

**A Multimodal Analysis of Some Selected Arabic COVID-١٩  
Awareness Posters**

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## الملخص

سبب وباء كوفيد ١٩ أزمة صحية جسدية وعقلية على نطاق عالمي ومن ثم لعبت وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي دوراً رئيساً في نشر الرسائل التوعوية لتيسير الوصول إلى المعلومات، ولتجنب المعلومات غير الدقيقة التي قد تسهم في عرقلة الاستجابة العالمية للوباء، ومن ثم قامت وزارات الصحة في العديد من الدول العربية بنشر ملصقات توعوية لفيروس كورونا (كوفيد ١٩) على صفحاتها الرسمية على فيسبوك. الهدف الرئيسي من هذا البحث هو تقديم تحليل شامل للملصقات التوعوية لفيروس كورونا والتي نشرت على الصفحة الرسمية لوزارة الصحة والسكان المصرية ووزارة الصحة في المملكة العربية السعودية ووزارة الصحة والوقاية في الإمارات العربية المتحدة في عامي ٢٠٢١ و ٢٠٢٢ حيث تقدم هذه الدراسة تحليل شامل للرسائل التي تحويها الملصقات التوعوية لفيروس كورونا كوفيد ١٩ عن طريق استخدام أدوات بحثية من ثلاثة مداخل مختلفة وهم: مدخل السيميائيات الاجتماعية لكريس وفان ليفن (٢٠٠١) ، تحليل الخطاب النقدي متعدد الوسائط لماتشين وماير (٢٠١٢)، ونظرية التحول أوشوجناسي جي و أوشوجناسي إن جي (٢٠٠٤) حيث تبحث استخدام الأدوات اللفظية والعناصر المرئية التي تقدمها ثلاثة ملصقات مختارة باللغة العربية تجمع بين المكونات البصرية. ومن هنا توضح كيفية إسهام العناصر المرئية والنصية في الملصقات التوعوية في رفع وعي الأفراد بضرورة الحفاظ على الإجراءات الاحترازية، وأخيراً توضح هذه الدراسة تكامل أساليب التواصل اللفظي والبصري لنشر الوعي بين المواطنين وفقاً لثقافتهم. وقد أثبتت الدراسة أن دمج العناصر اللفظية والمرئية ساهم بشكل رئيسي في تحقيق الأهداف المنشودة من هذا البحث وذلك لأن العناصر اللفظية والمرئية يكمل بعضها البعض من أجل توصيل الرسائل التوعوية ورفع مستوى الوعي.

*الكلمات المفتاحية:* كوفيد ١٩، الوسائط المتعددة، الملصقات التوعوية، السيميائيات، نهج السيميائيات الاجتماعية، تحليل الخطاب النقدي متعدد الوسائط، ونظرية التحول، الحالات التحفيزية

## Abstract

The COVID-١٩ pandemic has sparked a physical and mental health crisis on a global scale. During COVID-١٩, social media has played a principal role in providing precautionary messages since information on social media and other digital platforms is easy to access. Therefore, ministries of health have published awareness posters on their official Facebook pages. Therefore, this study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the COVID-١٩ posters published on the official Facebook pages of the Ministry of Health and Population of Egypt, the Ministry of Health of Saudi Arabia, and the Ministry of Health & Prevention United Arab Emirates during ٢٠٢١ and ٢٠٢٢. It investigates the verbal and visual elements of three selected Arabic awareness posters, which combine both verbal and visual components. This qualitative study implements an eclectic approach by employing varied analytical tools: the Social Semiotics Approach (Kress & van Leeuwen, ٢٠٠١), the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis Approach (Machin & Mayr, ٢٠١٢), and the Reversal Theory (O'Shaughnessy, J. & O'Shaughnessy, N.J., ٢٠٠٤). Through the use of the multimodal approach, this study examines the verbal tools applied in the COVID-١٩ posters in order to assess their role in persuading people. Consequently, it illustrates how the communicative modes can be combined to raise awareness among residents in accordance with their cultural backgrounds.

*Keywords:* Coronavirus (COVID-١٩); Semiotics; Multimodality; Awareness Posters; Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis; Social Semiotics Approach; Reversal Theory; Motivational States.

## ١. Introduction

The Coronavirus (COVID-١٩) pandemic is a major global health crisis. It has caused a negative impact on daily life and has taken the lives of thousands of people. Due to the rapid advancement of the technological world nowadays, society has made social media technology pervasive. Since people have become more inclined toward the use of social media platforms during the COVID-١٩ crisis, public health campaigns have had to continually adapt to recent and unexpected social media trends.

In response, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministries of Health of several Arab countries have initiated awareness campaigns aiming at helping people limit the spread of the deadly virus. These campaigns include posters that are published on the official Facebook pages. A poster is a graphic representation of images and words (or just words). It is used for a variety of reasons, including informing, persuading, educating, and motivating people (Aning, ٢٠٢١). Since posters feature both verbal and visual components, this study aims to investigate the impact of incorporating the visual communicative modes as a meaning-making system into verbal language. Additionally, it represents an attempt to demonstrate the significance of the instructional posters in raising public awareness of the COVID-١٩ pandemic coronavirus.

### ١.١ Objectives of the Study

The study aims to analyze the semiotic resources used in Egyptian, Saudi Arabian, and Emirati awareness posters about COVID-١٩, especially considering that the time frame when these posters have been released corresponds to a global pandemic of an infectious disease. Additionally, it examines the verbal and nonverbal content of posters rather than the current connections of text-viewer; as a result, it seeks to identify distinct interactional meanings between multimodal resources. Since posters can be used to transmit specific messages, the perspective of this study is to reveal the three different

cultures via utilizing verbal and non-verbal language choices in awareness instructional posters.

Besides, this study aims to illustrate the interrelationships between each mode in conceptualizing the COVID-١٩ pandemic awareness posters within the frameworks of the Social Semiotics Approach by Kress & van Leeuwen (٢٠٠١), the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis by Machin & Mayr (٢٠١٢), and the Reversal Theory by O'Shaughnessy, J. & O'Shaughnessy, N.J. (٢٠٠٤). Additionally, the posters designed by the three Arab countries are compared and contrasted to see the similarities and differences between the various communicative modes used in these posters and the impact of culture on the visual and verbal representations.

