Proximization Strategies of Legitimization and Persuasion in Selected Political Speeches on Covid-19

استراتيجيات البعد الزمانى والمكانى

للتشريع والاقناع فى خطابات سياسية مختارة

حول فيروس كورونا

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ملخص عربى

تتناول هذه الدراسة استخدام مفهوم المسافة والقرب في خطابات السياسيين والقادة حول انتشار فيروس كورونا و تعتمد الدراسة على نموذج البعد المكانى والزمانى فى اللغة لبيوتر كاب لإظهار استراتيجياتهم الخطابية والتى تتمثل فى ثلاث مجالات وهى المكان (S) والزمان (T) والقيمة الايجابية والسلبية (A). إن الإطار النظري للتحليل وهو نموذج البعد المكانى والزمانى هو نهج متعدد التخصصات يتعلق بالجوانب الخطابية والمعرفية والبراغماتية لهذه الخطابات. ونستعرض في هذا البحث خصائص خطابات مختارة لبعض قادة العالم التي تعطى الشرعية لإجراءاتهم وقراراتهم ضد فيروس كورونا. إن التشريع والإقناع ظاهرتان لغويتان يستخدمهما السياسيون في الخطاب العام وذلك لفرض تفسيرات للتهديدات الخارجية المحتملة التي تواجه بلدانهم.

Abstract

This article deals with distance and closeness in selected political speeches on Coronvirus breakout. The study draws on Cap's proximization model to manifest their discursive strategies; namely, Spatial (S), Temporal (T) and Axiological (A) domains. The theoretical framework for the analysis which is Cap's proximization model is a multidisciplinary approach relating discursive, cognitive and pragmatic aspects of these speeches. In this paper we examine some of the properties of the speeches by some world leaders legitimating their measures and decisions against Corona. Legitimization and persuasion are two linguistic phenomena that are used by some politicians in public discourse. Proximization entails forcing construals of possible externals threats encroaching upon the nation.

Keywords: Discourser Analysis, Pragmatics, Cognitive linguistics, Public Discourse, proximization

1. Introduction

Some world leaders and politicians use linguistic strategies in their speeches to justify preventive action against the external threat of Coronavirus. This goal can be identified by the value of distance and closeness in political discourse. Since politicians, leaders and especially governments need to take action when there is a 'crisis', proximization is a persuasive way to define the initial situation. Apparently, they use language to describe the surrounding reality, especially when it is an increasing threat, in order to justify the measures taken to stop the threat before it reaches their home. Their strategy of legitimization is still remembered in the seemingly far-fetched example; i.e. the US presidents' speeches on anti-terrorist war. Public discourse involves negotiating individual social perceptions to agree with consequently leaders' decisions. Therefore, the language of state politicians and leaders utilizes the strategy of legimization in the public discourse space. In this article my aim is to show that proximization operations can be identified in discourses on Coronavirus. To this end I focus on some world leaders' discourse; more specifically, the speeches of six world leaders – namely, Emmanuel Macron, the French President; Boris Johnson, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom; Mark Rutte, the Prime Minister of the Netherlands; Donald Tramp, the Ex-President of the United States; Justin Trudeau, the Prime Minister of Canada; and Tedros Adhanom, the Director General of the World Health Organization. All of their speeches describe the virus as "enemy" or "ousider" as opposed to "nation" or

"humanity". The objective of the study is to apply Cap's proximization model on the speeches of world leaders during Coronavirus crisis in the beginning of 2020. It aims to identify and systemize the domains where proximization operates in this public discourse. In sum, the study provides description, analysis and rationale of the spatial, temporal and axiological strategies used in these speeches. The strategies used in the speeches of world politicians and leaders make a significant contribution through the use of some forms; e.g. lexical and grammatical forms construing the threat as an enemy. Their use has been a strategic choice to initiate fear appeal.

