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Attitudinal Resources in the Process of Persuasion in the Saudi Minister of Health's Statements during COVID-19

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Abstract

This analytical study aims to investigate the influence of evaluative language on the persuasive process in the Saudi Minister of Health's statements during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the effect of positive and negative attitudes. The analysis was conducted on a statement dated April 7, 2020, employing Martin and White's appraisal theory derived from Halliday's systemic functional linguistics framework. A mixed-methods approach was employed: the quantitative analysis gave the frequencies and percentages of the three subsystems of attitude resources and positive and negative resources in each, and the qualitative analysis explored and commented on the functions and processes of each subtype of attitude. The findings indicate that the Minister relied his persuasion on various attitude resources, with the affect subsystem being the most influential, followed by judgment and then appreciation. Furthermore, the results show that he based his persuasion on negative attitudes, proving that negative is more persuasive than positive.

Keywords: Attitudinal Resources, Persuasion, the Statement, COVID-19, Saudi Arabia.

1. Introduction

On December 31, 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) was notified of cases of pneumonia of unknown etiology in Wuhan City, China. On January 7, 2020, Chinese authorities identified the cause as the novel coronavirus (nCoV), which was temporarily named "2019-nCoV" (COVID-19). On March 11, 2020, the dramatic increase in cases outside China prompted the WHO Director-General to announce that the outbreak was characterized as a pandemic. Over 118,000 cases were recorded in 114 countries, with 4291 fatalities (World Health Organization 2020).

The Ministry of Health of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (hereinafter referred to as "the Kingdom" or "Saudi Arabia") confirmed the first case on March 2, 2020. The Kingdom had the highest number of confirmed cases among Arab states in the following months and imposed a curfew on March 23, 2020, which extended until June 21, 2020. During this time, the Minister of Health, Tawfig F. AlRabiah (hereinafter referred to as "AlRabiah," "the Saudi Minister of Health," or "the Minister"), issued many statements to educate individuals on the dangers and spread of the disease and the importance of public

cooperation with the Ministry of Health. The Minister called on the public to take necessary measures to curb the spread of the virus. He made one of the most influential and persuasive statements on April 7, 2020, in which he described the gravity of the situation and emphasized the importance of taking the necessary precautions to prevent the spread of this disease, at least until the situation was under control. Evidently, the Minister deployed effective persuasion strategies in this statement.

Persuasion is an overarching term for influence, impacting a person's beliefs, attitudes, intentions, motivations, and behaviors (Gass and Seiter 2018). Given that persuasion operates through the semantics of evaluation, it seems logical to employ appraisal theory (Dvorak 2021), a discourse analysis paradigm designed to analyze evaluation (Scherer, Schorr, and Johnstone 2001). The appraisal system comprises three subsystems: attitude, engagement, and graduation. Attitude is the broad system responsible for appraisal, including emotional reactions, social judgments, and aesthetic evaluations (Hart 2014). The semantic system of engagement deals with the interpersonal negotiation of the sources of attitudes; it responds to the social dialogic perspective developed by White (2000). Attitude and engagement "allow speakers to express (inter)subjective positions of various kinds" (Hart 2014, 56). Graduation is a third modulating system concerned with grading attitude (Martin and White 2005).

This study focused on the role of attitudinal resources in persuasion in COVID-19 statements, according to two dimensions: type and polarity. Type enables access to attitude choices, such as affect, judgment, and appreciation, and polarity intuitively classifies instances of attitude as either positive or negative.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Using the appraisal framework, studies (e.g., Hood 2006) have extensively demonstrated the influence of evaluative language on persuasion techniques. However, only a handful of studies (e.g., Almutairi 2019) have explored the influence of evaluative language, focusing on the effects of positive and negative attitudes on persuasion techniques. Other studies (e.g., Rozin and Royzman 2001; Allen and Burrell 2002; Meffert et al. 2006) have demonstrated that negative information attracts more attention and is more persuasive than positive information.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, few studies, if any, have examined the influence of evaluative language on the persuasive process in COVID-19 statements, which is crucial for convincing people to engage in particular health habits to avoid the spread of COVID-19 and mitigate its adverse consequences. Therefore, aiming to bridge that gap, this study explored the role of evaluative language in the process of persuasion in AlRabiah's statement on April 7, 2020, regarding the curfew to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus (hereinafter referred to as "the statement"), with an emphasis on the influence of positive and negative attitudes on persuasion strategies.

