

## A Multimodal Analysis of Some Selected American Coronavirus Awareness Posters

By

Reham Sayed Omar Abdulhaleem

### *Abstract*

This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the messages presented by the COVID-19 posters. It examines the verbal and visual elements of two selected American awareness posters published on the official Facebook page of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in 2021 and 2022. Since these posters have both visual and verbal components, the objective of this qualitative study is to investigate the semiotic resources utilized in the COVID-19 precautionary posters via employing a multimodal perspective. It implements a descriptive qualitative approach by utilizing diverse analytical tools: the Social Semiotics Approach (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001), the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis Approach (Machin and Mayr, 2012), and the Reversal Theory (O'Shaughnessy, J. & O'Shaughnessy, N.J., 2004). It examines the contribution of visual and textual resources to raise awareness among people about the significance of preserving some tools for protection. Hence, this study demonstrates the integration of verbal and visual communicative modes to spread awareness among citizens according to their cultures.

**Keywords:** Coronavirus (COVID-19); Multimodality; Awareness Posters; Semiotics; Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis; Social Semiotics Approach; Reversal Theory; Rhetorical Devices

### المستخلص

تشير هذه الدراسة إلى كيفية استخدام الأدوات اللغوية والبصرية في تحليل الملصقات التوعوية الأمريكية عن فيروس كورونا. ومن أجل تحقيق ذلك، تم اختيار ملصقين توعبيين من صفحة الفيسبوك الرسمية الخاصة بوزارة الصحة الأمريكية حيث اختارت الباحثة ملصق تم نشره عام 2021 والملصق الآخر تم نشره عام 2022. والسبب في اختيار الإعلانين أن خلال تلك العامين زادت نسبة الإصابة بفيروس كوفيد 19 وبدأت مرحلة التعايش مع هذا الوباء مع اتخاذ الاحترازمات اللازمة. ومن أهداف هذا البحث هو توضيح الدور الهام الذي يلعبه دمج الأدوات اللغوية مع الوسائل البصرية لإيصال الرسائل التوعوية للمشاهدين. لذا يتم تحليل الملصقات عن طريق استخدام أدوات بحثية من ثلاثة مداخل مختلفة وهم: مدخل السيميائيات الاجتماعية لكريس وفان ليفن (2001) ، تحليل الخطاب النقدي متعدد الوسائط لماشين وماير (2012)، ونظرية التحول أوشوجناسي جي و أوشوجناسي ان جي (2004). وقد أثبتت الدراسة أن ذلك الدمج بين الأدوات البحثية ساهم بشكل أساسي في تحقيق الأهداف المنشودة من ذلك البحث حيث أن الوسائل اللغوية والبصرية يكمل بعضها البعض من أجل توصيل الرسائل التوعوية لرفع نسبة الوعي وتوضيح كيفية اتخاذ الإجراءات الاحترازية اللازمة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** كوفيد 19، الوسائط المتعددة، الملصقات التوعوية، السيميائيات، نهج السيميائيات الاجتماعية ، تحليل الخطاب النقدي متعدد الوسائط ، ونظرية التحول، الأدوات الخطابية.

## A Multimodal Analysis of Some Selected American Coronavirus Awareness Posters

By

Reham Sayed Omar Abdulhaleem

### 1. Introduction

Social media awareness campaigns have become widespread in contemporary life; thus, predominantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, public health initiatives have had to continually adapt to current social media trends. During the COVID-19 crisis, people are advised by the authorities to stay home due to the lockdown; therefore, they have become more receptive to social media messages, especially posters published on the official pages of the Ministries of Health.

Accordingly, the World Health Organization (WHO) and many countries have launched awareness campaigns to help individuals control the rapid spread of the fatal virus. These campaigns have included instructional awareness posters published on the official Facebook pages. Posters are an efficient tool to influence public opinion because they can reach wide and specific audiences. Since these posters have both visual and verbal components, this study endeavors to explore the significance of integrating the visual communicative modes as a meaning-making system into verbal language. In addition, it attempts to reveal the importance of the instructional posters in raising the awareness of citizens to contest the pandemic Coronavirus (COVID-19).

