Discourse of Fear in the Social Semiotic Representation of the Novel Coronavirus in English Language Newspapers

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Abstract

This study examines semiotic resources, deployed by English language newspapers to describe discourse of fear about the novel Coronavirus. This study explores: How were the highly circulated English language newspapers expressed discourse of fear in the world? The data was based on ten editorial articles followed by the comments on four English language newspapers: "The New York Times, The Guardian, The Tribune, and The Japan Times." In addition to this, 30 participants' perceptions about the semiotic choices used by these English language newspapers were studied to support the selected editorials' findings. The data was interpreted through thematic analysis by codifying the emerging discursive themes. The findings reveal that semiotic resources deployed by the selected English newspapers created a discourse of fear that set the new normal. Moreover, the English newspapers' use of semiotic resources is well replicated by the participants, as the participant's comments on these semiotic resources surface positive self-claim and negative out-group. They divide between them and us, have and have not, and eventually widen the language of fear, panic, and hatred. This thesis contributes to the studies on the discourse of fear created by media to serve political interests. This study recommends replacing the current semiotic choices used by the media with neutral, honest, and positive lexical and visual choices. The discourse of fear must be replaced with the discourse of medical officials that must use factual language and show optimistic visuals to build policies for the most vulnerable in the world.
Keywords: English newspapers, Discourse, Semiotics, Coronavirus, Fear

Introduction

With the outbreak of the novel Coronavirus, the world is undergoing a great recession in terms of health crisis, financial management, and social or domestic catastrophes, where the role of media especially newspapers have become more significant because of their wide-reaching readers. Researchers including D

Marko(2013) and Kress & Leeuwan, (1996, 2001, 2009)argue that media use semiotics to nurture a discourse about an event.The selection of semiotic tools perpetuates a certain kind of discourse and affectshow people should interpret an event. This study has defined semiotics as use of words, pictures, images, symbols, and videos to achieve certain effects. According to Van Dijk (2009) and Cap (2017), semiotic resources are used to create a discourse of fear as this claim is well supported by Rafi (2020). This study assumes that English language newspapers have contributed towards the discourse of fear through semiotic choices. In the on-going situation, through continuous advisory of self-quarantine, lockdown, shutdown of businesses, and wearing masks, media in general and English language newspapers in specific have spread a wave of fear and panic with fear-provoking images of virus, death, and infected people. The people are asked to stay at home or work from home as the shares of high-tech companies (Zoom, Netflix, and Amazon) have shot up. They are asked to quit hand shakings and hugs, wear masks, and hence they are asked to live an unconventional way of existing.

Altheide (2002)highlights the role of media in embarking abnormal circumstances and explained how mass media and famous programs change social expectations and everyday life by promoting fear.Van Dijk, (1991) argue that fear has a big market, when it is used as an ideological framework for the coverage of significant events and knowledge; it becomes a matter of discourse analysis. The coverage about the novel Coronavirus and infodemics has caused people to change their way of living andinitiated large scale economic crisis. The stock markets experiencedbearish since the outburst of the novel Coronavirus as there are global hits to the shares of The FTSE, Dow Jones Industrial Average and the Nikkei. Oil prices crashed to the lowest $20.59 in the last twenty years as the demand for oil shrank globally, US oil prices turned negative to -$37.63 for the first time in last two decades. Not only this, The International Monetary Fund believes that the world economies will shrink by 3% by the end of 2020. Travel restrictions severely damaged the airline, shipping, and road transport companies as governments have applied local and international lockdowns.

What is thought provoking with this on-going pandemic of the novel Coronavirus is not its scale, but the reaction of governments and media to contain the spread of the novel Coronavirus? This study will find out the semiotics, used by the media to perpetuate fear and its impact on the public.

Discourse of Fear

The description of Van Dijk (2014) about fear and discourse, *"Fear has a big market and when it is used as a theoretical or conceptual framework, it becomes a matter of discourse analysis",* is pretty much relevant here in 2020, as the year started with the catastrophe of the novel Coronavirus and became a matter of great importance. It compels social researchers to conduct researches on the origin, spread, and effects of the novel Coronavirus.Rafi (2020) studies the language use of media that has perpetuated discourse of fear and anti- Chinese sentiments, for that, he used articles

