A PRAGMATIC STUDY OF CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION CONTROL(CDC)INSTRUCTIONS OF COVID-19

Prof. Dr. Qasim Obayes Al-azzawi

dr.qasim_tofel@uobabylon.edu.iq

Department of English, College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Babylon

Noor Al-Huda Kadhim Hussein

alhusseininoor688@gmai.com

PhD Student, Department of English, College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Babylon

Abstract

Despite the wide coverage and potential effectiveness of the public sensitization about Covid-19, studies on the social management of Covid-19 have not investigated context-constrained language use and its effects on the citizens in the announcements and instructions about the disease. Accordingly, the present studyis an attempt to explore the pragmatic aspects of the language used in the instructions of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Control (henceforth CDC) of Covid-19. The presents study tries to answer the following questions: (1) What are the pragmatic actsgenerated by the different utterances of CDC instructions of Covid-19? (2) What are the pragmatic functions or perlocutionary effectsof these acts in these instructions as a context-sensitive language? Thus, the study mainly aims at (1) Pinpointing the pragmatic acts generated by the different utterances of CDC instructions of Covid-19. (2) Demonstrating are the pragmatic functions or perlocutionary effects of these acts

in these instructions as a context-sensitive language. It is hypothesized that: (1) Various pragmatic functions manifested in the instructions such as co-opting, projecting, encouraging, emboldening and advising. (2) CDC instructions of Covid-19 exhibit certain pragmatic acts such as co-opting, projecting, advising that are generated for certain intentions such as creating awareness about the virus, living a healthy live devoid of Covid-19 virus and maintaining healthy habit for adults.Then, in order to achieve the aims of the study and test its hypotheses the following procedures are adopted: (1) Presenting a theoretical background about the some pragmatic notions that are relevant to the present study along with some literature review about CDC and its role in Covid-19 battle. (2) Analyzing some extracts CDC instructions of the Covid-19 according to an elected model based on Mey (2001) model of pragmatic acts.After analyzing the data, the study has come up with some conclusions that validate the hypotheses set in the first place.

Keywords: CDC, Instructions, Covid-19, Pragmatic acts, advising, co-opting

1. Introduction

Scholars heavily emphasized on the investigation of language use through speech acts as well as their performance in determining the intention of the speaker or instructor and the functions of the utterances but not their perlocutionary effects on the target audience. More specifically, emphasis is not laid on the language of CDC instructions of Covid-19and its effects on the audience. In essence, earlier researches conducted on Covid-19 proposed and established that there has been, to certain extent, some form of awareness about the virus and that they are already circulating within the communities where the researches were conducted. However, the types of campaigns, the effectiveness of the genre used in transmitting the information and the function of language as instrument of awareness and the attendant effects on the target audience have not been thoroughly discussed . Thus, the present study intends to fill this gap. CDC language used in the instruction is laid out to have subtle, compelling authority and immediate impact on the citizens. It plays a significant role in

creating awareness and support for people already living with the virus.

2. Speech Act Theory

Speech Act Theory (henceforth SAT) has been one of the basic components and significant approaches within pragmatics. It was first introduced by Austin (1962) and further developed and formalised by Searle (1969). The underlying principle of this theory is that language can be used for performing different kinds of actions, rather than simply describing a situation or a fact.

This theory treats an utterance as an act performed by a speaker in a context with respect to an addressee (Robinson, 2013: 604). Austin (1962:158) suggests three basic senses in which saying something equals doing something. These amount to three types of acts that are simultaneously performed:

(i) **Locutionary act**: The locutionary act indicates to an utterance simply structured by its literal or propositional meaning. A complex act consists of various kinds of actions: phonological, syntactic and semantic, hence it is the uttering of a sentence with determinate sense and reference (the actual words uttered).

(ii) **Illocutionary act**: The illocutionary act is the real action accomplish by the utterance, i.e. the conventionalized meaning. what is usually meant when we produce an utterance is that we achieve some particular social act, for instance, the making of a statement, an offer, or a promise, by virtue of the conventional force associated with it.

