

Health crisis communication in Finnish news media

Evaluative images of the Covid-19 pandemic in digital news headlines

JENNA SAARNI & VERONIKA LAIPPALA

DEPARTMENT OF DIGITAL LANGUAGE STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF TURKU, FINLAND

ABSTRACT

During crises, news headlines not only communicate objective information but also express attitudes and emotions towards the reported events through different linguistic markers of evaluation. By analysing Finnish headlines from digital news sources on 16–17 March 2020, in this article we unravel how evaluative parameters, themes, and actors construct evaluative images of Covid-19 in Finnish news media. The results show how themes such as daily lives, health, and restrictive measures are evaluated, for example, through emotivity, mental state, evidentiality, and style. Findings also highlight the variety of different actors, from authorities to ordinary citizens, involved in the headlines. Consequently, three evaluative images emerge: 1) the pandemic that evokes concern and solidarity in the everyday lives of citizens; 2) the pandemic as a challenging health crisis, with the authorities as responsible decision-makers; and 3) the pandemic as a crisis that creates concern and negatively impacts the different functions of society.

KEYWORDS: crisis communication, discourse analysis, evaluative parameters, news headlines, Covid-19 themes

Introduction

When readers mainly browse news feeds instead of reading articles in-depth, digital news headlines have a significant role in creating certain types of images on current events (Mustafa-Awad & Kirner-Ludwig, 2017). These images have the power to shape our perceptions and even influence our behaviours (Mustafa-Awad & Kirner-Ludwig, 2017); thus, the study of news headlines is essential. The Covid-19 pandemic was not only an extensively communicated and mediated health crisis but also one of the most challenging situations for news media to communicate in the course of the infodemic (Johansson et al., 2023; Lewis et al., 2021). Although other global health crises have occurred previously, the preconditions for the crisis communication of Covid-19 were more complex (Johansson et al., 2023). News addressing the pandemic dominated news coverage in an extreme way, and updated content was produced around the clock (Johansson et al., 2023; see also Ytre-Arne & Moe, 2021). There was even a time when the pandemic almost overshadowed other newsworthy topics of political conflicts and natural disasters in the news headlines (Ytre-Arne & Moe, 2021). On the other hand, the constant flow of information supported the citizens in understanding the bigger picture or, in other words, the social aspect of the health crisis beyond medical perspectives (Quandt & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2022). By early 2023, the pandemic was no longer considered a global health emergency and no longer dominated news media coverage. The focus of the news media in Western countries shifted from the health crisis to the political crisis caused by Russia's war in Ukraine. However, the need to study and understand the nature of communication during the pandemic, and crises in general, remains when preparing communication for future crises.

The practices of news are often contradictory: The news media must communicate accurate information to citizens but, at the same time, attract readership to maximise newsworthiness, increase advertisement-based revenues, and improve social media shares (Glik, 2007; Jaakkola, 2018; Kilgo & Sinta, 2016; Kivioja, 2018). For example, sensational and exaggerated language deployed in the headlines is a typical way of generating more clicks (Kilgo & Sinta, 2016). Even though crisis communication needs to remain coherent, it must also be appealing when providing information to the public on what is happening and why, and how to behave (Boin et al., 2016). In this article, we consider that the divergent practices of news media offer a fruitful starting point for examining images of the pandemic in the headlines of crisis communication. We enter the realm of crisis communication and news headlines from a linguistic perspective of evaluation. This allows us to analyse the attitudes and emotions in the language used to address the pandemic. Especially, we consider that when evaluations are attached to specific themes related to the pandemic, we can identify unified entities, which we call *evaluative images*. The linguistic approach complements research in media and communication studies by providing detailed knowledge of news discourse (Bednarek & Caple, 2012). After all, news is primarily realised through words, which is why decisions concerning the language used in crisis communication have a great potential to influence people's perceptions

(Bednarek & Caple, 2012; see also Djerf-Pierre et al., 2014; Johansson & Odén, 2018; Mustafa-Awad & Kirner-Ludwig, 2017). Language is, therefore, a central resource when we seek to understand our social reality and communicate our experiences about health (Mahlberg & Brookes, 2021).

In extant research, communication about Covid-19 has been studied from different perspectives, all emphasising the crucial role of crisis communication. For example, communication and media scholars have investigated politicisation and polarisation (Hart et al., 2020), the effects of the pandemic on journalism (Quandt & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2021), communication dynamics (Lewis et al., 2021), public health communication (Nan & Thompson, 2021), news use (Ytre-Arne & Moe, 2021), and crisis management (Johansson et al., 2023). Furthermore, linguists have used multilingual and translational perspectives (Blumczynski & Wilson, 2022) and multimodal discourse analytical approaches (Tan & E, 2022). In their study, Ghersetti and colleagues (2023) found that news reporting in Sweden and Iceland mainly focused on health-related information from authorities during the first year of the pandemic. Their findings also indicated that criticism towards the presented information was not allocated much space in the news coverage. Attitudes and emotions in crisis communication have also been investigated. Hase and Engelke (2022) discovered that the news coverage in the UK in 2020 used fear-inducing discourse emphasising threats related to the pandemic. The discourse was used as a warning rather than a reflection of the ongoing situation. Meanwhile, the studies in the special issue edited by Mahlberg and Brookes (2021) concentrated on how attitudes and beliefs are built and mediated through language use in different contexts. For instance, Dong and colleagues (2021) discovered how the news media in various English-speaking countries typically used appreciation-oriented and emotional expressions when addressing the pandemic, which also correlates with the news media's goal of attracting readers. Moreover, research has also concentrated on the reader's perspective of the emotional responses the news evoked during the first lockdown (see, e.g., Eisele et al., 2022).

Notably, despite previous research, we still have limited knowledge of how the pandemic was represented at the news headline level. Given the vital role of news media in crisis communication and the power of news headlines to influence people's perceptions (Eisele et al., 2022; Mustafa-Awad & Kirner-Ludwig, 2017; Quandt & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2022), we argue that it is necessary to understand what kind of pandemic images were created in the headlines. Therefore, we study the attitudes, emotions, themes, and actors in news headlines and aim to shed light on the evaluative images they create. In doing so, we build on existing scholarship on crisis communication by offering new knowledge on how this global health crisis was covered in Finnish news headlines. The extensive analysis of evaluation can also illuminate how much space attitudes and emotions gained in the news coverage. In this article, we address the following questions:

RQ1. How are different themes related to the Covid-19 pandemic evaluated in Finnish news headlines?

RQ2. How do these evaluations and themes intersect to create evaluative images of the Covid-19 pandemic in the news headlines?

Typical of discourse analysis, we conducted a detailed qualitative examination and close reading of the news headlines that guide us in identifying evaluations, conceived of as evaluative parameters (Bednarek, 2010), themes, and actors. The data consist of digital news headlines in Finnish addressing Covid-19 in March 2020. The article is structured as follows: First, we compose our theoretical framework with the concepts of evaluation and crisis communication, followed by a description of the materials and methods of the study. Subsequently, we present our analysis by describing the evaluative parameters, themes, and actors identified from the headlines. Afterwards, we present three evaluative images of the pandemic that emerged at their intersection. Finally, we summarise the research in the discussion.

