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Levels of Warning in the Text messages Sent by the Saudi Ministry of Health during Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract
With the beginning of the Corona pandemic at the beginning of 2019 and its rapid spread, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was among the countries that moved very quickly to address this matter. All state institutions played the role related to them. Saudi Ministry of Health launched an intensive package of warning, awareness, and guidance in the form of text messages through multiple electronic platforms to reach the largest segment of society. The study took three sources to collect data, three telecommunications companies, the official account of the Ministry of Health on Twitter and the official website of the Ministry. The current study was based on analyzing these messages in terms of warning levels in various speech acts according to the theories of Austin and Searle, in addition to analyzing the content in terms of its relationship to the actual text and the objective context. The study tried to seek the warning levels in the messages which were classified into three sections: high, moderate, and low and identified the types of actions that represent the levels. The significance of the study lies in revealing how language is used to raise the level of awareness in society. Based on the research methods, this study is analytical and descriptive, based on the theory of speech acts in its foundations, and the development of a reference model for analyzing warning levels that depend on the type of action and its implications, taking into account the indirect speech acts. The results of the study concluded that there is a clear discrepancy in the use of speech verbs to express the three levels of warning.

Keywords: Covid-19, levels of warning, Saudi Ministry of Health, speech acts, telecommunications, text messages, Twitter

Introduction

During the pandemic so-called COVID 19, which has occurred at the beginning of this century -21st, the shape of the whole world is not as before since it has immensely influenced social life that no such disease had done ever since the last five centuries. Economically, educationally, socially, and even politically, all nations around the world have been exposed to a great number of sequential changes. Life movement has been before all in the front to suffer from the bad influence of the pandemic. Almost all countries all over the Earth suffered from a terrifying death toll which resulted in harsh regulations authorities had to apply, among which were curfew and locking down regional areas, cities, and the whole country. The pandemic put all health institutions in front of real challenges and made them confront two issues death and life.

Generally, health and infection control institutions, pharmaceutical and biotechnology corporations were in a high alert; all were to work in their arenas to minimize the worst scenario the world may face in the future. If shedding light on health institutions liabilities, the most considerably important part was to raise the awareness of the coming danger among the community. Luckily, in the era of the enormous progress in technology, that matter was not a big dilemma. More specifically, the process of spreading societal awareness effectively took no more than seriously activating the use of social media.

In Saudi Arabia, the government was noticeably aware of the serious hazard of the pandemic right from the beginning when the first case was recorded March 2020. Particularly, the Ministry of health took the initiative and started to broadcast daily statements including the cases reported and the regulations of both the Ministry of interior and Ministry of health through the official Saudi TV channels.
Shortly afterward, the Ministry of health took an outstanding step towards the release of awareness campaigns of the noble virus and official rules that mattered inconsistent with what each stage required. The step was an organized program of short system services (SMSs) being sent in the Arabic Language via Twitter, cell phones, and the official website of the Ministry.

The significance of the text messages lies in three things: the recurrent use, speed, and the possibility of reaching the largest segment of the society. Thus, this process started almost March/April 2020 and lasted up till now during which the Ministry of health released hundreds of messages. These messages carried a lot of important information about COVID 19, health advice and warnings, and general rules of how people were to change their lifestyle. Accordingly, the content of the text messages was being adapted and modified in consistent with the quick changes of the pandemic. As a result, there were several of linguistic constructions used to convey for instance, warning, threatening, advising, etc. Looking carefully at meaning construction, a message, no doubt, would have a certain meaning that has a certain impact on an addressee via language use. A very good example on that is *warning* as an illocutionary act is much stronger than *advising* or *asserting* (Searle, 1969).

This leads to the central subject of this paper through which the pragmatic meaning of the Saudi MOH text messages is discussed. It is, on the face of it, meaning that is very complex to be construed with its variations in the sense of meaning in using Thomas (1995), taking the furthest

point, the contrast between what seems on the surface and what lies in there, in the deep construction in relation to the context (Searle, 1979). On the other hand, since the discussion is about raising awareness of a serious pandemic, it is worthy of investigating the level of alerts in the sent instructional messages. The significance of this paper lies in the extent to which the levels of alerts of language used, supposedly, to raise awareness among people. Importantly, this paper seeks answers to questions: did Saudi MOH use high levels of alerts in the text messages? What was the representation of high levels of alerts? What kind of speech acts was used to serve the input of the instructions? Thus, this paper is an attempt to discover variations of speech acts ranging from the softness of instructions like asserting and advising to strongly worded ones, which have alarming consequences like warning and prohibition. In addition, what makes this paper distinguishing is its attempt to apply the theory of speech acts on written texts. This move was supported by the principles of the theory itself and a study on written advertisements based on speech acts (Kadri & Abd Razak, 2018; Naufalina, 2017; Simona & Dejica-Cartisa, 2015).

Literature Review
Pragmatics

For decades, (meaning) as the core of a communicative event has been a field of question in linguistics and thus the work had to explore ample evidence about how people communicate meaning via language. In late 20th century when pragmatics became a formal field in linguistics, see for example Davis (1991), the linguistic pioneers started to devote outstanding work to the use of utterances, vs. sentences, that are associated to speaker's meaning.