(iii) **Perlocutionary act** : The perlocutionary act expresses the influence of the utterance upon the recipient or, the bringing about of influences on the audience by means of uttering the sentence, such influence being special to the circumstance of utterance (the effect of the illocution on the hearer) (Kaburise,2011:70 -71).

It is worthy mention tht , Haverkate (1979: 11) as cited in Al-Hindawi (1999: 14) suggest the term "allocution" as a new dimension of the speech act. To him, an allocution refers to "the

selection by the speaker of those linguistic devices which he thinks optimally serve the purpose of eliciting from the hearer a positive reaction to his speech act. Allocutionary acts, therefore, determine the strategy of verbal interaction".

There are many taxonomies of illocutionary acts that have been proposed, but Bach's characterizations will be discussed in the present study. According to Bach and Harnish (1979:41) , the four main types of communicative illocutionary acts are *constatives, commissives directives,* and *acknowledgments*.

1- *Constatives*

In general, a constative describes the speaker' desire that the hearer forms alike belief. It can be listed in some subcategories falling under the notion of constative such as : Assertives,Predictives,Retrodictives,Descriptives,Ascriptives,Infor mativeConfirmatives,Concessives,Retractives,Assentives,Dissentiv es,Disputatis,Responsives,Suggestives and Suppositives .

2-Commissives:

To express an utterance that direct the speaker to some future course of action, is to fulfill one of the speech act kind that is called commissives(Levinson,1983:240).In his/her expressing of intentions, the speaker makes the world fit his words. Such category can be exemplified in promising, threatening, offering, … etc.

3-Directives:

They represent the speaker's attitude towards some potential action by the hearer.The impetus behind using these speech acts is make the hearer perform an action. Anyhow, they also show the speaker's wish that his utterance or the attitude it reveals be taken as (a) reason for the recipient to act. These include Advisories, Permissives, Requirements, Prohibitives, Questions and Requestives.

4-Acknowldgements

 These speech acts that express feelings regarding the hearer or, in cases where the utterance is evidently superficial or formal, the

speaker's intention that his utterance satisfy a social anticipation to express specific feelings and his belief that it does. These feelings and their expression are suitable to certain sorts of occasions. For instance, greeting expresses pleasure at meeting or seeing someone, apologizing expresses pity for disturbing the hearer. these speech acts include Condole, Congratulate, Greet, Thank, Bid, Accept and Reject.

3. Pragmatic Act Theory

Recently, the established way of thinking about speech acts (in the tradition of Austin, Searle, Grice, and their followers) has undergone a remarkable change. From being an effort to represent human words in terms of what they 'do' (Austin), or how they can be used to produce 'speech acts' (Searle) or to generate 'implicatures' (Grice), the focus has shifted to the situation in which words are spoken and how this contributes to understanding the utterance, or even how the situation can predefine and to a degree determine what can be said. The upshot of these considerations is that we need a new theory, one that takes into account the inter- and transactional aspects of speech acting . This section explicates such a theory under the label of 'pragmatic acts' . Pragmatic acts are those acts that work not just by their wording but also by their being embedded in a situation in which humans act, with everything that humans bring to their interactional forum, including body movements, emotions, and so on (Web Resource).

The language use in the theory of pragmatic act is not demonstrated by starting from the words uttered by single, idealised speaker, rather "it focuses on the interactional situation in which both speaker and hearer realise their aims" (Mey 2001:212). Instead ofsearching what a word could refer in isolation, the situation in which the word is referred is motivated to state what is actually said. The language we use, particularly the speeches we utter are entirely dependent on the situation in which the acts are produced . Mey (2001) suggests that pragmatic acts depends on language use as constrained by the situation, not as defined by

syntactic rules or by semantic selection and conceptual restrictions. All speeches are in essence context-situated.

4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Control(CDC)

It is a national public health institute in the United States. It is a United States federal agency, under the Department of Health and Human Services, and is headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia. Its main goal is to protect public health and safety through the control and prevention of disease, injury, and disability in the US and internationally .

