An Analysis of Illocutionary Acts in the COVID-19 Vaccine Campaign Posters

Guinivere Dawn Nicole L. Lumintao and Jackie Lou C. Corbita

Bukidnon State University, Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, Philippines

ABSTRACT

Speaking is a form of communication where individuals convey their thoughts, opinions, and perspectives through verbal expression. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a significant shift in communication, pushing most people to rely on online platforms for interaction. This change highlighted the importance of identifying the most prominent forms of speech during the pandemic, especially in the context of the COVID-19 vaccine campaign. The study aimed to analyze public views on the vaccination campaign by examining utterances and identifying which categories of speech acts were most notable. The research focused on the analysis of illocutionary acts in the fifteen COVID-19 posters. Results revealed that 7 assertives, 5 directives, 2 expressives, and 1 declaration. Assertive type of illocutionary act was dominantly used in COVID-19 vaccination campaigns to convey the value, necessity, and safety of vaccination successfully. While commissive placed last as it was not mainly used in the campaign posters since it intended plan of action. Understanding speech acts provided valuable insights into communication, emphasizing the importance of context in conveying information effectively. Further studies on illocutionary acts in other health posters in the context of post-pandemic is recommended.

KEYWORDS: *Illocutionary Acts, COVID-19, vaccine campaign posters*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a type of communication where a speaker utters or expresses their ideas, opinions, and views. Actions or non-verbal communication are also an effective way to communicate and to be understood by the people around an environment or community and individuals where all given the freedom to speak. As a result, many people express their ideas, opinions, and perspectives and utilize and conclude their understanding of a particular point of view (Kissine, 2013).

Speech acts play a huge role in understanding and conveying utterances. They focus on language's use by conveying information while also acting. Speech acts help people understand how language determines communication, social interactions, and beliefs beyond the actual meaning of the words. When understood, they help perform information or messages, just as they acquire the knowledge to use language effectively. Misinterpretation can happen if there is a lack of comprehension and not fully understanding the conveyed concept and speech acts can occur across cultures. An utterance or communication encountered in everyday life is speech act. When apologizing, refusing, complaining, inviting, complementing, or requesting, a speech act occurs if people engage in these types of communication. Speech acts are acts of communication; despite the various ways language's significance underdetermines use, it is to explain how speakers' communications succeed.

In the philosophy of language and linguistics, speech acts display content and acts (Austin, 1962). Speech Act Theory by Austin (1962) has described speech as a thread in the fabric of communication; it shows content and entails actions, which Austin referred to as performative utterances. Austin later defined performative utterances as locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. Locutionary acts are fundamental to forming words and sounds into a coherent utterance. The physical act of uttering words is the locutionary act, the most basic level of speech acts. Then, illocutionary acts, this level deal with the speaker's intention or the purpose they wish to convey through their speech. Illocutionary acts are actions taken by the speaker while uttering a sentence. Lastly, perlocutionary acts relate to a speaker's words' impact to an audience or listener. It deals with the effect or reaction that the speaker's words have on the listener. The speech act's results or repercussions are the main subject of the perlocutionary act.

According to Bach (1979), communication is not only about language but also about action. It explains that in verbal communication, an action has a message in itself. In summary, speech action is the utterance that occurs, and 'action' refers to an action.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, communication changed significantly as most people relied on online media. As part of the Department of Health (DOH) drives, several vaccine campaigns which include posters, videos, audio, translated materials, and other resources. The materials aimed to encourage communities and societies to engage and help reduce the fast transmission of the virus. Pieces of information were collected and spread through online platforms as the pandemic occurred, and several communities were not allowed to go outside and had to stay at home. COVID-19 awareness in online posters mainly escalated throughout the media and other online platforms. COVID-19 emerged worldwide and caused several crises among individuals and countries. The disease had led to numerous losses in human life. Vaccine campaigns appeared as required in some countries and, later on, in other countries. Campaigns for vaccine programs or implementation gained several reactions from individuals who either agreed or disagreed to avoid and prevent the disease.