Lexico-grammatical choices are of key importance to proximization model since they help establish the deictic center, the deictic periphery, and thus *help impose, in the service of socio-political legitimization, symbolic construals whereby the peripheral entities cross the distance in discourse space to permeate the deictic center*. (Cap 2013: 9)

The process lies in the notions of 'construal' and 'strategy'. "Language use is a matter of alternative choices which encode alternative experiences of the reality being described" (Filardo-Liamas et al. 2016: xi).

2. Literature Review

Linguistic-related studies on Covid-19 discourse attempt to identify patterns of language use during the pandemic. Osisanwo (2021) examines media representation of Covid-19. Yu et. al. (2021) introduce a

corpus-based analysis of news reports on the Covid-19 pandemic in China and the UK. Castro Seixas (2021) approaches war metaphors in political communication on Covid-19.Gelmini et. al. (2021) deal with rhetoric, accounting and accountability in the discourse of Covid-19 in Italy. Most studies approach the pandemic from the critical discourse point of view. Piotr Cap introduced a model which combines cognitive linguistics, pragmatics and critical discourse. Cap (2013) introduces "proximization" into linguistics as a model to investigate distance and closeness in discourse. The concept can be traced to Cap (2005). He developed the concept to be used as a Critical Discourse Analysis tool. It incorporated discursive strategies which refer to symbolic construals in political discourse. According to Sinha and Bernardez (2015), space and time are considered to be universal, domains of human language, and the language of space, time, and motion has been investigated in linguistic research. Space is considered as the main domain for linguistic and conceptual analysis, through metaphoric mapping, of time. The spatial and temporal domains are interrelated at lexical and constructional levels. Cap's model which is a spatial-temporal-axiological model is both methodologically-oriented and empirical. His theoretical claim is supported by textual and lexico-grammatical evidence.

In its broadest and most general sense, proximization is a discursive strategy of presenting physically and temporally distant events and states of affairs (including "distant", i.e. adversarial, ideological mind-sets) as

directly, increasingly and negatively consequential to the speaker and her addressee. (Cap 2013: 3)

Hart (2010), like Cap (2008, 2010a, b), utilizes lexico-grammatical categories to interpret proximization intensity and effects. The aim behind such construals is to represent the 'out-group' negatively that are considered threatening and harmful to the 'in-group'. Cap introduces spatial, temporal and axiological construals which are triggered by a strategic use of lexico-grammatical choices. The aim is to evoke a sense of fear and to call for precautionary measures and preventative actions. His model presents the issue of legitimization and delegitimization to raise awareness of the conflict.

Public discourse is defined by Cap, following Habermas (1981), as a "collection of voices on top issues of politics, economy, law, education and other areas of public interest and participation" (Cap 2017:1). Cap introduces legitimization as a strategy of threat in public discourse. According to Cap (2006, 2010, and 2017), top actors such as politicians and leaders follow linguistic strategies to manage their power and reach social consensus. Their aim is "to receive people's approval of policies involving both sides, the leader and her audience in a joint course of action" (2017: 2). Public discourse is described by Cap as "necessarily coercive" because actors make "assumptions about realities and their hearers are obliged to at least temporarily accept in order to process the text or talk" (2017: 2). He discusses coercion strategies such as legitimization which

is defined as "a complex practice involving, first of all, a linguistic enactment of speaker's right to be obeyed (Chilton 2004; Cap 2008 cited in Cap 2017:2). Legitimization (of the self), according to Huntington (2004), involves the assignment of 'ideological values', 'the assertion of hearers' wants' and 'the construal of characteristic leadership' in crisis (Cap 2017: 3). The goal is always social mobilization. To the contrary, deligitimization (of the other) is used to present enemies or opposition negatively (Cap 2017: 3).