### ١,٢ Rationale of the Study

Coronavirus (COVID-١٩) awareness posters have been chosen as the primary objective of this study since they are multimodal texts that blend verbal and visual modes and reflect societal culture while being concerned with raising public awareness. The rationale of the current study is to demonstrate how the employment of multimodal modes can raise awareness among individuals while also providing a more thorough understanding and precise multimodal analysis of the chosen data.

### ١,٣ Research Questions

This study attempts to address the following research questions:

- ١- How effective are instructional awareness posters at raising public awareness when using both verbal and visual modes?
- ٢- How does culture influence the representation of verbal and visual modes in instructional awareness posters?

### ١,٤ Research Data

The data under discussion consists of three posters published on the official Facebook pages of the Ministry of Health and Population of Egypt, the Ministry of Health of Saudi Arabia, and the Ministry of Health & Prevention United Arab Emirates. Data are selected from the period January ١<sup>st</sup>, ٢٠٢١, to December ٣١<sup>st</sup>, ٢٠٢٢, in which the criteria

for data selection are due to the number of confirmed cases during the emergence of the pandemic Coronavirus (COVID-١٩) in both countries.

### ١,٥ Literature Review

The outbreak of the pandemic Coronavirus (COVID-١٩) was first identified in December ٢٠١٩ in China and then has spread to several countries all over the world. Accordingly, the World Health Organization (WHO) and many countries have launched awareness campaigns to help individuals combat its spread. Among these campaigns is publishing posters on social media. Posters are an effective way to get the attention of viewers by providing information in an understandable way and making it simpler for the reader to comprehend what the poster is attempting to say (Hawan, ٢٠١٨). Moreover, they are visual representations of words and/or images. As a result, they may seem to represent a piece of art created to raise public awareness of current social issues. They gain their main influence from the fact that they successfully enlighten, inform, influence, motivate, and persuade people by conveying strong and sincere messages (Aning, ٢٠٢١).

A variety of studies have been conducted from various perspectives and within different research areas to explore the use of the analysis of awareness posters. The following part demonstrates examples of preceding studies that have tackled multimodal studies of awareness campaigns, specifically posters.

Accordingly, there is a study by Jehan (٢٠٢١), which investigates the semiotic resources utilized in the COVID-١٩ informational posters. This study aims to examine the semiotic resources used in the warning posters disseminating information about COVID-١٩, understand the significance of text in the posters communicating information about COVID-١٩, and compare the posters created by the WHO and Pakistani locals to see how semiotic resources are used differently and how they are framed overall. The findings of the study suggest that a variety of semiotic resources are

used in the design of these posters. Therefore, this study demonstrates that text is crucial to the creation and comprehension of meaning. Moreover, the comparative study of the data indicates that the World Health Organization-designed posters are more thorough and varied than those created by Pakistani local institutes. It comes to the conclusion that local warning signs in Pakistan are relatively straightforward, have few semiotic resources, and share certain characteristics with the WHO posters.

Moreover, a study by Farahdina & Suhandoko (٢٠٢٣) attempts to provide an exhaustive overview of the concepts presented through the COVID-١٩ posters. The study applies the Social Semiotic Metafunction of Halliday and the Multimodality of Kress and van Leeuwen to analyze the linguistic and visual components of health promotion posters published by the official Instagram of the World Health Organization (WHO). The study finds that multimodal posters effectively convey signals about instructions, truths, and limitations. However, it is determined that there is an imbalance in how the various modes are used within the posters, which can lead to viewers becoming perplexed and misunderstood. Finally, the study offers a number of suggestions for creating motivating and instructive health promotion posters.

Additionally, the study of Lirola (٢٠١٦) aims to analyze the main political posters made for the campaigns of the Irish political party Fianna Fail framed in the Celtic Tiger (١٩٩٧-٢٠٠٨) and post-Celtic Tiger years (٢٠٠٩-٢٠١٢). It focuses on the four posters of the candidate in the elections with the intention of observing first how the leader is represented, and later on pinpointing the similarities and possible differences between each. Thus, the researcher utilizes Critical Discourse Analysis tools as the social actor theory of van Leeuwen (٢٠٠٨) facilitates the understanding of how participants are represented in the corpus under analysis. The study reveals that politicians are represented in a consistently positive way, with status and formal appearance, thus people are convinced to vote for the party they

represent because they trust them as political leaders. Finally, the study states that posters are a powerful tool used in election campaigns to highlight the power of political parties.

Furthermore, Chen and Gao (٢٠١٣) state that movie posters include a variety of semiotic resources such as images, colors and languages, which decode an integration of a variety of modalities. Therefore, this thesis takes Visual Grammar as the theoretical foundation and makes an attempt to propose a model for the multimodal discourse analysis of movie posters. The researcher analyzes two movie posters for a case study, in order to explore how the realization of the three meta-functions contributes to the overall meaning conveyed by movie posters. The researcher adopts a qualitative and interpretative one with incisive exploration of a small set of movie posters.

In addition, the study of Zhang (٢٠١٩) focuses on three prominent semiotics scholars: Saussure, Peirce, and Barthes, whose theories are incredibly essential and beneficial for advertisement analysis. In this study, two luxury perfume advertisements are taken to be within the scope of the study: Dior J'adore and Burberry London. These semiotic theories explain symbols in luxury brand prints from a semiotic perspective. The study masters some features of symbols during advertisement design as they produce meanings through signs. As a result, semiotics is a necessary theory for decoding images in the world.

Furthermore, the thesis by Juliantari (٢٠١٦) examines the semiotic signs which are utilized in movie poster advertisements. Semiotic analysis investigates not only written and spoken language, but also the visual elements of a commercial. This study focuses on the semiotic signs and messages sent via verbal and visual signs. This study focuses on the value of the semiotic signs in this poster, such as the meaning of color, the verbal and visual aspect, and so on.