As a starting point to the literature review, it is significant to present what is meant by pragmatics in a very brief way. For instance, Thomas (1995) believed that pragmatics is meaning in use or meaning in context. The modern term of pragmatics was first traced back to Morris in 1938, it addresses the relation of signs to users and interpreters (Horn & Ward, 2006, as cited, Morris 1938). Levinson (1983) says that Charles was interested in studying signs being a scientific field called *semiotics,* "the study of the relation of signs to interpreters" (p. 1). For instance, the interpretation of the pronoun (you) depends on the real context rather than if read on a book or the like. Charles Morris maintained that certain expressions like *interjections* "Oh", and orders "come here", others "Good morning" exist only in specific situations. More interestingly, pragmatics deals with all aspects of *semiosis* "signs and images" when they are in use (Levinson, 1983). Pragmatics is the study of meaning in context. It investigates inferences approached by listeners to interpret what is communicated by speakers; in other words, how a speaker expresses the unsaid in what is actually said. There is always more to be communicated in one single linguistic form. For instance, by asking *"what is the time?"*, is not necessarily interpreted as a question that seeks information about the time.

This overriding field "pragmatics" emerged considerable perspectives about how language is used and processed to convey different meanings in different contexts. The main goal was bridging the gap that might occur between the phonological representation and speaker's intentional meaning which semantics and syntax could not fill for a long time. The bridging process was operated by many frameworks and theories that have had practical values so far. More specifically, in 1950s Paul Grice was first who discussed meaning when a speaker means more than what he/she says through the *theory of implicatures*, and during the 1930s up to the 1960s Ludwig Wittgenstein, Gilbert Ryle, John Austin and John Searle went with Grice on the

same track and developed *speech acts theory* (Huang, 2017). However, there are more areas determined in the arena of pragmatics i.e. presupposition, deixis, and relevance theory.

Speech Acts Theory: Brief Theoretical Background

This theory was established by John Austin in the middle of 1950s. The basic principle of Austin's is "how to do things with words". In the beginning he distinguishes between two main verbs: constatives and performatives. The point here is that these verbs have certain characteristics; one characteristic is that when one says (the verb) he performs an act. It is not necessary to perform it physically but to perform the act itself. At the beginning, one condition was stated to test the verb; it should pass the use of (hereby). However, his theory ended up in the assumption that all verbs can perform actions under certain conditions and rules, and performatives changed into speech acts. The theory attempted to establish practical principles by originating the felicity conditions.

Felicity conditions

Felicity conditions are described by Levinson (1983).
- There must be a conventional procedure having a conventional effect.
- The circumstances and persons must be appropriate to the procedure.
- The procedure must be correct and complete.
- The participants must have the required thoughts, feelings, and intentions as specified in the procedure. (p.229)

In the same vein, Cutting (2002) identifies the felicity conditions and the general conditions in a more explicit description:

A- *According to Austin, felicity conditions are:*
- Each participant knows his role and recognizes the context.
- The action should be performed completely.
- All participants should have the intention to perform the action.

B- *According to Searle, there are general conditions applied to all speech acts:*
- The addressee must hear and understand the code.
- The speaker must be in a real context; not having a role in a play, for instance.

Consistent with the above illustration, Levinson (1983) merely adds "both speaker and addressee", and they must be conscious and normal human beings.

*A-Felicitous request according to felicity conditions, (*Johnstone, 2002; Cutting, 2002; Levinson, 1983).
- Context is recognized by all parties; the action, place, code, meaning.
- The roles of participants are recognized.
- The participants have the right intentions.
- The speaker must trust the hearer that the latter would do the action.
- The speaker wants something to take place in the future; *propositional content condition.*
- The speaker believes that the hearer "requestee" is able to do the action*; preparatory condition.*
- The hearer will not do the action unless he is asked to do it; *preparatory condition.*

- The speaker is sincere; he wants the request to be understood and done as a request; *sincerity condition.*
- The speaker attempts to get the hearer doing the action; *essential condition.*

B-Felicitous question according to felicity conditions
Schiffrin (1994) states these conditions as follows:
- Proposition or propositional function; propositional content. (Textual content)
- The speaker does not know the "answer"; he lacks information that completes his proposition (interrogatives are incomplete propositions in case of open questions Schiffrin (1994), or he wants to make sure whether his proposition is true (in case of closed questions, Schiffrin (1994); *Preparatory condition.* (Background circumstances)
- The speaker wants this information, *sincerity condition.* (Psychological state)
- The speaker attempts to get the information from the hearer, *essential condition.* (Illocutionary point of what is said)
-

It might be beneficial to mention two aspects of speech acts theory; that are *explicit performatives* and *implicit performatives*. I will elect an example from Levinson's book to explain the idea. To differentiate between the two types of performatives, let's consider the following example:

"I promise I will be there"
The verb (promise) is performative, "I promise" means I do something. "I will be there" is the promise and it is the implicit performative. If I say "I will be there" it is still performing and that is implicit. What comes after the performative verb is the implicit speech act and the explicit is the performative verb itself.