In this regard, speech act analysis anticipated to describe the utterance, transfer ideas and opinions, interact, and illustrate viewpoints verbally. The study of Muhassin (2022) on the types of linguistic elements used in World Health Organization (WHO) posters and the meanings of the elements used to express the messages revealed that it increased public awareness. Posters and other forms of information raised awareness and knowledge among affected individuals or the general public, as caution and awareness were valuable assets to have during a pandemic crisis. Similarly, Nurkhamidah (2020) emphasized that the illocutionary speech act in one of Donald Trump's speeches addressing the COVID-19 outbreak exceeded the speaker's simple word choice and included their intended message. The uttered words of Donald Trump presented an example that exemplified and determined different categories of speech acts utilized during the COVID-19 vaccine campaign. The study of Dylgjeri (2017) on the Analysis of Speech Acts in Political Speeches further revealed the role of language, its meaning, and the interpretation of speeches conducted by several politicians. Several politicians' speeches conveyed a message by pursuing and making the audience or listeners aware of what they said. However, speech acts must also intervene during that period or play an important role. It displayed how relevant it was to examine one's language or speech. Simon & Dejica-Cartis (2014) analyzed the types of speech acts utilized in written advertisements and it classified the study's approaches and series of messages supported the message to be understood and interpreted.

In the context of Bukidnon setting, COVID-19 posters and campaigns were also applied and utilized. In this manner, the types of speech acts determine the utterances or speech of a specific text or other types of speech. During the COVID-19 vaccine campaign, it was also essential to identify the most prominent category of speech that was salient during the pandemic. This study aimed to describe the views on the vaccination program or campaign. This analyzed the utterances and which category of speech act was most notable. There was a need to study speech acts to prevent misunderstandings and crimes, emphasizing the importance of cultural sensitivity and awareness. The study of speech acts was crucial for effective communication, reducing misunderstandings, increasing cultural awareness, and understanding how language works in different contexts. Hence, it was vital to understand the types and categories of speech acts and how they differ, as it will determine what is inappropriate and appropriate to say or utter.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aimed to answer the following question:

1. What are the types of illocutionary acts utilized in the two cities of Bukidnon in the COVID-19 vaccine campaign?

FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

This study is anchored on the Speech Acts Theory developed by Searle (1979), emphasizing that communication is about conveying information, executing actions, and achieving specific results through language. It highlights the importance of context, intentions, and social conventions in determining language use. Understanding speech acts is crucial to effective communication because it helps speakers and listeners understand the subtleties and nuances of language in different social situations. Austin (1962) made a preliminary distinction between constative and performative sentences. While constative sentences had a truth value (true or false), performative sentences were successful or not, Austin (1962).

The speech acts based on the assumption that the unit of human communication is not a sentence or other expression but the performance of certain types of actions, such as making statements, asking a question, giving some orders, describing something, explaining, apologizing, to thank, congratulating, etc. A speaker performs one or more of these actions by uttering one or more sentences, but the act itself is separate from a sentence or other expression uttered in its performance, Searle et.al (1980). Austin (1962) classified speech acts into three categories; locutionary (utterance), which refers to the fundamental act of forming words and sounds into a coherent utterance; illocutionary (the process of meaning from the utterance), which level deals with the speaker's intention or the purpose they wish to convey through their speech, and perlocutionary acts (utterance effect on the hearers) relate to the impact that a speaker's words have on an audience or listener. This study analyses one of the categories of speech acts, the illocutionary acts developed by Searle (1979). The foundation of any theory of speech acts is illocutionary acts. Illocutionary acts emphasize the fact of stating or asserting.

