Life-Saving Messages and Cognitive Ability of Focusing on Similitudes in the Coronavirus Pandemic: Cases of Public Health for Hand Hygiene Compliance and Related Examples in Communication to Encourage Appropriate Actions

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1. Introduction

1.1. Outline of COVID-19 and desirable communication

Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we have been confronted with challenging times since early 2020. COVID-19 is now affecting the lives of everyone on the planet. This paper shares some examples of successful communication in these challenging times, analyzes the cases from linguistics perspectives, especially from the viewpoints of pragmatics, and proposes desirable communication where people are asked to act in certain ways to achieve beneficial goals. The authors of this paper are a linguist and a medical doctor, and in everyday medical settings, selecting appropriate messages is essential. This research finds that employing messages focusing on similitudes is one of the useful ways of encouraging people to act appropriately. Since COVID-19 is an unprecedented disease that has spread suddenly throughout the world, it would seem that the most effective solutions would be those obtained mainly from medicine and public health studies, and people are now awaiting the development of a COVID-19 vaccine; at the same time, theoretical linguistics could contribute to society especially in the sharing of an appropriate means of communication to ameliorate difficult situations. Successful selection and delivery of verbal messages could assist with the challenges of COVID-19 since we require correct understanding of these unprecedented circumstances, and appropriate actions could at least be partially guided by desirable communication through verbal messages.

2. Public Hygiene and COVID-19

2.1. COVID-19 pandemic and the world

The spread of COVID-19 started in China, and on February 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that they had officially named this disease COVID-19 (BBC News, 2020). The term, *A professor in the Faculty of Business Administration, and a research fellow of the Institute of Human Sciences at Toyo University
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COVID-19 is composed of three items: Corona/ Virus/ Disease, and the year 2019, when this disease was first reported to the WHO. On March 11, 2020, the coronavirus epidemic was labelled a pandemic by the WHO. For example, it was reported as “WHO chief Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the number of cases outside China had increased 13-fold in two weeks. He said he was ‘deeply concerned’ by ‘alarming levels of inaction.’” (BBC News, 2020). As the WHO expected, it continued to spread across the globe, plunging the world into a state of emergency. The word “pandemic” can be divided into three parts: pan (all)/ dem (people)/ -ic (adjectival suffix, expresses the nature of something). A pandemic has a larger scale, and a wider influence than an epidemic. The term pandemic is used when a disease spreads in multiple countries around the world simultaneously.

COVID-19 continues to have a devastating impact, and is restricting our daily activities. Our face-to-face interactions are still greatly limited to prevent us catching this virus. People are working diligently to prevent COVID-19, and our lifestyles have changed dramatically. When a patient tests positive for the virus, the people around him/her will also be affected. If he/she falls ill with COVID-19, other people will also be affected. School Shutdowns were instigated, but the state of emergency has since been lifted. Online education was commenced in schools, but face-to-face classes have gradually started up again since September 2020 at universities in Tokyo. Many restaurants were closed in spring, but are now gradually restarting their operations. Therefore, it is important to keep COVID-19 at bay by everyone cooperating together.

The number of cases has been fluctuating. Since it is not easy to eradicate COVID-19 in a short period of time, coping with this difficult situation is an ongoing struggle. Even if the number of global infections continues to rise and fall, it is unlikely that COVID-19 will disappear completely all at once. The coronavirus pandemic has had such an influence on our lives and life styles that people are now expected to act in a certain way, even though many of these situations are new to us all. Therefore, coronavirus countermeasures are necessary in every aspect of our lives to limit the spread of COVID-19, and the way for selection and delivery of appropriate messages has become more important than ever before in order to encourage people to act accordingly in COVID-19 society.

