Analyzing Self-Praise Strategies in Political Resignation Speeches of Female Heads of the Government from Australia, England, New Zealand, and Scotland: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis

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Article information	
Abstract	While males have predominantly held leadership positions in national-level parliaments, the rising visibility of females as heads of government, despite their underrepresentation, is a significant trend. This study investigated the political resignation speeches of four female leaders in national parliaments: Australia, England, New Zealand, and Scotland. Examining their speeches revealed a strategic utilization of self-praise to construct their identity as effective leaders. A comparative analysis of these speeches highlighted distinct self-praise strategies employed. These speakers interacted with varied levels of familiarity with their audience influencing their self-praise strategies. Addressing familiar individuals prompted the use of diverse strategies, notably emphasizing direct self-praise with modifications. In contrast, when addressing less familiar recipients, leaders tended to lean more towards straightforward strategies. Across these speeches, a multimodal discourse analysis uncovered the diverse

	communication modes utilized by leaders including variations in bodily movements, hand gestures, and eye contact. These modes of communication reflected the perceived social distance between the speakers and their audience.
Keywords	social distance, self-praise strategies, political resignation speech, multimodal analysis
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1. Introduction

Political resignation speech is a unique type of political discourse which does not occur frequently. Chilton (2004) states that politics and language are inseparable, and while most studies on political discourse focus on the process of producing, maintaining, abusing, and resisting power in contemporary society (Chilton, 2014; Van Dijk, 1987), few are looking into the process of resignation where political power is relinquished. Resignation speeches by political leaders are highly influential in shaping public opinion and can have lasting effects on a politician's career, especially in today's world of social media where the audience is worldwide. Chilton (2004) notes that most political actors are aware of the impact of their words and would craft them purposefully. We can presume that the resignation speech would have other purposes, not a mere statement about leaving the post.

Over the past decade several English-speaking female leaders in national-level parliaments, including Prime Ministers and a First Minister, have delivered resignation speeches. A common element in these speeches seems to be the use of self-praise expressions as part of their scripted remarks. This study aimed to

analyze the self-praise strategies performed by four speakers who held varying tenures in office. Julia Gillard (JG) made history as Australia's first female Prime Minister following years of active involvement in national politics. Her resignation speech on June 26, 2013, was presented at the Parliament House in Canberra. Elizabeth Truss (ET) had the briefest term as the United Kingdom's Prime Minister, serving from September to October 2022. She delivered her succinct resignation statement in front of the Prime Minister's Office in London. Jacinda Ardern (JA) became New Zealand's youngest female Prime Minister, serving from 2017 to 2023, a term of approximately five years. Her resignation speech was given at the War Memorial Center in Napier. Nicola Sturgeon (NS) was not only Scotland's first female First Minister but also held the longest tenure, spanning from 2014 to 2023. Her resignation came after over eight years in office and was announced during a press conference at the First Minister's residence in Edinburgh. The four speakers in this study vary in their lengths of tenure in office, leading to differences in their familiarity with audiences such as government personnel, news reporters, and citizens. This research delved into the speeches of these four prominent female leaders to explore how self-praise was strategically used in resignation contexts and how it may be influenced by the perceived social distance between the speakers and their audiences, as revealed through verbal and non-verbal cues.

2. Literature Review

This section discusses the key concepts and relevant literature related to the self-praise speech act in relation to politeness, social distance, and accompanying gestures.

2.1 Speech acts in political discourse and resignation speech

Political discourse is inseparable from speech acts as it involves the use of language and speech to achieve political goals and influence audiences (Van Dijk, 1987). Using the critical discourse analysis tool, Bowo et al. (2022) has carried out a study on Boris Johnson's (UK's former Prime Minister) resignation speech and

reported the speaker's strategy in identity construction of a successful leader even as he was stepping down. According to Chilton (2004), politicians and other political actors employ various speech acts in their discourse to convince, persuade, appeal, command, and create desired effects. Wodak (2009) further describes that political leaders employ the illocutionary acts of commissives and directives to portray hope and future action.

The commissive speech act is defined by Searle (2014) as the commitment to an action in the future through promise, pledge, or consent, such as "I promise I will improve our country's economy." While directives are used to command, request, suggest, or invite, such as "please vote for me." There are three other illocutionary acts as classified by Searle (2014), which are assertives, declarations, and expressives. Assertive speech acts are used to state a fact, such as "I am the First Minister." Declarations are speech acts where the speaker declares a change in the world via words, such as "I am announcing my intention to step down as First Minister and leader of my party." Expressives are used to express attitudes and emotion, such as apologizing, thanking, complaining, praising, complementing, or criticizing. Making an extension from praising, 'self-praising' can be categorized as an expressive speech act in which the speaker expresses positive evaluation of oneself (Dayter, 2014). For instance, "I am very proud of what this government has achieved, which will endure for the long term." is a positive statement expressing admiration towards the speaker as the head of the government.

Politicians strategically use a variety of speech acts in their communication. By employing these tactics, they aim to achieve a successful impact on their audience through perlocutionary effect. According to Ramanathan et al. (2020), politicians effectively utilize commissives and directives on social media platforms to communicate future actions and steer the hearers towards their political objectives. In addition to the strategic use of speech acts, the choice of politeness level is crucial. Kartika and Aziz (2021) have examined Shinzo Abe's (a former

Japanese Prime Minister) resignation speech from the perspective of politeness in the Japanese language. She found that Abe used expressive speech acts that carried the message of gratitude, condolence, and apology, noting that Abe used very polite language, given the formal nature of the situation and his humility in resigning unexpectedly during a pandemic. We can see from these studies that politician resignation speeches often encapsulate more than one speech act to achieve their intended goal with a wide group of audience. Though self-praise has never emerged in previous studies (Kartika & Aziz, 2021; Ramanathan et al., 2020), we can infer that it would be part of Boris' positive identity construction, or subtly implied when Abe "thank[ed] the Japanese people sincerely for these eight years" (Kartika & Aziz, 2021, p. 336).

