

A Pragma-linguistic Study of COVID_19 in Selected English Posters

بتول عارف خنياب

batool.arif@s.uokerbala.edu.iq

أ.م.د. توفيق مجيد احمد

tawfeeq.a@uokerbala.edu.iq

ABSTRACT

The goal of the current study is to examine the pragma-linguistic study of speech acts used in posters to illustrate the concept of COVID-19 in five selected English posters.

In this study, COVID-19 in chosen English posters is explored from a pragmatic and linguistic perspective. The aim of this study is to increase public knowledge of the most effective pandemic health care techniques. The current study aims at inspecting the most and least common speech acts that used in COVID-19 posters, to present a pragma-linguistic tools for analyzing and evaluating the true message that the English posters transmit, and not the speaker's intention, the aim of multidisciplinary study is to propose a preliminary framework for the study of covid-19 from a pragma-linguistic perspective. In association with the aims, the study sets out two hypotheses: (1) Indirect speech act is the most common pragmatic type utilized in Covid-19 English posters (2) Covid-19 is used in posters for different pragmatic functions. However, warning, advising are the most frequent function.

The eclectic model encompasses Searle's (1969) classification of speech acts and peirce's model for text and poster analysis. The study has concluded that use communicative SAs (speech acts) the most whereas declarative SAs are used the least frequently, the current study adds to linguistic research on the Covid-19 epidemic since it emphasizes on the verbal and visual components used in health care posters and their meanings. According to the advice of the WHO posters, readers will be able to understand and learn about the best health measures they should take at home and out it during the pandemic through this study.

المستخلص

تبحث الدراسة الحالية في الأدوات اللغوية-التداولية التي تستخدم في الصور لتوضيح مفهوم كوفيد-19 في الصور الانكليزية المختارة. الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو لرفع الوعي العام لصحة افضل خلال الوباء. تهدف الدراسة إلى استيضاح الأفعال الكلامية الأكثر والأقل استخداماً من قبل المستخدمة في صور كوفيد-19، ولتقديم الدراسة اللغوية-التداولية من اجل تحليل وتقييم الرسالة في الصور الانكليزية وليس معنى المتكلم. والهدف من هذه الدراسة المتعددة هو لدراسة كوفيد-19 من الناحية اللغوية- التداولية. تزامناً مع هذه الأهداف، تحدد الدراسة فرضيتان: (1) الكلام الغير مباشر هو الاكثر شيوعاً في الدراسة التداولية في صور الانكليزية المختارة. (2) تستخدم صور كوفيد-19 لأغراض تداولية مختلفة. على اي حال الاغراض الاكثر استخداماً هما التحذير والنصيحة. في الصور المختارة يميل الكاتب إلى استخدام أفعال الكلام التوجيهية أكثر وأفعال الكلام التمثيلية أقل. لفحص الفرضيات المحددة مسبقاً، تم تصميم نموذج انتقائي يتكون من تصنيفات الأفعال الكلامية لسيرل (1969) وأنموذج بيرس لتحليل النصوص والصور. يخلص التحليل إلى استنتاجين: فيما يتعلق باستخدام أفعال الكلام في

توضيح التتمة، تستخدم الصور أفعال الكلام التعبيرية أكثر في حين يتم استخدام أفعال الكلام التصريحية على نطاق أقل. الدراسة الحالية تساهم بأنها دراسة لغوية لكوفيد-19 وانها تركز على استخدام الأفعال الكلامية والمرئية ومعانيها في الاهتمام الطبي التي تقدمه الصور. بالنسبة للإرشادات التي تقدمها صور منظمة الصحة العالمية القارئ سوف يستطيع ان يفهم ويتعلم افضل المقاييس الصحية التي يمكن اني يتخذها في البيت وخارجه خلال الوباء من خلال هذه الدراسة.

Key Words: pragma-linguistic, COVID-19, speech acts, posters, advice.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تداولية-لغوية، كوفيد-19، الأفعال الكلامية، الصور، نصيحة.