published in 'The New York Times', university students' lived experiences and a questionnaire to find the common patterns in linguistic or discursive themes built about the fear of the novel Coronavirus that eventually caused Sinophobia. He found out bizarre linguistics forms which perpetuated discourse of fear for public. Bradbury-Jones and Isham (2020) study the novel Coronavirus by figuring out its consequences on domestic violence, while Hua and Shaw (2020) investigate to test the victory of China against the spread of the novel Coronavirus and the hurdles came in the way the of Chinese's success against this virus. They found the term 'infodemic', as suggested by the World Health Organization (WHO), has great impacts on the collective public conscience. They have recommended different approaches to reduce the impacts of fake news. On the other hand, Asif (2020) studies the use of neologism (Coinage of new words) related to the novel Coronavirus.They realized that people on social media and state level briefings utilized different word formation processes including abbreviations and acronyms for a colourful portrayal of the novel Coronavirus. Therefore, it is necessary for anthropologists and social researchers to look into the matter and examine the use of language and its impacts on human lives.

When we witness fear, as an autonomous potential, posing threats to society, we immediately run to see its possible negative impacts on society, but there are hardly any efforts such as Rafi (2020) and Cap(2017) to address the linguistic causality that produces fear in the society

and ultimately raising xenophobia.This study took a different conceptual framework just like (Rafi, 2020; Cap, 2017) to explore linguistic/discursive themes, emerged from coding the data into different categories.

Research Questions

- How were the discourse of fear and Sinophobia expressed by the highly circulated English language newspapers while reporting the novel Coronavirus?
- What are the impacts of English newspapers' language on public?

Methodology

This is a mixed-method research. The qualitative data was based on editorial articles published in "New York Times", "The Guardian", "The Express Tribune" and "The Japan Times" from 31st December to 10th February. All the editorial articles were taken purposively on the notion that an article must have maximum online public comments, from all other published articles in these newspapers during the period of the study. Since all the editorial article were written through the lenses of the Novel Coronavirus, words and graphics both were picked to analyse semiotics, used by the selected English newspaper.Through the early analysis of the data, I have found that visuals used in Express Tribune and The Japan Times were the real representations of editors as they used their own pictures. The New York Times and The Guardian took visuals from other sources including Getty Images, Reuters, PA media, and Barcroft Media. Moreover, since all articles weretaken from online sources, 30 public comments were collected to find discursive themes and

their connection to the semioticsused in the articles.

Figure 1 indicates the theoretical framework that I used to interpret the data. This theoretical framework is amalgamation of Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Discourse Model (2009) and Kress and Leeuwen's Social Semiotic Approach (1996).
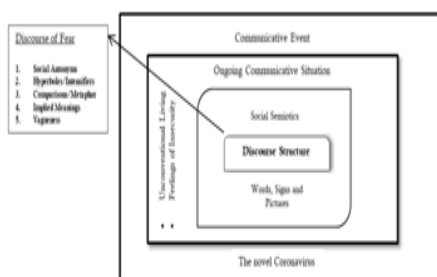

Figure 1 Theoretical Framework

Analysis

The study has interpreted data through multi-faceted analysis. All linguistics/discursive themes were interpreted through codifying the data and dividing them into different categories. The researcher went back and forth several times to decide the categories which agreed with the themes. Public comments were interpreted to observe the impacts of the selected English newspaper's language on general public. Since this is a multi-model study, it has also interpreted pictures used in the data to link it with the emerged themes. I emphasized my interpretation on headlines, contents of the articles, and their use of specific lexicon and pictures to see how reporters or journalist build a certain kind of discourse and pursue pubic. Interpretation was finalised by linking texts, pictures, and their messages together to see common patterns in between them, so that they could be put into the emerged themes.

Discourse of Fear and the Novel Coronavirus Newspaper Coverage

It has beenseen in this study that through highlighting number of deaths, number of disease-ridden patients, and unconventional living in the world, a fear has been generated by the selected English language newspapers. Moreover, by campaigning self-isolation, nationalism, asking people to stay at home or work from home, locking down people into their houses, highlighting closing of flight operations, factories, and halting sports events,the selected English language newspapers have described a discourse of fear and panic as Milman et al. (2020) believes that controlling the spread of the novel Coronavirus has causedunintended consequences including loss of employment, health hazards, severe impacts on social life and mental health, domestic violence,financial instability, and feelings of death.