Kinds of Acts
Levinson (1983) illustrates the kinds of acts based on Austin's model to speech acts theory:
Locutionary act: the utterance itself.
Illocutionary act: the act one intends to perform, like "I will come" the act is "you are promising", that is the act. That is the force or the act. The intention of the speaker by the utterance and the **intention in this case is the act** like *promising, threatening, judging.*
Perlocutionary act: the effect on the hearer.

Clarifying the notion behind illocutionary act, it would be necessary to refer to Cutting's exact words "this is the **illocutionary force** 'what is done in uttering the words', the function of the words, the specific purpose that the speakers have in mind" (Cutting, 2002, p. 16).

Important to mention here is that perlocutionary can be unintended in that how can one determine the effect on the hearer intentionally? In this case he may produce an effect on the hearer which is not intended. Therefore, perlocutionary act is not systematic. This is the beginning of theory established in the 50s. Then Grice posited the theory of conversational implicatures in which intentional meaning is highly activated rather than non-intentional meaning, (Levinson, 1983). Relevant to the above kinds of acts is the concept of *uptake*. The assumption is that consequences should be verified or ratified in illocutionary act. For example, when I say *"I bet you"* then you have to say something for example *"I accept it"* and to perform

the **uptake**, then, it requires that you understand the illocutionary act of the utterance. Perlocutionary act is necessary to occur to evaluate the illocutionary level of one's act. In this regard, it is essential to differentiate between two main prototypes of acts relevant to semantics and pragmatics; these are *direct speech act* "semantic reference" and *indirect speech act* "with reference to pragmatics", (Fromkin & Rodman, 1993; Whitney, 1998). For example, if S says, *"can you close the door?"* and the H does not do anything, so what is the effect? Definitely H understands what S means regardless he does or not. This example can be a request and it can be a question. On the one hand, although the linguistic structure and syntactic properties of the example reveal a question form, it carries a connotative sense of request; that is the illocutionary act; explicitly founded as *indirect speech act*. The indirect speech act in the above example is the requesting. On the other hand, the *direct speech act* in this case is asking a question. The question is asking about the ability of the hearer. So, if the H says "yes I can" and does nothing, it means that he understands the meaning as interrogation; that is the semantic meaning. The effect is only if the H understands what is meant by *"close the door"*, if I didn't close the door, it cannot be suggested that the effect occurred. More explicitly, if the H understands the utterance as a request, then the interaction is successful.

Five kinds of action
Representatives: i.e., claiming, predicting, asserting and concluding.
Directives: i.e., ordering, requesting, and questioning
Commissives: i.e., promising, threatening, offering
Expressives: i.e., thanking, apologizing, welcoming, congratulating
Declarations: i.e., declaring war, firing from employment

In a more explicit view, representatives (assertives) are when S commits to a true A, directives are when S attempts to have H do A for his/her best interest, commissives are when S commits to a future A, expressives are when S expresses some psychological conditions, and declarations are when S intends to make changes in the institutional affairs, (Levinson, 1983).

Methods
The nature of the current research is consistent with analytic and descriptive methodologies. The paradigm used to analyze and describe the data was stemmed and developed from Austin and Searle's framework of speech acts theory. The main purpose of the current research is to explore the levels of alerts the MOH employed to increase the awareness of danger about COVID19. Thus, the research adapted the qualitative method since it attempted to interpret the content meaning of the text messages, Abu Allam (2007). However, numbers and means were used to explain differences among the levels of alerts.

The Research Paradigm
The research paradigm "instrument, if possible, to name" was designed to meet the main purpose of this paper. Therefore, the performative verbs were the targeted contents. Accordingly, the paradigm consists of three levels of suppositional forces (high, moderate, low). The high level of alerts is represented mainly by directives and declarations. The moderate level of alerts is represented mainly by directives of another type of performatives. The low level of alerts is represented mainly by representatives. There are two types of macro-functions related to language functions and accordingly to speech acts discussed by Brown and Yule (1983). They

divided the functions to *transactional* in which the function of language is embedded in the content of the linguistic expression, and *interactional* in which the function is involved in the context surrounding the text, social, and personal aspects. Hence, it was worthy of enriching the paradigm by discussing these two types of language functions.

The paradigm

Suppositional Forces	Class of Speech Acts	Paradigm Cases	Examples	Macro-Functions
High alerts	Directives	Warning, Forbidding, Commanding (Ordering)	Health announces 58 new deaths, bringing total deaths	Transactional Interactional
	Declarations	Declarations		
Moderate alerts	Directives	Inviting, Requesting, Questioning Advising, Suggesting	Please register now to get the vaccine. فضلًا سجّل الآن لأخذ اللقاح.	Transactional Interactional
	Representatives	Claiming		
Low alerts	Representatives	Claiming Describing Hypothesizing Predicting	Sitting at home limits the spread of the new Corona virus. جلوسك في المنزل يحد من تفشّي فيروس كورونا الجديد.	Transactional Interactional
	Directives	Requesting Advising Inviting		

