

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background Research

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a global crisis that has impacted societies, economies, and healthcare systems worldwide. In response to the pandemic, governments and health organizations have advocated for various public health measures, including vaccinations and mask-wearing, to curb the spread of the virus and protect public health. However, these measures have not been universally accepted, leading to the emergence of anti-vaccine and anti-masker movements.

Anti-vaxxers, skeptical or hesitant individuals opposing vaccination, often rely on misinformation or pseudoscience. Hornsey et al. (2018) found that conspiratorial thinking, reactance, disgust toward blood/needles, and individualistic/hierarchical worldviews predict anti-vaccination attitudes. Instead of demographic factors, cognitive patterns and worldviews drive skepticism. The term "anti-vaxxers" denotes those opposing vaccination due to beliefs in ineffectiveness or conspiracy, emphasizing the need for targeted communication strategies addressing both psychological factors and misinformation. In summary, understanding these factors is crucial for effective interventions and communication strategies against anti-vaccination sentiments.

Anti-maskers resist wearing masks for COVID-19, citing beliefs in ineffectiveness or personal freedom infringements. Pascual-Ferrá et al.'s (2021) study notes heightened toxicity in online discussions related to anti-mask sentiments, challenging health communicators. Navigating hostile digital environments is complicated, necessitating clear scientific evidence and understanding the concerns of anti-maskers. To counter this, communicators must employ strategies fostering empathy, dispelling misinformation, and appealing to shared values. Recognizing diverse perspectives within the anti-mask community is essential for effective public health messaging. Pascual-Ferrá et al.'s (2021) findings underscore the need for targeted strategies considering the emotional and ideological dimensions surrounding anti-mask sentiments on social media.

One of the most intriguing and influential means of expression in contemporary discourse is memes. Memes have become a prominent feature of online communication, allowing individuals to share ideas, jokes, and social commentary in a format that is easily shareable and understandable across diverse audiences. The term "meme," coined by Richard Dawkins in 1976, refers to cultural units of information that spread from person to person through imitation. In the digital age, memes have evolved to encompass a wide range of formats, including images, videos, and text, and have proven to be a powerful tool for influencing public opinion and shaping collective beliefs.

Mememes rapidly influence digital culture and societal trends, reflecting Denysiyuk's (2022) insights on their unique fusion of verbal and visual elements. As key components of intercultural communication, memes shape popularity across

diverse channels, impacting perspectives. Particularly powerful on social media, memes address pressing issues like anti-vax sentiments during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their concise and humorous nature makes memes accessible for expressing diverse viewpoints on health measures, shaping public opinion. This highlights the crucial need for critical awareness when engaging with digital content, emphasizing the dynamic and influential nature of online communication in shaping both individual attitudes and collective responses.

The chosen framework for this research, visual grammar, allows for a comprehensive examination of the memes visual elements. Then researcher used transitivity to enable comprehension of the meme's verbal elements. Finally, researcher used intersemiotic framework to further analyze correlation between interplay between language, visuals, and other semiotic resources to uncover how meaning is constructed.

Critical multimodal discourse analysis integrates elements from discourse analysis, linguistics, semiotics, and multimodality to examine how meaning is constructed and conveyed through diverse modes. Jewitt (2013) emphasizes the significance of employing multiple modes like language, gesture, image, sound, and spatial design in contemporary society. The primary goal is to unravel the interaction and intersection of these modes, revealing specific meanings, values, and ideologies. Within this framework, power dynamics are crucial, with modes inherently carrying social values, power relations, and ideologies (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). Critical multimodal discourse analysis unveils these dynamics by examining how meaning is constructed and conveyed through different modes in a

given text or discourse. Contextual consideration is vital, emphasizing the need to understand multimodal texts within the broader social, cultural, and historical context (Jewitt, 2013). van Leeuwen (2008) illustrates this approach in political discourse, showing how images and visual representations convey meaning and ideology, revealing power relations and ideological stances. For instance, political leaders strategically use family images to project values, even if not reflected in policies or actions.

Gunter Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2006) delved into the exploration of three essential metafunctional framework structures applicable to analyze visual representation in communication. Rooted in Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (2004), these structures have been adapted to analyze multimodal texts. The three pivotal metafunctional framework structures encompass the ideational/representational metafunction, the interpersonal metafunction, and textual metafunction. The ideational/representational metafunction refers to how visual elements represent the world and its participants. The interpersonal metafunction relates to how visual elements express the social relations and attitudes of the communicators. The textual metafunction concerns how visual elements organize the information and create coherence and cohesion in the message. These metafunctional frameworks provide a framework for analyzing multimodal texts, which combine visual and other modes of communication.

