



## A Pragmatic Analysis of Intimidation of Receiving COVID-19 Vaccine in Twitter

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### Abstract

The aim of this paper is to investigate the speech acts which convey intimidation of receiving COVID-19 vaccine, and also to examine the utilization of the strategies of intimidation. Tweets have been collected as a data source in the current qualitative study. The data of this study includes ten tweets drawn from public health tweets that has been obtained through purposive sampling from social media (Twitter) to be analyzed pragmatically. The findings indicated that the argument presented in tweets on COVID-19 vaccine was developed persuasively using various strategies of warning and prohibition. The study ends up with conclusions that hesitation of receiving COVID-19 vaccines witnessed by the world have a great impact on the types of speech acts performed by the doctors and health experts resulting in a texts. As well, they were capable of using a variety of strategies of intimidation in their debates. Notably, the application of speech acts and intimidation strategies was connected to the social interaction and contexts, and a reflective of the situation of pandemic and the hesitation about vaccine.

**Key words:** COVID-19 vaccines, speech acts, intimidation, strategies



تحليل تداولي للترهيب في اخذ لقاح كوفيد ١٩ في تويتر

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العراق، الانبار، الرمادي

### ملخص البحث:

الهدف من هذه الورقة هو التحقيق في أفعال الكلام التي تنقل الترهيب من تلقي لقاح كوفيد-١٩، وكذلك لفحص استخدام استراتيجيات الترهيب. تم جمع تغريدات من تويتر كمصدر بيانات في الدراسة النوعية الحالية. تتضمن بيانات هذه الدراسة عشر تغريدات مأخوذة من تغريدات اطباء و شخصيات طبية تم الحصول عليها من خلال أخذ عينات هادفة من وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي (تويتر) لتحليلها بشكل عملي. أشارت النتائج إلى أن الحجة المقدمة في التغريدات حول لقاح كوفيد-١٩ قد تم تطويرها بشكل مقنع باستخدام استراتيجيات مختلفة للتحذير والحظر. تنتهي الدراسة باستنتاجات مفادها أن التردد في تلقي لقاحات كوفيد-١٩ الذي يشهده العالم له تأثير كبير على أنواع أفعال الكلام التي يقوم بها الأطباء وخبراء الصحة مما ينتج عنه نصوص. كما أنهم كانوا قادرين على استخدام مجموعة متنوعة من استراتيجيات التخويف في مناقشاتهم. والجدير بالذكر أن تطبيق أفعال الكلام واستراتيجيات الترهيب ارتبط بالتفاعل الاجتماعي والسياقات ، وكان انعكاسًا لحالة الجائحة والتردد بشأن اللقاح.

الكلمات المفتاحية : لقاح كوفيد-١٩ , ترهيب , استراتيجيات , افعال الكلام

## 1.Introduction

Currently, there is a severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2 pandemic (COVID-19) affecting the entire world (SARS-CoV-2). On March 11, 2020, the disease COVID-19 was declared a pandemic (Halim, 2021). COVID-19 has quickly moved from China to the rest of the world, making it one of the most talked-about subjects among journalists, politics, health



officials, and different organizations. (Sonasi & Kuhi, 2021). Since its emergence at the end of 2019, coronavirus disease (COVID19) pandemic has continued to impact many aspects of human life. Urgently, vaccination has become the most anticipated way to minimize the spread of COVID-19. Despite the fact that the development of COVID-19 vaccines has been progressed globally, some people are still apprehensive to receive the vaccine. (Wang, Ahorsu, Lin, Chen, Yen, Kuo, Griffiths, and Pakpour, 2021). This involves presenting evidence on the vitality of Vaccine and supporting experiences. All these can be functioned in the language used to persuade people to receive the Vaccine. However, one contributing factor to vaccine hesitancy is the spread of misinformation and rumors.

Accordingly, the study imports its significance from the importance of language in conveying the message intended by the users of language. Thus, the present paper focuses on the role of language and how intimidation strategies are employed to prevent people from receiving COVID-19 vaccine. It concerns the investigation of intimidation strategies employed within language to convey the risk of COVID-19 vaccine. In this regard, it can be said that language is used as a means of communicating all that concern COVID-19 vaccine and health all over world. Health is an area where effective communication is particularly important, as good communication contributes virtually to all aspects of healthcare.

In short, to achieve their goals, people do not only say something but also insert an action embedded in their utterances. For this reason, speech acts cannot be separated from conversation. In terms of speech acts, Intimidation, can refer to the act of making someone feel timid or afraid or it can also refer to that fearful feeling itself.