Figure 2 indicates that English language newspaper coverage were in the form of editorial narratives, personal opinions and descriptions that is either describing unconventional or insecure life through certain linguistic benchmarks including social antonyms, hyperboles or intensifiers, comparisons or metaphors, implicitness and vagueness. Textual forms are well supported by visual forms.
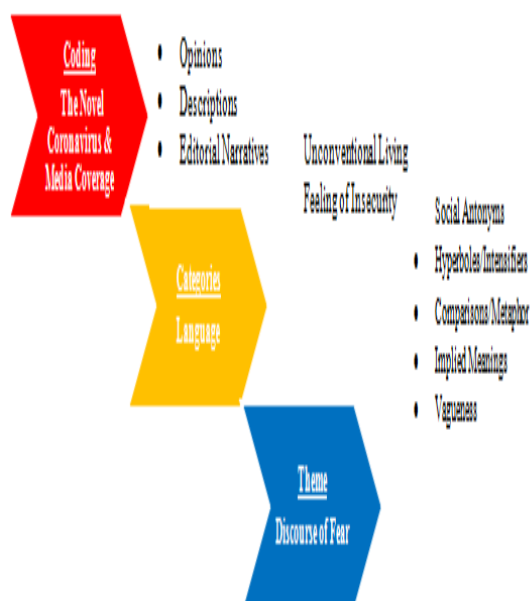
Figure 2 Discourse of fear

Social Antonyms

As illustrated in table 1, through the analysis of editorials, the researcher has found anunconventional story, which is compelling people to act,that they might not have anticipated in the past. Campaigning an unconventional way of living can urge public to feel insecure and feeling of being unsecured is associated with the nexus of fear (Hawryluck et al., 2004). The language of the selectedEnglish language newspapers recommends total lockdown rather than open markets, social distancing rather than sticking together, and telecommunication rather than face to face meetings which is further supported by the figure3 of working from home and men's new role of taking care of kids at home.

Figure 3 Telecommunication rather than normal working plans

Also, the selected English language newspapers prophesyin favour of limited movements rather than self-determination, isolation or quarantine rather than spread out events e.g. sports or business, and nationalism rather than globalization. Hence, all these recommendations advocate a change in a day-to-day life of public as Bradbury-Jones&Isham, (2020) argue that the measures taken by the countries primarily change the conventions of life, suspend normality, and drastically modify the manners of thinking. On the other way, Perrin et al. (2009) termed quarantine measures as a punishment that prophesy separation from social circle and departure from normal life as happens in the context of prison. A comment of participant no. 01 shows the impacts of media coverage of the novel Coronavirus who finds the information bizarre as he says,"I found the information disturbing that once again".There are many other spontaneous consequences such as unemployment, closure of schools, businesses shutdown, and health vulnerabilities; all of these unintended consequences made children and women at risk of domestic violence as reported by a unique public-private collaboration 'End

Violence Against Children' in 2020 and Bradbury-Jones & Isham(2020).

Table 1 has also illustrated that there is common trend of departure from normal way of livings such as isolation, lockdown, and quarantine measures in the selected English language newspapers' articles that is well replicated in the demands of public as shown in the response of participant no. 20 who demands isolation to restrict the virus. Perrin et al., (2009) and Hawryluck et al., (2004) argue that imposed isolation can cause psychological instability to those vulnerable who have pre-exiting mental health issues. Bai et al., (2004), Brooks et al., (2020) Cava et al., (2005), Desclaux et al., (2017),and Hawryluck et al., (2004) stated that quarantining a social setting or a part of it can be the catalyst for many health issues including depression, fear, lack of sleep, mood swings, and emotional instability because of financial pressure and loneliness. It can also cause permanent behavioural changes such as a cut to social contact, direct communication, and visiting public places as found by the researchers such as Marjanovic et al. (2007) and Reynolds et al. (2008) during the outbreak of SARS epidemic. Such kind of discourse has compelled public to adapt the mental models of the selected English language newspapers as they are asking for strict isolation rather than voluntary isolation.To further check the impacts of the selected English language newspapers' language, participant no. 13's comment is pretty much relevant here as he implied that the British Government should predispose strict isolation to restrict the number of deaths. Hence, it has beenascertained that English language newspapers'discourse, built about the

novel Coronavirus, has greatly affected the mental models of audience as they start copying the English language newspapers' discourse in their social discourse.