2.2. Avoiding infection-evoking unhygienic settings

Close physical contact is one of the biggest causes of infection, and countries are making efforts to reduce the infection risk. Airborne infection and coughing are important factors when people consider coronavirus countermeasures. Since COVID-19 is an airborne infectious disease, coughing and contacting within a crowd and/or in a closed space are seriously undesirable. An infected patient coughs and expectorates small droplets. These small droplets are infectious to the people around the patient. Even the breath of the patient is infectious. With COVID-19, the elderly and the immunocompromised are particularly vulnerable and tend to have more serious symptoms, including death. Therefore, many people are now wearing masks, of which there was a
shortage at one point because of the surge in demand.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced that “The principal mode by which people are infected with SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) is through exposure to respiratory droplets carrying infectious virus.” (CDC, 2020). We must act against the spread of COVID-19 as one united world. Breathing is essential to life, and we are exposed to the air all the time. Therefore, it is not easy to totally prevent situations where people are free from other people’s respiration. Well-shared understanding and certain desirable actions are more indispensable than before through communication at many levels in the current COVID-19 world. People are willing to save lives, but their mindset varies. We need scientific measures against COVID-19, and at the same time, we need well-selected verbal messages to be shared within the community and the whole world to obtain certain desired goals. Astute verbal messages can undoubtedly evoke appropriate and desirable acts.

2.3. Avoiding the “Three Cs (San-mitsu)”

In Japan, the Prime Minister’s Office and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare have employed the term san-mitsu (三密). Since the whole picture and features of COVID-19 were unclear, the measures against COVID-19 were not evident at the beginning, and the idea of san-mitsu (三密) was gradually generated, with its importance being shared among society. The Prime Minister’s Office tweeted and expressed the importance of preventing the three overlapping conditions. (The Prime Minister’s Office, 2020). The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2020) has also created awareness-raising materials and leaflets.

This term was not widely used before the COVID-19 pandemic, and could be regarded as a coined word, or a word that became frequently used because of this new circumstance. San-mitsu wo sakeru started to be widely used in the media, meaning “avoiding the ‘Three Cs.’” The Three Cs are: (1) mippei : closed spaces, (2) misshuu : crowded places, and (3) missetsu : close-contact settings, and they all have the same Chinese character in common, mitsu (密). It has become an established slogan that encourages people to aim for “zero C” in Japan. Mitsu (密) literally means “tightness/ denseness/ closeness,” and san-mitsu (三密) can be literally translated as “three tightness/ denseness/ closeness.”

The idea of san-mitsu was recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO), and its official Facebook page announced the importance of avoiding the “Three Cs” on July 18, 2020. They pointed out that “There are certain places where COVID-19 spreads more easily : Crowded places, Close-contact settings, and Confined and enclosed spaces.” The concept of the “Three Cs (San-mitsu)” is useful for encouraging people to act appropriately by adapting to a new lifestyle with COVID-19. People have the need to name something that has newly appeared, and good slogans and well-coined expressions are essential in these situations. People with various backgrounds need to share and cope with the same difficult situation, and the behavior of one person will influence that of another. In other words, sharing the correct knowledge and selection of appropriate and
desirable actions can build and maintain a safe community. In Japan, when people looked for commonalities in places where there was an outbreak of COVID-19, they found that the common point was these three factors which have to be avoided.

Also, the term “social distance” is now widely used globally. In Japan it is directly adopted from the English, and is pronounced in Japanese almost the same way as it is in English as soosharu disutansu. While some more senior or conservative people would prefer proper Japanese words over adopted or loan words, the concept of “social distance” is so widely spread in society that it is frequently used in Japanese as an adopted word today. At the same time, there is more conceptual discussion stating that what is required in this new lifestyle with COVID-19 is physical not social distance. The term “social distance” has the connotation that people are divided or separated socially and are isolated in the community. We need a good distance to prevent the inhalation of droplets from coughing and sneezing, or breathing infectious air. One linguist, David Crystal stated the following on Twitter in the early stage of the COVID-19 outbreak, on March 31, 2020: “I wonder who invented the term ‘social distancing’? Seems totally wrong to me. It’s ‘physical distancing’ we need to be practicing. We need social solidarity, not distancing, at this time.” We give things a name in order to be able to reference them, or call them something. We give new names to new things. Language is essential to understand the world. Naming new ideas reflects how we recognize the world. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) stated this in their book remarking that our metaphorical expressions are based on the metaphors we experience. Having an appropriate understanding can lead to the selection of appropriate actions in a new lifestyle with COVID-19. Therefore, naming new concepts has great importance in society. Good slogans can encourage a large group of people to act in appropriate ways.