All in all, the proposed model of proximization, a much-revised version of Chilton's (2004) theory, consists in the speaker's continual endeavor to impose upon the addressee the conceptualization of the suggested adversary in terms of an entity which gradually enters, along the spatial, temporal and axiological lines, the addressee's "territory" in the deictic center. (Cap 2010: 6-7)

Cap's model was based on Paul Chilton (2005)'s Discourse Space that shows the visual model of spatial, temporal and modal conceptualization in political discourse. Moreover, Cap introduces a more pragmatics-based and detailed mode with reference to the 'out-group' and the 'in-group'. He chose the American anti-terrorist, interventionist discourse to elaborate on the strategies underlying the theory and the concept of legitimization as a primary discourse function. Cap's model, in fact, is a cross-disciplinary theory; he manages to combine pragmatics, cognitive

linguistics and critical discourse analysis. He shows how proximization is employed to illustrate the notion of construals and conceptualization. Cap also examines other works of potential critical discourse analysis which depends on the concept of proximization. He contrasts the works which utilize the concept of proximization (e.g. cognitive-linguistic, in Chilton) and handle it to advance other theories. Discussing contributions by Chilton, Cap, Hart and Dunmire, in interdisciplinary dialogue, he developed the concept to be an independent theory. Cap (2013) concludes his second chapter with designating pragmatics as "a discipline/perspective best suited to coordinate the agenda of such a theory" (2013: 45). He also points out how legitimization and coercion are two tools in the employment of language. Cap considers legitimization as the objective of proximization in potential discourse. He uncovers legitimization and its perlocutionary effects on the audience. He points out that language data can exemplify the relation between legitimization, proximization and written discourse. He considers legitimization as systematic employment of language. He manages to show how contextual (extralinguistic), temporally extensive situations support G. W. Bush utilized legitimization as he mentioned the rationale behind the necessity of the war on Iraq. Three types of proximization have been introduced in the conceptual structure of his model, namely Spatial (S), Temporal (T), and Axiological (A) domains through which forced construals proceed. His model works on a micro-linguistic level; the conceptual make-up and the

three domains are exemplified on a micro-textual level; i.e. samples of speeches.

1) In this STA model, spatial proximization includes forced construals of entities outside the deictic centre (ODCs); i.e. geographically and ideologically distant elements. These ODCs impinge upon elements conceptually placed inside the deictic centre (IDC elements) such as the speaker and the audience. These spatial construals are forced because of a tangible, concrete threat (e.g. COVID-19).

2) Temporal proximization depends on a forced construal of "now" as the momentous point which should be seized for preventative actions otherwise there will be detrimental consequences in the future. There could be some historical flashbacks (e.g. phrases evoking past events).

3) Axiological proximization depends on predicational strategies to create the imagery of conflict or war. The two groups; i.e. the in-group and the out-group are two opposite poles. They are assigned conflicting ideological roles and values. While the out-group is the 'evil', 'extreme' group. The in-group is the positive, admirable group. The strategy is also supported by the use of 'vague' 'generalized' attributions such as 'dictatorship' and 'extremists'. Through his proposal on axiological proximization, Cap manages to convert a static, ideological conflict into a dynamic, realistic conflict. His model is exemplified by real textual examples of this strategy.

What is it, then, about axiological proximization that allows the A-S/T chronology of analysis on a par with the original S/T-A track? The mechanism of axiological proximization involves a construal of a dynamic ideological antithesis made up of a conceptual frame encompassing conventionally "good" values (such as freedom, security, etc.) and a series of "evil" values and acts (such as calling for violence, spreading fear, etc.) targeted against the existence of this frame. The effectiveness of proximization depends on the addressee's assessment of the "evil" acts in terms of their capacity to impact the deictic center–how likely are the ensuing actions to (re)occur within the addressee's and the speaker's physical territory, and also, how capable is the antagonistic mind-set of prompting further actions that could threaten the deictic center elements. Crucial to such an assessment is a build-up of a spatial-temporal analogy whereby the current state of affairs is compared to all previous states of affairs of a similar causative structure, namely all situations where a series of micro-acts taking place apparently outside of the IDC space eventually culminated in a direct impact. (Cap 2010: 158)