However, there are strategies of intimidation which may not be comprehended by people as they are employed implicitly. Medical figures or doctors used pragmalinguistic strategies to convince people to avoid the vaccine. On the other hand, as health information is now widely available on social media platforms, people can utilize social media to know more about



the disease, how it spreads, and how to control it. Online health information is frequently bolstered by rumors and conspiracy theories that are not necessarily supported by scientific data. Users who seek health information on the internet run the risk of being exposed to false information implied within language, which could endanger public health. People frequently express their fears, mistrust, and suspicions regarding vaccines on social media before traditional surveillance systems catch them. All these aspects and issues are reflected in the speech acts employed in the language used, which, in turn, might influence people's mind thoughts and decisions. In this sense, a great deal of studies (Sonasi, & Kuhi, (2021); Damayanti, (2020); Asif, Zhiyong, Iram, & Nisar, (2021); GEÇIKLİ, (2021); and Stjernswärd, & Glasdam, (2021) has been conducted to investigate how language is employed to convey information, results, and reports in different forms on how COVID-19 is risky and threatens people's life, little might be said on how language is functioned to intimidate people from receiving COVID-19 vaccine.

However, Sonasi and Kuhi, (2021) tackled the intimidation strategies used in COVID-19. The study aims to identify intimidation strategies that contribute to the negative characterization of the virus. For the analysis of intimidation strategies, 42 articles (news articles, headlines, opinions, analyzes) taken from American and British news were selected. The analysis of the intimidation strategies was carried through proximization theory. The results showed that the discourse on COVID-19 includes intimidation strategies, such as metaphorization and low and high modality markers. The study used intimidation from a negative aspect of the COVID-19 by using metaphor, while in the present paper the researcher functioned intimidation strategies for COVID-19 vaccine.

The study entitled “*Pragmatic Analysis of Responses given by Social Media users toward CORONAVIRUS Phenomenon*” was undertaken **Damayanti (2020)**. This study aims to examine the intention and implicature of the responses given by social media users toward the coronavirus phenomenon. The type of this research is descriptive qualitative research. 84 responses



posted by social media users on Facebook were the data, which were collected via observation and documentation instruments. Kreidler (2013) and Grice's (1975) theories of implicature were employed to categorize the implicature of the responses. The findings revealed that 15 kinds of intentions were used by social media users. In addition, particularized Implicature was the most dominant type of implicature. However, the study investigated intention and implicature of speech on COVID-19 (not vaccine) by social media users not by doctors or medical figures.

**GEÇIKLİ, (2021)** allocated a study to analyse texts in COVID-19 Ads from different parts of the world in order to explore the pragmatic force of mass media discourse across contexts. the data source of the study is 450 COVID-19 Ads from the websites of countries national web platforms. Following qualitative paradigm, the linguistic functions of COVID-19 Ads were analysed on the basis of descriptive analysis moving on ready-made categories in order to compare and contrast the sort of pragmatic force employed in Ads. The findings showed that, regarding the frequency of illocutionary acts across contexts, there are no significant differences among the Ads in terms of the pragmatic force. Directives and assertives were found to be the most frequent illocutionary acts in texts. In this respect, COVID-19 Ads seemingly perform the same function in mass media discourse of Asian, European, and American contexts; that is, the public discourse is pragmatically manipulated by the Ads for the sake of health protection practices.

**Asif, Zhiyong, Iram, & Nisar, (2021)** in their study which is entitled *Linguistic analysis of neologism related to coronavirus (COVID-19)* focused on the phenomenon of neologism to explore the creation of new words during the outbreak of COVID-19. Using document instrument, data were collected from articles, books, Oxford Corpus, social media. The theoretical framework of this study is based on three components of neologism (word formation, borrowing, and lexical deviation). Krishnamurthy's (2010) model of neologism and Stekauer's (1998) theory of onomasiology were adopted to analyse the data under investigation. The findings of this study revealed that



with the outbreak of COVID-19, the majority of the people on social media and state briefings utilized word-formation in the form of nouns, adjectives, and verbs. The abbreviations and acronyms are also used in relation to the current situation of COVID-19. No doubt, neologisms present colorful portrayals of various social and cultural practices of respective societies. Overall, this study focuses on neologism related to COVID-19 but not the vaccine.

**Stjernswärd, & Glasdam, (2021)** made a study on COVID-19 pandemic and its influence on the social life to explore articulations of solidarity and polarisation in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic and related risks. A Foucault-inspired thematic analysis was adopted to analyse qualitative data collected from an international survey about COVID-19 and social media. The analysis showed solidarity and polarisation as each other's premise and contradiction. The study illustrated that social media functioned as social technology for control and manipulation towards social normalisation. However, it was also used to voice attempts to rectify (or overthrow) the dominant medico-political discourse and norms with own preferences, opinions and a functioning daily life. In short, the articulations and social media uses could be interpreted as expressions of power and counter-power. Accordingly, the study is about COVID-19 and its influence on the social life but not the vaccine.

