

**Terminological Invention Contextualized Meaning and Translational Implication: A Post-  
COVID-19 Linguistic Survey**

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**Abstract**

This paper looks at the controversy of the contemporary global perception of the COVID-19 epidemic. The plague which seeks unwavering scholarly responses has attracted critical attempts across disciplines, including linguistics that accommodates communication challenges during the COVID-19 awareness campaign. Among the issues raised is interpretational implication involving many of Nigeria's indigenous languages, whose cultural perception could be devoid of the modern context of the COVID-19 notion. This situation motivated the present study. It seeks to explore the post COVID-19 experiences, as well as comprehensively survey the possible tendencies of terminological invention, translational mapping and their implication on understanding the COVID-19 awareness campaign. The theoretical framework adopted in this work is Lexical Priming by Hoey (1991), while cohesion in translation and interpretation of the data generated in the work is guided by Fakuade (1998). The work solely concentrates on the two major languages, Hausa and Fulfulde, in Gombe town, Gombe State, Nigeria. The paper employed both qualitative and quantitative techniques in data collection and analysis. The researchers collected data from all the established COVID-19 isolation centers in Gombe. The research findings uncovered an

inventory of contextualized terminologies employed in propagating awareness regarding the signs and symptoms of the COVID-19 pandemic from the two languages under study. Few among the terms are *Ekkitare* from Fulfulde and *Mashaqo* from Hausa. The terms were linguistically examined, semantically compared, then translated and interpreted. It is concluded that language and metaphysics are robust techniques employed in translation and justification of the technical and medical terms in this contemporary era, especially on the African continent.

**Key words:** *COVID-19, terminology invention, culture, translation, interpretational implication*

### **Introduction**

According to the Novel Coronavirus Information Center, (2020), a novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is associated with human to human transmission of severe human infection reported from the city of Wuhan in China, December, 2019. The COVID-19 international pandemic has become a global development that relegates socioeconomic activities locally and internationally, physically and psychologically. Coronavirus is a large family of viruses that typically attack the respiratory system. The name comes from the Latin word *corona*, for crown, and the ancient Greek *korōnè*, meaning garland or wreath, because of the spiky fringe encircling these viruses. Most coronaviruses infect animals, such as bats, cats, and birds. Only seven, including COVID-19, SARS, and MERS, are known to infect humans. There is existing evidence from South Korea, China and Italy that patients with confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection have developed anosmia/hyposmia, in some cases without any symptoms (Agofure, 2020).

From the linguistic viewpoint, the concept has become a serious issue of consideration to ethnic groups, individual languages' translation and interpretation. Therefore, the assumption in this study could partially be linked with the perception of some people, particularly Hausa and Fulani who believe that coronavirus COVID-19 could be translated as a mere respiratory term "Mashaqo" and "Ekkitare", respectively, based on its signs and symptoms.

Harnessing the arguments presented above, two of the seven coronaviruses that infect humans, SARS and MERS, can cause severe pneumonia, but others lead to milder symptom like a common cold. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever and dry cough. However, symptoms of COVID-19 vary in severity from having no symptoms at all (being asymptomatic) to having

fever, cough, sore throat, general weakness and fatigue and muscular pain and in the most severe cases, severe pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome, sepsis and septic shock, all potentially leading to death. Reports show that clinical deterioration can occur rapidly, often during the second week of the disease. Anosmia – loss of the sense of smell – (and in some cases the loss of the sense of taste) have been reported as a symptom of a COVID-19 infection.

### **Statement of the problem**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) in its conception of coronavirus (covid-19), regards it as a new development globally. This position is strongly opposed by many individuals and ethnic groups, especially around African communities. It has been responded to in relation to their languages, cultural translation and interpretation which view it as an old phenomenon. This situation creates a wide gap and a problem between authorities and followers on believing the pandemic in WHO context and compliance to the precautionary measures. Therefore, this gap constitutes the major part of challenges faced by government in implementing safety measures. While many studies have been conducted by various researchers across disciplines, the present research addresses the problem linguistically, for a proper understanding of the COVID-19 from both the western perspective (that includes government), and the other perspective, namely tradition and cultural practices in Africa, specifically, Northern Nigeria (with reference to Hausa/Fulani). The study specifically aims to answer the questions:

- I. What is the meaning of Coronavirus (COVID-19) according to World Health Organisation and the western world?
- II. What is the translation and interpretation of the Coronavirus in the context of Fulfulde and Hausa?
- III. What is the linguistic implication of the gap between the present-day meaning of Coronavirus (COVID-19) according to WHO and its contextualised meaning among the Fulfulde and Hausa people in Northern Nigeria?

