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Master Thesis

The relation between the tone of voice and the role of the sender in crisis communication

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Abstract

This study analyses whether there is an effect between the role of the sender in crisis communication and what type of communication a sender is using and if it affects how the source is evaluated. Specifically, the study examines whether people perceive and evaluate prime minister Rutte and King Willem-Alexander differently if the tone of voice is not coherent with their role in communicating about crisis MH17. To test this, the following main research question is examined: *What is the effect between the tone of voice in crisis communication and the role of the sender regarding credibility, expertise, trust in government, and content evaluation?* Participants evaluate the text and sender on the basis of the credibility and expertise of the source, their trust in the government, and the overall content evaluation. To analyse the participants' evaluations, an online questionnaire is used with a total of 127 Dutch participants. Overall, the findings indicate that there is no significant effect between the tone of voice in crisis communication and the role of the sender. Likewise, the dependent variables did not affect the evaluations of the source based on the texts. This study gives insight into whether the sender influences how people perceive crisis communication.

Keywords: crisis, crisis communication, role of sender, tone of voice

Introduction

On the 8th of March 2014, flight MH370 went missing. This flight had a total of 239 people on board. It was supposed to make its way from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing. However, after less than an hour, the plane lost contact with people on the ground. The plane should have checked in with the air traffic control in a Vietnamese city, but they never did. What happened after is nowadays still a big mystery. A few aeroplane pieces were found on the African Coasts and islands in the Indian Ocean; however, the entire aeroplane and its passengers are still missing. Since this aeroplane contained 12 crew members and 227 passengers, it is a major crisis that is still unresolved (BBC, 2017).

Several parties played a role in this crisis; a critical role went to Malaysian airlines, of which the government owns the majority of the shares. Therefore, the government played a significant role in communicating about this crisis. How governments handle crisis communication could influence the amount of trust the citizens have in the government. During a crisis, the government's transparency is described as its ability and willingness to provide citizens with the information they request (Brajawidagda, Chatfield & Reddick, 2015). However, during this crisis, the government got criticism from the crisis stakeholders on how they handled the crisis mostly because they were not transparent, reliable, and consistent enough with their information to their citizens. During this crisis, various stakeholders communicated. The crisis communication was not handled correctly (Pearson, 2014; Shankar, 2014).

Nevertheless, crisis communication is becoming more and more critical for organisations and governmental institutions these days due to, for example, the rise in media attention (Heath, 2010). According to Coombs (2010), the essential factor in resolving crises is the use of appropriate communication. This is important because a crisis could threaten a company's reputation and further existence. It is evenly important concerning a government because it is a government's task to protect its citizens. Appropriate communication could positively affect citizens' trust (Brajawidagda et al., 2015).

Therefore, the question arises which aspects could play a role in whether people successfully perceive information during crisis communication. Various studies focused on how information is framed in media and perceived by the public. Still, there is limited research on whether the sender's role could influence how the public perceives the message. While according to the language expectations theory, people tend to have certain expectations when talking to people. If these expectations do not align with the language the sender is using, this could influence someone's behaviour (Burgoon & Miller, 1985). Therefore, could there be a

difference in how people perceive a message when the message does not fit the sender? This study will examine whether crisis communication is differently perceived when the role of the sender does not fit the message.

Crisis communication

Firstly, it is important to create a better picture of crisis communication. A crisis can arise in various ways and has numerous definitions with overarching concepts. According to Coombs (2007), "a crisis is a sudden and unexpected event that threatens to disrupt an organisation's operations and poses both a financial and reputational threat" (p. 164). Crisis management can be divided into three phases: prevention, managing, and recovery. Firstly, prevention is aimed at preparation prior to a crisis. Secondly, managing is aimed at communication while the crisis is occurring. Lastly, recovery entails communication after the crisis (George, 2012).

According to those phases, communication plays a significant role during and after a crisis because it could, if handled correctly, eventually cause less damage to the organisation or stakeholders. Crisis communication has a broad research area that encompasses many themes. To clarify what role communication plays in a crisis, Coombs (2010) came up with the following definition: "crisis communication can be defined broadly as the collection, processing, and dissemination of information required to address a crisis situation" (p. 20). There are multiple response strategies during crisis communication. Which response strategy an organisation should use depends on different factors.

To be more specific, Coombs (2007) invented a model to determine what kind of crisis the organisation or institution is going through, which could be of importance when choosing a response strategy. Choosing the correct strategy could minimise the effect of a crisis on the organisation's reputation. The model Coombs (2007) invented is called the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). This model provides instructions on handling a crisis to minimise damage to the organisation. It serves three particular clusters in which a crisis can fall.

Firstly, the victim cluster entails that the stakeholders and the organisation itself are a victim. Secondly, the accidental cluster in which the organisation's participation in the crisis was unintentional. Lastly, the preventable cluster refers to an organisation that intentionally risked a crisis. Logically, the victim cluster poses the least danger to the reputation and the preventable cluster the most. These clusters provide insight into which aspects the organisation falls and, thus, to what extent they are held responsible. Eventually, the level of responsibility

could indicate how the organisation should respond. Namely, the higher the responsibility of the organisation, the higher the public's expectations for a suitable explanation (Coombs, 2015).

Several studies examined the effect of the level of responsibility on the reaction of the public. For instance, Utz, Schultz, and Glocka (2013) tested what the influence of level of responsibility had on behaviour. In particular by comparing the victim and intentional crisis cluster. The researchers tested this by using Fukushima's nuclear crisis and the company responsible for the maintenance of the nuclear power plants. It appeared that the intentional cluster resulted in people being more negative towards the company compared to the victim cluster. In other words, participants showed more positive reactions in the condition where the company was a victim of the crisis itself.

Furthermore, the organisation's history regarding the crisis could be important in crisis communication. For example, whether the crisis has occurred more than once. According to Kriyantono (2012), people are less confident about an organisation if the crisis occurred more often in the past. Additionally, Jong and Broekman (2021) tested the effect of crisis history if two crises occurred in quick succession. In particular, they analysed how people responded to organisational communication regarding two aeroplane crashes which occurred shortly after one another. This research showed that the crisis history of an organisation plays a role in how people evaluate the company. Namely, the company with a history with crises was evaluated more negatively and had a negative reputation as a result.

In conclusion, all these factors play a role in the strategy the crisis manager uses to build their response. The main goal of crisis managers is to reduce the negative effect the crisis can have on the organisation. It is important to remember that not every crisis requires the same response but that the response varies from situation to situation (Coombs, 2007). Overall, crisis communication is a tool organisations can use to effectively communicate with the public. To be more precise, if crisis communication is handled successfully, it can increase the public's involvement and reduce negative emotions towards the organisation (Yang, Kang & Johnson, 2010). However, there are various ways to handle crisis communication.