#### 1.1 Objectives of the study

The study aims at revealing the American culture via utilizing verbal and non-verbal language choices in awareness instructional posters, specifically because the period during which these posters were published represents a widespread pandemic of an infectious disease. Moreover, it analyzes what is represented verbally and non-verbally in posters rather than the existing connections of text-reader/viewer; hence it intends to find out clear interactional meanings between multimodal resources. Since posters can be used to convey certain messages, perspective of this study examines the culture of American posters as it investigates the role of culture in the selection of verbal and non-verbal language which encounters the same respiratory fatal disease.

In addition, this study aims at demonstrating the relationship of each mode in conceptualizing the pandemic Coronavirus (COVID 19) awareness posters under the framework of the Social Semiotics Approach by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001); the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) by Machin and Mayr (2012); and the Reversal Theory

by O'Shaughnessy, J. & O'Shaughnessy, N.J., (2004). Moreover, it identifies the similarities and differences between the diverse communicative modes which are used in these posters. Finally, it sheds light on the persuasive tools which are utilized in these posters.

### **1.2 Rationale of the study**

Coronavirus (COVID-19) awareness posters have been selected to be the core of this study due to the fact that posters are not only concerned with raising awareness among people, but also they are multimodal texts that combine verbal and non-verbal modes to reflect the culture related to societies. The present study tends to reveal the impact of multimodal modes to increase the awareness of people and provide a more profound understating and accurate multimodal analysis of the selected data.

### **1.3 Research questions**

This study attempts to address the following research questions:

- 1- To what extent do the verbal and visual modes in instructional awareness posters function as a system to raise public awareness?
- 2- How does culture affect the representation of verbal and visual modes in instructional awareness posters?

### **1.4 Research data**

The data under discussion consist of two American instructional awareness posters, published on the official Facebook page of the Ministry of Health of the United States. Data are selected from the period January first, 2020 to December thirty 2022, in which the criteria for data selection are due to the number of confirmed cases during the pandemic Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the United States.

### **1.5 Literature review**

Posters are a type of advertising medium that takes the form of a piece of paper and contains text and graphic images, including symbols or pictures to convey information, messages, and purposes. They are a powerful approach to capture the attention of the public by presenting information simply and comprehensively, in addition to making it easier for the reader to comprehend what the poster is trying to express (Hawan, 2018). Posters are graphic representations of images and words (or just words). They are used for a variety of reasons, including informing, persuading, educating, and motivating people. Consequently, they may appear as a work of art intended to raise the awareness of people regarding current social issues. They derive their primary power from the fact that they accomplish their goal of informing, leading, and persuading people by providing genuine and powerful messages (Aning, 2021).

A multitude of studies have been conducted to examine the topic of awareness posters from diverse perspectives and within various research areas. Among these studies is a study by Aning (2021) that investigates how semiotic and textual modes are used to shape and regulate the attitude of the reader toward images. The researcher adopts descriptive research to achieve the objectives of the study. The data conclude that by examining and analyzing the verbal and visual signs in the poster, it is revealed that each of these visuals and verbal indications is made to transmit an idea or a message and communicate to readers in order to have a special influence on them. Thus, the study confirms that visual design as a visual language is culturally specific and that the poster depicts the environment; social interaction, which is the interaction between the image maker and the reader.

Furthermore, the study by Belgrimet and Rabab'ah (2021) adopts and explores multimodality in a variety of disciplines such as advertisement, mass media, health communication, political discourse, movies and education. It examines the intricacies of multimodal discourse analysis with regard to violence against women awareness campaign posters. This qualitative study investigates how meaning and language are constructed via adopting the diverse semiotic modes on three English posters, which are selected from different electronic sources. It applies the framework of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) by Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006). In this respect, the findings demonstrate that English posters have employed a range of semiotic modes, which are conceptual, static and immovable.

## **2. Theoretical framework and research methodology**

This paper utilizes a theoretical framework that incorporates theories that handle the verbal and nonverbal material of the chosen data. The theoretical framework is divided into three parts: Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (Machin and Mayr, 2012), Multimodality as a Social Semiotic Approach (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006), and the Reversal Theory (O'Shaughnessy, J. & O'Shaughnessy, N.J., 2004). The common aspect among these theories is that each theory tackles the analysis of verbal and non-verbal elements in the awareness instructional posters from separate angles that complement each other to introduce a comprehensive analysis.

