

Covid-19 Pandemic in the Spotlight: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Sahara Reporters' News Headlines

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the language use in reporting of the Covid-19 pandemic in Sahara Reporters (SR) news posts. The outbreak of Covid-19 has become a global health concern, affecting millions of people worldwide. The study examines how the media structure, choose and use words in reporting the events of the Covid-19 pandemic. A review of related literature in this research reveals that the media language can shape public opinion and influence policy decisions. The theoretical framework adopted as the yardstick for analysis in the study is *Fairclough's Socio-Cultural Approach*, which is an aspect of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The study adopted a qualitative approach, using purposive sampling to select news posts from Sahara Reporters' Facebook channels. Data analysis reveals that Sahara Reporters employs figurative language, short sentence structures, and health-related terms, mostly nouns, to disseminate information. The ideology portrayed by Sahara Reporters is shaped and focused towards advising the government on alleviating and taking precautions to ensure the safety of Nigerian citizens. The findings reveal that Sahara Reporters employs figurative language, short sentence structures, and health-related terms, mostly nouns, to disseminate information. The ideology portrayed by Sahara Reporters is shaped and focused towards advising the government on alleviating and taking precautions to ensure the safety of Nigerian citizens. The findings highlight the significant role of media in reporting prominent news and the importance of language choice in disseminating intended messages and focusing readers' attention on salient issues. The study concludes that the media's language use can have a profound impact on public perception and government response to health crises like Covid-19.

Introduction

Over the years, the media have developed a unique way of selecting words that carry different

kinds of meanings in order to disseminate information to audiences. This selection of words may end up confusing the audiences giving them wrong ideas about some health challenges, since different meanings can be given to these words based on individuals' perception. It becomes necessary therefore to carry out a study on language use in the media industry with a view to investigating how words are manipulated to achieve certain effects on listeners/readers.

The role of media in reporting prominent news has become a means where language is structured regardless of grammatical agreement. The choice of language is a prerequisite to ensuring that intended messages are directed to, especially as it relates to certain issues. News editors often reflect their opinions and attitudes about the issues conveyed in news. A linguistic analysis of the way these pieces of news are transmitted may reveal the opinions and attitudes of viewers and listeners of the media language. The role of the media language often reveals the real intentions of a text-producer, which may sometimes be obscure, leading to a sense of misunderstanding on the part of the text-recipient (Van Dijk, 1977:216). Social media is a key place of agenda setting and public interest on particular subjects, which operates to limit the range of arguments and perspectives that inform public debate. The advent of digital media has shown that the world is full of mass of disjointed and often contradictory information. An effective flow of information between the various distinct groups in the public sphere has historically been made possible by the mass media, which systematically edit and interpret huge volume of information, thereby making sense of the world for audiences (Van Dijk, 1998). As certain knowledge is promoted over others, it is effectively given a privileged status of being authoritative and, in some cases, truthful. Thus, the aim of this paper is to examine the portrayal of blame and responsibility in Covid-19 narratives by attempting a critical discourse analysis of headlines on Covid-19 pandemic as posted in the Facebook page of Sahara Reporters. Part of the reasons why this research adopts Critical Discourse Analysis is because CDA uncovers the ideological stance of Sahara Reporters, revealing how their language choices shape public opinion and influence government responses to the pandemic. It examines power dynamics, highlighting how language is used to exercise power, maintain dominance, or resist dominant ideologies, which is crucial in understanding media representation of Covid-19. It also considers the social context of language use, including the Nigerian context, cultural norms, and the impact of Covid-19 on the society. reveals how discourse constructs and

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reinforces ideologies, influencing public perception and understanding of Covid-19, and shaping responses to the pandemic.

Language and the Media

The relation between media and language is symbiotic as they have a lot of influences on one another. This is pertinent because in most cases, the language use on media is more formal than the common everyday language used by lay people on the streets. It is also different from language of textbooks or academic discourse. A school of thought, of which Marshal McLuhan is an exponent, claims that the new media (Facebook, twitter, Instagram) are producers of new language; they push written expression toward the spontaneous shifts and freedom of the spoken idiom (Michael 1979:12). If social media is considered as new media that is going viral today, then it also has an impact on language use, as it leads to emergence of new words and idioms that were nonexistent previously. These include emoticons and acronyms, which add colour and meaning to non-verbal communication – or annoy people with their overuse (John, 2014:9).