3. Theoretical Backgrounds of Action-encouraging Messages

3.1. Speech act theory

Theoretical linguistics includes the area of pragmatics, and this study is related closely to our daily actions. For example, according to Austin and Searle, our speech and acts are connected. Austin claimed the existence of performative verbs such as, “promise,” ”swear,” and “declare.” By using these special verbs, people are actually performing the act itself. Searle proposed the idea of speech acts. A speech act is composed of three levels. (1) A locutionary act, (2) an illocutionary act, and (3) a perlocutionary act. (1) A locutionary act is the performance of an utterance itself such as “Is there any salt?” (2) An illocutionary act is implied requests or meanings by the utterance. Therefore, in the case of the utterance, the locutionary act “Is there any salt?” could be a possible request or the illocutionary act could be “Can you pass the salt to me?” A perlocutionary act is the actual effect of the locutionary and illocutionary acts, such as persuading or threatening.

Also, the concept of indirect speech acts is influential in our daily use of language. For example, people often use indirect speech acts to reject proposals to avoid face-threatening acts. If you are invited to a party and
someone asks if you would like to come to the party tonight, but you do not feel like going, you could say, “I have homework to do,” instead of saying “No, I don’t want to.” People can also use indirect speech acts to make requests in a polite manner, so that the receiver of the message can act in accordance with the way in which they are spoken to. Especially in the service industry, providers of the service prefer to ask questions indirectly as a means of showing hospitality. This is exactly the opposite case of the communication in emergency settings, but they do have something in common. That is, how to make people move through language use. There are many books on advertisement studies such as Caples (1997) or in marketing studies such as Cialdini (2009) (2016), and how to attract people is a topic of wide concern in many fields. The book How to Develop Self-confidence and Influence People by Public Speaking by Dale Carnegie (1926) is one of the world’s best sellers. How to encourage people to act in a certain way is a traditional and well-known topic that has been regarded as an important issue, and this area of study has become more significant in the era of COVID-19, since this virus is contagious, and correct public understanding and appropriate behavior and actions are expected on the global scale. How to deliver the messages of warning, ordering, or requesting, etc. needs to be well planned through consideration of the expected results. For example, in the context of COVID-19 the expectation is not just that one must wash one’s hands, but that one must wash one’s hands thoroughly and hygienically. The definitions of “thoroughly” and “hygienically” differ depending on the individual, thus well selected messages are a necessary on the global scale in order to keep the whole world well prepared in the fight against COVID-19. We are facing a period when people should be re-reminded of the importance of verbal messages and how influential they are in directing the actual actions.

3.2. Easy Japanese for everyone, Yasashii Nihongo

Today, there are many foreign people in Japan, and not all of them are familiar with Japanese. In those cases, simple and easy messages are preferred especially in urgent and life-threatening situations. The use of easy Japanese for everyone, named Yasashii Nihongo in Japanese, has been proposed. The value and importance of Yasashii Nihongo started to be recognized after the Great East Japan earthquake disaster. People noticed there were many unclear messages where the intention of the message was not well delivered, and thus Yasashii Nihongo began to be used for people with various backgrounds. Important researches have been conducted on this topic such as those by Iori (2016) and many others. The idea of Yasashii Nihongo has also been employed in the preparation of the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics which was supposed to be hosted in 2020 (Bureau of Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 Preparation, 2020). The importance of Yasashii Nihongo is also acknowledged in the media such as in News Web Easy (2020) by NHK, Nippon Hoso Kyokai, Japan Broadcasting Corporation which is Japan’s only public broadcaster, and whose targeted audience also includes non-native speakers of Japanese who are living in Japan.

For example, most people do not have a concrete idea of what constitutes a large tsunami, be it 15 or 40
meters. What people need to understand is that they need to evacuate to a safe place as soon as possible. The exact height of that tsunami does not really indicate the degree of danger involved, and therefore it is not useful. Rather, what people require are easy and straightforward messages that can enable people to act appropriately in such urgent situations.

