

**LANGUAGE AND THE CHALLENGES OF LIFE: A STUDY OF NYESOM EZENWO WIKE'S
COVID-19 SPEECH**

PATIENCE AKUNNA OSONDU (PhD)
Department of Languages and Humanities
School of General Studies
Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri
Phone: +2348037063448
Email: patienceosondu@gmail.com

&

CHIOMA WINNER ONYEAMA (PhD)
Phone: +2347038007073
Email: chiomaonyeama@gmail.com
Department of Languages and Humanities,
School of General Studies
Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri

ABSTRACT

Language is undoubtedly an instrument to elaborate a politician's policy. The policies and ideologies of countries are reflected in the propagated media of that country. CoVID-19 has adversely affected the lives of people all around the world. Consequently, leaders address their people regularly focusing mostly on effects and precautions of the disease. This paper therefore investigates the linguistic strategies in Governor Nyesom Ezenwo Wike's Press Briefing on CoVID-19 of 1st May, 2020. It focuses on language as a means of action and the underlying belief that communication is composed of linguistic acts. The study used Searle's (1979) classification of speech acts theory as the theoretical framework. The study reveals that Governor Nyesom Wike used speech acts of promising, guarantee, offers, refusals, threats volunteering and other linguistic strategies to build the confidence of Rivers State residents in Nigeria that he is capable of combating the CoVID-19 pandemic with their co-operation. It also noticed that these speech acts are not performed in isolation but typically in natural communication. This study is a tool of focus for scholars who are interested in political speech analysis. It recommends that Speech Acts as a device of language analysis should not be neglected in literary discourse.

Keywords: *CoVID-19, Speech acts, Political speech, Nyesom Wike.*

INTRODUCTION

Language is a complex and dynamic phenomenon which forms an important tool for the elaboration of our humanity. Language is a unique trait of man which is used to construct the varying realities of our lives. Language therefore is at the hub of every human activity which compels our communal involvement and responsibilities. It is also a means of which social group cooperates. This is why Onuigbo (2019, Pg.6) asserts that "language is not just a cast that must be broken to reveal the beauty and riches of the content but that cast which must be scrutinized to understand the realities of the changing tides of life as captured by language".

This means that language affects us at every level both individually and collectively. Kulsum-Binder (2017) affirms that: "wherever a person goes, they not only employ language as a means of communication but also use it as a type of currency or capital to negotiate the circumstances around them". This is because language has extensive influence over its recipients and also holds the potential to empower its users.

Language plays an integral role in politics because its main function in different political situations is to enable politicians to form a structural formidable social relationship. This implies that politicians use language in administration, education and mass communication. They use it to perform the task of promising

appreciating, persuading and so on. Okoro C. (2017) subscribes to this view when she asserts “that politics is concerned with power to make decisions, control resources and control other people’s behaviour and at times to control their values”. This shows that language is a crucial role in politics for every political action is prepared, accompanied, influenced and played by it.

Nyesom Wike is an eloquent politician who knows the appropriate way to use language to make his political claims known to the public. This is why Gabriel Odu Orji the leader of Renaissance Movement of Nigeria refers His Excellency Governor Nyesom Wike as a man who demonstrates his uncompromising stance in politics at all times in every political situation he finds himself. In May 1st 2020 Governor Wike made a press briefing to Rivers State residents to expose the cause and effects of CoVID-19. He was assiduous in his speech by pointing out every feature of the pandemic and also promised the Rivers State’s residents that he was able to combat the corona virus pandemic with their cooperation. Governor Wike knows that it is essential to construct the crisis, shape collective conscience, foster understanding and create a sense of shared social identity. If not people may look for alternative sources of information and eventually jeopardize the expected response.

In 2020 there was an outbreak of corona virus pandemic. It is a public health emergency of international concern; it is also the most extensive one to afflict humanity in this century and poses a grave threat to human life and health. To contend with this unknown, unexpected and devastating disease, leaders all over the globe resort to media platforms to obtain measures to combat this deadly disease and thereby inform the populace. This formulated thought prompted Governor Nyesom Wike to give a press briefing on the pandemic to educate his people how to take precautionary measures on this public health emergency.