The previous studies have reached the conclusions that posters are powerful tools used in political campaigns. Furthermore, they



suggest that using a variety of semiotic resources and text is crucial to the creation and comprehension of meaning. They focus on the semiotic signs and messages sent via verbal and visual signs. Additionally, they highlight the value of the semiotic signs in posters, such as the meaning of color, and the verbal and visual aspects that decode an integration of a variety of modalities. However, one of the studies proposes that there is an imbalance in how the various modes are used within the multimodal posters, which can lead to viewers becoming perplexed and misunderstood.

Similar to the previous conclusions, the current study suggests that posters are powerful tools used in awareness campaigns. It tends to examine how the verbal and visual representations are integrated to convey precautionary messages. It emphasizes the value of the semiotic resources in posters, such as images, colors, and verbal and visual representations. Yet, opposing the point that the various modes in posters can lead to viewers becoming perplexed and misunderstood, this study proves that utilizing a variety of modes raises awareness of people and persuades them to follow directions.

Therefore, the present study endeavors to fill a research gap among the previous studies since it combines an eclectic approach in order to intensely comprehend the visual and verbal representations that are obtainable in awareness posters. It demonstrates how culture is revealed through these representations. Finally, it shows how the employment of diverse multimodal tools tends to persuade the viewers to follow the instructions.

## **٢. Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology**

The theoretical framework employed in this study comprises an eclectic approach of theories that tackle both the verbal and nonverbal elements of the selected data. The three components of the theoretical framework are Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (Machin & Mayr, ٢٠١٢), Multimodality as a Social Semiotic Approach (Kress & van Leeuwen, ٢٠٠٦), and the Reversal Theory (O'Shaughnessy, J. & O'Shaughnessy, N.J., ٢٠٠٤). The factor that unites these theories is that

each approach examines the verbal and non-verbal elements in the awareness instructional posters from distinct viewpoints that reinforce one another in order to present a whole analysis.

### ٢,١ Multimodality

Multimodality refers to semiotic analysis methodologies that use image, sound, and language as semiotic modes for interpretation established alongside media technology. It has entered linguistics through the innovative work of Kress & van Leeuwen in *Reading Images* (١٩٩٦) and *Multimodal Discourse* (٢٠٠١). Machin (٢٠١٣) states that texts that linguists study create meanings not only through language but also through visual features and elements such as images, colors, the layout of pages, material objects, and architecture.

### ٢,٢ Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis

Texts are not mono-modal in nature; they are always multimodal because they mix and make use of multiple resources to produce meaning. Multimodality is concerned with articulating what these resources are, the meaning potentials they have, and how they are used in social settings for specific intentions. In multimodal critical discourse analysis, which considers all means of communication as tools that shape and are shaped by society, the notion of social construction is equally important (Machin & Mayr, ٢٠١٢).

As a result, social construction is not confined to language but includes all modes of communication, such as gesture, posture, and color. In doing so, multimodal critical discourse analysis would disclose all diverse representations of various modes of communication. Accordingly, Baldry & Thibault (٢٠٠٦) describe it as the product of the frequently intricate ways that several resources collaborate with one another. It includes diverse tools such as word connotation which refers to the associated meanings of a word or a phrase that aid in the identification of implicit values, judgments, and perspectives. Moreover, over-lexicalization is the overuse and repetition of words and their synonyms that produces the impression of over-persuasion lexical absence. In addition, visual semiotic choices

assert that texts communicate not only through word choices but also through non-linguistic features and elements. Besides, the study of how thoughts and values are transmitted and represented through objects is referred to as attributes. Finally iconography studies how certain events, participants, things, or places are depicted through images that are called denotation, in semiotic terminology (Machin & Mayr, ٢٠١٢). Therefore, multimodal critical discourse analysis is a useful tool to explore and reveal different messages about Coronavirus in awareness posters.

### ٢,٣ Multimodality as a Social Semiotic Approach

Kress (٢٠١٠) states that multimodality as a social semiotic approach supposes that all communication modes (including language) are formed and affected by cultural, historical, and social factors (resources). According to van Leeuwen (٢٠١٥), “multimodality therefore focuses on the common properties of, and differences between, these different semi-otic modes, and on the ways in which they are integrated in multimodal texts and communicative events (p.٤٤٧)”.

For instance, rather than mining for categories to use in the description of images, the social semiotic approach to language of Michael Halliday is taken as a model and as a source for thinking about broad social and semiotic processes. His three-function model provides a starting point for the explanation of images, not because it works well for language (which it does to some extent), but because it works well as a basis for thinking about all modes of communication (Kress & van Leeuwen, ٢٠٠٦).

According to the model of Kress & van Leeuwen (٢٠٠٦), there are two types of participants that are exemplified in the narrative processes. The first is the represented participants, or the people, places, or things that are portrayed in an image, and the second is the interactive participants, or the people who create the images, such as painters and photographers, as well as those who view and read those images (Ly & Jung, ٢٠١٥).

The framework of visual communication, developed by Kress & van Leeuwen, is based on the key work of the linguist Michael Halliday. Halliday claimed that language is organized into three parallel metafunctions, each of which represents a different function in the meaning-making process. The ideational function is the first metafunction in the systemic functional framework of Halliday, and it expresses the experience of the speaker of the world. The interpersonal function of language is the second metafunction. It stresses the importance of individual relationships and identities in social interactions. The textual metafunction connects linguistic elements, such as clauses, together into whole, unified texts (Kress & van Leeuwen, ٢٠٠٦).

### ٢,٣,١ Representational Metafunction

The capability of any mode of communication “to represent objects and their relations in a world outside the representational system (Kress & van Leeuwen, ٢٠٠٦, p.٤٢)” is known as the representational metafunction (ideational metafunction). Kress & van Leeuwen (٢٠٠٦) state that the representational metafunction focuses on the things, places, and people that are displayed in an image and addresses how they relate to one another as well. Semiotic modes offer a variety of alternatives that enable the representation of objects and their connections to other objects and processes in various ways.

### ٢,٣,٢ Visual Transitivity System: Narrative and Conceptual Processes

Narrative processes are dynamic processes that depict events in terms of ‘doing’ and ‘happening’. They are used to show participants achieving something or taking action. However, conceptual processes do not represent the participants as doing something but as being something, meaning something, or being a member of a specific community or category. “Conceptual process represents participants in terms of their more generalized, stable or timeless essences (Jewitt & Oyama ٢٠٠٨, ١٤١)”.

