

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

Even during crises, news headlines not only communicate objective information but they also express attitudes and emotions through different linguistic markers of evaluation. When readers mainly browse news feeds instead of a thorough reading of articles, digital news headlines have a significant role in creating certain types of images on newsworthy subjects (see e.g., Mustafa-Awad & Kirner-Ludwig, 2017). This presentation unravels how attitudes, emotions and themes construct different evaluative images of the Covid-19 pandemic at the beginning of the state of emergency in Finnish news headlines. Altogether, the data consists of 687 headlines from three Finnish online news sources, a leading newspaper (*Helsingin Sanomat*), a tabloid newspaper (*Ilta-Sanomat*) and a broadcasting company (*Yleisradio*) on March 16–17, 2020. The analysis adopts a data-driven perspective on the themes and evaluative parameters (Bednarek, 2010) used in the headlines. The results show how the themes attached to the pandemic relate, for instance, to daily life and emotions events and culture, restrictive measures in general and instances that are affected by the health crisis such as business and working life. Additionally, the results indicate how themes are typically evaluated through the parameters of evidentiality, importance and negative emotivity. Based on the analysis, three evaluative images emerge in the headlines examined: the pandemic as i) a challenging health crisis with authorities as responsible decision-makers; ii) a factor that evokes concern and collective solidarity in citizen's everyday lives; and iii) a crisis that has negative impacts on the uncertain economic situation. These evaluative images demonstrate how the practicalities of the pandemic coexist with the private and emotional side of people's lives.

References

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Primary author: SAARNI, Jenna (University of Turku)

Presenter: SAARNI, Jenna (University of Turku)