Tone of voice

Besides the crisis response strategy, crisis managers can use a different tone of voice in their messages. The tone of voice of a message refers to how the sender states the message. There are various tones of voices. Firstly, there is a conversational human voice. According to Kelleher (2009), conversational human voice entails communicating in a natural manner, which engages. Research by Kapuściński, Zhang, Zeng, and Cao (2021) refer to it as a more informal

way of addressing a message. Important with this tone of voice is interacting with the public. Additionally, the conversational human voice is often more emotional (Barcelos, Dantas & Sénécal, 2018). The conversational human tone of voice can be characterised by first-person language, for example, 'I' and 'we', experiences from the sender, and reasonings that go with the crisis (Park & Cameron, 2014).

Secondly, an organisational tone of voice can be referred to as a more formal way of expressing a message which is often more task-oriented (Kapuściński et al., 2021). Whereas the conversational human voice gives a message a more emotional tendency, the organisational voice is the opposite. An organisational tone of voice is focused on providing information with fewer emotions, in a straightforward manner, and in a less personal way, namely, mostly in third person language (Park & Cameron, 2014).

Various studies have compared the influence and difference between the conversational human and organisational voice in crisis communication. For example, according to Park and Cameron (2014), the source's credibility was higher when the communication was more personal which refers to a conversational human voice. Additionally, people's intentions to be involved in the organisation after a crisis was higher if the crisis communication was provided in a conversational human voice. The researchers developed a fictitious crisis and company to avoid a potential bias. Due to these decisions, participants were not influenced by previous experiences with a particular company and biases were eliminated.

In comparison, Van der Meer and Verhoeven (2014), who manipulated the study in a comparable way as Park and Cameron (2014), revealed in their study that showing emotions during crisis communication, which again refers to a conversational human voice, had a positive effect on the organisation's reputation. What should be noted is that both Park and Cameron (2014) and Van der Meer and Verhoeven (2014) concentrated on recalling defective products. For this reason, the question arises whether the outcomes also apply to a crisis with more emotional valence, for example, an aeroplane crash. Another notable fact of the studies from Park and Cameron (2014) and Van der Meer and Verhoeven (2014) is that the studies used organisations in the study focused on making profits. Would the outcome be the same if the communicating organisation is not focused on making profits?

For instance, the study by Seeger (2006) used non-profitable organisations to analyse the most optimal way to handle crisis communication. According to the outcomes, in line with Park and Cameron (2014) and Van der Meer and Verhoeven (2014), using a conversational human tone of voice had more positive outcomes for the non-profitable organisations used in the study. To be more precise, a conversational human tone of voice resulted in a higher amount

of expertise concerning the sender. On the contrary, the organisational tone of voice made the source perceived as heartless and less credible.

Contrary to the beforementioned studies, Bakker, Bommel, Kerstholt, and Giebels (2018) studied the difference between a conversational human voice and an organisational voice in crisis communication directly from the government, in which different outcomes were found. Suppose the government is the communicating party during crisis communication; in that case, people tend to value the organisational voice more than the conversational human voice when following advice. Nevertheless, the conversational human voice did have a more positive influence on collective effectiveness.

Against expectations, Bakker et al. (2018) have not found evidence that tone of voice influenced trust or closeness towards the government. In contrast, the degree of accountability did influence the amount of trust in the government. If the government was accountable for the crisis, people's trust was lower in comparison to the condition where the government was not accountable. The finding that tone of voice did not influence the amount of trust was divergent because other studies suggested that it would have an effect. For example, Shen (2010) indicated that having empathy, that is, conversational human voice, positively affected the relation between sender and receiver during crisis communication. What should be noted is that Bakker et al. (2018) and Shen (2010) both focused on a fictitious crisis. Would the results be different if the studies focused on a non-fictitious crisis with governmental communication?

For instance, the study from Seeger (2006) focused on non-fictitious crises and found that showing empathy and emotions, which refers to a conversational human tone of voice, resulted in a higher amount of trust. Additionally, a conversational human tone of voice resulted in a higher amount of credibility. This higher amount of credibility eventually translated into a more trust between the sender and receivers of the message.

To conclude, various studies on conversational human and organisational voice show different and contradictory outcomes, which raises the question of whether more factors could influence how people perceive a message.

Role of the sender

One of those factors that could play a role is the sender's role. Communication can be described as an exchange of signs between different people in which they together generate the meaning of those signs (Fielding, 2006). However, in crisis communication, often someone takes the lead in sharing the communication. Therefore, it is important to stress the definition of leadership communication because it is different from regular communication. It entails a

"controlled, purposeful transfer of meaning by which leaders influence a single person, a group, an organisation, or a community" (Barret, 2006, p. 386).

According to the language expectation theory, people tend to have certain expectations when talking to people. For example, in governmental situations, people expect a particular form of communication that goes with the sender of the message. This might be a different expectation when talking to friends. According to the language expectations theory, various factors, such as the source, influence what someone is expecting from the sender. If those expectations do not align with the language the sender is using, this might have consequences on one's behaviour (Burgoon & Miller, 1985). For example, if listeners expect a high level of expertise, which aligns with the communication, people tend to be more motivated to act according to that message (Tobin & Raymundo, 2009).

Previous studies have already shown that the role of the sender could play a role in persuasive communication, which calls for action. To be specific, in those cases, the extent to which the sender has legitimate power played a role. People are more likely to reject messages from senders deemed to have no power. In other words, people are more likely to act according to the sender's persuasive message if the sender is perceived as powerful (Jenkins & Dragojevic, 2011). However, would this also apply in crisis communication instead of persuasive communication?

The language expectation theory and the study from Jenkins and Dragojevic (2011) are focused on persuasive messages. According to Benoit (1997), crisis communication can be seen as a form of persuasion. Furthermore, the language expectation theory concentrates on the receiver's expectations. Limited research has been conducted on influences instead of expectations. Could a message that does not fit the sender influence the sender's evaluations? For example, is someone less trustworthy if the language used does not match the role of the sender? This is especially important in crisis communication from governmental institutions because people must entirely rely on government information in an (inter)national crisis (Brajawidagda, Chatfield & Reddick, 2015).

Relation between tone of voice and role of sender

To summarise, various studies have been conducted in the field of crisis communication in combination with the tone of voice. Nevertheless, limited research has been undertaken on combining those aspects with the role of the sender. According to the language expectation theory, people tend to have expectations from their sender during a conversation. However, the language expectations theory is focused on someone's expectations of the sender instead of the

influences of the sender. Additionally, the influences of the tone of voice a sender could have on the receiver have not yet been tested in the context of crisis communication.

Present study

This study aims to clarify whether there is an effect on how people perceive a message if the tone of voice does not fit the sender's role. The crisis communication from the Dutch government during MH17 will be analysed and manipulated to clarify this. This crisis is chosen for the analysis because it has different characteristics. Firstly, the communication about the crisis occurred after the crisis had happened. In other words, in the recovery phase (George, 2012). Secondly, it entails a non-intentional crisis where the Dutch government and citizens were victims of the crisis. According to Coombs (2007), this refers to the victim cluster.