The hallmark of a narrative visual ‘proposition’ is the presence of a vector: narrative structures always have one, conceptual structures never do. In pictures, these vectors are formed by depicted elements that form an oblique line, often a quite strong, diagonal line. The vectors may be formed by bodies or limbs or tools ‘in action’, but there are many other ways to turn represented elements into diagonal lines of action. (Kress & van Leeuwen, ٢٠٠٦, p. ٥٩)

Kress & van Leeuwen (٢٠٠٦) assert that this action can take many forms. They classify six types of narrative processes: actional, reactional, speech, mental, conversion, and geometrical processes. Therefore, the narrative process is the primary focus of this study.

### ٢,٣,٢,١ Action Process

Participants in the action process are involved in some sort of physical activity. Kress & van Leeuwen (٢٠٠٦) state that depending on the number of participants, an action process may be transactional or non-transactional. This physical action is characterized by a vector that is created through an arrow. When an image has two participants, one is the Actor and the other is the Goal. “The Actor in such a transactional process is not so much the participant which moves (as in the non-transactional process) as the participant which instigates the movement (Kress & van Leeuwen, ٢٠٠٦, p. ٦٤)”.

As soon as the vector connects two participants and moves in one direction, originating from the actor to the goal, the action process is unidirectional transactional. Nonetheless, when the action is recognized by a double-headed arrow that forms two vectors connecting two participants, the action process is bidirectional transactional (Kress & van Leeuwen, ٢٠٠٦).

### ٢,٣,٢,٢ Reactional Processes

According to Kress & van Leeuwen (٢٠٠٦), reactional processes are the ‘glances or looking’ processes. An implied eyeline

vector is employed in this type of process to simulate the interaction between participants in the image that is formed through eye contact. Thus, the reactor is the participant who looks, or from whom the eyeline vector comes. This reactor, as stated by Kress & van Leeuwen (٢٠٠٦), “must necessarily be human or a human-like-animal –a creature with visible eyes that have distinct pupils, and capable of facial expression (p.٦٧)” otherwise, looking will not take place. Therefore, in this study, the researcher focuses on the action and the reactional processes since they are the only tools applicable to the visual data that the posters comprise.

### ٢,٣,٣ Color as a Semiotic Mode

It is quite complicated to look at attempts at systematic accounts of the meanings of color. Artists make their declarations, while psychologists conduct their tests and get their results, which differ from those of the artist and from each other. Therefore, Kress & van Leeuwen (٢٠٠٢) believe that there is a problem with the meaning of color; part of the problem is concerned with our notions of meaning or grammar, not with color or color terms. “In this sense color is a semiotic resource like others: regular, with signs that are motivated in their constitution by the interests of the makers of the signs, and not at all arbitrary or anarchic (Kress & van Leeuwen, ٢٠٠٢, p. ٣٤٥)”.

Although color is not a concept that is common to all people, it is related to observation since it can only be detected through observation. While color has distinct connotations across cultures, there are a few noticeable similarities (Wierzbicka, ١٩٩٦). Kress & van Leeuwen (٢٠٠٢) demonstrate that any individual instance of color can be analyzed as a combination of precise values on each of these scales and hence as having a complex and composite meaning potential.

### ٢,٣,٣,١ Value

It is the gray scale, which encompasses everything from extremely light white to extremely dark black. The black color is

associated with death, formality, sophistication, evil, and power. White, on the other hand, is thought of as the color of perfection and is associated with light, virtue, purity, safety, and righteousness (Kress & van Leeuwen, ٢٠٠٢).

### ٢,٣,٣,٢ Hue

The range of this scale proceeds from blue to red; the red end of the scale is associated with warmth, energy, salience, and foregrounding, even though the meaning of red as an abstract signifier cannot be determined. In contrast, the blue end of the scale is associated with cold, calm, distance, and backgrounding (Kress & van Leeuwen, ٢٠٠٢).

### ٢,٣,٣,٣ Purity

This is the scale that goes from maximum purity to maximum hybridity, and it has been at the core of color theory as it has evolved over the years. Pure colors are those with single names that are regularly used, such as brown and green. The names of other colors, such as cyan, which are mostly used by specialists and non-specialists, would be referred to using a composite word, such as blue-green. As a result, such colors would be viewed as blended (Kress & van Leeuwen, ٢٠٠٢).

### ٢,٤ Reversal Theory

Reversal Theory is a branch of structural phenomenology developed by Apter (١٩٨٢). Apter presents the Reversal Theory in his book *The Experience of Motivation* (١٩٨٢), through which he has developed some aspects of the way in which motivation is experienced. Reversal Theory asserts that there are two alternate systems, each with its own optimal point, and that the concept of homeostasis is thus replaced by the more sophisticated concept of bistability (Apter, ١٩٨١). It further claims that these two optimal points (or preferred levels) are on opposing sides of the arousal dimension.

Instead of one preferred level of arousal to which the organism tries to return and which is pleasant when achieved.

The Reversal Theory employs structural phenomenology to elucidate the mental structures that correspond with motivation and emotion. It is distinct from mainstream cognitive psychology, which focuses on rational processes rather than emotion and motivation. “Reversal theory, as developed by Apter, offers another insight into why associations are effective, in this case associations tied to excitement and relaxation (O’Shaughnessy, J. & O’Shaughnessy, N.J., ٢٠٠٤, p. ٩٣)”.

The Reversal Theory of Apter examines the relationship between emotions and motivation. According to him, there are eight ‘motivational styles’ (or states of mind) based on values that act as lenses through which the world is viewed. He believes that

When moving from one motivational style to another, not only do we want different things but we also see and experience things differently. When our motivations are satisfied, it feels good, but when they are not satisfied, we feel bad (Wilson, ٢٠٢٣).

“Motivational states, as defined in reversal theory, are more than instinctive-motivations-plus-behaviour” (Apter, ٢٠١٨, p. ٥٨). Apter affirms that a motivational state integrates particular values, motives, perspectives, families of linked emotions, and ways of communicating with the world. Besides, an adaptable variety of behaviors can result and be incorporated into a cohesive unit, a sort of mini-personality that takes control at a particular time. Reversal is caused by each motivational state that can function as a whole or cannot function in any way at a specific time; however, it cannot mix with its opposite. As a result, as our lives progress over time, we begin to perceive things in new ways (Apter ٢٠١٨).