### **Review of related literature**

Both linguistic and nonlinguistic studies have been conducted on Coronavirus by various scholars. The nonlinguistic studies comprise those focusing on defining the concept, its effect and those

teaching safety measures to prevent people from contracting the pandemic or stop spreading it by the victims Agofure (2020). The linguistic studies, on the other hand, have mainly been concerned with the use of language in awareness campaign activities Hoey (2021). This category may further be divided into the journalists' use of language or various expressions by the general public. These perspectives are presented below.

To begin with the first category, documentaries from Agofure (2020), who discussed the concept from the origin of the virus reveals that the levels of genetic similarity between the 2019-nCoV and RaTG13 suggest that the latter does not provide the exact variant that caused the outbreak in humans, but the hypothesis that 2019-nCoV has originated from bats is very likely. Evidence shows that the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is not-mosaic consisting in almost half of its genome of a distinct lineage within the beta coronavirus. These genomic features and their potential association with virus characteristics and virulence in humans need further attention. He also clarified by saying, our analysis suggests that the 2019-nCoV although closely related to bat CoV RaTG13 sequence throughout the genome (sequence similarity 96.3%), shows discordant clustering with the Bat SARS-like coronavirus sequences. Specifically, in the 5'-part spanning the first 11,498 nucleotides and the last 3'-part spanning 24,341–30,696 positions, 2019-nCoV and RaTG13 formed a single cluster with Bat\_SARS-like coronavirus sequences, whereas in the middle region spanning the 3'-end of ORF1a, the ORF1b and almost half of the spike regions, 2019-nCoV and RaTG13 grouped in a separate distant lineage within the sarbecovirus branch. Oladipupo (2017) attests that such are the propositions that described the state of affairs, the material world as it is. The acceptance of the definition of language to that extent gives credibility to "Mashaqo" and "Ekkitare as terms of languages to categorize COVID-19 epidemic to the wording proposition.

Wang et al, (2020) stated that the research on SARS-CoV-2 is in its primary stages. Based on current published evidence, this review systematically summarizes the epidemiology, clinical characteristics, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of COVID-19. It is hoped that this review will help the public to recognize and deal with SARS-CoV-2, and provide a reference for future studies. In addition to this, Zunyou Wu (2020) writes "The current COVID-19 outbreak is both similar and different to the prior severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS; 2002-2003) and Middle East

Respiratory Syndrome (MERS; 2012-ongoing) outbreaks. SARS was initiated by zoonotic transmission of a novel coronavirus (likely from bats via palm civets) in markets in Guangdong Province, China. MERS was also traced to zoonotic transmission of a novel coronavirus (likely from bats via dromedary camels) in Saudi Arabia. All three viral infections commonly present with fever and cough, which frequently lead to lower respiratory tract disease with poor clinical outcomes associated with older age and underlying health conditions. Confirmation of infection requires nucleic acid testing of respiratory tract samples (e.g., throat swabs), but clinical diagnosis may be made based on symptoms, exposures, and chest imaging. Supportive care for patients is typically the standard protocol because no specific effective antiviral therapies have been identified”.

Turning to language based studies, Mai and Hocuns (2023) conducted a multimodal critical discourse analysis of The New York Times and China Daily’s news reports of COVID-19. The aim is identifying the ideologies in COVID-19 news reports. They categorized the COVID-19 pandemic into three phases: China’s anti-pandemic phase, first global outbreak, and second global outbreak. The findings include others reveals that nyt and cd’s COVID-19 news reports do not only convey facts but also served different ideologies which shifted over each phase. They further exhibit linguistic devices that from both the nyt and cd news media which include lexical devices as images, and metaphors to convey different ideologies, shaping people’s perceptions of the pandemic and government measures to control it. They also posit that nyt’s Covid-19 reporting implies that China’s pandemic measures were irrational and extreme, and that the Trump administration’s policies during the outbreak were ineffective, while feminism and racism also appeared. On other hand, cd’s news reports of the pandemic portrayed efficiency by the Chinese government’s in controlling COVID-19 and a positive attitude toward government officials.