1. INTRODUCTION

Pragmalinguistics is one of the areas of linguistics increasing most quickly. Pragmalinguistics is defined differently by different researchers. Currently, pragmatics is seen as an interdisciplinary field because it is not only concerned with language. Research show that a human factor comes first. Semiotics serves as the inspiration for this concept. Semiotics, which means "the study of signs," is a branch of science that examines how signs are used, how information is stored, and how it is transmitted. Systems pertaining to human society, nature, or an individual are included. (Esenova 2017:38,42)

COVID-19 pandemic has shattered the global health economy. Advertisers take advantage of fear and emotion in society due to the pandemic outbreak. The information media is split into three forms based on how it is delivered: television, radio, and print. The current study focuses on how to analyze the COVID-19 posters in a semiotics analysis according to eclectic model. However, we will analyze five posters in this research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Health communication

Maintaining peaceful relationships with people and exchanging ideas are the fundamental goals of those who engage in communication. A variety of strategies can be used by people to achieve these objectives. One of these tactics is being indirect. (Supturo 2015: 1).

One of the most essential aspects of human life is communication. The primary characteristic of humans that sets them apart from other living things is their ability to communicate. (Steinberg 2007: 39).

According to Lane et al. (2016: 10), communication is the act of sending messages to other individuals. The process is successful if the recipients comprehend what the sender was trying to convey. Verbal and non-verbal communication are the two main types (Rosengren, 2000: 38).

2.2 What is a poster?

A poster is a temporary advertisement for an idea, thing, or event that is posted in a crowded place for everyone to see. Although a poster might be wholly text or completely graphical, most posters have both text and graphic components (Lippert 2017). Posters are meant to be both interesting and instructive. There are numerous uses for posters. They are a common tactic used by propagandists, activists, advertisers (especially of events, musicians, and films), and other groups aiming to spread a message. (Stephen 2021:7)

2.3 Defining the Concept of Pragmalinguistics

A **pragmalinguistic** approach can start with a language's pronoun system and look at how people use various forms to indicate a variety of attitudes and relationships (such as deference and intimacy). The latter approach could start with the social backgrounds of the participants in a conversation and analyze how various elements (including age, sex, and class) influence people's decisions to use specific pronouns. (Crystal 2011:379)

A pragmalinguistics

The intersection of linguistics and pragmatics, with a focus on the language strategies applied to pragmatic goals. For instance, a query of pragmalinguistics knowledge would be, "How do I offer a compliment (or a request, or a warning) in this language?" The study of the interaction between social elements and pragmatics is the focus of sociopragmatics and sociopragmatic knowledge, in contrast. For instance, a student might need to know which form of a compliment would be most acceptable is given the social relationship between the speaker and hearer and under what conditions it is appropriate to use the target language. (Richard & Schmidt 2002: 449)

2.4 Defining the Pragmatics

Since academic writing is viewed by Hyland (2000:1) as "a collective social practice" that reflects the values, norms, conventions, beliefs, or attitudes shared by a society," an understanding of language as a social activity is crucial to the current study.

Pragmatics, according to Leech (2014), is composed of two components where a transfer can take place, these are pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic.

2.5 Review of Related Studies

Raad, B. & Nehal, R. (2021), a Pragmatic Analysis of Health Advice Speech Actions in the Indian Covid-19 Epidemic. It can be characterized as the action taken when stating anything, and the commands serve as means of controlling how others behave. A directive speech act is giving advice. The advice was divided into direct, indirect, and typically indirect categories by several linguists.

Another study by Khotimah, K. (2020), Language May Represent Everything Pertaining to COVID-19 While Also Serving As A Tool To Recognize And Prevent The Virus. Linguistic Phrases in the Covid-19-Related Ecolexicons in Indonesian Online-Media Coverage. In order to identify new terminology or lexicons related to the COVID-19 pandemic that were present in Indonesian online mass media, the current study utilized the ecolinguistic theory and a qualitative descriptive technique. Data was gathered through observational methods. The findings demonstrated that fascinating linguistic dynamics emerged in response to COVID-19 news. It was described using expressive language.

Finally the study by the author Michael, T. (2021), Covid-19 Memes' Pragma-Multimodal Functions in the Nigerian Context. With its introduction into the global arena, academics and researchers have begun to analyze it from many angles. This research takes a linguistic approach to the Covid-19 discourse. The study specifically looks into the pragma-multimodal functionalities of memes that Nigerians produced and shared in response to the pandemic on various social media platforms.