**Table ١**

*Reversal Elements*

<b>Reversal</b>	<b>Some factors often that contingent reversals</b>
Telic to paratelic	Entertainment, removal of threat, humour, sexual situations
Paratelic to telic	Sudden threat, unavoidable task, need for strategic decision
Conformist to negativistic	Being insulted, arbitrary restriction, something unfair
Negativistic to conformist	Entering a novel situation, appeal to morality, ritual
Mastery to sympathy	Vulnerability, intimate situations, exchanging confidences
Sympathy to mastery	Competition, losing control, being challenged
Autic to alloic	Being part of a crowd, being asked to give help
Alloic to autic	Being alone, needing help

(Apter, ٢٠٠٥, p.٢٨)

That is, the Reversal Theory highlights how the viewer fluctuates from one state to another. Therefore, the significance of the Reversal Theory in this study is to identify the motivational states used in awareness posters to move the audience from a certain emotional status to another, to reverse from the state of unpleasant high or low arousal mode to the pleasant ones, and vice versa, throughout the time of Coronavirus.

### ٣. Methodology

In an attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis of the verbal and non-verbal content of the selected instructional awareness posters, this part illustrates the data collection and the procedures of data analysis.

### ٣,١ Data collection

This study adopts a qualitative analytical approach to analyze the data. The data under discussion consists of three Arabic instructional awareness posters that are published on the official Facebook pages of the Ministry of Health and Population of Egypt, the Ministry of Health - وزارة الصحة السعودية, and the Ministry of Health & Prevention United Arab Emirates. Data are selected during the years ٢٠٢١ and ٢٠٢٢, in which the criteria for data selection are due to the high number of confirmed cases during this period.

### ٣,٢ Procedures for Data Analysis

The researcher provides a detailed qualitative study to precisely recognize the message being conveyed. In other words, the posters in this study are thoroughly examined in accordance with the following standards: First, the researcher applies the framework of Kress & van Leeuwen (٢٠٠٦) to an analysis of visual communicative modes.

The researcher focuses on the ideational metafunction, also known as the representational metafunction, which consists of the conceptual and narrative processes. The action and reaction processes are the parts of the narrative process that are used in this study. Second, the data in this study are analyzed using tools from the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis Approach (٢٠١٢). Third, the motivational states of the Reversal Theory are applied to demonstrate how the audience is persuaded to change their emotional state. After using the earlier research tools, the researcher finally comes to some conclusions.

Therefore, coronavirus (COVID-١٩) awareness posters are purposefully chosen to be investigated using the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis Approach (Machin & Mayr, ٢٠١٢), the Social Semiotics Approach (Kress & van Leeuwen, ٢٠٠١), and the Reversal Theory (O'Shaughnessy, J. & O'Shaughnessy, N.J., ٢٠٠٤) as the analytical framework.

#### ٤. Sample Analysis

This part demonstrates the analysis of three Arabic COVID-19 awareness posters published on the official Facebook pages of the Ministry of Health and Population of Egypt, the Ministry of Health - وزارة الصحة السعودية, and the Ministry of Health & Prevention United Arab Emirates. The discussion section that follows the tables highlights the commonalities among all the data, which are essential to reaching conclusions.

#### ٤.١ The Poster from the Ministry of Health and Population of Egypt (2022)

##### Figure ١

##### Poster 1 (2022)



#### ٤.١.١ The Text on the Poster and Translation.

The Text in the Poster: حافظ على صحتها سجل بياناتها على الموقع الإلكتروني لحجز لقاح فيروس كورونا

[WWW.egcovac.mohp.gov.eg](http://www.egcovac.mohp.gov.eg)

#معا\_نظمن

Translation: Keep her healthy. Record her data on the electronic website to book the coronavirus vaccine.

[WWW.egcovac.mohp.gov.eg](http://WWW.egcovac.mohp.gov.eg)

#Together we feel secure.

**Table ١**

*Analysis of the Poster from the Ministry of Health and Population of Egypt*

The Analysis of the Arabic Posters	Social Semiotic Approach	Visual Transitivity Narrative Processes	The Poster from the Ministry of Health and Population of Egypt	
			Reactional	Non-transactional
Color as a Semiotic Mode Scales of Colors		Value	The font of the words in the poster is white, as it has a positive connotation of safety.	
		Hue	The prominent color scale in this poster is hue, as it is the scale from blue to red. The blue color is dominant in the poster; dark blue is selected as the background color of the half of the poster that includes text, while the color of the shapes of Coronaviruses is light blue as this color is linked to happiness and recovery. The red color is used to highlight the title of the poster and the website through which the audience can book the COVID-١٩ vaccine in order to be salient to the viewers.	

Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis	Word Connotation	The choice of the verbs ‘keep’ and ‘record’ connotes the necessity of getting the vaccine since they are imperative forms. The words ‘keep her healthy’ indicate that it is the responsibility of the children to keep their mothers healthy; otherwise, there is a real threat to the lives of their mothers. The words ‘record her data’ connote an obligation toward mothers.
	Suppression and Lexical Absence	There is suppression in the sentence ‘keep her safe’. It is not mentioned what the pronoun ‘her’ refers to. However, the poster means ‘keep your mother safe’.
	Visual Semiotic Choices	The color of the font in this poster is white. The sentence ‘Keep her healthy’ is written in a big, bold, white font and it is also highlighted in red. Similarly, the website title and the hotline number have the same big, bold, white font that is highlighted in red.
	Attributes	The body language and the facial expressions of the lady represent visual attributes of comfort since there is a smile drawn on her face.
	Iconography	The woman wears a <i>jalabiya</i> , which is a type of clothing that Egyptian mothers usually wear at home.
	Setting	The poster displays an old woman who wears a striped <i>jalabiya</i> . She sits on a chair, and she smiles optimistically.
	Saliency	Potent cultural symbols: the depicted clothing of the old woman reflects cultural practice.