These characteristics imply that the Dutch government has a low responsibility with regard to the occurrence of the crisis. A low responsibility could indicate that public expectations are low concerning an explanation from the government (Coombs, 2015). This could influence the outcome of a study. Nevertheless, for this study, it is a crisis which can be used as analyse material because of the different roles the senders of the communication played. The role of the sender is an important factor in this study, while the level of responsibility is not important in this study.

On the 17th of July 2014, flight MH17 from Malaysia Airlines was shot down in the eastern part of Ukraine. In total, 298 passengers attended the flight, of which 196 were Dutch. Tragically, all passengers died during the crash. Since it concerned a shot-down aeroplane, the Dutch government immediately started a criminal investigation. According to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the approach was "to establish the truth, achieve justice for the victims of flight MH17 and their next of kin, and hold to account those responsible for downing flight MH17" (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, n.d., para. 2).

Within crises, there are different levels of responsibility. At the start of the MH17 crisis, it was unclear who should be held responsible. What soon became apparent was that the Netherlands were the most heavily affected country without being guilty of the crisis. Even though the Dutch government had no influence on the crisis, they were responsible for communicating with the Dutch citizens. During crises of this magnitude, the prime minister and the King have an essential role in communicating with the Dutch public. However, they fulfil two different functions.

In the Netherlands, the role of the King can be described as a cohesive, representative, and encouraging role (Het Koninklijk Huis, n.d.). Referring to the differences in tone of voice,

this can be seen as the conversational human tone of voice. On the contrary, the prime minister, in this case, prime minister Rutte, is responsible for all the information coming from the government (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). This form of communication is often more formal; therefore, it can be referred to as organisational voice.

Due to the differences in roles and, therefore, the form of communication, this study will investigate whether participants perceive and evaluate King Willem-Alexander and prime minister Rutte differently if the tone of voice is not coherent with the sender's role. Thus, this study aims to investigate if the role of the sender should fit with the type of communication the sender is using and if it affects how the source is evaluated. To clarify this, the following research questions have been formulated:

What is the effect between the tone of voice in crisis communication and the role of the sender regarding credibility, expertise, trust in government, and content evaluation?

To answer the central research questions, the following sub-questions have been formulated:

1. What is the effect of conversational human or organisational tone of voice on how the participants evaluate the sender on its credibility and expertise?
2. What is the effect of conversational human or organisational tone of voice on the trust in the government?
3. What is the effect of conversational human or organisational tone of voice on how participants evaluate the content of the message?
4. What is the effect regarding credibility, expertise, trust in government, and content of the message if the sender speaks with a tone of voice that does not fit his role?

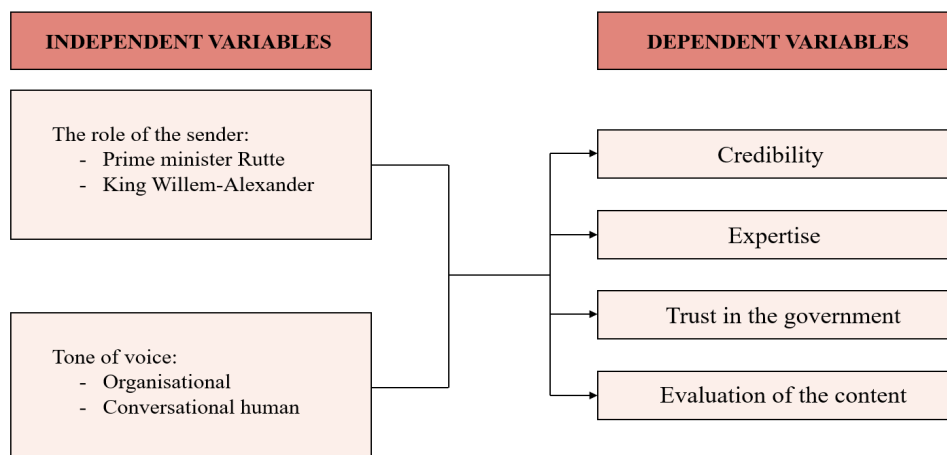The analytical model can be found in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Analytical model

Method

Materials

An experiment was conducted with a non-fictitious crisis to answer the research question. This study focused on two independent variables: the role of the sender (prime minister Rutte and King Willem-Alexander) and tone of voice (organisational or conversational human voice). The questionnaire was adapted to a 7-point Likert scale to compare the data as good as possible in accordance with other studies regarding tone of voice (for example, the studies mentioned in the introduction).

Firstly, regarding the sender's role, both men's speeches from a press conference about MH17 were used. Regarding the organisational tone of voice, the press conference from prime minister Rutte on the 18th of July 2014 was used. The speech from prime minister Rutte was used for the conditions of prime minister Rutte's organisational and King Willem-Alexander's organisational and can be found in Appendix A. The text in italics indicates an organisational tone of voice:

1. Prime minister Rutte talked in the third language by saying, "The Netherlands is shocked".

2. He provided more task-oriented information by stating, "Festivities are being sobered".

3. He gave detailed information about the crisis by providing exact numbers, "Late last night, the government could speak of at least 154 Dutch victims".

Concerning King Willem-Alexander's organisational condition, the text has not been adapted and used in its original state.

Additionally, concerning King Willem-Alexander, the speech of the 21st of July 2014 was used. This speech was used for the condition of King Willem-Alexander conversational human and, with the necessary adjustments, for prime minister Rutte's conversational human condition. For instance, adjustments entailed changing "we", referring to King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima, to "I'', referring to prime minister Rutte. The speech used for the condition of King Willem-Alexander conversational human can be found in Appendix B. Additionally, the adjusted speech for prime minister Rutte conversational human can be found in Appendix C. The text in italics indicates a conversational human tone of voice:

1. King Willem-Alexander talked in first-person language, saying, "We are deeply touched", and "We know that the loss cannot be recovered".

2. The speech contained emotional language like "The sadness, the impotence, and despair cut our soul" and "That we open our heart to anyone who wants to share their story".

A focus group was held to test whether participants evaluated both texts as organisational and conversational human tone of voice. This focus group consisted of 3 fellow students. At the start of the focus group, the researcher explained the differences between the organisational and conversational human tone of voice. After the explanation, the three students received both speeches from prime minister Rutte and King Willem-Alexander to test whether they perceived the text differently in terms of organisational and conversational human tone of voice. The students were asked to highlight the parts they perceived as organisational or conversational human tone of voice. After reading and highlighting the texts, a discussion between the students and the researcher about the highlighted parts took place.

The researcher and students discussed what parts of the text were coded as conversational human and organisational tone of voice. This discussion revealed that the students coded the text of King Willem-Alexander as a conversational human tone of voice. However, the text of prime minister Rutte was more complex to code as only organisational because it contained parts with a conversational human tone of voice. Furthermore, the students had suggestions for the text of King Willem-Alexander to make the text more conversational human.

