# Pragmatic Choice of Diction and Deictic Elements in Select Covid-19 Media Discourse in Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT:** Recent scholarly works on Covid-19 media discourse and medical discourse have only focused on the use of neologisms within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and language use that investigates communication and exchange of shared background knowledge as important factors between doctors and their patients. This paper investigates the pragmatic choice of words and the various contexts in which deictic elements have been employed by members of Nigeria's Presidential Task Force on Covid-19 to convey meaning with the public. As a pragmatic study, attention is given to the mood aspect, using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (*SFL*) to elicit the potential motivations behind the pragmatic choice of words of the speakers. This paper analyses a total of 92 utterances from four speeches of the Nigeria's Presidential Task Force on Covid-19 members delivered at one of their live telecast press briefings on Tuesday, 27th April 2020, were taped and transcribed for analysis. The utterances were analysed with ***antconc*** software, which provided a frequency tally of the specific deictic elements used in the speeches. The findings of this study on the one hand, indicate that speakers at the press briefing used person deixis such as I, We, and Us in both inclusive and exclusive contexts to demonstrate pity for the public and to pragmatically connect with the public as if both the speech producers and the public are engaged in a serious battle against Covid-19. On the other hand, our grammatical analysis revealed the use of military diction, leading the researcher to conclude that the members of the Nigerian Presidential Task Force on Covid-19 assume State authority for themselves.

**KEYWORDS:** Covid-19, context, deixis, pragmatics, diction, SFL

## INTRODUCTION

The word diction has been found to have its origin from the Latin word *dictio*, which means "expression" or "word." In its original usage, the word refers to a writer's or speaker's specific linguistic choices and way of expression in a text or speech. The uniqueness of speech in its broadest sense suggests that the art of speaking is clearly interpreted in such a way that each word in a speech or text is comprehended.

In the same vein, diction necessitates a number of considerations, the most essential of which is the adaptation of style and formality to the social context in which language is put to use. It may also be used to examine   how tone and characteristics evolve in voice or writing. In language, for example, a prevalence of verbs related to the physical world indicates an active character, while a preponderance of verbs referring to the intellect indicates an interpretative character. In other words, it has been shown that diction has a substantial impact on the choice of words and syntax in any particular speech or text. Preston's (1967) research backs this up, claiming that diction is made up of eight elements. Phoneme, syllable, conjunction, connective, noun, verbs, inflection, and speech are examples. As a result, the purpose of this study is to link diction choice to language use in a covid-19 media discussion in Nigeria, utilising the syntactic framework offered by Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, which is a potent tool for analysing language use in context.

## LANGUAGE USE AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN NIGERIA

The attention of language scholars has lately been drawn to language use in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Covid-19 is largely recognised as humanity's biggest catastrophic health calamity since World War II. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the unusual and highly infectious respiratory disease was found in Wuhan, China. There have been severe outbreaks of many diseases caused by a number of viruses throughout human history, such as Laser Fever, Ebola, and others, but the Corona Virus pandemic is second to none in terms of the virus' mutation, epidemiological manifestations, and the high number of fatalities that have been recorded around the world, leading one to believe that the virus has so many fuzzy manifestations and presentations in humans. Without a doubt, the disease's spread has had a negative influence on practically every sector of many economies throughout the world, from the health system to business and commerce, from the environment to social interaction, to mention a few. This has necessitated action on the part of critical stakeholders all around the world to rally support for the

**Pragmatic Choice of Diction and Deictic Elements in Select Covid-19 Media Discourse in Nigeria**

government's attempts to contain the virus in their own countries. One of the ways the government hoped to contain the virus in Nigeria, the main focus of this paper, was the establishment of the Presidential Task Force on Covid-19 by Nigeria's President, Muhammadu Buhari, on Monday, 18th March, 2020, with the country's first Covid-19 case dating back to February, 2020. Mr. Boss Mustapha, Secretary to the Government of the Federation, chaired Nigeria's Presidential Task Force (PTF), which included the Director General of the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Dr. Chikwe Ihekweazu, and many critical stakeholders from within and outside the Nigerian healthcare value chain. Since its inception, the PTF has kept the Nigerian people informed of covid-19 concerns through the media. To that end, the PTF had engaged both the Main Stream Media (MSM) and the Social Media (SM) to project its activities, which included, among other things, sensitizing the public about the emergence of the deadly virus, the mortality rate, and establishing safety protocols for Nigerians to follow in order to avoid contracting the virus.