2.2 Self-praise and politeness

Holmes (1988) defines a compliment as "a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, for some 'good' (possession, characteristic, skill etc.), which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer" (p. 446). Dayter (2014) adds that when a speaker himself or herself is credited, it will be considered self-praise, which includes "an announcement of achievement as well as a clear positive assessment of some aspect of the self." Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 39) assert that "just as elevating others is synonymous with lowering oneself, so elevating oneself can mean lowering others." Following this concept, self-praise can be seen as elevating the speaker and degrading the listener.

Within Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness and impoliteness, self-praise can be perceived as positive impoliteness, in which the speaker demands the hearer to approve or agree with him. A person claiming in front of his boss and colleagues that he is the most efficient worker is expecting to be positively evaluated by his superior and co-workers to agree that they are not as efficient. Hence, the speaker may appear boastful and will damage the hearer's

positive face as he indicates that he does not care about a hearer's feeling and is willing to cause distress to the hearer (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Self-praise by itself is thus potentially a face-threatening speech act that would need a mitigating device to reduce the imposition on the hearer. Pomerantz (1978) notes that self-praise is sensitive as the speaker risks being viewed as arrogant. Thus, the speaker may enforce constraints against self-praise by using linguistic strategies such as disclaimer (I don't like to brag, but..), quality (I have been trained) and shifting the praise to third-party (I have a top-notch team), so that their competence or quality can be positively accepted by others (Pomerantz, 1978). Wu (2011) suggests that self-praise, if performed inappropriately, can be considered as arrogant, and Dayter (2021) agrees that such self-praise is undesirable and rude.

In order to minimize their face-threatening act in social interactions, it is important to be aware of the potential impact of self-praise on both the speaker and the hearer and use linguistic politeness appropriately. Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest possible communicative strategies, where the speaker can go on record or off record. By going on record, there are sub-strategies of acting baldly or with a redressive action by employing positive politeness or negative politeness strategies. Positive politeness strategies are oriented towards the hearer to indicate that both the speaker and the hearer want the same thing, creating a sense of solidarity. Negative politeness strategies are mindful of the hearer's desire for freedom and autonomy, often including phrases such as requests, apologies, and hedging expressions, which give the hearer more freedom and minimize the obligation to comply. To go off record is to be ambiguous by using indirect strategies such as being vague, using metaphors, giving hints, using contradictions, and asking rhetorical questions, where the speaker does not have to commit himself or herself and offer the hearer room to vary his or her response.

2.3 Social distance

The selection of one linguistic strategy over another is not random. The choice of politeness strategy is determined by sociological factors, which are social distance, power relationship, and rank of imposition (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Wolfson (1986) categorizes distance into two groups: intimate and strangers together in one group and non-intimate and co-workers together in the other. The factor that differentiates the two groups is the perceived stability in the relationships, where both intimates and strangers are relatively more stable and unambiguous strategies are commonly used. As Wolfson (1986) has explained, "the more status and social distance are seen as fixed, the easier it is for speakers to know what to expect of one another" (p. 74). However, with non-intimates, the relationship is dynamic and there are ongoing negotiations, and thus the interlocutors tend to use ambiguous strategies and avoid confrontation.

Boxer (1993) explores the relationship between social distance and indirect complaints, where "the speaker does not make any confrontation but shares information with the hearer to achieve common feelings or problems" (p. 107). She categorizes three types of indirect complaints: self (e.g. "the First Minister is never off duty, particularly in this day and age"), other (e.g. "the media has not given me privacy"), and situation (e.g. "the nature and form of modern political discourse means that there is a much greater intensity of brutality to life as a politician than in years gone by"). Similar to Wolfson (1986), she states that social distance determines the linguistic strategy. Indirect complaints are most frequently used with strangers, which are commonly trivial topics to establish rapport.

Brown and Levinson (1987) have proposed that, for a speaker to be interpreted as polite, the production of verbal utterance, appropriate tone of voice, gestures, and facial expression are significant. Thus, to gain a holistic perspective of how politeness strategies are performed, we have to look at non-verbal components such as gestures as well.

2.4 Gestures

Gesture refers to visible physical actions that serve as stand-alone communications or as complements to speech (Kendon, 2004; Matsumoto & Hwang, 2012). McNeill (1992) outlines four main categories of gestures: iconic (illustrative gestures, like miming a phone call), metaphoric (using hand shapes to represent abstract concepts, e.g. gesturing to the heart while discussing love), beats (hand movements synchronized with speech rhythm), and deictics (pointing gestures correlating speech with specific locations). Another notable type is emblem gestures, associations like the two-finger peace sign, which may carry cultural connotations (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2012). For instance, while the thumbs-up gesture symbolizes approval in many cultures, it can be deemed offensive in certain Middle Eastern contexts.

The efficacy of gestures is highlighted by McNeill (2008) in his analysis of hand movements by notable figures like Boris Yeltsin and Bill Clinton. Yeltsin's expansive gestures projected dominance and assertiveness, contrasted with Clinton's more restrained gestures, signaling composure and control. In another context, Brown and Prieto (2017) underscore the interplay between prosody, gesture, and politeness across cultures. Their study of Korean participants has revealed that interactions with close friends involve more expansive and frequent hand gestures, along with subtle touches, while interactions with individuals of higher social or power distance feature more reserved gestures, like nods (Brown & Prieto, 2017). Wharton (2009) distinguishes these gestures into "naturally occurring behaviors" and "intentional communication," emphasizing involuntary actions (e.g. shivering from cold) versus voluntary displays (e.g. forcing a smile). This distinction categorizes gestures broadly as either spontaneous or deliberate. Deliberate gestures are particularly intriguing, as they can complement linguistic self-praise strategies, aiding in the intentional verbal messages to a large audience.