The focus group resulted in an adaption of both the text of prime minister Rutte as well as the text of King Willem-Alexander. For example, parts from the speech from prime minister Rutte, which were in first-person language, were changed to second- or third-person language. Additionally, the parts that made the text emotional were changed to less emotional language use. The reverse was applied to the text of King Willem-Alexander. Third-person language was, if possible, changed to first-person language. Additionally, some parts of the text were made more emotional.

Furthermore, both speeches were manipulated in a way that prime minister Rutte got a conversational human tone of voice and King Willem-Alexander an organisational tone of voice. This was manipulated by changing the original text for the other person. For example, prime minister Rutte's text with the conversational human tone of voice is the original text of King Willem-Alexander. However, the original speech of King Willem-Alexander was written in a 'we' form. Therefore, this was changed to an 'I' form. The same was applied to the original text of prime minister Rutte. These adaptations eventually resulted in four texts: organisational tone of voice of prime minister Rutte, conversational human tone of voice of King Willem-

Alexander, conversational human tone of voice of prime minister Rutte, and organisational tone of voice of King Willem-Alexander. These changes were implemented based on the discussion in the focus group.

Subjects

The study aimed to reach a total of 120 participants, consisting of male and female students with an age range of 18-30. This specific demographic was chosen because it was easy to reach out to them, and it is a homogeneous group. Having a homogeneous group minimised the possibility that other factors could play a role. In total, 161 people participated in the study. However, after excluding 30 participants who had incomplete answers and 4 participants who were above 30 years, 127 participants remained. From the 127 participants, 32.3% ($n = 41$) was male and 67.7% ($n = 86$) was female. The respondents had an average age of 24 years (range: 18-30, $SD = 3.14$). Concerning someone's educational level, most participants were from hbo (40.2%), followed by university (37%), mbo (15.7%), havo (3.9%), vmbo (2.4%), and vwo (0.8%).

A one-way analysis of variance and two chi-square tests were performed to examine whether the participants were equally distributed over the four conditions. Firstly, the one-way analysis of variance did not show a significant effect for gender and the four conditions ($F(3, 123) = 1.96$, $p = .124$). This outcome indicated that the participants were evenly spread across the four conditions concerning age. Secondly, with regard to gender, the chi-square test did not show a significant relation between gender and the four conditions ($\chi^2(3) = 1.04$, $p = .792$). In other words, this outcome indicated that, regarding gender, the participants were equally distributed across the four conditions. Lastly, concerning educational level, the chi-square test did not show a significant relation between educational level and the four conditions ($\chi^2(15) = 12.64$, $p = .630$). This outcome entailed that, regarding educational level, the participants were equally distributed across the four conditions.

Design

The design of this experiment was a 2 (role of the sender: prime minister Rutte or King Willem-Alexander) x 2 (tone of voice: organisational or conversational human voice) between-subjects design.

Instrumentation

This study had a total of four dependent variables. The sender's evaluation was divided into two dependent variables: credibility and expertise. Furthermore, this study measured the overall trust in government and the overall assessment of the content. Firstly, the credibility of the sender was measured with a 7-point Likert scale based on Kang (2010), which was also used in Park and Cameron (2014). It was measured with four items. Namely, participants rated to what extent they found the sender, based on the text, influential, knowledgeable, reliable, and transparent (strongly disagree – strongly agree). The reliability of the credibility scale was acceptable: $\alpha = .70$.

Secondly, the source's expertise was measured with a 7-point Likert scale based on McCroskey & Teven (1999), who developed a measurement scale to test the expertise of a source. Participants were asked to rate whether they found the source, based on the text, intelligent, trained, expert, informed, competent, and smart (strongly disagree – strongly agree). The reliability of the source expertise scale was acceptable: $\alpha = .82$.

Thirdly, trust in government was measured with the scale from Regan et al. (2014), which was also used in Bakker et al. (2018). This scale exists of a 7-point Likert scale. Participants were asked to rate their trust in the national government, based on the text, on expertise, honesty, and trustworthiness (strongly disagree – strongly agree). The researchers suggested that having a higher average mean relates to a higher level of trust in the government. The reliability of the trust in government scale was acceptable: $\alpha = .82$.

Fourthly, the content evaluation was measured with a 7-point Likert scale based on Kang (2010), who analysed a measurement scale for content evaluation and credibility. This was examined with six items. Namely, participants had to rate to what extent they found the content, based on the text, authentic, insightful, informative, consistent, focused, and accurate (strongly disagree – strongly agree). The reliability of the content evaluation scale was acceptable $\alpha = .80$.

Lastly, concerning opinions and bias, participants were asked what their opinion was about prime minister Rutte and King Willem-Alexander. For the opinion scale, two items from every scale of the dependent variables were used to connect the opinion questions with the rest of the study. To be more precise, participants were asked to rate to what extent they found prime minister Rutte or Willem-Alexander, depending on the condition the participant was in, influential, knowledgeable, intelligent, informed, having expertise, trustworthy, authentic, and accurate (strongly disagree – strongly agree). The reliability of the opinion scale for prime minister Rutte was acceptable: $\alpha = .83$. The reliability of the opinion scale for King Willem-

Alexander was acceptable as well: α = .85. The whole questionnaire can be found in Appendix D.

Procedure

This study was conducted using the online questionnaire Qualtrics, which individuals filled out. To test whether the survey was working accordingly, a pre-test was executed. Four participants filled out the survey to test whether the statements were clear and whether the four participants were assigned to the four different conditions. Both were approved. Therefore, the pre-test participants were used for the analysis. Participation in the survey was voluntary. At the start of the questionnaire, participants got privacy information on which they needed to agree. When the participants started with the questionnaire, they automatically accepted that the data would be used for this study. Firstly, the survey started with demographic questions. Participants needed to answer about what their age, gender, and educational level were.

Secondly, participants read one of the four texts, which were divided in a randomised order. Before they received the text, the participants got information on how often they got the opportunity to read the text. Participants got the chance to read the text two times. The first opportunity was before the control questions, and the second opportunity was after they knew from whom the text was. In this study, the role of the sender played a significant role. Due to this reason, it was important to show the text a second time so that participants could reread the text while knowing who it was.

Thirdly, several control questions were asked to ensure that foreknowledge, opinions, or bias did not influence the results. Those two control questions were asked at the beginning of the survey, namely, after the first time they read the text, because participants could be excluded if they knew exactly from whom the text was. With regard to foreknowledge, the participants were asked whether they knew from which source the text was and, if so, from whom it was. In total, 15 participants filled out that they knew from whom the text was. However, none of the participants filled out the correct answer. Therefore, those participants were still used in the study.

Fourthly, after the reading the text for the second time, the participants received questions about the dependent variables. Those scales incorporated the four dependent variables: credibility, source expertise, trust in government, and content evaluation. Before every scale, participants received a short note with information about the questions. This information entailed what dependent variable the questions were focused on, of what items the

scale existed, that there were no wrong or correct answers, and that participants should base their answer on the content of the text.