The rationale behind the sorting of the alert levels comes from the baseline of verb meanings. For instance, ***advising*** someone demands nothing to be followed immediately but it is upon the addressee's will either to commit him/her-self to it or not. Contrary to that, ***ordering*** or ***warning*** someone, for instance, necessitates considerable awareness that the addressee should commit to do whatever it takes to avoid harmful consequences. Bataineh and Aljamal (2014) "reports that the act of ***warning*** should be identified through the intention to warn (i.e., the intention to make somebody aware of danger)" (as cited in Allwood, 1977, p. 55). ***Advising*** is likely seen as a weak force of directives because it only suggests some future actions the speaker thinks it would be for the benefit of the addressee, (Searle, 1969). Interestingly, (executives) according to Austin's model is the practices of "powers & influence", for instance …***warning***, and the like, (Al-Hindawi, Al-Masu'di & Mirza, 2014, p. 29). Instances below clarify the difference among the three types of speech acts with respect to high, moderate, and low alerts. Nevertheless, there are some exceptions, for example, low alert existed in form of order as in:

اعرف آخر تحديثات فيروس كورونا المستجد من خلال متابعة حساب المركز الوطني للوقاية من الأمراض
والجهات   الرسمية الموثوقة.

"Find out the latest updates of the emerging corona virus by following the account of the National Center for Disease Prevention and trusted official bodies".

Instance (1)

A text message by the Minister of Health Dr. Alrabiah through Twitter:

احذروا تقبيل أو عناق الأطفال فبالرغم ان اصابتهم بسيطة أو بدون أعراض لكنهم ينقلون العدوى بشدة

Beware of kissing or cuddling children, although their infection is mild or without symptoms, but they transmit the infection strongly.

According to the Arabic version, the precise lexical meaning of the verb (احذروا) introduces *warning* although its syntactic form refers to *ordering*. This relationship between the two aspects of language evokes explicit and implicit speech acts, namely direct and indirect speech acts. On the one hand, any Arabic speaker would understand the verb as "warning" even if it is given in an imperative mode. On the other hand, this mixture of direct and indirect acts empowers the content in the sense that the speaker still commits to the intention to warn. It is important to note that the speaker might resort to this way of *warning* to avoid imposition or threat. So, instead of saying "I warn you not to kiss children …." " أحذركم بعدم تقبيل الأطفال", which can be understood as a sort of threat, he chose to use "beware".

Important question is rising; do the acts discussed in this paper meet felicity conditions? Referring to the framework of speech acts theory, 1- All participants were aware of the situation (the existence of COVID), appropriate to the procedure and are human beings: the speaker (the Saudi minister of health) and the addressees (the Saudi and non-Saudi people). 2- The event was real, there was a real pandemic, and it was not i.e., a play in a theater. 3- The speaker, in such a serious circumstance, certainly had the intention to warn the people about the critical situation. 4- The speaker used the appropriate words of *warning* followed by hazardous consequences that were "transmission of the infection", i.e., "if you kiss children, you get infected" and "children transmit infection strongly". 5- The code "language" used was recognized by people, it is important to mention that each message sent via cell phones had two versions: Arabic and English. And there are a lot of tweets in English found on this application for addressing non-Arabic speakers.

Instance (2)

Please register now to get the vaccine.

فضلًا سجّل الآن لأخذ اللقاح.

This text message represents a moderate level of alerts by using (now) which indicates that people should get vaccinated immediately. The verb (register) commits the hearer to do an action in the future. The (command verb, register سجل) carries meaning of alert because it pushes forward to taking the vaccine, the action that could prevent from being infected. However, the use of the interjection before the command verb (please فضلا) signals a polite request which lowers down the level of alert to moderate.

Instance (3)

Sitting at home limits the spread of the new Corona virus.

جلوسك في المنزل يحد من تفشّي فيروس كورونا الجديد

As a low level of alerts, it clear that this utterance has a claiming (assertive) or so-called representative mode of speech act by using the verb "limit" "يحد". Essentially, the intentional meaning of the verb is to state the fact that *if you don't stay at home the pandemic will spread*; another sort of alert.

Although representatives were considered as a low alert in describing MOH messages, but some messages were found having high tone of alert such as:

Instance (4)

تنتقل عدوى فيروس كورونا عبر :
الرذاذ المتطاير إثر عطاس أو كحة، لمس الأسطح والأدوات من ثم لمس الوجه، المخالطة المباشرة للمصابين..
- وزارة الصحة

Coronavirus modes of transmission:
Respiratory droplets from a cough or sneeze, touching your face after touching
contaminated surfaces, or direct contact with someone who is infected.
 MOH

To test the felicity condition in instances (two through four), it is only to use the same procedures in instance (1) which shows again that felicity conditions are met in both of them.

The transactional function was served in all above instances. The morphophonological and syntactic structures showed that the semantic meaning was pinned linguistically to accomplish the purpose of the sentences. On the other hand, the interactional function appeared clearly in all instances as well. It is unlikely to separate the context from the transactional function to recognize the pragmatic meaning of the speech acts intentionally planted to raise awareness and alerts in the community. The was proved by the strong meaning of the verbs like commands. Saying for instance (wear the mask in the public places البس الكمامة في الأماكن العامة) cannot be understood as an informative construction only. The recognition of the events around the individuals, social attitudes, and institutional rules are factors of interpreting **why** and **when** to wear the mask.