### **2.1 Multimodality**

The term multimodality refers to the various modes of analysis that can be used to semiotically inferred objects and phrases. Adami (2015) states that multimodality is an interdisciplinary discipline, which includes theories and methodologies from other fields of study. According to van

Leeuwen (2015), “multimodality refers to the discourse which implies more characteristics of communication apart from spoken discourse such as “voice, gestures, facial expressions or aspects of self-presentation p. 447)”.

## 2.2 Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis

Multimodal critical discourse analysis focuses on demonstrating how other semiotic resources, in addition to language, collaborate to create meaning. The analysis of Machin and Mayr (2012) is largely based on the approach of Halliday (1978, 1985), which views language as a social system with a collection of resources rather than a static linguistic system. Multimodal critical discourse analysis would disclose all diverse representations of various modes of communication. Accordingly, multimodal critical discourse analysis is a useful tool to explore and reveal different messages concerning Coronavirus in awareness posters. It includes diverse tools such as word connotation, over-lexicalization, lexical absence, visual semiotic choices, attributes, and iconography (Machin and Mayr, 2012).

## 2.3 Multimodality as a Social Semiotic Approach

The term multimodality, as elaborated by Van Leeuwen (2015), is the combination and integration of diverse semiotic modes (for example, language and image) in a given instance of discourse or sort of discourse. For example, in spoken discourse, language is merged with intonation, voice quality, facial expression, gesture, and posture, as well as aspects of self-presentation such as dress and hairstyle; in written discourse, language is combined with typographic expression and, with illustration, layout, and color.

According to Van Leeuwen (2015), “multimodality therefore focuses on the common properties of, and differences between, these different semi-otic modes, and on the ways in which they are integrated in multimodal texts and communicative events (p.447)”.

As for Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), visual images, like language, achieve the metafunctions of the representation of the experiential world (representational meaning), the interaction between the participants represented in a visual design and its viewers (interactive meaning), and the compositional arrangements of visual resources (compositional meaning). This study focuses on the representational metafunction in order to analyze the verbal and non-verbal language of awareness posters.

### 2.3.1 Representational metafunction

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) defines the representational metafunction (ideational metafunction) is defined as the ability of any mode of communication "to represent objects and their relations in a

world outside the representational system" (p.42). It discusses the people, places, and things depicted in an image, as well as their relationships with one another. Semiotic modes provide an assortment of options, allowing objects and their relationships to other objects and processes to be represented in a variety of ways. "Two objects may be represented as involved in a process of interaction which could be visually realized by vectors" (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p.42).

### **2.3.2 Visual transitivity system: Narrative process**

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) recognize two types of processes that relate participants in terms of 'doings' and 'beings'. These two are Narrative and Conceptual processes respectively. This research focuses on the narrative process, since narrative processes are dynamic processes that depict events in terms of 'doing' and 'happening.' They are used to show participants achieving something or doing an action. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) assert that this action can take many forms. They classify six types of narrative processes: Actional, reactional, speech, mental, conversion, and geometrical processes.

#### **2.3.2.1 Action process**

Through this type of process, participants are engaged in some kind of physical activity. This physical action is realized by a vector formed by a depicted element or an arrow. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the action process can be either non-transactional or transactional according to the number of participants involved. Transactional actions can be either unidirectional or bidirectional; the vector in the unidirectional transactional process is created by a depicted element or an arrowhead that connects two participants and moves in one direction only emanating from the actor to the goal. On the other hand, in the bidirectional transactional process the action is realized by a double-headed arrow the presence of two vectors connecting two participants, known as 'Interactors' (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006).