Evaluation and crisis communication in news media

Evaluation is an inseparable part of language use. It serves as an umbrella term for the expression of a language user's subjectivity, which can include attitudes, opinions, and emotions towards everything that can be evaluated through language (Bednarek & Caple, 2012; Thompson & Hunston, 2000). In the context of our research, evaluation not only reveals how the news writers and editors of headlines position themselves towards the reported matters but also reflects communal values (Thompson & Hunston, 2000). In other words, "identifying what the writer thinks reveals the ideology of the society that has produced the text" (Thompson & Hunston, 2000: 6). Evaluative language can be analysed through different frameworks, such as evaluation (Bednarek, 2006, 2010; Thompson & Hunston, 2000), subjectivity (Benveniste, 1966), positioning (Billig, 1987), stance (Du Bois, 2007; Jaffe, 2009), or appraisal (Martin & White, 2005). The frameworks seek to understand how language is employed by the actual speakers (Englebretson, 2007), but they have distinct analytical viewpoints that emphasise different aspects of language use (Bednarek, 2006). In this article, we apply the notion of evaluation and scrutinise the language of news headlines through evaluative parameters (Bednarek, 2010). Giaxoglou and Johansson (2020) have emphasised that the evaluative approach provides an effective tool for determining how certain interpretations appear and are presented, extended, and rooted into less stable attitudes and identities. Evaluative parameters are part of a framework specifically created to fit the analysis of news discourse (Bednarek, 2006, 2010; see also Thompson & Hunston, 2000). The parameters "refer to the standards, norms and values according to which we evaluate something through language" (Bednarek & Caple, 2012: 139), and they combine the previous frameworks mentioned above to become more suitable to news discourse, seeking to include a reasonable number of parameters in the analysis (Bednarek, 2006). For instance, the dimensions of the systemic functional

linguistics of affect, judgement, and appreciation have been placed under one collective parameter of emotivity in the framework we utilise (Bednarek, 2006).

Communication during crises has been addressed widely in the social sciences and in communication and media studies, where the concepts vary from crisis and disaster communication (Palen & Hughes, 2018; Thompson & Hunston, 2000) to risk communication (Glik, 2007) and crisis reporting (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013). Crisis communication often deals with the impact crises cause on an organisational level (An & Gower, 2009; Coombs, 2007; see also Johansson et al., 2023); however, it can equally take a more comprehensive perspective. In this study, we follow Ghersetti and colleagues (2023), Hase and Engelke (2022), and Ytre-Arne and Moe (2023), who employed the notion of crisis communication to address news reporting during the Covid-19 pandemic. Expanding the concept beyond the organisational level allows us to recognise the news media's crucial informative role in communicating with the public at different phases of a widespread crisis (An & Gower, 2009; Coombs, 2007; Ghersetti et al., 2023; Johansson & Odén, 2018).

In crisis communication, evaluation can be perceived as a strategy to construct appealing and effective news headlines (see, e.g., Molek-Kozakowska, 2013). During crises, information must be presented in a consistent yet attractive manner to guide citizens (Boin et al., 2016), for example, to follow recommendations. This also aligns with the discursive framework, which considers that headlines have a semantic and pragmatic double function (Iarovici & Amel, 1989). In other words, headlines are simultaneously summaries and advertisements, often presenting information in a bold, exaggerated, and polarised way (Andrew, 2013; Kronrod & Engel, 2001). The competition between newsrooms for readers and the increasing popularity of evening tabloids have also led to quality journalism and daily newspapers adopting characteristics of sensational reporting, previously exclusive to evening tabloids (Kantola, 2011a, 2011b; Rowe, 2010). Journalists and news writers analyse causes and consequences of newsworthy events, and they can emphasise entertainment, debate, storytelling, and emotions in their reporting (Deuze, 2007; Djerf-Pierre et al., 2014; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Johansson & Odén, 2018). For example, in the communication of the Covid-19 pandemic, appeals to emotions such as fear were entrenched (Hase & Engelke, 2022). The language of headlines also influences the perceptions of readers. Previous studies have illustrated that positive headlines can result in more favourable attitudes towards the reported events (Overgaard, 2021) than their negative counterparts (Wanta et al., 2004). Although the news discourse increasingly benefits from entertainment and emotions, communication by the news media still has a central position in crises, as people rely on news to provide information on the authorities' decisions (Monahan & Ettinger, 2018; Prieto-Ramos et al., 2020). Ytre-Arne and Moe (2023) indicated how the news media remained a highly valued and trusted source of pandemic-related information during Covid-19, regardless of the complex information environment that citizens had to navigate. In the context of this study, we consider that news headlines play a key role in constructing effective crisis communication, especially

in today's digital era, where citizens tend to scroll through newsfeeds without necessarily engaging with the actual articles (see, e.g., Andrew, 2013). This role cannot be underestimated, because the news media have the power to shape the perceptions, and even the actions, of their readers (Djerf-Pierre et al., 2014; Johansson & Odén, 2018; Mustafa-Awad & Kirner-Ludwig, 2017). Fairclough (1995) treated news discourse as a means for social change.

News is not only produced by journalists and news editors, but there are also other actors who actively take part in the process. Broersma and colleagues (2013) describe that news is a result of a display of courtship between journalists and their sources. The news writer has to lure the source to contribute to the news story, give information, and provide interesting citations. However, the collaboration of different actors is often reciprocal: Journalists mediate stories while sources get visibility for their cause (Broersma et al., 2013; Johansson & Odén, 2018; Larsson, 2002). In the early stages of a crisis, news media collaborate with authorities, experts, and decision-makers as they all seek to inform the public about the current situation and the appropriate ways to act (Ghersetti et al., 2023; Johansson & Odén, 2018). These public figures are the most important source of information in a sudden crisis, and the media functions as the most effective way of passing the information (Eisele et al., 2022; Vultee & Wilkins, 2012). In addition, nongovernmental organisations and entrepreneurs can emerge in crisis communication, but for the latter, communication tends to concern the reputation of the company (Broersma et al., 2013). News coverage is often characterised by human interest stories, where ordinary citizens such as patients are given a space to talk about their personal experiences (Thorbjørnsrud & Ytreberg, 2020). These stories are typically emotional, evoke sympathy among readers, and ensure media attention, which further influences how people perceive reported events (Thorbjørnsrud & Ytreberg, 2020; Zillmann, 2002). Ordinary citizens are seen as authentic experience specialists who “speak from the real world”, in contrast to politicians, for example, who advocate vested interests (Thorbjørnsrud & Ytreberg, 2020). However, the authority figures remain visible actors in news because they add credibility to the communication in times of uncertainty (Boyce, 2006; Strömbäck & Nord, 2006). In the following section, we describe the data and methods of the study.

Data and methods

To study the evaluations, themes, and actors in news headlines and the evaluative images they created of the Covid-19 pandemic, we analysed the digital news headlines in Finnish from the digital news sources of *Ilta-Sanomat*, *Helsingin Sanomat*, and Yleisradio (Yle). *Ilta-Sanomat* is an evening tabloid, whereas *Helsingin Sanomat* is a local newspaper of the capital region of Finland. Both newspapers are published by Sanoma Media Finland, and they obtain revenues from advertisements and subscriptions. In contrast, Yle is a non-commercial public broadcasting company owned by the state. Yle has national television and radio channels and a website that contains news and more theme-specific sections.