Lastly, participants received questions regarding opinions and bias about prime minister Rutte or King Willem-Alexander, depending on the condition the participant was in. Before the questions, participants received a short note of information about the upcoming questions. This information stated that the upcoming questions focused on prime minister Rutte or King Willem-Alexander itself instead of on the previous read text. Additionally, the information stated that there were no wrong or correct answers. Those questions were asked at the end of the survey to exclude the chance that participants were influenced by how they answered the questions about the text.

On average, participants took 9 minutes to complete the survey. What should be noted is that the extreme outliers in duration were excluded from this calculation. An explanation for these outliers could be that people have not completed the survey in one go but returned to the survey at a later time.

Statistical treatment

To compare the data and answer the research questions, several tests were performed by the statistical program SPSS Statistics 27. For all statistical tests, a confidence interval of 95% was used. Firstly, to analyse the distribution of the participants on the basis of gender, age, and educational level, a one-way analysis of variance and two chi-square tests were conducted. Secondly, tests for Cronbach Alpha's were conducted to test the item reliability. In other words, whether the statements used per variable are consistent enough for an overarching variable. The statements were used for the variable if the Cronbach Alpha was .70 or higher. This was the case for all the items.

Thirdly, two-way between-participants ANOVA's were conducted for every dependent variable (credibility, expertise, trust in government, and assessment of the content) with the independent variables role of the sender (Rutte versus Willem-Alexander) and tone of voice (conversational human versus organisational). Lastly, Pearson's correlations were tested between the dependent variables and the opinions about prime minister Rutte and King Willem-Alexander. These correlations tested whether the opinion of prime minister Rutte and King Willem-Alexander influenced how participants answered on the scales of the dependent variables.

Results

The aim of this study was to clarify whether the tone of voice of a message and the role of the sender influence how people evaluate prime minister Rutte and King Willem-Alexander. Different statistical tests were carried out to check whether the speaker's credibility and expertise, trust in government, and the overall content evaluation were evaluated differently.

Credibility of the source

Two univariate ANOVA's were conducted to answer the first research question, which entailed the effect of tone of voice and the role of the sender on the sender's credibility and expertise. The univariate ANOVA for the credibility of the source with as between subject factors tone of voice (organisational versus conversational human) and role of the sender (prime minister Rutte versus King Willem-Alexander) showed that both tone of voice ($F(1, 123) = 0.04$, $p = .838$, $\eta^2 = .000$) and role of the sender ($F(1, 123) = 2.75$, $p = .100$, $\eta^2 = .022$) had no significant main effect on the credibility of the source. There was also no significant interaction of tone of voice and role of the sender ($F(1, 123) = 3.29$, $p = .072$, $\eta^2 = .026$).

As the results show, there was no significant interaction. However, what should be noted, is that there was a trend in the result of the test. Despite the fact that it was not a significant interaction, the trend showed that prime minister Rutte was perceived as more credible in an organisational tone of voice, and King Willem-Alexander was perceived as more credible in a conversational human tone of voice. The exact means can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and *n* for credibility of the source assessed by differences in tone of voice (organisational versus conversational human) and role of the sender (prime minister Rutte versus King Willem-Alexander) (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

	Organisational			Human		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Prime minister Rutte	4.64	1.05	30	4.36	1.06	33
King Willem-Alexander	4.63	.90	33	5.00	1.21	31
Total	4.64	.97	63	4.67	1.17	64

Secondly, regarding the expertise of the source, a univariate ANOVA was performed. The univariate ANOVA for the expertise of the source with as between subject factors tone of voice (organisational versus conversational human) and role of the sender (prime minster Rutte versus

King Willem-Alexander) showed that both tone of voice ($F(1, 123) = 0.11$, $p = .747$, $\eta^2 = .001$) and role of the sender ($F(1, 123) = 1.69$, $p = .196$, $\eta^2 = .014$) had no significant main effect on the expertise of the source. There was also no significant interaction of tone of voice and role of the sender ($F(1, 123) = 2.53$, $p = .115$, $\eta^2 = .020$).

According to this analysis, there was no significant interaction found. However, what is worth stating, is that there was a trend. Even if there was no significant interaction, the trend showed that prime minister Rutte was perceived as having more expertise with an organisational tone of voice and King Willem-Alexander was perceived as having more expertise with a conversational human tone of voice. The exact means can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, and *n* for the expertise of the source assessed by differences in tone of voice (organisational versus conversational human) and role of the sender (prime minister Rutte versus King Willem-Alexander) (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

	Organisational			Human		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Prime minister Rutte	5.16	.90	30	4.83	1.09	33
King Willem-Alexander	5.11	.87	33	5.32	.98	31
Total	5.13	.88	63	5.07	1.06	64

Trust in the government

To answer the second research questions, which entails the effect of tone of voice and role of the sender on the sender's trust in the government, a univariate ANOVA was conducted. The univariate ANOVA for trust in government with as between subject factors tone of voice (organisational versus conversational human) and role of the sender (prime minister Rutte versus King Willem-Alexander) showed that both tone of voice ($F(1, 123) = 2.64$, $p = .107$, $\eta^2 = .021$) and role of the sender ($F(1, 123) = 1.36$, $p = .246$, $\eta^2 = .011$) had no significant main effect on the trust in the government. There was also no significant interaction of tone of voice and role of the sender ($F(1, 123) = 0.01$, $p = .925$, $\eta^2 = .000$).

While the results did not show a significant effect, there was a pattern. The tone of voice was not significant. However, numerically there were higher ratings for the organisational tone of voice compared to the conversational human tone of voice. Entailing, the trend showed that an organisational tone of voice could result in a higher degree of trust in government. The exact means can be found in Table 3.

Table 3. Means, standard deviations, and *n* for the trust in the government assessed by differences in tone of voice (organisational versus conversational human) and role of the sender (prime minister Rutte versus King Willem-Alexander) (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

	Organisational			Human		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Prime minister Rutte	4.64	1.22	30	4.32	.82	33
King Willem-Alexander	4.91	1.31	33	4.55	1.32	31
Total	4.78	1.26	63	4.43	1.09	64

Evaluation of the content

To answer the third research question, which entails the effect of tone of voice and the role of the sender on the evaluation of the content, a univariate ANOVA was conducted. The univariate ANOVA for evaluation of the content with as between subject factors tone of voice (organisational versus conversational human) and role of the sender (prime minister Rutte versus King Willem-Alexander) showed that both tone of voice ($F(1, 123) = 0.11$, $p = .737$, $\eta^2 = .001$) and role of the sender ($F(1, 123) = 1.50$, $p = .222$, $\eta^2 = .012$) had no significant main effect on the evaluation of the content. There was also no significant interaction of tone of voice and role of the sender ($F(1, 123) = 0.37$, $p = .545$, $\eta^2 = .003$). The exact means can be found in Table 4.

