
A Pragmatic Study of Advising on Covid-19

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Issue Details

Issue Title: Issue 1

Received: 08 October, 2020

Accepted: 19 November, 2020

Published: 25 December, 2020

Pages: 01 - 10

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Linguistica Antverpiensia

Abstract

This study deals with advising as a pragmatic phenomenon. In advising the speaker offers the benefit of his opinion to the addressee, but that implies the speaker is valuing his opinion above the hearer's. So advising is "a double-edged sword. The study investigates the use of advising in Covid-19 instructions.

The study falls into three sections: section one gives an introduction to the whole study (problem of the study, aims, limits, value, procedures and model of the study).

Section two gives a theoretical background. It deals with advising as a type of speech acts, referring to speech act theory, giving the felicity conditions of advising and explaining directive speech acts.

Section three is concerned with methodology, data analysis and the findings and percentages of data.

Keywords

Speech act theory, Advising speech act, directives, advising in Covid-19

1. Introduction (Heading 1)

1.1 The Problem

Advising is a directive speech act in which the speaker asks the hearer to perform an action for his own benefit. In other words, it tells the hearer what is best for him to do. Advising attempts at persuading the recipient to perform an action so it requires the advisor to take care of words selection and to choose a perfect way in expressing his advice so as to be more acceptable by the recipient.

The current study is concerned with the production of the speech act of advising in Covid-19. It investigates the pragmatic way of presenting advice.

Advising can be expressed in different strategies: direct, conventionally indirect and non-conventionally indirect. In this study, these strategies will be identified in the instructions of Covid-19.

1.2 The Aims

The current study aims at:

1. Showing the concept of advising as a pragmatic phenomenon.

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2. Showing how the speech act of advising is performed in Covid-19 instructions,
 3. Shedding light on the health advising especially these of Covid-19.

1.3 The Procedures

The procedures of the study are:

1. A theoretical survey of speech acts theory is presented.
2. Directive speech acts is clarified with focus on advising which is the concern of the study.
3. Data analysis is selected from Covid-19 instructions.
4. Findings and conclusions are presented.

1.4 The Limits

The present study is limited to investigating the use of advising in Covid-19 instructions. It is limited to the exploration of all the forms of advising that can be found within this area.

1.5 The Value

The study is expected to be of value to every student who studies English as a foreign language. It is of a crucial value for those who are interested in pragmatics.

1.6 The model of the study

Two models are followed in this study. First, Searle (1969) who defines advising as "telling you what is best for you". Second, Martinez-Flor's (2003) who classifies advising strategies into: direct, conventionally indirect and non-conventionally indirect. These models are applied to healthy pieces of advice especially those of COVID-19.

Advising as a Pragmatic Phenomenon

2.1 Speech Act Theory

When you are asked about the function of language you may reply that language is used to describe things and communicate ideas. These are some purposes of language, but language can be used for doing actions as Dascal (2003:502-520) and Armstrong and Fogelin (2013: 22) explain that language can be used in achieving actions not only in saying words. As in the following example:

(1) I promise I will visit them next week .

Here the speaker not only gives an idea but he commits himself to perform the action of visiting next week .

In Austin's book "How to do Things with Words" an observation is presented which explains that when someone says something that has a sense and reference ,he is normally doing something not only saying words, as in requesting, advising, offering etc. The following sentences imply request :

(2) I request that you make me a cup of tea.

(3) Can I have a cup of tea. (Geis,1995:3).

perform an act (Fought, 2006:225).

Bayley and Lucas (2007:142) show that speech act meaning should be understood by co-communicators whether within the same culture or between different cultures and that demands an ability in interpreting the meaning of different linguistic forms and if the meaning is misunderstood, communication will fail ,notice the following example:

(4) Could you wash these dishes?

If the receiver understands the utterance as question the communication will fail because the aim of the speaker is a request that requires the receiver to wash the dishes .

According to what has gone before , one can summarize the concept of speech acts in four words (action performance through words) .And it is very important to refer to Austin's classifications of speech acts. He firstly classifies them into performatives and constatives then he criticizes this distinction and presents explicit and implicit acts and finally he replaces this distinction by locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts and all these distinctions will be explained in the following subsections.

2.2 Directive Speech Acts

Directives refer to the speaker's point of view regarding the action achieved by the hearer and his intent that what he says or introduces can be considered as a cause for the action that is achieved by the hearer (Bach and Harnish,1979:41).

Kecskes and Horn (2007:265) show that directives are those speech acts that are uttered by the speaker with the aim that requires the hearer to perform the action (requesting ,advising ,warning and suggesting are types of directives).So directives are regarded as the opposite of commissives which mean that the speaker commits himself to perform the action (promise and threat are types of commissives).

In Searle's classification, speech acts, such as orders, advising and requests are speech acts by which the speaker or writer tries to get someone do something :

(5) Could you give me that book please ?

(6) You have to speak with him if he is regretful. (Brown and Miller,2013:135).