Moreover, the illocutionary act refers to a speaker's speech purpose, which is more than just producing an utterance but also delivering an intended meaning in a specific context. Illocutionary

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acts refer to the speaker's communicative intentions or the purposes behind a speech act. According to Yule (1996), this type of speech act is an act of doing something the speaker is determined to say. In identifying the standard types utilized and contributing to analyzing the data, the study examines the types of illocutionary acts by Searle (1979). Searle's Speech Act Theory extends Austin's ideas; Searle provided a more systematic analysis and expanded the framework. The original speech act theory put forth by Austin can be considered as developed and improved upon by Searle's classifications. The five types of speech acts determine direct utterances: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declaration. Assertive includes the speaker expressing opinions about the world and entails the truth or falsity of the claims made. Information, factual descriptions, and expressed beliefs are the goals of assertive illocutionary acts. Second, directive is primarily used to persuade or influence the listener to take action. Put another way, when a speaker engages in a directive illocutionary act, they try to influence the listener to act in a specific way. A request, command, suggestion, or other speech act with a comparable objective is frequently included in directives. Third is commissive, which refers to speech act where the speaker commits to a plan of action for the future. In other words, a commissive utterance expresses the intention or promise to carry out a specific action later. Commissive involve promises or intentions expressed. Fourth, expressive words allow the speaker to communicate their feelings, emotions, or psychological states. An expressive illocutionary act is a way for someone to express their feelings, attitudes, or reactions. This category places a particular emphasis on the speaker's internal experiences and emotional expression. Lastly, according to Speech Act Theory, declaration is a specific kind of illocutionary act. It is not enough for someone to declare, describe, or report a situation merely; by speaking, they are changing the outside world. Declarative serves a performative purpose because the intended outcome is achieved just by the act of uttering the statement.

Speech act theory forms the analysis of the research study. The theory of speech acts examines the impact of an utterance on the behavior of the speaker and the listener. This study found and described the speech acts and determined the types of speech acts utilized during the COVID-19 vaccine campaign.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the data gathered through documentation and observation methods. When researchers want to discover who, what, or where of particular events or experiences, this is the least theoretical of all qualitative approaches, but it is practical or pragmatic (Turale, 2020). This method should also be used when a simple event description is required.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in two local cities of Bukidnon. The first one is the first-class component city in Bukidnon, known as the "City in the Forest". The second one is the city which is regarded as the province of Bukidnon's agritourism capital because of its plains and hills rich in natural resources, as well as the bountiful harvest from the numerous farms.

Data Source

This study utilized and analyzed the different communication types used during the COVID-19 vaccine campaign. The researcher collected data from posters through social platforms which were used to disseminate information about the COVID-19 vaccine campaign. This study focused on analyzing the collected posters. The collected data consisted of 15 COVID-19 vaccine posters posted by the Department of Health (DOH) on social media platforms taken from two local cities of Bukidnon. The study only focused on 15 posters of the COVID-19 vaccine campaigns and the analysis centered on the illocutionary acts.

Data Gathering Procedure

 Before the researcher collected data, preliminary procedures were followed. After the letter was approved to conduct the study, the researcher looked for posters on social media about the COVID-19 vaccine campaign specifically disseminated in the two cities of Bukidnon. Next, the posters were checked by the panel and were used for the analysis un regard to the usage of illocutionary speech acts. The researcher identified the types of illocutionary speech acts that were utilized during the COVID-19 vaccine campaign. The gathered data were analyzed through the guide of the codebook, utilizing the illocutionary acts of Speech Act Theory developed by Searle (1979). Experts in the field validated the analysis done by the researcher to assert the validity of the study.

CODING

The study utilized the coding process by analyzing and transcribing the posters and campaign materials that disseminated information about the COVID-19 vaccine campaign. After researching and transcribing the gathered posters and information, the researcher proceeded to examine the data and identified the types of illocutionary speech acts used, using Searle's theory about illocutionary speech acts.

INTERCODING

The researcher's analysis was validated by experts in the field to assert the study's validity.

