



# Social and Affective Meaning of Covid-Related Terms in ‘New York Times’ Online News

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**Abstract.** The news media has an essential role in providing information and perspective on the issue presented, such as Covid-19, which has become a hot conversation these days. Many media bring their perspective on the hot issues of Covid-19 and make people more selective about the content. Compiling the content makes it possible to use the semantic study to know the elements of meaning in the news. This study aims to identify the social and affective meaning that occurs in New York Times online news using the theory of meaning by Geoffrey Leech. This study was structured using descriptive qualitative methods. The data is taken from the news about Covid-19 on the Asia-Pacific page of the New York Times. In this study, researchers found 12 news containing about covid and then found as many as 58 sentences that have meaning social dan affective meanings; They are 29 social meanings that vary province (26 languages of law and three languages of science), 29 affective meanings. Sentences in noun phrases are mostly used in social meaning, while direct expressions are mostly used in affective meaning. Future researchers, can choose different objects and develop theories that have been used in this study or use more complex theories.

**Keywords:** Social meaning · Affective Meaning · Covid-19 · News · New York Times

## 1 Introduction

Language has a strongly influence on among people and their behaviour of communication. It can serve as a mirror, allowing individuals to reflect their viewpoints, levels of knowledge, and even character as well as their comprehension of the issue at hand [1]. Communication itself it can be done in any way such as in the form of sound according to [2] or one of which can be through online news. Through the years, the usage of online news as a means of communication has increased. Online news is widely disseminated and readily available, especially among social media users who use it to stay connected by providing information on hot topics. Based on [3] through sharing online-published news. In the dissemination of online news, language acts as an intrinsic social element which is used in social life [4].

News writing to have a precise meaning in journalistic language is (1) using factually correct words, (2) using words with the right construction, (3) using words with the most

appropriate meaning, (4) using words with the most appropriate meaning, or the right word group (unbiased), and (5) grammatical use of sentences. Therefore, the language used by the news, when viewed from a semantic point of view, there is something that becomes an attraction for research. Sometimes the news also uses implied language in delivering an event or using the right words so that the meaning is not biased.

The news media plays a crucial role in presenting information and many viewpoints on the topics at hand. As the issue of covid has been a hot topic of discussion lately, in the lead-up to the covid-19 pandemic resilience how health systems, economies, and the environment deal with change and shocks by adapting, evolving, and innovating has emerged as an important attribute of societies working towards life the post-pandemic “new normal”. Many media bring their perspective on the issue. According to [5], people will be more critical of their tastes and more discerning as there are more media options available. It is essential to apply systematic linguistic aspects, such as implicit meanings while generating content for online news outlets. The meaning itself can be studied through semantics which is a sign component [6] whereas the application location for connecting objects [7]. [8] explained that the purpose of semantics is to ascertain whether the meaning is conveyed with logical and accurate repercussions.

Meaning is an aspect of semantics that is interesting to study. According to linguist, [9], seven categories of meaning exist. There are conceptual, thematic, and associative (social, affective reflective, collocative, and thematic meanings). This study discusses social and affective meaning, both of which are vital components of communication. One of these components is the utterance of the situation and the determination of our reactions to anything that is being discussed, which might come through the text or audibly. With an emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region, this study will examine the significance of material on the foreign news page of the New York Times. Since this study is focused on word and phrase meaning, it is included in the semantics perspective. Even though the research can be conducted using the perspectives of other disciplines, the researchers pick semantics to understand the meaning of social and affective meaning in the New York Times Online News. According to Geoffrey Leech’s theory of meaning, there are seven types of meaning, which are as follows: conceptual, connotative, collocative, reflective, affective, social, and thematic. There are seven types of meaning, and this study chose two of them because it wishes to explore them from two perspectives that are important in terms of communication: both from the social and affective perspectives, where language can display how emotions are represented in speech from the social perspective, where news can convey language about social situations.