However the current study attempted to investigate the speech acts and strategies employed to express intimidation from getting COVID-19 vaccine. Accordingly, this study adopted Bach and Harnish's (1979) speech acts theory and an eclectic Pragmalinguistic Model of warning and prohibition strategies of Griffiths, (2006), Leech, (1983), Goddard & Wierzbicka, (2013), Sadock, (1974), Allan, (1986), Jespersen , (2007) as a theoretical formwork, to pragmatically analyze the types of speech acts and the strategies of intimidation in COVID-19 vaccine reports. Thus, the aims of the study is: To investigate the speech acts which convey intimidation from receiving COVID-19 vaccine and to examine the utilization of the strategies of intimidation. Therefore, the value of this study lies in highlighting the



contribution of the fields of linguistics, namely pragmatics, in conveying the hidden meaning behind the language of tweets written on COVID19 vaccine. Particularly, the study is hoped to enrich people's awareness via investigating the pragmalinguistic strategies used to prevent people from receiving COVID19 vaccine.

## 2.Methodology

In this section, the research strategy and methodology used in the current work are discussed. Besides, it displays a research sampling. Moreover, it shows how data was collected. It also discusses the coding scheme utilized and the procedure for data analysis. The sections that follow examine these ideas in detail.

### 2.1 Research Design and Method

The present paper adopted the qualitative design to collect and analyze data. According to Hancock (1998, p. 2), qualitative research is "concerned with finding answers to questions which begin with: why? how? in what way?". It is termed as qualitative since "the data concerned appear in words rather than in numbers" (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p. 21).

Based on the aforementioned design, the current study used qualitative method to seek how intimidation is expressed pragmatically. This is to probe into the dominant speech acts in the texts of COVID-19 vaccine when analyzing the data, and to investigate the strategies of intimidation used in COVID-19 vaccine tweets., The qualitative aspect of the study involved the use of content analysis approach to elucidate the pragmatic and underlying message reflected in the speech acts and strategies employed in conveying the texts of medical figures. In this sense, the qualitative aspect of the study provides a critical understanding of the power of language embedded in the medical texts.

### 2.2 Sampling and Data Collection instrument



Documents or written texts were used as an instrument to collect qualitative data source. In particular, COVID-19 vaccine tweets, The current study employed the purposeful sampling of texts to obtain information-rich data that conform to the area and nature of the problem statement and any posited question. The tweets posed from January 2020 to January 2022.

The data of this study includes ten tweets pulled from Twitter that has been obtained through purposive sampling from medical figures, doctors and writers to be analyzed pragmatically. The data selected for a period of four months extending from October 1, 2020 up to February 1, 2022. The idea is to find out the speech acts strategies of intimidation employed when preventing people from receiving COVID-19 vaccine.

### 2.3 Coding Scheme and Data Analysis

After data collection, the tweets were coded accordingly. The current study used content analysis to analyze the qualitative data collected via document instrument. Content analysis has been defined as a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding (Berelson, 1952).

In conducting the present study, the content analysis was used in analyzing the data under investigation. Content analysis focuses on the analysis of textual data. It concerns going deeply into the implied meaning and structure of a message or communication. The message may be implied or intended within document, a communication broadcast, film, song and video or an actual human behavior observed.

However, in order to analyse speech acts used to convey intimidation and its strategies, the researcher selected ten tweets from Twitter delivered by medical experts, doctors and writers. After a close examination of selected material, data which carries the elements of intimidation, was identified. The analysis of the speech acts of intimidation was conducted adopting Bach and Harnish`s (1979) theory of communicative speech act, while intimidation strategies were carried adapting an eclectic Pragmalinguistic Model of





warning and prohibition strategies of Griffiths, (2006), Leech, (1983), Goddard & Wierzbicka, (2013), Sadock, (1974), Allan, (1986), Jespersen , (2007).

The approach of Bach and Harnish (1979) to Speech Act is intention-inference-based. They argue that it is intended for listeners to understand illocutionary acts through MCBs when speakers make illocutionary acts (mutual contextual beliefs). Their theory is that conversation, or interactional speaking, requires an inferential process. "Speech Act Schemata (SAS)" is their name for an inevitable aspect of the inferential process in a communicative event. They propose that mutual contextual beliefs between a speaker and his hearer facilitate the inferential process because the inference made or expected to be made by the hearer is based on the contextual knowledge shared by the speaker and hearer in discourse rather than what the speaker says (Bach & Harnish, 1979). According to SAS, every communicative speech act is made up of four sub-acts as its constituents (where S is the speaker, H is the hearer, e is an expression in language, C is the context of utterance).

Utterance Act: S utters e from L to H in C

Locutionary Act: S says to H in C that so-and-so

Illocutionary Act: S does such-and-such in C

Perlocutionary Act: S affects H in a certain way

The theory of Bach and Harnish emphasizes the importance of the hearer recognizing a speaker's intention, which they refer to as "Reflexive intentions" (R-intentions). According to them, communicating entails expressing an attitude such as belief, intention, desire, etc, and "for S to express an attitude is for S to R-intend the hearer to think S has that attitude." (Bach & Harnish, 1979). The theory distinguishes between communicative and non-communicative illocutionary acts. While the former demands that S's R-intention be recognized, the later does not (Acheoah, & Olaleye,



(2017). According to their theory, communicative illocutionary acts can be classified into four categories:

A- Constatives express the speaker's belief and an intention that the hearer has or forms a like belief.