GILL and Lennon (2022) critically analysed multimodal discourse of COVID-19 information adverts by the UK Government on television. The adverts or ‘campaigns’ meant to increase public

awareness of COVID-19 and promote compliance with its subsequent policy. The research shows that compliance with public health policy is influenced by fearful visual-verbal campaign messaging strategies with emotive representations of 'risk'. The strategy according to them is perceived to be more effective than non-emotive discourse. However, their Preliminary analysis of seventeen COVID-19 adverts revealed four sequential phases to the Government's pandemic response: responsibility, management, mitigation, and reflection. Their in-depth Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis reveals that fear was constructed using less conventional meaning potentials in favour of more implicit multimodal semiotic interactions. More so, they reveal that by portraying a 'good' pandemic subject as one who makes 'moral' and 'rational' decisions to comply with COVID-19 policy, pre-existing societal inequalities which might hinder compliance, particularly for the socioeconomically disadvantaged groups of society, were reduced and problematised. This raises ethical concerns over notions of 'expertise' and the 'rationalising' of 'irrational' lifestyles. Finally, they recommend that research should further explore multimodal nudges in public health campaigns to hold producers accountable.

Dezhkameha and Hadidib (2021) conducts a Critical Discourse Analysis of Covid-19 in Iranian and American Newspapers. They argue that policies and ideologies of countries are reflected in the propagated media of that country, and newspapers are no exception. They stated that Covid-19 has affected the lives of people all around the world, which their study investigates such ideological differences in reporting the news related to Covid-19 in light of Van Dijk's ideological square framework. A representative sample of 56 news articles was chosen over a period of one year (from January 2020 to the end of January 2021) from one Iranian and one American newspaper, the Tehran Times and The New York Times. An approximate of 2,977 clauses were

analysed qualitatively, to find out the reason of occurrence, and quantitatively, to determine the frequency of occurrence for each micro strategy. The findings include Hyperbole, Metaphor, National Self-Glorification, Negative Lexicalisation, and Number Game were the most frequent micro-strategies. For them, such high frequencies of the strategies can make for effective discursive apparatus to make readers believe what news articles claim is true. The implicational impact of the study is the raising readers' and academics' awareness of the need to view news articles critically to avoid negative ramifications of ideological propagandas. They further stress that newspapers need to be cognizant of the micro-strategies they consciously or sub-consciously employ since certain micro-strategies can be used to manipulate readers' minds and help news agencies to feed their readers certain ideological and political agendas.

Yeşilyurti (2021) conducted a Critical Discourse Analysis on the Effects of Covid 19 on the Future of Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language. The study aimed at analysing the discourses of prospective teachers who were taking teaching Turkish to foreigners course about the effects of Covid 19 on the future of teaching Turkish as a foreign language, providing a more quality language education during and after Covid 19 process. The study group consists of 59 students studying at Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University, Ereğli Faculty of Education, Department of Turkish language teaching since they were receiving teaching Turkish as a foreign language course and they would graduate from the related department. Open-ended questionnaires were applied to the participants in the study. The research concluded that although Covid 19 had a negative influence on language teaching activities, with positive state policies and with more frequent use of distance education and online education, these problems have been overcome and more people could be interested in Turkish in the future.

Chigina et al (2021) maintain that Media has the power to influence the public's views on certain issues, ideologies, and innovations. According to them, the media affects whether people accept or adopt a practice or innovation. How certain issues are portrayed in the media affects social reality through the kind of language used and how it is presented. Therefore, their paper investigates the media discourse of contact-tracing applications in South Africa, using Critical Discourse Analysis to analyse several media articles through Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action. The process involved assessing four validity claims (truth, sincerity, comprehensibility, and legitimacy) to uncover systematic distortions which could affect how the public perceived the Information and Communications Technology artefacts. The research finding shows that distortions that could create false impressions on the efficacy of the artefacts pushed the notion that would result in South Africans using more. However, the distortions were overshadowed by the overall evidence from the claims which made a consensus that the media discourse on the application is credible. In the above view, Coronavirus can be seen as difficulty in breathing which leads to sudden death. In essence, this research aim is to lay a retrospective investigation of the existence of the COVID-19 virus/disease within the communities of the Hausa /Fulani in Gombe, through language translation and interpretation.