The academic benefit of the study is understanding the meaning from a semantical perspective, particularly as it relates to affective and social meaning. Nevertheless, the purpose of this study is to demonstrate the originality of current research by bridging the gap in meaning understanding by combining affective and social perception in the new. To provide an academic viewpoint on the associated meaning of a term, the last hole is crucial for further research. In addition, the academic function has a non-academic role, which is determining how to make decisions based on an individual’s attitudes and link to meaning in the emotive and social domain. Additionally, it can enhance semantics and sight comprehension. Therefore, those who read the news will be greatly affected by this study. Moreover, the New York Times is regarded as good daily use as

an authoritative source for current news [10]. In addition, the news contains information regarding the economy, culture, and politics. It also boosted its amusement value as a study subject. Affective and social-semantic analysis of the research findings was the main emphasis of this study. Additionally, this study additionally examined the data using the descriptive approach. It is also important to research from an academic standpoint. This study can help with finding some references to comprehend word meaning in the news. Consequently, this study aims to close the previous research gap.

## 2 Theory of Meaning

As a basis for analysis, a researcher must comprehend the meaning of meaning itself to determine the meaning of news. Therefore, the fundamental postulate for meaning comprehension in semantic theory. Modern semantics expert, [11] asserts that the study of word, phrase, and sentence meaning is known as semantics. The study of meaning is called semantics. Consequently, to comprehend a text in its proper context, it is necessary to comprehend the meaning of the mentioned message. Consequently, the meaning of words in a phrase or sentence is split into two categories based on a knowledge of semantics. First, denotative meaning is the meaning of a phrase or word that lacks any additional connotations or emotions. The meaning that includes other meanings is known as connotative meaning. Specific emotions, or taste values in addition to the general denotative meaning.

In general, the theory of meaning can be divided into four. First, this is the referential theory that the theory revealed by [12]. It refers to the triangle of meaning and the expression of meaning as the relationship among reference and referent as expressed by language sound symbols in the form of words, phrases, and sentences. Contextual theory expresses meaning as a term tied to the ecological and cultural environment of a specific language user follows. The third is the theory of mentalism or conceptualism, a theory brought by [6], advocating the study of languages synchronously and differentiating language analysis. And last, the theory of formalism that theory developed by the German philosopher [13] who argues that the word communication and meaning play a very important role in language communication, meaning has been defined variously. Meaning can be categorized into seven different ways: conceptual, connotative, collocative, reflective, emotive, social, and thematic. However, from the five theories about semantic meaning, this study chose to use the theory revealed by Geoffrey Leech. This is because the researchers examined the language meaning of communication through online news and then it will be seen from the meaning of the social and affective.

### 2.1 Types of Meaning by Geoffrey Leech

In this study, the theory of meaning developed by Geoffrey Leech was applied by the researchers. As is well known, meaning encompasses not just one type of meaning, but several different types of meaning. According to [8] The seven categories that make up meaning are known as the seven types of meanings. These classifications include, among others, conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, social meaning, emotive meaning, reflective meaning, collocative meaning, and theme meaning.

### **2.1.1 Conceptual Meaning**

The logical or cognitive meaning is another name for the conceptual meaning. The definition that is primarily found in dictionaries relates to the basic propositional meaning of the word. In contrast to other types of associative meaning, this type of meaning is stylistically neutral and objective.

Conceptual meanings are the most important or core meanings, whereas the other six types of meanings are auxiliary or peripheral. It is considered peripheral in the sense that it is not necessary. They have meanings that are stylistically distinct and subjective. As a result of its sophisticated organizational structure, which is based on the principles of constructiveness and hierarchical structure, Leech gives precedence to conceptual meaning.

### **2.1.2 Connotative Meaning**

In addition to its merely conceptual content, connotative meaning is the communication value of a word or phrase that goes beyond it. The term refers to something that goes beyond the literal meaning of a word and suggests the properties of a word in the real world. For example: Dog = animal + mammals + fur.

Psychological connotations could be ‘the obedient’ or typical attributes of pets’ fun and lively animals. Connotative meaning can also include alleged characteristics of a referent as a result of the perspective held by a person, a group, or society at large. Dogs were therefore thought to possess traits like biting and viciousness in the past. Conceptual and connotative meanings appear to be separated by a similar line. When compared to conceptual meaning, connotative meaning is considered accidental, comparatively unstable, indeterminant, open-ended, and varied based on one’s age, culture, and ethnicity. Limited symbols can be used to express it.