B- Directives express the speaker's attitude towards a future action by the hearer and his/her intention that the utterance be taken as a reason for the hearer's action.

C- Commisives express the speaker's intention that the utterance obligates the hearer to do something. And finally,

D- acknowledgements reflect the feeling towards the hearer, or in the case of formal utterances, the speaker's intention that his/her utterances fit particular social expectations for the expressing of certain feelings.

Based on the theoretical and conceptual frameworks adapted in this study and the objectives of this study, the first step focused on the types of speech acts conveying intimidation while finding the strategies of intimidation was the second step. The speakers tend to use a variety of strategies that contribute to the affection of listener's attitudes towards their argumentation and finally altering even their behaviour.

**Table (1): Overview of intimidation strategies**

Strategy	Definition	Example
<b>1. Strategies of warning</b>		
<b>1. Direct warning</b> (Performative expression) (Griffiths, 2006, p.148)	formulated when the speaker makes an utterance containing an expression naming the act.	I warn you that the bull is dangerous.
<b>2. Indirect warning</b> (Declarative)	Motivated by face-saving that is consistent in	the rain is harmful.



construction)

(Leech, 1983, p.347)

conversational

interactions, indirect SAs, including warning, allow for the H not to do the action postulated by the speaker

**Indirect warning**

**(If- conditional)**

**(Goddard &**

**Wierzbicka, (2013, p.169-170),**

the situation in the main clause depends on that in the subordinate conditional clause.

A: Could I have look at the room?

B:Yes. But, if you don't pay the rent in advance, you won't get the room.

**Indirect warning**

**(Negative imperative )**

**(Allan, 1986, P.22)**

The imperative mood in English is generally used to give an order, to prompt someone to do something, to give a warning or to give instructions.

Do not smoke in here.

**Indirect warning**

**(Interrogative structure)**

**(Sadock, 1974, p.143)**

It is used for the need to be polite or to minimize the degree of pressure exerted on the addressee.

Does smoking cause cancer?

## 2.Strategies of Prohibition

**Direct prohibition**

**(Performative expression)**

**(Avoid, stop, Not allowed, Not permitted )**

**(Allan, 1986, p.4)**

the speaker prohibits the hearer from doing something i.e. he/she prevents him/her from doing a bad action. It includes impostive speech acts carried out so as to forbid a certain state of

'Stop developing friendships with evil people.

- Mexican law citizens are not allowed to have dual Citizenship



	affairs from being performed.	
<b>Indirect prohibition (Declarative construction) (Allan, 1986, p.206)</b>	Any kind of speech act, including prohibition, can be performed using a declarative sentence to indicate the actualization of the illocutionary act.	Cheating is prevented. -Adam must not be allowed out on the balcony
<b>Indirect prohibition (Modality ) -Cannot (Allan, 1986:235) - Shall Not (Jespersen, 2007, p.276)</b>	There are negative modal auxiliaries which can be used with prohibitive sentences	You shall not ignore my wishes.

### 3.Results and Discussion

*Extract No.1: "However, after consulting with several highly qualified doctors and reading all the reports from both the US and U.K. you realise that it is the vaccinated who are getting sick. So maintain a robust immune system and avoid the vaccination at all costs. Just check the data".(Nick Wainwright,2022)*

#### Speech Acts

Nick Wainwright, who is a writer, in this tweet explained that people should avoid vaccination by using 'directive, requestive' illocutionary act. He requested from people not to get vaccination as they get sick. The speech acts are employed here is to prohibit people from getting the vaccine. It contains only one type of speech acts, which is directive. The first utterance is directive in which, using this illocutionary act, Wainwright requested from people to do something. In this case, he expressed the desire that people realize that the vaccine may cause sickness and the intention that people do that partially because of his desire. Therefore, using directives is one of the methods for getting hearers to take action. It seeks to urge the audience to



pay attention to the message by implying that they are unaware of it, as if it contains vital information. A speech act of prohibition can be carried out using a variety of devices such as the imperative device which is used to make a prohibition from completing a certain action. (Allan,1986, p. 98).

### Strategies of Intimidation

The strategy of intimidation used in this tweet is ‘Direct prohibition’ ‘performative expression’ (Allan, 1986), since Wainwright prohibits people from vaccination directly. The strategy of prohibition is expressed directly by uttering a device of order which is the verb 'avoid'. Prohibition is described as the act of forbidding something from being done or utilized, primarily through the use of law. This means that it denotes forbidding, or ordering someone not to do something (Allan, 1986; Eastwood, 2002). By this imperative device, Wainwright issues the illocutionary force of prohibition, and people can infer that they are prohibited from doing an action: ‘vaccination’ by uttering that verb 'avoid' (i.e. You must not do something.).