The media language exists when meaning of a media text is conveyed to audience (Jeremy 2009). As an important aspect of communication, the media needs language to pass across meaning in form of written or spoken language. There is need for word and language code, verbal and nonverbal communication to reach diverse audience. There is need to have texts in a specific language for conveying news in magazine, newspapers, TV and online media. Thus, the relation between media and language is very strong, so much so that some people assume that language and media are almost the same, or that they are two different entities that are inseparable. In other words, one cannot construct any interpretation if one does not use language in media. Spoken language gives us the ability to communicate in an effective manner. There is more flexibility in communication, though it is possible to communicate via facial expressions and gestures, which have evolved into complex linguistic systems that enable us to express ourselves. There is a great variety in the form and style of media texts. Therefore, the codes used to construct meaning are varied and dependent upon the form of the media text. In most cases, the text uses a variety of codes, such as visual, audio and written that fit together in a certain way to create a particular meaning (Andy, 2011).

The rise of the internet in the early 1990s opened up new ways of communication, information exchange and socialising. It equally provides sociolinguists with an abundance of new language-related resources and new perspectives for perceiving the workings of man on new modes of communication. Social media is only one example of avenues which are subjected to extensive research and considered as a rich area of application and is closely connected to its users as well as vastly adaptive to their needs. Participants in highly institutionalised platforms, such as LinkedIn, are committed to rules and conducts that govern stylistic (linguistic and interactional) discourse features. In the context of social media platforms, the institutional (the state), social media (the public) and the private sector are open to potential one-to-one and one-to-many forms of communication (Jensen 2015, p. 1). In elaborating on the relationship of the social media language and institutional media, Jensen (2015:2) perceives social media to be a vehicle of civil society ‘articulating with itself’, manifesting a third force in society, beyond state and the market.

Media provides a platform for people to articulate their voices and ideas in various textual and modal forms. They also show how people claim their stance and distance over an issue. In analysing the socio-semiotics of the dynamic COVID-19 discourse, heterogenous voices operate as a means of expressing solidarity and expressing thoughts, such as health concerns. However, expressing these thoughts has not only emerged with the advent of social media platforms (Thurlow 2006). For example, Trčková (2015) traces the metaphoric representations of the disease and portrayals of its victims, combining critical discourse analysis and the cognitive theory of metaphor to investigate Ebola discourse in two American newspapers. The findings of the study show that the two newspapers heavily rely on conceptualising metaphor of Ebola as war, Ebola as an animate/human being and Ebola as a natural catastrophe.

Media language platforms not only allow for everyday concerns and topics to be discussed by the public, but also open new horizons to utilise language and discourse on multiple linguistic levels. Thurlow (2006) provides a comprehensive international corpus of 101 print media accounts of language use in technologies, such as instant messaging and text messaging. He uses the label ‘meta discourse’ (that is discourse about discourse) that reveals the conceptual and ideological assumptions by which particular communication practices come to be institutionalised and understood. He concludes that such discourse is characterised by dominance of Computer-

Mediated Discourse (CMD), together with highly caricatured exemplifications of actual practice. These popular but influential (mis)representations typically exaggerate the difference between CMD and non-mediated discourse, thereby misconstruing the ‘evolutionary’ trajectory of language change, and belying the cultural embeddedness of CMD. Albawardi (2018) examines how young Saudi women utilised WhatsApp to communicate in language and other resources. The study examines WhatsApp exchanges, including texts, images and emojis to emphasise the complexity of these interactions. The findings of the study indicate that there is a nexus of relations, identities and cultural tools that intersect in many different ways when WhatsApp users interact in different languages.

Language, Media and Ideology

Interest in language as social practice and in the context of its use has been the defining feature of various frameworks. Studies within the critical discourse analysis programme have generated continuous attempts to identify, analyse and describe various aspects and dimensions of the dialectics between discursive events and social structures, situations and institutions (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997).

It is a well acknowledged fact in the contemporary society people turn to different sources of information, including print and electronic media, to keep themselves updated on the happenings around the world, especially on matters of national and international politics, security, and events such as war (Fairclough 2006). Hence, there is need for vibrant mass media that can keep people aware of the political and social activities of the world. However, literature related to mass media reveal that the media shapes public perception by keeping intact its vested interest. Likewise, particular ideologies are propagated in the name of providing objective information to the public (Fairclough, 2006).

Ideologies more generally are associated with social groups, classes, castes, or communities, which thus represent their fundamental interests. The theory accounting for such ideological beliefs is complex and multidisciplinary, and can be summarized as follows (Van Dijk 1998:108):

- Ideologies have both social and cognitive properties which need to be accounted for in an integrated theory.

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- Cognitively, ideologies are a special kind of social belief systems, stored in a long-term memory.
- Socially as well as cognitively, these ideological belief systems are socially shared by the members of specific social groups, or ideological communities.
- Ideologies, like languages, are essentially social. There are no personal or individual ideologies, only personal or individual uses of ideologies.
- The identity of groups is not based only on their structural properties, but also on their ideology.
- Ideological belief systems – ideologies – form the axiomatic basis of the more specific beliefs or social representations of a group, such as their group knowledge and group opinions (attitudes).
- Unlike in most traditional approaches to ideology, ideologies are not necessarily negative. They have similar structures and functions whether shared by the dominant or the dominated groups, ‘bad’ groups or ‘good’ groups. Thus, we may have negative as well as positive ideologies (utopias), depending on the perspective, values, or group membership of the one who evaluates them.
- Not all socially shared beliefs of a group are ideological. Thus, ideologically different or opposed groups in the same society need to have beliefs in common in order to be able to communicate in the first place. This common ground consists of sociocultural shared knowledge, which by definition is ideological within that society (although it may later or elsewhere be described as ideological knowledge).

Studies on Covid-19 Reports

Since the onslaught of the COVID-19, news reports on the pandemic have increased exponentially, as linguists from various countries have been collecting COVID-19-related discourse and built corpora to interpret the relationship between the progress of the pandemic and related discourse from a linguistic perspective (Debnath & Bardhan, 2020). In general, studies on COVID-19-related discourse can be divided into two strands. One of them is the discourse analysis of COVID-19-related topics on various social platforms. Studies have found that there were significant differences in the discourse on the pandemic in different groups on social platforms

(Debnath & Bardhan 2020). The other strand is the analysis of news discourse of mainstream media in various countries. The consensus reached by Debnath & Bardhan (2020) is that the news discourse on the pandemic reveals some distinctive ideological and cultural backgrounds of linguists in various countries. For example, a study on headlines in eight newspapers from four countries found that the differences in the naming of the pandemic were related to ideological differences (Prieto-Ramos, Pei, & Cheng, 2020). It was discovered that people's understanding of the concept of "influencer" during the pandemic was largely affected by regional and socio-cultural backgrounds (Abidin, Lee, Barbeta, & Miao, 2020). In addition, a research on the use of hedge in the news about the epidemic in China reveals that the way that Chinese media reported on the pandemic reflected the determination and courage of Chinese citizens, as well as the great efforts put by the Chinese government to control the spread of the pandemic (Chen & Xie, 2020).

According to Lew (2020:12), "language use in reporting Covid-19 is usually a loaded kind. It is linguistically devised to sound powerful and thought provoking to the psyche of mental processes of the public". To this end, it is carefully designated to have an influence on the thoughts, opinions and attitudes of the public. Such human virtues are altered by way of language influence in favour of the media that lack linguistic skills to disseminate information before the public, so that the effect or the use of language is witnessed.

Furthermore, Awad (2020:19) asserts that "generally, we are aware that the ultimate goal of every media post is to influence the public in their choice of information by dint of his persuasive language, which in turn calls for his observing asset of professional ethics". The media stations must be honest in their intentions, which by legal and ethical standards, are expected to buy their way into the public psyche. The media language is sometimes boring with rhetoric characteristics of good or ill - humor which is forever narrowed with interests. The language of media draws attention to itself, to attract and sustain interests of the public in such a way as to command easy recall, or show familiarity and prompt right action.

According to Lew and Kosem (2020:5), "linguistics and various related disciplines cannot ignore the fact that the production of language in this short period has been overwhelmingly COVID-19centred. This has been the case for standard and non-standard language varieties, represented

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by news media and social media respectively”. Examples of this are extraordinary updates with COVID-19-related vocabulary in dictionaries such as the *Oxford English Dictionary* and *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, published much more quickly than the usual update intervals would dictate. According to Lew & Kosem (2020), COVID-19 affects daily lives of individuals and elicits a high interest in the government response process. The degree of interest in the government response process was confirmed by the fact that “President Moon Jae-in” emerged as a keyword in the entire response phase. The fact is that COVID-19 has consistently occupied a high frequency in terms of online search since its emergence in China and has been expressed as a keyword, indicating that our society is watching the government’s response to the disease with great interests.

In fact, social media such as Twitter, Facebook and other types of computer-mediated communication platforms, such as fora and blogs have become particularly relevant in the time of COVID-19, because of the absence of physical access to media or face-to-face communication, which led to more and more people using these channels to voice their opinions on matters related to Covid-19.

Theoretical Framework

The theory adopted for this study is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Critical Discourse analysis which is an aspect of critical linguistics developed at the University of East Anglia by Rodger Fowler and fellow scholars in the 1970s. CDA was first developed at the Lancaster School of Linguistics where Norman Fairclough was the most prominent figure. Ruth Wodak has also made a major contribution to this field of study. According to Van Dijk (2004), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a qualitative analytical approach for critically describing, interpreting, and explaining the ways in which discourses construct, maintain, and legitimize social inequalities. CDA rests on the notion that language is used purposefully, regardless of whether discursive choices are conscious or unconscious. CDA takes a number of different approaches and incorporates a variety of methods that depend on research goals and theoretical perspectives. Van Dijk (2003).

The version of CDA adopted in this study is *Fairclough’s Socio-Cultural Approach*. Like the systemic functional linguistic analysis of Halliday (1994, 2004, 2014), Fairclough’s system of discourse analysis has three dimensions, since discourse is seen simultaneously as:

1. a text (spoken or written, including visual images),
2. a discourse practice for production, consumption and distribution of the text, and
3. a socio-cultural practice.

Subsequently, Fairclough provides a three-dimensional framework for the analysis of text and discourse as follows:

- The linguistic description of the formal properties of the text,
- The interpretation of the relationship between the discursive processes/interaction and the text, and
- The explanation of the relationship between discourse and social and cultural reality.

The three-dimensional framework as outlined above serves as the technical concepts for the analysis of data in this study. This is because the above version critically aims to help the analyst understand the social problems that are mediated by mainstream ideology and power relationships, all disseminated by the use of written texts in the language used in reporting Covid-19 in Sahara Reporters Facebook news posts. Therefore, the concern of this study is centered on how the media structure, choose and use words in reporting Covid-19. Thus, the analysis of data in this research focuses on the structure, vocabulary and choice of words in reporting Covid-19.

METHODOLOGY

The data used for this study are collected from Facebook posts of Sahara Reporters (SR) news channels. The choice of SR is informed by the fact that the channel is quite interactive, making it suitable for analytical purpose. In this research, purposive sampling is used to select news posts from SR Facebook channels. Therefore, the study uses five (5) selected news headlines for the purpose of analysis. The analytical technique adopted is linguistics analysis, drawing insights from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The data were also viewed from the linguistic perspective of written discourse analysis. The relevant linguistic and discursual features contained in the news reports were identified and grouped according to their unique linguistic and discursual features before the analysis. The news headlines were studied separately and the features identified in them were analysed under different headings and sub-headings. After that, discussion

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was carried out on the various linguistic and discursal features of data for interpretation and better understanding of the features as posted on the channel.

Below are the lists of the selected posts and the date they were posted in the channel.

SN	POSTS	DATE	CHANNEL
1.	Covid-19 is lie from pit of hell; I have zero regard for it. – Oyedepo	December 10, 2020	Sahara Reporters
2.	Oyedepo recommends anointing oil to cure Covid-19, urge Nigerians to shun vaccine.	May 10, 2020	Sahara Reporters
3.	President Buhari blames Covid-19 for increase in petrol pump price, electricity tariff.	September 7, 2020	Sahara Reporters
4.	Covid-19: guarantee our safety like your children before asking us to resume, students tell Nigerian government.	September 1, 2020	Sahara Reporters
5.	Malaria-like symptoms should be considered Covid-19 – Sanwo-Olu	September 7, 2020	Sahara Reporters

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Using Fairclough’s prominent three-dimensional model (Description (text analysis), Interpretation (processing analysis) and explanation (social analysis; foci of analysis), the data is analysed in this section. The traditional text analysis (that has been taken over from Critical Linguistics) is supplemented by an examination of the discursive practice and discourse as social practice. A closer description of these levels follows below. On the basis of this model, three stages of CDA are developed. The first stage is the “description” of text; the second is the “interpretation” of the relationship of the text to interaction (which is discourse practice) and the last which covers the relationship of interaction and context (which is the sociocultural practice), is worked out by “explanation” (Fairclough 2001: 21-22). Fairclough (1992: 232) sees textual analysis as the most crucial element in justifying one’s interpretation. This is also why the textual examination is the crux of this analysis. Fairclough (1992: 75) splits text analysis into four different sections, namely vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and text structure. The examination of this analysis takes all of

these levels into account. However, the major focus lies, like in most analyses conducted within the frame of CDA, on vocabulary. Fairclough (1992: 75) distinguishes three further sections for the analysis: “force”, “coherence” and “intertextuality”, but as Widdowson (1995b: 511) points out, it is not clear in which relation the first group is to the second. Intertextuality plays a crucial role in the genre of media posts. First of all, their paramount goal is to be intertextually integrated into the reporting. Secondly, they themselves build on other texts

Datum 1: Covid-19 is lie from pit of hell; I have zero regard for it - Oyedepo (December 10th, 2020)



Figure 1: Source: Sahara Reporters’ Facebook Page

The post “Covid-19 is lie from pit of hell, I have zero regard for it - Oyedepo” generates about 2000 likes and reactions. There is a strong disapproval of the existence of Covid-19 as depicted in the post by Oyedepo, the architect and the founder of Megachurch Faith Tabernacle in Ota Ogun state, Nigeria. The sentences “Covid-19 is lie” and “I have zero regard for it”, clearly show the disapproval of Oyedepo in the existence of the virus. The post is structured on two notions, with the first notion showing Oyedepo’s disapproval of its existence and the second notion showing his disregard to the fundamental idea behind the existence of Covid-19. There is the use of personal pronoun “I”, which could be interpreted as an indication of personal opinion. The diction and the structure of the post, using personal pronoun, indicate personal opinion as words and

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phrase such as “lie”, “pit of hell” and “I have zero regard for it” clearly signifies them as subjective and religiously used.

Datum 2: Oyedepo recommends anointing oil to cure Covid-19, urges Nigerians to shun vaccine” (May 10th, 2020)

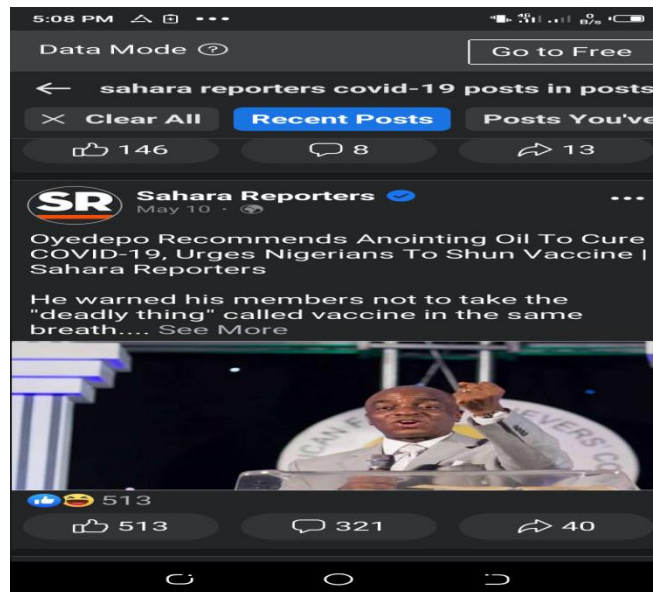


Figure 2: Source: Sahara Reporters' Facebook Page

The post reads “**Oyedepo recommends anointing oil to cure Covid-19, urges Nigerians to shun vaccine**”. It reveals how a religious leader recommended anointing oil as a vaccine for the cure of Covid-19. There is contradiction from the opinion of the speaker as reported in Figure 2. In the previous image, the speaker denied the existence of Covid-19 and disregarded its existence. Meanwhile, Figure 2 above shows how he vehemently recommended anointing oil for its cure after initially denying and disregarding the existing of the virus. This clearly indicates his uncertainty on the existence and the cure of the pandemic. The use of “anointing oil” vividly represents his opinion as religiously motivated.

Datum 3: President Buhari blames Covid-19 for increase in petrol pump price, electricity... (September 7th, 2020)

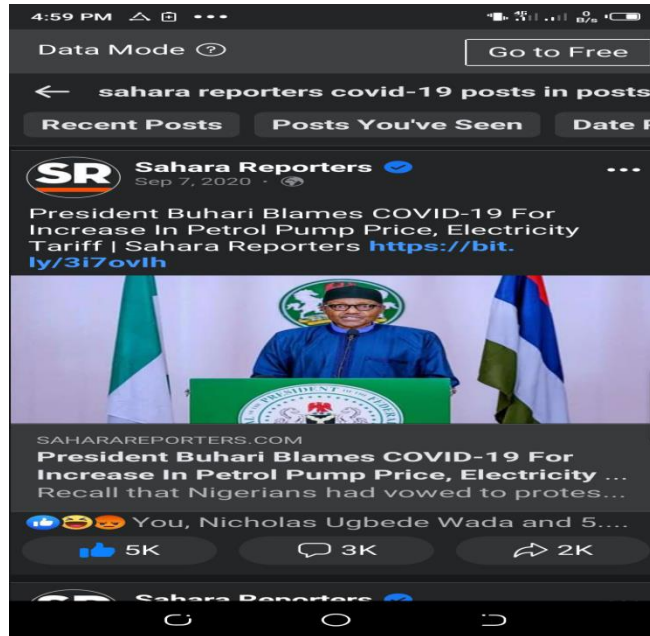


Figure 3: Source: Sahara Reporters' Facebook Page

The post *“President Buhari blames Covid-19 for increase in petrol pump price, electricity...”* received different reactions and comments. The above description of the virus forms the fundamental argument of this post. The post shows how President Buhari economically condemned Covid-19 instead of condemning its source. The post reports how President Muhammadu Buhari blames Covid-19 attributes some of Nigeria’s economic problems to the spread of Covid- 19. The semantic use of the word “blames” can be seen as fluctuating of opinion and shifting of blame to Covid-19 over economic change of price in goods and services. The use of many economic terms especially nouns such as “price, increase, petrol, pump, tariff and electricity” show the economic impact and the effect that Covid-19 had on the value of products in Nigeria. The use of these words indicates the economic impact of Covid-19 and the emphasis on the ideology behind the effect of Covid-19 on high increase of petrol pump price and electricity tariff which is an economic setback to Nigeria.

Datum 4: Covid-19: Guarantee our safety like your children before asking us to resume, students tell Nigerian government (September 1st, 2020)



Figure 4: Source: Sahara Reporters' Facebook Page

In the above post, there is class loop between the citizens demanding concrete assurance of safety from the government. It is well known that Covid-19 interrupted different activities, especially the academic sector. The students demanding an assurance of safety from government clearly indicates that their health and protection is in the hands of the government. The post further indicated how the students demanded not only safety from the government but they asked for the same protection as the government officials' children. The post also signposts the differences between the treatment citizens receive between their leaders. The use of simile "like your children" demands the need of equality in the treatment of the students and the governments' children. The ideology behind the students' utterances is that the government tends to give proper care and attention to their family abandoning the poor citizens to cater for themselves.

Datum 5: Malaria-like symptoms should be considered as Covid-19 - Sanwo-Olu (September 7th, 2020)

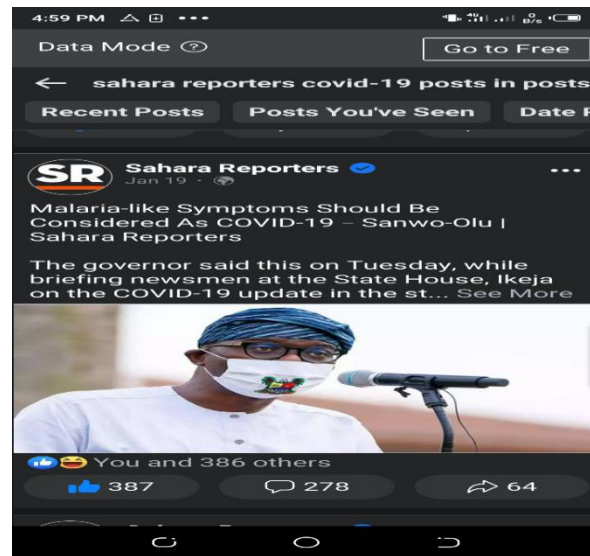


Figure 5: Source: Sahara Reporters' Facebook Page

The post is titled **“Malaria-like symptoms should be considered as Covid-19-Sawo-Olu”**. There are 387 likes, comments and emoticons from the viewers. Due to the spread of the Covid-19 virus, the government and other health practitioners attempted to find vaccine, in order to curtail the spread of the virus. This led to birth of different ideas and assumptions on how to tackle the Covid-19 virus. The government sought different angles and necessary symptoms that can be termed as signs and the causes of Covid-19. This results in different opinions by different professionals. One of the striking issues surrounding the pandemic is the possible symptoms that can reveal or prove that an individual has been affected by the virus. This compelled health practitioners and even the government to postulate certain symptoms that can be viewed as the possible sign of Covid-19. Subsequently, a government official proposed that malaria-like symptoms should be considered as signs of Covid-19. The use of the compound word “malaria-like” signifies that the necessary and immediate symptoms related to malaria should also be termed as Covid-19 symptoms. One of the striking structures of this post is the use of simile “as” and “like” as the connected verbs that link many ideas in the post.

Discussion

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The study examines language use in reporting Covid-19 in Sahara Reporters' Facebook News Channel. The research studies the portrayal of blame and responsibility in Covid-19 narratives. In other words, the study analysed how Covid-19 pandemic was reported on the online pages of Sahara Reporters. The role of the media in reporting prominent news has become a means in which language is structured regardless of its grammatical agreement. The choice of language is a prerequisite to ensuring the intended influence by directing readers' attention to certain issues. Based on Fairclough's three-dimensional model, the study looks at the underlying social practices, which means it takes into account the question of how far situational, institutional and social practices have an impact on the transmission of ideology with regard to the text.

From the above analysis, the influence of ideology on words is highly manifested in the posts. The vocabulary and the structure of the language create beliefs and convictions by repeating and emphasizing certain words classes such as "nouns" and "verbs". The influence of lexical ideology is present in almost every post by the media. This ideological influence is expressed by building a certain format of a mental framework, on the basis of which the media based their own social beliefs and actions. Beyond the function of communication, the words used in the posts are also a very important pragmatic tool of social interaction, which enables the media to associate with viewer's society, as well as to build and maintain the social participation within the social structure.

Having considered these functions, the choice of words such as "Covid-19", "anointing oil", "marijuana", "malaria", "hell" and "blames" signify the influence of ideology. In this regard, this can be viewed in three different dimensions of power as identified by Holzschleiter (2005:40): 'power in discourse', 'power over discourse', and 'power of discourse'. The first of these means the struggle over meanings and interpretations of terms and discourses. This struggle over semiotic hegemony refers to the choice of 'specific linguistic codes, rules for interaction, rules for access to the meaning-making forum, rules for decision-making, turn-taking, opening of sessions, making contributions and interventions' (Holzschleiter 2005: 69). This signifies that ideology plays a significant role in media discourse.

This ideology directly affects the format of the message and the form and the way it is expressed. Moreover, as ideology builds certain traits and values, the media aims to reflect precisely the features and ideological values of the messages. Within this premise, one can also see the

manifestation of political influence and ideology in the process of building singular and unique linguistic systems, such as standard lexical items.

Findings of the Study

The study arrives at the following findings:

1. There is the use of health-related terms which are mostly made up of nouns words, for example “Covid-19 pandemic”, “marijuana”, “vaccine”, “safety” “symptoms”, and “malaria”.
2. Sahara Reporters prefer to use the short sentence, which ranges from one to 16 words because short sentences make posts more accessible and the sentences easily captivate the viewers’ attention.
3. Sahara Reporters use figurative language and modals verbs to elicit emotion, help viewers and readers to form mental images and draw them into their news. Figurative language such as “*should*”, “*guarantee our safety like your children...*”, “*China-virus*” and “*Covid-baby*” are used to convey particular ideas without directly stating them.
4. Sahara Reporters focus on the government impact towards alleviating and taking precautions to ensure safety of the citizens.

Conclusion

Media plays a significant role in reporting prominent news. The choice of language in the media is also very essential to ensuring the intended influence by directing readers’ attention to certain issues and in different dimensions. This paper is designed to investigate the language used in reporting Covid-19. The study sourced data from the Facebook pages of Sahara Reporters’ News Channel to examine how the media structure, choose and use words in reporting the Covid-19 pandemic. The theoretical framework adopted for the study is *Fairclough’s Socio-Cultural Approach*, which is an aspect of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The methodology adopted for the study was qualitative method and purposive sampling was used in selecting the news posts from Sahara Reporters Facebook channels. The findings revealed that the media use figurative language, short sentence structure, and health-related terms which are mostly made up of nouns to disseminate information.

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