### **Methodology**

The current research is purely a descriptive survey, which employed a qualitative approach. The study explored both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data was obtained from the interviews with some medical personnel and prominent native speakers of Hausa and Fulfulde languages, while the secondary data is from the official documents containing the interaction of medical workers and the suspected covid-19 patients. The theoretical framework adopted in this work is Cohesion in translations and interpretation as utilized by Hoey (2021) and Fakuade (1998). The theory of Cohesion provides that a text is in part organized, in part created, by the presence in

each sentence or elements that require the reader to look to the surrounding sentences for their interpretation.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

As earlier stated in the background and the methodology of this study, three COVID-19 centers were visited for data collection. Additionally, some health workers and prominent native speakers of both Fulfulde and Hausa languages have been sampled for interview. The analysis is therefore presented in two broad categories. While the first category is concerned with the data obtained from the camps, the other category centers on the philosophical analysis of the Hausa and Fulfulde natives' conception and contextualisation of the current coronavirus (covid-19).

### **The Responses of COVID-19 Patients and the Health Workers**

Federal Teaching Hospital Gombe (FTHG), Gombe specialist Hospital and Kwadon isolation centers have been visited. First, the document containing interviews/interaction of the medical practitioners and the patients at FTH have been obtained. Most of the patients disputed being contracted with the virus, but believed to have been isolated for Government interest through medical authority. According to the patients' opinion, most of their health challenges as contained in their medical records are Diabetes, Asthma or Hypertension. They equally believe that the coronavirus could simply be considered as a mere catarrh (Mura in Hausa). Turning to the health personnel' responses, they have objected to the patients' view by emphasising the results and findings of each patient after undergoing the COVID-19 test and sample. They are therefore counted as COVID-19 patients.

Similarly, the medical practitioners' interaction with the COVID-19 suspected patients at Gombe state specialist camp were reached. The official data presented to the researchers is in waiting. Although some patients conceded to have been contracted with the coronavirus, many others deny such and claim to be free of any ailment. Besides, the record of Kwadom Camp Center reflects that of Federal Teaching Hospital Gombe where many patients even protest not having coronavirus but a mere catarrh (Mura/Mashaqo in Hausa and Damba/Ekkitara in Fulfulde).

### Professional Translation of the Coronavirus in Fulfulde and Hausa

Responding to the question on what actually the concept of /**Corona**/ → (**COVID-19**) could mean, the respondents, who are bilingual Hausa and Fulfulde experts perceive it as “Mura” (catarrh) which usually starts with a cold and later accompanied by a fever, cough, weakness among others. The responses are presented below as quoted from the respondents:

- (1) /**Coronavirus**/ → (**Covid-19**) “cutar murar mashaqo ce” this starts with a cold, dry cough, weakness, respiratory tract and obstacle.
- (2) /**Coronavirus**/ → (**Covid-19**) “Mashaqo” this progresses from “Mura” and leads to total obstruction of respiration in vocal cords that leads to a sudden death.
- (3) /**Coronavirus**/ → (**Covid-19**) “Sarqaqewar Numfashi” ”serious dry cough which leads to total obstruction of respiration in vocal cords that results in sudden death.

These systems (phenomenon) are familiar to almost everybody living within Hausa domain and are considered inevitable transmitted infection/diseases.

- (4) /**Corona**/ → (**Covid-19**) “Damba” this starts with a cold, later turns to a fever, cough and progresses to weaknesses.
- (5) /**Coronavirus**/ → (**Covid-19**) “Ekkitare” this is a progress of “Damba” that leads to total obstruction of respiration track in vocal cords that hints to sudden death in a patient.

Such types of infections are considered normal and common within Fulfulde people as confirmed from interviews in the research area<sup>1</sup>. This position has also been confirmed by an expert of traditional medicine (Fulfulde native Doctor) Malam Babayo Tulmi<sup>2</sup>

### Philosophical Analysis

“Mashaqo” and “Ekkitare” could be philosophically analysed with reference to language and metaphysics. This opinion suggests that language in its entity is a medium of communication while metaphysics is the study of reality. However, one is poised to interrogate the terms “Mashaqo” and ‘Ekkitare’ being the equivalent terminologies employed in describing and explaining COVID-19 within the mentioned ethnic groups. This stands to be the reality of facts because the terms

<sup>1</sup> . Interview with Alhaji Usman Garko (Wazirin Garko), a 72 year old man consulted in his house at Pantami quarters around 8:34pm on 07/02/2023

<sup>2</sup> .Interview with Fulfulde native speaker Malam Babayo Tulmi a 54 year old man at Pantami quarter, Gombe around 9:23pm on 11/02/2023

possess both the attribute of language and metaphysics. The justification for this claim have been expounded in Oladipupo (2017), that “it is pertinent to make recourse to the fact for ages linguistic interpretation has been one of the enormous tasks that every user of linguistic expression handles with”. This position can further be explicated from the position of Wittgenstein (1977), who defines language as “the totality of propositions which picture reality.

