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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

From Crisis to Hope: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Boris Johnson's Easter Day Speech

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ABSTRACT

Critical Discourse Analysis is a research approach which examines how language use reflects and maintains societal power dynamics. It seeks to reveal hidden meanings and ideologies in speech by investigating how language establishes social reality, reinforces power hierarchies, and shapes social practices. In the current study, Fairclough's (2001) model is adopted to analyze a speech delivered by the UK's Prime Minister Boris Johnson, on April 12, 2020, during Easter Sunday to the nation. In this speech, Boris Johnson thanked The National Health Service for saving his life from Covid-19 after leaving the hospital. The problem of the study is of three-folds: (1) understanding the speech's context and backdrop, particularly the COVID-19 epidemic and its effects on the UK (2) Recognizing the possible impact of political objectives and biases on the speech's linguistic construction (3) overcoming the difficulty of locating and examining hidden meanings and presumptions in the speech. It is hypothesized that the speaker uses language reflecting a strong national unity. It is hypothesized that the speaker uses language reflecting a strong national unity. The study concludes that the speech involves using different discursal and ideological features and structures (such as nationalism, calling for action, increasing solidarity, etc.) that directly reflect the power of the language used to make the speaker influence his audience positively. Also, the analysis confirms the hypothesis raised.

Keywords: CDA, Political Discourse, Boris Johnson, Fairclough, Van Dijk.

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1. Introduction

When rhetoric is regarded as essential for citizenship and political oratory in state affairs in ancient Greece and Rome, the relationship between language and politics firstly emerged^{1,2}). Politics control the operation of civilizations, which is considered as a complicated system that distributes power, wealth, and decision-making authority among people and groups³). While informal politics includes social and cultural norms that influence political behaviour, formal politics refers to the structures and procedures of the official government. Politics is fundamentally about settling disputes, balancing conflicting interests, and attaining shared objectives⁴).

Politics plays a significant part in determining public policy since it allows voters to influence and hold their elected officials accountable⁵). The political process includes several tasks, such as deciding on tax spending and passing laws. Gandhi and Przeworski⁶) suggest that politics can be used to perpetuate inequality and prejudice and concentrate power in the hands of a few, but politics can also have unfavourable effects. This is especially true in authoritarian regimes when political authorities utilize their influence to stifle criticism and keep the populace under control. In such situations, politics ceases to be a tool for advancing the common good and becomes an instrument of oppression.

Powerful interest groups can also have a substantial impact on politics in democracies, utilizing it to support their own interests above those of the general welfare. This may lead to decisions that benefit the well-connected and wealthy at the expense of common people⁷). Furthermore, political polarization and tribalism can promote a “us vs. them” mentality that hinders cooperation and compromise, making it challenging to resolve complicated challenges that call for shared sacrifices and collective effort⁸). Even if politics can bring about beneficial change, it is crucial to be aware of any unfavorable effects and work to build a more just and equitable society. Understanding the speech’s context and backdrop, particularly the COVID-19 epidemic and its effects on the UK, is one important issue with this study. Another point is recognizing the possible impact of political objectives and biases on the speech’s linguistic construction, and overcoming the difficulty of locating and examining hidden meanings and presumptions in the speech.

The study looks into how Boris Johnson's language is employed and how it affects the audience. It also seeks to expose the ideological assumptions and goals the discourse is based on.

1.1. Research questions

The following research questions are posed in the current study:

1. How does Boris Johnson use language to evoke patriotism and unity in his Easter Day Speech? What, then, are the speech’s discursive characteristics?
2. Which ideological figures does Boris Johnson use to provoke the audience’s emotions?
3. How does Boris Johnson’s political ideology appear in the speech’s values and presumptions?

