

Over The Counter Drug Labels “A Linguistic Study”

دراسة لغوية عن

(نصوص الادوية التي تعطى بدون وصفة)

Lecturer

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Section One

1.1 Introduction

English is the arena's most extensively used language. Quirk, et al. (1992:4) said that English is used as an international language for inner purposes, for speakers to speak with other audio system of the equal united states of america. I.e. it serves mainly as an international language. it is the medium of conversation with audio system from other countries.

The current study deals with drug labels which accompany most of medical products. They offer a great deal of information about the background of the product, how effective it is in addition to feedback by those who have used the product, and so on. Their main purpose is making the readers satisfied and believe that what they are reading is really true. In fact, there are two main functions to any drug label. One of them is to identify the contents of the container and last one is to ensure that patients who use them have clear and accurate information that can help them in using their medication in effectively and appropriately. The research tries to answer the following questions: How long or short is the text (and is it too long or too short?), What are the linguistic features of the text? Did you find any errors? Is it linguistically perfect text? Is it understandable by Iraqi people? Are there any medical terminology inside these texts? How about the structure and the technicality of the vocabulary that are used in drug labels.

The research data of the current research are 3 medical products. The present research concentrates on the linguistic features of instructional label, including some major lexical, syntactical features and rhetoric devices that appear in these drug labels.

The current study used new kind of material x which is a corpus. According to Sinclair (2005, 16) a corpus is defined as a collection of pieces of language text in typed form, selected according to external criteria in order to represent a language or variety in language which is considered a source of data for linguistic research.

Section Two

Discourse and Critical Discourse Analysis?

2.1 Discourse Analysis

Discourse can refer to the formation and arrangement of language segments above and below the sentence. The language segments are either bigger or smaller than a single sentence whereas the added meaning is beyond the sentence. Jaworski & Coupland (1999: 3-6) stated the importance of discourse which is spread in these last few years due to a sequence of changes which encouraged its interest. In spite of the fact that discourse analysis is considered one of the most important subjects of applied linguistics, the other disciplines have a great role to the development of its theory and practice nowadays like psychology, sociology, etc (Davies & Elder, 2004 , p. 133-134).

This discipline is concerned with studying the way in which the sentences can be combined with each other in order to form texts or discourses, in addition to the description of the language in use within them., Davies and Elder (2000:133) said that it presents patterning of language in use and the circumstances like situation, purpose ,participant and outcomes which are associated in typical way. As a conclusion ,discourse analysis involves both the text and the context. Language is not occur by its own but in context and as mentioned by Cook (1992:2) it is an important aspect to be considered as discourse analysis studies language. As a consequence, as Brown & Yule (1983, p. 27) state that the discourse analyst has to pay attention to the context in which a piece of discourse may appear.

The term discourse applies to both spoken and written language. i.e.it can be applied to any sample of language that is used for different purposes. It is a fact that speech events series or any form of written sentences in successive sentences or utterances join together is discourse. There is no possibility in confining discourse to sentential boundaries. It is something that goes beyond the limits of sentence. Matthews (2005:100) gives a clear description of discourse in that it refers to any coherent succession of sentences which are either spoken or written. The

relations between sentences in connected discourse can be considered of the same importance of the links between clauses in a sentence.

Beaugrande (1981:78) decides to introduce a number of criteria that should be available in spoken or written text to treat it as a discourse such as cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability and informativeness.

Cohesion is the grammatical relationship that exist between parts of a sentence, Coherence refers to the order and sequence of sentences that relates one another by sense where as intentionality is the message that is conveyed deliberately and consciously. While acceptability points out that the communicative product needs to be satisfactory in that the audience approves it. And Informativeness criteria which refers to new information that has to be included in the discourse. Situationality refers to circumstances in which the remark is made are important. Finally, intertextuality includes the world that exists outside the text.

Recently it agreed upon the fact that not all of the above mentioned criteria are understood as equally important in discourse studies, so as stated by Dressler & Beaugrande 1981 (cited in Renkema 2004:49) we can consider some of them are valid just in special ways of the research.

2.2 Systemic Functional Linguistics

There is no doubt that this type is mainly introduced by Halliday (1994:2), who said that systemic functional grammar is considered functional more than formal due to a number of reasons such as text, system and the elements of linguistic system. It is considered functional in that it is used for accounting the language use. It is said that systemic functional grammar is a language taken as a system of meaning in addition to forms through which the meaning can be realized.

Bloor and Bloor (2007: 2) consider systemic functional grammar as a type of grammar that has concern with the importance of social context in language development and production in terms of meaning, in addition to historical side.

2.3. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis Which is abbreviated (CDA) is a newly developed branch in analyzing the discourse as a social practice that combines the achievements of research in the fields of linguistics, psychology and sociology. It is considered as a method for the analysis of integrating language, language use with ideology. CDA deals with the question of what language and why language is so. It shows the concern in the meaning of language and the way the meaning produced by

language. Its main purpose is discovering the relationship between language, hidden ideology and power through its language from different aspects. It pays close attention to the effect of ideology which is called the function of discourse in the maintenance and changing of the ideology.