The three proximization strategies are correlated at the micro-temporal level (individual speeches) and is susceptible to change their salience at the macro-temporal level (public discourse). According to Cap, the three proximization strategies can be identified on the lexico-grammatical level; meaning can be measured via key lexico-grammatical items (noun phrases, verb

phrases and their characteristic relationships). He focuses on key lexical items, grammatical relations and patterns which are significant to enact each of the strategies and set them into categories. His derived categories are bottom-up generalizations and abstractions and relations of the actors of the anti-terrorist war. Spatial proximization implies six categories (2013: 109):

1. (Noun phrases (NPs) construed as elements of the deictic center of the DS (IDCs); e.g. "USA"; "American people"; "Americans"; "our people/nation/country/society"

2. (Noun phrases (NPs) construed as elements outside the deictic center of the DS (ODCs)); e.g. "Iraq"; "Saddam Hussein"; "terrorists"; "Al-Qaeda"

3. (Verb phrases (VPs) of motion and directionality construed as markers of movement of ODCs towards the deictic center); e.g. "move/are moving/head/are heading"

4. (Verb phrases (VPs) of action construed as markers of impact of ODCs upon IDCs); e.g. "destroy"; "set aflame/burn down an IDC or IDC values"

5. (Noun phrases (NPs) denoting abstract concepts construed as anticipations of impact of ODCs upon IDCs); e.g. "threat"; "danger"

6. (Noun phrases (NPs) denoting abstract concepts construed as effects of impact of ODCs upon IDCs); e.g. "catastrophe"; "tragedy"

Temporal proximization implies five categories (2013: 116):

1. (Noun phrases (NPs) involving indefinite descriptions construing ODC actual impact acts in alternative temporal frames); e.g. "a September morning"

2. (Discourse forms involving contrastive use of the simple past and the present perfect construing threatening future extending infinitely from a past instant); e.g. "Americans/America/we used to think/believe that IDCs were safe as ODC threat was far away.

September the 11th/9/11/September attacks has/have changed the/that IDC belief"

3. (Noun phrases (NPs) involving nominalizations construing presupposition of conditions for ODC impact to arise anytime in the future)

"IDCs will act against emerging WMD threat/threats/danger/dangers before it/they is/are fully formed / before it/they materializes/materialize/ before it/they appears/appear / before it is too late"

4. (Verb phrases (VPs) involving modal auxiliaries construing conditions for ODC impact as existing continually between the now and the infinite future); e.g. "Terrorists/terrorist networks/terrorist organizations can/could now/today/at this moment/at the moment impact IDCs"

5. (Discourse forms involving parallel contrastive construals of oppositional and privileged futures extending from the now); e.g. "Some IDCs think/believe

America/we can wait. The US government think/believe the opposite as they have evidence of ODC threat"

Axiological proximization implies three categories (2013: 122):

1. (Noun phrases (NPs) construed as IDC positive values or value sets (ideologies)); e.g. "freedom/liberty"; "democracy"; "peace";
2. (Noun phrases (NPs) construed as ODC negative values or value sets (ideologies)); e.g. "radicalism"; "terrorism"
3. (Discourse forms no longer than one sentence or two consecutive sentences involving linear arrangement of lexico-grammatical phrases construing materialization in the IDC space of the ODC negative ideologies); e.g.
(1) NP denoting ODC value(s) followed by or combined with
(2) VP denoting a remote possibility of the ODC-IDC conflict followed by
(3) VP denoting a close probability of the ODC-IDC conflict followed by or combined with
(4) NP denoting physical consequences of the ODC-IDC conflict"]

Successfully, Cap creates a framework to extract a reproducible and verifiable set of data in discourse. He applies his model over a long period of time from G. W. Bush till Barack Obama. He also manages to monitor the change in the geopolitical discourse or the different degrees of salience according to the geopolitical context.

He shows how his STA model can interpret the fluctuations and changes in anti-terrorist discourse and rhetoric. Cap points out that some discursive functions can be measured in language at the micro lexico-grammatical level and at the macro meaning level (the meaning of 'them' impinging on 'us' physically). All in all, Cap's model is an interdisciplinary-oriented, empirical tool to investigate the characteristics of the discourse space.