They also state that directives reflect the speaker's wish or desire for the addressee to act and they classify this category into six types of acts : Requestives, Questions, Requirements ,Prohibitives, Permissives and Advisories. Directives are those utterances that have 'you' as an actor even if this word is not present within the utterance as in:

(7) (You) stop here .

(8) Do not waste your time (ibid:47) .

Bussmann (1996:319) points out that directives are speech acts whose main purpose is to cause the addressee to undertake a particular act and they can be expressed not only by imperatives ,but they can be expressed in various ways such as the use of declarative sentences (You must leave now), gerund phrases as (No smoking) ,impersonal passive (Red flowers are to be ordered there), non-embedded complements "Just so you

don't forget the milk" and the use of modals "You ought to be here now! ".

Kreidler (1998:189) adds that directives are considered as prospectives since it is unreasonable to ask people for doing actions in the past. Directive utterance is based on certain conditions concerning the addressee and the context of situation, for example the utterance "speak in French" is not felicitous if the addressee cannot speak French and "open the window" is not appropriate if there is only one window already opened.

Cutting (2002:17) says that directives category contains the acts that are intended to make the addressee do something, such as (requesting, commanding, inviting, advising, warning, forbidding).

Wouters et al (2012:168) and Holmes (2013:277) show that directive speech acts have a purpose of obliging someone else to do some act. One can attempt to get people to be careful with something, for instance, by commanding or advising them to do so, or by suggesting that they be careful.

(9) Better remain silent and be thought a fool, than open your mouth and remove all possible doubt.

2.3 Speech Act of Advising

Bach and Harnish (1979:42) classify speech act of advising within informatives category which includes verbs like: (advise, disclose, announce, inform, apprise, inform, report, insist, reveal, notify, point out, testify, tell).

Besides, Bach and Harnish provide the term advisories, where the speaker's utterance is not a desire that the addressee do a specific action but it is a belief in the speaker's mind that there is a good idea in the addressee's interest (ibid: 49).

Brown and Levinson (1987:76) consider the speech act of advising as face-threatening act. It puts the hearer in a situation in which he is asked to produce something and thus limiting the hearer's freedom. It gives the speaker more power and authority as he puts himself in a place where "he knows what is best for the hearer".

Gass and Neu (1995:228) point out that in most of the times advising is given by men more than women. "Women commiserate while men give advice", particularly when they reply to women's indirect complaints. The reason behind this distinction is that men think in a logical way and tend to solve problems more than women. While women produce emotional support, men have the tendency to get to the root of the problem and know its cause to be solved.

Limberg and Locher (2012: 316) differentiate between 'advise' and 'advice'. The verb 'advise' implies a semi-official status of the person who advises, that he is known as having a specialized knowledge concerning the current situation and his message can be expected to be followed seriously; for example (I advise you to stop drinking more tea) seems as a doctor's speech not as that of a friend. The noun 'advice' is more informal and it does not imply a specialized knowledge, (my advice is don't apply for that job") can be said by a friend who doesn't have a special knowledge on the subject and who does not

expect his advice to be followed seriously.

Leech (2014:102) shows that in advising the speaker offers the benefit of his opinion to the addressee, but that implies the speaker is valuing his opinion above the hearer's. So advising is "a double-edged sword" and it is commonly produced with markers of conditionality, unreality, tentativeness "If I were you, I'd . . . , Wouldn't it be better if ... Could I suggest. . . .".

Leech comments on Searle's definition of speech act of advising when he says that this definition suggests both polite and impolite aspects: the polite one is implied in the sense that the speaker wishes goodness for the hearer (Generosity Maxim), the impolite aspect is implied in the case when the speaker tells the hearer what is good for him which shows the speaker's superiority upon the hearer, since he tries to impose his opinion upon the hearer (Leech, 2014:102).

2.4 Felicity Conditions of Advising Speech Act

Searle (1969:66) provides many felicity conditions regarding the speech act of advising. They can be shown as follows:

1. Propositional Condition: the speaker expects a future act of the hearer
2. Preparatory Conditions:
 - a. The speaker has some reason to believe that the act will benefit the hearer
 - b. It is not obvious to both the speaker and the hearer that the hearer will do the act in the normal course of events
3. Sincerity Condition: the speaker is sure that the action will be in the hearer's benefit.
4. Essential Condition: the speaker knows that the advice that he asks the hearer to follow is in the hearer's interest.

2.5 Felicity Conditions of Health Advising

Van Poppel (2013:55) mentions felicity conditions of health advising:

1. Essential Condition: is the condition in which advising is considered as an attempt by the advisor to make the receiver perform an act which is beneficial for him to treat or prevent a problem that may affect the receiver's health.
2. Propositional Condition: represents the condition in which the advisor predicates a future act that is beneficial to the receiver's health.
3. Preparatory Conditions:
 - a. the advisor has reasons to believe that the act will be beneficial to the receiver's health by treating, preventing or detecting a health problem.
 - b. the advisor believes that the receiver is willing to perform the action.
 - c. the advisor believes that the receiver is able to perform the action.
 - d. the advisor is a health authority and has a knowledge of the action and its effect.
 - e. it is not obvious to both the advisor and the receiver that the receiver will "perform the action in the normal course of events".
 - f. the advisor believes that the receiver has not yet performed or is not yet performing the

action.