As stated by Van Dijk (mentioned in Bloor & Bloor, 2007:2), Critical discourse refers to the field that deals with the analysis of text and talk in all branches of humanities and social science virtually. In addition Bloor & Bloor (2007:2) emphasized its main concern which is the use of language and discourse in order to justify different social purposes and specially this use plays a vital role in social change and maintenance (Ibid).

Wodak introduces the subject of CDA as follows:

”Critical Discourse Analysis centers on authentic everyday communication in institutional, media, political or other locations rather than on sample sentences or sample texts constructed in linguists’ minds. [CDA] regards both written and spoken ‘discourse’ as a form of social practice. It assumes a dialectical relationship between particular discursive acts and the situations, institutions and social structures in which they are embedded: the situational, institutional and social contexts shape and affect discourse, and, in turn, discourses influence social and political reality. In other words, discourse constitutes social practice and is at the same time constituted by it. (Wodak (et al.) 199: 8)”

2.4 Instruction Texts

Drug instructions(labels) are sheet of papers with text printed and put on container . They have certain communicative purpose. They are used to advertise , clarify or announce for the product . They have certain information to convey. So they have a great importance. These labels come in many shapes and sizes .

It is clear that the information on the drug labels are designed in a specific way so that it is easy to read and retain the readers attention. They come in many shapes and sizes.(Mohammed and AL-Rawi, 2000:1).

It is said that those who are specialized in medicine are rarely taught any linguistic features that characterize any written text. These texts are either written by the physician themselves or by un specialized people (for commercial purpose only). There are so many cases where users of these drug labels have no acquaintance and knowledge of the side affect

of these products . So they need to read the instructions given inside the product. Wright (1981:131) states that following drug labels are considered difficult comprehension tasks encountered in daily life , in addition the indirect support for this obtained from noticing that people often do not prefer to read these instructions. They look only to the pictures.

2.5 The use of images, words and numbers

Cook (1992: 37) mentions the word modes of communication which is used for referring to the use of music, pictures and language so he can transmit the advertising messages. It is familiar to notice a combination of words, images and numbers in press advertisements. Martínez (1993:124) explained iconographic images with their power to transmit a number of values to be associated with the product are of great importance . The image had little or no text in some sectors and the transmission of the message is done through the connotative power of the values which are associated with the image.

Where as the image used is considered as a powerful tool in that it conveys the message. We can consider the written word also of great importance. By contrast with the image. Where as Cook (1992:43) stated that the written text is understood to be more objective (Cook, 1992).

Block de Behar's (1992:15) said that text length can be varied in proportion to the novelty of the product, and that the written text for a good product will be shorter than that of a new product . It needs more detailed and explanation in order to express a related idea. The written texts length related to the information that are required in order to convey product details to the consumer. In the present corpus, the detailed information of the product is shown in the print that is small, which typically includes more written text, as mentioned above and the messages were presented using a mixture of words, images and numbers.

2.6 Context and Text

Analysts of critical discourse try to make "the reciprocal relationship between discursive action and political and institutional practices (Fairclough 2001: 9)" through the way of using a methodologically pluralistic approach like socio-political , historical and linguistic perspectives. This is based on the concept of context that gives permission in order to go deeply beyond the analysis of written text and to pay attention to different groups of data from discursive practices like brochures , posters and motives of speakers, their environment, etc. (ibid.).

Texts reflect these key situational aspects that has a good relation with world's experience, express interpersonal relations and they are combined together so that they can be understood. Understanding the introduced text by the reader depends on the nature of the topic that is being communicated; i.e. what the reader expect in addition to his previous understanding and comprehension of the relationship that exist between the writer and reader; and text organization and information density.

According to Gee (2005-1) "Discourse Analysis is basically the analysis of language in context. He says that context is the very shape, meaning, and the influence of the social world, in that it means the variety people play in social role, and what they take on culturally situated identities, the social and cultural activities they engage in in addition to the material, cognitive, social, cultural, and political effects of these" (ibid.). He points out two functions to language that are reflecting and creating context.

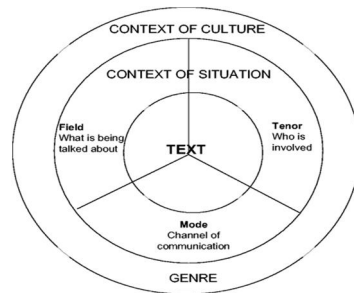


Figure (1) Text and Context

2.7 Drug Leaflets and Medical texts

Medical texts can be referred to as informative texts which aimed at providing information to the users, i.e. information about health matters and expand their knowledge in this regard. There are different kinds of informative texts as scientific brochures and articles, texts about tourism, newspaper texts, and scientific guidelines. Reiss (1977:89) states that the function of informative texts is transferring the information, therefore, their language should be referential or logical, because their core focus is topic or content (as cited in Munday, 2001: 72).