## MEDICAL DISCOURSE AND MEDIA DISCOURSE

Several research studies on language use in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic have been conducted, particularly in the media and medical discourse, which is the discourse domain of the current research. Examples of such works include; Odebunmi (2016), Osisanwo (2013, 2016), Oyeleye and Osisanwo (2013a and 2013b), Taiwo (2004, 2008), and Jefwa (2021). Only Osisanwo (2013, 2016), Osakinle (2011, 2019), Osakinle and Achebe (2021), and Oyeleye and Osisanwo (2013a, 2013b) have investigated media discourse from a different theoretical approach than this study. Furthermore, the studies on Covid-19 media discourse and medical discourse conducted by Odebunmi (2004, 2016), Olaniyan (2016), and Jefwa (2021) are quite comparable to the current research. For the sake of this paper, we consider the pandemic to be one that requires well-grounded language usage (together with all other forms of communication, particularly in the media) in order for the message about Covid-19 prevention to be regarded successful with the public. Jefwa's (2021) research on the implications of language use, for example, examines the use of neologisms in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, using terminologies and phrases from Covid-19-related social media and daily newspaper headlines in Kenya. However, for this study, we intend to take a different approach to medical discourse, similar to what scholars such as Odebunmi (2016) have done, by conducting a pragmatic analysis that projects the use of the grammatical mood aspect, which is expected to reflect in the pragmatic choices of diction made by speakers at the media press briefing under focus. This is a fresh research issue in the study of language use in the context of a pandemic. Because of its origins in the medical profession, Covid-19's discourse may be deemed to fall within the discourse domain of medical discourse. However, as previously stated, the government of Nigeria has been forced to establish a Presidential Task Force on Covid-19 to engage the media on a regular basis in order to keep the press informed of viral developments.

According to Adetipe (2004:24), as stated by Osakinle (2011:3), the media are the many modes of mass communication through which information is transmitted to the public at the same time. Print, electronic, and broadcast media are all covered. Print media includes newspapers, magazines, and journals, while broadcast media includes radio, television, the internet, and electronic billboards. However, because the focus of this study is on data from electronic or broadcast media, specifically television, efforts will be made only to conceptualise electronic media, despite the fact that social media (**SM**) is now commonly referred to as part of electronic media. As the name indicates, electronic media is concerned with the electronic transmission of information from a single site to millions of people at the same time. The dominance of electronic or broadcast media over print media and other forms of media discussed here is eventually a significant advantage. Channels TV, TVC, NTA, AIT, and others were among the television stations that broadcast the press conferences live. While this study views the media as a tool for influencing and manipulating the public, it also draws a link between Covid-19 discourse, media discourse, and political discourse in Nigeria. The speech of politicians is primarily political discourse. This is seen in the works of Osakinle (2011, 2019). The relationship between the aforementioned discourse kinds can be observed in the fact that the Nigerian PTF is made up of politicians who use the media to educate the public about Covid-19 concerns. The media performs a number of roles in persuading the public, which is why members of the PTF, who are mostly politicians, must work with the media to persuade the public to accept the safety standards designed to protect them from the lethal virus seriously. As we analyse our data, we will look into this further. The point here is that the media is a powerful tool that government organisations often use to depict particular programmes and policies to the public.

## AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this work is to conduct a pragmatic analysis of the use of diction and deictic features in Covid-19 media discourse in Nigeria with a view to exploring the following objectives.

i.       Examine how the speakers' mood affects the choice of diction in Covid-19 media discourse in Nigeria.
ii.      Investigate the varied pragmatic contextual uses of deictic components in Nigerian Covid-19 media discourse.