CODE GUIDE

The code guide contained the illocutionary speech acts introduced and developed by Searle (1979). Illocutionary acts were the foundation of any theory of speech acts. Illocutionary acts emphasize the fact of stating or asserting. An illocutionary act refers to a speaker's purpose in speaking, which is more than just producing an utterance but also delivering an intended meaning in a specific context.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Ethical considerations for illocutionary acts are important in various contexts, such as communication, social interactions, and relationships. These considerations revolve around the responsible and respectful use of language to ensure that communication is ethical and respectful of others, Resnik (2020). For this study, the researcher needs to be honest and truthful in statements. Misleading or making false claims can be considered unethical. First, the researcher must strive for clarity and transparency to avoid misunderstandings. Ambiguity or unclear communication can lead to ethical issues. Ethical communication involves being sensitive to the context and not exploiting it for manipulation. Then, the researcher must also be mindful of cultural differences in understanding illocutionary speech acts to avoid unintentional offenses or misunderstandings. Ethical illocutionary

acts should not undermine the listener's dignity or self-esteem. Sarcasm or irony, for example, should be used with care and not to belittle or insult.

DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher analyzed and examined the posters gathered using the theories needed to identify the common types and types of illocutionary acts utilized during the COVID-19 vaccine campaign period to address the study question.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The discussion was based on the study's objectives which were to analyze and examine the gathered posters of the COVID-19 vaccine campaigns by using the theories needed to identify the types of illocutionary speech acts utilized during the COVID-19 vaccine campaign period. The study used the Speech Act Theory Searle (1979) developed to determine the types of illocutionary speech acts. The study analyzed one of the categories, which was the illocutionary acts. The study focused on the types of illocutionary acts by Searle (1979), namely; assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declaration.

This study aimed to analyze the speech acts of 15 COVID-19 vaccine campaign posters from two Cities of Bukidnon. After a careful inspection of all texts, the study was analyzed.

Types of Illocutionary Acts				
Assertive	Directive	Commissive	Expressive	Declaration
7	5	0	2	1

Table 1. *The Types of Illocutionary Acts Utilized in COVID-10 Vaccine Campaigns*

As shown in the table, assertive was the most utilized type of illocutionary act. The second type of speech act was the directives. Expressive occupied the third spot. Meanwhile, the declaration was the most minor speech act employed in the posters. Lastly, no poster belonged under commissive.

Furthermore, 7 posters were identified and analyzed as assertive, these statements that entailed facts were determined as assertive. 5 directives were shown in the data, these were utterances that primarily used to persuade or influence the listener to take action. 2 utterances fell under expressive and these sentences imply that the utterance communicated their feelings, emotions, or psychological states. Only 1 poster was revealed as a declaration and it served a performative purpose because the intended outcome was achieved just by uttering the statement, the produced speech acts were utterances that mostly expressed opinions about the world and entailed the truth.

Illocutionary Speech Acts Found in the Data

    A. Assertive

I.   Poster 5.

Poster 5	

Poster 5 was considered assertive type of illocutionary speech act based on the code guide. These statements and claims were utterances that were part of assertive, an illocutionary act that not only informs but implies a message that is the truth. The utterance was asserting a particular fact, including information about the target population and using percentages to support their claim. The utterance based on the data, *"WE HAVE ALREADY VACCINATED 1ST DOSE 45% OF OUR TARGET SENIOR POPULATION",* not only informed about the percentage of the first dose of the vaccination but also claimed the specific percentage accurate. This act of claiming was characterized as assertive, as the utterance took responsibility for the truth made.

