A PSYCHOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF WORLD LEADERS' DISCOURSES CONCERNING THE COVID-19 CONTEXT: AUTHENTICITY AND EMOTIONAL TONE

SANDRA FIGUEIREDO, MIGUEL DEVEZAS, NEUZA VIEIRA, ANDRÉ SOARES

Abstract:

This study aims to examine authentic discourses of eight country leaders, in two different periods of the COVID-19 context, in order to analyze how their authenticity traits and emotional tone might have changed between February and April of 2020 and according to the updated pandemic numbers of each country. Countries and their leaders were selected based on the West and East representation of the North Hemisphere and with no ethnicity concepts attached. It was developed a specific dictionary for this psycholinguistic analysis based in the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC 2015, v. 1.6.0. 2019) and the original version created for this trial study was administered to establish the segmentation and codification of 16 international discourses, focusing leadership and COVID-19 as new contexts. The texts were coded considering the linguistic dimensions and psychological categories. After the dataset of 39 073 words concluded, correlation was computed to link linguistic samples with low/high emotional properties (and taking into account the linguistic style of the country' leaders). The word count will not be addressed attending to lexicon frequency, grammar organization and syntax properties of the eight languages. The samples revealed psycholinguistic controversy registered in the two sessions of the leaders' discourses. Results for authenticity have shown that the cases of US, UK and France were more authentic, contrary to Russian and Chinese leaders' discourses. The emotional tone was low and negative (< .50) for the discourses of Spain and Russian Presidents, by comparing to their peers. The discourse analysis by using automated methodologies such as LIWC enhances the correct comprehension and detects the locus of misinformation about the COVID-19 measures and phases. That misinformation, when observed, refers to likely mixed messaging used by individuals to prevent the collapse of their government respecting the impact of their discourses on the public opinion. We will discuss the data obtained concerning the results for different emotional response of the eight leaders and controlling for variables such as the culture and socioeconomic background of the country of origin.

Keywords:

LIWC; COVID-19; International Leaders; Authenticity; Emotional Tone; Role of Economics; Analysis of Education; Health Behavior

JEL Classification: F29, C55, D63

Authors:

SANDRA FIGUEIREDO, Psychology Research Centre (CIP), Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa, Portugal, Email: sfigueiredo@autonoma.pt
MIGUEL DEVEZAS, Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa (UAL), Portugal, Email: miguel.devezas@gmail.com

NEUZA VIEIRA, Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa (UAL), Portugal, Email: phe.sun@gmail.com
ANDRÉ SOARES, Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa (UAL), Portugal, Email: andre_acosta90@hotmail.com

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