We selected the news sources based on a number of criteria. First, we wanted to add variability to the data and avoid concentrating on a specific region. For example, *Helsingin Sanomat* is a local newspaper and some of the news focus on the Helsinki region. *Helsingin Sanomat* was still included in the data because it also covers other news in a national and international level, and it is widely read in Finland. Second, the three sources allowed us to examine both commercial and non-commercial news media. Third, we made the decision regarding the news media based on the number of readers. The digital news platform of *Ilta-Sanomat* reaches over 2.9 million readers, *Helsingin Sanomat* is accessed by almost 1.8 million readers, and Yle has over 2.4 million readers per week (FIAM, 2023). Finally, we considered their relevance in the Finnish news media scene during the pandemic: All the news sources were at the forefront of the crisis communication as they provided information on the latest turns of events.

The news corpus was compiled by the TurkuNLP team at the University of Turku and consisted of billions of automatically collected words, including digital news, their headlines, and comment sections from 2018 until today. However, for our study, we only investigated news headlines from 16–17 March 2020. This specific timeframe was selected because it includes the historical declaration of the state of emergency. A similar decision was executed in Finland several decades ago and it now limited the basic rights of citizens, such as travelling inside national borders. As we do not seek to compare time periods or stages of the pandemic, we considered that a careful limitation of the data would allow us to closely examine how the crisis is represented in news media. Moreover, we wanted to obtain actual crisis communication for the analysis before any extensive emergence of political discourse and polarisation in the public discussion (see e.g., Gherseti et al., 2023; Hart et al., 2020).

The compilation of the corpus started with the use of RSS feeds (continuously updated online feeds that allow users to access online news in a computer-readable format) from Finnish and Swedish news media. Many news media provide RSS feeds, including the news headline and link to the actual news article, on their website. The feeds also contain metadata in HTML, such as language used or photos that may not serve the research in question. Therefore, the Python package *Trafilatura*, designed for text extraction, was used to extract the necessary text (e.g., dates and news headlines) from the noisy HTML code for the purposes of our study. The Finnish data used in this research were extracted from a larger dataset using search terms such as *Covid-19*, *korona* [*corona*], and *koronapandemia* [*Covid-19 pandemic*]. The next step was to remove duplicates to increase diversity in the analysis. We started the analysis with 687 headlines; however, in the early stage, the data began to repeat. Therefore, the final data included in this study consisted of a random sample of 138 news headlines (1,606 words) in total. The headlines were divided as follows: 62 headlines from *Ilta-Sanomat*, 47 from *Helsingin Sanomat*, and 29 from Yle. The small size of the dataset does not seek to function in a representative manner but to offer an illustrative glance at the news headlines of the pandemic.

Our analysis was guided by a detailed qualitative examination and close reading of the data, typical of discourse analytical approaches. In other words, our analysis consisted of a sample of headlines that were manually studied systematically to find meanings within the text (Brummett, 2019). The process of close reading assisted us in the identification of the evaluative parameters (Bednarek, 2010) and themes. Throughout the analysis, we also recognised and marked different actors who had a voice in the headlines. We were especially interested in actors represented in the headlines other than news professionals. We consider these professionals as an inherent part of headlines, whether in the background with a neutral tone or more visible with an evaluative voice. Finally, we identified three evaluative images that emerged in the headlines at the intersection of the evaluative parameters, themes, and actors. To fit today’s news media discourse, the evaluative parameters synthesise previous frameworks of appraisal, evaluation, and stance (e.g., Martin & White, 2005; Thompson & Hunston, 2000). The framework we utilise contains twelve parameters for analysing evaluative meanings in news discourse. The parameters can also include subcategories that help specify the evaluation. For example, the parameter of emotivity has two subcategories from negative to positive emotivity, and the parameter of importance has subcategories from important to unimportant. Table 1 describes the most important parameters for our research (see Appendix A for all the parameters).

TABLE 1 Most important evaluative parameters

Evaluative parameter	Definition	Examples
Emotivity	Evaluation of activities, events, people, and other things as positive or negative	peaceful, beauty, aggressive, fiasco
Expectedness	Evaluation of aspects as expected or unexpected; also includes the notion of contrast	familiar, rarely, however, but
Importance	Evaluation of aspects as important or unimportant	historic, minor, star, leading
Evidentiality (sourcing)	Evaluation of the basis of information, e.g., as speech, thought, or feeling, emotion, or mental process	say, think, hope, speculate
Style (sourcing)	Evaluation of the previous reporting expression of speech, e.g., as neutral, illocutionary, or declarative	say, advice, instruct, acquit
Mental state	Evaluation of mental states as emotion, volition, belief, or knowledge	glad, refuse, convince, know

Source: summarised from Bednarek, 2010

The framework has two parameters of sourcing – evidentiality and style – both of which are linked to the news source. More specifically, evidentiality’s subcategory of speech is related to the parameter of style, which means style

provides information on how something was said by the source (Bednarek, 2010). Henceforth, for clarity, we refer to the parameters as evidentiality and style instead of the identical term of sourcing. According to Bednarek (2010), there are also similarities between other parameters: Emotivity and mental state are closely attached to emotions, but the main difference is that emotivity concerns a wider evaluation of different entities, whereas mental state is related to the mental states people can experience. Moreover, the parameters tend to co-occur, meaning one headline, expression, or word can contain several evaluative parameters. For example, an extremely negative evaluation of someone's emotional mental state can also evoke negative emotivity. Evaluative meanings can be interpreted differently depending on the reader's personal attitudes and experiences towards the discussed issues (Bednarek, 2008). We acknowledge the possibility of a certain level of subjectivity in the analysis due to the fuzzy nature of emotional language (Bednarek, 2008) and manual analysis. On the other hand, our analysis is based on decisions that have been consistent throughout the process, and we have executed several rounds of analysis to revise and strengthen these decisions. This has been possible due to the accessible amount of data. In the next section, we present our analysis based on the methods described above.

Analysis

Evaluative parameters, themes, and actors of news headlines

We begin our analysis by presenting the evaluative parameters, themes, and actors identified in the news headlines examined. Afterwards, we demonstrate the kinds of evaluative images that emerge at their intersection. Within the total number of 138 headlines, 101 headlines (73%) consist of evaluation. Altogether, these evaluative headlines contain 281 evaluative parameters, indicating that a headline can contain one or several evaluative parameters. Table 2 demonstrates the distribution of the evaluative parameters and examples drawn from the data.

Table 2 shows the various evaluative parameters found in the news headlines. The examples of emotivity and mental state illustrate the close connection of the parameters; for instance, the verbs indicating mental state can also evoke positive or negative emotivity. The prominence of emotional expressions was similarly discovered by Dong and colleagues (2021), when they found that news media typically exploit emotional language when they address the Covid-19 pandemic. As Table 2 further indicates, the intertwined parameters of evidentiality and style are typical, as these parameters occur with authority statements and citizens' personal experiences. Importance is also a typical evaluative parameter that correlates with the news media's tendency to present information as essential and relevant.

