

Stressed out News Speak?

A functional analysis of the use of emphatic stress by news anchors in TV Avisen

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Emphatic stress is an important prosodic tool for news speakers on radio and TV. Emphatic stress highlights key information and points out contrasts in content, supposedly making it easier for the listeners and viewers to understand the meaning of what is being said. On the other hand, illogical, misplaced or overused emphatic stress may confuse and annoy the recipients, and according to critics this happens regularly in Danish public service news broadcasting. This article however shows that the high frequency of emphatic stress in TV Avisen and the asserted illogical stress on auxiliary and copula verbs may very well be functionally motivated by journalism practice, i.e. governed by news criteria and speaker performance.