The CDC focuses on developing and applying disease control and prevention. It especially focuses its attention on infectious disease, food borne pathogens, environmental health, occupational safety and health, health promotion, injury prevention and educational activities designed to improve the health of United States citizens. The CDC also conducts research and provides information on non-infectious diseases, such as obesity and diabetes, and is a founding member of the International Association of National Public Health Institutes.

The Covid-19 pandemic is one of the greatest health challenges facing the world in 21 century . The challenges appear even more insurmountable for the whole world which face other socioeconomic problems. Since launching an agency-wide response to the COVID-19 pandemic on January 21, 2020, CDC has been learning more about how the disease spreads and affects people and communities. Their work helps frontline healthcare workers, communities, and the public to protect themselves and save lives.

From the beginning of the pandemic, CDC has been at the forefront of sharing what they have learned about COVID-19. CDC provides information and recommendation that constitutes a guidance to lessen and prevent the risk of that virus (Web Resource 2).

5.The Model of Analysis

While speech act theory deals with utterances only, the present study requires a more demanding theory such as pragmatic act to achieve its aim. Thus, Mey's (2001) model of pragmatic acts is adapted for the analysis of the present study. It demonstrates that a speaker's utterances alone do not uncover his/her intentions when speaking. Rather, other paralinguistic highlights do consolidate enough with the expression to lead the listener to effectively understand the significance of the aims of the speaker.

These utterances operate consistently in two sections; one is the textual part and the other the activity part. The identification of the textual part is by the context as well as the text (utterance) that is intended. This can be accomplished through the utilizing of different choices that range from 'INF' inference, 'REF' reference, 'REL' relevance, 'VCE' voice 'SSK' shared situation knowledge and 'MPH' metaphor. All these components cooperate to enable the interlocutors to understand and arrive their desired interactional goals.

On the opposite side of the divide of pragmeme is the activity part. These are non-verbal cues which come in form of body gestures, facial expressions, prosodies etc. If these non-verbal cues are adopted during any interaction, they further help in relaying the speaker's intentions. Consequently, interlocutors are permitted to settle on decisions from at least one of the things on the left in order to realise their intentions. This side, however, is overlooked in the present study since the data analyzed is written. The following figure shows the adapted model of the study:
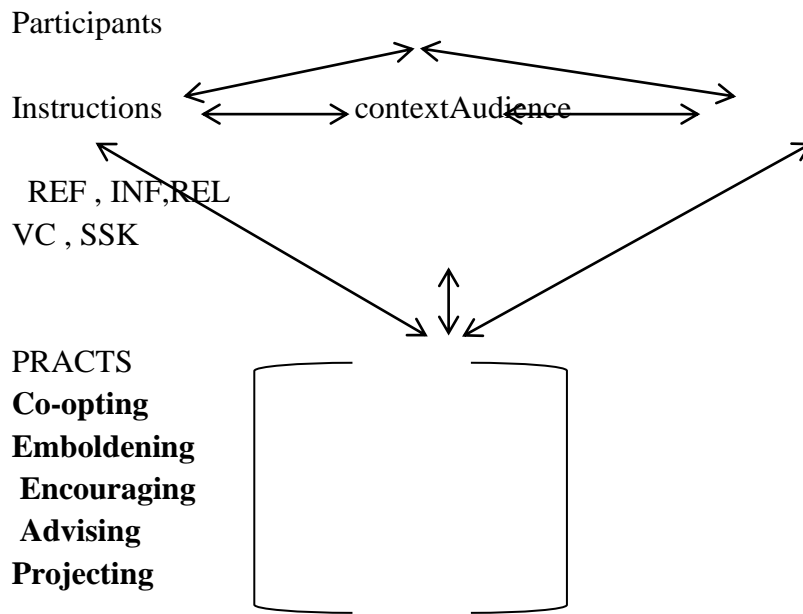
Participants

Instructions   contextAudience

 REF , INF,REL
VC , SSK

PRACTS
Co-opting
Emboldening
 Encouraging
 Advising
Projecting

Figure 1:The adapted Model

6-Data Analysis

The data of the present study are collected from the CDC instructions of Covid-19. The analysis of the present study is a qualitative and quantitative one. Pragmatic acts are examined in each extract selected from the CDC instructions of Covid-19.

6.1 Advising as a Pragmatic Act

Obviously, in the CDC instructions and in medical discourse in general, advising is heavily used.

 Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if symptomatic:

- *Stay home when you are sick*
- *Call your health care provider's office in advance of a visit*
- *Limit movement in the community*
- *Limit visitors*
- *Be honest and show respect in all relationships.*

The above instructions show how by means of direct acts people are advised to be cautious to deal with the virus. It is a way of persuading the adult audience to be faithful in their relationships as well as show respect to their partners/spouses . It is an admonition particularly for daily life events . This pract is targeted at protecting the faithful or innocent people from infection.

6.2 Co-opting as a Pragmatic Act

Co-optingrefers to an operation through which people who were not part of an earlier choice are invited on board due to particular qualities that they possess . Co-opting constitutes the majority of practs used in instructions . This pragmatic act is mainly meant to achieve the following perlocutionary effects:

1. To help and grant support to people living with Covid-19;

2. To get rid of stigmatisation;

3. To stimulateself-protection;

4. To give hope to people living with the virus.

    The CDC instructions of Covid-19 shows some references to the audience by the pronoun 'You'; that is to say, any individual or group of people that has contact with the instructions. The aim is to sensitise as many of the audience as possible to join in the fight against the spread of Covid-19 . All citizens are obliged to share responsibilities. It is an authoritative warning that everyone have to be responsible for his action and they should to contribute to each other's welfare:

You can make it possible by sharing responsibilities.

  It is important that you follow the steps below to protect yourself and others from COVID-19 .

The above extracts show how co-opting the audience to offer help to individuals living with Covid-19 infection was acquainted with gain audience's consideration and look for their involvement to overcome the troubles.

Obviously, there is encouragement to the citizens through this pract to take precautions by being faithful to one another. This plea also elicits support for people already living with the virus. Further, this pragmatic act is generated by the CDC instructions to stimulate self-protection as a way of achieving solidarity or co-opting :

The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

The above extract indirectly is used todirect the individual to be not exposed to the virus. In this way, the individual has the ability to eradicate Covid-19.

This pragmatic act is an indication that every approach to the management of the Covid-19 instructions starts from the individual who is expected to influence his/her nuclear family and by extension the society at large :

That world is possible.

"That world" in the above extract refers to a world free of Covid -19, a place where friends and family care for the sick. That is, a world free of Covid-19 is possible again and people living with the virus can live a normal life.

It begins with you.

It is hoped that the fear of rejection will be removed if the referent 'You' in the above extract starts by giving support to the sick, by taking care of them and knowing that mere touching or friendly associating do not make one contract the virus.

6.3 Projecting as a Pragmatic Act

Generally, projection is a forecast or a yearning for better days ahead: a condition of serenity, where things will come back to typical as they were before the flare-up of the infection. This is achieved through the perlocutionary effects achieved in this pragmatic act. That is, anticipating the effects through the mental benefit (cognitive effect) for the citizens. In a way to promote support, projection into a virus free generation that everybody desires is illustared in the following extract:

Imagine the possibility of an Covid-19 free generation.

The above extract gives inspiration to the sick . It is intended to raise hope for a better future. This pract proposes to encourage the sick and the infected people that hope is not lost. In this way, it is an indirect invitation that those who are sick should not be rejected. They must still be cared for by friends and family because loneliness and rejection are some of the reasons why people shy away from checking their Covid-19 status .

6.4 Encouraging as a Pragmatic Act

Encouragement is used directly and indirectly in the instructions below. Such practs are generated toencourage the citizens to go for the screening /test, speak about the virus, and not to criticise CDC' instructions . It is also an advocacy to motivate the youth to redirect their initiative and ingenuity towards achieving better standard of living.

Whether diseases start at home or abroad, are curable or preventable.

The above extract shows the way the CDC instructions indirectly encouraging the citizens to keep track of their symptoms because cure will be there whether by means of a new vaccine for the virus or form of discovering new drugs that will cure victims of the virus, or inventing more effective preventive drugs and management strategies.

You might have COVID-19. Most people have mild illness and are able to recover at home. If you think you may have been exposed to COVID-19, contact your healthcare provider.

It begins with you.
Imagine the world where young people with dreams live a healthy life and work.

Thus, as illustrated above, through that pragmatic act, CDC instructions suggest useful strategies to achieving that goal of motivating and encouraging.

4.4 *Emboldening* as a Pragmatic Act

Emboldening,as a pragmatic act, plays a vital role to give confidence to the citizens who may be afraid of testing . It is considered as an appealing to the psychology of the citizens by changing their mental state. This is obvious in the communicative work of the instructions thatinvolves the individual to do certain acts.Emboldening is utilized when the aimof the utterance is meant to achieve perlocutionary effects.

Your local health authorities may give instructions on checking your symptoms and reporting information.

And no one is afraid to get tested.

Indirectly, the above extracts are meant to relieve scares associated with the result of Covid-19 test particularly if the citizen is scared of positive testing. They indicate that everyone understands that stigma drives Covid-19 because of the lack of knowledge about one's Covid-19 status. Thus, the fears of stigmatisation do not motivate people to be tested because ofthe fear of rejection as a consequence of having Covid-19.This may provoke victims to seek out revenge from the society that has rejected them by deciding to be having indiscriminate sex. Therefore, the essence of this pract, is to strengthen the citizens or people against stigmatisation.

7. The Results of Analysis

Table (2): The Pragmatic Acts in the CDC Instructions of Covid-19

Pragmatic Acts	Frequency	Percentage
1. Advising	6	33.3%
2. Co-opting	5	27.7%
3. Projecting	1	5.5%
4.Encouraging	3	22.2%
5. Emboldening	2	11.1%
Total	18	100%

As far as the findings of the study are concerned, the above table clearly shows the occurrence of certain pragmatic acts in the CDC instructions of covid-19 in the selected extracts such as advising, co-opting, projecting, encouraging and emboldening. However, the pragmatic act of advising constitutes the higher percentage, making 33.3%, due to the fact that the genre of the CDC instructions is part of the medical discourse which is characterized mainly by the heavy use of advice for instructions. By contrast, the pragmatic act of projecting constitutes the lower percentage making 5.5%. This is due to the fact that doubts about the end of the virus are challenging and its end cannot be detected yet.

8. Conclusions

The present study has come up with the following conclusions:

1. Mey's(2001) pragmatic theory of action becomes more explicit and proves to be workable or exploitable in medical discourse analysis. Moreover, it helps explain and possibly solve a prevailing social health problems.

2. CDC instructions of Covid-19 exhibit certain pragmatic acts such as advising, co-opting, projecting, encouraging and emboldening. These pragmatic actsare generated for certain intentions such as creating awareness about the virus, living a healthy live devoid of Covid-19 virus and maintaining healthy habit for adults . This result validates hypothesis no 1. set earlier.

3. The perlocutionary effects achieved by means of those pragmatic acts are salient in the message conveyed through the campaigns of the CDC instructions. The effectiveness of these instructions is realized bythe public awareness and sensitization about Covid-19 as well as arousing the necessary passion to motivate citizens to get tested. This result validates hypothesis no. 2 set earlier.

4. The language of the CDC instructions is a constrained-context or context-sensitive language.

5. For the most part , the pragmatic acts are implicit and expressed indirectly in the CDC instructions about Covid-19 except for the advising pragmatic act.

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We Resources:

1.https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283133596_Pragmatic_ Acts

2. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cdcresponse/index.html