## METHODOLOGY

The data for this research include live broadcast statements provided by different parties during one of the multiple press conferences hosted by the Presidential Task Force on Covid-19 on Monday, April 27th, 2020. The justification for selecting the speeches made on this day is that it allows the researcher to study live data in order to evaluate how language use is projected utilising the

grammatical mood aspect. Again, we chose this press briefing based on the assumption that a lot will be said based on the speakers' mood that will be expected to catch the linguist's attention following the death of Nigeria's President's Chief of Staff, Abba Kyari, who died exactly a week from when this press briefing took place from Covid-19 related complications.

## SAMPLING TECHNIQUE
It has been mentioned that we chose to concentrate on the live broadcast statements provided by members of the Presidential Task Force on Covid-19 for this study. We have said that our choice of a certain press briefing on television was based on the above-mentioned assumptions. As a result, our selection of the TV genre of mass communication is based on the fact that the TV combines the speaker's voice as well as their image. A total of ninety-two utterances were utilised from the four speeches presented at the press conference were transcribed and will be analysed in this research to see how the speakers' mood reflects in the use of language in the context of the covid-19 pandemic in the Nigerian media discourse.

## METHODS OF ANALYSIS
The research is a holistic pragmatic-syntactic analysis aimed at elucidating rhetorical and/or manipulative language use methods in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. As said above, MAK Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is employed in this research to analyse the grammatical side of our data, while we will investigate the numerous contextual usages of deictic components used in the speeches to share meaning with the audience. In other words, descriptive/qualitative and quantitative modes of analysis are employed to enhance analytical methodologies. Our data samples, which are derived from the remarks of stakeholders at the Presidential Task Force on Covid-19's press conference on Monday, April 27th, 2020, are numbered as follows for convenience of analysis: Texts 1-4. (See appendices 1-4)

## PRAGMATICS CHOICE AND DICTION IN COVID-19 MEDIA DISCOURSE IN NIGERIA
According to Ayoola (2005), language philosophers such as Austin (1962), Searle (1965), and Grice (1979) have drawn attention to the fact that as language users, we may mean more than what we say, less than it, or something entirely different from it. As a consequence, pragmatics as a linguistic discipline is not too far off. Pragmatics is the linguistic study of how language is utilised in different contexts. It is primarily concerned with the practice of deriving meaning from utterances (or the structure of utterances) that cannot be defined by semantics. According to Balogun's (2009) work, pragmatics is mostly derived from the works of J.L Austin and others, as previously mentioned. Scholars such as Leech (1983), Allan (1986), Yule (1996), Odebunmi (2008b), and Adegbija have all paid close attention to pragmatics since its inception.

According to Leech (1983:1), pragmatics is the study of how language is used in a communication process. Leech's perspective sheds light on the workings of pragmatics while also emphasising pragmatics' inevitability in establishing the essential core of language. Pragmatics, according to Allan (1986), is the capacity of listeners in a speech event to grasp the interpretation intended by the speakers in their utterances. Yule's (1996) claim that pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as delivered by a speaker and comprehended by a listener seems to have some relevance with Allan's understanding of pragmatics. To augment the parameters at which pragmatics works, a scholarly understanding of context is required for assessment here. The viewpoints of the previously mentioned scholars and the literature on pragmatics all agree on the speaker's meaning and the hearer's inference of this meaning. It should be noted, however, that listeners in a communication encounter do not ascribe meaning to the speaker's words without the influence of the interaction context. Adegbija (1999:18) defines pragmatics as "the study of language in certain settings or circumstances" so that we may understand what the context of interaction involves. This would have to consider the message being communicated or the speech act being performed, the participants involved, their intention, knowledge of the world, and the effects of these on the interaction; what they have assumed (or presupposed); what is implied by what is said or left unsaid; and the effects of nonverbal aspects of interaction on meaning." Taking into account the many academic perspectives on pragmatics, this research claims that the nature and scope of pragmatics enable a language user as a listener to decode meaning through inference encoded in the utterances of the speaker or writer; provided the parties have a common background. Understanding the concept of pragmatics is hoped to point us in the right direction as we investigate how language users achieve more through the grammatical mood, which is expected to reflect in the choice of diction used in projecting a well-articulated message to the audience on the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria.

## THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS
The theoretical framework for analysing the remarks provided by stakeholders and members of the Presidential Task Force on Covid-19 during the press conference held on Monday, 27th April, 2020 is M.A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics. According to Olaniyi (2016), M.A.K Halliday specifies three key purposes of human language in his explicit explanation of the functions of human language: experiential, interpersonal, and textual functions. According to him, mood which is the focus of our analysis here is explained by the interpersonal function of language. Again, Olaniyi (2016) and Gregory and Carrol (1967) describe three discourse forms employed by humans: field of conversation, mode of discourse, and tone of speech. According to them, the

**Pragmatic Choice of Diction and Deictic Elements in Select Covid-19 Media Discourse in Nigeria**

tone of speech, which might be personal or utilitarian, accounts for mood, which is the primary emphasis of this study. Farinde (2006), on the other hand, contends that the expressive role of language occurs when language helps to communicate the sentiments and attitudes of its creator. Before analysing our data using the framework developed for this research, let us examine the following theoretical foundations of the mood system in the network below:

**Fig.1                              The Mood System Network (Halliday 1994:24)**
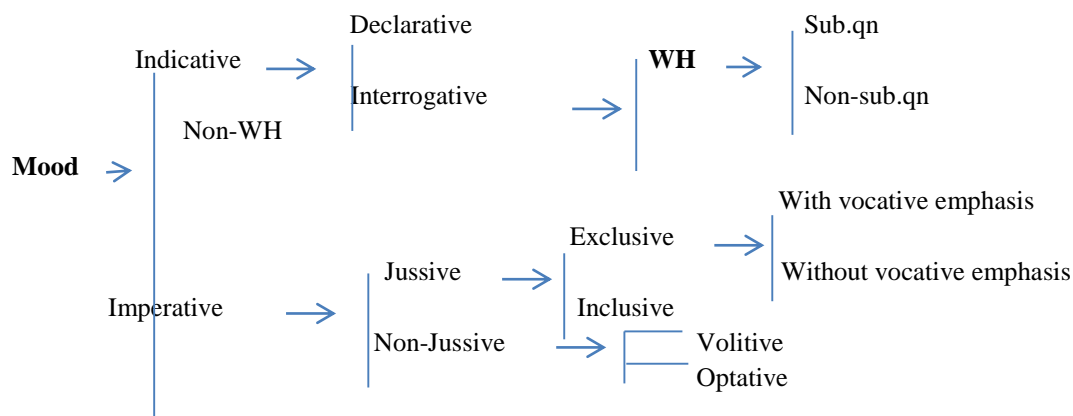


The grammatical mood system is summarised in the network above. Language scholars define mood as a state of mind in which one's feeling or combination of emotions is dominant (Holman 1972:327). Again, according to Hornby (1974:547), mood is just a condition of mind or spirit. Crystal (1991:223), on his side, claims that mood is a word utilised in the theoretical and descriptive analysis of sentence/clause forms, particularly verb contained. Ygelesias (1965:91) characterises mood as a kind of practice in pronouncing the same words in different ways to communicate different sentiments. A comment, according to him, might be pleasant, instructive, unpleasant, ominous, intriguing, or demanding. Crystal (1980) defines it as "a variety of attitudes that the mood system may represent." The clause's primary interpersonal system is mood. It offers the elements needed for a discussion with the resources for delivering or demanding a commodity (either knowledge or commodities and services), in other words, with the resources for carrying out speech functions (Halliday 1994:97).