This study investigated the speech acts linguistic skills which Governor Wike used in his speech to explain to River State’s residents on the efforts made by his Government so far in contending with the pandemic and elucidate the precautionary measures to be taken against the disease. The present study also examines the different functions of sentence the governor used to ascertain his oratory art.

Studies abound on CoVID-19 political speeches from different angles of linguistic analysis. Anyanwu (2020) studied on stylistic analysis of President Buhari’s addresses to Nigerians in the face of CoVID-19 pandemic. She examined the linguistic elements used, the stylistic and pragmatic imports using the theoretical framework of stylistics. The researcher found out that President Mohammedu Buhari used lexical devices such as transitional markers, repetition, alliteration, assonance, pronouns to project the theme and subject matter of the discourse. She also found out that the speaker used co-ordination to denote relationship of grammatical units, shows contrast and as a restatement of what he said earlier.

Al-Badri and Al-Janabi (2022) studied a systemic functional linguistic and critical discourse analysis of selected speech on CoVID-19. The researchers adopted Haliday’s (2004) model of systemic functional linguistics relying on interpersonal and ideational Meta functions and Van Dijk’s ideology and discourse (2000) models as mode of analysis. The paper’s main objectives are to analyze the speech of Prime Minister Boris Johnson actions and identify the interpersonal and ideational Meta functions in the selected speeches of the chosen figure on CoVID-19 pandemic. The study revealed that the Prime Minister used ideologies to advise, persuade and control the people’s beliefs and actions on CoVID-19 disease.

Esmer (2022) studied event structure metaphors in political speeches on CoVID-19 crisis delivered by the government leaders. The study described the use of event structure metaphors in the political speeches delivered by government leaders around the world during CoVID-19 crisis. The researcher used a descriptive survey design, qualitative method and applied critical metaphor analysis of critical discourse analysis based on Lakoff’s event structure metaphor theory (1992) and Benoit’s (2018) image repair strategies. The results revealed that the political leaders employed two of Benoit’s (2018) image repair strategies, to reduce offensiveness and the evasion of responsibility, via the event structure metaphors to protect their image and reputation during CoVID-19 pandemic challenge.

Obiora (2021) investigated the role of Nigerian indigenous language in CoVID-19 discourse. The study is of the view that because of the need to spread adequate information which will enhance personal safety of Nigerians in the fight against CoVID-19, great importance should be attached to our indigenous languages which erstwhile has been relegated and dominated by English Language used as Nigerian Lingua Franca.

The study adopted Salawu (2001) model for indigenous language developmental communication to analyze data collected through electronic media. The study revealed that Nigerian indigenous languages should be used in spreading CoVID-19 preventive measures, media briefing on National television, health orientations and medical research achieved great impact at this critical period of medical information delivery.

Owala & Odhiambo (2020) did a study on discourse analysis of selected Kenyan leader's utterances during CoVID-19 media briefings. The purpose of this research was to look at the Kenyan leaders used language to communicate to the masses about CoVID-19. Chunks of utterances from selected leaders that appeared in a Kenyan Newspaper Daily Nation between 1st April and 30th April were analyzed using critical discourse analysis parameters. The findings revealed that the utterances showed underlying social issues and disparities together with power relations and dominations. The study also revealed the need for the leaders to be considerate, educative and diplomatic in their approach to make their messages more effective and to obtain the desired result. They recommend that experts in a given field should be allowed to take charge in disseminating information to the populace.

From the above review of previous studies on CoVID-19 pandemic, models of linguistic analysis were adopted such as systemic functional, critical discourse and stylistic analysis. But the present study differs from these in the sense that it adopts Searle's Speech Acts linguistic model of analysis. The present data is Governor Nyesom Ezenwo Wike's Press Briefing on CoVID-19 on 1st May 2020. This is the lacuna the present study is trying to fill.

Conceptual Clarifications

CoVID-19 or Corona virus disease is defined as illness caused by a novel corona virus called severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2 (SARS-COV-2). This was first identified amid an outbreak of respiratory illness cases in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China.

It was initially reported to the WHO on December 31st 2019, on January 30, 2020 the WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global health emergency on March 11, 2020 the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. The name was chosen to avoid stigmatizing the virus origins in terms of populations, geography or animal associations. In most African countries including Nigeria, this outbreak sounded so distant. It did not appear real and therefore many people did not take it seriously. Speculations about the virus began to erupt in different quarters some of these assumptions were that the disease did not have any effect on Africans and that their immunity is much higher than other races, another was that the climatic conditions in Africa are unsuitable for the survival of the virus.

It is now expedient for leaders to sensitize the populace on the CoVID-19 pandemic since information about the virus was scanty. In this line of thought Owala & Odhiambo (2020) affirm that "the government officials then had double work to do, the first was to try and undo the damage that the rumours and false information had caused and secondly, to replace it with correct information about the virus for the benefit and safety of the citizens". Most of the people who were asked to sensitize the people on the virus were government officials which appropriate use of language became an essential tool to combat the virus. There was therefore a need to examine this language used by leaders to communicate information about the virus. This is why this study examines the language used by Governor Wike in the press briefing on CoVID-19.

Governor Nyesom Wike: Ezenwo Nyesom CON was born on 13th December, 1967. He is a Nigerian politician and lawyer who is the sixth and current Governor of Rivers State. He is an Ikwere from Rumuepirikom in Obio-Akpor, Rivers State. He is a member of the People's Democratic Party and was educated at Rivers State University of Science and Technology. Wike was elected a two-term Executive Chairman Obio-Akpor Local Government Area from 1999 to 2007. He was appointed Minister of State for Education on July 14th, 2011 and was later appointed Minister of Education. He resigned his ministerial appointment 2014 to run for gubernatorial election in his state in 2015. He defeated Dakuku Peterside of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and Tonye Princewill of the Labour Party and emerged as in the gubernatorial elections. Wike declared that he will be running for the office of the president of Nigeria under the platform of the People's Democratic Party ahead of the 2023 General Election. Wike was defeated by Atiku Abubakar who won the primaries with 371 votes while Wike got 237 votes being the first runner up.

Wike is a renowned politician who is eloquent and has a firm stance to express his political ideologies. In 2020 during the outbreak of corona virus, Wike was among the first political leaders who were able to take appropriate measures to combat the pandemic in his state.

Theoretical Framework

Speech Acts Theory

Speech Acts Theory posits that utterances are not mere propositions but actions. Yule (1996, Pg. 47) defines speech acts as actions performed via utterances” When a speaker utters something, he or she then expects that the hearer will be affected by his/her utterances. According to Austin (1962) in cutting (2002, Pg.16) states that, the action performed when an utterance is produced can be analyzed at different levels. This study uses Searle’s (1979) classification of speech acts in its analysis. Mbisike (2007) in Cole (2020, Pg. 519) says that the basic tenet of the Speech Acts Theory that:

We use language to do things or perform acts, and there are so many functions of, or ways in which we use speech to advise, order, promise, request, assert, warn, criticize, apologize and so on. Speech Act Theory is meant to give account of speech, of utterances, (ie, individual tokens of sentences in context)... speech acts theory provides insights into our use of language.

Austin’s work is in many respects a reaction to some traditional beliefs about grammar which recognize four types of sentence functionally (declarative, imperative, interrogative and exclamative), and influential attitudes to language, but which fail to tell us the effects of these on the hearer of the language. Searle (1969) explains the acts which utterances perform which include:

Locutionary Acts: This act is the semantic or literal meaning of a sentence. The understanding of the function of sentence is very important to understand semantic or literal meaning of a sentence. Locutionary acts are the intentions of the speaker which are conveyed in propositions.

Illocutionary Acts: The illocutionary act is performing the act in saying something. It is the acts that convey the actions behind the propositions. Searle did extensive work here and classifies illocutionary acts into five categories, assertive, directives, commissives, expressive and declarations. He insists that the purpose of illocutionary act of assertive is to commit the speaker to something’s being the case to the truth, of the expressed proposition and they can be assessed as either true or false. The verbs here include boast, describe, etc. The second act is directives whose force is to get the hearer to do something. Directives expressed psychological state of want, wish or desire some of the verbs here are advice, invite, etc. The third act is commissive whose point is to commit the speaker again in varying degrees to some future course of action. The verbs here are swear, vow, promise, etc. The fourth illocutionary act is expressive whose point is to express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content. The verbs include thank, apologize, welcome, etc. The fifth one is declarations.

It is believed here that the saying makes it so. The speaker wants to change the world via his or her utterance. In order to perform declarations correctly, the speaker has to have a special institutional role in a specific context that can be used to express it.

Research Questions

1. Is there Speech Acts in Governor Nyesom Wike’s Speech on CoVID-19 press briefing?
2. What kind of illocutionary acts are used by Governor Wike’s speech on his press briefing on CoVID-19?
3. What are the functions of the speech acts used by Governor Wike in his press briefing on CoVID-19?

Methodology

This study aims to examine and describe the forms and functions of the different speech acts identified in Governor Nyesom Wike’s press briefing on CoVID-19 on 1st May, 2020. The researchers use descriptive and qualitative method of data analysis. The analysis is based on the research questions.

Data Presentation/Analysis

The data is His Excellency Governor Nyesom Ezenwo Wike CoVID-19 press briefing on Friday May 1, 2020 is culled from Flashpoint New <https://www.orangeblog.com.ng/2020/05/hisexcellency-governor-nyesom-ezenwo.html>.

The data is made up of fifty (50) short paragraphs which are numbered, the graphology is unique and simple which makes it easy for analytical purposes. The analysis is strictly based on Searle's classifications of illocutionary acts.

Excerpts from the data are presented and classified into the different speech acts.

Research Questions one and two are answered here.

- 1) Is there Speech Acts in Governor Nyesom Wike's Speech on CoVID-19 press briefing?
- 2) What are the kinds of Illocutionary acts that Governor Wike used in his Press briefing speech?

Paragraph Numbers	Excerpts	Illocutionary Acts
1	Today I'd like to provide our people with an update on the ongoing efforts to contain the transmission of CoVID-19 in Rivers State	Assertives
2	We are in a battle with a dreaded and invisible disease, and as a state Government, we are doing everything within our powers, sparing no efforts to contain this enemy and save the lives of our people.	Assertives
3	It is therefore important for me to start by expressing our gratitude for everyone that we have engaged in this battle, and most especially, our healthcare workers, who are on the frontlines, working night and day, every day of the week to prevent the mass transmission of this virus in our State. You are all our heroes for your personal and collective sacrifice when it mattered most in the lives of our people.	Expressive
Paragraph Numbers	Excerpts	Illocutionary Acts
4	Let me also appreciate the various support groups, including the State Inter-ministerial Taskforce on COVID-19, the State Task-force on the distribution of Palliatives, its counterpart on Food Procurement, as well as our public-spirited donors and the media practitioners for your invaluable efforts and contributions to this decisive fight against COVID-19.	Commissive
5	Since the manifest importation of COVID-19 virus into our country by the index case, we have taken several measures, including legal, policy and material, to enable us combat, contain and limit the transmission of COVID-19 in Rivers State.	Assertive
6	Our strategy, from the very beginning, was to contain, prevent or minimize the spread of the disease and save the lives of our people. And so far, we are achieving these objectives significantly.	Assertive
7	On the 19th of March, 2020, we issued the Declaration, which classified COVID-19 as a dangerous infectious disease, as well as the Quarantine (Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Other Infectious Disease Regulations 2020, and Executive Order No. RVSG-01, 2020 to provide the legal framework for any and all actions required of the State Government under the Quarantine Act to combat the spread of the disease in the State.	Declarative
8	On the 22nd of March 2020, the State Executive Council mandated the COVID-19 Committee to create mass awareness about the disease and issue necessary advisories to avoid infections and	Commissive

	transmission among our people. This Committee immediately swung into action and has since done a lot to sensitization make everyone to be aware of this disease and the measures to prevent infection and spread.	
10	On Tuesday 23rd of March 2020, we placed a ban all forms of open religious worship, crusades, vigils, public burials and weddings and closed all public parks, night clubs, cinemas and related outfits.	Declarative
11	On Friday 26th March 2020, we stepped up our preventive measures by closing all schools and institutions of learning, the State's land and sea borders as well as all flights out of or into Port Harcourt International Airport, Omagwa and the Airforce Base, Port Harcourt. We also set up surveillance posts at all land and sea entry routes into the State.	Assertive
12	On 20th April 2020, we executed two additional legal instruments, namely: (i) the Quarantine (Coronavirus) {COVID-19} and Other Infectious Diseases) Regulations (No.2) 2020 and (ii) the Executive order RVSG-03 2020 to strengthen the legal framework for the battle against the spread of COVID-19 in the State with the provision of non-custodial penalties for the violation of extant regulations and the Coronavirus Prevention Border Task Force to enforce the ban on the exit and entry of persons from our borders.	Declarative
Paragraph Numbers	Excerpts	Illocutionary Acts
13	Following the failure to comply with our preventive directives and advisories on large gathering and social distancing, we were constrained to place some parts of Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas, including Obiri-Ikwerre junction, (Ozuoba, Rumualogu) to Choba, and from Education Bus stop to Agip Junction, Ikwerre road, under total lockdown.	Declarative
14	Presently, Elekahia, including the entire stretch of Rumukalagbor – Elekahia link road, Rumuomasi, including stadium road, and Rumuobiokani are under 24 hours lockdown until further notice.	Declarative
15	In terms of material and other resources, the State Government have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trained over 200 surveillance and ad-hoc personnel; • established holding and treatment Centres at the Rivers State University Teaching Hospitals as well as the General Hospital Nchia, Eleme; 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trained health workers both in the private and public sectors on infection control measures and appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE); • provided PPE's for all our health workers directly involved in the fight against COVID-19 and sanitizers and infrared thermometers for us at all public offices; • established the Rivers State Task Force on Border Closure; • received 250-bed isolation and treatment tent located at the General Yakubu Gowon Stadium donated by the private-sector led initiative on COVID-19; • received one GeneXpert RT-PCR testing machine from TOTAL E & P, which is ready to be used and will be deployed any moment we get the necessary reagents; • procured some ventilators as well as received some others from some private sector donors; • successfully prosecuted several violators of our orders and secured 188 convictions so far; and • arrested 45 persons illegally operating night markets in Rumuokoro, Elingbu and Rumuokurushi communities. <p>The state of COVID-19 transmission in Rivers State</p>	Commissive
16	As at today 1st May 2020, Rivers State has recorded 13 confirmed cases of COVID-19 infections, 4 females and 9 males. Out of this number, 2 have recovered and discharged, 9 are active and receiving medical attention in our treatment centre, while unfortunately, 2 lost their lives because of COVID-19.	Assertive
17	Recall that we had the first and second cases of coronavirus infections in the State in late March 2020. But it is significant to note that the third case was recorded after a lull of about one-month interval.	Assertive
18	Furthermore, apart from the sixth case who has no travel history, the rest were returnees to the State from Italy, United Kingdom, and Lagos or persons who had close contacts with already affected persons.	Directive
Paragraph Numbers	Excerpts	Illocutionary Acts
19	Indeed, five of the most recent cases are all children and a relative of the second death case.	Expressive

20	The logical conclusion therefore, is that the pattern of transmission of COVID-19 in the State is evidentially predicated on importation from outside, just as the rate of infection and progression is also relatively low and arithmetical, when considered from the date of the index case.	Assertive
21	Generally, we believe that unless there is a sudden and vertical slide into community transmission, we expect our COVID-19 infection and prevalent rate to continue along this low trajectory.	Commissive
22	This gives us the assurance that our hard work is paying off and Rivers State is certainly not in any dangerous position when compared to the situation in most other States, and we will never be by God's special grace.	Commissive
23	This is not to say that we are at the peak of this crisis and that everything about the containment and transmission of COVID-19 is under control. No; we are not, because of the challenges occasioned primarily by the negative elements that continue to deliberately undermine and sabotage our efforts to protect our people from this disease.	Expressive
24	For instance, the 7th infected case was an offshore oil and gas worker who went and passed a night in a Lagos hotel before returning to Port Harcourt on the 9th of April 2020 with the aid of the security personnel manning our borders. When his symptoms started, he was admitted to a private hospital, (St. Martin's Hospital) on the 20th and discharged on the 21st of April 2020 before testing positive to the virus after almost over two weeks of close contacts with other people.	Expressive
25	Had the security agencies not compromised their responsibility at the borders, this man would have been prevented from coming into Port Harcourt and threaten the lives of other people with this virus.	Commissive
26	Again, on the 29th of April 2020, our surveillance team picked up two men from Niger Republic, who came into the State from Lagos with the help of security personnel despite the closure of the entry routes into the State.	Expressive
27	And so, so long as security personnel continue to allow people with this virus into the State through the closed borders without first ensuring that they are quarantined and their infection status determined, so long shall our State and our people will be exposed to the threat of contracting COVID-19.	Directive
28	In addition, we are virtually fighting this battle without any tangible material support from the	Assertive

	Federal Government. We are wondering as most of you may also be, that up till now the NCDC has not established any testing center in the State in spite of our position, huge socio-economic and demographic mix and high transmission threat hanging over us as a result. Was this deliberate? If not so, why and what was the justification for this dangerous neglect, which is obviously limiting our capacity to expand testing for this virus in the State.	
Paragraph Numbers	Excerpts	Illocutionary Acts
29	But, for us as a Government, every single new infection of COVID-19 in our State is one too many. We shall therefore continue to take every necessary measure to control and possibly end the transmission of this disease in Rivers State in spite of the enormous challenges and lack of concrete support from the Federal Government.	Commissive
30	It is for the very reason that we have taken our fate in our own hands with the establishment of the Border security task force, which has been mandated to provide and ensure a water-tight situation in all our entry and exit points and prevent any unauthorized entry and or exit of persons and vehicles into the State during the period of the closure.	Directives
31	These are all Rivers sons and we expect them to protect the interest of the State at all cost, and not compromise and risk the health and survival of our people in exchange for some filthy naira notes.	Assertive
32	We also expect and request the security agencies to cooperate with the taskforce and fully enforce not only our order on the closure of our borders, but also Mr. President's directive on the ban on inter-state travels from next Monday, 4th May 2020.	Declarative
33	On the 26 of April 2020, I announced the provision of 2 billion naira by the State Government for the procurement of food items from local farmers for distribution to vulnerable households across the State.	Commissive
34	We also established a credible Committee, headed by Ambassador Desmond Akawor to undertake the thankless job of distributing the procured food stuffs and ensure they get to the targeted groups.	Declarative
35	Reports reaching us from independent monitors indicate that, so far, both Committees are creditably executing their respective mandate in spite of the difficult logistical challenge that is involved.	Expressive

36	As a matter of fact, the Procurement Committee has so far purchased and delivered to our warehouses local food items, including garri, yam, beans, fish, palm oil, plantain, tomatoes and onions worth over 590 million naira.	Commissive
37	Similarly, the Food Distribution Committee has successfully distributed food packages to vulnerable households in 16 Local Government Areas, namely: Obio/Akpor, Port Harcourt, Ikwerre, Eleme, Omuma, Bonny, Opobo/Nkoro, Tai, Okrika, Etche, Akuku Toru, Asari Toru, Oyigbo, Gokana, Khana, and Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni.	Commissive
38	The Committee will ensure that vulnerable households in the remaining seven Local Government Areas also receive their food packages before the end of next week. distributing to the needy among us.	Commissive
Paragraph Numbers	Excerpts	Illocutionary Acts
39	The Committee has also received donation of food items from a number of individuals and corporate bodies, which it is	Commissive
40	Details of the list of food donors and what was donated shall be published in the national dailies in due course as a measure of public appreciation for their kind gestures. This applies also to those who have made cash donations to the State Government's effort at combatting the coronavirus.	Commissive
41	Let me assure our people that the delivery of palliatives and other relief measures to vulnerable households is a continuous exercise and the State Government will continue to provide funding for this purpose.	Commissive
42	While we are not under any illusion about the presence of the risk of this virus in our midst, we are making tremendous progress that clearly underscores our belief that our aggressive strategy and targeted measures have been effective in curbing the spread seeing COVID-19 in our State.	Assertive
43	Accordingly, the directives and restrictions we have put in place to maintain social distancing must continue and all residents are advised to strictly follow and comply in the interest of the health and lives of everybody.	Directive
44	In addition, the wearing of face mask in all public places is now compulsory throughout the State.	Assertive
45	We understand the pain on our people but this is inevitable under the present situation in order for	Commissive

	us to make the gain of freeing our State and our people from the ravaging pandemic.	
46	The State's Security Council will meet in the next 48 hours to consider and approve necessary mitigating measures for commuters, including the deployment of Government buses to shuttle designated public routes free of charge during the period of the ban on commercial transport operations.	Commissive
47	Finally, community leaders and residents in Rumuokoro, Elimbu and Rumuokurushi are hereby warned for the last time to either comply with our directives on social distancing and desist all business activities, including night markets or risk a total lockdown in these areas and the permanent closure of the Rumuokoro (Oil mill) market	Commissive
48	While we agree with Mr. President's decision to gradually re-open the country for business, we shall be guided by the peculiarities of our State on when to relax the measures we have put in place and gradually restore business activities to the State.	Commissive
49	Until then, I wish to restate that we love all residents of Rivers State. Please maintain social distancing, stay at home, wear face mask in public places and stay safe.	Expressive
50	Thank you and may God bless us all.	Commissive

Analysis/Discussion

The data consists of all the different kinds of illocutionary speech acts propounded by Searle (1969) with different level of frequency.

The Illocutionary acts in Governor Wike’s speech are presented statistically in the table below.

	Assertive	Directive	Commissive	Expressive	Declarative
Frequency	16	7	23	8	10
Percentage	25	11	36	13	15

From the findings more of commissive speech acts are in the data. Commissive speech act is 36% which commits the speaker for actions in the future through verbs such as; swear, vow, promise, guarantee, refusal, threat, offer and volunteers. Governor Wike gave the press briefing to intimate the Rivers State Residents of the measure his administration is taking to combat the CoVID-19 virus. He presented his speech by making promises and issuing threats to persuade the people to adhere to CoVID-19 stay safe rules. He promised to offer palliatives to people who are really in need Governor Wike was assuasive in his speech. He fluently described how corona virus can be managed and avoided. Governor Wike used Directive Speech Acts which is about 11% in his speech to advice people to keep the precautionary measures. Governor Wike used Assertive Speech Acts which is 25% in the data to describe extensively the nature of the CoVID-19 pandemic and how it came into Nigeria this is because people were eager to hear from leaders like him of CoVID-19 health challenge so that they can obtain authentic information concerning the virus. Governor wike has language manipulative skills as he used Expressive Speech Acts which is 13% in his speech. He knows that the tension is high and people are seeking for different measures of protection from the virus. He apologized for the lost souls in his State and welcomes the global sure ways of staying safe at this time. Governor Wike also used declarative Speech Acts which forms about 15% of his speech, when he declared that all borders must be closed. He further explained that the Virus was able to penetrate into the State because the Security Officers compromised their job. He also declared that all night markets should stop and Oil Mill market should be closed for the time being. Governor Nyesom Wike was able to exhibit his leadership skills in his speech by appropriate use of language even in the midst of deadly health challenge of CoVID-19. The Governor’s speech shows the evasive nature of the interplay between linguistic form used and the context in which it appears that constitutes the puzzle of performance and illocutionary force.

Conclusion

The outbreaks of pandemics and epidemics, sometimes, throughout human history had caused cataclysmic changes and at times, these situations had resulted in the entirely different cultural habits of the affected countries. Language is one of the rapidly cultural phenomenon that is of great help during such health crises because it carries the whole essence of the meaning of every word uttered in the situations. The language used in these challenging times not only shapes new attitudes and behaviours but also reveals several cultural, social, religious, political and economic schemas of individuals and societies. This discourse shows that solutions to social problems do not necessarily emanate from those with the problems but from those who have the ability to speak out and be quoted like the police, politicians, health workers etc. following that, it means such solutions can at times be relevant since the public crave for it.

The researchers conclude that Governor Nyesom Ezenwo Wike’s used Searle’s Speech Acts Theory on his CoVID-19 Press briefing on May 1, 2020. He used illocutionary speech acts of Assertive, directives, commissive, expressive and declarative according to Searle (1979) classifications. His speech get hearers to know something, get hearers to do something and get hearers to expect something.

Recommendations

The researchers recommend that Searle’s classification of speech acts can be used to analyze other forms of political discourse such as political debates, inaugural speeches and so on. This will form a new visita to analyze a political discourse. Leaders at all levels are advised to be fully equipped to use different

aspects of linguistic strategies to make their political views known to the public which may enhance leadership acumen.

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