### **2.1.3 Social Meaning**

The information that a piece of language reveals about the social context in which it is being used is referred to as “social meaning.” Understanding stylistic and other language nuances is essential for understanding a written work. A dialectical term or pronunciation is one that reveals the speaker’s place of origin or social status. The social importance of a remark depends on the context in which it is used. The social setting in which a linguistic expression is utilized is its main focus. Some dialectic terms, for example, reveal the speaker’s location and social status. Stylistic cues, on the other hand, might reveal a lot about the relationship between the speaker and the audience.

On social meaning there are several variations: (1) dialect (the language of a geographical region or social class); (2) time (e.g., the language of the 18th century); (3) province (language of law, science, advertising, etc.); (4) status (polite, colloquial, slang, etc.); (5) modality (language of memoranda, lectures, jokes, etc.); (6) singularity (the style of Dickens, Hemingway, etc.).

### **2.1.4 Affective Meaning**

Emotional association or impacts of words on the reader and listener are considered by some linguists to be the subject of the term. That which is expressed about one's personal feelings or attitude toward the listener is known as the message. Emotional meaning, also referred to as expressive language, is the use of language to convey one's feelings or attitudes toward the audience or toward the course material. According to Leech, emotional meaning refers to how language and expression are used to communicate the speaker's sentiments and attitude (attitude to the listener as well as attitude to what he is saying). Affective meaning is frequently communicated through the conceptual and connotative content of the words that are employed.

### **2.1.5 Reflective Meaning**

Both collocative meaning and reflected meaning contain connections. When a term has several conceptual meanings in a single sentence or when a term has several conceptual meanings, reflected meaning happens at the lexical level of a language. Because of this, even as we react to one sense of the word, we also react to a certain extent to a different sense of the word. According to Leech, the comforter and the Holy Ghost are two terms that refer to the third person in the Trinity. They are words with religious significance. However, there is an unintentional response to their non-religious beliefs as well. As a result, the "comforter" is warm and comforting, but the "Ghost" is amazing or even "dreadful." One sense of the term appears to contaminate another, especially when it is used frequently and is familiar to the listener.

### **2.1.6 Collocative Meaning**

Collocative meaning refers to a word's meaning when it is used in conjunction with other words. Words only coincide or collocate with other words of the same kind; for instance, big business does not coincide with vast or fantastic. It is possible to associate meanings with a word as a result of its frequent or regular co-occurrence with specific sorts of words, which is referred to as collocation. The terms "pretty" and "handsome" denote "good-looking." They do, however, differ slightly from one another as a result of the collocation or cooccurrence of the words. The term "beautiful" conjures up images of girls, women, villages, gardens, and flowers, among other things.

### **2.1.7 Thematic Meaning**

It relates to how a speaker or a writer organizes the message in terms of focusing and emphasizing. As a result, active is distinct from passive, even though their conceptual meaning is the same. In addition to a subject, object, or complement, certain aspects of a sentence can also be utilized to express emphasis. Focus, theme (topic), or emotional emphasis are all effective methods. Thematic meaning aids in our comprehension of the message and its ramifications.

### 3 Research Method

In this study, a descriptive qualitative method was applied. The researchers examined the data from the perspective of the related theory and elaborated on it to support the conclusions. This study investigates the social and affective significance of analyzing words and phrases. This conclusion will be evaluated using Geoffrey Leech's hypothesis. The data will be described in terms of Geoffrey Leech's social and affective meaning theory.

#### 3.1 Data Collection

In the data collecting process, the researchers did several steps. First, the researchers read the news on the New York Times page, precisely on the Asia-Pacific page published in October 2021. Second, select the news that contains the issue of the Covid-19 virus. Third, mark the sentences that include the social and affective meaning of the news. Fourth, grouping the social and affective meaning data. And last, analyze the data that has been marked and grouped.

#### 3.2 Data Analysis

There are several steps to analyze the data. First, the researchers identified social and affective meanings used in the New York Times. Second, classified the types of social and affective meaning based on the theory of Geoffrey Leech by marking if it includes the social meaning, the text will be in **bold**, and if it includes the affective meaning, the text will be *italicized*. Third, describe the results of data analysis with narrative text that is adapted based on the theory of meaning by Geoffrey Leech theory. Fourth, describe in what form social and affective meaning appear in the news. Then, the researchers interpreted the data obtained based on the Leech's theory and concludes in line with the data obtained.