*Extract No.2: The dismissing of the deaths and injuries of the covid vaccine with the ‘their sacrifice was acceptable for others benefit’ narrative is despicable pure and simple! Now they are injecting kids with it, even though it can do more harm than good where children are concerned! Awful (Emma Kenny, 2021).*

### Speech Acts

This tweet posted by Emma Kenny a psych therapist. She warns people from getting COVID-19 vaccine by using three types of speech acts. In the first utterance, the type of speech act is ‘Constative, confirmative’. It showed that Kenny expressed her belief that this ‘narrative is despicable’ and the intention of intimidating people so as to believe and avoid vaccine. She intended to intimidate people by stating that there are deaths and injuries because of the vaccine. In the second utterance, the type of speech act is constative, informative. She informed people that the kids now injected, and in the second clause employing constative, descriptive, she evaluated the vaccines as harmful for children



## Strategies of Intimidation

The strategy of intimidation applied in this tweet is 'Indirect warning, Declarative construction'. The strategy of warning is expressed by uttering a declarative sentence which issues the illocutionary force of warning. This means that Kenny used this strategy to warn people indirectly. In this sense, the words: '*deaths and injuries*' conveys the illocutionary force of warning because they draw the attention of people to the state which makes them feel that the speaker wants them to avoid doing something. As such, '*they are injecting kids with it*' implies a strong warning for people against harmful action which is issued by the complement of the warning: '*can do more harm*'. This means that this utterance involves the action which should not be done by people.

**Extract No.3: -"@JanetMillsforME Force-injecting citizens with a fast-tracked, experimental, liability-free vaccine is unethical and unconstitutional. Medical mandates don't belong in a free society. Let each person choose how they care for their bodies. #nomandates #noforcedcovidvaccines (Christiane Northrup, 2022).**

## Speech Acts

This tweet is for Dr. Christiane Northrup who was a media darling, and in 2013 made Reader's Digest's annual list of 100 most trusted people in America. But she then was depicted as a miasma of misinformation and conspiracy theories.

The speech acts employed in this tweet are to warn people not to get the vaccine. It contains only two types of speech act; Constative and Directive. The first utterance is 'Constative, descriptive' in which, using this illocutionary act, Dr. Northrup described vaccine as '*a fast-tracked, experimental, liability-free vaccine*' to prove that vaccine should be avoided. In the second utterance, the speech act is 'Constative, assertive', as Dr. Northrup used 'assertives' to assert her beliefs and present her opinions as true issues to convince people to admit these weaknesses and warn them not



to get vaccination. In the third utterance the type of speech act is 'directive' in which, she wants people to do something. In this case, Dr. Northrup used 'requestive' speech act, as she asked people to let everyone do care his body.

### Strategies of Intimidation

'Indirect warning, Declarative construction' is the strategy of intimidation applied in this tweet. The strategy of warning is expressed by uttering a declarative sentence which conveys the illocutionary force of warning indirectly. In this respect, the declarative sentence conveys the illocutionary force of warning because when Dr. Northrup described vaccine as '*a fast-tracked, experimental, liability-free*', she wants to warn people indirectly to avoid vaccination. This finding is in tandem with that of Leech (1974) which indicated that declaratives are intended to exhibit various illocutionary acts; they may express assertions, orders, questions, warnings and so forth. In other words, the use of declaratives as implicit SAs is favoured by the speakers so as to save both time and effort spent on their corresponding explicit performatives

***Extract No.4: "All vaccinated people will die within in 2 years" Nobel Peace Prize Winner Virologist Luc Montagnier has confirmed that there is no chance of survival for people who have received any form of the vaccine.(Michael son of YHVHr, 2021).***

### Speech Acts

In the aforementioned tweet, a French Virologist Luc Montagnier predicted that all people who had get the vaccine will die. The intention of the speaker is to warn people from getting the vaccine indirectly.

The illocutionary act of the utterance "*all vaccinated people will die within 2 years*" is "Predictive", as Montagnier believed that all people will die in the future because of the vaccine. In this sense, the speech act of prohibition in this tweet is expressed indirectly in terms of prediction which implies indirect prohibition for people to avoid vaccination. In the second speech act "*nobel Peace Prize Winner Virologist Luc Montagnier has confirmed that*



*there is no chance of survival for people who have received any form of the vaccine”, the illocutionary act is ‘constative, confirmative’ as Montagnier confirmed that no chance to be alive for everyone who get the vaccine. However, for the speech act to be communicatively successful the speaker’s intention should be recognized by the hearer. Alternatively, the perlocutionary effect of prohibition might be expressed by informing the people that this vaccine is risky (causing him/ her to be intimidated).*