It has already been said in the previous subsection that the STA model draws on not merely linguistic variables, but also on those involving the domains of related disciplines, such as politology, psychology, and social sciences. Such a cross-disciplinary approach to the study of political language entails questions about the mutual relations between the particular layers of analysis.In particular, it prompts considerations of whic h of the analytic parameters aremethodologically superordinate and which have a merely auxiliary value. The apparent problem with a cross-disciplinary analysis of political language is that there is hardly any visible one-to-one correspondence between the analytic components derived from the different disciplines. For instance, the general strategy of proximization, which the latter can be described as a cognitive and sociopsychological concept, is not to be equated with any particular linguistic form. It is rather a combination of specific language forms that can contribute to proximization, but even in this case, it cannot be guar anteed that the languageforms involved will address

simultaneously all the three aspects of proximization, i.e. spatial, temporal and axiological. (Cap 2010: 11-12)

3. Data and Method of Analysis

Data are taken from a collection of six world leaders speeches on the breakout of Coronavirus. They comprise the total of 20 addresses by Emmanuel Macron, the French President; Boris Johnson, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom; Mark Rutte, the Prime Minister of the Netherlands; Donald Tramp, the Ex-President of the United States; Justin Trudeau, the Prime Minister of Canada; and Tedros Adhanom, the Director General of the World Health Organization. It should be noted that the number of speeches, 10, albeit small, does not include items frequency as the model in this study is a qualitative study of public discourse. I adopted Cap's device which is the three lexico-grammatical frameworks with its "spatial", "temporal", and "axiological" strategies. I tested the STA proximization model in a critical discourse analytic, synchronically descriptive study of the Coronavirus outbreak rhetoric in the beginning of 2020. I draw upon a cognitive-pragmatic methodology (bottom-up approach which is based on empirical data) to investigate widely appealing linguistic phenomena (legitimization and persuasion). The article's aim is therefore to account for the mechanism of proximization which yields linguistic items which reflect cognitive, pragmatic, critical approaches to public discourse analysis; i.e. it is an interdisciplinary method that could be further applied in discourse public

discourse analysis. The study is a qualitative research as it does not aim for quantification or standardization in the data collection and analysis of data. In my analyses below I shall select a number of fragments of world leaders' speeches as they communicate and exhibit the properties of the public discourse, such as positive in-group and negative out-group descriptions as well as other strategies of spatial, temporal and axiological proximization. This selection and brief characterizations show how they are engaging in public discourse and its well-known structures and strategies, and more specifically in the case of the debate about the war on Coronavirus.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

This section is concerned with presenting an analysis of the different lexicogrammatical items which reflect the proximization framework. It includes a number of short excerpts from the world (anti-)coronavirus discourse. Here is one such mini-analysis:

4.1 Spatial Proximization

Coronavirus is considered as an element outside the deictic centre (DC) which represents 'the nation'. Noun phrases with negative attributions are noticed in the speeches of world leaders on Coronavirus crisis. Notice words like 'enemy', 'catastrophe', 'fightback' and 'war' to describe the situation. Adhanom Tedros's speech could easily count in the construal of Coronavirus in terms of an enemy. We can notice, in the following

example, that the virus breakout is depicted as 'public enemy number one'.

(1) The world must "wake up and consider this enemy virus as public enemy number one. (Reuters, 11 Feb. 2020)

Terror items have a strong appeal in Adhanom' phrases. Coronavirus discourse triggers construals of theat. The following example from Adhanom's speech contains noun phrases which denote negative representation of ODC.

(2) This virus is presenting us with an unprecedented threat. But it's also an unprecedented opportunity to come together as one against a common enemy – an enemy against humanity. (WHO, 18 March 2020)

Notice the following sentence from Macron's speech on the crisis.