The use of linguistics terms such as 'lockdown' or phrases such as 'shutdown of businesses' has affected businesses to shut down that has instigateda large scale unemployment as the United States of America has received 26 million applications for unemployment benefits declared by the President Donald Trump and one million people in the United Kingdom till 27th April. For instance, Apple has closed all its stores in China and caused unemployment. Participant no. 9 has been inspired by the discourse of the selected English newspaper as he supported the cause of financial support, but on the contrary he is afraid of economic devastation from the spread of the novel Coronavirus reasoned because of the ideas of isolation by the English language newspapers. The panic of losing employment and closure of businesses is further intensified through the use of visuals such as in figure 4, which is showing empty streets, roads, and malls, hence perpetuated greater fear. All such information by the selected English language Newspapers have deeply affected the mental models of participants as they start speaking the language of newspapers which favours in locking down the cities or shutting down the business, for instance, participate no. 02 statedin favour of containing the spread of the virus as he says "it is hard to stop unless drastic measures such as closing down cities with iron fists". Moreover, participant no.05 commented that shutting down factories and businesses would be in favour of

humanity as it would cause less pollution and carbon emission, while paying no attention to the unintended consequences. Thus, discourse createdby the selected English language newspapersabout the novel Coronavirus has shownatrend ofaskingfor lockdown or shutting down businesses. This social discourse trend is well replicated by the public in their online comments.

Figure 4. Closure of businesses and empty streets and malls are forecasting complete lockdown and shutdown

Moreover, table 1 has also illustrated that the discourse of nationalism rather than globalization isencouraged by the selected articles of English language newspapers.According to researchers such as Fernandes (2020), shutting down businesses would cause an inevitable worldwide economic recession as he has found that the longer the lockdown, the worse its impacts would be; where 2.5 months of global lockdown will cause -2.8 % hit to the global GDP, 3 months lockdown will cause -6.3 % hit to global GDP, and 4.5 months would cause -10.7 % damages to the world GDP. The similar ideas of nationalism can be seen in the

social discourse of public as participant no. 25 has replicated the need of nationalization and criticized the outcomes of globalization by casting sarcastic remarks as he says," Ah, globalization, the gift that just keeps giving". This statement implies that the globalization hascausedthe spread of the virus and hence supports the forecasts for nationalism.

The data at phrasal and sentence level shows that the novel Coronavirus has changed some key and universally recognized concepts. People are asked to restrict their movements against previouslyacknowledged human independence, change their styles of celebration against previously recognized freedom, leave eating fresh meat against previously known nutritious diet, wear masks against the norms of taking fresh air, close stores against the concept of open and free markets, stay at or work from home against the concept of previously accepted free trade of workers, refrain from appearing in big gatherings against the notion of previously recognized celebrations, and cancel domestic events and limit economic activities against the ideas of economic advancements.They are manipulated to halt playing sports against the concept of 'sports make human fit' as it can be seen in the figure 5, that shows how the novel Coronavirus has compelled the government of Japan to postpone the Olympics of 2020 and hence changed the patterns of living. Moreover, people are encouraged to limit personal contact and shift to remote working programs against the concept of international and national exposure. Hence, shifting people to a new lifestyle which changes the conventions of life eventually makes public to feel

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insecure and feelings of insecurity is strongly associated with fear.It is exhibited through the language of public who are victims of media discourseas participant no. 07 says, "People don't even know that they have it orhad it" and participant no. 26 reassures, "I still don't feel safe. Thank You". Thus, they look frightened as they adapted the language of English language newspapers to spread feelings of insecurity. A comment of a participant no. 07 describes the impacts of such reporting on people as how much they are adapted to the language of English newspaper as he says "it is imperative to admit the existence of virus here and in every single community which requires that you are up to date on your prescriptions".

Table 1

Socially antonyms terms

Newspaper	Words	Phrases
	Isolationism	tight movement restrictions
The Guardian	Lockdown	muted the celebrations in China
		The imposition of quarantine measures
		unprecedented in their scale
		Strict travel restrictions
		No Cure
		Restriction on eating wild life
	Nationalism	People wearing masks
The New York Times	Shutdown	Closing all its stores in China
	Isolationism	Apple, Starbucks and Ikea have temporarily closed stores
	Quarantine	Canceled flights to China
		Workers are likely to remain away from factory towns
		Shifting production to other countries
		Concerts and sporting events have been canceled
		Preventing workers from returning.
The Tribune	Quarantine	Halt their operations
	Isolation	Suspended flights
The Japan Times	Isolation	And urges everyone to refrain from attending gatherings and events
	Telework	Cancel or postpone such events,

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Telecommuting	Discouraging economic activities
Online communications systems	Sports and cultural events involving large numbers of participants over the coming two weeks be canceled, delayed or scaled down. Decrease personal contact Work from home Stay home
	Remote working programs

Figure 5.Olympics in Japan and the spread of the novel Coronavirus. Credit... Japan Times

The human are social beings and part of a global village, this is what the people have learnt from the world, but after the novel Coronavirus outbreak, the world has taken 180 degree turn as illustrated in the figure 6,a universal handshake, kissing on cheeks in the West, and rubbing of noses were asked to be removed from daily life because of the spread of the virus as participant no. 23 mentions, "There is a requirement for governments to council their citizens against unhygienic greetings from the time being". Now, people are asked to stay at home and wear masks as the world famous magazine 'Vogue' has published a picture on its front page to prophesy a change in orthodoxies of life such as cut to social contact that demands masks', as it can be show in the picture6. A comment of participant no.8 shows the impact of the selected English language newspapers' discourse on wearing masks

as he says that "if somebody is sick with any contagious illness, wear a mask".