### Strategies of Intimidation

The intimidation strategy used here is ‘indirect prohibition’ (Allan,1986), since Virologist Luc Montagnier prohibits people from getting vaccination indirectly, by telling them that all vaccinated people will die because of the vaccine. In this extract, the strategy of prohibition is expressed by uttering a declarative sentence which issues the illocutionary force of prohibition indirectly. That is, the present verb ‘die’ conveys the illocutionary force of prohibition because it draws the attention of people to the state of fear that the speaker wants them to avoid doing something. As such, ‘*will die*’ implies a strong prohibition for the readers against harmful action which is issued by the utterance: ‘*all vaccinated people*’. In this sense, intimidation aims to impose persuasive effect on the people not to get vaccine as it is risky. This finding goes in line with that of Sonasi and Kuhi, (2021) which indicated that using prohibition strategy of COVID-19 vaccine with persuasion intention can be effective in persuading people that the vaccine is dangerous.

***Extract No.5: Stop the vaccines in kids and the young . You have ZERO idea what you’re doing to their microbiome which is their longevity. #STOPTHEMANDATES. I’m here to protect the Kids and I will not be silent anymore. RISK OUTWEIGHS BENEFIT. #WATCHMEROAR. I’m the MICROBIOME an expert.( Sabine Hazan, 2022).***

### Speech Acts

In this tweet by Dr. Sabine Hazan, gastroenterologist, Researcher, Consultant, microbiome expert. She wants to prevent people from getting the vaccine especially kids. She gives reason that vaccine is harmful to their





microbiome. Furthermore she promised that she will not be silent and she wants to protect kids as she is microbiome expert. Dr. Hazan used three types of speech acts. The first speech act, directives, was clear in “*stop the vaccine*”, which is a means to direct, instruct and command people to do some specific actions. Hazan's endeavors encouraged people to prevent getting vaccine by kids and young. She would like to prohibit people not to get vaccine by using imperative verbs. In this sense, she attempted to create awareness among people that the vaccine effects microbiome. Commissive speech act was employed in the above extract to indicate Hazan's promise that she ‘*will not be silent*’ and will prevent vaccine to protect kids.

### Strategies of Intimidation

The strategy of intimidation used here is ‘direct prohibition, since Dr. Hazan used the verb ‘stop’ directly. She is a gastroenterologist, for this reason she has the authority to prevent people from vaccination. The strategy of prohibition is expressed by uttering the construction “stop” which issues prohibition. From the verb stop, readers can recognize that Dr. Hazan prohibits them from doing a hateful action. Moreover, according to speech act scholars, prohibition is a feature of command in the sense that in command, the speaker orders the hearer to perform an action that is comparable to prohibition, but in prohibition, the speaker forbids the hearer from performing a certain action (Allan,1986, p. 98).

**Extract No.6:** *As we expected, the Pfizer experimental gene therapy "vaccine" can cause hundreds of conditions. You are really not meant to mess with genes. A human being is a highly complex system not a Lego set. They don't know what they are doing.( Sherri Tenpenny, 2021)*

### Speech Acts

In this tweet, Dr. Sherri Tenpenny who is a longtime anti-vaccine activist, employed three types of speech acts. In the first message, the type of speech act is ‘Constative, predictive’. It showed that people should be careful, because Dr. Tenpenny expresses her belief that the Pfizer vaccine may cause death or sickness for people. In the second message, the type of speech act is



directive, requestive. It showed that Dr. Tenpenny requested from people not to mess with genes. In the third message the type of speech act is 'Constative, descriptive' in which she described human as a complex system and categorized Pfizer owners as 'don't know what they are doing'. This is to warn people from the vaccine. Directives are employed in the tweet above as a tool to prevent the audience to perform actions. The power of this type of speech act resides on the prohibition made by the writer as a contribution or resolutions to change the present situation.

### Strategies of Intimidation

The intimidation strategy applied in this tweet is 'Indirect warning, declarative construction'. Dr. Tenpenny, by these two utterances, warns people against doing a bad action '*You are really not meant to mess with genes*'. Warning carries a meaning which includes request and command in a sense that the speaker warns people in terms of requesting from and commanding them to stop doing a bad or unpleasant action. As Hinkle (1997, p.5) demonstrated that warning the hearer against doing something undesirable indicates that his or her interests would suffer if he or she does it. She continues her warning by using declarative sentence when she said, '*A human being is a highly complex system not a Lego set. They don't know what they are doing*'. Crystal (2010) indicated that by warning the hearer has optionality to heed or not. This means that warning is optional as Leech (1983) stated that "the degree of indirectness correlates to the degree to which the addressee is allowed the choice of not performing the proposed action".

***Extract No.7: 'The COVID vaccines may cause 500 million to 1 billion people to die or to have disabilities. I believe that the effective treatments for adverse effects of the COVID vaccines will soon be available. The COVID vaccine disasters have not started yet'. (Annie Bukacek, 2021)***

### Speech Acts

This tweet is for Dr. Annie Bukacek a Montana fixture. Bukacek, is a practicing physician; she occupies a seat on the Flathead City-County Health



Board, which is the local authority on how to manage public health outbreaks like COVID-19.