(3) The enemy is invisible and it requires our general mobilization. (New York Times, 16 March 2020)

Example (4) from Rutte's speech represents a canonical construction realizing the proximization strategies used in discourse on coronavirus. The sentence consists of the following structure: the NP 'the virus', the VP 'could simply rear its head again once the measures were lifted'.

(4) The virus could simply rear its head again once the measures were lifted. (Government of the Netherlands, 16 March 2020)

We find both spatial and temporal proximization strategies in the sentence. Spatial proximization is realized as the verb 'rear' which denotes motion. The virus is conceptualised as an element outside the deictic centre which could move into the deictic centre, and thus approaching the nation that is inside the deictic centre. Temporal proximization is realized in the modal form of 'could', which construes for the ODC impact or consequences in the future, and reinforced by the AP 'again once the measures were lifted' which refers to the rapid rate at which the virus could rear its head.
Spatial proximization is also realized by (VP) denoting motion in examples (5, 6, and 7) from Adhanom's and Rutte's speeches. The verbs 'reach', 'stop transmission' and 'run its course' imply directionality.

(5) Every day, COVID-19 seems to reach a new and tragic milestone. (WHO, 20 March 2020)

(6) Every loss of life is a tragedy. It's also motivation to double down and do everything we can to stop transmission and save lives. (WHO, 20 March 2020)

(7) The second option is that we simply allow the virus to run its course. (Government of the Netherlands, 16 March 2020)

4.2 Temporal Proximization

As stated above, temporal proximization is defined as a forced construal of "now" which refers to the speaker's present as the central point of time in a time frame which uses the past and the present, as well as anticipations of the future, to take an immediate action to to prevent (an anticipated event) happening (ODC). It involves a symbolic representation of the time axis in two conceptual shifts, past-to-present and future-to-present. The following example from Boris Johnson's speech contains discourse forms involving contrastive use of the present perfect 'have already announced' construing threatening future extending infinitely from a past instant);

(8) And we have already announced in the last few days we will massively scale up our testing capacity in the weeks ahead so we hit 25,000 tests a day. (Government of the United Kingdom, 18 March 2020)

Temporal proximization is linked to epistemic imminence (how the situation will develop) and axiological urgency (actions that have been taken). Analogy is used, like in the war discourse, to strengthen the measures taken by authorities. The statements involve construals of future events to strengthen the fear

appeals. Another familiar strategy is the construal of unpredictable losses. Notice the sentence uttered by Boris Johnson in Example (9):

(9) It is going to spread further and I must level with the British public: many more families are going to lose loved ones before their time. (The Telegraph, 12 March 2020)

He uses the progressive tense to shed light on possible future consequences. Note the frequent use of 'crisis', 'catastrophe' (spatial proximization), the use of verbs in the progressive 'is going to' indicating the closeness of the threat (spatial and temporal proximization); and the use of a modal auxiliary 'could' construing conditions raising impact probability. To sum, the spatiotemporal proximization entails epistemic consequences as the threat is brought into cognitive attention.

4.3 Axiological Proximization

Thanks to the spatial and temporal proximizations, a sense of 'fear' is created. In addition, axiological proximization is the third strategy used in Coronavirus discourse. It is a formalized abstraction reflecting conflict between two values:

(1) Noun phrases (NPs) construed as IDC positive values or value sets (ideologies)

(2) Noun phrases (NPs) construed as ODC negative values or value sets (ideologies)

As such, the conception of axiological proximization entails that a forced construal of a growing ODC-IDC

conflict may lead to a clash, i. e. a very high likelihood of the ODC-IDC clash. Humanity is construed as a circle (IDC) attacked by Coronavirus (ODC). Thus, axiological proximization utilizes values assigned to the opposing (center vs. periphery) physical entities of the Discourse Space (IDCs vs. ODCs).

The world leaders' speeches on Coronavirus crisis are full of discourse forms (NP denoting ODC-IDC conflict). Notice the APs 'by eliminating it' and 'to stamp it out' in the following excerpt from Boris Johnson's speech. These lexico-grammatical items create the imagery of conflict or war.