3.METHODOLOGY

The goal of this section is to create an eclectic model that combines a number of models to analyze the data being investigated. This section complements the literature covered in section two and acts as a tool for achieving the study's objectives and testing its hypotheses. Here, we shall first talk about the pragmatic theories that might be utilized to analyze posters. The chosen model will then be developed using these theories.

3.1CHARLES SANDERS PEIRCE'S CONCEPT OF THE SIGN

How do signs occur? The Peircean sign has been defined in its most basic form as something that is connected to another object for someone in some way or another.(Cobley,2001:28)

The sign is triadic. Its meaning has three components: a representation(icon), an object, and an interpretation. A representation is something that, in some way or another, stands in for something. The representation is anything that interacts with the object it is meant to represent. It is a depiction of something, yet it's not an accurate one. It addresses someone when it makes an equivalent or possibly more complex sign in that person's thoughts. The interpretant of the first sign is referred to as the sign that it makes. The symbol is an object that has meaning. It refers to that item in some ways, but not in other respects. I've referred to this idea as the "ground of the representamen" at times.

3.2THE CATEGORIES

There is more to creating, digesting, and giving meaning to signals than just extracting information from them or making sense of them. It involves a nuanced relationship between firstness, secondness, and thirdness, as defined by Peirce. Firstness arises from possibilities, secondness from actualities, and thirdness from the possibility of future

signs becoming signs. (Cobley,2001:30) Peirce goes on to clarify three other ideas:

3.2.1* The icon resembles the thing being symbolized in its physical form. A symbol that designates an object by virtue of a quality that it shares with it but that it possesses independently of the object is known as an icon (also known as a likeness or semblance) (Deely, 1981:61)

3.2.2* The Index: although related to the object, it is not similar to it. It is a symbol that represents the actual thing in a few ways. An index* is a symbol that designates an item by virtue of an actual connection that links them; this connection is sometimes referred to as a real relation because it is unaffected by interpretation.

3.2.3* The Symbol: it represents a rule or custom. The emblem was once chosen at random. A symbol is a sign that designates an object simply by virtue of the interpretation that it will receive. The symbol is made up of a rule, norm, or habit that is natural, conventional, or logical and does not depend on the signified item bearing any similarity to or actual link with the symbolic sign.

4.DATA ANALYSIS

The data are collected from World Health Organization (n.d.), World Health Organization (2020), and from other different electronic websites.

The WHO is a health organization that belongs to the United Nations agency. It deals with serious global health issues and its main goal is to control diseases, improve healthier lives, “keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable - so everyone, everywhere can attain the highest level of health” via following scientific policies and programs (World Health Organization).

The data consist of five argumentative situations selected from twenty health awareness posters designed to correct the misconception and increase the public of certain facts as a response to certain myths through the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic in 2020.



Figure1. **CORONAVIRUS SAFETY POSTER** <https://www.graphicproducts.com>

A poster titled "CORONAVIRUS SAFETY POSTER" is shown in picture 1. Several indicators on the poster fall within the categories of icons, indices, and symbols. Combining the three different sign kinds yields information that helps the general public comprehend the message of the poster with the hashtags #Be Active and #Healthy At Home and Work. instance, keeping health throughout the Covid-19 outbreak by being active both inside and outside. Iconic, indexical, and symbolic meanings are the three categories into which the semiotic process of the signs in the poster is separated.

Figure 1 depicts a picture that resembles the reference object to illustrate the iconic meaning. The emblem features both people and things, such as a hand cleans the surface, a two hands wash for at least 20 seconds and the last icon which refers to a man sneezes or coughs and covers his mouth.

The equipment needed to maintain the safety from the Corona virus are a representation of indexical significance, such as the usage of cleaning supplies like cloths, soap, and wipes as a sign (index). Also, the color white, which serves as the backdrop color of the poster, is thought to have therapeutic properties that can assist treat sadness and anxiety in the face of the Covid-19 outbreak and convey the vital message of being healthy at home and at work.