1.2 Aim and Research Question

This study aims to address the "substantial lack of knowledge about some important aspects of the relationship between language and persuasion" (Hosman 2002, 385) by conceptualizing discourse as a productive force that shapes convictions, thoughts, ideas, beliefs, values, identities, and behaviors.

Specifically, it highlights how attitudinal resources were employed to argue for or against a notion by asking the following research question: "What role did attitudinal resources play in the process of persuasion in the Minister of Health's statements on curfew during the COVID-19 pandemic in Saudi Arabia?"

The findings of this analysis extended the validity of Martin and White's appraisal theory to evaluate persuasive language in COVID-19 statements.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical and Analytical Framework

Fairclough (1989) distinguished between text and discourse, arguing that text is a product form, whereas discourse is a social interaction process of which text is a part. Discourse plays a significant role in contemporary social sciences (Howarth 2000). Howarth states that although it originated in disciplines such as linguistics and semiotics, discourse analysis has been utilized in numerous human and social science branches. Furthermore, a critical discourse analysis (CDA) school has emerged (Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000). CDA is not a method of discourse analysis; rather, it is "a shared perspective on doing linguistic, semiotic or discourse analysis" (van Dijk 1993, 131). According to Fairclough (1995), CDA is an interdisciplinary approach to studying discourse, considering language a form of social practice.

Research on CDA has necessitated a technique rooted in a functional linguistic paradigm (Koller 2020). As SFL links structure to communicative function, it has been proven "an effective tool for critical discourse analysis as well as for the field of literature" (Omari, Harchaoui, and Dagamseh 2020, 322). Thus, SFL is a foundation for several studies examining various discourse domains (Koller 2020). The SFL theory of Halliday (1985) seeks to define a system of choices available to language users in three meta-functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual.

This study focuses on the interpersonal meta-function of language, particularly appraisal. The appraisal framework originated from research on narratives and secondary school and media discourses (Martin 1995; Martin and Plum 1997; Martin and Veel 1998). Appraisal is located above lexico-grammar in discourse semantics stratification hierarchy and is primarily concerned with "gradable" lexis. It may be considered "a grading system, a cline from negative to positive" (Thornbury and Slade 2006, 69). Martin and White (2005) classified evaluative meaning into three critical subsystems: attitude, engagement, and graduation. Attitude, which is the focus of this study, concerns the linguistic resources for evaluating people, including ourselves and things, and divides them into three subtypes: affect, judgment, and appreciation. Affect refers to the evaluations of our internal mental states through feelings and emotions (Hart 2014). The affect system includes three categories: happiness, security, and satisfaction. Speakers express moral judgments of other individuals and their characters and behaviors through the judgment system, which comprises social esteem and sanction (Martin and White 2005). Appreciation enables speakers to evaluate objects and processes aesthetically and is divided into reaction, valuation, and composition (Martin and White 2005). Judgment and appreciation can be considered *recontextualizations* of affect (Martin 2000).

2.2 Previous Studies

Through the lens of the appraisal framework, extensive studies demonstrated the influence of evaluative language on persuasion techniques in discourse. One of the most relevant studies is that of Hood (2006), which investigated the effect of evaluative language on persuasion processes in the online debate text (ODT). Hood stated that by the frequent reliance on appreciation rather than affect and judgment, the ODT debaters attempt to sound more appreciative and persuasive than personal and emotional. Moreover, other studies explored the influence of evaluative language, focusing on the effects of positive and negative attitudes on persuasion techniques. Almutairi's (2019) study, for instance, examined the distributional patterns of appraisal choices and co-choices in a corpus of widely viewed online debate texts (ODT) using the appraisal framework from SFL. The textual portions of the corpus were classified into two broad groups based on the vote results of each: more persuasive and less persuasive debaters. Almutairi discovered that while the more persuasive debaters often use negative attitudes to persuade, the less persuasive debaters prefer positive ones.