#### **2.3.2.2 Reactional processes**

Reaction processes are 'glances or looking' processes. Participants in the image are engaged in an eye-contact interaction that is realized by an implied eyeline vector in this sort of operation. The reactor is the participant who looks or from whom the eyeline vector emanates (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). This reactor, as stated by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)," must necessarily be human or a human-like-animal –a creature with visible eyes that have distinct pupils, and capable of facial expression" (p.67) otherwise looking won't take place. Thus, If the 'Phenomena,' which is the object of the gaze of the reactor, is depicted in the image, the process will be referred to as a 'Transactional Reaction

Process,' because in this case, there will be two participants in this connection, namely the reactor and the phenomenon. The phenomena can be achieved by "another participant, the participant at whom or whom the reactor is looking," or a whole visual proposal" (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 67).

### **2.3.3 Color as a Semiotic Mode**

Although color is not a universal human concept, it is associated with observation since color is only identified through observation. Color has various meanings in different cultures, yet there are some remarkable commonalities (Wierzbicka, 1996). Kress & Van Leeuwen (2002) assume that the meaning of colors is obviously recognized by many people.

Color has two types of value: direct and associative. The direct value refers to the actual physical effect of color on the viewer, which is derived from the physical properties of colors that cause them to move toward us or move away from us. The associative value is achieved when red is associated with flames or blood, or other phenomena of high symbolic and emotive value (Kandinsky, 1977). Among the color scales are the value and hue scales which are mostly adopted in this study.

#### **2.3.3.1 Value**

The value scale is the grey scale, which ranges from extremely light white to extremely dark black. The black color is connected to evil, power, sophistication, mystery, formality, and death. Alternatively, white is regarded as the color of perfection and is connected to light, morality, virtue, purity, safety and righteousness.

#### **2.3.3.2 Hue**

This is the scale from blue to red. Despite the fact that the meaning of red-in-general, of the abstract signifier, cannot be determined, the red end of the scale is nevertheless linked with warmth, energy, salience, and foregrounding, while the blue end is connected with cold, calm, distance, and backgrounding.

### **2.4 Reversal Theory**

The Reversal Theory, developed by Apter (1982), provides another interpretation for why associations are beneficial, in this case, associations related to excitation and relaxation. A branch of structural phenomenology is Reversal Theory. Phenomenological psychology attempts to comprehend the significance or meaning of social phenomena from the individual point of view. The actuality of interest, according to phenomenology, is what people experience it to be. Giving a phenomenological account of Y is describing how Y is experienced by a person or group of people (O'Shaughnessy, J. & O'Shaughnessy, N.J., 2004).



Reversal theory suggests that there are two such levels, only one of which is preferred at a given moment, this being the preferred level of the arousal system that is operative at that moment. Since the two alternative preferred levels are assumed to be toward opposite ends of the felt arousal dimension, switches between the systems involved are referred to as reversals (Apter, 1989, p.20).

In consequence, audiences move from one state to another as telic and paratelic states are two opponent states; in which an individual is serious-minded, focused on important objectives, and future-oriented in a telic state and the person is lively, sensation-focused, and spontaneous when they are in the paratelic state (O'Connell, K, A. & Calhoun, J. E., 2001).

Additionally, audiences can swing between the "Self" (or Autic) and "Other" (or Alloic) states in the relationships domain to describe whether someone is motivated by self-interests (personal accountability and responsibility) or by the interests of others (altruism and transcendence) (Apter, 2001). Therefore, this paper highlights the fluctuation from one state to another through applying the persuasive tools of the reversal theory.

### **3. Methodology**

In an attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis of the verbal and non-verbal content of the selected instructional awareness posters, the thesis adopts the following method.

#### **3.1 Data collection**

This study adopts a qualitative analytical approach to analyze the data. The data under discussion consist of two American instructional awareness posters which are published on the official Facebook pages of the United States 'U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)'. Data are selected during the years 2021 and 2022 in which the criteria for data selection are due to the high number of confirmed cases during this period.

#### **3.2 Procedures for data analysis**

The researcher follows a detailed qualitative analysis in order to intensely identify what is being communicated. That is, posters in this study are analyzed in detail according to the following criteria: first, the researcher analyzes the visual communicative modes through applying the framework of Kress & Van Leeuwen (2006). The researcher adopts the ideational metafunction which is also called "representational metafunction"; it comprises the narrative and the conceptual processes. The narrative process is the implemented process in this study, specifically the action and reaction processes as they are applicable to the

data selected. Second, tools of the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis Approach (2012) are utilized to analyze data in this research. Third, the persuasive tools of the Reversal Theory are applied to show how the audience is moved from certain emotional status to another. Finally, the researcher draws findings and conclusions from utilizing the previous tools.