Studies in these fields have been conducted worldwide such as those of Cannon (2008) and Federici (2020), and disaster prevention management is becoming increasingly important in this COVID-19 world. These natural hazard studies are interdisciplinary; how people deliver, receive, and understand messages, and how people can act appropriately in unexpected circumstances are also inextricably matters of linguistics. The perspectives of Yasashii Nihongo need to be included in the context of life-saving messages regarding COVID-19. The Japanese adjective yasashii has two meanings. The first yasashii means “kind” or “gentle,” and in Kanji it can be understood as in 優しい日本語. The second yasashii means “easy,” and in Kanji it can be understood as in 易しい日本語. The term Yasashii Nihongo is written in Hiragana as in やさしい日本語, therefore it can be interpreted in both senses in Japanese. The pronunciation is the same, but it conveys double meanings. This concept of Yasashii Nihongo written in Hiragana is important when people consider the life-saving messages within the COVID-19 contexts. We need yasashii (kind and easy) messages in both senses, and simultaneously we must take strict (not yasashii) measures against COVID-19 to suppress the spread of the virus.

3.3. Framing, decision making, and psychology of choice

There are many cases where some people see the same thing, but describe it in a different way. For example, Venus is called both “the morning star” and “the evening star,” but the reference is identical. How to describe a reference is important because people will have different images depending on verbal messages they receive. The well-known study by Tversky and Kahneman (1981) proposed the framing effect and revealed that there is a psychological preference of choice. This viewpoint has given insight to linguistics studies, and there have been many related studies conducted to date such as those of Geurts (2013) and Claus (2019). In hazardous setting communication such as with COVID-19, the media need to remember that the following sentences will result in different choices.

Tversky and Kahneman (1981) proposed an example of a well-known risky choice-framing problem which is called the “Asian Disease Problem.” Under the framing effect people will have a different decision-making procedure for the same problem. In other words, when people have different framings, they will opt for different choices even for the same decision-making problem. In this problem the participants were asked to imagine that the United States is preparing for the outbreak of an unusual Asian disease, which is expected to kill 600 people. Two alternative scenarios were proposed, and they are both aimed at combatting the disease. However, the difference is how it expresses their situation, which thus provides different framings to the participants. Problem
I employs the positive framing condition, and the results of the programs are described as follows:

1. If Program A is adopted, 200 people will be saved.
2. If Program B is adopted, there is a one-third probability that 600 people will be saved and a two-thirds probability that no people will be saved.

The participants were asked to choose one scenario, and 72 percent of the respondents favored A, and 28 percent favored B. Both (1) and (2) are describing the same state, but the way they describe it affects people's preference. People favored the risk averse choice of (1) under this positive framing condition. The prospect of certainly saving 200 lives as it is described in (1) is more attractive than the risky prospect described in (2). However, when the participants were given a negative framing condition, the result was the opposite. A randomly selected second group of respondents received the same question but the situation was described in a different way. Problem 2 employs the negative framing condition, and the results of the scenarios are described as follows:

3. If Program C is adopted, 400 people will die.
4. If Program D is adopted, there is a one-third probability that nobody will die and a two-thirds probability that 600 people will die.

They were asked “Which of the two programs would you favor?” The result was that 22 percent of the respondents said C, and 78 percent said D. A large percentage favored the two-in-three chance that 600 would die rather than the certain death of 400 people. Here, program A and C are objectively the same. Also, the program B and D are the same, since “to be saved” is equivalent to “not to die,” and “not to be saved” is equivalent to “die.” This is how our human mind works and one of the ways we recognize the world. This insightful problem sheds light on decision-making studies, but it can also be employed in COVID-19 society. People seem to engage in rational decision making and follow logical steps in their way of thinking, but as the above shows we are easily influenced by the way language expresses and describes things. Therefore, we need to be careful when selecting and understanding expressions.

4. **Hygiene in COVID-19 and related examples**

4.1. **Hygiene practices**: An example of hand washing

Since COVID-19 is an infectious disease, washing hands is effective to prevent COVID-19. On the BBC, reporters repeatedly used the examples of “singing ‘the happy birthday song’ twice” and “singing the song ‘Row, row, row your boat’ twice.” This is a great example of sending an appropriate message. People are not
sure how long 20 seconds is. Even if we are advised to wash our hands for at least 20 seconds, it is rare to have a stopwatch to measure the time while we are washing our hands. Therefore, singing well known songs while washing our hands is a great idea. These two songs take about 20 seconds to sing, and most English speakers are familiar with them.