Figure 6 Don'tmeet people. Photo Credit... Nicholas Konrad/ The New York Times

Governments have halted flight operations and cross border movements. Organizations have closed their factories and asked their workers to either work from home while forcing others to quit, creating an environment of mass unemployment till the conditions come to a safe end. On the other way, sports are encouraged to build healthy environments and brains, but after the outbreak of the virus, sports events are called off. On the worst part, people are requested to self-isolate themselves and governments are applying quarantine measures to compel 8.5 billion people to live an unconventional life. So, the response of

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media in the novel Coronavirus outbreak is not normal and socially antonym which spreads insecurity in the public and hence leads to a greater fear.

Hyperbole and Intensifiers

Fear and hatred can be emphasized through repeated use of exaggeration, hyperboles, and intensifiers (Van Dijk, 1991). The data on the novel Coronavirus is ever evolving that demands optimal decision making, but the coverage of the selectedEnglish language newspapers as shown in table 2 is telling a different story. Through rhetorical devices such as hyperboles and intensifiers, the selected English language newspapersare exaggerating the spread of the novel Coronavirus as JPA Ioannidis (2020) believes that the challenge of the novel Coronavirus has been made complex merely through exaggeration. Table 2 illustrates that by exaggerating number of infected patients such as 'mass infections' and 'hundreds of patients' and by stressing the numbers of deaths such as in the case of over exaggerated expressions used in the selected English language newspapers'globe killing' and 'tens of millions death' have caused great insecurity in the public. Discourse of threat through phrases such as 'grave warning', 'greater menace', and 'vortex of fear'have also been deployed by the selected English language newspapers to build feelings of insecurity. According to Hawryluck et al. (2004) feelings of being unsafe is related to the nexus of fear. Moreover table 4 illustrates that the spread of the novel Coronavirus has been exaggerated through certain intensifiers such as 'extremely

difficult' and 'increasingly worry' and so on.

Over 70.8 million homeless refugeesare under great threat of food shortage because of restrictions to supply due to lockdown. Simultaneously, migrants who have lost their jobs due to global recession are under great threat of hunger. On the contrary, telling the number of migrants through the overuse of language such as 'while hundreds of millions of migrant workers'and encouraging self-isolation, global lockdown, and shutdown of businesses, English language newspapers are spreading anxiety and eventually causing fear for homeless because of financial pressure and health risks as according to Wilson et al. (2019) feeling of homelessness can cause poor health outcomes. Through highlighting the health risks and financial crises, media texts made societies as 'risk communities' where people are waiting for number of measures to mitigate the risk of the novel Coronavirus as the participant no. 10,11, and 12 are worried and anxiously waiting for the government plans to reduce the impacts of the virus. The researcher has noticed that the discourse around the novel Coronavirus has turned so intensified and exaggerated that even the public start speaking like what the selected English language newspapersinfiltrate among them.They have even demanded unconventional measures to contain the spread of the virus. Furthermore, the discourse built about the virus has given rise to anti-sentiment for the governments as people are feeling insecure.

Table 2

Hyperboles and intensifier to report the novel Coronavirus

Names of Newspaper	Hyperboles	Intensifiers
The Guardian	globe killing	Too little
	tens of millions deaths	Every so often
	hundreds of millions	far more swiftly
	grave warning	far less
	stark contrast	very real
	Too little information	Extremely difficult
The New York Times	Hundreds of preventable infections	Far less
	hundreds of millions	increasingly worry
	vortex of fear	deeply strained
	Greater Menace	more potent threat
	while hundreds of millions of migrant workers	threatening sales
		so widespread and intense
	millions restricted to limit	too slow and too disappointing.
The Tribune	massively underfunded	the most susceptible province
		lot more needs to be done.
		more confusion than answers
		too slow and too disappointing.
	millions restricted to limit	critical juncture
	massively underfunded	rapid increase
The Japan Times	hundreds of patients	worst-case scenario
	mass infections	more confusion than answers
		far below the daily maximum of 3,800
		abrupt decision
		much-needed boost