Reversal Theory	Motivational States	Telic to Paratelic	The verbal choice of the hashtag ‘together we feel secure’ in this poster moves the audience from a sense of insecurity and threat to a sense of safety through following the instructions in the poster.
		Paratelic to Telic	The imperatives ‘keep her healthy’ and ‘record her data’ refer to an unavoidable task as they ask the audience to take on the responsibility of vaccinating their mothers.
		Autic to Alloic	The poster involves the audience through using imperatives to make them feel worried about their mothers in order to register to get the vaccine.

## ٤,١,٢ Discussion

This poster utilizes both verbal and visual representations in order to convey a certain message to the viewers. It represents an old woman who sits on a chair and wears a striped *jalabiya* (a long gown that Egyptian mothers usually wear at home). The woman is the reactor of a non-transactional reactional process, and there is no phenomenon; it is left to the viewer of the poster to guess who she looks at in order to involve them in the poster. This image integrates with the choice of language in the sentences ‘keep her healthy’ and ‘record her data on the electronic website to book the coronavirus vaccine’. That is to say, the poster is directed at children who are supposed to be accountable for their mothers. The representation of a *jalabiya* refers to a cultural feature, as it is commonly worn by Egyptian mothers.

Correspondingly, the words in the poster connote responsibility towards old mothers and the requirement of the vaccine, for the reason that failing to provide it could endanger their lives. There is a lexical absence of the noun that the pronoun ‘her’ refers to since the visual representation of the elderly mother complements the message of the poster, thus the connotation of using ‘her’ instead of ‘mother’ is to motivate the audience to rely on both verbal and visual representations to get a comprehensive message.

In addition to the verbal choice of text in the poster, the visual semiotic choices of font, size, and colors focus on highlighting the main messages the poster conveys. That is, red is used to highlight the title of the poster, the website title, and the hotline number in order to make them more salient to the viewers. Furthermore, the font color is chosen to be white, as this color represents purity and safety. The background of the part that includes the verbal instructions is dark blue, as this color represents knowledge, control, and reliability. The COVID-19 figures are drawn in light blue on this background, as the blue color refers to health and seriousness.

Finally, through the motivational states in this poster, the audience moves from the paratelic to the telic state, from safety and stability to threat and fear, to obligate them to book the vaccine for their elderly parents. In addition, it moves the audience from the autic to the alloic state to make them feel threatened and to oblige them to take serious steps and book the vaccine to protect their old mothers.

٤,٢ **The Poster from the Ministry of Health - وزارة الصحة السعودية - (2021)**

**Figure ٢**

**Poster 2 (2021)**



٤,٢,١ **The Text on the Poster and Translation.**

The text on the poster: هذا أبوي ولأنني سند له أليس الكمامة، عش بصحة  
 Translation: This is my father. Because I'm his support, I wear the mask. Live well.

**Table ٢**

*وزارة الصحة السعودية - Analysis of the Poster from the Ministry of Health*

The Poster from the Ministry of Health (KSA)				
The Analysis of the Arabic Posters	Social Semiotic Approach	Visual Transitivity System	Narrative Processes	Action Transactional Unidirectional The old man in the background is the actor, and the cup in his hand is the goal. The young man forms another actor, and the mask is the goal; his hands holding the mask strings form a strong vector between the two represented participants.
				Reactional Non-transactional The son is a reactor, and there is no phenomenon. It is not shown what he looks at.



	Color as a Semiotic Mode	Scales of Colors	Value	White is the prominent color since the color of the clothes is white and the background color of the poster is white. The font color of 'wear the mask' is white.
			Purity	The green color is chosen as the font color for the text and the slogan. The logo colors of the Ministry of Health are green and brown.
Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis			Word Connotation	The words 'his support' connote intimacy, care, love, and responsibility. The slogan 'live well' has a positive connotation of optimism and security.
			Suppression and Lexical Absence	There is a lexical absence in the words 'This is my father. Because I'm his support, I wear the mask'. It is not explained in the poster why the father is the one who is highly threatened with infection. It is left to the audience to comprehend.
			Visual Semiotic Choices	The font of the words 'this is my father'; 'because I'm his support'; and the slogan 'live well' is green. The phrase 'his support' is written in a big, bold, green font. The phrase 'I wear the mask' is written in a bold white font, and it has the biggest font as it is the main attention of the poster.
			Attributes	The body language of the son represents the visual attributes of optimism and confidence.
			Iconography	The two men in this poster wear white Saudi <i>Thawb</i> (a garment), <i>Ghutra</i> (a head cover), and <i>Igal</i> (a headband). The cup of coffee that the father holds denotes cultural iconography.

		Setting	The poster displays two men who wear white Saudi <i>Thawb</i> (a garment), <i>Ghutra</i> (a head cover), and <i>Igal</i> (a headband). The father holds a Saudi Arabian coffee cup as he drinks coffee while giving his back to the son. The son is represented in front of the father as he is wearing a mask with a smile of confidence in his eyes.	
		Salience	Potent cultural symbols: the depicted clothing of the participants reflects their culture. Size: the size of the element determines its importance. Although the father is backgrounded, his size is larger than the size of the son, which means that the father is given more importance than the son. Focus and tone: the son, who is responsible for keeping his father safe, is foregrounded and brighter than the father, who is backgrounded.	
	Reversal Theory	Motivational States	Paratelic to Telic	The lexical choice of the words 'because I'm his support, I wear the mask' indicates threat, which needs a serious decision to control the virus.
			Autic to Alloic	The verbal choice of the imperative form in the slogan 'Live well' makes the audience part of a crowd and asks them to give help and wear masks.

### ٤,٢,٢ Discussion

This poster represents two participants, a father and his son, who both wear white Saudi *Thawb* (a garment), *Ghutra* (a head cover), and *Igal* (a headband). The father holds a Saudi Arabian coffee cup as he drinks coffee while giving his back. The son is represented in front of the father as he is wearing a mask. The visual attributes of the son, including his body language, connote confidence and optimism. Despite the fact that the son wears a mask, there is a smile drawn in his eyes that gives glances of hope to the audience. Both the father and the

son form unidirectional transactional action processes, yet the son forms a non-transactional reactional process as he looks left toward other people who are not included in the poster with the aim of connecting the audience to the participants in the poster.