3. Methodology

This section covers the data, addressing how they were collected, analyzed, along with an overview of the research process and the coding scheme utilized.

3.1 Data and the analysis process

The resignation speeches analyzed in this study were delivered between 2013 and 2023 and were publicly accessible online through live broadcasts. The transcripts of these speeches were released by various news agencies and official government platforms. The speeches were given by four female heads of government. All of them are native English speakers who had different lengths of time in office. To ensure authenticity, the resignation speech transcripts were kept in their original and unedited form.

Prior to the analysis, the transcripts were imported into Google Sheets, where each utterance was segmented into separate rows using the Split and Transpose functions, with full stops as delimiters. Subsequently, the utterances were organized into rows to enable numbering and coding. Initially, they were categorized based on whether they constituted self-praise speech acts, and then they were assigned by the specific types of self-praise. By employing the pivot function, the overall count of self-praise instances and the percentage distribution of each type were visualized, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Coding and Statistics Using Google Sheet

The annotations were performed manually by the researchers and an intercoder, with any discrepancies resolved through discussions. Firstly, the speech transcripts were annotated to determine whether each utterance constituted self-praise. Secondly, all identified self-praise utterances were selected for further analysis, based on the taxonomy for self-praise being presented in 3.2. The video materials were analyzed following the conventions for annotating gestures as detailed by Mondada (2018), with a specific emphasis on capturing the moments when self-praise was expressed.

3.2 Annotation taxonomy for self-praise

The annotation scheme was developed based on the linguistic expressions of self-praise outlined by Dayter (2014) and Tobback (2019). It involved categorizing utterances according to differing levels of straightforwardness, with direct self-praise considered the most explicit and indirect self-praise being more subtle. Additional sub-strategies related to modified direct self-praise were incorporated from the research conducted by Wu and Chen (2021). This taxonomy, along with its implementation in the current study, was presented in Table 1, complete with descriptions and examples of self-praise instances.

Table 1

Self-Praise Strategies

Self-Praise Strategy	Description	Examples
Direct self-praise		
	Explicitly praise oneself	I am proud to stand here as the first female and longest serving incumbent of this office, and I'm very proud of what has been achieved in the years I've been in Bute House.

Self-Praise Strategy	Description	Examples
Direct self-praise with modification		
• Transfer of the praise focus	Praise or give positive assessment to people working with or associated with the speaker.	The good news is the country will now get to see more clearly, perhaps, that the SNP is full of talented individuals more than up to that task.
• Praise from a third party	Quote a credible source that had acknowledged the speaker's accomplishment.	As the Institute for Fiscal Studies confirmed last week, the poorest families with children in Scotland are now £2,000 better off as a result of our policies.
• Reference to hard work	Declare the invested time and effort that the speaker placed in the work.	And we've worked hard to make progress on issues around our national identity.
• Comparison between past and present	Claim improvement or positive changes resulting from one's contribution.	We have turned around child poverty statistics and made the most significant increases in welfare and the state housing stock we've seen in many decades.
Indirect self-praise		
• Implicatures based on cognitive attitude	State a vision or belief that can reflect one's goal, or qualification standard.	My point is this. Giving absolutely everything of yourself to this job is the only way to do it. The country deserves nothing less.
• Self-praise as a complaint	Appear to complain but covertly convey their own positive assessment such as	Even ordinary stuff that most people take for granted, like going for a coffee with friends or for a walk on your own, becomes very difficult.

Self-Praise Strategy	Description	Examples
	dedication, or selflessness.	

According to Wu and Chen (2021), direct self-praise strategies are used to construct a competent self-image, a connotation reflected in resignation speeches where phrases like "be proud of" explicitly commend one's own efforts. The concept of direct self-praise with modification, drawn from Dayter's (2014) explicit self-praise with modification, and Tobback's (2019) and Wu and Chen's (2021) indirect self-praise, includes self-praise where the speaker does not "overtly claim skillfulness by making a positive identity statement" (Tobback, 2019, p. 653). Implicit self-praise involves conveying meanings beyond the literal level, with the speaker implying for the listener to infer from the context or situation (Tobback, 2019).

3.3 Multimodal Discourse Analysis

This study adopts a multimodal approach to analyzing various modes of data for meaning creation, as outlined by Kress (2009) who categorizes them as linguistic, visual, aural, gestural, and spatial. The application of multimodal discourse analysis is well-suited for this research since the resignation speeches of the four political leaders were recorded on video and shared online, enabling access to all communication modes, as proposed by Kress (2009). In line with Lerdin and Machin's (2020) semiotic approach, the study explores the distinct visual elements, such as color and shape, and further delves into the denotation and connotation of the data. Denotation refers to the representation of individuals, events, and places captured, demonstrated by news photographs "denoting a reality" (p. 39). Distinctively, connotation involves the communication of "abstract ideas and values" through the representation and presentation of the data (p. 40). Lerdin and Machin (2020) suggest the visual portrayal of individuals, such as the

framing of a single person or a group, conveys varying meanings to the audience; for example, an image focusing on a single person establishes a personalized connection between that person and the audience.

This study focused primarily on analyzing linguistic expressions. Initially, the researchers identified self-praise strategies within the resignation speeches. Later, a secondary analysis on gestures was conducted. Specifically, gestures that were not directly linked to the linguistic expressions of self-praise strategies were excluded. According to Wharton (2009), these accompanying gestures can be categorized as either spontaneous or deliberate. To work systematically with multimodal data, the researchers utilized Atlas.ti, a widely recognized software for qualitative analysis that is well-suited for handling various types of data including text, images, audio, and video. The process began with importing video clips of the recorded speeches into Atlas.ti, followed by playback in conjunction with the coded speech acts. Gestures accompanying the self-praise speech acts were coded accordingly.