Data Collection

The data was the content of text messages employed by the Saudi Ministry of Health MOH. They were collected from two channels. The first channel was the text messages sent to cell phones through the telecommunication companies approaching their business in Saudi Arabia STC, Mobily and Zain. The second channel was the messages sent by the minister through the Twitter platform. The data of this paper was between March 2020 when the first cases of corona appeared in the Kingdom, until August 28th, 2021. As for the data across the telecommunication companies, the researcher collected over 188 messages from 51 persons living in Almadinah Almunawarrah, Jeddah, Riyadh, Eastern Region, and Yanbu. The companies were STC, Mobily, and Zain. The data collected from Twitter platform was 701 messages. The data collected from the Ministry of Health website was 67 messages. The overall number of messages from all resources was 956 text messages.

Table 1. *Distribution of messages on resources*

Cell phone messages	Twitter	MOH	Total
188	701	67	956

Research Procedures

The purpose of this paper is to identify how the MOH raised awareness across the whole Saudi nation through alerts spread in text messages. The first step was to approach discourse analysis to several text messages from different channels to test the possibility of applying the speech acts framework as a model to investigate the levels of alerts. Based on the data of the discourse analysis and literature review, modeling procedures were set up to build the research paradigm used for data analysis. Meanwhile, data were being collected from different resources as mentioned in the previous section. Then the data was sorted and analyzed according to the research paradigm. Finally, the results were discussed using some numeric measurements like numbers and means to explore the size of each level of alerts. Refer to Appendix A.

Important to mention that in some circumstances, there may not be clear cut between *suggesting* or *advising* and *commanding*. This is a defect that speech acts theory doesn't present a linguistic remedy but likely it introduces a way for using the context to interpret the intended meaning. Thus, the researcher tried hard to adhere to the patterns of the performative verbs like (advise and stick) and activate the context role. In instance five below, the message has the expression "go immediately "which shows a direct order linked to the previous information, it is likely considered a high warning because the act is not intended to advise or suggest. Another important point is the considerable number of verbs which occur in the Arabic language in formula like (لا تخالط ، لا تحضر) were found in the data. These verbs in such formula are considered prohibitions in negative imperative, (Al-Hindawi1, Al-Masu'di1, & Mirza, 2014).

Instance (5)

اسهال، فقدا تشعر بأحد هذه الاعراض؟ ارتفاع في درجة الحرارة، ضيق في التنفس، ألم في الصدر، سعال، احتقان الحلق
حاسة الشم والتذوق، **توجه فورا لأقرب عيادات تطمن.**

*Do you feel any of these symptoms? High temperature, shortness of breath, chest pain, cough, sore throat, diarrhea, loss of sense of smell and taste, **go immediately** to the nearest reassuring clinic.*

Example (6) below shows through the context that it is an invitation to provide information even though the verb is in the imperative form.

Instance (6)

تعرف على فيروس كورونا الجديد من خلال الرابط
Learn about the new Corona virus through the link

The research has identified the type of actions that determine warning levels to achieve credibility in the results of the analysis. The researcher also took into account indirect speech acts very little for the same reason above. The table below shows a group of verbs and their connotations in the warning levels established in this research

Table 2. *Connotations of verbs in the warning levels*

High alert verbs	Moderate alert verbs	Low alert verbs
احذروا تقبيل الاطفال	لنعود بحذر مسؤوليتنا جميعًا	تقل الحالات ويزداد التعافي عنما نلتزم جميعا بالاحترازات الوقائية
اتبع الإجراءات الوقائية والتزم بها	فلنلتزم بشدة بلبس الكمامة	لبس الكمامة يقينا بإذن الله من العدوى
تجنب المصافحة	فضلًا سجّل الآن لأخذ اللقاح	التحورات التي تطرأ حاليًا، قد تُصيب الأطفال
اعزل نفسك فور شعورك بالحرارة	تعرف أكثر على الفئات الأكثر عرضة لكورونا	تشمل الاعراض النمطية لحالة فيروس كورونا المستجد الحمى والسعال وضيق التنفس.
لا تصافح	ننصحك بشدة على اخذ لقاح كورونا	التعقيم المستمر يحميك وغيرك بإذن الله من انتقال العدوى
تقيد باشتراطات السلامة	دعونا نلتزم بالاحترازات معًا لنضمن سلامتنا	تكوين المناعة في الجسم بعد تلقي لقاح كورونا يتطلّب وقت والتزام
لا تخالط أحد، اعزل نفسك، وخذ المسحة	وزارة الصحة تهيب بالجميع بسرعة الحصول على اللقاح	لا تحتاج فحص لإثبات التعافي
التزم بمسافة مترين ولا تعرض نفسك للمسائلة	نوصي بأخذ اللقاح من للفئة العمرية من 12 الى 18	الإصابات ستقل مستوياتها، والعدوى سينخفض انتشارها، عندما نتعاون ما نتهاون

Results

This section displays the results of the analysis of the text messages according to the levels of alerts determined in the paradigm of the research. Means and numbers were used to explore the differences among the levels of alerts that the messages had according to the performative verbs.

Table 3. *Frequencies of alert levels on cell phones messages*

Telecommunication companies		
Suppositional forces	N	%
High alert	102	54.25
Moderate alert	56	29.78
Low alert	30	15.95
Total	188	100

Data in Table three showed results of the messages that were collected from telecommunication companies. The analyzed data illustrate that 54.25% (102) of all messages indicated that they carried a high alert content about the pandemic represented by speech acts, contrary to 29.78 % (56) which carried a moderated alert and 15.95 % (30) carried a low alert.