In addition, the major reality of public nature of language follows just as Tucker (1981), who argues that “the illustrious *cogito* of Descartes (COVID-19 epidemic) cannot occupy the primary position accorded to it by him.” This assumption in what could be termed *metaphysic principle* which is enough to knock out the belief of the public. For solution, the problem that is discussed here is briefly, that those experiments that are devised presuppose our problem have been resolved. It cannot find the solution to our problem by experiment simply because whatever experiments are allowed as legitimate depends upon the solution to the problem of developed countries (Western World precisely). So trying to investigate it by experimental means land us in vicious circle as Tucker, 1981, and Oladipupo 2017 posit.

In Oladipupo’s (2017) opinion, any concept that is described as real, a distinction that is commonly drawn is between the “real” as physical and the “unreal” as abstract in this context. Hence quality (e.g, redness) will be unreal in the sense while a chair will be real. Next, we speak of different level of reality. Redness, for instance, is real because there are instances of red things in the world. Hence, although there is no tangible object which we can refer to as redness, philosophers still regard it as real in its own way, though having no objective independent existence.”

What could then be the real conception of “Mashaqo/Ekkitare” or COVID-19 epidemic in Fulfulde/Hausa community of Gombe? Deducing from the professional translation and philosophical analysis above, whenever something is empirically manifest to be real, any other conception on assumption should be considered abstract, and that is the nature which is the ideal situation of COVID-19 epidemic in the Fulfulde/Hausa community of Gombe town.

### **Inadequacy in Translation**

Although, the study is primarily concerned with the translation or interpretation of the coronavirus, this part focuses on the terms realized in English that could not be translated into Hausa and Fulfulde. While translating the data, few words are found quiet challenging that need to be

acknowledged for further prominence. This is an instance of linguistic adoption or borrowing, from English to Hausa and Fulfulde.

<b>Hausa</b>	<b>Fulfulde</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Gwamna	Ngomna	Governor
Komishina	Komicina	Commissioner
Darakta	Darekta	Director

This comprehension is unique to the said communities due to phonological interference (Garko, 2018).

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Language naturally evolves, while vocabulary development remains controversial concept especially when the language is used by a non-native and/or in a non-native environment. Translation and/or interpretation process in such a situation consequently affects the users' way of thinking or the language be molded by the users. Failure to comply with Tucker (1981) and Oladipupo's (2017) view for collective inference on a text rather than individual lexical mapping can cause set back in a translation process. And that forms part of the presupposition of this work. This exaggerative conception of coronavirus by the western world to Africans is a linguistic implication that leads to economic collapse and educational decline among other misfortunes in the African continent.

The study has successfully interrogated the conception and contextualization of coronavirus (covid-19) by the western world and Africa, with reference to Northern Nigeria's two most influential ethnic groups (Hausa/Fulani). The intercultural perceptual clash of the covid-19 concept has well been examined. Some isolation centers in Gombe have been visited for data collection. This is in addition to the verbal interview with some prominent personalities from the two ethnic groups under study. The study is purely descriptive qualitative, whereby the result of the sampled ethnic groups is generalized on the northern region's perception of the corona-virus. Based on the findings of this paper, within its scope, the equivalent concepts for coronavirus (covid-19) as emphasized both the professional translators and the philosophical analysis, are "Mura, Mashaqo" and "Damba, Ekkitara". The said terms are the popular responses obtained from the Fulfulde and Hausa languages in describing and translating the Western concept of COVID-19 epidemic. This

has proved the position of Oladipupo (2017) that “mythical world is language-dependent, mythical language simplifies the myth believer’s reports of the success of scientific practice”. The work suggests that combination of language and metaphysics are the good techniques for translation of the technical and medical terms in contemporary time, especially for African continent.

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