Table 4. Means, standard deviations, and *n* for the content evaluation assessed by differences in tone of voice (organisational versus conversational human) and role of the sender (prime minister Rutte versus King Willem-Alexander) (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

	Organisational			Human		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Prime minister Rutte	4.80	1.02	30	4.75	.96	33
King Willem-Alexander	4.91	.80	33	5.07	1.16	31
Total	4.86	.91	63	4.91	1.07	64

Opinion prime minister Rutte and Willem-Alexander

As mentioned above, there were no significant effects of the tone of voice or role of the sender. Therefore, the opinion about prime minister Rutte and King Willem-Alexander was analysed

to examine whether the overall opinion about prime minister Rutte and King Willem-Alexander played a role in the examination.

Firstly, concerning prime minister Rutte, a significant positive correlation was found between credibility and opinion of prime minister Rutte ($r(63) = .732$, $p < .001$). Secondly, a significant positive correlation was found between expertise and opinion of prime minister Rutte ($r(63) = .694$, $p = < .001$). Thirdly, a significant positive correlation was found between trust in government and the opinion of prime minister Rutte ($r(63) = .772$, $p < .001$). Lastly, a significant positive correlation was found between content evaluation and opinion of prime minister Rutte ($r(63) = .524$, $p < .001$). These correlations suggested that, for all dependent variables, participants answered in the same way on the questions about the opinion of prime minister Rutte as on the questions about the dependent variables. This could have entailed that they based their judgements on their existing opinions.

Furthermore, the same correlation analysis was performed with regard to the opinion about King Willem-Alexander. Firstly, a significant positive correlation was found between credibility and opinion about King Willem-Alexander ($r(64) = .418$, $p < .001$). Secondly, a significant positive correlation was found between expertise and opinion about King Willem-Alexander ($r(64) = .332$, $p = .007$). Thirdly, a positive correlation was found between content evaluation and opinion about King Willem-Alexander ($r(64) = .292$, $p = .019$). These correlations suggested that, for the three dependent variables, credibility, expertise, and content evaluation, participants answered in the same way on the questions about the opinion of King Willem-Alexander as on the questions about the dependent variables. With regard to the trust in government, the analysis did not show a correlation with the opinion about King Willem ($r(64) = .161$, $p = .205$).

Conclusion and discussion

For this study, the following research question was analysed: What is the effect between the tone of voice in crisis communication and the role of the sender regarding credibility, expertise, trust in government, and content evaluation? To answer this question, several sub-questions were formulated. Those sub-questions focused on whether conversational human or organisational tone of voice had an influence on how people evaluate the sender based on credibility, expertise, the extent of trust in the government, and the evaluation of the content. Additionally, it was tested whether there was an effect regarding credibility, expertise, trust in government, and content of the message if the sender speaks with a tone of voice that does not fit his role. It was performed by the use of a survey with Dutch students.

This study showed no significant relationship between credibility, expertise, trust in government, and evaluations of the content and tone of voice or role of the sender. Consequently, regarding the main research question, there is no significant effect between the tone of voice in crisis communication and the role of the sender. The possible explanations for these outcomes are presented below. Furthermore, the limitation of this particular study and suggestions for future research are described.

Credibility and expertise of the source

According to previous research, using a conversational human tone of voice had more favourable outcomes compared to an organisational tone of voice. Firstly, concerning credibility, the credibility of the source was higher if the source communicated with a conversational human tone of voice (Park & Cameron, 2014; Seeger, 2006). However, this was not shown in this study. Both in the organisational as well as the conversational human tone of voice, the credibility of the source remained the same. What should be noted is that for both conditions, the credibility was mostly answered on the neutral part of the scale.

With respect to expertise, comparable outcomes were found. According to the results from this study, the tone of voice did not play a significant role in the evaluation of the expertise of the source. These results are not in line with previous studies. For example, Seeger (2006) demonstrated that the use of a conversational human tone of voice resulted in a higher amount of expertise from the source. Again, for both conditions, the source's extent of expertise was mainly answered on the neutral part of the scale.

A possible explanation for these differences could be the difference in method. Firstly, regarding credibility, in the study by Park and Cameron (2014), the researchers used a fictitious crisis which, in their case, eliminated the bias participants could have toward the company.

However, this could also have influenced the extent to which people could possibly emphasise with the company because they did not have previous experiences with the company. For that reason, this study used a non-fictitious crisis to increase the possibility that participants could emphasise.

Nevertheless, using a non-fictitious crisis could have other consequences. Therefore, what should be discussed, is the extent of influence of the opinion of prime minister Rutte and King Willem-Alexander played a role. In both the examination of credibility and expertise, there was a correlation between the opinion of prime minister Rutte and King Willem-Alexander. This could suggest that participants based their judgements on their existing opinions. Consequently, for both credibility and expertise of the source, this could have influenced the results.

Furthermore, with regard to an explanation of the outcomes concerning the expertise of the source, it might have played a role that prime minister Rutte and King Willem-Alexander are always perceived as having a certain amount of expertise. Due to the role they are fulfilling. This could be a possible explanation for the result that the amount of expertise did not depend on whether both men communicated with a conversational human or organisational tone of voice. Additionally, it could declare the differences in outcome between this study and the study from Seeger (2006). Furthermore, as mentioned before, this possibility could be strengthened with the results that there is a chance that participants based their evaluations of the text, and therefore sender, on their existing opinions about prime minister Rutte and King Willem-Alexander.

Trust in the government

As mentioned before, the government plays a significant role during a crisis because it is its task to protect its citizens. Previous studies showed contrasting outcomes. According to this study, the trust in government was the same for the different conditions. This entails that the role of the sender and the tone of voice did not influence the amount of trust the participants had in the government. Across the different conditions, the amount of trust was evenly spread. This outcome is in line with Bakker et al. (2018), who found that tone of voice did not influence the amount of trust in government.

In contrast, Shen (2010) indicated that the tone of voice did matter for the relation between the sender and receiver. To be more precise, a conversational human voice had a positive relationship between the sender and receiver, with regard to trust, as a result. What could be an explanation for the contradicting outcomes is the crisis type. Shen (2010) focused

on a fictitious crisis, namely, the possible consequences and accidents due to drunk driving and smoking. For crises used in Shen (2010), people have their own responsibilities and influences on the outcome of the crisis. This study used a crisis where the Dutch government was a victim itself. According to Coombs (2015), the higher the responsibility, the more expectations the public has.

This study contained a crisis with a high level of emotional valence and a low level of responsibility for the Dutch government. This could be an explanation for why the results in this study were not significant, and the kind of tone did not play a role. In addition, as mentioned before, this would somewhat be in line with the study from Bakker et al. (2018). Namely, that tone of voice does not influence the trust towards the government, while the degree of accountability does. According to Bakker et al. (2018), low accountability led to higher trust in the government. However, what should be noted concerning this study, is that participants answered fairly neutral, which entails that participants were not outspokenly positive.

Content evaluation

Against expectations, there was no significant difference in the evaluation of the organisational and conversational human tone of voice. This could indicate that the participants did not perceive the text differently. Basically, an organisational tone of voice should have been focused on providing correct information with fewer emotions (Park & Cameron, 2014), which could have as a consequence that a text is being perceived as less authentic and more informative and accurate. On the contrary, a conversational human tone of voice normally has more emotions and interactions with the public, which could be perceived as more authentic.