It is hypothesized that Boris Johnson speaks in a way that conveys a sense of deep national solidarity and a joint fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Data Collection and Analytical Procedure

The data of this study involves a speech delivered by the UK’s prime minister Boris Johnson on April 12, 2020, during Easter Sunday to the nation. In this speech, the PM thanked The National Health Service (Now on NHS) for saving his life from Covid-19 after leaving the hospital. To analyze and evaluate Boris Johnson's political discourse, the discourse will be analyzed based on Fairclough's (1989, 1992) social practice model and Van Dijk's (1998) model of ideological square.

2.1. Model of the Study

The model adopted is Fairclough's (1989, 1992) social practice model and Van Dijk's 1998 model of ideological square. According to Fairclough (9), critical discourse analysis has three dimensions. Description, which refers to the formal characteristics of the text, is the first dimension. The second is interpretation, which entails comprehending how the text and the interaction it represents relate to one another, as well as the function of the text in the interpretation procedure. The third dimension is explanation which concerns the text's social significance, social identity, and social effects, as well as how those processes are carried out during its creation and perception. Three sorts of analysis are carried out in accordance with Fairclough's model: text analysis, discursive (process) analysis, and social analysis. Consider Figure (1) below:

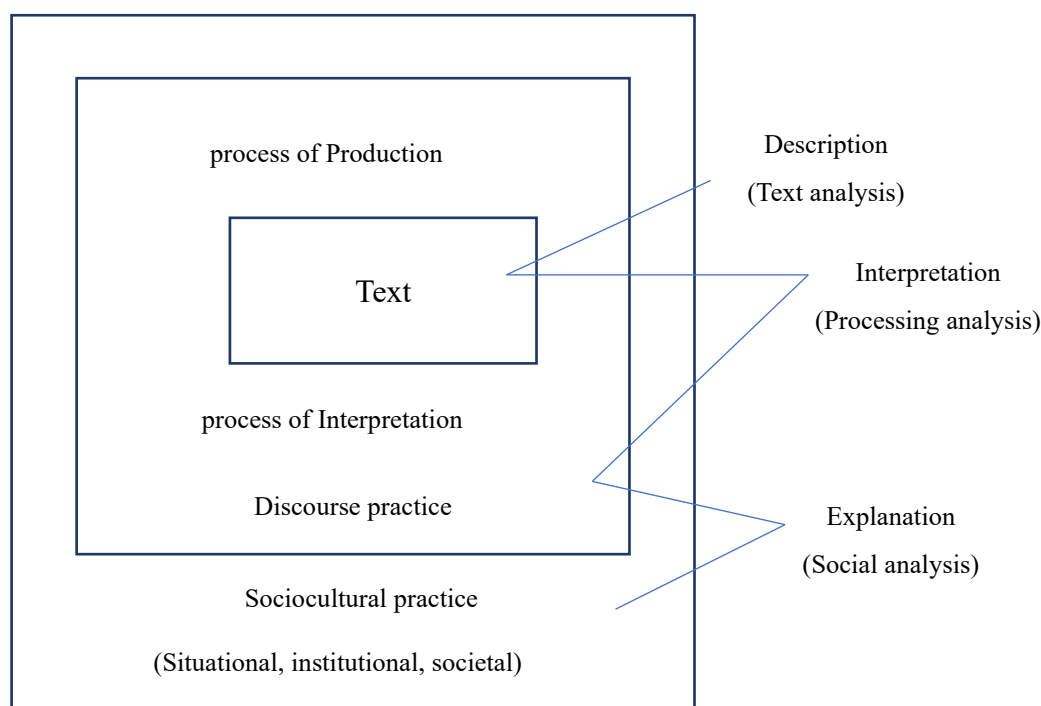


Figure 1. Fairclough's social practice model

Fairclough^{9,10} in description phase of text analysis, states that a thorough comprehension of proposal organization and structure is required. He contends that reading a work critically entails assessing its vocabulary, grammar, cohesiveness, and textual structure. Examining individual's word choices, definitions, and metaphors is part of vocabulary analysis. Examining the relationships of words, phrases and clauses, such as transitivity and mode, is a component of grammar analysis. The main focus of cohesion analysis is on the connections that connectives and arguments make between clauses and phrases. Contrarily, text structure analysis works with more substantial organizational elements, including sentence complexity, length, and interaction management. The elements of analysis of the three levels of analysis are presented in Figure (2) below:

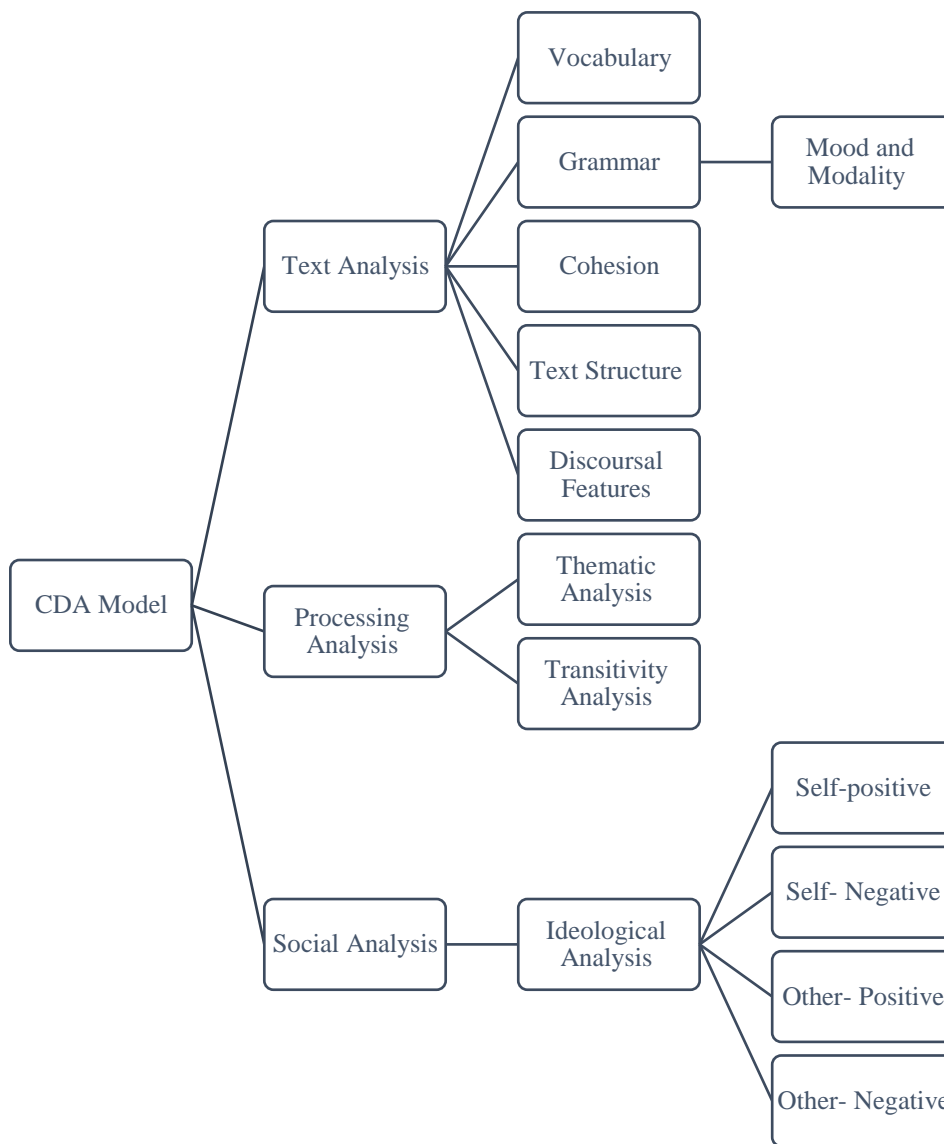


Figure 2. Elements of Analysis

3. Theoretical Background

3.1. Politics and Discourse Analysis

Much work has been done on the connection between politics and discourse analysis during the last decade¹¹. Discourse analysis looks at how language is used to construct meaning and interpret the world around us, whereas politics is concerned with the use of power and decision-making by individuals and institutions that affect people and groups^{12,13}. Chilton¹⁴ maintains that language and communication techniques used by politicians, policymakers, and other participants in the political process to spread their views and policies can be evaluated through a discourse lens. Such a study can show how certain people and issues are depicted in language and how that affects public opinion and policy outcomes¹⁵. Furthermore, Abdurrahman et al.,¹⁶ see that “social life is interconnected networks of social practices of diverse sorts” i.e. “Political, cultural, family, etc”.

In this context, Entman¹⁷ writes that discourse analysis in politics includes an assessment of framing, which is the

presentation of a topic in a certain way to affect how people see it. Framing can assist in developing a narrative around a political problem by highlighting some features while downplaying others. Instead of framing the discussion of immigration as a human rights issue or an opportunity for the economy, a politician may emphasize border control and enforcement as a national security priority¹⁸). Political leaders utilize language to inspire and energize their audience and foster a feeling of shared objectives and unanimity. Hence political rhetoric is essential to political discourse¹⁹). One can learn more about the principles, theories, and ideologies that influence political discourse and policymaking by dissecting political speeches and other types of political communication²⁰). The media is a crucial topic for discourse analysis in politics since it significantly shapes public opinion and influences policy results²¹). Discourse analysis can help us comprehend how the media affects political decision-making by examining how various media outlets frame political topics and their coverage's impact on public opinion²²).

Thus, discourse analysis and politics are closely related disciplines that may both learn a lot from one another. Discourse analysis is an effective tool for investigating how language is used in politics, illuminating how authority is exercised and policies are communicated²³). Politics, on the other hand, offers discourse analysts a variety of real-world examples and data to support their theories²⁴). Finally, understanding how power and communication operate in modern society requires an understanding of politics and discourse analysis²⁵).