**IMPERATIVE MOOD SYSTEM**

This is more noticeable and prominent in our data. The imperative mood allows the speaker to provide instructions, give counsel, make requests, or develop hypotheses. These duties are carried out by the imperative mood in any of its forms. The imperative mood is without a doubt one of the moods with the clearest interpretation, despite having the fewest members, with forms confined to the second person singular, first and second person plural. This is not surprising given that the existence of a discussion scenario is implied by the usage of this mood. This will be further explored in the analysis of our data later.

**DEICTIC EXPRESSIONS AND COVID-19 MEDIA DISCOURSE IN NIGERIA**

Because communication is a spatiotemporally sensitive activity, deixis as a pragmatic technique becomes important in language use in context, particularly in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. This is indicative of the fact that communication at this point requires a lot of conscious effort to convince the masses about the deadly virus and the need for them to take the PTF's safety protocols very seriously in order to avoid contracting the deadly virus. Eden's (2020) study suggests that "in everyday communication, language users are obliged to perform linguistic actions that connect to human and non-human characteristics." Valeika and Verikaite (2010:10) state that different communication contexts need the identification of beings, processes, and conditions. Several studies have been conducted on the use of deixis in political communication. Ayoola's (2005) study of the use of person deixis in President Olusegun Obasanjo's July 26, 2005 address to Nigeria's National Assembly in response to the Paris Club's debt relief gift to Nigeria proved the relevance of deixis in political communication once again. Politicians, in his view, employ the first person deixis while seeking political success and vying for political office. He also discovered indexical components in the speech under investigation that show the speaker's military past. This study confirms that deictic components are potent tools to assess the antecedents of speakers, although the use of deictic elements in medical discourse or Covid-19 media discourse has not been investigated in recent scholarly activity. Person deixis, space deixis, and temporal deixis are the three categories of deixis that are often used to communicate deictic claims. Pronouns, according to Eden et al. (2020), have been widely investigated as a technique of improving communicative involvement in political meetings. He claimed that speakers employ pronouns to assign roles to their referents. He emphasises the use of the plural word 'we' to show inclusion, function as a bonding item, and emphasises the encoder's intention to engage the addressee in certain acts. When Zupnik (1994) said that a speaker's persuasive power is typically

determined by his or her capacity to move communicative roles and tasks across discourse spaces, she stressed the importance of deixis in political communication.

## PERSON DEIXIS

This is concerned with the lexical and indexical depiction of persons engaged in conversation. Person deixis is offered in relation to the speaker's position as the discourse event's deictic center. According to Schandorf (2019:5), the art of communication requires a pointer, a person doing the pointing, another person for whom the pointing is done, and some object (item, idea, feeling, or event) that is thus intentionally invested with meaning for both. In a shared world, the act of pointing establishes a meaningful link between self and other. Participant deixis is also known as person deixis, according to Holger (2012). This, he claims, is because person deixis determines the role of the speech actors as well as their social connection with one another. Person deixis is primarily concerned with determining, however gently, the pragmatic role(s) that each participant in a speech event is expected to perform. Depending on the situation, person deixis is often expressed using the usual grammatical categories of person, case, and number. Personal pronouns representing person deixis are available in three dimensions: first, second, and third person. In the first person, the speaker is the main focus of the discourse. The first person pronoun represents the speaker's reference to himself/herself as all there is to know and perceive in a communication event. In this line, the speaker only employs the pronoun 'I'. In the second person deixis, the speaker refers to one or two addressees. It indicates the speaker's sincere care for the other people in the room. Third person deixis refers to the encoding of the speaker's reference to discourse participants who are neither the speaker nor the hearer.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION
## DISCOURSE PARTICIPANTS' CHOICE OF DICTION RELATING TO MOOD

As previously stated, the choices language users make in each communication encounter are influenced by the mood of the speakers. Mood in grammar indicates the function or goal of an utterance or speech. That is, how language users utilise speech or writing in connection to the person to whom they are speaking or writing to. As a result, this paper's examination of the grammatical mood component of our data is critical to our comprehension of the pragmatic choices made by speakers during the press briefing under consideration. The function or purpose of an utterance or speech is expressed by mood in grammar. Take a look at the imperative mood prominent in connection to our data here:

## IMPERATIVE MOOD

To show the level of preponderance, we shall now give the following examples from our data here:

**Ex1: Boss Mustapha**

> Nigerians at all levels *must* take responsibility for our actions, adopt
> behavioural modification, ensure compliance with advisories and
> provide guidance  to our followers and the youth (italics mine)

**Ex2: Sen. Olorunimbe Mamora**

> Finally, I would like to speak about calling for medical help.
> If you suspect or someone around you has been exposed to covid-19,
> *call* the toll free number 112.

From the above it is clear that the modal auxiliary verb *must,* has been added to the first imperative sentence in Ex 1. The italicised auxiliary conveys a sense of compulsion or a lack of choice, as well as an obvious call for collaboration in order to defend oneself from Covid-19. This demonstrates the fact that the author of the speech has the backing of Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari, in abdicating too much authority, as seen by the task force's name beginning with the word *presidential*. Again, we may speculate that the speaker's mood is pensive, after the death of the President's Chief of Staff, Abba Kyari, from a Covid-19-related complication, which could have prompted the use of the prompted the word *must* in the context of the address.

Again, in **Text 2**, we discover another intriguing angle in portraying the grammatical mood. In this case, the text's producer, Nigeria's Minister of State for Health, employs a silent auxiliary verb ***must***, having to employ the lexical word ***call***. Instead of saying anything like, "...if you think or anybody in your vicinity has been exposed to Covid-19, please contact the toll free number 112." It conveys the idea that the audience has no choice but to call and report any Covid-19 cases. The usage of imperative statements in Covid-19 language use may be related to political discourse since precisely the same imperative sentences are employed in Nigerian politics to accomplish certain persuasive and/or manipulative discourse effects. This might explain why Nigerians were suspicious about Covid-19's presence in the country.

## USE OF MILITARY DICTION

In each communication interaction, mood in language accounts for the mental speech choices made by speakers/writers. We said in extract 1 that the text producer arrogates a lot of State powers to himself, which may not be that far-fetched given that he is a

politician who has always had the president's mandate to carry out presidential tasks. It is worth noting that former Nigeria's president, Mohammadu Buhari, was once a military ruler, which explains the rationale behind the speaker's use of military diction in his address to the media to project force or lack of choice by the audience. Consider the following examples from our data:

**Ex3: Boss Mustapha**

*Let* me register the appreciation of the presidential task force

to the media for ensuring that Nigerians are kept well informed

about actions of government and for creating the necessary awareness.

…Finally, *let* me remind all Nigerians that the fight against covid-19 is a fight for all of us. It is only when we unite that victory can be assured in the next phase of this fight (ellipsis mine)

**Ex4: Sen. Olorunimbe Mamora**

The rising number of cases is of concern to all, but there is evidence of increasing in country community transmission, which to a large extent is as a result of non-compliance with lockdown ***orders*** and other non-medical interventions.

The snippet above displays the use of the verb ***let*** in Mr. Boss Mustapha's speech, which is generally linked with military-style of speaking that projects force. This speech is just approximately six sentences long, yet he uses the word let extensively twice, as shown above. The issue here is that the text producer feels himself as overly strong, which might be detrimental to the message being sent to the audience.

Again, there is evidence in Ex. 2 that the military-style of language use was employed in the speeches. For example, the military functions on orders/commands from superiors to subordinates. As a result, the sample above demonstrates apparent power abuse from the speech producer here, which is why he claims that the people were resistant to their authority since it was seen as an order rather than a nuanced manner of communicating to the public.