Notably, individuals may appraise inner states positively or negatively (Kelly et al. 2012). The more persuasive discourse effectively exploits what is known in psychology and communication as the negativity bias or negativity effect (Steiner 1979). Negativity bias was first documented by Rozin and Royzman (2001), who hypothesized that "negative information attracts more attention than positive information, and it is more likely to be selected" (Meffert et al. 2006, 29). Almutairi (2019) also argued that bad is stronger than good because "bad emotions … impressions…are quicker to form and more resistant to disconfirmation than good ones" (Baumeister, et al. 2001, 323). In this vein, Allen and Burrell (2002) indicated that negative information produces a more significant effect on opinion formation when compared to positive information. However, Rozin and Royzman (2001) asserted that even when the persuasive stance involves a combination of positive and negative evaluations, the negative predominates and tends to "yield evaluations that are more negative" (296). Nevertheless, Pratto and John (1991) demonstrated that the influence of the negative on audience perception is automatic and unconscious.

Although the reports on the role of evaluative language in persuasion have been the focus of some recent studies, no study integrated negativity bias with appraisal theory to analyze the persuasive process underpinning COVID-19 statements. Therefore, aiming to bridge that gap, this study investigated how evaluative language in COVID-19 statements plays a significant role in the process of persuasion, with an emphasis on the effect of positive and negative attitudes.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

The spoken statement of the Saudi Minister of Health, dated April 7, 2020, was derived from CGCSaudi Twitter account, which is a social media outlet with a significant influence on the public of Saudi Arabia.[1] This 7:59-minute statement attracted considerable attention, which can be attributed to AlRabiah's propensity to employ effective persuasion strategies. The statement was crucial in handling the outbreak and spread of COVID-19 and had a marked effect on individuals, and it helped raise

awareness by highlighting the destructive consequences of ignoring the necessary precautionary measures. Hence, the aforementioned statement served as a representative purposive sample in this study. The sample was sufficient for the aims of this study, particularly considering that the amount of data depends on the aims and the timescale of the research, as well as the appropriateness of the research questions and the depth of the analysis (Philips and Hardy 2002).

3.2 Data Analysis

The selected statement was accurately transcribed and translated into English by a researcher and rechecked by a professional bilingual expert who has critical linguistic knowledge in "tackling both the surface and underlying relations of language" (Akan and Karim 2019, 58). The original and translated transcripts were broken into clauses and then carefully and frequently read "to allow a deep understanding of both the semantic and discourse meanings" (Alshakhanbeh and Alghazo 2022, 267). Subsequently, following Martin and White's (2005) method of the appraisal system, the translated transcripts were manually analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively.

The quantitative analysis comprised statistical calculations of the frequencies and percentages of the three attitude types, focusing on the positive and negative features. The data were then tabulated to represent the frequencies and percentages visually. Subsequently, a qualitative analysis was conducted based on the quantitative data to explore and comment on the functions and processes of these patterns. Specifically, the qualitative analysis examined the recurrent patterns in speakers' evaluative choices that may play an essential role in the persuasive process. The results were reflected to determine the function and significance of the language used, and the analysis was evaluated concerning the broader framework established earlier to draw conclusions that answer the research question.

4. Results

4.1 Quantitative Findings: Analysis of Attitude Resources in the Statement

As shown in Table 1, the statement contained 46 attitude resources. The affect subsystem was the most significant attitudinal resource subsystem, with 21 different types of affect items accounting for 45.6% of the total. Judgment ranked second, with 13 resources, accounting for 28.3% of the total. Appreciation ranked third, with 12 resources, accounting for 26.1% of the total.

Table 1: The distribution of attitude types

Attitude-type	Number	Percentage
Affect	21	45.6
Judgment	13	28.3
Appreciation	12	26.1
Total	46	100

As shown in Table 2, the polarity of attitudes indicated that positive attitudes (21 or 45.6%) were less prevalent than negative attitudes (25 or 54.4%). The distribution and frequency of attitude polarity may suggest that the Minister of Health influenced individuals using negative instantiations.

Table 2: The distribution of attitude polarity

Attitude polarity	Number	Percentage
Positive	21	45.6
Negative	25	54.4
Total	46	100

The examination of each subsystem of attitude resources in the statement is critical. Therefore, this study analyzed each subsystem.

4.1.1 Affect

The statement contained 21 types of affect resources, with 17 negative ones accounting for the majority (80.9%), and four positive ones accounting for 19.1%. All three subsystems were involved; happiness, security, and satisfaction accounted for 14.3%, 66.7%, and 19.0%, respectively (see Table 3).

