

An Analysis of Yoruba Covid-19 Jingles on Selected Nigerian Radio Stations

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Abstract

Covid-19 is a health crisis that posits great challenges to all aspects of human life. Extant studies on the crisis situations are mainly from the religious, social, economic, health and psychological perspectives with little attention paid to the language or the linguistic resource which is the main instrument and vehicle in communicating the information and updates on the deadly Covid-19 currently ravaging the whole world to people. The study, therefore, undertakes analysis on Jingles centered on the pandemic situation. It specifically uses a modified version of John Seale's (1969). Speech Acts theory to analyse Yoruba Jingles collected between March 2020 and June 2020 from three Radio Stations in the Southwestern part of Nigeria. The Jingles which are transcribed and translated from Yoruba into English are analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The findings revealed the forms and functions of different Speech Acts performed in terms of directing, advising, informing, persuading and encouraging listeners to take particular safety actions/precautions during the pandemic as well as other speech acts employed in appealing to the emotions of the listeners through local dialects. The paper argues that language use in health reporting during pandemic was sensitive as a misuse of it have triggered or escalated the already tensed situation. It recommends that health media practitioners and health experts be trained on appropriate language selections and word choices for effective communication.

Keywords: *Jingles, Language, Radio Broadcast, Covid-19, Speech Act.*

Citation

Degboro O. & Dokunmu, O. (2022). An Analysis of Yoruba Covid-19 Jingles on Selected Nigerian Radio Stations. *International Journal of Women in Technical Education and Employment (IJOWITED)*, 3(1), 122-128

Introduction

Coronavirus or Covid-19 started as a severe acute respiratory syndrome around December 2019 and was reported to have started in Wuhan, an emerging business hub in China. The virus which initially appeared to be a problem that affected only China and its surrounding provinces soon became a global issue when it spread to Europe, America and finally to Africa where cases were also declared. Corona virus was initially declared a global health emergency by World Health Organisation early in February, 2020 and was soon declared a pandemic by the same organisation few weeks after (Nadeem, 2020).

There had been dramatic increase in the number of people infected and killed by the virus since late 2019

when it was discovered to March 2020 when it was declared as pandemic and this had resulted into restricted movement globally because countries around the world closed their borders and shut cities to prevent further spread of the virus believed to be aided by the movement of people from a place to another (Shereen et al, 2020).The impact of Covid-19 has been grievous in that it has shut down the economies worldwide; many productive people had been killed, industries had been shut down and people are more concerned about being and staying alive now rather than being involved in national and international businesses. The virus has also affected the religious, social, health and psychological aspects of human lives all over the world (Shereen *et al.*, 2020).

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: January 13, 2022
Revised: May 13, 2022
Accepted: May 17, 2022

A research study indicated that human-to-human transmission can cause the virus to spread especially contacts that happen among closely-related persons. This can be further aided through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Though different studies had shown different incubation periods of the virus, the virus has been found to survive on surfaces for days and the incubation period of the virus ranges from two to twenty four days. The virus has also been found to be asymptomatic which is very controversial. The rate and ways of transmission could be ascribed to the reasons why regular washing of hands, the use of alcohol based sanitizers and the use of face masks are constantly advocated (Nadeem 2020, Shereen et, 2020). Symptoms of the virus include sneezing, coughing, difficulty in breathing, fever and high temperature of body among others. For now, there is no known vaccination or drug to cure the virus and can only be treated through isolation and supportive use of oxygen of patients, fluid management and the use of antibiotics (Harapan *et al.*, 2020).

With the ravaging pandemic, a link has been created between scientists who are daily making discoveries about the virus and the people who are expected to be informed about ways of preventing and treating symptoms of the virus through social messages such as Jingle. Jingles (which are mostly slogans, short messages or information usually not spoken but produced with interesting musicals to leave lasting impression on people) have continued to be used in advertisements to publicise goods and services as well as to draw the attention of the audience.

They are also prominently used in politics, especially during campaign to woo voters. The widespread usage of jingles has attracted scholarly attention. In Nigeria, linguistic studies on jingles have analysed jingles in political and business contexts to determine their persuasive functions. The facets of music used in communication are tempo, lyrics, rhyme, association, instruments, melody, repetition and

story. They are used to convey meanings or help create a narrative track when music is used to pass information which often occurs in jingles. The use of the facets of music in communication are deployed to establish commonality, share information, efficient in following set patterns, to reinforce key points, to create pleasing rhythms and rhymes, creating meanings through the use language and mental constructs among other methods to appeal to people's reasoning, mood, energy and emotions (Kempton, 1980).

Elements of speech communication include: the speaker which is the person who initiates and sends a message through a channel while the message which in this case is the jingle is the information or message conveyed and just as language, it comprised the combination of vowel and consonant which forms words which are spoken during the production.

Many state governments in Nigeria adopted local languages in Covid-19 jingles essentially to reach the populace majority of those who have no knowledge of English language because they are not literate or majorly semi- illiterates. Another reason which could be attributed to the use of local language is so that the populace will feel at home with the jingles and accept them which is very important route to adoption of the messages in the jingles, because the jingles would not be seen as being imposed on them and from strangers who knew nothing about them and their struggles.

This paper identifies and discusses the form and functions of speech act types that are performed in the selected jingles on Covid-19, it also examines the linguistic implications of language use inherent in messages on Covid-19 prevention in terms of clarity or ambiguity and finally discusses the socio-cultural and health implications of the language use towards observance of the Covid-19 rules and effectiveness in curtailing the spread of the virus.

Language scholars have several tools at their disposal for data analysis, for the purpose of this study, the pragmatic tool of speech act shall be adopted as theoretical framework. Pragmatics is the science of

the unsaid (Okafor and Alabi (2017). It is also the study of the intended meaning in an utterance and one of the major fields in linguistics that could unravel meanings in language use (Koutchade 2017, Ijamide 2014). Encyclopedia Americana (1994 vol. 2) defines pragmatics as the study of language that investigates the techniques by which language is used for communication.

Pragmatics does not only investigate the literal meaning of an utterance but also how the utterance reveals and helps linguistic participants understand the intentions and strategies that are used to express the intention. There is an important connection between what we say and the context in which it is appropriate or meaningful and as such, the focus of pragmatics is on the systematic study of this important connection between language use and its context of use by employing some pragmatic features such as deixis, presupposition, implicature, speech act, inference, cooperative maxims, hedges, politeness, to mention a few (Idowu 2019). Summarily, pragmatics is the study of language in use in context and situation. The theory holds that utterances are made to perform acts of functions of requesting, denying, accusing warning naming, declaring; other actions performed by language can be promising, threatening, rejoicing, praying, instructing, questioning, confirming ordering, commanding and others.

The speech Acts theory is widely known as ‘how to do things with words theory’ it was propounded by J. L. Austin (1962) and later developed by Searle (1969). Speech Acts according to Austin (1962) fall into three (3) classes, which are: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. The theory was further modified by Searle (1969) who classified it into five classes as: Assertives (representatives), Declaratives, Directives, Expressives and Commissives. J.L. Austin’s Locutionary Acts refer to the literal meaning of an utterance without any ambiguous meaning through the grammar phonology and semantics of language it is Illocutionary Acts

(also known as Performative Acts) refer to the communicative acts intended to be achieved by an utterance. This is what the speaker does or what is understood to have been done by his utterance. The illocutionary act is central in pragmatic studies because it is a nonlinguistic act performed through a linguistic (Elocutionary) but not stated explicitly in a sentence, it can be direct or indirect, intended or unintended, conventional or unconventional (A. Okoroh (2016). The illocutionary act is performing an act by uttering a sentence, where the real intention of the speaker is encoded either to promise, condemn, invite, direct, praise, christen, or sentence one to prison (Okafor 2015). The third type of Speech Acts according to John Austin is the Precautionary Act. This has to do with the effect an utterance or illocutionary act has on the hearer, reader as well as the appropriate consequences or response. Precautionary act is the hearer/ readers linguistic.

Methodology

Content analysis of seven jingles recorded from three radio stations in Ogun and Lagos states constituted the data base for this investigation. The jingles which were in Yoruba language were transcribed and translated into English for the analysis. The jingles were chosen and selected based on how the messages were delivered, jingles in musical and prose forms and those that were directed to dialects especially dialects in Ogun state of Nigeria. The messages in the jingles centered on Covid-19 and they ranged from cure, prevention to treatment.

Three radio stations were chosen for this study which comprised of both Government owned and private owned radio stations. The radio stations were Ogun State Broadcasting Corporation (O.G.B.C.) and Fresh F.M. in Ogun state and Faaji F.M. in Lagos State.

The analyses of the jingles were done in connection to others considering the pragmatic features of each of the jingles and the conceptual meanings ascribed to each. The analyses were also done using a modified version of John Seale’s Speech Acts. In

addition, the quantitative and qualitative analyses of words, phrases that were used frequently were taken

note of, counted and converted to percentages for statistical analysis.

Data Analysis/Discussion of Analysis of Results

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Speech Acts in Jingles

Types of Jingles	Jingle1	Jingle2	Jingle3	Jingle4	Jingle5	Jingle6	Jingle7	Total	percentage
Speech Acts Types									
Assertives	3	2	5	12	2	2	7	33	31.7%
Directives	2	7	2	2	9	13	5	40	38.5%
Commissives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Expressives	6	0	9	12	0	2	0	29	27.9%
Declaratives	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1.9%

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Speech Acts in Jingles shows how speech acts are distributed in the radio jingles: analysis of categories of speech acts.

Table 1 showed the frequency distribution of the Assertives and these occurred 33 times on the table with 31.7 % percentage. This indicated that the jingles used for the study were assertive in telling the truth about COVID 19 so that the general public can know facts and truth about the pandemic and not be dissuaded by rumours or untrue information. The use of assertives were also useful in the jingles because it told people about washing hands and applying sanitizers to prevent the spread of the pandemic.

Table 1 also showed the frequency of Directives occurring 40 times with 38.5% which was the highest of the speech acts. This indicated that the use of directives that were useful in managing the pandemic. The frequency also indicated that majority of the jingles contained some directives which people should followed to combat, prevent or treat Covid-19 and its symptoms. This established the fact that most of the jingles have some directives that were meant to be followed by people in other to prevent the spread

of the pandemic or ensure that individuals are not affected if inflicted by Covid-19.

Table 1 further contained commissives and this having no occurrence in any of the jingles. This indicated that none of the jingles committed people or the general public to some future actions on the pandemic and that all information supplied on Covid-19 were instructions on how to deal with the present situations.

Table 1 showed the frequency distribution of the Expressives and these occurred 29 times with 27.9% percentage. The result indicated that the use of expressives in the jingles were average compared to the use of directives and assertives which were above average. This also indicated that the jingles were expressive in indicating speaker's psychological state of mind attitude, in that the speakers in the jingles were emotional about the pandemic and further implications were not desirable.

Finally, table 1 contained Declaratives with the frequency distribution occurring 2 times with 1.9%

The effect of this low occurrence from the jingle indicated a little or no change in the situation of people. People's attitudes to the pandemic indicated that large percentages of them do not believe that the pandemic was real and could affect them

Discussion of Results

Assertive Speech Acts

The Table of analysis above reflects that directives are the most dominant samples of the assertions found in jingles 4, 5 and 6 e.g.

JINGLE I

"...The global spread of the Corona virus and its potential threat to human lives and its existence has prompted the Ogun State government to place a ban on all social gathering in Ogun State..."

JINGLE II

Another sample of Assertive Jingle is 5

"...This is beyond scientists' knowledge;

A pandemic that doesn't allow joint worshipping of God..."

JINGLE III

Sample for Jingle 6

"...The world health organization has declared Corona virus as a global pandemic..."

The Assertions above are true of the Pandemic of Corona Virus which were made to inform the listeners and the populace of the fact that it was not an untrue case but a real one because there are cases to confirm the existence of the pandemic and so the need for the listeners to follow the rules and regulations stipulated by the government in order to stop the spread. The jingle also had explored these assertions to prove. The efficacy of their profession as stating the truth of the matter of Corona Virus so that no one can claim that he/she was not aware from the radio stations in the country of their information.

Directive Speech Acts

38.5% of Directives speech acts were identified with the highest percentage in the table of Analysis. Such directives can be found in Jingles 4, 5 and 7

JINGLE IV

"...Obey all government regulations. If you are a woman, it is time for you to arise and pray."

JINGLE V

"The use of sanitizer is a must..."

JINGLE VI

"...Wash your hands regularly..."

JINGLE VII

"...Use face masks,

Maintain social distance

Avoid social gatherings."

From this analysis, the preponderance use of directives speech acts that dominate the reporters speech indicates that leaders usually lay claim to power by directing the people to the use of the covid 19. Palliatives or the gadgets needed to protect themselves. The directive speech act made use of the following verbs in the jingle: use, wash, avoid, maintain and obey.

Commissive Speech Acts

The commissives have no significant representation in this analysis. It has 0% occurrence which implies the government is not committed enough on prevention and treatment of Covid-19 as it ought to commit herself to the provision of the needs of Covid-19 to the people so as to be serious and believe that Covid-19 is real. The people were just directed to buy sanitizer, face masks and medications themselves. Everybody is on the look out to when the government will be committed to the provision of Covid-19 needs / requirements. Everybody was just looking for personal money to buy the essentials, unlike what is done in other countries. The government needs to champion the cause of Covid-19 so as to motivate the followers to be committed to the success and the goal of eradicating the Pandemic.

Expressive Speech Acts

According to Table 1, expressive speech acts carry 27.9% and sample of such Jingles can be found in Jingles 3, 4, 6 e.g:

JINGLE 3

"Everyone is afraid, corona virus has turned the powerful to a lazy man..."

JINGLE 4

“How can one confront Corona Virus?”

JINGLE 6

“Have you just returned from countries where corona virus is of high prevalence...

The expressive speech acts in the Jingle above indicate that the jingle has performed to expectations in writing vividly the feeling and the condition the listeners/populace found themselves about the Pandemic that brought sorrows and lamentations of the departed loved ones.

The Declaratives Speech Acts

From Table 1 declarative speech acts occurred only two time with 1.9%. The effect of this low occurrence from the jingle indicated a little on no change in the situation as information that the Pandemic had entered a second wave and the number of confirmed cases were increasing globally as at the time of the write-up, no tangible vaccine or drugs had seen procured or manufactured to cure the Pandemic.

JINGLE 1

“... Doctors ca does not cure death, no herb can cure corona, a pandemic that has not allowed joint worshipping of God...”

JINGLE II

“Therefore, my fellow women, this is an urgent call to you all. It does not matter your religion denomination, age, marital status or the state of your physical bodies...”

Conclusion

The forms of speech act types that were used in the selected jingles were Assertive, Directives, Expressive and Declaratives. Declarative acts are speech acts declaring or making known the mind of people about a matter. Directive speech acts are used to direct people on taking actions towards a purpose. Expressive speech acts are used to express someone’s mind thereby expecting the people to understand the condition and the situation of things. and Assertive are statements used for making facts and explanations. The linguistic implications of language use inherent in messages on Covid-19 prevention were clear and not in anyway ambiguous.

The use of Commissive acts in jingles by the government suggests that government is ready to assure the populace of provision of equipment and facilities that will make the fight against the pandemic a successful one and not by trying to avoid or move away from their basic responsibilities. Moreover, Representative act which is the act of describing events, claims, process, suggestions and Declarative act which is the act of making known minds of the people about issues in situations should be used more in jingles so that people will be carried along in decision making and be involved so as to know how messages are composed and directed at them. When this is done, messages to people would be found to be useful and exploited according to different needs.

More use of directives in jingles are also advocated because people tend to follow instructions passed to them through this channel and as a result many of the people have imbibed the directives in their ways of life for example, people now carrying sanitizers about and using them frequently.

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