Therefore, Coronavirus (COVID-19) awareness posters are purposively selected to be examined by using the Social Semiotics Approach (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001), the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis Approach (Machin and Mayr, 2012), and the Reversal Theory (O’Shaughnessy, J. & O’Shaughnessy, N.J., 2004) as the framework of analysis.

**4. Sample Analysis**

This part demonstrates the analysis of two American COVID-19 awareness posters published on the official Facebook page of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Moreover, these posters are selected from the data published in the years 2021 and 2022. The discussion section which follows the tables highlights the commonalities among all data, which are essential to reach the conclusions.

**4.1 Analysis of an American awareness poster from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) (2021)**

The Analysis of the English Posters	Social Semiotic Approach		American Posters from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) (2021)
		Visual Transitivity	Narrative Processes
			

			Action	Transactional	Bidirectional	The action is realized by a double-headed arrow connecting the participants or the interactors. There are two vectors connecting the mother and the daughter, forming a speech circuit. The vectors are formed by depicted elements that constitute an oblique line, as in the eye contact between the two ladies in the poster. Both women play the role of the actor and the role of the goal.
	Color as a Semiotic Mode	Scales of Colors	Value	Black is the dominating color. The daughter wears black. Colors in this poster range from black and white. However, the old lady wears a floral blouse in which the dominating color is white.		
Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis			Word connotation	The phrase ‘reduce the risk of hospitalization’ may have a negative connotation of threat as quarantine and isolation do not guarantee complete protection from the virus. However, it may have a positive connotation of security as quarantine helps people decrease the viral dose they are exposed to. Accordingly, they will not need to be treated in hospitals.		
			Suppression and lexical absence	There is lexical suppression in the phrase “Reduce your risk of hospitalization”. The phrase does not have a comprehensive message which may be ‘by keeping the social distance or by staying home’. Thus, there is absence of the instructions people have to follow to reduce the risk of hospitalization.		
			Visual semiotic choices	The phrase “COVID-19 treatments” is written in a big font while “reduce your risk of hospitalization” is written in a smaller font.		
			Attributes	The visual attributes present two women: the first is the mother who is in her late middle age and the second is apparently her daughter.		

		Iconography	The two women in this poster are African Americans.	
		Setting	Two black-skinned women are represented while touching a glass wall separating them.	
		Saliency	Tone: both women are the bright elements and the background image is distorted.	
	Reversal Theory	Rhetorical devices	Telic to paratelic	The words: ‘Treatments’ and ‘reduce the risk of hospitalization’ denote the removal of threat caused by the fatal virus.
			Paratelic to telic	The sentence ‘Reduce your risk of hospitalization’ refers to the necessity of taking a deliberate decision to control the virus, or there would be a possibility of being infected.
			Autic to alloic	The imperative form ‘reduce’ involves the audience as they are asked to give help.

#### 4.1.1 Discussion

The setting of the poster is a place that may be quarantine as there are two women who seem to be a mother and her daughter touching a glass wall that separates them. The bidirectional process is realized by two vectors connecting two participants ‘Interactors’: the old woman and her daughter. Each vector emanates from one ‘interactor’ (the woman or the daughter) and aims at the other. Hence, each one of them plays a double role one of actor and another of goal. It represents two humans, ‘the woman’ and ‘the daughter’, and a process, circular and continuous, described as the ‘unlocking of sound-images in the brain’, there is a silent conversation through the transmission of impulses corresponding to the image to the organs used in producing speech. There is no sound; however, facial expressions, eye contact, and body gestures convey most of the meaning. That is to say, the wrinkles around the eyes of the old woman indicate that she is fine and smiling and the raise of the eyebrows of the daughter indicate that she is happily surprised. They are touching hands as they look missing each other; however, there is a barrier preventing them from real communication which is the glass wall symbolizing the pandemic COVID-19.