Dr. Bukacek in this tweet used three types of speech acts. In the first utterance, the type of speech act is 'Predictive' in which, using the illocutionary act, she predicts that the vaccine may cause death to millions of people, and her intention is to warn people from getting the vaccine. In the second and third utterance, the type of speech act is also predictive, since Dr. Bukacek predicts that '*the effective treatments for adverse effects of the COVID vaccines will soon be available*'. In this sense, she intimate people from getting vaccine by stating that it results in adverse effects. In the utterance "*The COVID vaccine disasters have not started yet*", she used predictive speech act with an intention to warn people that the vaccine will cause harm for them.

### Strategies of Intimidation

The strategy of intimidation employed in this tweet is 'Indirect warning, declarative construction'. Dr. Bukacek warns people that vaccination may cause death or disabilities. The strategy of warning is expressed by uttering a declarative sentence which delivers the illocutionary force of warning indirectly. That is, the present verb '*cause*' conveys the illocutionary force of warning because it draws people's attention to the extent which makes them avoid getting vaccine. To elaborate one the utterance, '*to die or to have disabilities*' implies a strong warning for the people against vaccination which is issued also by the utterance: '*the COVID vaccines may cause...*'. This means that this utterance involves the action which should not be done by people. Dr. Bukacek has the intention to intimidate people. She said that '*the COVID vaccine disasters have not started yet*' to warn people indirectly from getting vaccination.

**Extract No.8: More #SteveKirsch - estimated 400K spontaneous abortions related to the vaccine. "We can't determine causality but we certainly have correlation. The only thing that could cause something that huge would be**



*something like the vaccine - there isn't any other rational explanation” (Steve James, 2022).*

### Speech Acts

This tweet is for Dr. Steve James - a critical care consultant who has chosen not to be vaccinated. The speech acts employed in this tweet are to warn people from getting the vaccine with an intention of intimidation. In the first utterance, the type of speech act is assertive, since Dr. James claimed that the cause behind this number (400K spontaneous abortions) of abortions is related to the vaccine. In the second utterance, the illocutionary act is confirmative, Dr. James confirmed that there is a correlation between abortions and vaccine. The third utterance is ‘constative, assertive’ in which, using these illocutionary act, Dr. James claimed that vaccine is the only thing that cause these abortions. His intention by this claim is to intimidate people from getting the vaccine.

### Strategies of Intimidation

The intimidation strategy applied in this utterance is ‘Indirect warning, declarative construction’. Dr. James used this strategy to warn people, especially women, from getting the vaccine. The strategy of warning is indirectly expressed using the declarative construction ‘400K spontaneous abortions related to the vaccine’. That is, the declarative sentence conveys the illocutionary force of intimidation because it draws people's attention to the risk of getting vaccine. In this regard, ‘the only thing that could cause something that huge would be something like the vaccine’ implies a strong warning for the hearers against hateful action which is issued by the complement of the utterance: ‘there isn't any other rational explanation’. This finding is similar to that of Ahmed’s (2018) study which indicated that warning has a stronger illocutionary force that the force of advice.

**Extract No.9: “Nurse faints immediately after taking experimental Covid-19 vaccine. Rushed experimental biological agents like this should not be mandated upon anyone. Meaning airlines, employers, schools, nor the**



*government can ever tell anyone else they must take an experimental vaccine! (Dr. Simone Gold, 2020).*

### Speech Acts

Dr. Simone Gold, a former emergency room physician who has referred to the COVID-19 vaccines as an "experimental biological agent whose harms are well-documented". The speech acts employed by this tweet are to prohibit people from getting the vaccine indirectly. In the first utterance, the illocutionary act is 'constative, informative', as Dr. Gold informed people about the fainting of the nurse to convince them that vaccine is dangerous. In the second utterance the type of speech act is 'Prohibitive', as she prohibited mandated vaccine upon anyone. Her intention is to confirm that she has sufficient reason which makes her prohibit people from vaccine. In the third utterance, she continued her prohibition, as she used 'nor', 'ever tell'. This goes in line with Bach and Harnish (1979, p.49) who illustrated that "prohibitives are essentially requirements that the hearer not do a certain thing. To prohibit someone from smoking is to require him not to smoke". Tsohatizidis (1994, p.17) argued that "indirect speech act depends on the addressee's understanding of what the speaker is implying by his utterance". This means that people should realized that they are prohibited from something.