The wording and emblem of the Corona Virus Safety, on the other hand, symbolize the symbolic value of being healthy in the global community, particularly in light of the Covid-19 epidemic. The next symbol is the graphic products warning text, which is legibly presented in white to stand out against the poster's white background. This text serves as the principal call to action for the Covid-19 outbreak, urging people everywhere to preserve their health by engaging in a variety of physical activities at home and at work. The material is organized logically and begins with a subject that urges readers to keep healthy while performing cleaning tasks during the pandemic, such as "Clean surfaces around your house and place of employment; wash your hands for at least 20 seconds; sneeze or cough? Shut your mouth ".

Additional symbols include phrases beginning with the hashtag #Coronavirus Safety, which are frequently utilized nowadays to become phrases in the social media sphere. Slogans are typically composed of a few attractive, short words that capture the core of a catchy statement. The plea in this instance emphasizes the importance of maintaining physical health at home while the Covid-19 outbreak is ongoing.

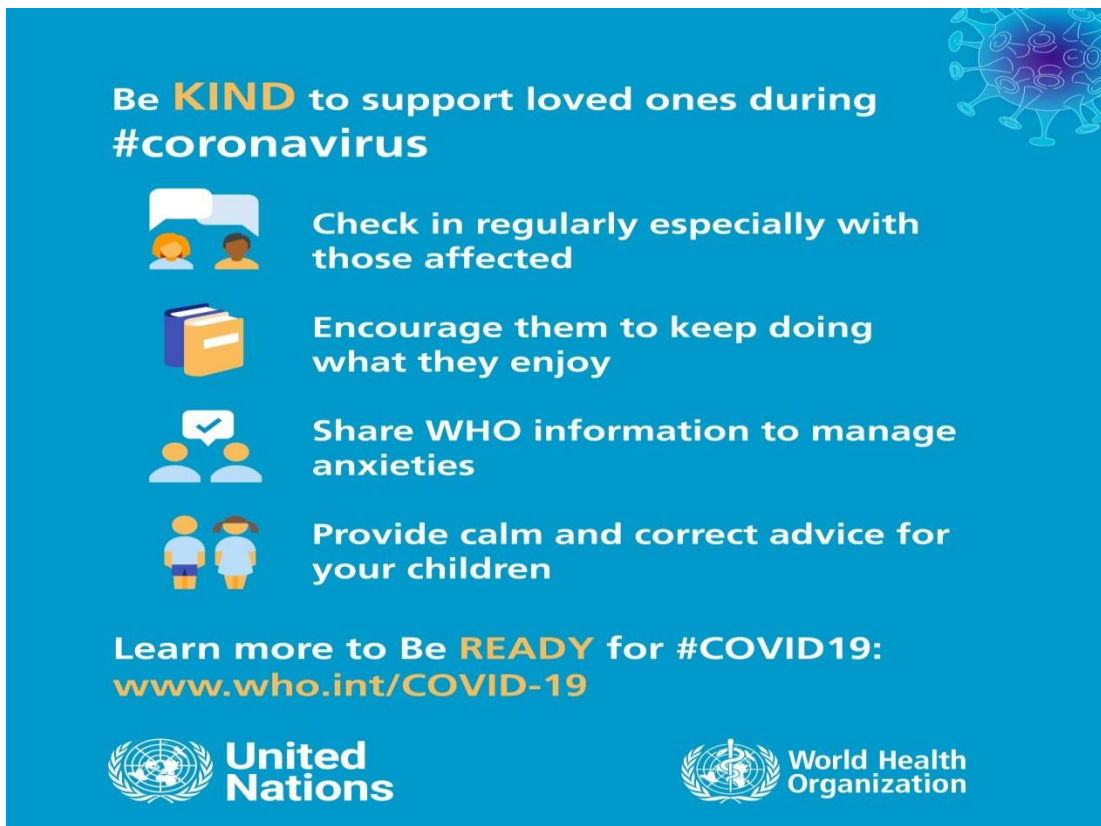


Figure 2. Be Kind to Support Loved Ones During #Coronavirus (<https://www.un.org/>)

In the second poster we have the dominant color which is blue and the repeated word which is kind. In Cambridge dictionary, this word means generous, helpful, and thinking about other people thinking. Figure 1 comprises a poster titled “Be Kind to Support Loved Ones During #Coronavirus”. Several indicators on the poster fall within the categories of icons, indices, and symbols. The three different sorts of signs are combined to provide information that helps people grasp the message of the poster Be Kind to Support Loved Ones During #Coronavirus, which is to stay healthy by staying active throughout the Covid-19 outbreak. Iconic, indexical, and symbolic meanings are the three categories into which the semiotic process of the signs in the poster is separated.