II.   Poster 6.
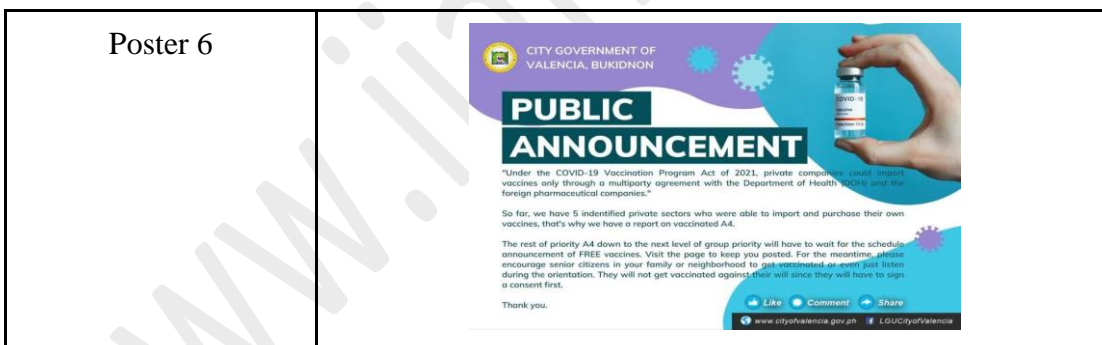
Poster 6	

Based on the poster, Poster 6 was also an assertive type of illocutionary act. "*Public Announcement"* made by the government of one of the cities of Bukidnon, and announcements can be considered assertive, as they convey information to a group of people, specifically to the City of Valencia, based on the poster. The nature of giving announcements involved asserting or making a true statement. According to the poster, "*Under the COVID-19 Vaccination Program Act of 2021, private companies could import vaccines only through a multiparty agreement with the Department of Health (DOH) and foreign pharmaceutical companies",* this entailed the purpose of informing others that vaccines were only approved and disseminated by private sectors of the government. Thus, announcing is a characteristic of assertive.

III.   Poster 8.

Poster 8	

Poster 8 contained utterances from a speaker from one of the cities of Bukidnon. The poster indicated an assertive illocutionary act, as the utterance asserted the truth. It presented the assertion based on the data, *"Vaccines can protect you,"* and the speaker claimed the safety of vaccines. This was an assertive, as it fell into the category of expressing truth. The data can be supported by evidence, as the speaker who uttered the statement was a registered nurse and a professional in health programs.

IV.   Poster 9.
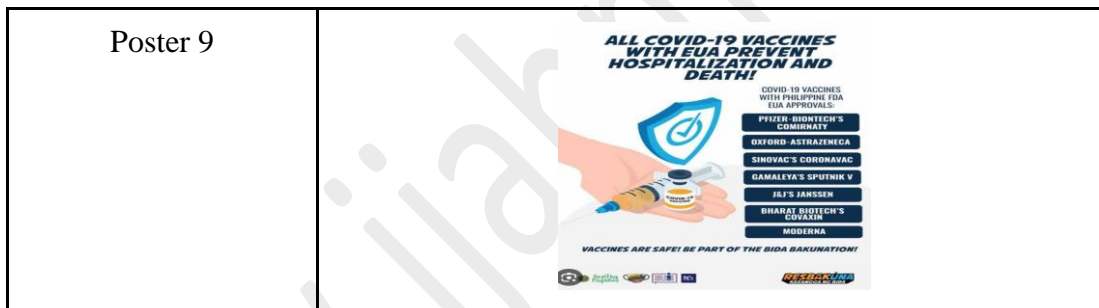
Poster 9	

Based on Poster 9, the data was assertive as it presented the kinds of vaccines approved by the FDA or Food and Drug Administration, from the source of the Department of Health also implemented vaccination programs. The given data generally presented all the types of vaccines that were safe for the individuals who would take vaccines. Moreover, the data revealed as assertive, as making claims and expressing opinions that derive from an authority entailed that the data was essential for its truth value.