The reflection of the image of the daughter on the glass, covering the old woman, gives the audience a sense of containment as if she hugs the old woman. Through the facial expressions, it can be anticipated that the one who is being hospitalized is the old woman and the daughter is visiting her. The sight of the mother conveys a message of reassurance to her daughter, while the daughter is contentedly astounded that her mother is improving.

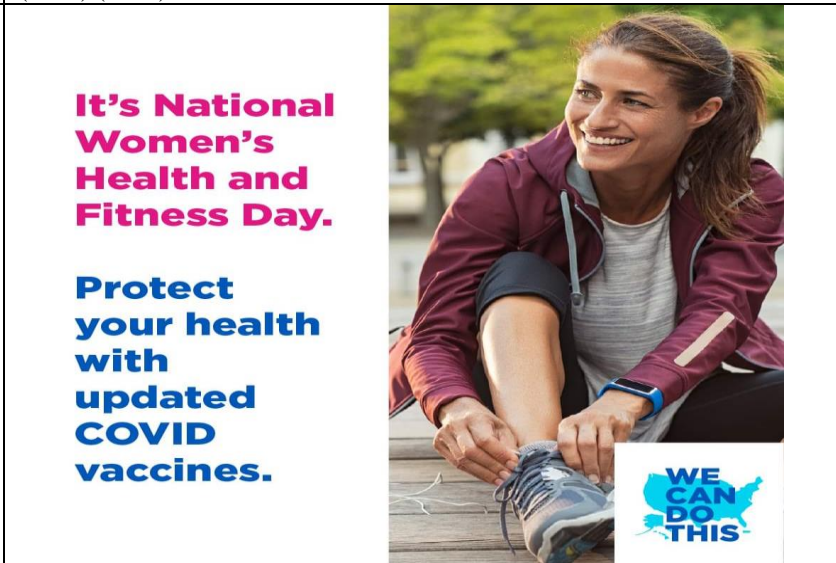
This poster represents two women who have the same skin color. They look passionate while a wall of glass is separating them this indicates that COVID-19 has separated even the close relationships in 2021. Even a glass wall separates them, they both wear masks. This reflects the atmosphere of horror due to the Chinese Virus as called by the then President Trump.

In this poster, iconography is implied through the representation of black African American women which highlights the role of media to assert the fact that African Americans have been regarded as an essential part of American society. This elucidates the significance of strengthening expressive and safe public participation and representation in all areas of decision-making to prevent and combat racial discrimination.

Black is the dominating color as it is associated with death, evil, and mystery, this reflects the atmosphere during the period of COVID-19. On the other hand, white is associated with light, goodness, innocence, purity, and virginity. It is considered to be the color of perfection. White can represent a successful beginning. Verbally, the lexical choice of words such as connotation denotes how serious the virus is as the language written has both positive and negative connotations depending on the attitude of following directions. Moreover, there is lexical absence since the visual representations of settings, attributes, salience features, and narrative processes fill in the gaps of missed words.

Finally, through the Reversal Theory, the audience swings from the state of fear to the state of safety, that is from telic to paratelic state and at the same time they move from paratelic to telic states, which most describes a period of uncertainty and ambiguity. Finally, the poster involves the audience to be real participants through moving them from autic to alloic state and asking for their help to control the virus.

**4.2 The second Poster from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) (2022)**

The Analysis of the English Posters	Social Semiotic Approach	Color as a Semiotic Mode	Scales of Colors	American Posters from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) (2022)					
				Visual Transitivity System		Narrative Processes			
								Action	Trans actional
				Reactional	Non-trans actional		The woman is a reactor and there is no phenomenon. It is not shown what she is looking at.		
				Value				The background of the text is white.	
				Hue				Blue is the font color as blue is the color of directions.	

Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis	Word connotation		The choice of the imperative verb 'protect your health' connotes the inevitability of getting the updated vaccine, as it is a protection from the virus.
	Visual semiotic choices		The colors of the font in this poster are pink and blue. The first part 'It's National Women's Health and Fitness Day' is written in a pink font, while the font of the second part is dark blue.
	Attributes		The body language of the lady represents visual attributes of optimism and vivacity.
	Setting		The poster displays a woman who is dressed in sportswear: a training suit, a smart watch and sneakers. She sits on the floor trying to fix her shoe while she smiles optimistically and looks to the right side.
Reversal Theory	Rhetorical devices	Paratelic	'Protect your health with updated COVID vaccines' refers to an unavoidable task as it asks the audience to take the vaccine.