TABLE 2 Distribution of evaluative parameters of the headlines

Evaluative parameter	Distribution (%)	Examples
Emotivity	25	agonise, fall drastically, feel nervous, giant losses, life-threatening
Evidentiality	16	announce, appeal, demand, promise, recommend, tell, warn
Mental state	12	believe, be overjoyed, consider, fear, hope, worry, agonise, feel nervous
Style	9	announce, appeal, demand, promise, recommend, tell, warn
Expectedness	8	already, but, only, suddenly, unexpected
Importance	8	giant, historical, important, leader, star, success
Reliability	6	could, few believe, is planned, likely, may
Causality	6	we're in trouble if, did not obey and therefore
Necessity	4	forced, have to survive, must be cancelled
Possibility	4	can, can't, possibility
Comprehensibility	2	clearly, completely new, difficult to say, mystery
Genuineness	–	nowhere near right
Total	100	

Comments: $n = 281$.

Table 3 presents the themes discovered, as well as their distribution and examples. Although the themes were identified with close reading, we illustrate them with the lexical items attached to each theme. In total, the evaluative headlines include 131 themes, meaning that a headline can contain more than one theme; for example, general restrictive measures and health can appear together. Table 3 illustrates how the crisis communication of news media covers different themes that are connected to the pandemic. The themes show how widely different areas were taken into consideration at the beginning of the state of emergency. The news coverage not only concerns different restrictive measures and recommendations but also provides space for citizens' daily lives, experiences, and emotions. The themes found in the Finnish context are similar to those found in Swedish and Icelandic news media, which covered themes, for example, concerning health and the economy (Ghersetti et al., 2023). In addition, social issues, unemployment, arts, and sports were discovered (Ghersetti et al., 2023), which can be situated in the themes of daily life and emotions, business and working life, and events and culture in our research. As for the actors in the headlines, we identified, for example, politicians, researchers, healthcare actors, personnel of organisations and companies, celebrities, and ordinary citizens. In the following sections, we demonstrate how the evaluative parameters, themes, and actors presented above are associated, thus creating three evaluative images of the pandemic.

TABLE 3 Distribution of themes in the headlines

Theme	Distribution (%)	Lexical items
Daily life and emotions	13	ordinary life, everyday life, single parent, citizen, relative, homeless, worry, be nervous, Covid-19 anxiety
Events and culture	12	premiere, movie, museum, match, football association, UEFA European Championship, cancel, postpone
General restrictive measures	11	contingency law, state of emergency, Covid-19 measure, Covid-19 guidelines, recommendations
Health	11	infection, death, Covid-19 suspicion, risk, municipality doctor, WHO, healthcare, Covid-19 vaccination
Movement and travel restrictions	11	moving restriction, travel restriction, closed border, outside border, quarantine, get locked, moving outside
Business and working life	10	company, working life, profession, remote work, support package, entrepreneur, cash crisis, branch manager, Covid-19 layoff, unemployment fund
Politics	8	government, ministry, decision, EU leaders, union, minister of the interior, party meeting, prime minister Marin
Economics	8	world economy, oil price, CEO, central bank, key interest rate, trade, Black Monday, finance, stock market
General situation	7	Covid-19 situation, Covid-19 pandemic, information
Education and childcare	6	school, high school, remote education, school child, basic education, classroom teaching
Other	3	–

Comments: $n = 131$.

Crisis that evokes concern and solidarity in the everyday lives of citizens

The first evaluative image created at the intersection of the evaluative parameters, themes, and actors (see Tables 2 and 3) is a crisis that evokes concern and solidarity in the everyday lives of citizens. The evaluative image is constructed with themes that concern ordinary citizens, including daily life and emotions, general restrictive measures, health, and movement and travel restrictions. Daily life and emotions and movement and travel restrictions are evaluated through emotivity, mental state, evidentiality, and causality. Similarly, general

restrictive measures are evaluated with the parameters of emotivity, mental state, and causality. As for health, it is evaluated through emotivity, evidentiality, expectedness, mental state, and reliability. The actors represented in the headlines are ordinary citizens identified as parents, people from risk groups, and family members. An authority can also be “one of the citizens” if they address the public in a certain way (see example 2). With the following examples drawn from the data, we demonstrate the relationship between the evaluative parameters, themes, and actors in the evaluative image (the English translations are our own; the original headlines in Finnish can be found in Appendix B). The parts linked to the evaluative parameters are indicated with bold letters.

(1) The closing of schools **worries** a single parent: “**I have to borrow money to afford to buy food** for the schoolchild” (*Ilta-Sanomat*)

(2) President Niinistö **comments** on the **extremely strong** measures to restrain the Covid-19 pandemic: “**We need each other**” (*Ilta-Sanomat*)

(3) Covid-19 | Poetry became a social media **success** that **offers hope** to Italians **in the middle of distress** and now circulates in Finland (*Helsingin Sanomat*)

(4) Loved ones **agonise**: Finland’s “**unruly**” over 70-year-olds **resisting** the Covid-19 measures – “**It’s like herding cats**” (*Ilta-Sanomat*)

In example 1, the evaluation concerns education and childcare and daily life and emotions, where the mental state of single parents is described with *worries*. The verb is also related to the parameters of evidentiality and its subcategory of emotion, as it simultaneously describes the parent’s emotional stance (Bednarek, 2010). In addition, the citation *I have to borrow money to afford to buy food* contains the parameters of necessity and causality. The citation consists of a reason–effect structure of compulsory actions: The parent needs to borrow money to feed their child. Overall, negative emotivity echoes in the headline, with the concerned parent. As a result, the parent experiences the need to ask for help to manage their daily life.

In example 2, the president of Finland at the time encourages the citizens to work for the common good by appealing to their emotions. The parameters of evidentiality and style occur in the verb *comments*, where the object of evaluation targets the general restrictive measures. From the parameters, the subcategories of speech and neutrality are used in the verb to describe the statement of the president. The headline contrasts with the two sides of negative and positive emotivity. First, we consider that the expression *extremely strong measures* reflects negative emotivity in the given context. In the Finnish media coverage, in general, restrictive measures were often discussed in a negative manner. For example, critical discourses concerning the need for certain restrictions emerged in public discussions. In addition, the expression is associated in the headline with the president’s statement, which, in our point of view, creates the impression that the president also seeks to reach the people who question the extent of the

different measures. Furthermore, the extent of the measures is highlighted with the terminology *extremely strong*, which captures a negative tone when compared with the president's emotionally appealing citation. The citation *we need each other*, with the pronouns *we* and *each other* and the emotive verb *need*, emphasises the collectiveness and solidarity required to survive the crisis. With this expression, president Niinistö, as a well-liked and down-to-earth public figure in Finland, positions himself at the same level as the citizens and becomes more approachable instead of a distant authority who states plain figures and numbers.

Example 3 evaluates daily life and emotions with positive and negative emotivity, importance, and mental state. The notion of pleasant outcome *success* indicates that the poem is regarded as relevant and important; it also demonstrates positive emotivity (see Bednarek, 2010). The headline demonstrates adequately how positive and negative evaluations co-occur within the same headline; the negative expression *in the middle of distress* draws a picture of a continuous and hopeless situation, while the positive expression *offers hope* sheds a positive light on the ongoing situation.