V.   Poster 13.
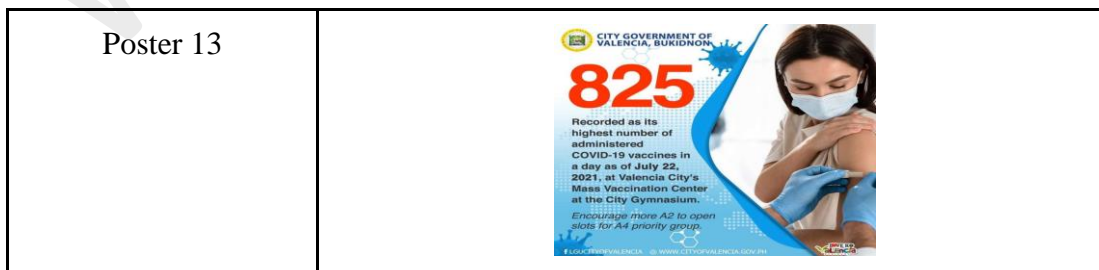
Poster 13	

Statements that were facts were characterized as illocutionary acts, such as assertive. The utterance in Poster 13 indicated the record for the highest number of administered COVID-19 vaccines in a day. The statement or claim displayed information expressing the truth, displaying the number of vaccines administered daily.

VI.   Poster 14.

Poster 14	

Poster 14 was also an assertive type of illocutionary act. Bida Bakunation was a campaign promoting awareness and knowledge about vaccine programs that disseminated information about safe vaccines. The poster indicated the number of Filipino people who had vaccines, from the statement *"The best shot is now in the arms of 9,669,940 Filipino people",* and it showed how many people got vaccines, which showed the claims made. Making statements or claims that were true, assertive speech act characterized the Poster 14.

VII.   Poster 15.

Poster 15	

Poster 15 was considered assertive. It asserted facts and records for the COVID-19 vaccine campaign, which indicated the percentage with only "*1.44% recipients"* employed as truth. It also displayed "*as of May 16, 2021 (1st and 2nd doses),* indicating a statement that the untoward reactions and most were mild only vaccines conveyed statements which were accurate as it came from a health organization program.
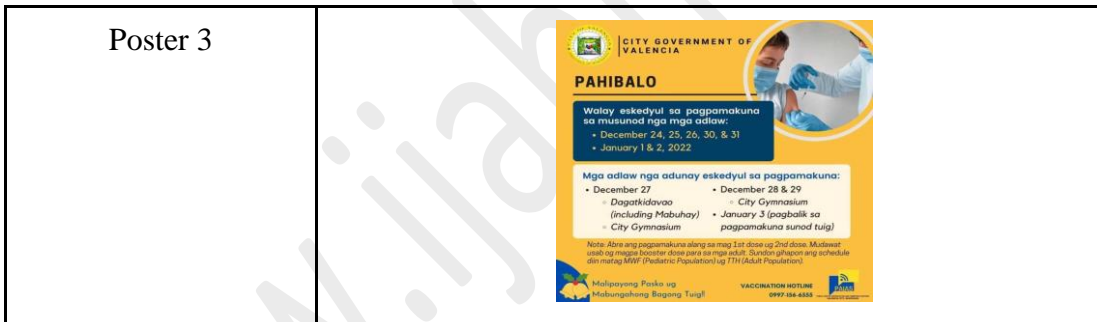
B. Directives