3.2. Political Discourse

According to Fairclough¹⁰), discourse shapes itself as a social practice and is shaped by the environment in which we live. He contends that ideology can permeate a text's form and structure, resulting in an “ideologically invested” discourse. This suggests that ideological implications can be conveyed through a sentence's fundamental structure and elements. Political speech is largely concerned with issues of power, control, dominance, and conflict, according to Chilton and Schaffner²⁶). Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) is defined by Van Dijk²²) as taking a political or critical stance towards discourse analysis, as well as examining the text and speech of politicians in political circumstances. Politics occurs on both a micro and macro scale, according to Chilton¹⁴). Politics at the micro level can be conducted by persuasion, arguments, threats, bribery, and other means amongst individuals, genders, and social groups. Politics, at its most fundamental level, involves disputes between and within political institutions, as seen in laws, democratic constitutions, historical precedents, and other factors. At the macro level, politics can be conducted through aspects like: international relations, global governance, globalization, political economy, etc.

Political discourse analysis should concentrate on the practices and actions carried out by political discourse rather than merely the players. So long as they behave as political actors and participate in political actions like governing, ruling, protesting, dissenting, or voting, people and groups other than politicians can have a voice in political discourse. The possibility for speech to be “ideologically invested” and utilized to manipulate language for particular political objectives is highlighted by Fairclough¹⁰). According to Chilton and Schaffner²⁶), the purpose of political discourse is to persuade listeners to agree with the speaker’s viewpoint while also altering, masking, or strengthening a certain reality. According to Van Dijk²²), the main goal of political speech is to persuade the listeners that the speaker’s political claims are true. According to Charaudeau²⁷), political speech strives to assert leadership and enthrall the audience through rhetoric. Moreover, Kaid and Holtz-Bacha²⁸) assert that political speech influences people's beliefs and behaviours, deepens their comprehension of a problem, and increases their involvement in the political process. Political discourse is a complex