Figure 2

Coding Gestures using Atlas.ti
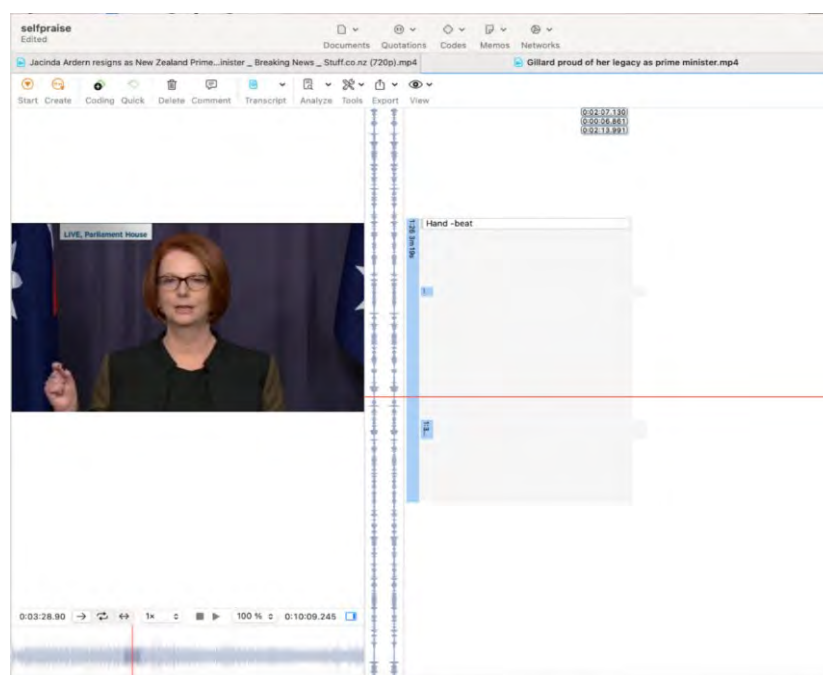
4. Findings and Discussion

From the four resignation speeches, a total of 116 instances of self-praise were extracted, comprising 35 from JG, four from ET, 22 from JA, and 55 from NS. Among these individuals, NS had the longest tenure and delivered the lengthiest speech, lasting over 18 minutes. JG and JA, having served moderate tenures, presented resignation speeches lasting over ten and seven minutes, respectively. In contrast, ET, who held the position for just 49 days, delivered a concise speech lasting one minute and 30 seconds. A noticeable correlation emerged between the length of tenure, speech duration, and the utilization of self-praise strategies, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Self-Praise Frequency

	JG	ET	JA	NS
Duration of stay in the office	3 yrs 3 days	49 days	5 yrs 3 mths	8 yrs 2 mths
Duration of speech	10:10 min	1:30 min	7:45 min	18:03 min
Total utterances	73	13	65	139
Total self-praise utterances	5 (48%)	4 (30%)	2 (34%)	5 (40%)

In the resignation speeches of the four female heads of government, self-praise was evident at varying but compatible frequencies. This initial observation suggested a tendency for employing self-praise as a rhetorical strategy. Consistent with Bowo et al.'s (2022) findings, even as these female political leaders stepped down from their positions of power, they presented themselves as effective and accomplished individuals by praising themselves, with percentages ranging from 30% (the lowest) to 48% (the highest). These instances resonated with Pomerantz's (1978) discussion on the potential misinterpretation of self-praise when it occurs in higher percentages, as it may easily be perceived as bragging.

Interestingly, the duration of their time in office appeared to influence the frequency of self-praise. For example, ET exhibited the lowest percentage of self-praise. Conversely, NS utilized self-praise at a rate of 40%. However, determining the exact nature of this relationship is beyond the scope of this study. Other social variables, such as their reasons for resigning or their post-resignation goals, may have a significant impact on the instances of self-praise. These factors could play a crucial role in shaping the frequency of self-praise observed in their speeches. Detailed findings about the sub-strategies are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Types of Self-Praise

	JG		ET		JA		NS	
Total self-praise utterances	35	(100%)	4	(100%)	22	(100%)	55	(100%)
Direct self-praise	8	(23%)	0	(0%)	4	(18%)	12	(22%)
Direct self-praise with modification	22	(63%)	4	(100%)	9	(41%)	23	(42%)
• Transfer of the praise focus	9	(26%)	0	(0%)	1	(5%)	5	(9%)
• Praise from a third party	2	(5.5%)	1	(25%)	0	(0%)	3	(6%)
• Reference to hard work	9	(26%)	3	(75%)	6	(27%)	9	(16%)
• Comparison between past and present	2	(5.5%)	0	(0%)	2	(9%)	6	(11%)
Indirect self-praise	5	(14%)	0	(0%)	9	(41%)	20	(36%)
• Implicatures based on cognitive attitude	5	(14%)	0	(0%)	9	(41%)	15	(27%)
• Self-praise as a complaint	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	5	(9%)

It was observed that each speaker employed distinct self-praise strategies. JG, JA, and NS were perceived to have a higher level of familiarity with their audience compared to ET, utilizing all three types of strategies with comparable frequency. In contrast, ET, being the least familiar, exclusively employed the direct self-praise strategy with modifications. Their respective linguistic realizations are discussed in 4.1 and multimodal analysis of visual depiction and hand gestures are discussed in 4.2.