The verbal language in this poster and the visual representations form a comprehensive message directed to the audience in that foregrounding the son in the poster and representing the shade of his father drinking coffee in the background gives the audience a sense of protection and containment. This visual representation corresponds with the lexical choice of words in the poster, such as the words 'I'm his support', which refer to protection and security. Moreover, the son is displayed holding the mask strings in his hands while wearing it in a way that epitomizes the mask as a weapon through which he protects his father from the deadly virus.

The expression 'لأنني سند له' 'because I'm his support' has a cultural connotation, as it is a common belief that sons have to support their fathers. Moreover, the words 'هذا أبوي' 'this is my father' are written in the Saudi slang Arabic language, which reflects the identity of the country publishing the poster. Moreover, the visual semiotic choice of the green color to be the font color of the text in the poster is symbolic, as the green color in Saudi Arabian posters represents nationalism in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, green is the color of hope and optimism, and white is the color of security and hope as well. Thus, these colors are the most prominent in the poster. Therefore, the clothing of the participants in the poster, the representation of the cup of coffee, the lexical choice of words, the use of slang language, and the implementation of the green color, which is the color of the Saudi Arabian flag that has cultural significance, are all integrated to deliver a message that reflects the identity of the country.

Finally, through the Reversal Theory, the viewer is moved from a paratelic to a telic state as the feelings of threat are moved to an unavoidable task, which is following safety instructions. The audiences are also moved from an autic to an alloic state since they carry the

responsibility for their old family members and are asked to give help and wear masks.

**٤,٣ The Third Poster from the Ministry of Health & Prevention  
United Arab Emirates (2022)**

**Figure ٣**

*Poster 3 (2022)*



**٤,٣,٣,١ Text on the Poster.** Vaccination against COVID-١٩ protects you and your loved ones. Consult your doctor first if you suffer from any illness.

**Table ٣**

*Analysis of the Third Poster from the Ministry of Health & Prevention (the UAE)*

Analysis of the Arabic Posters	Social Semiotic Approach	Visual Transitivity System	Narrative Processes	The Poster from the Ministry of Health & Prevention United Arab Emirates			
				Action	Transactional	Unidirectional	The man is an actor and the boy is the goal; the arm of the man on the shoulder of the child, in addition to the whole angle of his body, forms a strong vector between the two represented participants.
				Action	Transactional	Bidirectional	The action is realized by a double-headed arrow connecting the participants, or interactors. There are two vectors connecting the

						<p>father and his son, constructing a speech circuit. The vectors are formed by depicted elements that create an oblique line, as in the eye contact between the participants in the poster. In this case, both participants play the roles of the actor and the goal.</p>
			Reactional	Transactional	<p>The child (the son) becomes the phenomenon of a reactional structure while the man (the father) is a reactor. The child reacts to the reaction of his father with a smile.</p>	
		Color as a Scales of Colors	Value	<p>White is the dominant color. The background color of the poster is white. Both the father and the son are dressed in white. However, black is designated as the font color of the written text on the poster.</p>		

Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis				Purity	The green color is the font color for the central title of the poster, 'Vaccination against COVID-١٩'. The father and his son are surrounded by a circular frame that contains a green color. The name of the UAE MOHAP is brown.
				Word Connotation	The sentence 'protects you and your loved ones' connotes duty and obligation. The sentence 'consult your doctor first' connotes responsibility and inevitability.
				Visual Semiotic Choices	The font of the phrase 'vaccination against COVID-١٩' is bold and green. All the other text on the poster is printed in black font.
				Attributes	The visual attributes in this poster represent a father and his son: the father puts his arm around the shoulder of the son. The body language of the father and the facial expressions of both the father and the son display intimacy, care, and security.
				Iconography	The two participants represented in this poster are dressed in a white Kandura (a long white cloak with long sleeves and a tassel 'tarboosh' hanging from the neckline) and a Gotra (a white head scarf). The father wears an Agal (a black rope used to fix the headscarf in place). The traditional dress of men in this poster denotes cultural iconography.
				Setting	A father and his son are depicted in this poster wearing the national clothes of the UAE. The arm of the father surrounds the shoulders of the son while they exchange eye contact.
				Saliency	Potent cultural symbolism: the traditional dress of the UAE has a cultural feature. Focus: the two participants are surrounded by a circular frame as they are the focus of the poster.

Reversal Theory	Motivational States	Telic to Paratelic	The sentence ‘vaccination against COVID-19 protects you and your loved ones’ moves the viewers from a state of danger to a state of security and stability.
		Paratelic to Telic	The sentence, ‘consult your doctor first if you suffer from any illness’ moves the viewers from the state of permanence to the state of risk.

**٤,٣,٣,٢ Discussion.** The poster applies both verbal and non-verbal representations. Visually, the poster represents a father and his son, in which the father is the actor in a unidirectional action process since he puts his arm on the shoulder of his son as a sign of protection and containment. The father is likewise the reactor of a transactional reactional process, and the son is the phenomenon. The visual attributes in the poster indicate intimacy, attention, and security; they are perceived through the body gesture of the father and the facial expressions of the two participants.

Additionally, white is the prominent color in the poster, as the background is white and the clothes are white. In other words, white is the traditional dress of men in the UAE; it is the main color in the poster. In addition, the traditional dress of the UAE represents cultural identity since the father and son wear white Kanduras and Gotras, and the father wears an Agal. Besides, the traditional dress has the salient feature of potent cultural symbolism, as Emirati Kandura differs from other similar traditional clothes of other Gulf countries. The visual semiotic choices make the audience attentive to the major message of the poster, which is getting the vaccine.

Verbally, this poster is directed to fathers, given that they are in charge of their family members. The verbal language carries positive connotations of responsibility, necessity, obligation, and care through



the use of the imperative forms of the verbs 'protect' and 'consult'. It is an awareness poster that commands people to get vaccinated against COVID-١٩ in order to protect their family members, especially children.