So, from the above analysis, the researcher has found hyperboles and intensifiers repeatedly used in reporting the numbers of patients and deaths due to the novel Coronavirus, which has already caused insecurity in the public and feelings of

being vulnerable is associated with fear. Van Dijk (1992) claims that if we look at the use of hyperboles and intensifiers, they look simple, but they put great emphasize to the event, it could be negative or positive. Here in this case, the overuse of the language while reporting the novel Coronavirus has turned negative as it sparked a great panic through a threat based discourse.Stanivukovic (2007) mentions the significance of the overuse of the language, in which hyperboles are used to emphasize the intensity of the threat and leave overbearing impacts on the audience. If we movetowards the discourse of public under these articles, we shall find instances of overuse of language such as in the case of participant no. 21 response,he has made a comparison between previously occurred flu strains and the novel Coronavirus, through the overuse of language he asserts that the virus would cause deaths much higher than the deaths caused by previously occurred flu strains which shows agreement between the selected English language newspapers'discourse and current public discourse about the novel Coronavirus. Hence, intensifying threat and exaggerating information cause insecurity which is leading to a greater fear and demands unusual measures from the government officials as participant 10 has asked the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson to wake up from his hidings to protect the lives of people.

Metaphors

Metaphor is a power of artistic language which deals with the abstract part of meaning deployed by authors and touches human aesthetics rather than real life information (Shymanskaya, 2020).

Shymanskaya's (2020) claim about the functions of metaphors is used here for this research as he believes that metaphors are deployed by the media to manipulate audience understanding of the event. Van Dijk (1992) believes that the use of metaphor is a persuasive technique to get readers' attention and enrich the reader with the ideologies of the newspapers. Today, the world is witnessing the novel Coronavirus outbreak, where journalists are using different metaphors to describe its spread and characterize its nature. Through studying newspapers' text, I have revealed numbers of metaphors, used to represent the spread of the virus.

Table 3 illustrates that the novel Coronavirus has been described in terms of a greater enemy that the world hasnever seen in the history as 'The Guardian' has described the pandemic as 'killing machine', and 'The New York Times' has described it in terms of a 'real fire' and 'greater menace' that would engulf the world in terms of health and economic crisis. Concurrently 'The Tribune' has mentioned the vulnerability of humans in the face ofthe virus, as this disease does not have any cure in any part of the part. Moreover, from the table2, the word "fight" along with intensifiers has been deployed many times in the coverage of the novel Coronavirus. Rafi (2020) believes that the media has described the virus as a sudden armed attack which needs to be discouraged by the media. Hence, by exaggerating the spread of the virus and numbers of ill cases, a war like situation has been created by the English language newspapers' coverage, where people are encouraged to fight against the virus. To support the point,

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Shymanskaya's (2020) recent research is extremelyrelevant and significant over here as he mentioned some key metaphors to describe the virus such as 'aggressor', 'war', 'fire', 'plague', and 'wave'were deployed by the media to represent the spread of the novel Coronavirus, which represented war like situation.

Hence, the use of metaphors such as 'greater enemy', 'real fire', and 'incurable virus' are encouraging people to fight against a so-called threat-especially that has no other solution-as mostly happens in a war like situation and asking them to take quarantine measures which is causing unintended consequences, making public confuse, and compelling them to live an unconventional life, which according to Bavel et al. (2020) and Hawrylucket al.(2004) eventually is linked with the nexus of fear.

Table 3

Comparison of novel Coronavirus with other viruses

Names of Newspaper	Metaphor	Comparison
The Guardian	Killer Virus/Zoonotic	Birds' flu, Spanish flue, SARS, and MERS
The New York Times	Real Fire/ Great Menace	Swine Flu, Bird's Flue, SARS, MERS and Ebola
The Tribune	Incurable	Polio
The Japan Times	-	Cold/Cross Border Diseases

Comparisons

Bavel et al.,(2020) claim that it is a human nature to take defensive response when they face ecological threats. People change behaviour when they find themselves helpless in the face of a threat. This change in behaviour is deeply associated with the nexus of fear (Hawryluck et al., 2004). The use of metaphor such as 'real fire' and 'greater menace' in table 3 compels public to take defensive measures which is further intensified through the use of visuals such as figure 7, which is asking people to get ready for the real fire.