4.1 Linguistic Realizations

The analysis revealed that all four speakers employed direct self-praise with modifications. According to Wolfson's (1986) theory, this strategy is widely used across all levels of social distance, particularly common among colleagues. Furthermore, JG, JA, and NS, who had a closer relationship with their audience, utilized both direct and indirect strategies. This finding aligned with Wolfson (1986), indicating that direct and indirect strategies are typically employed among close acquaintances. The use of the indirect strategy, requiring the listener's interpretation, was prevalent with interlocutors having minimal social distance. The ensuing discussion delves into the comparison of self-praise strategies employed by the four speakers. The comparison of self-praise strategies employed by the four speakers are discussed as follows.

4.1.1 Direct Self-Praise

NS and JA, with close social distance, used direct and unambiguous self-praise with the hearers, while ET did not use this strategy, as she was not familiar with the audience and may risk appearing arrogant (Wu, 2011). According to Wu and Chen (2021), direct self-praise such as "be proud of," is used to construct a competent image. This study found that the three speakers utilized such a direct strategy to express their accomplishments.

1.	JG: **I am very proud** of what this government has achieved, which will endure for the long term. **Very proud** of the way in which **we** achieved health reform, against the odds, with newly elected conservative leaders.
2.	JA: **We** achieved a huge amount in the last five years. And **I am so proud of that**.
3.	NS: **I am proud** to stand here as the first female and longest serving incumbent of this office, and **I'm very proud** of what has been achieved in the years I've been in Bute House.

All three speakers JG, JA, and NS stated that they were proud of their achievements. JG and JA were similar in using the pronoun 'we' in regard to the achievement, while using the pronoun 'I' when JG said, "I am very proud" and JA said, "I am so proud." The pronoun 'we' would refer to governmental institutions in which they were the leader, and they were attributing credit to both themselves and the teams. NS listed multiple things that she was proud of in this one utterance. She also used parallelism, the first was "I am proud" and repeated by "I'm very proud" with an intensifier. This emphasized and accentuated a high degree of pride in all the achievements. NS used the pronoun 'I' for both parts indicating that she was contributing both achievements mainly to herself. Though the three speakers were using direct strategies, the degree of pride was different. NS being the office the longest, appeared to be most forward and elaborative with direct self-praise.

4.1.2 Direct Self-Praise with Modification

As self-praise is considered a face-threatening speech act (Dayter, 2021; Wu 2011), speakers should use linguistic strategies to mitigate the risk of imposition on the hearers (Pomerantz, 1978). Boxer (1993) has suggested that a direct strategy with modification is commonly used by speakers across all levels of social distance. This study confirms that this strategy was most prevalent among all three speakers. The sub-strategies of direct self-praise with modification performed by each speaker are discussed below.

4.1.2.1 Transfer of the Praise Focus

This strategy was used by JG, JA. and NS, which, according to Tobback (2019) and Wu and Chen (2021), is assigning the credit to other persons or organizations closely related to the speaker. Wu and Chen (2021) state that this strategy is used when "the speaker intends to shape a favorable image by altering the praise focus" (p. 680).

4.	JG: **I have had loyal and capable colleagues**.
5.	JA: The team that has done all that, **they have been some of the best people I have ever had the privilege of working with**, and they are well-placed to take us forward as we continue to focus on our economic recovery with one of the strongest economies in the world.
6.	NS: The good news is the country will now get to see more clearly, perhaps, that the **SNP is full of talented individuals** more than up to that task.

All three speakers were transferring praise to the people they had worked with. JG chose to praise her colleagues for being 'loyal' and 'capable,' which also reflected positively on herself. JA used the quantifier "some of" which would mean a relatively few people and not all of them (Larsen-Freeman & Celce-Murcia, 2016). The subject used was the pronoun 'they' that referred to all the people that she had worked with, which may or may not be from her party. The subject of praise was NS' political party, SNP. The adjective "full of" indicated there were a large number of talented people. NS was praising the people in her political party, indicating that there were many talented people to lead the country after her resignation. Though all three were transferring the praise to their working team, NS put more emphasis on her political party, which was understandably to pave the way for a successor from her party.

4.1.2.2 Praise from a Third Party

In the analysis, ET employed this strategy 25%, whereas NS used it at just 7%, JG at 6%, and JA did not use this strategy. Wu and Chen (2021) identify praise from a third party as "when the speaker praises oneself through delivering a third party's praising statement, which implicitly functions as self-praise" (p. 681). Tobback (2019) further explains that this strategy takes away the face-threatening nature of self-praise as the speaker is not claiming self-assessment (p. 654). It appeared that the person who stayed the shortest duration would need a third party's praise.

7.	JG: Three years ago, I had the very great honor of **being elected** as Labor leader.
8.	ET: I was **elected by the Conservative Party** with a mandate to change this.
9.	NS: As the **Institute for Fiscal Studies confirmed** last week, the poorest families with children in Scotland are now £2,000 better off as a result of our policies.

JG and ET expressed this strategy in the passive voice, which was when the subject was acted upon. There could be various reasons for using this grammatical structure, including to shift the focus to the recipient of the action to be the subject of the sentence. JG used short passive with the stative verb, "being elected" and omitted the agent. The stative verb in the passive voice is when the emphasis is on the result rather than the action (Biber et al., 2021) which, in this instance, indicated that she was made leader by choice of her party. This was similar to ET, though she had used a long passive voice where the agent was expressed in a by-phrase, a common structure in news reports (Biber et al., 2021). Excerpt (8) was ET's first utterance of self-praise in her speech. This served as self-praise, as she was claiming that it was the party that deemed her as a suitable Prime Minister and elected her. In excerpt (9), NS had quoted an established financial institute that had acknowledged the success of her policy. The utterance was in the active

voice where the subject "Institute for Fiscal Studies" was performing the action. It could be the credibility of the third party that brought weight to her self-praise.