Through the Reversal Theory, the first sentence in this poster transfers the audience from the state of danger to the state of security and stability, that is, from the telic to the paratelic state, for the reason that people have to be positively stimulated to get their vaccination. On the contrary, the other sentence in the poster moves the audience from the state of permanence to the state of risk, from the paratelic to the telic state, with the purpose of recognizing the significance of consulting the doctor for their own refuge.

#### ٥. Findings and Conclusion

This paper represents an analysis of three posters published on the official Facebook pages of the Ministry of Health and Population of Egypt, the Ministry of Health - وزارة الصحة السعودية, and the Ministry of Health & Prevention United Arab Emirates. With reference to the analysis of these three posters, some recurrent findings concerning COVID-١٩ awareness campaigns have surfaced. First of all, through implementing the tools of the Social Semiotic Approach, it is found that the posters focus on the narrative process, specifically the action and reactional processes, which are the only processes adopted in these posters. That is, Poster ٢ and ٣ implement unidirectional transactional action processes and Poster ١ applies a bidirectional transactional action process. In addition, Posters ١ and ٢ utilize non-transactional reactional processes since the viewers of the posters have to be involved in the awareness campaign. Thus, the significance of the action and reactional processes is that they create a link between the participants and the audiences of the posters in order to achieve the objective of raising awareness to stop the spread of the virus.

The dominant color scales in Poster ١ are the value and hue scales, while value and purity are the most commonly used colors in Posters ٢ and ٣. All posters fall within the value scale, as white is used

as the font color of the written text for the reason that it is considered the color of protection and transparency. Furthermore, the hue scale is used in poster ١, in which the blue color is the color of instructions; therefore, dark blue is selected to be the background color, and light blue is used in coronavirus images. In addition, red is employed to highlight important information in order to make it more salient to the viewers. Besides, the use of the culturally significant color 'green' in poster ٢, which is also the color of the Saudi Arabian flag, is incorporated to convey a message that symbolizes the identity of the nation. Given that green is a nationalistic color; the visual semiotic choice to make green the font color of the text in the poster is symbolic. Additionally, white and green are used in the Emirati poster as well since they are the colors of security, hope, and optimism. As a result, these hues are the most noticeable in the poster.

Verbally, the lexical choice of words in the posters has both positive and negative connotations, considering that the words chosen in Posters ١ and ٣ connote responsibility, care, and obligation. Furthermore, the words selected in Poster ٢ connote optimism, intimacy, love, security, responsibility, and care. However, Posters ١ and ٣ have negative connotations of seriousness in order to demonstrate how severe the virus is and how to manage it with the aim of keeping loved ones secure. Additionally, there is a lexical absence in Poster ١ in order to involve the audiences who have to protect their family members. Besides, there is no mention in the posters why parents are the particularly threatened ones, yet it is left to the viewers, who are supposed to comprehend the reasons.

The visual semiotic choices in the posters emphasize the key messages through selecting font size and font colors that are more salient to the audience. Hence, the tools designated for the verbal analysis from the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis Approach intermingle to accomplish one objective, which is raising public awareness of how to control the infection.

Through the Reversal Theory, the audiences of posters ١ and ٣ move from the telic to paratelic state in order to feel secure; nonetheless, viewers of all posters move from the paratelic to telic state to urge the audience to get the vaccine for their parents and children since the lexical choice of words in the posters makes the viewers fluctuate from being playful to serious, which is the basis for the theory of psychological reversals, or Reversal Theory. In addition, audiences of Posters ١ and ٢ move from the autic to the alloic state in order to plead with the audience to give help since they transfer from the self-state to the other state as they are motivated by the interests of the public rather than their self-interests.

There is a representation of some iconographic elements in the posters. Poster ١ epitomizes a woman wearing a *jalabiya*, which is a type of clothing that Egyptian mothers usually wear at home. Poster ٢ views two Saudi Arabian men who wear their national clothes, which are white Saudi *Thawb* (a garment), *Ghutra* (a head cover), and *Igal* (a headband), and there is a demonstration of the Saudi Arabian coffee cup. Poster ٣ displays a father and son wearing white Kanduras (long white cloaks with long sleeves and tassels 'tarboosh' hanging from the necklines) and Gotras (white head scarves). The father wears an Agal (a black rope used to fix the headscarf in place).

Accordingly, posters published in Saudi Arabia focus on people who wear their national clothes. Similarly, posters of the United Arab Emirates display men wearing their white national clothes. Yet, the Emirati Kandura differs from similar traditional clothes from other Gulf countries. According to Khalaf (٢٠٠٥), despite all male residents of Arab Gulf countries wearing long, loose white robes, there are a few variations in style that highlight the localized regional local identity of the wearer. The Emirati in his Kandoura can easily be distinguished from his cousins in Saudi Arabia in his Thoub by a cursory glance.

Moreover, the selected posters reflect the Arabic cultures of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the Emirates which influence the representation of verbal and visual modes in instructional awareness

posters. In other words, the posters published on the Egyptian Facebook page and the Saudi Arabian one focus chiefly on old people, while the poster displayed on the Facebook page of the United Arab Emirates focuses on children since elderly people and children are the most threatened group being infected with COVID-١٩.

In addition, strong family relations are highlighted, as it is the responsibility of children to protect their elderly parents, relatives, children, and those with chronic diseases. Furthermore, the selection of clothing reveals the identity of the country where those posters are published, such as those published in Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, which focus on people who wear their national clothes, while in the Egyptian poster, an elderly woman is represented in her *jalabia*. Eventually, Saudi Arabian slang and Egyptian slang are used in the posters as a reflection of the identity of the country publishing the poster.

In conclusion, this research has principally focused on demonstrating how the utilization of different semiotic modes in awareness posters helps raise public awareness and convey a persuasive message. The tools of the eclectic approach: the Social Semiotics Approach (Kress and van Leeuwen, ٢٠٠١), the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis Approach (Machin and Mayr, ٢٠١٢), and the Reversal Theory (O'Shaughnessy, J. & O'Shaughnessy, N.J., ٢٠٠٤) are sufficient since they complement each other to analyze the verbal and visual elements in the posters. Finally, the research demonstrates the similarities and differences between the various communicative modes used in the posters and the impact of culture on the verbal and visual representations.

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