(10)   We are going to do it with new medicines, and with new digital technology that will help us to see the disease as it is transmitted, and thereby, by eliminating it, to stamp it out. (Government of the United Kingdom, 20 March 2020)

Axiological proximization is also supported by the words of war imagery. Again, a number of leaders' phrases subsume items belonging to an array of lexico-grammatical choices recognized by Cap's proximization model. It is realized in Examples (10), (11) from Johnson's speeches and (12) from Trump's briefing on the crisis; e.g. 'fightback', 'defeat' and 'control'.

(11)   I want to tell you where we got to in our national fightback against the coronavirus.

> (Government of the United Kingdom, 18 March 2020)

> (12)   And above all, now we are going to defeat this disease with a huge national effort to slow the spread by reducing unnecessary social contact. (Government of the United Kingdom, 20 March 2020)

> (13)   The first is: control the virus as much as possible. (New York Times, 16 March 2020)

Constructions denting directionality from ODC towards IDC can also be noticed in Example (12); e.g. 'to slow the spread'. The same construction is also used in Example (14) and is enriched by the strong metaphor 'that widow is closing'. In fact, the use of construal operations such as metaphor and metonymy might contribute to strategies of proximization.

> (14)   We can still slow the spread of this virus, but as Dr. Tam said, that window is closing. (Rev.com, 16 March 2020)

In Example (14) from Trudeau's speech, the Coronavirus characteristic of keeping a firm hold of the country is realized as a metonymy. This kind of metaphorical language helps the strategic goal of legitimization.

(15)   Coronavirus has our country in its grip.
(Government of the Netherlands, 16 March
2020)

Again in Example (15), the imagery of invasion is seen in
the VP 'is here in our midst' which contains two adverbs
of place.

(16)   The reality is that coronavirus is here in our
midst, and for the time being it is here to stay.
(Government of the Netherlands, 16 March
2020)

The triggers are adverbs with prepositions of place which
imply space and distance in discourse. The prepositional
phrase 'in our midst' co-occurs with the deictic expression
'here'. Personal and spatial deixis confirm the underlying
contextualizing/proximizing mechanism. In the following
example the image of war is stated explicitly without any
construal construction or proximization.

(17)   "We are at war," Macron said multiple times
during a 20-minute televised speech. (CNBC, 17
March 2020)

All these proximization strategies are used by politicians
and leaders to legitimize their measures and decisions.
However, they sometimes resort to mitigation to
persuade their addressees. Notice the justification by
Boris Johnson.

(18)   And of course these measures are intended to
        be temporary and of course I am confident that,
        in time, the UK economy is going to bounce
        back. (Government of the United Kingdom, 20
        March 2020)

In fact, the Coronavirus outbreak has put the nations
and the world leaders in an extremely difficult,
unprecedented situation. They rely on their discursive
strategies such as strategies of proximization to support
the measures and decisions taken.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, the study concludes that Cap's
proximization model can be used to manifest the
discursive strategies; namely, Spatial (S), Temporal (T)
and Axiological (A) domains in the public discourse of
Coronavirus breakout. Theoretically more interesting,
however, is the notion of 'deictic center'. The virus
emerged as a deadly pandemic in many countries.
Politicians and leaders of the world had no choice but to
take preventative measures to protect the nations. In the
beginning people did not take Coronavirus seriously
and were not aware of its fatality. Therefore, politicians
and leaders resort to legitimize their policies and
decisions to persuade people that they are at a war. In
doing so, they make use of proximization strategies in
their speeches. The study investigates the lexico-
grammatical items in their speeches which imply
spatial, temporal and axiological proximization.

Although this paper cannot do justice to all the discursive strategies of world leaders' speeches in crisis of Coronavirus outbreak, we now catch a glimpse of some of the main characteristics of these speeches. Apparently, the strategies of proximization are quite suitable in public discourse on Coronavirus, such as positive in-group and negative out-group, as well as a number of familiar strategies of spatial, temporal and axiological proximization.

Data

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