4.1.2.3 Reference to Hard Work

It was the only strategy performed by all four speakers. JG and JA, with similar duration of stay, used this strategy at similar proportions. ET used it at the highest percentage of her speech, while NS used it at the lowest. According to Wu and Chen (2021), reference to hard work was when the speaker elaborates the time and effort invested or skill required in the work, which indicates self-praise on oneself. It could be that the shorter the duration in the office, the more one needed to convince the hearers of the invested effort during the stay.

10.	JG: It has **not been an easy environment** to work in. But I am pleased that in this environment, which wasn't easy, **I have prevailed** to ensure that this country is made stronger and smarter and fairer for the future.
11.	ET: I came into office **at a time of great** economic and international **instability**.
12.	JA: And we've done that while responding to **some of the biggest threats** to the health and economic well-being of our nation arguably since World War Two.
13.	NS: Leading this country through the Covid pandemic is **by far the toughest thing I've done**.

JG resigned in 2013, while the other three resigned post-COVID. Therefore, their references to challenges would reflect different global economic and political situations. JG specifically mentioned the environment as a challenge she overcame, alluding to both political and personal hurdles she faced as Australia's first female Prime Minister. ET described her hard work simply as 'great,' avoiding comparative or superlative terms. This lack of superlatives suggests that perhaps she did not face as many obstacles as the other two speakers, making the use of superlatives unnecessary to emphasize her efforts. Both JA and NS, however, used

superlatives such as 'biggest' and 'toughest' to convey the extent of the challenges they encountered. NS in particular highlighted COVID as the toughest obstacle, emphasizing its significance by referring to it as "the toughest thing" and expressing her successful leadership through this challenging period. JA mentioned 'some' obstacles she faced, indicating a multitude of difficulties she was navigating simultaneously, with the pandemic being one of the most significant challenges. While the speakers praised themselves for their competence in overcoming difficulties, these reflections may also provide insight into their decisions to step down.

4.1.2.4 Comparison between Past and Present

Due to their long tenures in office, JG, JA, and NS had the chance to compare past and present situations. On the contrary, ET, who had a short tenure, did not have the same basis for comparison. Wu and Chen (2021) suggest that when individuals compare past and present circumstances, they often highlight positive changes, signaling self-recognition of their accomplishments over time.

14.	JG: Today we passed the legislation which means 60 percent of schoolchildren are **covered by our new reforms**.
15.	JA: We have **turned around** child poverty statistics and **made the most significant increases** in welfare and the state housing stock we've seen in many decades.
16.	NS: Scotland is **a changed country since 2014** and in so, so many ways it has **changed for the better.** Young people from deprived backgrounds have never had a better chance of going to university than now.

JG used the pronoun 'we' to describe the progress of her achievements, highlighting collective recognition for herself and her party. Similarly, JA employed 'we' when drawing a positive comparison between past and present situations, extending the credit to her team. JA also discussed several projects at various stages of development, one that was revamped and another that showed

substantial growth. These descriptions signified a more modest degree of change compared to NS. In contrast, NS emphasized the term 'changed' twice in her statement, particularly noting the year 2014 when she assumed office. She eloquently illustrated the country's evolution from her inaugural day as First Minister to the present, mentioning the year served to highlight her pivotal role in driving these changes. Transforming a country significantly over time requires sustained efforts, and NS's long-term tenure enabled her to claim such transformative progress. In comparison to NS, who likely oversaw many significant changes, both JG and JA may not have had the same duration in office to see all their projects through. Interestingly, all three speakers emphasized their work on policies benefiting underprivileged children, probably reflecting a part of their nurturing female identity.

4.1.3 Indirect Self-Praise

JG, JA, and NS, who were very familiar with the audience, utilized indirect self-praise, while ET did not employ it at all. As noted by Tobback (2019), "the indirectness of these strategies entirely relies on implicit meaning, more specifically on pragmatic inferences that hint at the skillfulness of the professional" (p. 655). This approach is typically employed between closely connected individuals as it requires listeners to make an effort to interpret the message (Wolfson, 1986). NS, who had the longest tenure, employed both sub-strategies, while JG and JA each used only one. The strategies employed by these individuals will be further discussed below.

4.1.3.1 Implicatures Based on Cognitive Attitude

In this study, implicatures based on cognitive attitude were observed in the behaviors of JG, JA, and NS. According to Tobback (2019), the self-praise strategy involves speakers articulating their cognitive stance in a way that aims to create a favorable evaluation of themselves.

17.	JG: What I am **absolutely confident** of is it will be **easier for the next woman** and the woman after that and the woman after that.
18.	JA: I hope in return **I believe** that you can be kind, but strong. Empathetic, but decisive. Optimistic, but focused. That you can be your own kind of leader—one that knows when it's time to go.
19.	NS: My point is this. Giving absolutely everything of yourself to this job **is the only way to do it**. The country deserves nothing less.

JG expressed her confidence in the potential of future female leaders while also indicating that she had paved the way for them. JA employed a similar strategy by offering her assessment of a qualified individual for the job. Using parallelism to emphasize her point, JA presented three sets of seemingly conflicting adjectives. Additionally, she shared her belief that a good leader was someone who knew when it was time to step down, a principle she was now embodying. NS, who had served in the role for eight years, articulated her views on the job requirements of the First Minister, emphasizing the necessity to give one's all, describing it as "the only way to do it." With her extensive experience, NS was able to distill her insights into a definitive statement. She concluded by asserting, "the country deserves nothing less," possibly hinting at her resignation due to her inability to continue giving her absolute best as before. According to Tobback (2019), such expressions of beliefs lead to a positive evaluation of the speakers. In alignment with Bowo et al. (2022), it is evident that these three leaders were building a positive identity even as they resigned.