Table 4. *Frequencies of alert levels on Twitter Platform*

Twitter Platform		
Suppositional forces	N	%
High alert	602	86.59
Moderate alert	42	5.99
Low alert	57	8.13
Total	701	100

Data in Table four showed high differences in readings. The results of the messages were collected from Twitter platform. The analyzed data illustrate that 86.59% (602) of all messages indicated that they carried a high alert content about the pandemic represented by speech acts, contrary to only 5.99% (42) which carried a moderated alert and 8.13% (57) carried a low alert.

Table 5. *Frequencies of alert levels on MOH website*

MOH website		
Suppositional forces	N	%
High alert	35	52.23
Moderate alert	16	23.88
Low alert	16	23.88
Total	67	100

Data in Table five showed the results of the messages that were collected from the official site of the Saudi Ministry of Health. The analyzed data illustrate that 52.23% (35) of all messages indicated that they carried a high alert content about the pandemic represented by speech acts, contrary to 23.88% (16) which carried a moderated alert and 23.88% (16) carried a low alert.

Table 6. *Frequencies of overall alert levels of all data*

Cell phone messages			Twitter messages			MOH messages		
Le		9	Le		9	Le		6
Hi		5	Hi		8	Hi		5
Mo		2	Mo		5	Mo		2
Lo		1	Lo		8	Lo		2
Tot		1	Tot		1	Tot		1

Table 7. *Overall messages distribution on levels*

Level of alerts	N	%
High	739	77.30
Moderate	114	11.92
Low	103	10.77
Total	956	100

Tables six and seven indicate that of all messages, high level alerts took the first place in the data. The analyzed data illustrate that 77.30% (739) of all messages were of a high alert content contrary to 11.92% (114) of a moderated alert and 10.77% (103) of a low alert.

Table 8. *Distribution of types of performatives on High Level Alert*

High Level		
Performative type	N	%
Forbidding	1	0.13
Warning	7	0.94
Ordering	120	16.23
Requesting	3	0.40
Inviting	13	1.75
Advising	21	2.84
Claiming	29	3.92
Declaring	545	73.74

Table eight reveals that the highest percentage of actions used at this level were from declaration actions and amounted to 73.74 % of the total messages at this level. While the lowest percentage was in the acts of forbidding (prevention), and it amounted to less than 1 % of the total messages.

Table 9. *Distribution of types of performatives on Moderate level alert*

Moderate Level		
Performative type	N	%
Inviting	36	31.57
Advising	29	25.43
Requesting	7	6.14
Questioning	10	8.77
Claiming	9	7.89
Commissive (Promising)	1	0.87
Suggesting	1	0.87
Ordering	21	18.42

Table nine indicates that the highest percentage of actions used at this level were from invitation actions and amounted to 31.57 % of the total messages at this level. While the lowest percentage was in the acts of suggesting and promising, and they amounted 1 % of the total messages.

Table 10. *Distribution of types of performatives on Low Level Alert*

Low Level		
Performative type	N	%
Claiming	59	57.28
Inviting	19	18.44
Requesting	2	1.94
Advising	12	11.65
Describing	10	9.70
Predicting	1	0.97

Table 10 indicates that the highest percentage of actions used at this level was from claiming actions and amounted to 57.28 % of the total messages at this level, while the lowest percentage was in the acts of predicting, and it amounted only 1 % of the total messages.

Discussion

In this section we discuss the most important results of the research as described in the results section. The text messages used by the Ministry of Health contained three different levels of warning but in different proportions. More detailedly, the messages used in telecommunications companies carried a 54% high warning compared to the low warning of only 15%. The difference in warning levels on the Twitter platform has increased, with the high warning reaching 86% of all messages compared to the average warning and the low warning of less than 10%. The messages on the official website of the Ministry of Health reached a high warning level of 52% of the total messages compared to the average and low warning, which amounted to less than 10% each. More importantly, the results indicated that of the total number of messages,

the high warning level was the most used in text messages, which was 77.30% compared to the other two levels, which was only 10.77%.

The concept of warning and its linguistic use can be used in different linguistic compositions as well as the meaning of these compositions. Looking at the theory of implicatures and theory speech acts, the intentional meaning of the speaker may appear in direct or indirect form, (Mey, 2001). He therefore considered that the actions of speech in both forms represent the first stage of the use of language, with the tacit meaning of communication coming in the second phase. This theoretical principle is consistent with the research outcomes. In example seven, the direct performative (order and leave) acts refer to commanding, however, it cannot be understood as an order because of the propositions lying in the overall message give vivid indications that the message provides some advice for the good of the addressees. Mey asserts that people do not usually say for example "I invite you" but the proposition is usually set in the utterance and understood with the help of the context.

Instance (7)

لأنك مسؤول اطلب اللازم وخل الكماليات، الوقاية من كورونا.

Because you are responsible, order the necessary and leave the luxuries, prevention of corona

More instances represent the same idea:

(8) Commanding refers to request AND/OR invitation

اعرف آخر تحديثات فيروس كورونا المستجد من خلال متابعة حساب المركز الوطني للوقاية من الأمراض والجهات الرسمية الموثوقة.