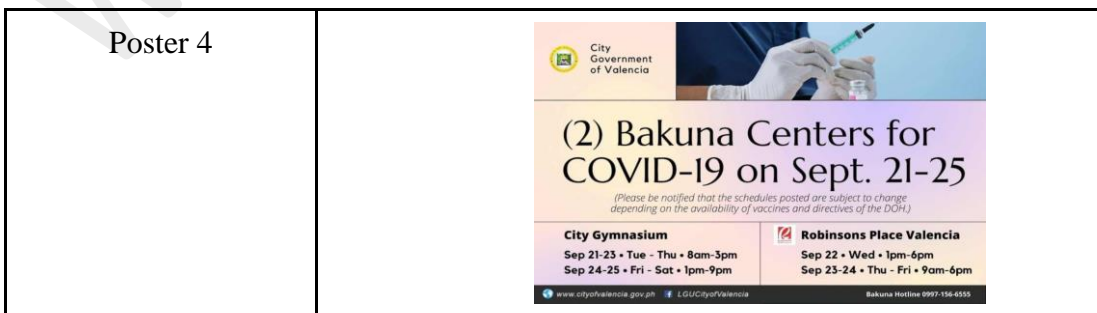   I.   Poster 1

Poster 1	

Based on poster 1, the gathered data was a directive as this statement was a schedule for a vaccination program that would occur at the said address, and it expressed and informed the citizens about the program's occurrence. A schedule differs from the directive. However, directive speech acts found in some schedules presented in some contexts similar to Poster 1; by introducing a schedule of events or the vaccination program mainly, it made a statement that conveyed the order of events and implied the accuracy of the information presented. The given data belonged to the directive illocutionary act, as there were no rules of speech acts violated.

    II.   Poster 3.

Poster 3	

In this data, Poster 3 was considered a directive within the context of an announcement. The announcement format was utilized, but it was an act of directing or a directive as it informs the target audience that the said dates indicated no schedule for vaccination. It implied a command from the government which instructed the people to be aware of the said dates. Based on the data, it was a directive, as the utterance intended to give a command.

    III.   Poster 4.

Poster 4	

In Poster 4, it was considered as a directive illocutionary act. It showed the schedule for vaccination centers and the given date when it would occur. A directive illocutionary act involved instructing and persuading the listeners, particularly by this data or poster shown, which implied influencing and guiding the action made by the target audience. As in the following statement, "*Please be notified that the schedules posted are subject to change depending on the availability of vaccines and directives of the DOH.*", a directive was related to scheduling, and the directive was embedded within the context of the information of the data. The directive guided the target audience in following the instructions that was given.

IV.   Poster 7.

Poster 7	

Directives were primarily used to persuade others to take action through their utterance. The information on Poster 7 implied instructions for individuals whenever they inquired about vaccines. It illustrated the order or chronological manner of how to get vaccinated, and it persuaded the audience to take action. Through these actions, the speaker can affect the listener's behavior, as this context was part of directives.

V.   Poster 10.

Poster 10	

Poster 10 was presented as a directive utterance. Announcements were not just assertive; in this statement above, they delivered and contained complex speech acts that served both informative and persuasive functions. Directives involved clear expression of the utterance and it showed that the schedule for vaccination programs in COVID-19 continued, and the utterance wanted the audience to proceed with the COVID-19 vaccine campaign program.

C. Expressive

    I.   Poster 2.

Poster 2	

Expressives in Poster 2 allowed the speaker to communicate their emotions or psychological states; in this context, they demonstrated empathy directly to the audience. Empathy as it set details to the audience to be careful going outside without proper protection from COVID-19. It facilitated the communication of the speaker's emotional state and attitude toward the topic in addition to information.

   II.   Poster 12.

Poster 12	

Poster 12 was expressive. The speaker stated that having a vaccine is the best option to prevent COVID-19 from escalating. The context above is an example of an expressive speech act. The expression encouraged the readers as it ensured the safety of COVID-19 vaccines while also protecting the population.

It indicated a positive attitude or feeling toward the COVID-19 vaccines. While the utterance expressed the speaker's feelings toward vaccines, it also encouraged specific action, such as getting vaccinated.