4.1.3.2 Self-Praise as a Complaint

This particular strategy is absent in both Tobback's (2019) and Wu and Chen's (2021) studies, likely because it is not a common feature in typical work environments. Nevertheless, it was incorporated into this research due to the discovery of instances where individuals engaged in self-praise that did not neatly fit into existing sub-strategies. These instances bore resemblance to Dayter's (2014) concept of self-praise used in the form of a complaint. In this study, this

occurred when speakers discussed challenges that had arisen in their work. It is important to note that this type of self-praise, unlike reference to hard work, did not focus solely on the difficulty of the task but rather on any negative consequences resulting from the work process.

20.	NS: The First Minister is **never off duty**, particularly in this day and age. There is virtually **no privacy**.

In excerpt (20), NS' complaint appeared to subtly intertwine self-praise regarding her dedication and sacrifices, ultimately leading to a positive evaluation. By incorporating negative terms like 'never' and 'no' in conjunction with essential human needs, specifically time off and privacy, she shed light on her challenges. According to Boxer (1993), a complaint serves as a means to convey shared emotions or issues to listeners, a strategy NS employed to resonate with her audience regarding the demanding nature of her work and her unwavering commitment. Boxer (1993) further elaborates that situational indirect complaints are typically used in interactions where there is a close or minimal social distance between individuals. NS's expression of dissatisfaction with the work environment indicated a level of comfort and rapport with her audience, ensuring her message was effectively communicated without the risk of being misconstrued.

4.2 Multimodal Analysis

This section discusses the finding of multimodal analysis which includes framing and gestures.
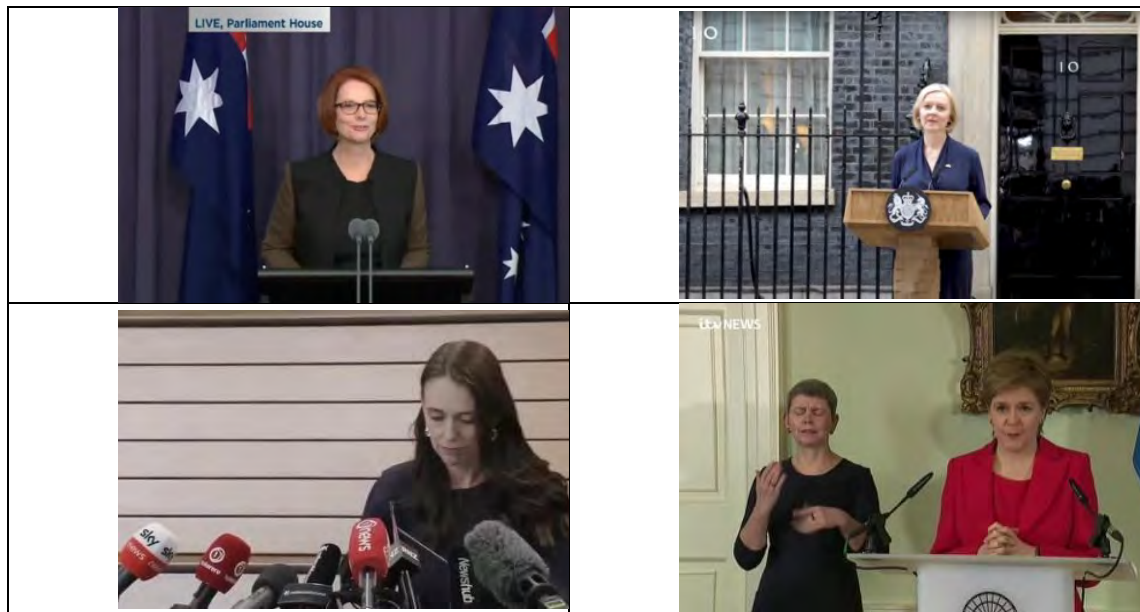
4.2.1 Visual Analysis

The images in Figure 3 were captured from the beginning of the speech, just when each speaker arrived at the podium and was about to speak.

Figure 3

Extracted Shots of the Speakers at the Start of their Speeches

JG announced her resignation at the Parliament House, a common venue for official press conferences. In contrast, JA opted for the Napier War Memorial Center to announce her resignation, a convention hall frequently used for government events. ET delivered her resignation speech at 10 Downing Street, the primary location for official UK government press announcements. NS chose Bute House, the residence of Scotland's First Minister, for her resignation speech, which also featured a sign language interpreter for accessibility. The venue included a podium and Scotland's flag, typical elements for official announcements seen in the news. While JA faced a multitude of microphones from the press, JG, ET, and NS used only the house microphone, suggesting a higher level of formality and premeditation in their speeches. JA's announcement appeared less planned and embraced a more informal setting.

JG delivered her speech with a typical formal posture, maintaining eye contact, occasionally referring to a prepared script, and making minimal hand gestures. She appeared relaxed and even smiled during her speech. In comparison, ET maintained a formal posture but seemed rather stiff. Her facial expression