Find out the latest updates of the emerging corona virus by following the account of the National Center for Disease Prevention and trusted official bodies.

(9) Claiming refers to invitation

عدوى كورونا تتوقف بإذن الله بالتزامنا جميعًا بالإجراءات الوقائية!

Corona infection will stop, God willing, by our commitment to all preventive measures!

(10) commanding refers to advice

استمتع بوقتك ولا تنس الإجراءات الوقائية
كمامة مسافة آمنة تعقيم الأيدي

Enjoy your time and don't forget the precautions
Mask, safe distance, sterilize hands

The researcher believes, through analyzing the data, that the Ministry of Health has succeeded in formulating its messages with a level of warning consistent with the size of the pandemic, and that the messages mostly depend on the pattern of high warning, on the one hand. But at the same time, the messages were characterized by a language free of threats, violence, or intimidation to preserve the psychological integrity of the community and maintain a pattern of good relationship between them and the members of the community to complement their awareness and service role.

احذروا تقبيل الأطفال (11)

Beware of kissing children.

نحذركم أن تقبلوا الأطفال (12)

We warn you to kiss children

In Example 11, the message contains an act that commits the recipient to do an action and the results of this action are for his benefit and the benefit of those around him. As for example 12, the verb (we warn you) obliges the speaker to do something in the future against the recipient in case the latter does not abide by the instructions. This claim is consistent with Yule's claim (1996) in that indirect speech acts "are generally associated with greater politeness in English than direct speech acts" (p. 56).

The results of the sample analysis indicated that the MOH messages were characterized by a distinct type of linguistic expression, which clearly indicates a high level of warning. Nevertheless, it turned out that this type of message did not contain the verb (to warn) with a linguistic connotation, such as (health warns you), but was replaced by the phrase (the danger increases). In example (13) (The risk of infection with the Corona virus increases in crowded places) is equivalent to (I warn you that the crowded places are dangerous).

Instance (13)

أخي المصلي: يزداد خطر الإصابة بفيروس كورونا في الأماكن المزدحمة

My praying brother: The risk of infection with the Corona virus increases in crowded places

This issue was discussed by Austin (1962) who confirmed that the expression of warning is not necessarily by using the word that contains the verb (I warn you). For example (The bull is dangerous) carries the same warning of (I warn you that the bull is dangerous).

Outcomes indicated that the highest percentage of acts used at this level were from *declaration* and amounted to 73.74 % of the total messages at this level. The results are consistent with the Bataineh and Aljamal (2014) whose samples use declaration to express warning. While the lowest percentage was in the acts of forbidding (prevention), and it amounted to less than 1 % of the total messages. In this context, the results are largely consistent with the model that was prepared for data analysis. At the higher level of warning, the command act elicits a higher rate, for example, than the act of requesting, inviting, and advising. Doing an order fits the context of a higher-level warning than, say, an act of advice. On the other hand, the act of prohibition was received only once from the total messages of the Ministry of Health, and this may indicate the unwillingness of administrators to use threatening language with citizens, which may be the authority of other government agencies "(…) who classifies *warning* under exercitives in which one exercises the power, right and influence over another" (Bataineh & Aljamal, 2014, p. 87). And the act of prohibition came with a very important topic, which is violating the quarantine that exposes society to the spread of the virus as shown in instance 14.

Instance (14)

صوناً للصحة العامة، ووقاية من تفشي فيروس كورونا، **يُحظر انتهاك أحكام الحجر الصحي ـالصادرة عن الجهة** المختصةـ من قبل المصابين بفيروس كورونا أو المخالطين لهم أو المشتبه في إصابتهم، تحت طائلة المُساءلة الجزائية المغلظة.

In order to preserve public health and prevent the spread of the Corona virus, it is prohibited to violate the quarantine provisions - issued by the competent authority - by those infected with the Corona virus, those who are in contact with them, or those suspected of being infected, under penalty of strict criminal liability.

At the same high level of warning, the Ministry of Health used the act of declaration and announcement in a very important context; this claim is supported by Al-Shafie and Al-Jubbory (2015) who asserted that warning can be expressed through announcement. It achieved a message to the audience that is very high in its warning meaning and at the same time free from the acts of command and prohibition that oblige the listener to follow and make him liable for punishment in case of violation. Announcing the numbers of deaths and critical cases on a daily basis undoubtedly raises the degree of warning and awareness in society of the seriousness of the pandemic by using indirect speech acts. This analysis is supported by Hussein and Khalaf (2018) who claim that prohibition is clearly directive whereas warning can be expressed through assertion.

As for the average warning level, the results indicated that the verbs used are commensurate with the level that was used as a model for research and analysis. The acts of advising and inviting achieved the highest rates at this level, which indicates the compatibility between the level of warning and the meaning of the acts. It seems that the Ministry, through this method, wanted to raise awareness in a different and effective way that relies on soft language. As for the low level of warning, the analysis of the data indicated that the results were largely consistent with the study model. The results showed that more than half of the messages were based on the claim actions. This type of action means presenting and commenting on facts, and this method is consistent with the goal of raising social awareness in a manner that does not depend on a loud warning. At the same time, it can raise the degree of awareness in the society through stating facts about the pandemic.