D. Declarations

    I.   Poster 11.
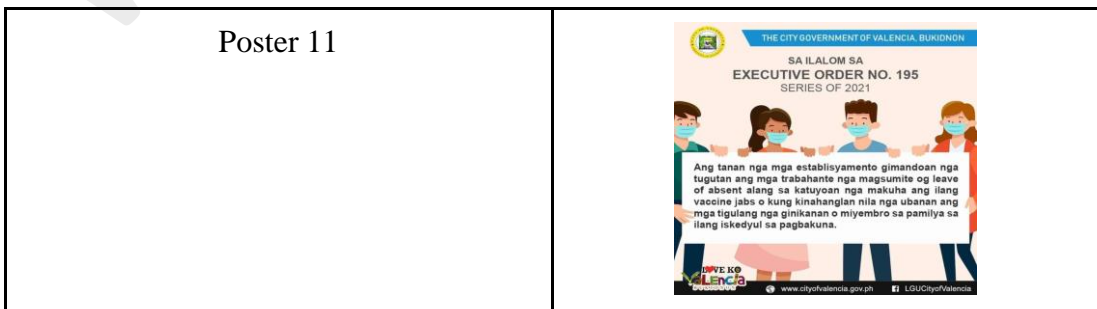
Poster 11	

This utterance in Poster 11 was a declaration. According to the poster, workers could take leave of absence for vaccination programs or their families to get vaccines. Declarations served a performative purpose as the intended outcome was achieved by uttering the statement. It aimed to provide accurate information and address concerns about COVID-19 vaccines. Declarations are a person's declaration; describing or reporting a situation is insufficient; through speaking, they are influencing the external environment. The information in the Poster "*THE CITY GOVERNMENT OF VALENCIA, BUKIDNON SA ILALOM SA EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 195 SERIES OF 2021*" indicated the executive order implemented in the city. Implementing a law was also called declaring. Giving a formal announcement, delivering information, or expressing a belief was called a declaration.

The study investigated the gathered data in terms of its usage in illocutionary acts. The types of illocutionary acts that were included in the study were assertive (statements, claims), directive (command, requests, order), expressive (feelings, apologies), and declaration (declaring). The results showed that illocutionary acts with a frequency of 15 utterances appeared, for the detail; 7 assertives, 5 directives, 2 expressives, and 1 declaration.

Based on the result, the researcher found types of illocutionary acts developed by Searle (1979) used during the COVID-19 vaccine campaign. This study focused on using speech acts which conveyed information to the community regarding the safety and protection of the people by implementing COVID-19 vaccine campaigns with posters. This was an essential point for the study, where posters were conducted and implemented for awareness, and utterances were made for the people to understand. By expressing one or more sentences, a speaker carried out one or more of these acts by stating one or more sentences. However, it was crucial to note that the action should be distinct from the specific sentence or expression uttered during its execution, as discussed by Searle (1980).

Posters were frequently made to interpret information and was surely used during the COVID-19 vaccine campaigns (Barik et al., 2019). Attractiveness played a significant role in promotional media since its goal was to pique and influence people's interest. As a result, the gathered data which were the posters of the COVID-19 vaccine campaigns were informative and directly utter speeches, statements, or information. With the use of COVID-19 vaccine campaign posters, it directly employed and implemented the importance of having COVID-19 vaccines.

CONCLUSION

This research focused on the types of illocutionary acts, and it was found that in the fifteen (15) COVID – 19 posters analyzed, it revealed 7 assertives, 5 directives, 2 expressives, and 1 declaration.

Studying speech acts provided insights into communication, and understanding contexts was essential for conveying information. In speech acts, researchers can analyze and interpret how a message was conveyed, but they can also shape social interactions and perform actions. Understanding speech acts was essential for communicating effectively. Individuals can use

language more precisely to accomplish their communicative goals when they know the illocutionary force underlying statements in social, cultural, and professional contexts.

Assertive type of illocutionary act was dominantly used in COVID-19 vaccination campaigns to convey the value, necessity, and safety of vaccination successfully. This changed people's behavior and motivated them to take preventative measures to protect their communities and themselves. While commissive placed last as it was not mainly used in the campaign posters since it intended plan of action.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The current study can be interpreted as a first step in analyzing the types of an illocutionary act. It is recommended to conduct a similar study about speech acts, particularly illocutionary acts, and to study the context of the information of the COVID-19 vaccine campaign. Speech acts support and add to our knowledge of how language shapes attitudes, beliefs, and actions various of settings.

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