Transitivity is a key concept that extends beyond being a component of the verbal group to encompass the entire clause. This concept relates to how the process is carried out, analogous to the classic terms 'transitive' and 'intransitive' (Halliday,

1994). In a clause, the verb influences the process, participants, and circumstances involved (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). The six types of processes identified are Material, Mental, Relational, Behavioral, Verbal, and Existential processes (Halliday, 1994).

Intersemiotic logical-relation as explained by Liu Y and O'Halloran (2009), are the logical links between verbal and visual elements in multimodal communication. These relations help to create meaning by showing how different modes work together. There are four types of intersemiotic logical relations: Comparative, Additive, Consequential, and Temporal/Time. Comparative relations show similarities or differences between modes, Additive relations show additional or alternative information, Consequential relations show cause and effect or condition and result, and Temporal/Time relations show sequence or duration of events.

This research aims to analyze anti-vaccine and anti-masker memes in COVID-19 context by applying visual grammar (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006); Transitivity (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014); and Intersemiotic logical-relation (Liu and O'Halloran, 2009). With these three frameworks allow researcher to analyze the visual representation of the memes and the verbal representation of the memes, thus the correlation of visual representation and verbal representation of the memes can be analyzed and see how both representation work together. This research serves as a valuable reference for students interested in similar research. Additionally, it promotes critical thinking about how visual and verbal elements

shape meme messages, facilitating a clearer understanding for readers of the intended meaning.

## **B. Reasearch Questions**

Here are the questions for this research:

1. What is the visual representation of anti-vaxxers and anti-masker memes in COVID-19 context?
2. What is the verbal representation of anti-vaxxers and anti-masker memes in COVID-19 context?
3. What is the correlation between the caption of the meme and visual representation of anti-vaxxers and anti-masker memes in COVID-19 context?

## **C. Research Objectives**

Based on the research question, the research object is formulated as follows.

1. To identify and analyze the visual representations of anti-vaxxers and anti-masker memes in COVID-19 context.
2. To identify and analyze the verbal representation of anti-vaxxers and anti-masker memes in COVID-19 context.
3. To investigate the correlation between the verbal representations and visual representations of anti-vaxxers and anti-masker memes in COVID-19 context.

#### **D. Research Purpose**

Based on the research questions above, this study has three objectives, which include: first, identifying and analyzing the visual representation of anti-vaxxers and anti-masker memes in COVID-19 context. Second, identifying and analyzing the verbal representation of anti-vaxxers and anti-masker memes in COVID-19 context. Third investigating the correlation between the caption of the meme and visual representation of anti-vaxxers and anti-masker memes in COVID-19 context.

#### **E. Research Limitations**

There are several limitations may emerge in this research, the limitations are as follows:

1. **Sample size:** The sample size for this research may be limited, which can affect the ability of the findings and the overall results.
2. **Data ambiguity:** The data that is available for analysis may be ambiguous, for example the tag #antivaxxers, the tag #antivaxxers is not limited to COVID-19 as main theme of the research, #antivaxxers tag may refer to other issues which can impact in finding the data.
3. **Research design:** The design of this research may have limitations, as this mostly used of self-reported data, which can impact the strength of the conclusions that can be drawn.
4. **Bias:** The accuracy and dependability of the results may be impacted by bias that may be present in the data or methods employed.

## **F. Research Benefits**

This research is expected to contribute as a reference for students who may have an interest in conducting similar research. In addition, this research is also expected to foster critical and in-depth thinking for readers, especially about how visuals and verbal elements can help shape the message of the meme. So, that readers could understand the meaning of the message meme easily.

## **G. Definition of Key Terms**

The researcher provides additional key terms that assist readers comprehend this research and prevent confusion in order to provide clear definitions and assistance.

1. **Memes:** A cultural artifact that spreads from one person to another, often through the internet, and undergoes development and change over time through modification.
2. **COVID-19 memes:** Humorous images, videos, or text that are shared online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Memes can be used to make light of the situation, to express anxiety or frustration, or to share information about the virus. They can also be used to raise awareness about the pandemic or to promote social distancing and other safety measures.
3. **Multimodal Discourse Analysis:** is a theory of communication that explores the varied forms of meaning-making beyond language
4. **Visual metafunction:** refers to the various communicative functions served by visual elements in a multimodal text.

5. Transitivity: a method of classifying verbs and clauses with reference to the relationship of the verb to other structural elements.
6. Intersemiotic: In the context of multimodal discourse analysis, refers to the study of communication and meaning-making that involves the interaction of different semiotic representations or systems.
7. Anti-vaxxers and anti-masker: individuals or groups who oppose the use of masks as a preventive measure against COVID-19 and are skeptical or resistant to getting vaccinated against the virus, respectively. These terms have emerged during the pandemic to describe people who express strong objections to public health measures and vaccination efforts.