Giving a concrete and familiar example is an excellent way of delivering messages to people with various backgrounds. In these settings people have different shared knowledge, and therefore widely shared examples are useful to deliver the intention of the message. In this case it is not enough to state “Wash your hands thoroughly” because the word “thoroughly” is an adverb of degrees and its definition is unclear. As each individual measures “thorough” washing of their hands subjectively, maintaining an appropriate degree of hygiene in society becomes impossible. Therefore, we need a definition of “thoroughness” and the concrete and familiar example of thoroughness is helpful to encourage the recipients of the message to act appropriately.

4.2. Singers, dancers and comedians in Japan

In Japan, the media employed famous singers and celebrities to encourage hand washing. Similar movies by singers and celebrities have been made and shared globally, and this has been helpful in getting the attention of ordinary people. Those movies depicted the ideal way of washing hands and provided guidance especially to young children on the correct way to conduct hand washing. It repeatedly showed which parts of the hands and fingers tend to be left uncleansed, and which parts require more careful attention when washing.

As mentioned in the previous section, time is abstract, and people feel it passes quickly or slowly depending on their mindset. Therefore, the correct measurement of the seconds or duration of performing an action is important to ensure people act appropriately. Similar things can be pointed out from the perspective of vagueness. It is not a matter of the concept of time, but a matter of every unfamiliar message. For example, we are now familiar to see the message such as “please keep distance of 1-2 meters”, but what constitutes “two meters” is also still unclear, since two meters is not a measurement always required in every-day life, and such image remains vague. Therefore, stating “it is the length by which two people stretch out their arms and touch each other” is more appropriate to send the correct message and encourage appropriate action.

Similar things were happening before COVID-19. For example, when people are asked “What is a Jacaranda tree?” there are many ways of explaining it. The simplest way is to show a picture of a Jacaranda tree. If one needs to describe it orally, one needs to illustrate its flowers and height. However, if you have been to Brazil where there are Jacaranda trees everywhere, you might just need to mention that they are the trees you used to see along avenues and on mountains. Also, if you are asked “What is a Baobab tree?” you might need to mention the book by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Le Petit Prince* (The Little Prince), or you might wonder if you are being asked to describe the actual Baobab tree on Madagascar Island in Africa. In addition, there is a well-known anecdote of “The Blind Men and an Elephant.” It tells how blind people described an elephant
differently by touching it. Each person selected different features of the elephant, but did not depict the appearance of the elephant as a whole. This anecdote is often used to exemplify the difficulty and importance of grasping the whole picture of the target, but it also suggests that selecting important features is very different depending on the person and the situation. Therefore, as it is totally up to the intention of the message, the way one describes something should also differ greatly.

4.3. Communication in medical settings and stating similitudes

When providing medical treatment, similar issues occur. Using concrete and familiar examples is sometimes helpful. When a doctor wants to explain a disease to a patient, the content of the explanation tends to be professional and technical. However, as a lay person, there are many cases when the patient is not familiar with medical terminologies or definitions. There are many ways to offer good medical practices, and one such way is to use similitudes in explanations. For example, Kawasaki Disease was discovered by a Japanese pediatrician, Dr. Tomisaku Kawasaki in the 1960s and the cause of the disease remains unclear. It is also called mucocutaneous lymph node syndrome, MCLS in English. Infants who get this disease will have high temperatures and many other symptoms. One of its characteristic symptoms is that it causes a red tongue because of hyperemia. Being “red” is a subjective judgment. How we perceive red as red differs by each individual, but describing and defining the redness of the tongue is important in medical treatment. The redness of the tongue of a patient with Kawasaki Disease resembles that of a strawberry. Thus, it is called ichigo jita which literally refers to “strawberry tongue” and means a tongue like strawberries. Strawberries have many features. They are visibly red, two to three centimeters in size, and have small seeds that look like dots on the surface. They smell sweet, and feel soft, etc. Among these various features of strawberries, the feature of their color is selected to depict the state of the tongue. Strawberries are familiar fruits for ordinary people in Japan, and it is rare to find people who has never eaten or seen strawberries.

Also, it is often illustrated that the lips of the patient become red as if they have colored them with lipstick. One could argue that there are many colors of lipsticks. However, it is clear from the commonsensical inference that the prototypical color of lipstick is red, not pink, orange, purple, or gold, etc. In Japanese lipstick is called kuchi beni which literally corresponds to “mouth” and “red,” and this noun can refer to lipsticks of any color besides red. In the above explanation, the listener can infer that the prototypical color of a lipstick is “red.” It is unlikely that an infant will be wearing makeup and lipstick, and the use of the simile “just like” or “as if” needs to be added to the expression “the lips of the patient are colored with lipstick.” Giving an example of lipstick is providing a sense of familiarity to care-givers.