Figure 7Get ready for 'real fire'. Credit...Nicholas Konrad/ The New York Times

Table3 illustrates that the novel Coronavirus is compared with Bird's Flu, Spanish Flu, Swine Flu, SARS, MERS,

Ebola, Polio, Cold, and Cross border diseases. Where Spanish Flu killed 50 million, Swine Flu wreaked havoc on human by killing 200 thousand. SARS, MERS, and Ebola killed 12 thousand together. CDC reported 1300 deaths per year from 2006 to 2010 from Cold. Rafi (2020) claimed that since the outbreak of the novel Coronavirus, people have been bombarded with scary representations of death. In table 2, we have seen the overuse of language to report about the number of deaths i.e. globe killing or tens of millions deaths. Just to see the impacts of media language on public, participants' responses were analysed and found that the spread of the novel Coronavirus is understoodwith the 'end of the world' by the participant no.16 who read a book on flu epidemic and linked it with this on-going pandemic. The selected English language newspapers constant advisory of taking quarantine measures i.e. self-isolation and the overuse of language to report about the deaths caused by the novel Coronavirus compel public to change their social behavior, wear defensive kits, and take unusual measures against the threat, hence leads to a greater fear. Kövecses (2002) argued that "as fear increases, its physiological and behavioural reactions increase". Participant no. 14 serves that he has been deeply affected by the English language newspapers discourse as people start making comparison between the novel Coronavirus and others such as Spanish flu and SARS to give an image of number of deaths.

Implicitness/Implied Meanings

Van Dijk (1991) believes that implicitness or indirectness through words and propositions is considered one of the most powerful tools in theanalysis of critical discourse. Knowledge, principles, and mental models of journalists deeply affect the information of any ethnic event, for that, journalists deploy implicitness for mutual comprehension between writers and audience.Similarly, [1a and1b] are implying a change in the Chinese way of celebrating events and working methods which are related to the change in behavior. This evidence is presented through visual imagery as in the case of figure 4.7 that shows mutated celebrations as people are wearing masks while worshipping.

In similar to the Chinese mutated celebrations, the Japanese were also shown to be on the receiving end as they also had to mutate their Lunar Calendar New Year holidays, which can be seen in the image 8. Thus, all these instances of text and visuals imply a requirement that foreshadow a change in celebrating events, hence, a great change in social behavior is related to the nexus of fear.

Figure 8 Celebrations on the first day of Lunar Calendar Mutated. Credit...The Guardian

Figure 9 The Novel Coronavirus has mutated celebration of Lunar Calendar New Year Holidays .Credit...Tomohiro Ohsumi/Getty Images

[1c] also implies that the virus would cause deaths as it spreads. So using terms such as isolation, lockdown, shutdown, and highlighting the deadly outcomes of the virus have caudeda transformation in the collective conscience and individual behaviours, that are linked with the nexus of fear especially when there is a constant fear of death.

[1]

a) "This year the coronavirus outbreak has profoundly muted the celebrations in China"

b) "Companies should allow their employees to work from home as much as possible"

c) "Soon it begins to spread. The deaths mount"

Vagueness

From [2a] to [2j], all have shown that the selected English newspaper's texts mostly conceal the responsibility of negative actions especially when they report about medical awareness and actions required for restricting the virus. All the selected articles of English Language Newspapers have one thing in common that is the use of institutional names or common nouns

rather than the actual person who is being quoted to inform the public about the spread of the virus. People have been warned by some unknown sources for taking measure against the spread of the virus and hence compel public to alter their ways of doing. From the analysis of [2a] to [2j], the linguistic term over-completeness has also been observed to report the spread of the virus and measures to control it. That is, the novel Coronavirus has been described in global terms and by referring to action as a whole, which increases the degree of abstraction as Van Dijk (1991) argues the event can be described in many terms of both including its level of abstraction and degree of completeness. Both terms can be used to present negative portrayal of any event. What we can learn from here is that, through irrelevance, the degree of abstraction has been used to present negative image and hence used negative semiotic forms to report about the spread of the novel Coronavirus and preach certain steps require for restricting the virus which compel public to take unusual or unconventional measures which is associated with great fear and panic.

[2]

a) Global health experts warned

b) Scientist later traced

c) Chinese investors

d) Trump Administration

e) While the authorities have taken measures

f) Health Authorities

g) The ministries of health, and the National Institutes of Health

h) The World Health Organization will hold an emergency meeting

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i) Officials covered up the problem for months

j) To prevent a rapid increase in domestic infections of the COVID-19 coronavirus, according to a panel of infectious disease experts who are advising the government

Conclusion (Findings)