Finally, example 4 concerns daily life and emotions. In the headline, the verb *agonise* refers to the experiences of loved ones and is attached to evidentiality; it also reflects the mental state of loved ones and negative emotivity. On the contrary, the words *unruly* and *resisting* represent the evaluative parameters of mental state and negative emotivity, referring to the behaviour of the elderly. The figure of speech *it's like herding cats* portrays a chaotic situation that is impossible to control; thus, it also reflects negative emotivity.

To conclude our presentation of the evaluative image, we can see that emotivity, mental state, and evidentiality are attached to the different themes that concern citizens during the crisis. The parameters also reflect the emotional complexity of the pandemic. On the one hand, the evaluative image is characterised by concern and distress when the pandemic negatively affects the emotions and perceptions of ordinary citizens. On the other hand, the image is characterised by positive tones, wherein solidarity among citizens and the need for comfort stand out.

Challenging health crisis with authorities as responsible decision-makers

The second evaluative image constructed through the evaluative parameters, themes, and actors is a challenging health crisis where authorities function as responsible decision-makers. The themes are related to general restrictive measures, health, movement and travel restrictions, politics, general situations, and education and childcare. For the evaluative parameters, general restrictive measures, politics, and general situations are all evaluated through emotivity, importance, evidentiality, and style. In addition, the parameters of reliability and possibility are attached to restrictive measures and politics. Health and movement and travel restrictions are both evaluated through evidentiality, possibility, causality, and mental state. Moreover, movement and travel restrictions is evaluated through emotivity, style, necessity, and health through reliability, expectedness, and genuineness. Finally, education and childcare is associated with the parameters

of evidentiality, expectedness, possibility, and mental state, which illustrate the uncertainty of the decisions with regards to the closing of schools. The actors of the headlines represent decision-makers (ministry, members of parliament, EU leaders), healthcare actors (doctors, healthcare organisations), and researchers. We illustrate the evaluative image with the following examples:

(5) **Should** we escape the Covid-19 pandemic and go to a cottage in the north? – The local doctor of Utsjoki municipality **advises** staying at home: “**We will be in trouble if the number of people doubles**” (Yle)

(6) The WHO **recommends** testing all suspected Covid-19 cases – “**Fire can’t be extinguished blindfolded**” (*Ilta-Sanomat*)

With regard to example 5, the themes concern movement and travel restrictions and healthcare. Necessity is linked to the verb *should*, and after reading the whole headline combined with the doctor’s statement, we can note that it is necessary to stay at home. Evidentiality and style can be seen in the verb *advises*, which refers to the local doctor as a source but also functions as an illocutionary signpost where the purpose of the utterance is included in the verb (see Bednarek, 2010). The illocutionary expression highlights the recommendation instead of a neutral evaluation, such as *say*, which would create a more neutral and possibly ineffective statement. For instance, Hunston (2000) further explained that different expressions contain different levels of reliability and can be exploited to influence the reader’s position. In the example, the recommendation is simultaneously the doctor’s wish, which refers to the parameter of mental state and its subcategory of volition. Furthermore, the direct citation includes causality, as the municipality’s healthcare will face problems if the number of people increases. The citation also casts a negative emotivity on the potential situation with the expression *in trouble*.

In example 6, the World Health Organization has a voice in the headline addressing healthcare. The parameters of evidentiality and style are again a part of the verb *recommends*. The style is illocutionary, as the verb contains a wish for specific actions. Similar to the previous example, the metaphor *fire can’t be extinguished blindfolded* includes negative emotivity. The noun *fire* describes and reinforces the gravity of the pandemic. This word, together with the expression *can’t be extinguished blindfolded*, also confirms that well-planned policies and decisions must be implemented in the management of the crisis.

As a summary of the evaluative image described above, the news headlines that deal with different measures and regulations often contain comments from experts, which are evaluated with evidentiality and style, thus highlighting the crucial role of authorities in crisis management. Furthermore, these kinds of expressions can help the writer create a fact-based image (Montgomery, 2007). We argue that the image characterises the decision-makers as responsible and reliable experts who guide citizens through the pandemic. The image expresses a complex crisis environment, where the dominant presence of the authorities and experts provides reassurance to citizens and demonstrates that the situation is taken seriously despite constant uncertainties.

Crisis that creates concern and negatively impacts different functions of society

The final evaluative image is a crisis that creates concern and negatively impacts the different functions of society. The image includes the themes of business and working life, economics, and events and culture. The evaluative parameters associated with events and culture are importance, emotivity, expectedness, reliability, and necessity. The theme of business and working life is characterised by emotivity, expectedness, evidentiality, style, and importance. Finally, economics is evaluated through emotivity, expectedness, reliability, causality, evidentiality, and mental state. The actors represented under the image are from organisations and companies, such as managers. We illustrate the construction of the evaluative image with the following examples:

(7) Covid-19 **changed** working life and travelling **with a sudden jolt**: “The crisis is **completely new**” (*Ilta-Sanomat*)

(8) The-three-day **hoarding avalanche** is **fading but not abating** – Kesko’s [Finnish trading sector company] branch manager: “I have **never seen** anything like this in my career” (Yle)

(9) **Giant losses** for museums due to the Covid-19 pandemic – works worth **hundreds of thousands** are now **linguishing in empty ghost-like halls** (Yle)

Example 7 addresses business and working life and movement and travel restrictions. The expression *changed with a sudden jolt* includes the evaluative parameters of expectedness and comprehensibility. On the one hand, the expression suggests that working life and travelling experienced unexpected changes due to the pandemic. On the other hand, the expression implies that the changes were incomprehensible. Similarly, *completely new* confirms that the crisis was both unexpected and incomprehensible at the time (see Bednarek, 2010). In the given context, unexpectedness and incomprehensibility articulate negative emotivity. This seems adequate as the pandemic and its impacts were still widely unknown in early 2020, which evoked uncertainty and negative emotions.

Example 8 concerns business and working life and economics by contrasting two instances with the conjunction *but* when evaluating the causes of the pandemic in the consumption of daily goods. The expression *hoarding avalanche is fading but not abating* echoes uncontrolled and continuous behaviour. This can be attached to negative emotivity, given that in today’s society, excessive consumption should be avoided. As for the citation, the headline contains the subcategory of unexpectedness and negative emotivity when the branch manager describes the hoarding as unforeseen. Similar to the previous example, this seems to be justified because, in March 2020, the pandemic had just emerged as a new crisis, and the effects of the crisis on people’s behaviour were still a mystery, among others.

Finally, example 9 falls in the themes of events and culture and economics. The descriptive expressions *giant losses* and *hundreds of thousands* contain the parameter of importance as the expressions emphasise the significance and sever-

ity of the experienced impacts. They also evoke negative emotivity. Moreover, the expression *languishing in empty ghost-like halls* characterises the impacts negatively when the headline draws a picture of wide and empty spaces with nothing but extremely valuable artwork.