### 4.2.1 Discussion

The representation of a woman, wearing a training suit, a smart watch, and sneakers, indicates that she practices sports at the club. This image integrates with the choice of language in the sentence 'protect your health with updated COVID vaccines'. That is to say, the woman is shown as a healthy and vigorous person who can maintain her energetic physical activity through getting the updated COVID vaccine. The poster spreads awareness about physical activity; in addition it motivates the audience to take the updated vaccine as a way to enhance their immunity system.

This is an awareness poster designed principally for women on the National Women's Health and Fitness Day; the depiction of a female character breaks the stereotypical image of women who only take care of their houses and families. It shows a great degree of admitting their role in society as they have a special national day for their health and fitness; thus, they are represented as independent and strong. The font color of the sentence 'It's National Women's Health and Fitness Day' is pink as a pink color has a feminine connotation. However, the rest of the written text is dark blue as it includes verbal instructions which represent

information, consistency, and seriousness. The background of the text is made white as it is the color of pureness and security. In addition, being a reactor with no phenomenon presents a great connection with the viewer. Finally, moving the reader from a paratelic to a telic mode signifies the strong necessity of the vaccine as it is inevitably vital for their own life safety.

## 5. Findings and Conclusion

This paper represents an analysis of two posters published on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Facebook official page the first in 2021 and the second in 2022. With reference to the analysis of these two posters, some recurrent findings concerning COVID-19 awareness campaigns have surfaced. First of all, the implementation of the Social Semiotic Approach tools, specifically the action and the reactional narrative processes, requires the viewers of posters to get involved in the awareness campaign. That is, the second poster applies a unidirectional transactional action process, while the first poster utilizes a bidirectional transactional action process. In addition to the employment of the action process, the second poster employs a non-transactional reactional process. Both action and reactional processes build a connection between the participants and the audiences of the posters in order to reach the objective which is raising the awareness to stop the spread of the virus.

The dominant color scales in these posters are the value and the hue scales; all the colors in the posters fall within the value scale as white and black are used as font colors of the written text since white is thought to be the color of protection and transparency and black the color of endangerment and seriousness. Furthermore, the hue scale is the second dominant scale in which the blue color denotes significance as this is the color of instructions, thus it is used as a background color of the written text in the first poster and as a font color in the second poster.

Verbally, the lexical choice of words in the first poster has both negative and positive connotations, given that the words chosen in the first poster connote struggle, seriousness, risk, and threat. At the same time, the words selected in this poster connote positivity, hope, and support. The contradiction of word connotation in the posters reflects the period when the pandemic spreads all over the world in which people have to know how serious it is and how to control it to be safe and sound. However, the lexical choice of words in the second poster has shifted from negativity to positive connotations of necessity and security, as people have recently learned to coexist with the virus. Moreover, there is a lexical absence in the first poster in order to assign responsibility to the



audiences who have to help stop the spreading of the virus. Besides, the visual semiotic choices in the posters highlight the main messages through font size and font colors in order to be more salient to the viewer. Therefore, all the tools selected for verbal analysis from Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis Approach merge together to reach one objective which is raising the awareness of people to control the virus.

Through the Reversal Theory, viewers move from paratelic to telic state in both posters to urge the audience to get the vaccine. The lexical choice of words in the posters makes the viewers fluctuate from being playful to serious as the basis for the theory of psychological reversals, or Reversal Theory. Moreover, audiences of the first poster move from autic to alloic in order to plead with the audience to give help. The reason they move from the self-state to the other state as they are not motivated by self-interests, but by the interests of the public.

There is a representation of some iconographic elements, such as black African Americans represented in the first poster. It portrays a heart-breaking scene of an old woman and her daughter who have a glass wall separating them due to quarantine rules.

The selected posters reflect the American culture, since people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds make up the category of black Americans. The black population of the country comprises people whose race is black or belongs to other racial backgrounds. Thus, there is a representation of black people in awareness posters to highlight their existence as part of the American society who have equal rights to the white.