### 4 Findings and Discussion

This presented the information that was offered in the Asia-Pacific part of the New York Times online news regarding Covid-19. In this case, specifically the data of social and affective meaning that may be discovered in the news are examined by using Geoffrey Leech's theory of meaning. The data presentations in this chapter are presented from the Asia-Pacific section of the New York Times online news that was published in October 2021. Within that section, twelve news articles report on the development of Covid-19 after the researchers analyzed the news, with twenty-nine social and twenty-nine affective meanings. The data presentations are broken down clause by clause, sentence by sentence. Data that is included in social meaning will be in **bold** and if it is included in affective meaning, it will be written in *italics*.

## 4.1 Findings

### 4.1.1 Social Meaning

The researchers find social meaning. The word '*covishield*' means the Oxford-AstraZeneca Vaccine, locally known as *Covishield*, created from an attenuated variant of the common cold virus (called adenovirus) of chimpanzees. It has been adjusted to make it look like a coronavirus. The sentence is included in the type of scientific language. Because '*covishield*' is included in the name of drugs, it can be classified as a social meaning because it is included in the province in the science section.

The analysis of the '*covishield*' word refers to the noun phrase meaning. Since the word mentioned about the thing that is '*covishield*' or Covid-19 vaccine. The word above is manifested in the form of a noun phrase that is not in the form of a sentence. There is one noun phrase in the sentence above where in the word there is no subject or verb mentioned. The position of the word is in the middle of the sentence which functions as an object complement in a sentence. This means the sentence gives more information about the object of the sentence.

### 4.1.2 Affective Meaning

There is a sentence that '*caused a strong backlash in India, and the government threatened retaliation British government*', here the personal reflection is the investigation would be done by the Indian government regarding the new policy of the British government regarding the affected quarantine policy for the Indian people. It is classified as affective meaning. As we know, affective meaning refers to personal reflection or attitude towards the speaker.

The phrase '*caused a strong backlash in India, and the government threatened retaliation*.' Analysis refers to the indirect form of the sentence. This sentence is included in the type of declarative sentences because it serves as information providers about the reaction from India and the planning of reprisals by the government by the speaker when conveying a statement indirectly above.

## 4.2 Discussion

This research discussed the types of social meaning and affective meaning in news containing the development of covid-19 in the Asia-Pacific Section that was published in the New York Times Online News on October 2021. Besides that, this study also analyzed the reason for using social and affective meanings. As the result of this study, there were twelve news articles about covid-19 which contained twenty-nine social meanings and twenty-nine affective meanings.

In a social meaning, as many as twenty-nine sentences are included in the province variation, twenty-six of which are the language of law and three are the language of science. It is as shown in Fig. 1. Then the researchers found that the writer brought up social meaning in the form of noun phrases and verb phrases, as many as seventeen noun phrases and twelve verb phrases in the news summarized in Fig. 2. Affective meaning is also found in the form of direct and indirect sentences, as many as twenty-three direct sentences and six indirect sentences in the news shown in Fig. 3. Sentences in the form



Fig. 1. Number of Social and Affective Meaning

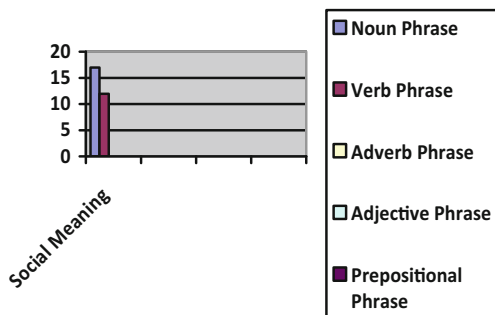


Fig. 2. Form of Social Meaning on News

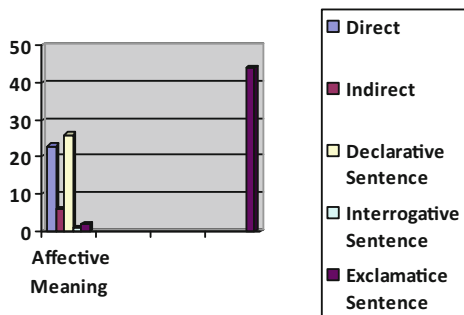


Fig. 3. Form of Affective Meaning on News

of noun phrases which are positioned at the beginning of the sentence are 5 as subjects, while those in the middle are 11 as complement objects and 1 as a direct object at the end. While the sentence is in the form of a verb phrase that is in the initial position there are 5 sentences, there are 4 sentences in the middle, and 3 sentences at the end. Several types of sentences are also found here, 26 types of declarative sentences, 1 interrogative sentence, and 2 exclamative sentences.