To conclude the present evaluative image, the different sectors of society affected by the health crisis were raised as a matter of concern already from the early days of the state of emergency. The intersection of the evaluative parameters, themes, and actors not only indicates the unexpected and negative effects but also reflects the vital nature of different actions. In the next section, we summarise our research.

Discussion

The importance of this study lies in the divergent practices of news headlines (Boin et al., 2016) and their power to influence how people understand and feel about major societal issues (Bednarek & Caple, 2012; Mustafa-Awad & Kirner-Ludwig, 2017). The systematic analysis of the evaluative parameters helps us better comprehend the attitudes and values in news headlines and helps us access them precisely through the three evaluative images. Primarily, our study suggests how the evaluations attached to different themes are reflected as evaluative images that can potentially influence how citizens perceive the Covid-19 crisis. First, the pandemic is represented as a crisis that evokes concern and solidarity in the everyday lives of citizens. Second, the pandemic is described as a challenging health crisis with authorities as responsible decision-makers. Third, the pandemic is portrayed as a crisis that creates concern and has negative impacts on the different functions of society.

As for the actors involved in crisis communication of news media, it is worth noticing that news headlines are always produced by news professionals, represented as objective reporters or evaluative voices. In addition to them, actors in our data include parents, family members, and people from risk groups. The findings support Thorbjørnsrud and Ytreberg (2020), who noted that ordinary citizens' personal experiences of health are important in the news media because they attract readers and arouse sympathy. Further, healthcare actors, politicians, other decision-makers, researchers, and company managers are represented in our headlines. Boyce (2006) stated that the appearance of authorities and different experts in news media is crucial because they offer fact-based information and enhance credibility. Additionally, we propose that the presence of authorities offered reassurance to citizens under new and uncertain circumstances. In fact, the citizens' trust towards authorities, institutions, and news media in Finland during the first year of the pandemic was relatively high (Jallinoja & Väliverronen, 2021), which would support the use of authorities and experts in news media coverage.

Our findings support extant research showing that during crises, news media regard its role as having dual responsibilities of distributing relevant information from the authorities and experts to the public (Eisele et al., 2022; Ghersetti et al.,

2023; Vultee & Wilkins, 2012) and deploying evaluative language on reported events (Boin et al., 2016; Eisele et al., 2022; Ghersetti et al., 2023; Overgaard, 2021; Wanta et al., 2004). In contrast to Ghersetti and colleagues (2023), our findings show how news reporting in Finland covered themes beyond health. Furthermore, the results of this study highlight the important role of individual headlines as mediators of crisis information, stories, and experiences. That is, the results reflect the power of compact headlines within the wider news genre. The evaluative images presented in this study demonstrate how practical aspects of the pandemic, such as decision-making and information that seeks to guide citizens, co-occur with the emotional and personal side of the citizens' lives at a grassroots level (see also Ghersetti et al., 2023; Hase & Engelke, 2022; Lee, 2022). In other words, the public and private spheres overlap in the headlines. Our findings contribute to clarifying the complex media environment during a crisis, where different types of information are presented (see, e.g., Ytre-Arne & Moe, 2023) through emotional and attitude-oriented expressions.

Our results could serve actors ranging from decision-makers and experts to ordinary citizens for future purposes. The research may give preliminary ideas to journalists and newsrooms about the evaluative output of their crisis response, and whether the significant role of attitudes and emotions in the headlines appear desirable or not. The results could also be used to reflect the role and visibility of different actors in crisis communication and could also open discussions between newsrooms and public authorities on whether there were aspects of the pandemic that should have been discussed more comprehensively or vice versa. The outcomes of these considerations could be adapted and realised in health crisis communication of the future. Finally, the study may be of interest to ordinary citizens who were represented in the headlines and who consume the news.

With this article, we have demonstrated how the global health crisis was covered in the Finnish news headlines. Our study builds on existing scholarship on health crisis communication in news media and sheds insights through a linguistic lens into the role of attitudes and emotions in the news headlines communicating a new crisis. The question remains whether citizens perceived the pandemic as a multi-effected health crisis, as described in the headlines. This would open possibilities for future research to delve into the relationship between news media representations and citizens' personal perceptions, and whether they correlate or differ. In addition, it would be beneficial to examine news headlines during a longer time period to detect changes in attitudes and emotions, especially if the news media's criticism towards various restrictive measures emerged in the later stages of the pandemic (Ghersetti et al., 2023). Moreover, conflicting opinions, disinformation, and conspiracy theories attached to the pandemic over the past years would offer fascinating and essential avenues for future studies to deepen our knowledge of health crisis communication.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Filip Ginter from the TurkuNLP team for setting up the RSS feeds and collecting the original data. We are also grateful for Lotta Lehti and Sanna-Kaisa Tanskanen for their valuable feedback on previous versions of the manuscript. This study has been funded by the Kone Foundation and the C. V. Åkerlund Media Foundation.

References

- An, S., & Gower, K. K. (2009). How do the news media frame crises? A content analysis of crisis news coverage. *Public Relations Review*, 35(2), 107–112.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2009.01.010>
- Andén-Papadopoulos, K., & Pantti, M. (2013). Re-imagining crisis reporting: Professional ideology of journalists and citizen eyewitness images. *Journalism*, 14(7), 960–977.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884913479055>
- Andrew, B. (2013). Political journalism represented by headline news: Canadian public and commercial media compared. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 46(2), 455–478.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423913000462>
- Bednarek, M. (2006). *Evaluation in media discourse: Analysis of a newspaper corpus*. Bloomsbury.
- Bednarek, M. (2008). *Emotion talk across corpora*. Palgrave Macmillan.
<https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230285712>
- Bednarek, M. (2010). Evaluation in the news: A methodological framework for analysing evaluative language in journalism. *Australian Journal of Communication*, 37(2), 15–50.
- Bednarek, M., & Caple, H. (2012). *News discourse*. Bloomsbury.
- Benveniste, E. (1966). *Problèmes de linguistique générale [Problems of general linguistics]*. Gallimard.
- Billig, M. (1987). *Arguing and thinking: A rhetorical approach to social psychology*. Cambridge University Press.
- Blumczynski, P., & Wilson, S. (2022). *The languages of Covid-19: Translational and multilingual perspectives on global healthcare*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003267843>
- Boin, A., 't Hart, P., Stern, E., & Sundelius, B. (2016). *The politics of crisis management: Public leadership under pressure* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/97813163397>
- Boyce, T. (2006). Journalism and expertise. *Journalism Studies*, 7(6), 889–906.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700600980652>
- Broersma, M., Den Herder, B., & Schohaus, B. (2013). A question of power: The changing dynamics between journalists and sources. *Journalism Practice*, 7(4), 388–395.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2013.802474>
- Brummett, B. (2019). *Techniques of close reading* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Coombs, W. T. (2007). Protecting organization reputations during a crisis: The development and application of situational crisis communication theory. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 10(3), 163–176. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.crr.1550049>
- Deuze, M. (2007). *Media work*. Polity.
- Djerf-Pierre, M., Ekström, M., Håkansson, N., & Johansson, B. (2014). The mediatization of political accountability: Politics, the news media logic and industrial crises in the 1980s and 2000s. *Journalism Studies*, 15(3), 321–338. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2014.889473>
- Dong, J., Buckingham, L., & Wu, H. (2021). A discourse dynamics exploration of attitudinal responses towards Covid-19 in academia and media. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 26(4), 532–556. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ijcl.21103.don>
- Du Bois, J. (2007). The stance triangle. In R. Englebretson (Ed.), *Stancetaking in discourse: Subjectivity, evaluation and interaction* (pp. 139–182). John Benjamins.
<https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.164.07du>
- Eisele, O., Litvyak, O., Brändle V. K., Balluff, P., Fischeneder, A., Sotirakou, C., Syed Ali, P., & Boomgaarden, H. G. (2022). An emotional rally: Exploring commenters' responses to online news coverage of the Covid-19 crisis in Austria. *Digital Journalism*, 10(6), 952–975.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2021.2004552>