remained stoic as she gazed directly at the camera. Differently, JA began her speech with her face downward and looked visibly downcast. When NS started speaking, she had clenched hands in front, suggesting emotional restraint and potential stress, as noted by Pease and Pease (2004). While NS maintained eye contact, her facial expression appeared tense, hinting at the delivery of a challenging message. It was evident that NS and JA were emotional about stepping down, while ET portrayed a more impassive demeanor. Despite speaking for a similar duration as JA, JG seemed to have come to terms with her resignation more gracefully.
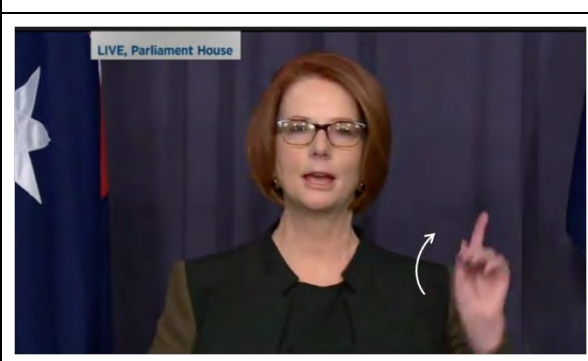
The speeches were broadcast live by a news agency. From the camera shots, we could see that the cameras were positioned close to the speakers, allowing a proximity to the press. However, the frames presented in the news coverage varied. Lerdin and Machin (2020) suggest that the camera plays a crucial role in representing the relationship between the main figure and the audience. Building on Barrett's (2020) insights on camera framing, it was observed that JG, JA, and NS were captured in medium close-up shots (from the waist upwards), implying a small perceived social distance. Diversely, ET was framed in a medium shot (from the knee upwards), which indicated a wider social distance gap with the audience (Barrett, 2020).

4.2.2 Hand Gestures

During the formal press release events, the speakers stood behind podiums to deliver their speeches. JA and ET refrained from raising their hands above the podium or utilizing visible hand gestures. In opposition, JG and NS incorporated a few hand gestures, although these were limited, with only three primary types identified. Below, we delve into these three types of gestures alongside the corresponding transcript of their spoken content. To facilitate a structured analysis of the multimodal data, we utilized the transcript convention by Mondada (2018).

Metaphoric gestures:

According to McNeill (1992), metaphoric gestures are used to depict abstract ideas into something more concrete. JG had used her hands in point to the left indicating the future female leader that would follow the path she had made as the first female Prime Minister of Australia.

	What I am absolutely confident of is it will be easier for the **next woman**
	and the **woman after that** and the woman after that.

Here, NS hands drew out an object-like shape, to signify something 'big' as she was talking about her achievement.

	I'm very proud of

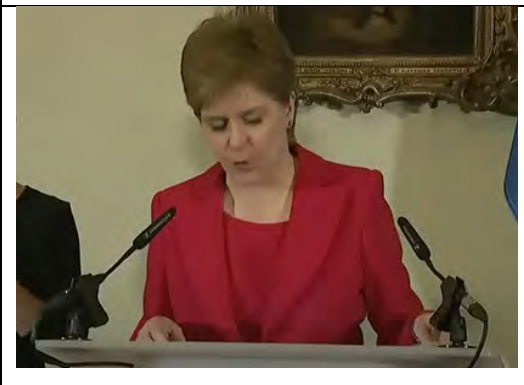|	what has been achieved
	in the years I've been in Bute House.

Beat:

As per McNeill (1992), a beat gesture occurs when the speaker employs one hand to swiftly move up and down in synchronization with the speech's rhythm. While beat gestures allow for diverse interpretations, our observation revealed that both JG and NS utilized this gesture to accentuate crucial aspects of their speeches. Notably, JG employed hand pinching and beat gestures to underscore keywords like "every Australia," directing her message to the audience, and the positive term 'great.' These gestures were instrumental as she subtly engaged in indirect self-praise through implied cognitive attitude, advocating for her ongoing project vision.

	It has been the **defining passion** of my life that(.) **every Australian** child gets a

	great opportunity
	at a **life of work** and the **dignity** that comes with work,
	gets a **great** opportunity for the education that they should have…

NS pinched her hand and made a beat gesture as she said, "poorest family with children," which could be an emphasis of important details as she performed praise from a third party.

| | As the Institute for Fiscal Studies |

	confirmed last week the poorest **families**
	with children
	in Scotland (.) are now £2,000 better off (.) as a result of our policies

Emblem gesture:

During her speech, NS utilized an "air quote" gesture by making a wriggling movement with two fingers on each hand, resembling a quotation mark. This gesture was notably employed when she mentioned 'love' in the phrase "some of the people in Scotland love me." According to Matsumoto and Hwang (2012), emblem gestures like air quotes are culturally influenced, with their symbolic meanings varying across cultures. The phrase "love me" was accompanied by hand gestures and vocal emphasis, signaling her intention to emphasize the word and imply a non-literal interpretation, as highlighted by Christensen (2023). This

combination suggested that her reference to 'love' was not about the emotional sentiment but rather denoted the ongoing support she received from the citizens.

	..for every person in Scotland who **loves**
	me

Given the seriousness of the resignation announcement, it was expected that hand gestures would be kept to a minimum. As noted by McNeill (2008), extensive hand gestures can convey a sense of assertiveness and would not be suitable for such an occasion. While JA and ET refrained from using hand gestures entirely, JG used them sparingly, and NS, having the longest tenure in the office, exhibited a bit more freedom in her gestures. Kendon (2004) also supports the idea that gestures naturally accompany speech, with McNeill (2008) emphasizing the importance of minimizing gestures in formal settings.

5. Conclusion

The observation revealed that speakers with minimal social distance employed both direct and indirect self-praise strategies, while "direct self-praise with modification" was consistent across all social distance levels. Notably, all four leaders made references to "hard work" in their addresses. In the formal setting of

the speeches, JA and ET refrained from using hand gestures, whereas NS, with the lengthiest tenure, used gestures sparingly. JG, JA, and NS, who were familiar with their audiences, disclosed personal details, hinting at their plans to prioritize family time post-resignation. Conversely, ET, less acquainted with the audience, avoided sharing personal information. One limitation of this study was the exclusion of other social factors influencing politeness strategies, such as 'liking.' As per Brown and Levinson (1987), "liking might be an independent variable influencing the choice of politeness strategy" (p. 16). The perceived likability or popularity of a political figure could influence their use of self-praise strategies. Furthermore, our study focused solely on hand gestures, suggesting that future analyses could explore facial expressions and prosody to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

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