phenomenon that includes various language elements and purposes. The motivation behind election campaigns and other kinds of political expression is what gives political discourse its illocutionary potency²²). According to Chilton and Schaffner²⁹), “informativity” refers to how novel or surprising a communication is for the audience. They contend that all writings include some information and that reading information-poor texts can be tedious. Additionally, political speech is characterized by a “war of words” and a “political show” that seeks to sway public opinion to either win support or incite animosity towards political rivals²⁹). Politicians manipulate the public’s consciousness and persuade people to embrace particular views and behaviours by using metaphorical language, especially during periods of political and economic crisis. Political slogans are viewed in this regard by Wodak and Meyer³⁰) as a particular kind of social-political advertising. They advocate using political slogans to educate the public about the intellectual-conceptual platforms of political parties and issues in order to regulate ideological relationships in society. In order to increase the influence of political messaging on public opinion, Charteris-Black³¹) claims that metaphORIZATION and the use of symbols in political discourse attempt to promote emotional expressiveness.

3.3. Previous Studies

The conceptually-oriented critical discourse analysis demonstrates how Brexit was made real by recontextualising components of prior social/political/economic crises. In his study, Krzyżanowski highlights the various impact of ‘Brexit as crisis’ on European news media discourse³²). Ajayi examine President Buhari's (2019) Independence Day Speech to show how it discreetly but pragmatically projects the Buhari-led administration's commitment to its ‘change’ goal³³). This study purposefully chose speech clips for examination using van Dijk's (2004) Critical Discourse examination approach. It concentrates on how Johnson and Trump organized their stories to depict themselves as ‘characters’, discursively generated agency, and took different stances. Although Johnson and Trump seemed to have learned different lessons from their illnesses, their narratives promoted a masculinist discourse to portray them as ‘strong leaders’ and detract from their reckless personal behaviour leading up to their infections and their governments' failures to formulate coherent pandemic control plans. Analyzing the Australian Prime Minister's speech on Coronavirus, Alyeksyeyeva et al. examine speech's political and ideological surroundings throughout the national political process and decision-making, as well as its sociopolitical and cognitive characteristics in parliament³⁴). Every discourse has three aspects according to critical discourse analysis. A written or spoken language text, an interaction between individuals, and a social act require the generation and interpretation of texts (discourse). Nugraha et al. examine the impact of the virus's spread on the Indonesian economy, as well as the government's response to the public health crisis and the efforts made to overcome the Covid-19 and 'new normal' economic crisis³⁵). Rovino et al. seek to identify news text language that conveys anxiety using Teun A. Van Dijk's (1993) critical analysis discourse model and discourse's micro, macro, and superstructure³⁶). They find that political memes' critical and affirmative power confused during the COVID-19 crisis based on a thematic analysis of Boris Johnson and Trump memes. This hindered politicians' ability to resist populist leaders' actions and messages.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

Following Fairclough’s 2001 model of discourse and Van Dijk’s 1998 model of ideological square, the analysis involves analyzing the given speech on three levels: Text Analysis (Description), Processing Analysis (Interpretation) and Social Analysis (Explanation)

4.1. Text Analysis (Description)

Using Fairclough's discourse analysis model, the researchers can analyse this speech in terms of vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and text structure.

Vocabulary analysis: The vocabulary used in the discourse combines professional and colloquial expressions. Using complex vocabulary and expressions, the speaker expresses his gratitude to the NHS and the UK. For example, he uses expressions such as "*It's hard to find the words to express my debt*" and "*forming a human shield*" to convey the extent of his gratitude towards the NHS and the British public. Johoson's speech contains casual and colloquial words and phrases like "*no question*" and "*folks,*" which contribute to a more conversational tone and help the speaker connect with the audience more personally. The speaker also uses a variety of figurative language to emphasize his point. He uses metaphors, such as calling the NHS "*the beating heart of this country*" and "*powered by love*", to highlight the significance of the organization and the emotional bond people have with it.