Table 3: The distribution of affect resources

Affect	Positive		Negative		Total	Percentage
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage		
Happiness	0	0.0	3	14.3	3	14.3
Security	4	19.1	10	47.6	14	66.7
Satisfaction	0	0.0	4	19.0	4	19.0
Total	4	19.1	17	80.9	21	100

4.1.2 Judgment

The statement contained 13 types of judgment resources, with nine positive ones (69.2%) and four negative resources (30.8%). Both subsystems were involved, with social esteem and sanction accounting for 61.5% and 38.5%, respectively (see Table 4).

Table 4: The distribution of judgment resources

Judgment	Positive		Negative		Total	Percentage
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage		
Social esteem	7	53.8	1	7.7	8	61.5
Social sanction	2	15.4	3	23.1	5	38.5
Total	9	69.2	4	30.8	13	100

4.1.3 Appreciation

The statement contained 12 appreciation resources, with eight positive ones (66.7%) and four negative ones (33.3%). Reaction and composition were the most common, accounting for 41.7% of the total, with a significant polarity difference. However, valuation accounted for 16.6% of the total (see Table 5).

Table 5: The distribution of appreciation resources

Appreciation	Positive		Negative		Total	Percentage
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage		
Reaction	2	16.7	3	25.0	5	41.7
Valuation	2	16.7	0	0.0	2	16.6
Composition	4	33.3	1	8.3	5	41.7
Total	8	66.7	4	33.3	12	100

4.2 Qualitative Findings: Functions of Attitudinal Resources

4.2.1 Affect

The clauses presented below (Examples 1–10) are categorized as affect, which enables speakers to discuss many types of emotions. Categories in the affect system included happiness, security, and satisfaction.

4.2.1.1 Happiness

According to Hart (2014), "Happiness concerns moods construed broadly as feelings of happiness or sadness" (47). The following instances of negative language reflect the Minister's sadness:

<div dir="rtl">

1. لكن، اسمحوا لي أن أتحدث معكم بكل شفافية وإن كانت <u>مؤلمة</u>.

</div>

1. However, let me speak with you in full transparency, even if it is <u>painful</u> [-Affect: Happiness].

<div dir="rtl">

2. ومع كل هذا الدعم غير المحدود من الدولة لمكافحة هذه الجائحة إلا أن هُناك <u>مشكلتينِ</u> تواجهنا.

</div>

2. Despite all this unlimited support from the Kingdom to combat this pandemic, there are <u>two problems</u> facing us [-Affect: Happiness].

Negative choices such as "painful" and "problems facing us," were used to demonstrate the severity of the pandemic and how it might exacerbate the current state, making the public apprehensive of the disease. Furthermore, to persuade the public of the significance of preventive measures, the Minister stated that the Kingdom and the Ministry had made every effort to combat the pandemic. However, there are two significant problems: the insufficient supply of medical equipment on worldwide markets and the lack of commitment by some to preventive measures. Negative language was used to refer to these problems and emphasize the situation's gravity.

4.2.1.2 Security

According to Hart (2014), "Security concerns feelings of peace and anxiety" (47). The following analysis reveals how the Minister's negative lexico-grammatical choices reflect his anxiousness:

<div dir="rtl">

3. المرحلة المقبلة سوف تكون <u>أكثر صعوبةً</u> على المستوى العالمي.

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3. The next stage will be <u>more difficult</u> at the global level [-Affect: Security].

<div dir="rtl">

4. وبالرغم من <u>التطورات المتسارعة في انتشار هذه الجائحة</u>، فإن قيادة بلدنا –رعاها الله- كانت سبّاقة عالميًا في اتخاذ إجراءات احترازية صارمة قبل أن تبدأ كثير من دول العالم اتخاذ أي إجراءات وقائية.

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4. Despite <u>the rapid developments in the spread of this pandemic</u>, the leadership of our country—may Allah protect them—was globally proactive in taking strict precautionary measures before many countries of the world began to take any precautionary measures [-Affect: Security].

<div dir="rtl">

5. إن التوقعات في قادم الأيام <u>لا تشير بأن أرقام الإصابات في تناقص</u>.

</div>

5. The expectations in the coming days <u>do not indicate that the number of cases is decreasing</u> [-Affect: Security].

<div dir="rtl">

6. عدم توافر معروضٍ كافٍ في الأسواق العالمية من الأجهزة والمستلزمات الطبية يلبي جميع احتياجاتنا المستقبلية في حال ارتفاع الإصابات بشكل كبير.