Semiopragmatic analysis

It depends on peirce semiotic theory. Figure 2 depicts a picture that resembles the reference object to illustrate the iconic meaning. The poster's emblem depicts both living things and inanimate items, such as a man and a woman speaking to one another. In addition, we have people help in sharing the details about corona virus, and the last iconic meaning in this poster that we have children, we should encourage them to be peaceful and teaching them. The iconic markings were also found in persons who were doing bodily action.

Indexical sense represented by the tools like the presence of books as a sign (index), a man and woman read through the outbreak, to have fun and keep in touch with those affected people by sending and receiving messages, also a sign of exchange information. In adding, the color feature indicated by blue. The color blue is a primary color. It is often associated with sadness in English language. It symbolizes the sky and the sea and is linked to wide-open areas, freedom, intuition, creativity, and sensitivity. Be Kind to Support Loved Ones During #Coronavirus also embodies the values of depth, trust, loyalty, honesty, wisdom, confidence, stability, faith, tranquillity, peace, and intelligence in the face of the Covid-19 outbreak.

The World Health Organization's texts and logo. Logo serve to represent a given organization or company through a visual image that can be easily understood and recognized. A logo generally involves symbols, stylized text or both. On the other hand, serve as a sign of the official UN organization that is committed with enhancing global health, particularly in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a call to action for people all over the world to maintain their health by staying physically active at home during the pandemic, the symbol's placement in the lower-left corner demonstrates the legitimacy of the organization that started the Be Kind to Support Loved Ones During #Coronavirus movements. (<https://www.techtarget.com>)

Additional symbols include phrases beginning with the hashtags Be Kind to Support Loved Ones During #Coronavirus, which are frequently used in the social media sphere nowadays as slogans. Slogans are typically composed of a few attractive, short words that capture the core of a catchy statement. The message of the plea in this instance is to be physically active throughout the Covid-19 outbreak in order to keep your health.

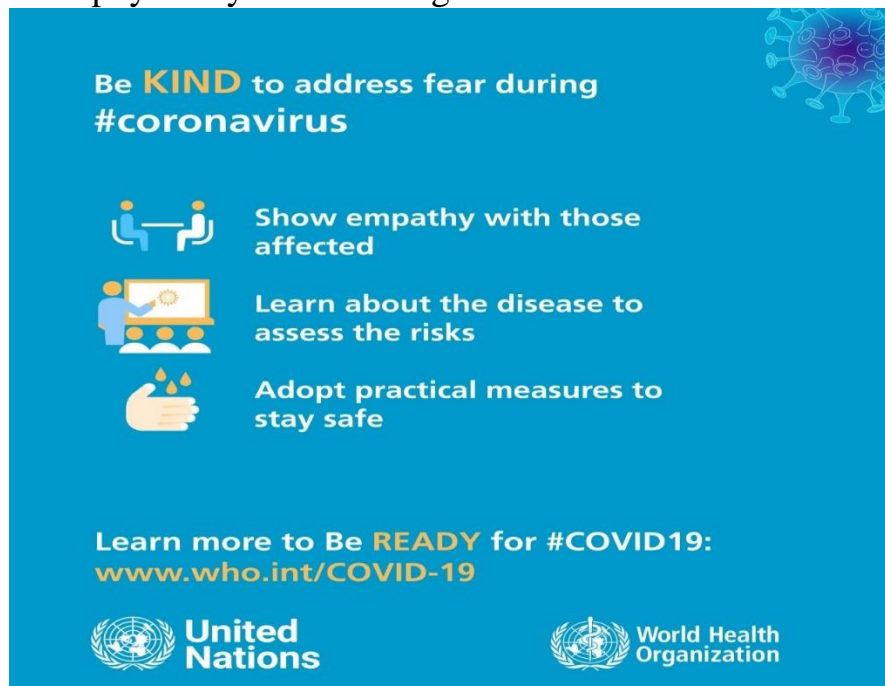


Figure 3. Be KIND to address fear during #coronavirus (<https://www.un.org/>)

Figure 2 includes a poster with the message "Be KIND to combat fear during the #coronavirus" in keeping with the preceding subject.