Finally, the speech effectively uses various vocabulary and language techniques to convey appreciation and unity. The speaker also uses a variety of technical terms related to healthcare, such as "*physios,*" "*radiographers,*" and "*pharmacists,*" which serve to emphasize the expertise and professionalism of the NHS staff. In **Grammar Analysis**, the speech mostly includes simple and compound sentences, with some complex ones used here and there (e.g. *It's hard to find the words to express my debt* (**Simple sentence**), *we will defeat this coronavirus and defeat it together* (**Compound sentence**), *I want to thank the many nurses, men and women, whose care has been so astonishing* (**Complex sentence**). Besides, the speaker makes use of modal auxiliary verbs to express "possibility", "ability", "obligation", and "necessity", like using (can, will). As for the pronouns used, the pronouns (I, you, and we) are frequently used as personal pronouns in this speech. **Mood and modality** analysis is part of Fairclough's discourse analysis approach. Modality refers to the speaker's assessment of the likelihood or truth value of the message, whereas mood refers to the grammatical expression of the speaker's attitude towards the message being delivered.

The speech's tone primarily indicates the speaker's mood as he shares his experience and shows gratitude for others. Additionally, some imperatives exhort listeners to observe social conventions and remain at home to safeguard the NHS and save lives. In terms of modality, to express his evaluation of the probability or truth value of the message, the speaker employs a combination of modal verbs and adverbs. The speaker first uses the modal verb "could" to suggest that the NHS might be overrun if people didn't abide by social conventions but then switches to the words "unbeatable" and "powered by love" to emphasize the NHS's courage and resiliency. For instance, the speaker emphasizes with the word "no question" how definite it is that the NHS saved their life. Additionally, he uses the phrase "It's hard to find the words" to convey his appreciation for the NHS. Generally, the mood of the speech is positive, and it emphasizes the value of the NHS and healthcare professionals' efforts in overcoming the pandemic's obstacles. The speech also emphasizes the importance of upholding social distance laws to safeguard the NHS and save lives.

As for cohesion analysis, the speech is coherent since the speaker employs multiple cohesive strategies to connect sentences and paragraphs. Using personal pronouns, like "you" and "we," create a sense of solidarity between the speaker and the listeners. The speaker also connects clauses and sentences with conjunctions like "but," "because," and "so." Thanks to the repetition, especially of the nurses' names, the audience feels more at ease and more empathic.

In the **text structure analysis**, the speech has a clear beginning, middle, and end. The speaker begins by thanking the NHS and the British public for their sacrifices in the fight against the coronavirus. The middle of the speech discusses the

efforts of the NHS and the British public in confronting the virus, highlighting the courage and dedication of NHS staff. The speech's conclusion urges the audience to adhere to the social distancing rules and protect the NHS. The speech generally serves as a convincing statement for the audience to keep up their efforts in the pandemic-fighting effort. The message is effectively communicated thanks to the text's clear structure and logical progression of ideas. Using personal pronouns, repetition, and cohesive devices creates a sense of unity and empathy between the speaker and the listener.