## CONTEXTUAL USAGES OF DEICTIC ELEMENTS IN THE NIGERIAN COVID-19 MEDIA DISCOURSE

Our findings show that there is a preponderance of the use of deictic components employed by members of the Presidential Task Force on Covid-19 in diverse contexts. These include the inclusive and exclusive contexts in Covid-19 media discourse in Nigeria. This is further explained in the tables below:

**Table 1: Frequency Distribution Of Contextual Usages Of Deictic Element-"*I*" In Covid-19 Media Discourse In Nigeria**

| Deictic Elements | Frequency of usage | Contexts of use Inclusive/Exclusive | Examples of Inclusive Context | Examples of Collective Exclusive Context |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I | 23 | Inclusive | **Ex 5**: Similarly, *I* want to thank our Frontline health workers and administrators again and again, who have been working to keep every Nigerian safe. The professionalism and commitment are well appreciated and *I* urge you to continue with strength and vigour.<br><br>**Ex 6:** While wishing all citizens well, particularly those who are presently observing Ramadan, *I* shall reiterate the usual public health advisories; stay at home, avoid large gathering, especially during Easter.<br><br>**Ex 7:** There has been a lot of conversation surrounding the situation in Kano; but first, *I* will like to remind everyone that during a pandemic, the risk of spread is in those towns where the population density is highest. | |

**Pragmatic Choice of Diction and Deictic Elements in Select Covid-19 Media Discourse in Nigeria**

According to table 1, members of the Presidential Task Force on Covid-19 used the possessive pronoun "I" 23 times in the five speeches investigated in this article, with the pragmatic context of usage being inclusive throughout. This demonstrates that the text's authors are capable of providing appropriate information about the frequency of the deadly virus in Nigeria. This is seen in Example 3, where the Secretary to the Government of Nigeria, in his role as Chairman of the PTF, acknowledges health professionals for their perseverance in limiting the virus and encourages them to continue fighting Covid-19. Furthermore, in instances 5 and 6, the deictic element "I" was employed to provide guidance on the necessity for residents to avoid congested areas and avoid visiting others in order to prevent communal spread of the virus.

**Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Contextual Usages of Deictic Element-"We" In Covid-19 Media Discourse**

| Deictic Element We | Frequency of Usage | Contexts of use Inclusive/Exclusive | Examples of Inclusive Context | Examples of Collective Exclusive Context |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 63 | Inclusive/Exclusive | **Ex 8:** *We* have now activated two additional laboratory in the Covid19 network; The USMAN DAN FODIO UNTH Sokoto and Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, bringing the total number of laboratories to 15.<br><br>**Ex 9:** *We* are in the process of setting up an emergency ambulance response system to address such issues. If your symptoms are mild to moderate, you can afford to isolate at home while awaiting a test and the results of that test.<br><br>**Ex 10**: What exactly are *we* doing? Firstly is to mention that Kano is one of the States with which we have had the strongest relationship with NCDC. There is no single state I have visited more often since I became the Director General in 2016 than Kano. So *we* have a strong relationship, with the public health leadership with the commissioners, and *we* have had this over the past few years. Just last week, I visited and met with the Honorable Governor of Kano State, Dr. Ganduje and *we* had very fruitful discussions in recognition of the difficulties in Kano and a commitment to continue supporting. Now, within the first 12 hours of the first confirmed case, *we* had already deployed a national response Team to Kano to support the state government effort. We now have a total of 15 people in Kano and we will | **Ex 12:** Finally, let me remind all Nigerians that the fight against covid-19 is a fight for all of us. It is only when *we* unite that victory can be assured in the next phase of this fight. It is time for us to individually and collectively take responsibilities for the next steps that *we* are going to take in the days and weeks ahead.<br><br>**Ex13**: Today is the 27th April, 2020 and it marks two months since **we** recorded the first case of Covid19 in Nigeria. The first case was on the 27th of February with the Italian index case. Since then, **we** have recorded 1,273 people in 32 States and the FCT that have been confirmed positive Covid19. |

| | | | continue to keep scaling the number of people supporting Kano state until *we* get to the appropriate number.<br><br>**Ex 11**: Our work is to put our heads down and continue. *We* will not be distracted with any politics, any insinuations. **We** will continue supporting the people of Kano and the government of Kano state to get ahead of this. This is a time for solidarity and not the time to point fingers. Our work is cut out for us, but *we* are not running away. *We* remain committed to achieve the task that we have set out for ourselves and *we* are committed to the mandate given to us by the NCDC. | |