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6. <u>Lack of sufficient supply</u> in the global markets of medical devices and supplies to meet all our future needs in the event of a significant increase in cases [-Affect: Security].

<div dir="rtl">

7. فما يمر على العالم أجمع هو جائحة بكل ما تعني الكلمة من معنى.

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7. <u>The whole world is facing a pandemic</u> in the full sense of the word [-Affect: Security].

The Minister of Health outlined the painful reality facing the country and the world, stating that the next COVID-19 pandemic wave would be the most difficult globally. The Minister used a significant number of negative instantiations of security to persuade individuals to take all precautionary measures, underlining the undesirable consequences of the spread of COVID-19 and asserting that a tight commitment would provide security. In contrast, he stated that individuals would lack security if they did not follow these requests, as this would dramatically increase the number of cases.

4.2.1.3 Satisfaction

According to Hart (2014) "Satisfaction concerns feelings of achievement and frustration" (47-48). Below are some of the negative lexico-grammatical choices employed to express dissatisfaction with the situation:

<div dir="rtl">

8. البعض من أفراد المجتمع لم يطبق شعار "كلنا مسؤول" ولم يأخذوا التعامل مع خطورة الوباء بالجدية الكافية.

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8. Some members of society <u>did not implement the slogan "We are all responsible"</u> and <u>did not deal with the severity of the epidemic seriously enough</u> [-Affect: Satisfaction].

<div dir="rtl">

9. كما أنهم لم يلتزموا بما يصدر من تحذيرات تشدد على خطورة المخالطة والتجمعات.

</div>

9. They also <u>did not abide by the warnings issued</u>, stressing the risk of contact and gatherings [-Affect: Satisfaction].

<div dir="rtl">

10. أن تهاون البعض من أفراد المجتمع بالالتزامات والإجراءات الاحترازية قد يؤدي إلى وصول أعداد المصابين كما أكدت الدراسات، إلى مستوى لا يستطيع القطاع الصحي مواجهته.

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10. The <u>negligence of precautionary commitments and measures by some members of society</u> may lead to the number of infected individuals reaching, as confirmed by the studies, a level that the health sector cannot address [-Affect: Satisfaction].

Specifically, this dissatisfaction was aimed at specific people, who did not take the matter of the pandemic seriously and were not adhering to the precautionary measures, resulting in the spread of the disease. The dissatisfaction of the Minister prepared the audience to accept the application of precautionary measures, such as curfews forced on the populace.

4.2.2 Judgment

Examples 11–20 contain judgment resources, that is, resources that connect one's attitudes and behavior, including social esteem and social sanction.

4.2.2.1 Social Esteem

According to Martin and White (2005), sub-categories of social esteem include normality, which concerns how special someone is; capacity, which concerns how capable someone is; and tenacity, which concerns how resolute someone is. The examples below demonstrate this:

١١. وباعتبارنا جزء من هذا العالم الذي يبذل جهودًا وإجراءات غير مسبوقة لمكافحة جائحة كورونا.

11. Since we are a part of this world that is making unprecedented efforts and measures to combat the Corona pandemic [+Judgment: Social esteem: Normality].

١٢. فإن قيادة بلدنا –رعاها الله- كانت سبّاقة عالميًا في اتخاذ إجراءات احترازية صارمة قبل أن تبدأ كثير من دول العالم اتخاذ أي إجراءات وقائية.

12. The leadership of our country—may Allah protect them—was globally proactive in taking strict precautionary measures before many countries of the world began to take any precautionary measures [+Judgment: Social esteem: Normality].

Positive instantiation of social esteem was cited to show gratitude for the global community's efforts to fight COVID-19, especially Saudi Arabia's efforts, which have been "globally proactive in taking strict precautionary measures."

١٣. الدولة أعزها الله لم تقصر إطلاقًا في تلبية جميع الميزانيات المرفوعة لها من قبل وزارة الصحة.

13. The Kingdom never fails to approve all budgets submitted thereto by the Ministry of Health [+Judgment: Social esteem: Capacity].

١٤. وبعد أن تم اعتماد مبلغ ثمانية مليار ريال من بداية انتشار الفيروس فقد صدرت الموافقة الكريمة على ما رفعه سمو ولي العهد حفظه الله، بعد اجتماع عُقد مساء أمس من خلال دوائر الاتصال المرئي على تخصيص مبلغ سبعة مليار إضافية ليكون ما تم اعتماده حتى تاريخه خمسة عشر مليار ريال.