As far as discursual features are concerned, the speech has several discursual features that are worth noting: First, formality, the speech begins with a formal salutation, "Good afternoon," and often uses formal language. The speech is presented formally and has a high vocabulary and complex sentences. In his speech, the speaker makes statements like "faithfully, patiently, with thought and care" and "the struggle is by no means over". Second, expressions of gratitude, throughout the speech, the speaker gives numerous thanks using phrases like "I want to thank," "I thank you," and "I want you to know that." Third, use of figurative language, the speaker uses metaphors and personification to describe the NHS, calling it a "human shield" and the "beating heart of this country" and saying that it is "powered by love." Fourth, use of specific names, to show his appreciation and draw attention to their achievements, the speaker specifically acknowledges doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals. Fifth, use of persuasive language, it urges the audience to keep assisting the NHS and abiding by the recommendations to fight the pandemic. He appeals to the nationalism and unity of the audience by saying that if everyone pulls together and supports the NHS, the UK can overcome this issue. He uses language like "protect our National Health Service" and "save lives". Sixth, use of emotive language, the speaker employs passionate language to highlight the value of the NHS and the sacrifices made by healthcare professionals; he uses words like "courage," "devotion," and "love". Emotive language is used to create an emotional connection with the audience. Seventh, use of personal anecdotes, to connect with the audience and emphasize his arguments, the speaker often shares personal experiences. He describes his time in the hospital and the names of particular nurses who attended to him. Finally, repetition, the speaker repeats certain phrases to emphasize his points, such as "our National Health Service," "24 hours a day," and "stay at home, protect our National Health Service – and save lives." The speaker repeats certain phrases and names, such as "National Health Service," "Jenny and Luis," and "Thank you," to emphasize their importance and to show appreciation.

In conclusion, the speech has a formal register, emotive language, repetition, and a persuasive tone, among other discursive characteristics. These aspects express the speaker's appreciation and admiration for the public and the NHS and persuade them to keep fighting the pandemic.

4.2. Processing Analysis (Interpretation)

1) Thematic Analysis

The speech contains several topics, they are:

a. Gratitude towards the National Health Service:

The speaker appreciates the NHS and its employees for saving his life. He expresses gratitude for the commitment and courage of medical personnel who have risked their lives to fight the virus.

b. Acknowledgement of the sacrifices made by the UK citizens:

The speaker thanks the entire UK populace for their sacrifices and efforts in observing social distance laws throughout the pandemic. He admits that it has been challenging for people to abide by these regulations, particularly during the spring when the outside seems attractive.

c. Progress in the national battle against coronavirus:

The speaker highlights the advancements in the fight against the virus on a national level, which have been made possible by the efforts of the British people and the building of a human shield surrounding the NHS. He also recognizes the personal sacrifices made by NHS employees during this battle.

d. The National Health Service as the beating heart of the country:

The speaker describes the NHS as the nation's best and most resilient part. He emphasizes the importance of adhering to social distance laws to safeguard the NHS.

e. Personal acknowledgements:

The speaker thanks specific doctors and nurses who helped him while he was in the hospital and made crucial decisions. He points out their names and draws attention to their courage, loyalty, and sense of obligation to what they do.

f. Hope for the future:

The speaker closes his speech by expressing optimism that the nation will beat the virus collectively, with the NHS serving as the driving force for this accomplishment. He advises people to stay at home and adhere to social distance regulations to preserve lives.

4.3. Transitivity Analysis

Halliday's transitivity analysis is a linguistic tool that analyzes how clauses are put together in a sentence to determine the actions and people involved and how they contribute to the meaning of the text. By presenting the process types used in the given speech using this framework, the table below shows the process types in the given speech:

Table 1. Processes used in the speech

Process Types	Types of Verbs	Frequency (percentage)	Examples
Material Processes	(actions, events)	14 (26.9%)	left hospital, made, follow the rules, going through, formed, keep coming to work, putting themselves in harm's way, risking, took some crucial decisions, defeat, follow the rules, stay at home, protect, save lives
Mental Processes	(thinking, feeling, perceiving)	10 (19.2%)	find the words, express, imagine, believe, understand, decided, know, see, think, care
Relational Processes	(identifying, attributing)	9 (17.3%)	is, are, be, have been, is by no means, are taken from us, is under, is thanks to, are acting
Behavioural Processes	(psychological or physiological)	9 (17.3%)	thank, mourn, making progress, thank, pay my own thanks, thank, mention, watching, caring
Existential Processes	(existence, presence)	2 (3.8%)	there are, there are
Verbal Processes	(saying, telling, reporting)	(11.5%)	want to thank, want you to know, want to thank, want to thank, hope they won't mind, thank

The analysis shows that the given speech contains 52 processes in total, with material processes being the most frequent at 26.9%, mental processes at 19.2%, while relational and behavioural processes at 17.3%. Existential processes are the least frequent at 3.8%, while verbal processes comprise 11.5% of the total processes.