This type of employment of similitudes in explanation is helpful and useful for ordinary people to judge at home if their children are infected. The anti-COVID-19 messages can also utilize this sort of employment of similitudes in explanations, since the background settings are similar where people need to deal with
unprecedented situations.

4.4. A slogan by the British Transport Police

The slogan “See it, say it, sorted” is widely used in the British Transport Police. This phrase can be found on posters and also at stations. It has been repeated so many times that people can easily remember it. However, it is not the number of times the message is repeated in order for us to memorize it that is important, but rather the pattern it employs. It utilizes rhyme, more specifically, alliteration, and therefore it can be easily recognized and remains in our memory.

The repeated word “it” is not explicitly explained with words in this short slogan. However, it evokes all the possible images that “it” can depict and refer to, thus the general understanding is that “it” refers to suspicious objects in your vicinity. The message does not need to list up all the names of suspicious items, rather this message asks us to employ our general knowledge of defining what suspicious things or people are.

This message is also announced audibly in trains that states “If you see something that doesn’t look right, speak to staff or text the British Transport Office. See it, say it, sorted.” In this case, the message is clearly encouraging the listener to act in a certain way. The word “it” refers to “something that doesn’t look right.” However, the beauty of this message is again the expression “doesn’t look right” can evoke innumerable objects and settings, and thus requires the listener to judge what looks right and what does not look right. This judgment can be subjective, but can cover all possibilities of something not looking right. It does not give concrete examples of suspicious objects or things they define as being not right in this short message, but is powerful enough to evoke the possible images and references the listener will imagine when he/she hears the word “it” and the expression “something that doesn’t look right.” Compared to the anti-COVID-19 hand washing encouragement, this message does not utilize the similitude of familiar objects. However, it is utilizing the similitudes within the message. The sound /s/ is repeated in the slogan “See it, say it, sorted” at the beginning of each of the three parts. We can also easily recognize the three repeated sound of /it/ in the ending of the three parts. This intended beauty of expression works well since it speaks to listeners’ hearts as in the newly coined term san-mitsu (三密) in Japanese which we discussed in the previous section. San-mitsu (三密) is exactly one of the cases which delivers the message by focusing on the three similar situations which people should avoid in order to act against COVID-19. As for the British transport slogan, much attention has long been paid to safety in the transportation service, and this is not a sudden and unprecedented problem to be tackled with. These security issues have been important for many years, therefore the intention of maintaining safety is well-shared in society. Today suspicious items on trains and at stations are regarded with commonsense. That is the difference with the anti-COVID-19 messages. COVID-19 is new and people are not yet familiar with the problems, and therefore concrete and well-explained expressions are required that are easy to understand, remember, and follow.
5. Conclusion

People will have to continue to cope with the coronavirus pandemic on a global scale. Medical experts on the coronavirus pandemic are at the forefront of this issue, but this virus requires us to cooperate and act appropriately together as one cohesive global group. Sharing the knowledge and insights in all related fields is highly anticipated. In this paper, we pointed out and explained the importance of appropriate delivery of messages and usefulness of employing similitude-related expressions. Encouraging appropriate actions as a group on the global scale has become essential in COVID-19 society. The definition of what is appropriate and what is desirable differs depending on the circumstances, but life-saving communication in unprecedented settings needs to be considered as an interdisciplinary measure.

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Websites


The world is now facing difficult times because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Starting in early 2020 in China, it spread throughout Asia, and has since affected the lives of every person on the planet. COVID-19 is a serious problem for everyone because it directly affects both our lives and life-styles. This paper introduces related examples of communication where the messages are intended to encourage people to act in an appropriate and desirable way. This research finds that employing messages focusing on similitudes is one of the useful ways of encouraging people to act appropriately. Act and speech are inextricably connected as shown in Austin (1962), Searle (1969) and etc., and thus selecting messages to make people act appropriately is helpful in order to deliver an intended message in unprecedented experienced situations where people are expected to act appropriately particularly to save life.

**Key words:** COVID-19, life-saving messages, public health, similitudes, desirable communication