According to Table 2, members of Nigeria's Presidential Task Force on Covid-19, on the one hand, pragmatically utilised the possessive pronoun *we* in both inclusive and exclusive contexts. The speakers employed the subjective possessive pronoun *we* in the inclusive context to basically update the public on what has been done to control the deadly and highly contagious virus. In instances 8 and 9, for example, the speakers notified the public about the establishment of new laboratories in Sokoto and Zaria to examine suspected Covid-19 cases in Nigeria. Although the speakers spoke to the press in turns, it was natural for them to utilise the inclusive *we* to accommodate the perspectives of others in the PTF.

On the other hand, in the exclusive collective context of usage, the pronoun *we* was heavily utilised by speech makers to signify oneness on their part and that of the masses/public. This indicates that the speakers, realising the importance of the masses in the collective struggle against the virus, asked for the public's support in this respect. This is can be further seen in cases 12 and 13 of the table above.

**Table 3: Frequency Distribution Of Contextual Usages Of Deictic Element-"Us" In Covid-19 Media Discourse**

| Deictic Elements | Frequency of usage | Contexts of use Inclusive/Exclusive | Examples of Inclusive Context | Examples of Collective Exclusive Context |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Us | 5 | Inclusive/Exclusive | **Ex.14:** …I am happy to announce that in addition to Kano, today, we are activating the high through put Roach Machine in the National Reference Laboratory that will enable *us* an extra capacity of about (1000) samples a day, if we can get the samples here.<br><br>**Ex.15**: Our work is cut out for **us**, but we are not running away. We remain committed to achieve the task that we have set out for ourselves and we are committed to the mandate given to *us* by the NCDC. | **Ex.16:** Finally, let me remind all Nigerians that the fight against covid-19 is a fight for all of *us*. It is only when we unite that victory can be assured in the next phase of this fight. It is time for *us* to individually and collectively take responsibilities for the next steps that we are going to take in the days and weeks ahead. |

**Pragmatic Choice of Diction and Deictic Elements in Select Covid-19 Media Discourse in Nigeria**

Table 3 shows that PTF members depend on deictic elements to project their views to the public. Although the usage of the collective pronoun *us* in the objective case was significantly used just five times in the speeches, the pragmatic implications in conveying communicative rhetoric to the audience were clearly visible. It is worthy to note that, like its counterpart in the subjective example stated previously, the deictic element *us* was utilised in both inclusive and exclusive situations.

In the inclusive context, as demonstrated in instances 14 and 15, the speakers utilised *us* to refer to themselves, the speech makers (Members of PTF) and describe what they have accomplished as a team prepared to confront Covid-19. While in the exclusive environment, the speakers drag the listener along in the conversation as though both were engaged in a serious battle against the Covid-19 infection.

**CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this research is to conduct a pragmatic analysis of the use of diction and deictic features in Covid-19 media discourse in Nigeria. Following the examination of our data in this research, it was discovered that the choices we make as language users in every communication encounter are likely to be influenced by the mood of the speakers at such communicative events. Again, it was the submission of this paper that, most of the messages projected to the audience at the press briefing by members of Nigeria's Presidential Task Force on Covid-19 were projected in an imperative mood, which appeared more like a command or a lack of choice on the part of the audience to change their attitude and take advisories on Covid-19 issues for their own safety. Again, we noticed that the PTF members utilised deictic elements in both inclusive and exclusive situations to either pragmatically connect with the audience as though both of them were in for a serious struggle against Covid-19 -and/or accept responsibility for whatever stated during the press conference. To that end, this study concludes that there are many similarities between language use in Nigerian political discourse and language use in Covid-19 media discourse in Nigeria, because the same language used in political discourse is seen to be transposed into current discourse, which may or may not perform the function the words are sent out to do.

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