The novel Coronavirus and the reporting of the selected English language newspapershavechallenged human's individual and collective consciences in terms of health hazards, financial liabilities, and social and domestic calamities. The study has shown that the general public are deeply affected by the semiotics of the selectedEnglish language newspapers as they start believing in unconventional lifestyle and speaking the language of fear, panic, and hatred. The responsibility of unconventional or socially antonym suggestions is made obscured in the selected English language newspapers, where they have used linguistic techniques such as degree of abstraction and over-completeness. Anti-social linguistics forms, hyperboles and intensifiers, metaphors and comparisons, implied meanings, and vagueness are used to build a discourse of uncertainty and insecurity, which is associated with discourse of fear. By promoting anti-conventionalnorms of life, such as lockdown and social distancing instead of open markets and social cohesion, telecommunication rather than face to face meetings, isolation or quarantine in place of social gatherings, and nationalism rather than globalization, the selected English newspaper coverage has altered the way we live, think and behave. All these

bizarre semioticformshave overturned the normal lifestyles and set a new normal.Such drastic changes, which have become new normal,have laid unintended consequences such as unemployment, closure of educational institutions, businesses shutdown, low immunity due to fear of health crisis, domestic violence, psychological instability, depression, fear, sleeplessness, mood swings, emotional flux, and permanent behavioural changes(Perrin et al., 2009; Hawryluck et al., 2004; Bai et al., 2004; Brooks et al., 2020; Cava et al., 2005; Desclaux et al., 2017).The virus has shuttered the patterns of living by evoking new normal. People are discouraged to eat fresh meat, play sports, open stores, work in offices, celebrate events, shake hands and kiss on cheeks. Moreover, other common thing in all four newspaper article is the use of hyperbole or exaggeration which has made the challenge of the novel Coronavirus more complex by mainly giving stress to the number of deaths and infected patients which is further exaggerated through certain linguistic intensifiers. In response to this, people's collective senses of right and wrong and individual behaviours are deeply affected because of the constant fear of death and incessant advisory of self-isolation. Where exaggeration made the outbreak more complex, the virus is also relatedto greater enemy or a greater threat which is countered through war like rhetoric by the selectedEnglish language newspapers to build discourse of fear about the novel Coronavirus. Their constant recommendation of taking quarantine measures i.e. self-isolation and the overuse of language to report about the deaths and infected patients caused by the

novel Coronaviruscompel public to change their social behavior, wear defensive tools e.g. masks and take unusual measures against the threat which lead them to a greater fear as it is scientifically proven by Kövecses (2002) that when fear increases, it causes socio-psychological changes. In similar to this, semiotic choices deployed by the English language newspapers' texts have changed the conventions of celebrating holidays as in the cases of the Chinese and the Japanese Lunar Calendar New Year's Holidays. Hence the media has deployed those semiotic choices, which ask for change in social behavior. In response to these English language newspapers' semiotic choices, people are overruling their normal instincts and moving towards the unconventionalresponses. They start askingfor closure of borders to increase the sentiments of nationalism, and total lockdown to contain the virus disregarding the sufferings of the most vulnerable.Hence, they replicated the discourse of fear thatwasexaggeratedbyconsumingthe selected English language newspapers' reporting.

If English language newspapers' coverage continues to build the discourse of fear that prophesies for self-isolation and lockdown, it will permanently change the conventions of life and cause everlasting behavioural changes such as cut to social contact, direct communication and visiting public places. It would also cause psychological implication such as more suicides, divorce, domestic violence, disturbed family system and disturbed sex life of partners (Rafi, 2020; c.f. Hussain, 2020). If the businesses remain closed due to the

quarantine measures, it will hit the global GDP to more than -10.7 and would take unknown time for recovery (Fernandes, 2020). So during the time of pandemic, it is important to become the voice of those who are vulnerable to the virus spread, rather than asking for a change in conventions of life, such as freedom, social integration and businesses expansions. The discourse of fear must be replaced with discourse of medical officials that uses factual language and show optimistic visuals to build policies for the most vulnerable.Moreover, this study would recommend media and governments to practice and request the public to read and watch those semiotics choices, which could curtail the social and psychological impacts of the novel Coronavirus and eventually mitigate anti-Chinese sentiments.

Recommendations

I would, therefore, recommend future researchers including medical anthropologists and social critics to draw an in-depth analysis of discourse of fear and Sinophobia around the outbreak through scaling the overall spread of the virus (quantitative) and its socio-cognitive impacts (qualitative) on public that can be taken through social media comments, face to face interviews or surveys, hence the triangulation of both qualitative and quantitative methods would elicit rich findings for the complex research settings. Moreover, I would also recommend socio-political researchers to conduct a study to see the influence of a complicated socio-political setting which shape or formulate press biases and journalists' opinions.

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