Semiopragmatic Analysis

The substance in this poster is more than one, which contains two men in first line, three man and maybe woman with them who sit down and man stands up, and lastly the poster involves hands washes with water. Meanwhile, the main theme of the poster concentrates on the fear from the virus and similar to the previous poster in which being kind. Who can we face it, by being kind during the outbreak. The iconic meaning in this figure involves man, woman and hands.

The chairs' positions and the table, which are drawn as white lines at the top of the poster, give away the indexical meaning. Then, we have a board which draws a yellow virus on it, to learn people about coronavirus and its dangerous. Also, we have a yellow water, a yellow which consider as primary, brightest and warm color. It's associated with hope, happiness and sunshine. The meaning of color has a different connotation in some countries. It is also associated with danger, though not as strongly as red. Another meaning to this color is a deceit, so, here according to this poster, we can fight this virus by adopting practical and precise measurement to stay healthy and safe.

The text also contained symbols that represented the WHO's appeal to actively exercise and maintain good health at home and outside during the pandemic. Also, the World Health Organization's words and emblem serve as markers of the official organization that is concerned with teaching the global audience about health, particularly in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. The United Nations' logo is positioned in the lower-left corner to demonstrate the organization's legitimacy. The text is composed of the following sentence constructions " Be KIND to address fear during #coronavirus", "Show empathy with those affected", " Learn about the disease to assess the risks", " Adopt practical measures to stay safe".



Figure 4. Be SMART if you develop shortness of breath (<https://www.un.org/>)

As the previous two posters, the sentence in the first line begins with verb to be and gives an instruction to those who suffered from shortness of breath. The message is different to be follow, here, "shortness of breath" is a term used to describe difficulty of breathing, it's usually marked by feeling like you can't catch your breath. We have the words SMART and READY with capital letter and they are with different color from other words as we see in this poster in yellow to highlight them from others.

Semiopragmatic Analysis

An image that resembles a reference object in the shape of a human and an object icon in figure 3 illustrates the icon's symbolic significance. An image of a guy or woman wearing a white dress serves as the symbol sign. Another icon is a white car with yellow tire. So, the icon meaning here is a doctor, an ambulance car and the shape of virus in the upper- right of the poster.

The indexical meaning in this poster represents by the blue background. As blue is so widely liked, it is frequently thought of as a non-threatening color that can appear conservative and traditional. It evokes sentiments of tranquility or peace. It is frequently characterized as tranquil, safe, and structured. Blue is frequently regarded as a symbol of dependability and stability. Another indexical meaning is by unequal positions of car.

Meanwhile, the symbolic meaning find in a sequence of letters in the script that displayed the WHO's call to stay in fine fettle, take care of ourselves and go to the doctor if we feel tininess of breath. Also, the World Health Organization's literature and emblem serve as markers of the official organization that is concerned with teaching the global community about health, particularly in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. The United Nations logo is positioned in the lower-left corner to demonstrate the institution's power.

The WHO advisory text is the following symbol, and it is displayed in white to make it easier to see against the poster's blue background. Beginning with the title about how to keep healthy during an outbreak, the text is organized systematically, such as "Be SMART if you develop shortness of breath", "Call your doctor", and " Seek care immediately".

Figure 5. Be KIND to address stigma during #coronavirus (<https://www.un.org/>)

In figure 5. Also it begins with same verb and noun which is "Be KIND". The word highlight with yellow color . The word "stigma," on the other hand, refers to unfavorable opinions or treatment of someone because of a distinctive



attribute, such as a mental disease, medical condition, or disability. Other qualities including gender, sexuality, color, religion, and culture can also be linked to social stigmas. Regrettably, there is still a lot of stigma associated with mental health. Stigma does not only apply to mental illnesses, but it is more prevalent in relation to psychiatric disorders than in relation to other medical ailments. (www.verywellmind.com) In this poster, we have three instructions during corona virus that we can help us and others from this disease.