The most important source of information about a medication for the patient is drug leaflets and labels. When they are discussed in the framework of medical texts, the way of their information delivery is important. This fact is reflected in some definitions of drug in medical

texts. Prescription container label is considered to be a good source of information if it is readable and understandable for patients.

Section 3 Analytical Framework

3.1 The Symbols

Reading labels , specially medical once, is very important since it tell us much about the product a container holds. Drug products are either prescription or over-the-counter . When labeling are written they ensures that the information is comprehensible to all people, including persons who has low literacy ability. Any medical label must warn you of the side effects of taking a medicine. For instance it tells you if the medicine make you dizzy or drowsy or weak,etc, So the amount of information you learn from a label will vary from one product to the other.

In order to collect the data , the researcher deals with three types of medical products . Most people take them over the counter , i.e. without the doctor's prescription .They provide supplements. It is agreed about the fact that they are not harmful ,but there are certain rules in taking them property.

Most drug labels contain the product's name. It also gives information about symptoms the medicine should relieve , its ingredients , in addition to the manufacturer .Druglabels taken in this study are:Omega 3 ,Centrum and MR.TUMEE Omega 3

3.1 Omega 3

Omega3 refers to a group of polyunsaturated fatty acids which contain great importance and functions in the body.It can be found in vegetable oils, fatly fish and sell fish ,etc. They do not have negative side effects.



3.2 Centrum

Centrum is a well – known drug that is used in order to treat or protect the body from the low levels of vitamins and minerals and this drug is given according to the advice introduced by the doctor. It can also be used for other conditions according to the

doctor's advice. It is considered a vitamin and mineral supplement and its main job is providing additional vitamins and minerals to human's body in case of lacking them due to diet.



Fatakat.com

3.3 MR. TUMEE Omega 3

Mr. Tume™ Calcium Plus Vitamin D is very useful in helping to promote bone health for growing children. Calcium is considered one of the most important supplements at an early age because it may help to establish and maintain healthy and strong teeth and bones. Vitamin D is very important for absorbing calcium and also help in regulating body weight and cognitive functioning.



3.4 Results of data analysis

Analyzing these drug labels from a linguistic standpoint, We have noticed the following points :

1. The three products don't have no pattern that govern layout. The texts used include headline, subheading, body, expanded use of Symbols , abbreviations and acronyms , identifying information and image. The most important part is the name of the product and the number of tablets it contains. The use of headings is one of the properties that should be taken into consideration when assessing the quality of text and it is considered important for patient information .
2. The number of words in each product is ,....and the number of sentences...
3. There are also the supplement facts and instructions about the doze in addition to the manufacturer . Any label should Provide explicit instruction in order to improve patient comprehension, such as using -paced reading.

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4. All the words are used to convey a message and this is a characteristics of medical language .The main purpose of words is providing the adequate directions for the use of the products.
5. There is no repetition of words and no synonymous .
6. As we know the sentence is a group of words that explain complete thought and meaning .They can be simple, compound, or complex. It has observed that most analyzed sentences are simple , short and imperative .The tense used is simple present which is one of the characteristics of scientific language.
e.g. Keep bottle tightly closed .
7. The information inside any instruction is well- spaced , condensed in to a few lines, bulleted points are used, direct language is the most important characteristic of instructieronal texts , the language is plain and simple in order to reach to the audience .
8. It has been found that the symbols of the current study contain tables which include supplement facts. These tables give clear explanation of the content of the medicine .
9. The three products contain proper nouns , referring to the product's brand name and locations where they are produces (Made in Canada).
10. Frequent references to times (year , month, ..)
11. Use of adjectives (healthy).
12. The labels are written in the 3rd person. The writer is detached from the text, and there is no indication as to whether the description is the writer's opinion as it is written on behalf of the company , as it is.
13. With regards to address, any reference to the reader tends to be indirect.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that any printed information accompany the drug and medicine can be referred to as drug labeling . Those include the label, the wrapping and package insert .Drug labels serve two goals: providing consumers with accurate directions of how to use it in addition to alerting consumers to possible health risks posed by the products. For prescription

According to the analysis of data done by the researcher , it has been concluded that instructional labels use linguistic devices such as headlines, direct address and positive vocabulary in order to attract attention of people. So this can has a direct effect on consumers to buy the product. Intertextuality also occurs when manufacturers use words from other discourses so as they can attract readers to words from

science. In addition to attracting customers is the use of technical words. Technical words help convince the reader that the product is of value in addition to reflecting expertise that is considered the source of power. It has been observed the frequent use of scientific information. They are considered as methods of conveying expertise, which in other words reflect power.

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