

Title:	Language in adversity: How should language be used in times of crisis?
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Abstract

COVID-19 is one of the most unprecedented events in the history of mankind. Facing such difficult challenges in combatting the virus, it is the paramount responsibility for government leaders to face the public and provides them with guidance given the uncertainties. Despite both the Prime Minister of the UK Boris Johnson, and Prime Minister of New Zealand Jacinda Ardern, delivering daily press conferences to the public, the public's perception of these speeches differs hugely: Johnson is often criticised for being uncertain and uncreditable, while Ardern is nearly always acclaimed for her firmness and clarity. In order to discover the reason for such difference, this study collects 10 COVID speeches respectively for the two leaders as a corpus and analyses their difference in language use using a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis approach. It is found that Ardern's strategy such as using effective epistemic modality, telling stories to express empathy, and the frequent use of imperatives, are crucial to her positive perception. This thus provides implications around the appropriate language strategies one should adopt in time of future crisis.

Reflection

Political discourse analysis is an interesting area of study as politicians often have hidden agenda that they would like to achieve behind their simple utterances. Although such analysis belongs to the linguistics field of study, I find it incredibly helpful and interesting that close reading technique in literature can be incorporated into linguistics research methods such as Critical Discourse Analysis to help unveil the underlying messages of political speeches. This capstone project therefore allows me to understand interconnectedness between literature and linguistics. Being both a linguistics and literature lover, the project serves as a great conclusion on my academic experience as an English major and it is certainly one of my biggest achievements in the department. On a final note, I would like to thank Professor Mackay for all her support throughout the project despite the all the difficulties caused by COVID and I am truly honored to be nominated by her for the award.