A strong evidence of black people representation in American society is the election of Barack Obama who made history as the first Black U.S. president, followed by a black woman who is a vice president of the United States following the election of Joe Biden. The [first Black American](#) woman, Kamala Harris, who is of mixed American and Indian heritage, is the [first Black American](#) hold the second-highest office in the country. The election of Harris proved another advance in the steady progress black Americans have made in recent decades in gaining a greater foothold in political leadership. Additionally, they have lagged in the Senate and in governorships ([Brown](#) and [Atske](#), 2021). Moreover, the representation of women in posters highlights their role in society as they are effective members who share equal responsibility with men.

To compare and contrast between the American posters published in 2021 and 2022, the following result is reached. During 2021 all the efforts have been directed towards finding out a vaccine to help stop spreading the virus at the same time people have been forced to the

lockdown and quarantine in case of being infected. This is reflected in the selection of the setting of posters which direct people to be away from their families and friends. On the contrary, the setting has been changed from closed areas and having barriers to open areas in the poster published in 2022 in that; people enjoy the fresh air and do their favorite exercise. Eventually, the slogan 'we can do this' connotes containment as the first person plural pronoun 'we' means all Americans. Thus, it is an encouraging slogan which gives hope and confidence.

References

- Adami, E. (2015). *Multimodality*. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.4818.0565>
- Aning, E. (2021). An analysis of covid-19 poster of the Ghana health service: a semiotic approach. *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*. 9(6), 56-67. ISSN: 2055-0138.
- Apter, M.J. (1981). On the concept of bistability. *Znternational Journal of General Systems*, 6(4), 225-232.
- Apter, M.J. (1982). *The experience of motivation: The theory of psychological reversals*. London and New York: Academic Press.
- Apter, M.J. (1989). *Reversal theory: Motivation, emotion and personality*. London: Routledge.
- Asif, M., Zhiyong, D., Iram, A. and Nisar, M. (2020). Linguistic Analysis of Neologism Related to Coronavirus (COVID-19). <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3608585>
- Belgrimet, S. Rabab'ah, G. (2021). A multimodal discourse analysis of English posters in violence awareness campaigns against women. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 11(2), 191-201. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1102.12>
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1978). *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Halliday, M.A.K. and Hasan, R. (1985). *Language, Context, and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social-Semiotic Perspective*. Geelong, VIC: Deakin University Press.
- Hawan, R. (2018). *An Analysis of semiotic signs found in movie poster of Pirates of the Caribbean*. [Master's thesis, University of Sumatera Utara]. Repositori Institusi Universitas Sumatera Utara. <http://repositori.usu.ac.id/handle/123456789/3357>
- Kandinsky, W. (1977). *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Kress, G. & Van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal Discourse – The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*. London: Arnold.
- Kress, G. & Van Leeuwen, T. (2002). Colour as a semiotic mode: notes for a grammar of colour. *Visual Communication*. 1(3), 343–368. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237623450>
- Kress, G., & Van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)*. London: Routledge.
- Machin, D., & Mayr, A. (2012). *How to do critical discourse analysis: A multimodal introduction*. London: SAGE Publications.
- O'Shaughnessy, J., & O'Shaughnessy, N. J. (2004). *Persuasion in Advertising*. London & New York: Routledge.
- O'Connell, K. A., & Calhoun, J. E. (2001). The telic/paratelic state instrument (T/PSI): validating a reversal theory measure. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 30(2), 193-204.

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.). Home [Facebook page]. Facebook. Retrieved April 7, 2023, from <https://www.facebook.com/HHS>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.). *Home* [Facebook page]. Facebook. Retrieved May 11, 2023, from <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=3998735273490102&set=a.577318915631772>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.). Home [Facebook page]. Facebook. Retrieved May 12, 2023, from <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=465200765645852&set=a.229531195879478>
- Van Leeuwen, T. (2015). *Multimodality: The handbook of discourse analysis*. Blackwell Publishers, Malden and Oxford.
- Wierzbicka, A. (1996). *Semantics primes and universals*. New York: Oxford University Press
- World Health Organization. (2021 May 5 ). *Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)*. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19>