14. After an amount of SR eight billion was approved since the beginning of the spread of the virus, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques has approved SR 7 billion additional allocation submitted by HRH, the Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister, following a meeting held yesterday evening via a virtual network, bringing the total amount of the financial support since the beginning of the COVID-19 spread to SR 15 billion [+Judgment: Social esteem: Capacity].

١٥. ومع كل هذا الدعم غير المحدود من الدولة لمكافحة هذه الجائحة إلا أن هُناك مشكلتين تواجهنا.

15. Despite all this unlimited support from the Kingdom to combat this pandemic, there are two problems facing us [+Judgment: Social esteem: Capacity].

Furthermore, the Minister used positive instantiation of social esteem to demonstrate how capably Saudi Arabia tackled the virus, citing its efforts as "unprecedented," as it supplied the Ministry with the necessary funding.

4.2.2.2 Social Sanction

According to Martin and White (2005), sub-categories of social sanction include veracity, which concerns how truthful someone is; and propriety, which concerns how ethical someone is. This can be seen in the following statements:

١٦. كما تعاملت الدولة مع هذه الأزمة بمنتهى الشفافية والوضوح ليكون المواطن على علم واطلاع بآخر المستجدات.

16. The Kingdom has also dealt with this crisis <u>with the utmost transparency and clarity</u> so that citizens would be aware and informed of the latest developments [+Judgment: Social sanction: Veracity].

١٧. وبمبدأ الشفافية التي نحن ملتزمون بها أشارككم نتائج أربع دراسات مختلفة قام عليها خبراء سعوديون ودوليون متخصصون في مجال الأوبئة.

17. <u>Based on the principle of transparency</u> to which we are committed, I share with you the results of four different studies conducted by Saudi and international experts specialized in the field of epidemiology [+Judgment: Social sanction: Veracity].

١٨. البعض من أفراد المجتمع لم يطبق شعار "كلنا مسؤول."

18. Some members of society <u>did not implement the slogan</u> "We are all responsible"
[-Judgment: Social sanction: Propriety].

١٩. ولم يأخذوا التعامل مع خطورة الوباء بالجدية الكافية.

19. They <u>did not deal with the severity of the epidemic seriously enough</u> [-Judgment: Social sanction: Propriety].

٢٠. كما أنهم لم يلتزموا بما يصدر من تحذيرات تشدد على خطورة المخالطة والتجمعات.

20. They also <u>did not abide by the warnings issued</u>, stressing the risk of contact and gatherings [-Judgment: Social sanction: Propriety].

The positive instantiations of social sanctions were used to emphasize the importance of transparency and the need to be informed about the most recent developments, which reflected the openness and transparency of the Ministry of Health in sharing information about the pandemic. Moreover, a focus on transparency caused individuals to anticipate releasing negative information. Subsequently, the Minister used negative instantiations to deliver the painful news that the number of COVID-19 cases was continually increasing due to the indifference of some individuals.

4.2.3 Appreciation

The clauses below (Examples 21–30) belong to the appreciation category, allowing speakers to evaluate things and processes. Appreciation is divided into reaction, valuation, and composition.

4.2.3.1 Reaction

Reaction is an "expression of quality or effect" (Hart 2014, 51). The following used both positive and negative expressions:

٢١. حيث نقف اليوم أمام لحظة حاسمة في رفع استشعارنا للمسؤولية.

21. We face today a <u>defining moment</u> in raising our awareness [-Appreciation: Reaction].

22. وبالرغم من <u>الاحتياجات المالية الكبيرة</u> التي تتطلبها جهود مكافحة هذه الجائحة فإن الدولة أعزها الله لم تقصر إطلاقًا في تلبية جميع الميزانيات المرفوعة لها من قبل وزارة الصحة.

22. Despite <u>the great financial needs</u> required by the efforts to combat this pandemic, the Kingdom never fails to approve all budgets submitted thereto by the Ministry of Health [-Appreciation: Reaction].

Using negative reaction choices, the Minister clarified the terrible times the individuals would experience, which would significantly impact the economy and health.

23. بما يتيح للوزارة مزيداً من الوقت لتوفير <u>أكبر قدر ممكن من أجهزة التنفس الصناعي</u> وغيرها من الأجهزة والمستلزمات الطبية الضرورية.