- Englebretson, R. (2007). Stancetaking in discourse: An introduction. In R. Englebretson (Ed.), *Stancetaking in discourse: Subjectivity, evaluation and interaction* (pp. 1–25). John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.164.02eng>
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Media discourse*. Edward Arnold.
- FIAM (Finnish Internet Audience Measurement). (2023, March 20). *FIAM top-lista [FIAM top list]*. www.fiam.fi/tulokset/
- Ghersetti, M., Ólafsson, J. G., & Ólafsdóttir, S. (2023). Watchdogs and government megaphones: The dual democratic roles of the news media during the Covid-19 pandemic in Iceland and Sweden. In B. Johansson, Ø, Ihlen, J. Lindholm, & M. Blach-Ørsten (Eds.), *Communicating a pandemic: Crisis management and Covid-19 in the Nordic countries* (pp. 217–240). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855688-10>
- Giaxoglou, K., & Johansson, M. (2020). Introduction: Networked practices of emotion and stancetaking in reactions to mediatized events and crises. *Pragmatics*, 30(2), 169–178. <https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.18058.gia>
- Glik, D. C. (2007). Risk communication for public health emergencies. *The Annual Review of Public Health*, 28, 33–54. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.publhealth.28.021406.144123>
- Hart, P. S., Chinn, S., & Soronka, S. (2020). Politicization and polarization in Covid-19 news coverage. *Science Communication*, 42(5), 679–697. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1075547020950735>
- Hase, V., & Engelke, K. M. (2022). Emotions in crisis coverage: How UK news media used fear appeals to report on the coronavirus crisis. *Journalism and Media*, 3(4), 633–649. <https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia3040042>
- Hunston, S. (2000). Evaluation and the planes of discourse: Status and value in persuasive texts. In S. Hunston, & G. Thompson (Eds.), *Evaluation in text: Authorial stance and the construction of discourse* (pp. 176–207). Oxford University Press.
- Iarovici, E., & Amel, R. (1989). The strategy of the headline. *Semiotica*, 77(4), 441–459. <https://doi.org/10.1515/semi.1989.77.4.441>
- Jaakkola, M. (2018). *Hyvä journalismi: Käytännön opas kirjoittajalle [Good journalism: Practical guide for writers]* (3rd ed.). Kansanvalistusseura.
- Jaakkola, M., Hellman, H., Koljonen, K., & Väliverronen, J. (2015). Liquid modern journalism with a difference. *Journalism Practice*, 9(6), 811–828. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2015.1051361>
- Jaffe, A. (2009). Introduction: The sociolinguistics of stance. In A. Jaffe (Ed.), *Stance: Sociolinguistic perspectives* (pp. 1–33). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195331646.003.0001>
- Jallinoja, P., & Väliverronen, E. (2021). Suomalaisten luottamus instituutioihin ja asiantuntijoihin Covid-19 pandemiassa [Finns' trust in institutions and experts in the Covid-19 pandemic]. *Media & Viestintä*, 44(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.23983/mv.107298>
- Johansson, B., Ihlen, Ø., Lindholm, J., & Blach-Ørsten, M. (2023). Introduction. In B. Johansson, Ø, Ihlen, J. Lindholm, & M. Blach-Ørsten (Eds.), *Communicating a pandemic: Crisis management and Covid-19 in the Nordic countries* (pp. 11–30). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855688-1>
- Johansson, B., & Odén, T. (2018). Struggling for the upper hand: News sources and crisis communication in a digital media environment. *Journalism Studies*, 19(10), 1489–1506. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2017.1279980>
- Kantola, A. (2011a). Saatteeksi [As an introduction]. In A. Kantola (Ed.), *Hetken hallitsijat: julkinen elämä notkeassa yhteiskunnassa [Masters of the moment: Public life in the liquid society]* (pp. 5–7). Gaudeamus.
- Kantola, A. (2011b). Modernin julkisuuden teorian ja käytännöt [Theories and practices of modern publicity]. In A. Kantola (Ed.), *Hetken hallitsijat: julkinen elämä notkeassa yhteiskunnassa [Masters of the moment: Public life in the liquid society]* (pp. 17–41). Gaudeamus.
- Kilgo, D. K., & Sinta, V. (2016). Six things you didn't know about headline writing: Sensationalistic form in viral news content from traditional and digitally native news organizations. *International Symposium on Online Journalism*, 6(1), 111–130.
- Kivioja, P. (2018). *Ilta päivälehtien evoluutio median murroksessa: Hiipuva printti, nouseva digitaalinen mahti ja ansaintamallin uusi asento [The evolution of the tabloids in a changing media environment: Fading print, rising digital power and a new position of the earning model]* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Tampere, Finland]. <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-03-0904-6>