The outcomes from this study are not in line with the study from Van der Meer and Verhoeven (2014), who emphasised the importance of authenticity in emotional communication. A possible explanation for the contrary outcomes could be that the content of the text differed in the extent of emotional valence. Although Van der Meer and Verhoeven (2014) studied emotional situations, they focused on the recall of defective cars. Compared to the tragic consequences of an aeroplane crash, one could argue that this study used a crisis with more emotional valence. This may have influenced the outcomes of this study and why they are not in line with previous studies.

Role of sender

According to the results of this study, the role of the sender did not play a role in how people evaluated the texts. This result suggests that the role of the sender does not have to fit with the

text and tone of voice they are using. This is not in line with the expectations based on previous studies. To be more precise, it is not in line with the language expectations theory from Burgoon and Miller (1985). In line with the language expectations theory, Tobin and Raymundo (2009) found that communication aligned with the expectations of the receiver resulted in a higher motivation to act according to that message. However, what could explain the contradicting outcomes from this study, is that the text did not suggest or motivate to behave in a certain way.

Additionally, based on this study, one could suggest that the role of the sender does not play a role if there is no call to action. While based on previous research from Jenkins and Dragojevic (2011) on persuasive messages, the role of the sender did play a significant role if the sender had a certain amount of power, which prime minister Rutte and King Willem-Alexander had based on their position. However, previous research has not yet combined the tone of voice of a text and the role of the sender in crisis communication. For this reason, it is hard to fully explain the findings based on previous research.

Lastly, with regard to the combination of the role of sender and tone of voice, previous research from Park and Cameron (2014) suggested that people's intentions to be involved with the source were higher when the crisis communication was provided in a voice. However, again, this cannot be supported based on this study. Participants did not evaluate prime minister Rutte or King Willem-Alexander more positively or negatively between the two different tones of voice. A possible explanation could be that the texts in this study were more focused on being informative than on the involvement of the people.

Limitations and future research

Besides the outcomes of this study, it is important to state the limitations. Firstly, with regard to the participants, most of the participants were women. In addition, the analysed group only contained students, and most students were from a higher educational level. The gender and the fact that the study was focused on students who followed a specific educational level influence the generalizability of the study. Concerning future research, it could be helpful to focus on a broader audience to increase the generalizability.

Secondly, concerning participants, it could be helpful to aim for a bigger group for future research. This study contained 127 participants, which could influence the statistical power. Aiming for a bigger participant group could possibly increase the statistical power and generalizability of the study. For instance, various dependent variables showed a non-significant trend. Additionally, overall, participants were fairly neutral in answering the different statements. Having a more varied group of participants could possibly eliminate this

due to a bigger chance of differences in opinions. However, for this study, it was hard to aim for a broad and varied audience due to the limited resources the researcher had. To be specific, the researcher was still a student herself, which eliminated the possibility of, for example, reaching for elderly colleagues.

Thirdly, regarding the materials, this study used two press conferences which, in their original state, were broadcasted on live television. For this study, the texts from those press conferences were transferred to written texts. As a consequence, the facial expressions and silences of both men were not present. This could have influenced how the emotions were transferred and how the participants perceived the texts. Verbal communication, which entails facial expressions, emotions, and ways of talking, transfers the emotional meaning of the spoken words (Westland, 2015). This study focused on the role of the sender rather than verbal or non-verbal communication. However, the absence of non-verbal communication in this study could have influenced how participants evaluated the texts and source. Therefore, future research could focus on the influence of non-verbal communication in combination with the role of the sender and tone of voice.

Fourthly, with regard to the materials, it could have been a limitation for this study that prime minister Rutte and King Willem-Alexander have corresponding features. For instance, they are both parts of the government and are both men. Now that there are no significant differences in this study, it could have had an influence on how participants filled out the questionnaire. Despite the fact that the texts were manipulated in a way that they were different and that in the basis, prime minister Rutte and King Willem-Alexander had different roles, it could have influenced the results. Therefore, it could be interesting to examine senders with totally different roles for future research, for example, someone within and outside the government and differences in gender.

Fifthly, what could also have influenced the outcomes of this study, is the opinion or bias participants had about prime minister Rutte and King Willem-Alexander. According to the results, there were significant correlations between the dependent variables and opinions about prime minister Rutte and King Willem-Alexander. This could entail that people based their answering on the dependent variables on their existing opinion about prime minister Rutte and King Willem-Alexander. For future research, it could be valuable to examine whether the sender plays a role with fictitious senders or senders who do not have an important role in the country the study is held in. This could eliminate the opinions or biases people have about the sender.

Lastly, concerning the materials, this study did not use a manipulation check in the questionnaire. The manipulation check was eliminated because the researcher held a focus group with fellow students to check whether they perceived the speech with an organisational or conversational human tone of voice differently. However, this study showed no significant difference between the two tones of voice, while previous research did find this difference. For future research, it could be of extra value to carry out a manipulation check to examine whether all the participants perceived the texts differently. Additionally, the means of this study were remarkably often in the middle of the scale. A manipulation check embedded in the questionnaire could possibly explain those outcomes and strengthen the conclusion.

Theoretical implications and future research

Due to the outcomes of this study, there are a few theoretical implications which could be considered for future research. These implications might develop more clarification concerning the role of the sender and tone of voice. Furthermore, it could clarify whether the importance of these aspects differs within various crises. Firstly, with regard to future research, it could be helpful to test the difference between a fictitious and non-fictitious crisis and existing and non-existing people. This offers the possibility to test whether bias plays a role in the examination of crisis communication.

Secondly, concerning future research, it could be useful to test whether the role of the sender plays a role in communicating about a crisis with less emotional valence. For example, instead of analysing the communication of an aeroplane crash, analysing a crisis that entails recalling defective products. This could be helpful to test whether the role of the sender will play a role when the crisis has a less emotional effect on the people. Additionally, this could test whether the evaluation of the communication is different between an emotional and less emotional crisis.

Thirdly, most of the means were around the four and five. In other words, most participants used the neutral part of the scale while answering the statements. Therefore, regarding future research, it could, for example, be helpful to exclude the neutral option of the scale. This could trigger participants to think about their answers. Additionally, as mentioned before, it could be helpful to reach for a bigger group of participants to enhance the statistical power and the possibility to aim for participants with differing opinions.

Practical implications

Based on this study, but with much caution and in need of more clarifying research, one could argue that for handling future crises, governments and organisations could focus on what kind of crisis it is to determine the crisis response strategy. To be more precise, organisations or governments could question whether the crisis entails emotional valence and depend their strategy upon it. Additionally, what, against expectations, did not play a role, according to the outcomes of this study, is the role of the sender. Therefore, for organisations or governments, it could be of greater value to focus on what the sender is communicating rather than whether the role of the sender suits the message.