23. Giving the Ministry more time to provide <u>the largest possible number of respirators</u> and other necessary medical equipment and supplies [+Appreciation: Reaction].

24. فكلما قللنا أعداد الإصابات لأطول فترة زمنية ممكنة؛ كلما تمكنا من الاستفادة من آخر العلاجات أو اللقاحات التي <u>يثبت فائدتها طبيًا لعلاج أو حماية المواطنين والمقيمين.</u>

24. The more we reduce the number of infections for the longest possible period, the more we can benefit from the latest treatments or vaccines that are <u>medically proven to be useful in treating or protecting the citizens and residents</u> [+Appreciation: Reaction].

Conversely, positive reaction choices in statements such as "[providing] the largest possible number of respirators" and "the latest treatments or vaccines" offered optimism regarding the pandemic.

4.2.3.2 Valuation

Valuation is "expressions of value and uniqueness" (Hart 2014, 51). The following analysis reveals how the Minister's positive lexico-grammatical choices reflected his appreciation of the government:

25. وأشير هنا إلى أن <u>الأمر الملكي الكريم</u> بمنع التجول في المساء تمت الموافقة عليه بطلب من وزارة الصحة سعيًا لتقليل الحركة وتقليل الاختلاط، وكذلك تخفيف التجمعات إلى حدها الأدنى.

25. I want to refer to <u>the honorable royal order</u> imposing night curfews that were approved at the Ministry of Health's request to reduce movement and contact and decrease gatherings to a minimum [+Appreciation: Valuation].

26. تهدف هذه <u>الموافقة الملكية</u> لرفع جاهزية القطاع الصحي لتأمين الأدوية، ولتشغيل الأسِرَة الإضافية، وشراء الاحتياجات الطبية والمستلزمات الصحية.

26. This <u>royal approval</u> aims to raise the health sector's readiness to secure medicines, operate additional beds, and provide medical equipment and health supplies [+Appreciation: Valuation].

Here, the Minister referred to royal concerns using a positive instance of valuation, such as "honorable royal order" and "royal approval."

4.2.3.3 Composition

Composition is the "expressions of balance, complexity, and functionality" (Hart 2014, 51). Both positive and negative compositions were used in the speech:

27. أبدأ معي كلمتي بما صارحكم به خادم الحرمين الشريفين –حفظه الله- في كلمته الضافية بأن المرحلة المقبلة سوف تكون أكثر صعوبةً على المستوى العالمي.

27. I begin with the statement made by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques—may Allah protect him—to you in his extensive speech that the next stage will be more difficult at the global level [+Appreciation: Composition].

28. فإن قيادة بلدنا –رعاها الله- كانت سبّاقة عالمياً في اتخاذ إجراءات احترازية صارمة قبل أن تبدأ كثير من دول العالم اتخاذ أي إجراءات وقائية.

28. The leadership of our country—may Allah protect them—was globally proactive in taking strict precautionary measures before many countries of the world began to take any precautionary measures [+Appreciation: Composition].

29. وآمل من إخواني وأخواتي المواطنين والمقيمين مساعدتنا في تنفيذ الإجراءات المطلوبة بدقةٍ كاملة وعلى أكبر قدر من المسؤولية.

29. I hope my dear citizens and residents will help us implement the required procedures with perfect accuracy and the greatest responsibility [+Appreciation: Composition].

30. إن عدم الالتزام سيؤدي إلى ارتفاع هائل في أعداد الإصابات.

30. The lack of commitment will lead to a huge increase in the number of cases [-Appreciation: Composition].

At the beginning of his statement, the Minister of Health praised the speech of the King of Saudi Arabia as being "extensive," demonstrating a high appreciation for the king's words and using them to highlight that the next phase of the COVID-19 pandemic would be the most difficult globally. Furthermore, this reflected that the fight against COVID-19 was not the responsibility of a single nation, and no nation could abstain from its efforts; only by working together and concerted efforts could the fight against COVID-19 be won. Therefore, as the Minister of Health stated, Saudi Arabia took the necessary "precautionary measures" before many other nations, resulting in the pandemic being mainly under control in Saudi Arabia. The most crucial of these measures was the suspension of Umrah and prayers in mosques, halting of domestic and international flights, cessation of attendance at workplaces, and interruption of study.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis of this study showed that the Saudi Minister of Health's statement based its persuasion on several attitude resources. The affect subsystem was the most used, followed by judgment and appreciation. This contradicted Hood's (2006) argument that less persuasive debaters strongly rely on

inscribed negative affect and judgment. Hood believed that the less persuasive stance sounds more emotional and explicitly judgmental, which is typical of novice argumentative writing.