4. Responsibility Conditions:

- a. the advisor wants the receiver to perform the action.
- b. the advisor believes that the action benefits the receivers health .

2.6 Linguistic Realizations of Advising

Leech (2014:205) linguistically, the imperative is the most direct form of advice as in:

You look so tired. Sit down.

Leech provides other forms of advising:

- d. have to: (10) They have to avoid this.
 - e. Need to : (11) You need to be accurate.
 - f. Should: (12) You should get up early.
 - g. You'd better: (13) You had better visit him.
- (ibid:207) .

Martinez-Flor (2003:144) gives three types of strategies which are used to imply speech act of advising: (direct, conventionally indirect and non-conventionally indirect).

1. The direct one can be of four realizations:

a. imperative as in:

(14) Wash your teeth .

b. Negative imperatives as in:

(15) Don't touch that .

c. Declaratives in modals (should and ought to) as in

(16) You ought to help him.

d. Declarative by using performative verbs :

I advise you to be more active.

e. declarative with the noun advice as in:

(17) My advice to you is to visit them.

2. Indirect conventionalized strategy, that includes conditional as in :

(18) If I were you , I would order these shelves .

3. Indirect non-conventionalized strategy in which advising is produced implicitly by hints such as :

(19) You want to order these shelves, don't you? (Martinez-Flor, 2003:144).

2.7 Characteristics of Medical Language

Medical language is characterized by many features that distinguish it from other languages as Mey (2009:593) shows :

- 1. The extensive use of words that are largely related to subject matter .In other words each word ,phrase or sentence uttered in medical context is special and refers to medical jargon .
- 2. Medical language is characterized by the use of passivization and impersonal style to be

more objective. So the specialists use third person pronouns rather than first person pronouns .

Pei (1966:347) presents another characteristic of medical English language saying that there are many words in medical English of Greek and Latin origin and the Roman heritage has brought the Greek medicine to English. Romans have added many Latin expressions to medicine which have made the medical language very difficult and odd for the public.

Data Analysis

3.1 Data Selection

In this study, the pieces of advice concerning Covid-19 are collected from Internet sources.

3.2 Data Analysis

This section is concerned with analysing Covid-19 pieces of advice in a pragmatic way since advising is a directive speech act.

□ The bold writing implies a unit of analysis.

Text (1)

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

Analysis

Advising speech act here is presented by using imperative so it is a direct strategy that used here. And since it implies a benefit for the receiver it is an advice.

Text (2)

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Analysis

Advising speech act is presented by using imperative so it is a direct strategy that used here. And since it implies a benefit for the receiver it is an advice.

Text (3)

Avoid close contact with people who are sick, even inside your home.

Analysis

Advising speech act is presented by using imperative so it is a direct strategy that used here. And since it implies a benefit for the receiver it is an advice.

Text (4)

Put distance between yourself and other people outside of your home.

Analysis

Advising speech act is presented by using imperative so it is a direct strategy that used here.

And since it implies a benefit for the receiver it is an advice.

Text (5)

Do not gather in groups.

Analysis

Advising speech act is presented by using negative imperative which is one of direct strategy forms. And since it implies a benefit for the receiver it is an advice.

Text (6)

Stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings.

Analysis

Advising speech act is presented by using imperative so it is a direct strategy that used here. And since it implies a benefit for the receiver it is an advice.

Text (7)

Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others

Analysis

Advising speech act is presented by using imperative so it is a direct strategy that used here. And since it implies a benefit for the receiver it is an advice.

Text (8)

Everyone should wear a cloth face cover when they have to go out in public, for example to the grocery store or to pick up other necessities.

Analysis

Advising speech act is presented by using declarative sentence with modal should so it is a direct strategy that used here. And since it implies a benefit for the receiver it is an advice.

Text (9)

Do NOT use a facemask meant for a healthcare worker.

Analysis

Advising speech act is presented by using negative imperative which is one of direct strategy forms. And since it implies a benefit for the receiver it is an advice.

Text (10)

Be alert for symptoms. Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19.

Analysis

Advising speech act is presented by using imperative so it is a direct strategy that used here. And since it implies a benefit for the receiver it is an advice.

Conclusions

The current study has reached the following conclusions:

1. Advising is a directive speech act in which the speaker asks the hearer to perform an action for his own benefit.

2. Directives are those speech acts that are uttered by the speaker with the aim that requires the hearer to perform the action (requesting, advising).
3. Imperative as a direct strategy is used 70% in Covid-19 pieces of advice. Negative imperative is used 20%, Declarative with modal is used 10%. So the whole pieces of advice are based on direct strategy.
4. The use of direct strategy in all the pieces of advice implies a concern and seriousness in providing advising speech act.

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