

# Language use dynamics as portal into the ‘psychotic organisation’

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## **Abstract**

Leaders bring conscious, but also unconscious information into their personal and working relationships. Some of this unconscious material is communicated through language use. There is limited research on how leaders could access what is unconsciously communicated through language. Thus, the aim of this study was first to explore from organisational psychologists’ perspectives, how leaders use language consciously and unconsciously from a systems psychodynamic stance, and second to propose what leaders could do to access this unconscious material, which often creates psychotic organisations. A qualitative research design was selected. Purposive and convenience sampling were utilised. The sample included nine psychologists. A listening post was used as data collection method. The findings describe how leaders simultaneously use language as unconscious defence against anxiety, and as unconscious offence in their working relationships. What they find difficult, however, is to use language consciously and more consistently to express their personal and leadership authenticity and vulnerability. The findings of this study have implications for the management of wellbeing in organisations, and could be used by leaders, managers, and consultants in South African and international organisations to enhance their understanding of how language is used to induce psychotic reactions in leaders. Practical guidelines are provided to help leaders access what is unconsciously communicated through language to enhance their wellbeing.