The negative attitudes in the Minister's statement were more prevalent than positive ones. The negative affect choices highlighted the pandemic's severity. Other negative security choices were employed to reveal how difficult the future was likely to be. Furthermore, dissatisfaction was expressed with particular individuals who did not take the problem seriously. According to the Minister, the number of COVID-19 cases would continue to rise due to specific individuals' apathy, which he revealed by employing negative instantiations of judgment. Furthermore, by utilizing negative appreciation choices, it was heavily underscored that people were likely to endure difficult times, which would significantly impact the economy and health.

The Minister's statement based its persuasion on negative attitudes. Intriguingly, strongly persuasive statements effectively employed what communication literature refers to as the "negativity bias" or "negativity effect," which is consistent with the findings of Meffert et al. (2006), who hypothesized that negative information attracts more attention and more likely to be chosen than good information. This finding also aligned with Almutairi (2019), who demonstrated that in the context of persuasion, bad is more persuasive than good, and with Baumeister et al. (2001), who proved that negative emotions and impressions are more resistant to disconfirming evidence than positive ones. Furthermore, this was consistent with Allen and Burrell (2002), who asserted that individuals are more likely to be persuaded by negative than positive arguments.

Conversely, several instances of positive judgment were employed, including positive instantiation of social esteem to emphasize Saudi Arabia's capacity to combat the virus. In addition, positive choices of social sanctions were utilized to emphasize the significance of transparency and highlight the need to be aware of the most recent developments. Furthermore, a positive instantiation of appreciation was used when referring to royal concerns. By using positive composition instantiation, the Minister communicated that Saudi Arabia adopted the required "precautionary measures" before the majority of other nations, indicating that the pandemic was essentially under control in Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, the negative attitudes in the Minister's statement predominated over positive ones. This was in line with Rozin and Royzman (2001), who found that even when a persuasive stance contains both positive and negative evaluations, the negative tends to predominate and produce evaluations that are more negative.

The present study indicated that an attitudinal device is a powerful tool to persuade individuals if employed professionally. Thus, the findings of this study encouraged speakers to employ attitudinal recourses, with a focus on negative patterns to boost the persuasiveness of their speech. Furthermore, future studies should conduct lexico-grammatical analyses on different discourses worldwide and compare their utilization of evaluative language in persuasive processes, focusing on the effect of positive and negative attitudes on persuasion techniques.

مصادر المواقف في عمليَة الإقناع في بيان وزير الصحة السعودي خلال كوفيد-19

حنان الونين

قسم اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها، كلية اللغات والعلوم الإنسانية، جامعة القصيم، القصيم، المملكة العربية السعودية

الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة التحليليَة إلى البحث في تأثير اللغة التقييميَة في عمليَة الإقناع في تصريحات وزير الصحة السعودي خلال جائحة كورونا، مع التركيز على تأثير المواقف الإيجابيَة والسلبيَة، وأُجري التحليل على بيان مؤرخ في السابع من أبريل 2020، باستخدام نظرية تقييم مارتن ووايت المشتقة من إطار اللغويات الوظيفيَة المنهجيَة الخاص بهاليداي. وقد استُخدم منهج مختلط: أعطى التحليل الكمي التكرارات والنسب المئويَة للأنظمة الفرعيَة الثلاثة لموارد المواقف والموارد الإيجابيَة والسلبيَة في كل منها، أما التحليل النوعيّ فقد استكشف وعلق على وظائف كل نوع فرعي من المواقف وعملياته، وتشير النتائج إلى أن الوزير اعتمد في إقناعه على موارد المواقف المختلفة، حيث كان النظام الفرعي المؤثر هو الأكثر تأثيراً، يليه الحكم ثم التقدير. علاوة على ذلك، لقد بنى إقناعه على المواقف السلبيَة، مما يثبت أن السلبية أكثر إقناعًا من الإيجابيَة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مصادر المواقف، الإقناع، البيان، كوفيد -19، المملكة العربية السعوديَة.

Endnotes

1 The link to the episode:

https://twitter.com/cgcsaudi/status/1247504719897079809?s=48&t=k7NHbuKKsDoiDUddzxgX3g

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