Semiopragmatic Analysis

Figure 4 illustrates the iconic meaning with an image that resembles the reference object. Three guys who share a fact and refrain from hyperbole are among the people and objects featured in the image. Then we have the image of heart and the hand which mean the unity with affected people. However, the iconic markings also find as a woman who tells stories about people. Those who have experienced the virus. Also, the shape of telling stories, facts, the image of virus in the top of the poster.

The placement of the word "facts" above the word "men" in the first piece of advice indicates the indexical meaning. Meanwhile, the position of the white heart above the hand to show solidarity, to be helpful with those affected people. Also, we have the position of the "stories" at the right, above the head of the woman to indicate people experienced the covid- 19 and talks about their harmful, damaging and how to keep others from this virus. Under the crucial message of the "Be KIND to confront stigma during #coronavirus," the blue color on the poster background denotes harmony, faithfulness, grief, distance, infinity, the imagination, cold, and occasionally with confidence in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The World Health Organization (WHO), the official UN agency that is involved with the health sector, particularly in dealing with Covid-19, represents the symbolic meaning through its texts and logo. The WHO logo is positioned in the lower-left corner to demonstrate the legitimacy of the organization that sponsored the "Be KIND to overcome stigma during #coronavirus" campaign, which encouraged people all around the world to stay active and maintain their health during the pandemic.

The WHO advisory text is the following icon, and it is presented in white for easy reading against the poster's blue background. The systematic arrangement of the text starts from the title about tips to stay healthy during the pandemic, such as "Be KIND to address stigma during #coronavirus", "share the latest facts& avoid hyperbole", ""show solidarity with affected people", ""Tell the stories of affected people who have experienced the virus. Being aware of the Covid-19 breakout during the pandemic is something that needs to be brought to your notice, and that is what the yellow hue in the words #COVID19 and the recommendations highlight.

Conclusion

1-Covid-19 occurs in English posters through using several strategies. Semio-pragmatic strategy is the iconic, indexical and iconic meaning.. According to the outcomes of the qualitative analysis, representative speech acts are not the most common type found in English posters.

2- There are several pragmatic function used in Covid-19 posters but the prominent ones are the advising and warning instructions to be safe from this virus. However, warning, advising are the most frequent function.

3- All the semio-prgmatic device are of the same important and use in Covid-19 posters. The three devices completed each other to give the intended meaning of the writer to the reader or a person when she or he saw them.

REFERENCES

Cobley, C.(2001), *The Routledge Companion to Semiotics and Linguistics*, London and New York: Routledge.

Crystal, D. (2011). *A dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics (6th Edition)*. John Wiley & Sons.

Deely, (1982), *The Scholastic Conception of a Relation's Foundation* (Google Books).

Esenova, K., (2017), *Pragmalinguistics Studies in Linguistics*, Jipto.

Hyland, K. (2000). *Disciplinary Discourses: Social Interactions in Academic Writing*. Harlow: Pearson Education.

Leech, G. (2014). *The Pragmatics of Politeness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Richard, G. & Schimdt, R. (2002). *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*. London: Longman.

Steinberg, Sheila. (2007). *An Introduction to Communication Studies*. Cape Town: Juta.

Stephen Eskilson,(2012), *Graphic Design: A New History*, Yale University Press.

Supturo, Ayo. (2015). "Indirectness". (<http://suputriaumner.blogspot.com/2015/07/indirectness.html>).

Lippert, Angelina, (2017). *"What is a poster?"*. article. [Poster House](#). Retrieved 18 July 2019.

Lane, Shelley D., Ruth Anna Abigail, and John Casey Gooch. (2016). *Communication in A Civil Society*. London: Routledge.

Rosengren, Karl Erik, (2000), *Communication: An Introduction*. London: SAGE Publications.

(www.verywellmind.com)

(<https://www.techtarget.com>)