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Journalese: The good, the bad and the ugly

Standard English is not the only type of English. Other types include legalese and business-speak. Journalese is one of the most influential linguistic domains because it has such widespread public exposure. Like other language domains, it often needs some translation. Good journalism clarifies issues for the public, and is expressive and readable. However, too much journalese hinders readers' comprehension. This paper characterises journalese as "good", "bad" or "ugly" with reference to positive features such as ease of assimilation on the one hand, and overuse of superlatives, hyperboles, stereotyping, clichés and (often awful) puns, portmanteau words, metonymy and metaphor, etc. Brevity and simplicity can be a benefit to the reader, but when overdone it can confuse meaning and may even detrimentally influence a reader's writing habits. The paper gives examples of terms and expressions from the journalist's toolbox, including "shorthand" constructions (neologisms, acronyms, semantic condensation, etc) which can speed up writing time and save space when used wisely, as well as some features that enhance readability.