- Kronrod, A., & Engel, A. (2001). Accessibility theory and referring expressions in newspaper headlines. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 33, 683–699. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(00\)00013-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(00)00013-8)
- Larsson, L., (2002). Journalists and politicians: A relationship requiring manoeuvring space. *Journalism Studies*, 3(1), 21–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700120107310>
- Lee, N. Y. (2022). Headlines for summarizing news or attracting readers' attention? Comparing news headlines in South Korean newspapers with the New York Times. *Journalism*, 23(4), 892–909. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884920929202>
- Lewis, M., Holland, K., & Govender, E. (2021). The interdisciplinary communication dynamics of the Covid-19 pandemic. In M. Lewis, E. Govender, & K. Holland (Eds.), *Communicating Covid-19: Interdisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 1–18). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mahlberg, M., & Brookes, G. (Eds.). (2021). Language and Covid-19: Corpus linguistics and the social reality of the pandemic [special issue]. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 26(4). <https://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/15699811/26/4>
- Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. R. (2005). *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Molek-Kozakowska, K. (2013). Towards a pragma-linguistic framework for the study of sensationalism in news headlines. *Discourse & Communication*, 7(2), 173–197. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481312471668>
- Monahan, B., & Ettinger, M. (2018). News media and disasters: Navigating old challenges and new opportunities in the digital age. In H. Rodríguez, W. Donner, & J. E. Trainor (Eds.), *Handbook of disaster research* (pp. 479–495). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-63254-4_23
- Montgomery, M. (2007). *The discourse of broadcast news: A linguistic approach*. Routledge.
- Mustafa-Awad, Z., & Kirner-Ludwig, M. (2017). Arab women in news headlines during the Arab Spring: Image and perception in Germany. *Discourse & Communication*, 11(5), 515–538. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481317714114>
- Nan, X., & Thompson, T. (2021). Introduction to the special issue on “public health communication in an age of Covid-19”. *Health Communication*, 36(1), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2020.1853330>
- Overgaard, C. S. B. (2021). Constructive journalism in the face of a crisis: The effects of social media news updates about Covid-19. *Journalism Studies*, 22(14), 1875–1893. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2021.1971107>
- Palen, L., & Hughes, A. L. (2018). Social media in disaster communication. In H. Rodríguez, D. William, & J. E. Trainor (Eds.), *Handbook of disaster research* (pp. 497–518). Springer.
- Prieto-Ramos, F., Pei, J., & Cheng, L. (2020). Institutional and news media denominations of Covid-19 and its causative virus: between naming policies and naming politics. *Discourse & Communication*, 14(6), 635–652. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481320938467>
- Quandt, T., & Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2021). The coronavirus pandemic as a critical moment for digital journalism. *Digital Journalism*, 9(9), 1199–1207. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2021.1996253>
- Quandt, T., & Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2022). The coronavirus pandemic and the transformation of (digital) journalism. *Digital Journalism*, 10(6), 923–929. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2090018>
- Rowe, D., (2010). Tabloidization: Form, style and socio-cultural change. In V. Rupar (Ed.), *Journalism and meaning-making: Reading the newspaper* (pp. 121–138). Hampton Press.
- Strömbäck, J., & Nord, L. (2006). Do politicians lead the tango? A study of the relationship between Swedish journalists and their political sources in the context of election campaigns. *European Journal of Communication*, 21(2), 147–164. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323105064043>
- Tan, S., & E, M. K. L. (2022). *Discourses, modes, media and meaning in an era of pandemic. A multimodal discourse analysis approach*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003168195>
- Thompson, G., & Hunston, S. (2000). Evaluation: an introduction. In S. Hunston, & G. Thompson (Eds.), *Evaluation in text: Authorial stance and the construction of discourse* (pp. 1–27). Oxford University Press.
- Thorbjørnsrud, K., & Ytreberg, E. (2020). A human interest economy: The strategic value of turning ordinary people into exemplars in the news media. *Journalism Studies*, 21(8), 1093–1108. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2020.1720520>
- Vultee, F., & Wilkins, L. (2012). What's probable and what's possible: What the emergency community knows and what the journalists don't. In M. Steffens, L. Wilkins, F. Vultee, E. Thorson, G. Kyle, & C. Collins (Eds.), *Reporting disaster on deadline: A handbook for students and professionals* (pp. 11–16). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203148860>

- Wanta, W., Golan, G., & Lee, C. (2004). Agenda setting and international news. Media influence on public perceptions of foreign nations. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 81(2), 364–377. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900408100209>
- Ytre-Arne, B., & Moe, H. (2021). Doomscrolling, monitoring and avoiding: News use in Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. *Journalism Studies*, 22(13), 1739–1755. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2021.1952475>
- Ytre-Arne, B., & Moe, H. (2023). Citizens' news use during Covid-19: Concerns about misinformation and reliance on local news in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. In B. Johansson, Ø. Ihlen, J. Lindholm, & M. Blach-Ørsten (Eds.), *Communicating a pandemic: Crisis management and Covid-19 in the Nordic countries* (pp. 303–324). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855688-14>
- Zillmann, D. (2002). Exemplification theory of media influence. In J. Bryant, D. Zillmann, & M. B. Oliver (Eds.), *Media effects* (pp. 29–52). Routledge.

Appendix A

TABLE A1 All evaluative parameters

Evaluative parameter	Definition and subcategory	Paraphrase
Comprehensibility	Evaluation of entities, situations, and statements as comprehensible or incomprehensible	How comprehensible or incomprehensible does this appear?
Emotivity	Evaluation of activities, events, people and other things as positive or negative	How positive or negative does this appear?
Expectedness	Evaluation of aspects as expected or unexpected, also includes the notion of contrast	How expected or unexpected does this appear?
Genuineness	Evaluation of aspects as real/true or untrue	How real, true, or untrue does this appear?
Importance	Evaluation of aspects as important or unimportant	How important or unimportant does this appear?
Necessity	Evaluation of aspects as necessary or unnecessary	How necessary or unnecessary does this appear?
Possibility	Evaluation of aspects as possible or impossible	How possible or impossible does this appear?
Reliability	Evaluation of aspects as likely or unlikely	How likely or unlikely does it appear that this will happen?
Causality	Evaluation of events' causes and consequences	What are the reasons and what are the consequences?
Sourcing (evidentiality)	Evaluation of the basis of information as speech, thought, or feeling, expectation, emotion, mental process, perception, proof, general knowledge, or unspecific basis	How do we know? How did sources say it?
Sourcing (style)	Evaluation of the previous reporting expression of speech as neutral, illocutionary, declarative, discourse signalling, or paralinguistic	How do we know? How did sources say it?
Mental state	Evaluation of mental states as emotion, volition, belief, expectation, or knowledge	What mental states are attributed to news actors?

Source: summarised from Bednarek, 2010

Appendix B

Original headlines in Finnish

(1) Koulujen sulkeminen huolestuttaa yksinhuoltajaa: “On pakko lainata rahaa, jotta on varaa ostaa ruokaa koululaiselle” (*Ilta-Sanomat*, 17 March 2020)

(2) Presidentti Niinistö kommentoi erittäin voimakkaita toimia koronan hillitsemiseksi: ”Me tarvitsemme toisiamme” (*Ilta-Sanomat*, 16 March 2020)

(3) Koronavirus | Somehitiksi noussut runo tarjoaa italialaisille toivoa keskellä ahdinkoa ja kiertää nyt Suomessakin (*Helsingin Sanomat*, 17 March 2020)

(4) Läheiset tuskailevat: Suomen ”kurittomat” yli 70-vuotiaat uhmaavat koronaohjeita – ”Kuin kirppuja paimentaisi” (*Ilta-Sanomat*, 17 March 2020)

(5) Pohjoiseen mökille koronavirusta pakoon? – Utsjoen kunnanlääkäri kehottaa jäämään kotiin: “Olemme pulassa, jos kunnan ihmismäärä tuplaantuu” (Yle, 16 March 2020)

(6) WHO kehottaa testaamaan kaikki koronavirusepäilyt – “Tulipaloa ei voi sammuttaa side silmillä” (*Ilta-Sanomat*, 16 March 2020)

(7) Koronavirus muutti työelämän ja matkustamisen äkkirysäyksellä: “Kriisi on ihan uudenlainen” (*Ilta-Sanomat*, 17 March 2020)

(8) Kolme päivää kestänyt hamstrausvyöry hiipuu, mutta ei hellitä – Keskon toimialajohtaja: “En ole koskaan urallani nähnyt mitään vastaavaa” (Yle, 16 March 2020)

(9) Koronasta jättitappiot museoille – satojen tuhansien arvoiset teokset möllöttävät nyt aavemaisen tyhjissä saleissa (Yle, 17 March 2020)