In social meaning, the most used is a sentence in the form of a noun phrase because it includes legal and scientific terms in the covid terms and is positioned in the middle because it is to complete information from the object in the sentence. While the affective meaning that is mostly used is the direct object in the form of declarative sentences because in the news it is used to convey opinions and facts accompanied by specific



information. However, there are also sentences in the form of exclamative which express strong emotions and there is a sentence in the form of interrogatives.

In this study, from all the data collected, the researchers can conclude that the social and affective meaning used in the news is almost balanced. However, in the use of social meaning, the type of language of the law is more dominant. It is because the language of the law is commonly used to convey new policies or regulatory terms, for example in the news the term Phuket Sand-Box Island. Besides that, the language of science is the least used in this study because it is more used to refer to the term drugs such as drugs used to reduce the symptoms of Covid, namely *Monulpiravir*. Then the affective meaning found in the sentence is more dominantly used to express the speaker's feelings.

News is information about current events, and it can be distributed by a variety of mediums. The news helps in enlightening people about what is occurring in the world. It covers every significant topic that every person has a right to know to live a better life, and it serves to raise awareness about what is happening on critical themes throughout the world. Similarly, news about COVID-19 published by the New York Times Online has the same function, which is to inform the public. In news writing or the grammar used greatly affects the content of news and information that will be captured by readers [14]. The role of language becomes very important in terms of reporting because without language there is no news discourse, the use of language is very necessary in this case to support the delivery of information following reality [15]. Likewise with the use of social and affective meaning in news about the development of Covid-19 in the New York Times Online News.

In this study, the researchers used the theory of Geoffrey Leech (1981 regarding the theory of meaning. According to Leech (1981), there are seven categories of meaning: conceptual, connotative, social, affective, reflective, collocative, and thematic. In this study, researchers only analyze social and affective meaning because they want to know in terms of social situations, and how feelings are reflected in language. In social meaning, there are several variations, namely dialect, time, province, status, modality, and singularity.

## 5 Conclusion

From the data analyzed, we can conclude that the researchers found social and affective playing by applying the theory of meaning by Geoffrey Leech (1981) in a news story about the development of Covid-19 in the Asia-Pacific section of the New York Times Online News published on October 2021. There are fifty-eight meanings. They are 29 social meanings that vary province (26 languages of law and 3 languages of science) and 29 affective meanings. In the use of affective meaning, the most frequently used direct expressions in the form of declarative were found. Besides that, noun phrases the one in the middle position acts as the object complement were also the most frequently used in social meaning. In the news, it was found that there were seventeen forms of noun phrases and twelve forms of verb phrases used in social meaning. In addition, twenty-three sentences and six sentences of indirect expressions were found in affective meaning.

The reason for using social and affective meaning in news is used for various purposes. The meanings used are intended to emphasize policy, provide information about

a foreign language, describe an event, or express the speaker's feelings. One example of social meaning used in the news under study is the 'zero covid policy' which is a policy regarding the Covid-19 pandemic to narrow the spike in cases. And an example of affective meaning is "a taste of its own medicine." It describes the feeling of the speaker, namely Kanchan Gupta towards British law, namely, to feel the taste of the medicine itself or in other words to have the same unpleasant experience. That has been inflicted on others is the rule of their government. Therefore, apart from classifying the social and affective meanings used in the news, the researchers also analyzed the purpose of these meanings.

For academics interested in meaning who want to look at things other than movies and music This final project will aid in the development of new forms for other objects. The research theory can be expanded further for both current and upcoming studies, for instance, by looking at semantics and syntax from other angles. It is therefore anticipated that reading this thesis would have a significant positive impact on future scholars. Furthermore, whether it applies the same or somewhat different theories, this study is significant for upcoming meaning-focused researchers. Future researchers may choose to use the same or different research objects; for instance, if the current researcher doesn't want to use a film-related object, the current researcher may choose to use news or other types of objects that have social and affective meanings. However, it would be preferable if future researchers could look at the analysis of all meanings.

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