### Strategies of Intimidation

The first strategy of intimidation used in this tweet is 'Indirect prohibition, declarative construction'. Dr. Gold used this strategy using declarative sentence '*Nurse faints immediately after taking experimental Covid-19 vaccine*' which issues the prohibition indirectly. Horn and Ward (2006, p. 468) stated that there is what is called "non-literality". It means that someone utters an utterance to mean another thing. She talked about the nurse with an intention to prevent people from getting vaccination. Furthermore, since the interpretation of the utterance depends on the context, Dr. Gold here has an intention to intimidate people from getting vaccine. She continued to prohibit people indirectly from getting vaccination by stating '*rushed experimental biological agents like this should not be mandated upon anyone*'. The strategy used here is Indirect prohibition, modality' as , Dr. Gold used the



model 'should not' to prevent people from mandating of vaccines. In the third utterance, 'indirect prohibition strategy, modality' used as well *'Meaning airlines, employers, schools, nor the government can ever tell anyone else they must take an experimental vaccine!'*. the intention of Dr. Gold is to prohibit from telling people to take vaccine which is experimental. In this utterance, modality (can) combined with 'nor' and 'ever' was functioned to convey the intention of prohibition and government's inability to oblige people to get vaccine.

**Extract No.10:** *"I had COVID-19. I had minimal symptoms. I'm thankful I made the choice not to be vaccinated so I could avoid vaccine side effects. Please everyone, don't get vaccinated".( Dr. Christopher Rake, 2022).*

### Speech Acts

This tweet is for Dr. Christopher Rake, an anesthesiologist at UCLA Health in California who has not shied away from airing his suspicions about COVID-19 vaccines. The tweet contains only two types of speech acts; Constative and Directive. The first three utterances carry 'constatives, assertive' speech acts in which, Dr. Rake asserted that he had COVID-19 and he had '*minimal symptoms*' so there is no need for the vaccine which has side effects. In this sense, he would like to elaborate on the risk of getting vaccine. This is to make people feel confident and avoid getting vaccine. The fourth utterance is directive in which, using these illocutionary acts, Dr. Rake wants people to do something. In this case, he warned people from doing something directly "*don't get vaccinated*". Using directives is one of the strategies to influence people to act (Kadhim, Jibreen, & AL-Janabi, 2018, p. 95). He tries to warn people by using advisory speech act from getting vaccine because he thinks that the side effects of vaccine are more harmful than COVID-19.

### Strategies of Intimidation

'Indirect warning, negative imperative' is the strategy used in this tweet. Implicit warning is mainly accomplished in terms of imperatives. Here Dr. Rake used negative imperative to warn people from getting vaccine. Mey, (2009, p.1002) argued that implicit speech acts are characterized by lacking the performative verb naming them. Nonetheless, there exists



correspondence between the structure of an utterance and its function. The strategy of warning is expressed by uttering the construction (don't +infinitive) which conveys warning. From the verb '*don't get*', people can recognize that Dr. Rake warns them from doing a hateful action. This means that the illocutionary force of warning is indirectly expressed. Moreover, Dr. Rake used the word '*please*' which means that he warns people by advising them not to be vaccinated, and he expressed his intention to intimidate people. Brown and Levinson (1987) defined warning as when "performing the FTA is principally in hearer's interest," and so no face redress is required.

#### 4. Conclusion

The findings revealed that the argument presented in COVID-19 vaccine's tweets was developed persuasively supported by various intimidation strategies. Performing the speech acts in COVID-19 vaccine tweets carries a pragmatic value. In this sense, they direct the people to prevent an action when it carries bad consequences. Two types of speech acts were employed to intimidate the audience and to prevent them from vaccination. Thus, it is concluded that "constatives" speech acts are employed by doctors, writers, and medical figures to assure true propositions. Moreover, it is also inferred that "constatives" were particularly used to predict and report some events which had happened in the past because of the impacts of social media and bad news on getting vaccination and mobilize people to have one stance. Furthermore, it can be concluded that "directives" were used to warn and prohibit the audience from getting the vaccine.

The declarative sentences are more frequently used than imperative ones and others in the tweets. This leads to the conclusion that this mood seems to correspond to the writers' tendency to reality, facts, and confirmed information. In this regard, it can be said that COVID-19 discourse is sometimes referring to the concept of death on the account of the risky side-effects vaccine being characterized with. In this sense, intimidation aims to impose persuasive effect on the audience. The strategies adopted by COVID-19 vaccine discourse attempts to intimidate the people and persuade them that the vaccine is dangerous. Furthermore, to depict the vaccine as dangerous also aims to persuade that preemptive action is needed to stop the



COVID-19 vaccine receiving. The negative characterization of the virus signals the necessity of preparedness against these rumors. Besides that, the above strategies take on a "hidden application" through which doctors and other medical specialists help convince their audience and the general public to change their attitudes in their favor; as a result, hidden intimidation strategies benefit the interests of politicians and medical businesses that have hidden agendas. In other respects, the COVID-19 vaccine discussion used several strategies in an effort to convince the listener or reader that the vaccine was harmful. Additionally, they convinced people that preemptive action was necessary to prohibit people from getting the COVID-19 vaccine in order to portray the vaccine as risky.

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