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Appendix A. Speech prime minister Rutte and King Willem-Alexander Organisational

Dames en heren, de omvang van de gebeurtenissen gisteren in *Oekraïne ontvouwt zich vandaag, een dag na dato, in zijn steeds tragische verschijning. Gisteravond laat kon de overheid spreken van zeker 154 Nederlandse slachtoffers. Op dit moment zijn het er in ieder geval zeker 189.* Vandaag komen de verhalen door over individuele reizigers, jongeren, een grote groep wetenschappers en soms hele gezinnen. *Zij* zijn gisteren aan boord gegaan zonder te weten wat *hun* te wachten stond. En ook steeds meer mensen horen in hun directe omgeving het nieuws van mensen die ook aan boord zaten. *Nederland* is geschokt door deze dramatische gebeurtenis en leeft mee met nabestaanden en dierbaren van de slachtoffers. *Festiviteiten worden versoberd* en op de sociale media laten mensen medeleven zien. *Vastgesteld kan worden dat de MH17 is neergeschoten, maar over de precieze toedracht van de ramp heeft de Nederlandse overheid nog geen duidelijkheid. Voor het kabinet staat daarom voorop dat door middel van onafhankelijk onderzoek, duidelijkheid over de feiten wordt geschapen. Onderzoekers van de Nederlandse Onderzoeksraad voor Veiligheid* zijn betrokken. *Zij* reizen af naar de rampplek. *Onbelemmerde toegang tot de plaats van de ramp en tot de gegevens van de zwarte dozen is daarbij noodzakelijk.*

Appendix B. Speech King Willem-Alexander Conversational Human

Vanmiddag kwam een grote groep nabestaanden bij elkaar van de slachtoffers van de vliegramp in het oosten van Oekraïne. *Mijn vrouw en ik waren daarbij. We zijn diep geraakt door de schrijnende, persoonlijke verhalen, van mensen die dierbaren hebben verloren. Mensen die wier leven in scherven ligt. Het verdriet, de onmacht en wanhoop snijden ons door de ziel. Vele mensen zeiden ons: "we willen tenminste waardig afscheid kunnen nemen van onze dierbaren". We begrijpen de frustratie en gekwetstheid en we delen de innige wens dat er klaarheid komt over de oorzaak van deze ramp. We* weten dat het verlies niet meer goed te maken is. *Het verdriet is immens.* Het enige wat *wij* vandaag konden doen, is bij hen zijn en luisteren naar de verhalen. De afgelopen dagen zijn jullie overal in het land bij elkaar gekomen. Ook in de komende tijd zal dat gebeuren. In bedrijven, op scholen, bij sportverenigingen en in huiskamers, overal in Nederland. *Mensen, laat elkaar niet los.* Dat is vooral van belang in deze dagen, nu ons land zo op de proef wordt gesteld en zo veel landgenoten *overweldigd zijn door verdriet.* Dat *we elkaar vasthouden*, dat *we elkaar steunen en opvangen* waar mogelijk. *En dat we ons hart openstellen voor iedereen die zijn of haar verhaal wil delen.* Nu, maar ook in de maanden en jaren die volgen. *Ik wil graag mijn waardering uitspreken voor al die mensen die zich bekommeren om de getroffenen.*

Appendix C. Speech prime minister Rutte Conversational Human

Vanmiddag kwam een grote groep nabestaanden bij elkaar van de slachtoffers van de vliegramp in het oosten van Oekraïne. *Ik was daarbij. Ik ben diep geraakt door de schrijnende, persoonlijke verhalen, van mensen die dierbaren hebben verloren. Mensen die wier leven in scherven ligt. Het verdriet, de onmacht en wanhoop snijden mij door de ziel. Vele mensen zeiden mij: "we willen tenminste waardig afscheid kunnen nemen van onze dierbaren". Ik begrijp de frustratie en gekwetstheid en ik deel de innige wens dat er klaarheid komt over de oorzaak van deze ramp. Ik* weet dat het verlies niet meer goed te maken is. *Het verdriet is immens.* Het enige wat *ik* vandaag kon doen, is bij hen zijn en luisteren naar de verhalen. De afgelopen dagen zijn jullie overal in het land bij elkaar gekomen. Ook in de komende tijd zal dat gebeuren. In bedrijven, op scholen, bij sportverenigingen en in huiskamers, overal in Nederland. *Mensen, laat elkaar niet los*. Dat is vooral van belang in deze dagen, nu ons land zo op de proef wordt gesteld en zo veel landgenoten *overweldigd zijn door verdriet*. Dat *we elkaar vasthouden*, dat *we elkaar steunen en opvangen* waar mogelijk. *En dat we ons hart openstellen voor iedereen die zijn of haar verhaal wil delen.* Nu, maar ook in de maanden en jaren die volgen. *Ik wil graag mijn waardering uitspreken voor al die mensen die zich bekommeren om de getroffenen.*

Appendix D. Questionnaire

Statements Credibility

De afzender is invloedrijk.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

De afzender is deskundig.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

De afzender is betrouwbaar.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

De afzender is transparant.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

Statements Expertise

De afzender is intelligent.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

De afzender is vakkundig.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

De afzender is deskundig.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

De afzender is geïnformeerd.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

De afzender is competent.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

De afzender is slim.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

Statements Trust in government

De Rijksoverheid heeft expertise.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

De Rijksoverheid is eerlijk.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

De Rijksoverheid is betrouwbaar.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

Statements Content evaluation

De inhoud van de tekst is authentiek.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

De inhoud van de tekst is inzichtelijk.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

De inhoud van de tekst is informatief.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

De inhoud van de tekst is consistent.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

De inhoud van de tekst is gefocust.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

De inhoud van de tekst is accuraat.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

Mark Rutte opinion

Mark Rutte is invloedrijk.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

Mark Rutte is deskundig.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

Mark Rutte is intelligent.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

Mark Rutte is geïnformeerd.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

Mark Rutte heeft expertise.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

Mark Rutte is betrouwbaar.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

Mark Rutte is authentiek.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

Mark Rutte is accuraat.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

King Willem-Alexander opinion

Koning Willem-Alexander is invloedrijk.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

Koning Willem-Alexander is deskundig.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

Koning Willem-Alexander is intelligent.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

Koning Willem-Alexander is geïnformeerd.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

Koning Willem-Alexander heeft expertise.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

Koning Willem-Alexander is betrouwbaar.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

Koning Willem-Alexander is authentiek.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

Koning Willem-Alexander is accuraat.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens – 7 = helemaal mee eens

Appendix E. Declaration plagiarism and fraud

The undersigned [first name, surname and student number],

First name: Sophie
Surname: Ter Hedde

Master's student at the Radboud University Faculty of Arts,

Declares that the assessed thesis is entirely original and was written exclusively by himself/herself. The undersigned has indicated explicitly and in detail where all the information and ideas derived from other sources can be found. The research data presented in this thesis were collected by the undersigned himself/herself using the methods described in this thesis.

Place and date:

Nijmegen, 14th of June 2022

Signature: