

Health Communication: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Selected Corona Virus Posters in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The world today is faced with various epidemics which have introduced myriad of challenges. COVID-19 disease is the latest crisis with its attendant to health and language issues. With its emergence, COVID-19 introduced into the global linguistic repertoire a specialized form of discourse which manifested in the way government communicates to the public. The study set to analyze multimodality features of COVID 19 posters. The objectives were to describe the multimodal structure of COVID-19 posters, establish the semiotic choices adopted, explore the use of persuasive verbal and visual elements as components of multimodality, and explain the functions of multimodal metadiscourse. The study employed Social Semiotics Theory and adopted a descriptive research design. The target population was COVID-19 posters in Kenya, with a sample size of 30 posters selected through purposive and snowball sampling. Data collection methods included documentary analysis and an observational checklist, with data analyzed qualitatively through content analysis. The findings revealed that COVID-19 posters in Kenya predominantly utilized bold colors, attention-grabbing visuals, and culturally resonant symbols to capture attention and enhance message retention. Semiotic choices included the strategic use of icons, such as masks and social distancing symbols, and multilingual text to cater to diverse audiences. Verbal messages often relied on persuasive techniques, including imperative statements ("Stay Safe," "Wash Hands") and reassuring tones, to encourage compliance. Multimodal metadiscourse was instrumental in creating coherence and reinforcing critical health messages, such as prevention measures and the importance of vaccination. The study recommended the promotion of health literacy through the design of clear, concise, and inclusive messaging that accommodates varying levels of literacy. Posters should utilize plain language, simple visuals, and relatable examples to convey key information about prevention, symptoms, and protective measures.

Key Words: Multimodal Structure, Persuasive Verbal, Semiotic Choices, Visual Images

I. INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization [WHO] (2020) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on 30th January, 2020 and categorised it as a pandemic on 11th March, 2020. WHO (2020) reported the first cases of COVID-19 which were identified in Wuhan City, China, in December 2019. The new virus was linked to the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The virus is primarily spread between people during close contact, most often via small droplets produced by coughing, sneezing, and talking. The virus spreads with incredible quickness which results in hundreds of thousands of infected people Worldwide (Pitlik, 2020, World Health Organization [WHO], 2020).

WHO noted that amongst preventive measures of COVID 19 preventive actions were: staying home when sick; covering mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing. Dispose of used tissue immediately; washing hands often with soap and water; and cleaning frequently touched surfaces and objects. Some of other effective mitigation measures include practicing effective personal and public hygiene, protecting the most vulnerable to the disease and isolating people who are currently infected through self-quarantine and social quarantine (WHO 2020). The government of Kenya had to communicate this information through the Ministry of Health. However, government communication during a national catastrophe, such as the Covid 19 pandemic is a challenging task that demands the balance of professional communication skills and self - restraint.

Globally, public health communication, posters play a vital role in disseminating information and promoting behavioral change on pressing health issues, including infectious diseases, maternal and child health, nutrition, and hygiene. International organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF frequently utilize posters as part of their communication strategies to address global health challenges and reach vulnerable populations in low-resource settings. Additionally, posters are employed in social advocacy campaigns to raise awareness about human rights, environmental conservation, gender equality, and other social justice issues. In the commercial sector, posters are utilized for advertising products, services, events, and cultural initiatives, leveraging persuasive visuals and messaging to attract consumers and drive engagement (WHO 2020).

In the African context, posters serve as essential communication tools that play a significant role in addressing a wide array of social, economic, and health-related issues (WHO 2020). From public health campaigns aimed at combating infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS, malaria, and now COVID-19, to advocacy efforts promoting education, gender equality, and environmental conservation, posters are widely utilized to convey messages, raise awareness, and mobilize action within diverse communities across the continent.

In Nigeria, according to Ope-Davies and Shodipe (2023), posters are extensively employed in public health campaigns to disseminate vital information and promote preventive behaviors related to various health challenges. Organizations such as the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), Ministries of Health, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) utilize posters to educate communities about disease transmission, symptoms, prevention measures, and the importance of seeking medical care. Particularly in rural and remote areas where access to healthcare services may be limited, posters serve as an accessible and cost-effective means of communication, providing essential health information to individuals and families.

In Kenya, posters are integral to communication strategies across various sectors, serving as effective tools for disseminating information, raising awareness, and promoting behavior change. From public health campaigns addressing infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS, malaria, and now COVID-19, to educational initiatives promoting literacy, environmental conservation, and civic engagement, posters play a significant role in reaching diverse communities and populations across the country (Ngwacho, 2020).

Posters are extensively utilized in public health campaigns to educate communities about disease prevention, symptoms, and treatment options (Atceru & Ayikoru, 2022). Government agencies such as the Ministry of Health, alongside international organizations and NGOs, utilize posters to communicate key messages on topics such as hand washing, mask-wearing, social distancing, and vaccination. These posters are often distributed in healthcare facilities, schools, public transportation hubs, and other community settings, providing accessible and visually engaging information to individuals and families. Additionally, leveraging innovative approaches such as digital technology, community radio, and peer education programs can enhance the reach and impact of poster campaigns, particularly among hard-to-reach populations. According to Ngwacho (2020), addressing these challenges and embracing new technologies and strategies, stakeholders can maximize the effectiveness of posters in promoting health, education, and social development in Kenya. The study therefore sought to analyze the multimodal discourse of selected Corona Virus posters in Kenya.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The world today is faced with various epidemics which have introduced myriad of challenges. COVID-19 disease is the latest crisis with its attendant to health and language issues. With its emergence, COVID-19 introduced into the global linguistic repertoire a specialized form of discourse which manifested in the way government communicates to the public (Gerber et al., 2018). In Kenya, the Ministry of Health used posters among other communication initiatives as a preventive strategy to control the pandemic and deal with the risk factors associated with the pandemic. In attempt to achieve social behavior change the public, the ministry in collaboration with religious groups and civil society has created campaign posters with several messages on pandemic.

Despite the usage of poster in communication disseminating information of COVID-19, the process faces several obstacles. According to Baraza et al., (2020), one major obstacle is the issue of low literacy rates, particularly in rural and marginalized communities, which can hinder the comprehension and effectiveness of poster messages. Additionally, linguistic diversity across the country presents a challenge, as posters must be translated into multiple languages to ensure accessibility and relevance to diverse populations. Limited access to resources and infrastructure, especially in remote areas, further complicates the distribution and dissemination of posters, restricting their reach to vulnerable populations who may be most in need of critical information about COVID-19 prevention and response measures.

Moreover, the rapid evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and the emergence of new variants pose challenges in keeping poster content accurate and up to date (Hu and Luo, 2016). Given the dynamic nature of the situation, there is a need for constant monitoring and adaptation of poster messaging to reflect the latest developments and public health guidelines. Additionally, the proliferation of misinformation and rumors about COVID-19 circulating on social media platforms can undermine the credibility of poster campaigns and confuse the public. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes community engagement, collaboration with local stakeholders, and innovative strategies to ensure that poster campaigns effectively reach and resonate with diverse audiences across Kenya.

Despite the Ministry of Health's efforts to use posters as a preventive communication strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic, several challenges—such as low literacy rates, linguistic diversity, misinformation, and limited infrastructure—hinder their effectiveness. Existing studies inadequately address how these barriers impact poster-based communication, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. Moreover, there is insufficient research on the

adaptability of poster content to the dynamic nature of the pandemic, the role of community engagement in improving outreach, and the integration of innovative approaches to enhance message delivery and credibility. These gaps highlight the need for further exploration to develop inclusive, responsive, and effective communication strategies for diverse Kenyan populations. Thus the current study explored and explicates the multimodal discourse of COVID-19 posters, as a health communication strategy. The study analyzed the meaning of verbal and visual signs in COVID-19 posters. The study also interpreted the meaning of verbal and visual signs and the overall meanings these verbal and visual signs bring to bear on the COVID-19 Posters.

1.2 Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the proposed were to:

- i. Assess the multimodal structure of COVID 19 posters in Kenya.
- ii. Establish the semiotic choices adopted in COVID 19 posters in Kenya.
- iii. Explore how persuasive verbal and visual images, as the components of multimodality are used in COVID 19 posters in Kenya.
- iv. Explain the functions of multimodal metadiscourse in COVID 19 posters in Kenya.

1.3 Research Questions

- i. What is the role of multimodal structure of COVID 19 posters in Kenya?
- ii. What are the semiotic choices adopted in COVID 19 posters in Kenya?
- iii. How are persuasive verbal and visual images, as the components of multimodality, used in COVID 19 posters in Kenya?
- iv. What are the functions of multimodal metadiscourse in COVID 19 posters in Kenya?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.2 Social Semiotics Theory

This theory was formulated by was introduced by Michael Halliday (1978) in his book “Language as Social Semiotic”. The central theme of Social Semiotics Theory is meaning-making through semiotic resources within social and cultural contexts. According to Bezemer and Cowan (2022), this theory posits that communication is not solely about the transmission of information but also about how individuals and societies create and interpret meanings using signs and symbols. It emphasizes the interplay of different modes and how these are shaped by the cultural, historical, and situational contexts in which they are used.

Social Semiotics Theory has been criticized for its interpretive nature, which can lead to subjectivity in analysis. Critics argue that the theory lacks a standardized framework for evaluating multimodal elements, making it difficult to replicate or compare findings across studies (Djonov and Zhao, (2017). Additionally, some scholars contend that its heavy emphasis on context and culture may overshadow universal principles of communication, limiting its applicability in cross-cultural settings. Despite this weakness, Social Semiotics Theory has strength that it has an ability to capture the dynamic interplay between various modes of communication, such as text, visuals, and gestures. This makes it particularly suitable for analyzing complex, multimodal artifacts like posters. Its emphasis on context ensures that communication is analyzed within its cultural, historical, and social milieu, which is crucial for understanding how messages resonate with specific audiences (Yelle, 2021).

In analyzing COVID-19 posters in Kenya, Social Semiotics Theory provides a robust framework for understanding how visual and textual elements work together to convey health messages. The theory’s emphasis on cultural context allows the study to explore how Kenyan cultural symbols, languages, and values are integrated into the posters to enhance their relevance and impact.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Multimodal structure of COVID 19 posters

A study by Ngigi and Busolo (2018) focused on how persuasive language in mass media is an important tool for reaching and persuading people to adopt new and healthier lifestyles. Their research reveals how language is important in prevention of drug abuse and in other unhealthy behaviors. their study recognize that messages of campaigns such as the national institute on drug abuse's "cocaine: the big lie" campaign and the partnership for a drug-free America anti-drug campaign created a big impact on behavior change in terms prevention, treatment and even bring to halt the use of drug abuse. This study focused on how persuasive language and communication can stop and prevent the use of drug abuse. The proposed study focused on language on use of multimodal strategies to persuade masses on behavior change on posters.

Chou and Budenz (2020) maintain that there is need to consider the role of language as a primary factor in health communication. According to this study, language allows patients and care providers to make their intentions known, and that language is important in the crucial step of process of identifying a problem, investigating how long it has existed, exploring what meaning this problem may have, and setting in action a treatment strategy. Further the study acknowledged that in case problems in linguistic encoding interfere with this process, there may be important consequences. Therefore, language is fundamental in health communication and, as such, there is need to take serious consideration of how language impacts on the delivery of health services in Kenya. The study borrowed from Cameron and William roles of language in health communication.

2.2.2 Semiotic choices adopted in COVID 19 posters

Tambiah (2017) states that words are very powerful when it comes to influencing, altering and transforming the world we live in because language helps us to initiate, maintain and terminate our interpersonal relationships. The language enables us to communicate what we feel about ourselves and others. He adds that we use language to develop labels that enable us describe the world and our experiences and that the power of language in expressing our identities varies depending on the origin of the label and the topic of discussion. He goes further to report that human beings are more comfortable with the labels they use to describe their own identities but raised issues with labels placed on them by other people in the community especially if those other people give them labels that have negative connotations and are intentionally using such labels intentionally to contort meaning(s).

Van Leeuwen (2015) viewed Multimodality as a phenomenon rather than a theory. He argues that all kinds of discourse are said to be multimodal. Spoken discourse for instance characterizes the combination of language, intonation, voice quality, gestures, facial expressions and posture in addition to some aspects of self-representation such as dress and hairstyle. Written discourse on the other hand includes the combination of language, typographic expressions, illustration, layout and color (ibid). Van Leeuwen further argues that intensive scrutiny on multimodality is motivated by the belief that investigating different types of semiotic modes that occur in a given piece of discourse and looking at how these modes combine has the promise of deploying different ideologies and hidden beliefs.

2.2.3 Persuasive verbal and visual images

Vidgen, and Derczynski, (2020) report that even though language can be spread in all directions (when a person speaks), the receptions are directed. This means that sound(s) can be heard in all directions but the receiver is intended and s/he can tell from which direction the sounds of language came and thus decipher the intended meaning. These researchers also point out that language is open. This means that words can be used according to human needs to communicate our ideas, thoughts and feelings towards the object of discussion. Language is therefore used to communicate information about health.

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2.2.4 Functions of multimodal Metadiscourse in COVID 19 posters

Baraza et al., (2020) performed a discursive analysis of the interactive meaning in COVID-19 containment discourses in social media using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as its theoretical bases. The purpose of the study was to analyze interactive meaning is facilitated in linguistic and visual mode in 28 texts sampled from the Internet and WhatsApp groups. The findings revealed several thematic family issues ranging from poverty, strained couple relationships, spouse cheating, spousal phone swooping, couple dominance and power struggles among other issues. However, the current study is on campaign posters on Covid 19.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive research design, which deals with naturally occurring phenomena using data, which either may be collected first hand or may utilize an already existing data (Plano Clark, 2017). Kothari (2004) notes that the main purpose of descriptive research is to state the affairs as it exists. Descriptive research design is used to establish the existence of phenomena by explicitly describing them (Creswell, 2012).

3.2 Study Area

This was a desktop research that focused on primary data (COVID 19 posters). The geographical context of the study was Kenya, indicating that the research specifically examined how health information was communicated to the public through selected coronavirus posters in the Kenyan context. The study area involved the intersection of health communication, multimodal discourse analysis, and public health messaging with a regional emphasis on Kenya's response to the COVID-19 crisis.

3.3 Target Population

The target population for this study was Kenyan individuals who had seen or been exposed to the selected coronavirus posters. They included public health officials and communication professionals involved in designing and disseminating health information in Kenya and general public who may have encountered these posters during the COVID-19 posters during the in Kenya.

3.4 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Kothari (2004) defines a sample as a subset of elements or members selected from a population for scientific study. This research utilized two sampling techniques: purposive sampling and snowball sampling. According to Sebele-Mpofu (2021), qualitative samples are purposive, chosen based on their ability to provide rich, detailed information relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. Purposive sampling was employed to select COVID-19 posters that were particularly relevant to the study's objectives. A total of 30 posters were collected for analysis. Snowball sampling was also used, guided by the study's objectives to ensure that the collected data was comprehensive and aligned with the research focus. Fusch and Ness (2015) emphasize that data saturation is achieved when there is sufficient information to replicate the study, no new insights are being uncovered, and further coding becomes unnecessary. This principle informed the sampling strategy, ensuring that the data gathered was robust and adequate for the research.

3.5 Data Collection Methods and Procedures

The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources to collect information on the multimodality of COVID-19 posters. Primary data consisted of COVID-19 posters, while secondary data was gathered from newspapers and online sources. To capture visual data, the researcher used a digital camera to photograph relevant posters. The analysis involved a critical review of the COVID-19 posters using documentary tools and an observational checklist. These methods allowed for the systematic examination of visual and textual elements, enabling a detailed analysis of the multimodality features present in the posters. This data was essential for understanding the use of semiotic elements and their role in conveying critical public health messages.

3.6 Data Analysis

The study utilized qualitative content analysis to examine COVID-19 posters, employing the Visual Grammar paradigm by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006). The analysis identified semiotic modes, including linguistic and paralinguistic elements, and evaluated them through three metafunctions: representational, interactive, and compositional. The representational metafunction analyzed how the posters depicted reality through images and messages, the interactive metafunction assessed audience engagement through elements like gaze and language, and the compositional metafunction explored the arrangement of text and visuals to ensure coherence and reinforce messaging. This approach provided a detailed understanding of how multimodal features were employed to communicate public health information effectively.

3.7 Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

Badawy et al., (2018) defines validity as the accuracy and meaningfulness of interferences. To guarantee that the instruments were legitimate, the researcher analyzed posters on advertisements. The results of the pilot study from the documentary instrument were tested by discussing them with my peers and consulting the experts in the field of linguistics. These results were not included in the final findings of the study.

Reliability on the other hand is the ability of a research instrument to consistently measure characteristics of interest over time (George & Mallery, 2018). It is the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials. To measure reliability of the instrument, the test-retest technique was used to assess the reliability of the research instrument; the analysis was done twice at an interval of two weeks, to ascertain consistency of results.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

The proposed study upheld the ethics of research as required by the Mount Kenya University. The research applied for ERC permit and introductory letter from Mount Kenya University. This necessitated the application of National Commission for Research Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). The research also conducted the study with honesty and integrity. The works of other scholars were acknowledged accordingly so as to avoid plagiarism. Honesty was also strictly observed in data interpretation.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Multimodal Structure of COVID 19 Posters in Kenya

This sub-section is focused on the multimodal structure of COVID-19 posters in Kenya in health communication. In analysis, a total of six posters were selected for the analysis, and from all the selected posters were looked at the information's value, the framing, and connective of the elements, graphics, and the font size of the images found in the posters. In addition, how to achieve these elements was also analyzed as well as the functions of each element.

The basic element of COVID-19 posters was to spread information regarding covid-19 infections, and preventive measures. The multimodal structure was used to select the posters, used to communicate and serve different functions. Table 1 show the multimodal structure of the COVID-19 in Kenya while Plate 1 show multimodal structure of Covid 19 posters for government directive.

Table 1

Multimodal Structure of COVID 19 Posters in Kenya

Interactive Resources	Achieved through	Function
Textual and linguistic modes	Multilingual, positive reinforcement, directives.	The use of multiple languages to ensure the messages is accessible to a broad audience. Visual hierarchy.
Visual and graphic mode	universally recognized symbols Photographs and illustration	hand sanitizers, masks, social distancing markers to in reinforcing the textual information
Color Modes	Color coding, visual and visibility.	to convey different types of information
Institutional and Authoritative Modes	Logos and endorsement Official tone. WHO, and UNCEF, Amref	The presence of logos from government bodies, health organizations, and NGOs lends credibility to the poster's message.



Plate 1

Multimodal Structure of COVID 19 Posters for Government Directive

4.1.1 Visual and Graphic Elements

The poster in Figure 1 featured iconography using universally recognized symbols such as hand sanitizers, masks, and social distancing. These visual and graphic elements reinforced the textual messages by highlighting essential preventive measures. Additionally, bold borders, clear icons representing actions like wearing masks and getting vaccinated, and a central image of a diverse group of people maintaining safe distances were included. The graphic elements also incorporated visual representations of the virus, such as microscopic imagery, emphasizing the threat posed by COVID-19. These elements conveyed a sense of urgency and seriousness, encouraging viewers to take the message seriously and follow the recommended precautions. Furthermore, the use of symbols and icons made the poster accessible, transcending language barriers.

4.1.2 Color Modes

The color scheme used bright hues designed to capture the public's attention, while the layout remained simple and easy to understand at a glance. These graphic elements were intended to convey the message quickly and effectively, even from a distance, making the poster suitable for display in various public spaces. The expected impact of these graphic elements in health communication was to raise awareness, encourage behavior change, and foster a sense of unity and responsibility in adhering to COVID-19 safety guidelines.

4.2 Semiotic Choices Adopted in COVID 19 Posters in Kenya

Table 2

Semiotic Choices Adopted by COVID 19 Posters in Kenya for Health Communication

Interactive Resources	Achieved through	Function
Visual and images used	Symbols and empathetic imagery.	Larges enough to make the communication of the important information. Readability and understandable to all.
Color schemes	Red, yellow	It communicates warning, death
Typography	Simple language, clear and bold fonts, and hierarchy.	The essence of staying at home not to contract the disease and avoiding further spread of the disease.
Symbolism	Face mask, virus Icon	Health and avoiding the spreading of the disease.



Plate 2

Poster on the Semiotic Choices

4.2.1 Visual and Images Used

The visual images on the front present the element of readability and are understandable to all. The accompanying text “stay home” reinforces the message. By showcasing individuals of diverse backgrounds and ages adhering to mask-wearing protocols, the poster seeks to normalize and promote this essential preventive measure. The imagery is large enough to make the communication of the important information.

The visual element of the face mask used plays a crucial role in conveying the message effectively. The poster prominently features diverse individuals of different ages, genders, and cultural backgrounds wearing face masks in various settings, such as in public spaces, workplaces, and social gatherings. The use of visuals not only normalizes mask-wearing behavior but also highlights its universal applicability and relevance across different contexts. Additionally, close-up images of properly fitted masks and demonstrations of correct mask-wearing techniques educate viewers on the importance of wearing masks correctly to maximize their effectiveness in preventing the spread of

respiratory droplets. Through compelling visuals, the poster aims to reinforce the message that wearing face masks is a simple yet powerful measure to protect themselves and others from COVID-19.

Color schemes



Plate 3

Poster on Color Schemes

Color also presents the design and persuasiveness of the COVID-19 poster. The color presents the clarity of the message and emotional response regarding it. A striking color like red is for to show an urgent message such as "STAY HOME SAFE KENYA." The font such as bold creates a sense of immediate responses. These colors, for instance, "red," capture attention quickly and a sense of danger. Blue in the poster indicates trust and calmness, while green symbolizes safety, recovery, and positive outcomes. Moreover, the yellow color symbolizes caution to the public, which the COVID-19 poster communicates. The background color should provide sufficient contrast with the text to ensure readability, with white or light backgrounds often preferred for a clean and clear presentation. Additionally, the consistent use of a limited color palette helps to maintain a cohesive and professional look, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the poster in conveying its critical health messages.

4.2.2 Typography

Poster four shows that typography is vital in a persuasive COVID-19 poster, as it ensures readability, conveys urgency and captures the attention of the public. The function of the words creates an essence of staying at home not contracting the disease and avoiding further spread of the disease. The use of simple and clear language, "stay home" indicates a clear language of following a directive. Also, clean fonts such as Arial or Helvetica are used for body text to maintain clarity and readability, with adequate spacing enhancing comprehension. Effective typography establishes a hierarchy of information, guiding the reader through the message logically while evoking the necessary emotional response, making the poster not only visually appealing but also impactful in promoting public health guidelines.

4.3. Persuasive Verbal and Visual Images, as the Components of Multimodality are used in COVID 19 Posters in Kenya

Table 3

Components of Multimodality are used in COVID 19 Posters in Kenya

Interactive Resources	Achieved through	Function
Verbal images, Usage of verbs	Direct command/urgency and action orientated language, positive reinforcement and use of inclusive pronoun “WE”	Encouraging a prompt action. Showing disease and death Convey a sense of urgency and responsibility
Visual images	Clear symbol and icons, contrast and color, empathetic imagery.	Diverse people following the guidelines
Infographics and diagrams	Simple visual	Encourage protective behavior.
Emotional appeal	Images of family and vulnerable groups.	Emphasize on the importance of the loved ones. Together we can beat corona.



Plate 4

Poster Five Persuasive Verbal and Visual Images, as the Components of Multimodality are used in COVID 19 Posters in Kenya

4.3.1 Verbal Images, Usage of Verbs

Poster four has informative value, which lies in its ability to direct command and urgency, positive reinforcement effectively conveys important information, raises awareness, and educates the audience on a specific topic or issue. For instance “**STAY HOME SAVE KENYA**” is a government directive on staying home. A well-designed and informative poster serves as a visual communication tool that can capture attention, stimulate interest, and impart knowledge to viewers. Also, Encouraging prompt action the informative value of this poster lies in its ability to effectively communicate important messages, engage with diverse audiences, and promote understanding, awareness, and action on a variety of topics.

Positive reinforcement focuses on positive outcomes, “Save Kenya”. The use inclusive pronoun “WE” shows an emotional appeal encouraging members to unite as they fight the coronavirus. The use of the direct command “stay

home” provides clear and actionable instructions. The use of Urgency and action-oriented language “stay home” encourages a prompt action of staying at home.

The COVID-19 poster four has a verbal Kiswahili text #komesha corona to convey the message of the importance of effective hand washing. A prominent image of the coronavirus is displayed on the poster to attract the attention of readers and lead them to the following message. The large and clear text reads "Wash Your Hands," emphasizing the significance of this action in preventing the spread of COVID-19. Below this message, instructions on how to wash hands properly are provided in a simple and understandable manner, following the guidelines of the World Health Organization (WHO). This includes the duration of hand washing, the proper use of soap and water, and the importance of doing so regularly.

4.3.2 Visual Images

The objective of poster three above shows Clear symbols and icons is to educate the public about the importance of washing hands properly to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The prominent image and clear text capture attention and persuade people to pay attention to the message. By providing instructions on the correct steps for hand washing, this poster offers practical guidance that can help people protect themselves and others against COVID-19 infections. In doing so, the poster contributes to efforts to prevent the spread of the virus and safeguard the health of the community as a whole.

In poster three empathetic imagery shows images of diverse people following guidelines. The imagery of individuals from various backgrounds adhering to safety measures normalizes behavior and creates a relation to the actions to be done. For example, poster three provides guidelines on how people should sneeze; somebody with a mask shows the essence of the mask. There is also a picture of a safe distance of 2 meters apart. All these pictures show the need to follow guidelines for safety from coronavirus.

4.3.3 Infographics and Diagrams

Universal icons like hand washing symbols, masks, and social distancing markers are used to quickly convey complex messages without relying on text alone. These symbols in poster three are easily recognizable and help bridge language barriers. Visual cues such as exclamation marks, hazard triangles, or stop signs draw attention to important warnings or prohibitions. These visual elements communicate urgency and the need for immediate action.

Colors like red, which is often associated with danger or urgency, are used to highlight critical information, while green might be used to indicate safety or approval of certain behaviors. The strategic use of color helps guide the viewer’s emotional response and draws attention to the most important parts of the poster. Incorporating colors associated with Kenyan such as red, green, and white evokes a sense of national pride and collective effort, encouraging compliance with health guidelines.

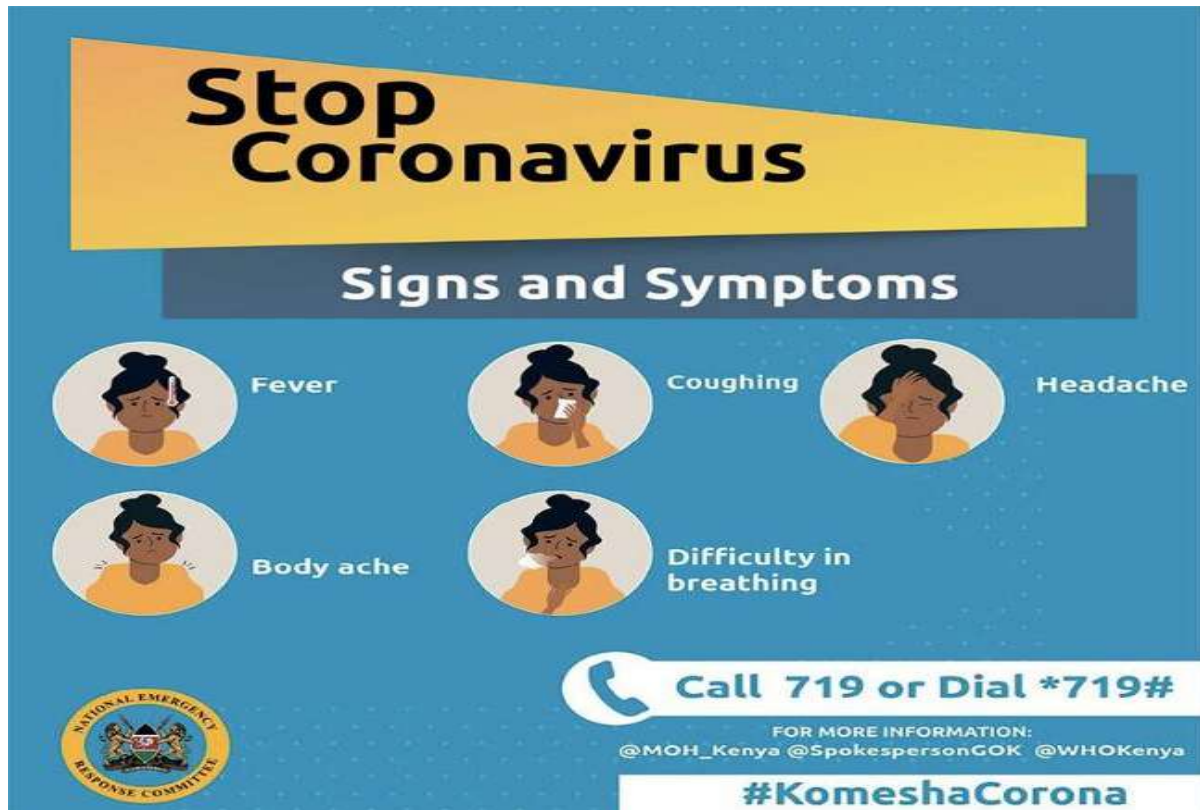
4.4 Functions of Multimodal Metadiscourse in COVID 19 Posters in Kenya

Table 4 below describes the Functions of multimodal metadiscourse in COVID-19 posters. The Functions of multimodal metadiscourse in COVID-19 posters range from information value, framing, connective elements graphic elements, and fonts.

Table 4

Functions of Multimodal Metadiscourse in COVID 19 Posters

Interactive resources	Achievement measures	Multimodal Metadiscourse function
Information Value	Wording and usage of persuasive language.	Identifying and emphasizing the most important findings
Framing	Defining the purpose of your poster.	Attracting attention, providing a context and influencing decision making
Connective Elements	Virtual continuity transitions and signpost, visual cues, and consistent messaging.	Enhancing visual flow, clarifying relationship, providing context, creating unity and facilitating comprehension.
Graphic Elements	Choose relevant graphics, balance text and graphics, plan your design and maintain consistence.	Enhance visual appeal, supporting persuasion, increasing memorability, and facilitating understandability.
Fonts	Establish hierarchy, ensure readability, pay attention to spacing and align the text properly.	Convey the tone and style, differentiation of textual element, adding visual interest and facilitate accessibility.

**Plate 5**

Poster Six on Functions of Multimodal Metadiscourse in COVID 19 Posters

4.4.1 Information Value

All the wording the writer uses is persuasive; this enables the reader to conceptualize them well, and hence healthy communication is achieved. For instance, in times of crisis, unity is our greatest strength. Let's stand together, shoulder to shoulder, in the fight against COVID-19. Our collective actions can make a significant difference in overcoming this challenge. By following the guidelines set forth by healthcare experts, we not only protect ourselves but also our loved ones and our community. Each precaution we take, whether wearing masks, practicing social distancing, or getting vaccinated, is a step towards a brighter and safer future for all. Let's show resilience, compassion, and determination as we navigate these uncertain times. Together, we can flatten the curve and emerge stronger on the other side.

Join the frontline of defense against COVID-19; your actions matter more than ever. By staying informed and adhering to safety protocols, you become a beacon of hope in your community. Let's prioritize health and safety above all because every life is precious. Together, we can save lives and protect the vulnerable. Let's be the example of resilience and solidarity that the world needs. Together, we can overcome any obstacle and emerge victorious against this pandemic. By using such persuasive language, the writer is interested in giving the reader an inner understanding that the disease of COVID-19 requires a collective responsibility for it to be overcome.

4.4.2 Connective Elements

The poster utilizes connective elements such as pictures showing the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 compelling imagery to grab attention and convey a sense of urgency. Visual cues like people wearing masks, maintaining distance, and getting vaccinated, foster a sense of collective responsibility and solidarity in the fight against COVID-19. By strategically framing the message with these connective elements, the poster aims to evoke empathy, inspire action, and encourage individuals to embrace preventative measures for the greater good. Its anticipated effect on health communication is to effectively disseminate crucial information, empower communities to make informed decisions, and ultimately mitigate the spread of the virus.

4.4.3 Graphic Elements

The poster utilizes imagery like clear icons representing preventative measures like masks and vaccines and perhaps a central image of a diverse group of people standing together while maintaining safe distances. Also, the layout is simple and easy to comprehend at a glance. These graphic elements are designed to convey the message quickly and effectively, even from a distance, making it suitable for display in various public spaces. The anticipated effect of these

graphic elements in health communication is to increase awareness, encourage behavior change, and foster a sense of unity and responsibility in adhering to COVID-19 safety guidelines.

Additionally, the graphic elements may include visual representations of the virus itself, such as microscopic imagery or stylized depictions, serving as a stark reminder of the threat posed by COVID-19. These elements evoke a sense of urgency and seriousness, prompting viewers to take the message seriously and heed the recommended precautions. Moreover, the use of symbols and icons helps transcend language barriers, making the poster accessible to diverse audiences. By incorporating these graphic elements thoughtfully, the poster seeks to not only inform but also emotionally resonate with viewers, compelling them to take proactive measures to protect themselves and their communities.

4.4.4 Fonts

The fonts chosen for the poster play a crucial role in conveying the tone and message effectively. Likely, the headline font is bold and attention-grabbing, with clean lines and ample spacing to ensure readability from a distance. This font choice helps draw the viewer's attention to the key message, such as "STOP THE SPREAD" or "PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS." Additionally, the use of fonts for body text ensures clarity and readability, even in smaller sizes. These fonts are typically modern and straightforward, allowing for easy comprehension of important details such as safety guidelines or contact information for resources. By selecting fonts that strike a balance between visibility and aesthetics, the poster ensures that the information is both accessible and visually appealing to a wide audience.

Furthermore, font variations may be employed to emphasize certain words or phrases, such as using italics for emphasis on critical points or employing different font weights to highlight key actions, like "Wear Masks" or "Get Vaccinated." The consistency in font choice throughout the poster maintains coherence and reinforces the overall message. Additionally, the size hierarchy of fonts helps guide the viewer's attention, with larger fonts reserved for headlines and important instructions, while smaller fonts are used for secondary information. Overall, the thoughtful selection and application of fonts in the poster contribute to its effectiveness in conveying vital information concisely and persuasively, ultimately empowering individuals to take proactive measures in combating COVID-19.

4.5 Discussions

Discussions of the findings based on the research objectives.

4.5.1 Assess the Multimodal Structure of COVID-19 Posters in Kenya

The findings reveal that the selected posters utilized a well-integrated multimodal structure to communicate health messages effectively. Textual elements, imagery, and design features were cohesively combined to emphasize preventive measures like hand washing, social distancing, and mask-wearing. This aligns with Gerbier et al. (2018), who emphasized the role of multimodal discourse in creating impactful health communication materials. The strategic use of bold fonts, vibrant colors, and culturally relevant symbols in the posters reflects a deliberate effort to attract attention and facilitate comprehension. These elements support Social Semiotics Theory, which highlights the importance of context and multimodality in audience interpretation and meaning-making.

4.5.2 Establish the Semiotic Choices Adopted in COVID-19 Posters in Kenya

The study highlights the strategic use of semiotic resources such as bold text for warnings, vibrant colors like red to signify urgency, and culturally resonant symbols like traditional Kenyan attire to foster trust and relatability. These choices underscore the posters' effort to connect with their audience emotionally and culturally, ensuring that the messages resonate with the local context. However, the findings also reveal limitations in inclusivity, as the posters primarily catered to urban audiences familiar with English and Swahili while neglecting vernacular languages spoken in rural areas. This supports the findings of Al-Masri (2016), who emphasized the importance of context in understanding visual communication.

4.5.3 Explore the Use of Persuasive Verbal and Visual Images in COVID-19 Posters in Kenya

The posters effectively combined persuasive verbal and visual elements to emphasize urgency and drive behavior change. For example, the use of bold, directive text paired with culturally familiar imagery created a sense of immediacy and trust. However, some posters suffered from overly complex visuals and crowded designs, which increased cognitive load and hindered comprehension, particularly among audiences with lower literacy levels. These challenges resonate with Baraza et al. (2020), who found that socio-economic and cognitive barriers can affect the accessibility of communication.

4.3.4 Explain the Functions of Multimodal Metadiscourse in COVID-19 Posters in Kenya

The findings underscore the importance of multimodal metadiscourse in guiding audience interpretation and interaction with the posters. Elements like bold headings, clear layout designs, and culturally familiar imagery served to organize information and highlight critical messages. However, the study also identifies gaps in accessibility, as the reliance on complex visuals and limited linguistic adaptation reduced the effectiveness of these multimodal elements for diverse audiences. Simplified messaging and greater adaptation to cultural and linguistic diversity could enhance the impact of multimodal metadiscourse in reaching marginalized populations.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The study make the following conclusions, the multimodal approach, is a significant element in COVID-19 posters raises awareness, promotes preventive behaviors, and influences viewer attitudes and behaviors related to the pandemic. The study highlights the use of symbols, icons, illustrations, and photographs to communicate key messages about prevention, symptoms, and protective measures, as well as the strategic use of linguistic features such as imperative verbs and direct commands to prompt specific actions. Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of contextual cues, credibility markers, and persuasive techniques in enhancing the effectiveness of COVID-19 posters in shaping public perceptions and behaviors.

Further the usage of different posters in health communication regarding COVID-19 provides a comprehensive approach to disseminating crucial information, raising awareness, and promoting preventive measures within communities. The use of imperative verbs “where, wash, get vaccinated” instructs readers on the specific actions to take. The inclusion of (get vaccinated) emphasizes the importance of vaccination as a key preventive measure.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study on COVID-19 posters, several recommendations can be made to enhance the effectiveness of future communication efforts related to the pandemic:

The COVID-19 posters should be tailored to the cultural norms, values, and preferences of the target audience to ensure relevance and resonance. Consider linguistic diversity and cultural nuances when selecting language, symbols, and imagery to maximize accessibility and engagement.

Further, the study recommends the promotion of literacy, where the design of COVID-19 posters should have clear and concise messaging that is easily understandable by individuals with varying levels of health literacy. Use plain language, simple visuals, and concrete examples to convey key information about prevention, symptoms, and protective measures.

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