Conclusion

The current study concluded several matters related to the warning language used by the Saudi Ministry of Health during the Corona pandemic. The Ministry of Health has used various types of verbs of speech for the purpose of warning and awareness, ranging from the use of verbs of direct warning to indirect warning. Warning levels in text messages varied across the three warning levels. One of the most important findings of this study is that the high levels of warning in text messages are largely in line with the main issue of the Ministry of Health, which is the warning of the spread of the virus in society and the seriousness of the pandemic.

As for the other levels, they were compatible with the awareness aspect and the dissemination of health culture through the utilization of speech acts that varied between advice, description and request, then calling for the adoption of health measures that preserve the safety of individuals. On the other hand, the number of messages broadcast by the Ministry on the three platforms under study amounted to approximately 1,000 messages during about a year and a half, the time period taken by the research to collect data. It is also noted that there are a significant number of warning messages that came in the vernacular Saudi dialect instead of using the classical Arabic language, and this may be attributed to the simulation of the psychological aspect of individuals.

Recommendations

The researcher thinks that the importance of the study is not only in its results, but it can be a very important starting point for conducting other research based on this research. Including, for example, measuring individuals' understanding of the three levels of warning, comparing the level of warning with the topics of messages, and studying the impact of text messages on

community awareness during the pandemic. On the other hand, the researcher recommends conducting a similar study on the messages of the Ministry of Interior and Hajj and comparing the levels of warning and awareness among these three parties.

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Appendix A

Examples of the verbs appeared in the text messages

Locutionary act	Levels of alerts in the illocutionary act		
	High	Mode rate	Low
اللقاح يساهم في تقليل نسبة الإصابة بشكل كبير The vaccine greatly reduces the incidence of infection			Claiming
عدم ترك مسافة آمنة يزيد من احتمالية تعرضك للإصابة Not leaving a safe distance increases your risk of injury			Predicting
عندما يُصاب مريض ضغط الدم بكورونا، يزيد من إجهاد القلب ويُضعف الجهاز المناعي When a blood pressure patient develops corona, it increases heart stress and weakens the immune system			Describing
ستقل الإصابات مستوياتها، والعدوى سينخفض انتشارها، عندما نتعاون ما نتهاون بغسل اليدين			Inviting

Injuries will decrease, and the spread of infection will decrease, when we cooperate, we do not neglect washing hands			
دعونا نلتزم بالاحترازات معًا لنضمن سلامتنا Let's stick to precautions together to ensure our safety.		Inviting	
وزارة الصحة تهيب بالجميع بسرعة الحصول على اللقاح للحماية من تداعيات المرض The Ministry of Health calls on everyone to quickly get the vaccine to protect against the repercussions of the disease		Requesting	
تزداد العدوى في التجمعات، كمامتك تحدد موقفك، هل أنت المنحنى الذي يرفعها، أو المنعطف الذي يمنعها؟ The infection increases in gatherings, your mask determines your position, are you the curve that raises it, or the curve that prevents it?		Questioning	
إهمالك للتعليمات الوقائية قد يكون سببا في إصابة ومعاناة أهل بيتك ومن هم حولك لذلك ننصح بـ "لبس الكمام, ترك مسافة آمنة بينك وبين الآخرين Your neglect of the preventive instructions may cause injury and suffering to your family and those around you Therefore, we advise to "wear a mask,		Advising	

leave a safe distance between you and others			
التسوق متعة، فلا تجعلها نقمة! احذر جيدًا في تصرفاتك وجميع تعاملاتك Shopping is fun, don't make it a curse! Be very careful in your actions and all your dealings	Warning		
صوناً للصحة العامة، ووقاية من تفشي فيروس كورونا، **يُحظر انتهاك أحكام الحجر الصحي -الصادرة عن** الجهة المختصة- من قِبل المصابين بفيروس كورونا أو المخالطين لهم أو المشتبه في إصابتهم، تحت طائلة المُساءلة الجزائية المغلظة. In order to preserve public health and prevent the spread of the Corona virus, it is prohibited to violate the quarantine provisions - issued by the competent authority - by those infected with the Corona virus, those who are in contact with them, or those suspected of being infected, under penalty of strict criminal liability.	Forbidding		
إذا كنت مخالطًا لحالة مصابة ب"كوفيد- ١٩ " فلا تحضر أيّ تجمع If you have been in contact with a case infected with "Covid-19", do not attend any gathering	Commanding		

الصحة تعلن عن تسجيل (1334) حالة إصابة جديدة بفيروس كورونا (كوفيد-19)، وتسجيل (18) حالات وفيات رحمهم الله Health announces the registration of (1334) new cases of coronavirus (Covid-19), and the registration of (18) deaths, may God have mercy on them	Declaration		
تنتقل عدوى فيروس كورونا عبر: الرذاذ المتطاير إثر عطاس أو كحة، لمس الأسطح والأدوات من ثم لمس الوجه، المخالطة المباشرة للمصابين Corona virus infection is transmitted through flying droplets after sneezing or coughing, touching surfaces and tools, then touching the face, direct contact with infected people.	Claiming		