4.4. Social Analysis (Explanation)

Social analysis is an interdisciplinary approach that examines different aspects of society to understand their impact on individuals and groups. Van Dijk's Ideological Analysis is used to understand how language conveys power dynamics, social relations, and cultural values. It includes the following categories: "self-positive," "self-negative," "other-positive," and "other-negative". However, these categories enable social analysts to evaluate the use of language in maintaining social hierarchies and inequalities. Analyzing language use in social contexts can reveal how individuals and groups are positioned concerning others.

4.4.1. Self-Positive

The speech contains elements of self-positive representation, mostly concerning the NHS. The speaker describes the NHS as the "beating heart" of the nation, a "national asset," and a group that is "unbeatable" and "powered by love". The speaker also praises the British for acting as a "human shield" for the NHS and for making efforts that are "daily proving their worth". The speaker creates a positive image of the UK by focusing on the significance of the NHS and the British public's support for its protection.

4.4.2. Self-Negative

In some parts of the speech, the speaker gives a self-negative account of the UK, particularly when discussing the difficulties caused by the coronavirus pandemic. The speaker admits that the struggle against the virus is a "national battle" that the UK "never picked" and that it is being fought against an "enemy we still don't entirely understand". The speaker also mentions how the NHS is under pressure and how medical personnel are risking their lives to fight the infection. These acknowledgements raise the possibility that the UK may have difficulty responding to the epidemic, which could be interpreted as a negative reflection on oneself.

4.4.3. Other-Positive

The speaker gives a favorable impression of healthcare professionals in his speech, especially those who looked after him while he was in the hospital. The speaker expresses gratitude to the healthcare professionals in every category, praising their bravery, devotion, duty, and love. The speaker also mentions several specific nurses by name, identifying their nationalities and their critical role in his healing. The speaker creates a favorable impression of people battling the infection by highlighting the selfless activities of healthcare professionals and personalizing their contributions.

4.4.4. Other-Negative

The speech doesn't contain any obvious examples of other-negative representations. The speaker understands the difficulties the virus presents, but he does not point the finger at any one party or organization. Instead of criticizing or blaming anyone for the pandemic response's difficulties, the speech focuses on recognizing and appreciating individuals who have contributed constructively.

5. Conclusions

The speech's primary points center on gratitude for the NHS and its staff, appreciation for the UK's efforts to adhere to social distance regulations and faith in the British people's capacity to overcome the coronavirus pandemic. Boris Johnson's Easter Sunday Speech significantly aided the UK's campaign against the COVID-19 pandemic. After being released from the hospital following his struggle with the virus, the Prime Minister gave a speech to the country from his residence in Downing Street. The purpose of the speech was to offer encouragement and express gratitude to the British people and the NHS staff for their hard efforts in fighting the pandemic. Johnson praised the nation's combined sacrifices and efforts throughout the address, admitting the challenges posed by social isolationist practices and urging people to keep their observance of them. Johnson also emphasized the NHS's (NHS) contribution to the nation's response to the pandemic. He commended the bravery and commitment of healthcare experts, including doctors, nurses, and other medical staff members, who have toiled nonstop to treat individuals infected with the virus. The speech was notable for its persuasive language and rhetorical devices, including repetition and emotive language. Johnson repeatedly thanked the British public, using phrases such as "I want to thank everyone in the entire UK" and "millions and millions of people across this country", creating a sense of unity and shared responsibility. Boris Johnson's Easter Sunday Speech was a powerful example of discourse during a crisis. It conveyed a sense of solidarity and hope while acknowledging the challenges ahead. The speech resonated with many people across the country and helped reinforce the message that the UK can overcome the pandemic by working together and following healthcare professionals' guidance.

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