JoLaCE

Journal of Language and Cultural Education, 2022, 10(2)
ISSN 1339-4584

sciendo

DOI: 10.2478/jolace-2022-0009

Epidemics and Language Rejuvenation: The Emergence and Use of New English Forms in the Covid-19 Pandemic Nigeria

Onyebuchi Nwosu[1], Chidimma U. E. Inyima[1], Immaculate N. Dona-Ezenne[2], Obinna Ibezim[1] & Ngozi G. Ugochukwu[1]
[1] Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Nigeria
[2] F.C.T. College of Education, Zuba, Abuja, Nigeria
buchinwosu@yahoo.com

Abstract
The novel coronavirus (SAR-COV-2) and its attendant respiratory disease, COVID-19, said to have originated in Wuhan, China in December, 2019 has become a global concern with far-reaching impact on all facets of human life. Its impact on the English language can be seen in the emergence of new forms of expressions, extension of the meaning of existing words and the resuscitation of hitherto not commonly used expressions. A number of these innovations and usages affect the English language generally, yet language use is context-bound revealing the cultural realities of its users and their environment so that language at all times exhaustively catalogues the things, events and processes in its environment of use (Carrol, 1966:102). This study adopts the Functionalist Approach to investigate the linguistic impact of COVID-19 discourse on the Nigerian variety of the English language using data from *Nairaland*, an online Nigerian forum. It establishes that COVID-19 pandemic has informed new Englishes in Nigerian English by way of morphemic coinages, phrasal restructuring, syntactic composition, semantic broadening, lexical resuscitation and acronymic coinages.
Keywords: COVID-19, Language resuscitation, New Englishes, Functionalist Approach, Nigerian English.

Introduction

An incontrovertible fact about natural languages is their intrinsic flexibility and amenability to change in order to reflect prevailing realities and shifting concerns. Research in the field of sociolinguistics reveals that language users creatively exploit these characteristics so that at all times language is able to meet their need to communicate, inform, educate, share experiences and express their thoughts (Adegbija, 2004; Labov, 2001). Disease situations such as epidemics and pandemics usually present language users with such need to exploit the potentialities of language. They often birth new socio-cultural realities and consequently new communication and interactional needs which language users must creatively deploy the resources of their language to meet.

The emergence of the novel coronavirus (SAR-COV-2) and its attendant respiratory disease, COVID-19, in Wuhan, China in December, 2019 and its subsequent exponential global spread has altered social relationships, cultural habits, modes of communication, economic landscapes and physical mobility more than any other epidemic has (Nicola, Alsufi, & Agha, 2020; Haleem, Javaid, & Vaishya, 2020). It has since become a global health emergency having been declared 'a pandemic' by the World Health Organization on 11 March 2020. Its emergence, spread and effects have therefore sired a linguistic burden and need to express novel sociolinguistic realities and concerns. Recent corpus-based research, (April, 2020), by Oxford English Dictionary reveals a prevalence of certain words, expressions and collocations in native English speech and discourse as the native

speaker of English response to these novel sociolinguistic realities. But is this response uniform across all varieties of the English language especially given the fact that communication needs vary across contexts and users? Similar research by Kenneth (2020) on the pronunciation fall-out of the Coronavirus pandemic in Nigeria indicates up to eighteen variations of pronouncing the word 'coronavirus' in Nigeria. These studies underscore the fact that different people across the globe express their understanding of crisis situations differently using the available linguistic tools at their disposal. In some cases, they stretch the semantic scope of existing words or else invent or coin new ones which are peculiar to them but understandable because of shared socio-cultural knowledge and shared ways of encoding and decoding. The burden of this paper therefore is to investigate the English as second language speaker response, specifically Nigerian English response, to the communication needs engineered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Theoretical perspectives

The study adopts the functionalist approach to language studies which looks beyond structure in the quest for meaning and 'takes a much wider view of what constitutes semantics' (Butler, 2006, p. 1). Functionalism, usually associated with the Prague school of linguistics (1930s), is in contradistinction to both structural and formal theories and was popularized in the 1960s by Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday. It explains language as expressing meanings created within a social system and social reality as encoded in language (Nordquist, 2020). As Butler (2014) puts it, the major function of language is for communication, Thus, language in this essence helps to meet communicative ends (Nichols, 1984). For Dik (1986), the paramount aim of natural language is the establishment and enhancement of human communication while other aims are secondary or derived. So language is initially conceptualized as an instrument of social interaction among human beings; it is used with the intention of establishing communicative relationships (Butler, 2014). With this, emphasis is on what people do and achieve with language, and how it helps them interact with one another (Dik, 1997a). Language in this vein is viewed as a system of human communication, rather than as an infinite set of structural description of sentences (Foley & Van Valin, 1984). This means that language is functional, and this function is to make meanings which are in turn conditioned by their cultural and social contexts of exchange (Halliday, 1973; Eggins, 2005). Appropriateness is thus a function of context of use such that language function takes precedence over language structure. So, language is something that allows human beings to communicate with one another (Butler, 2003). In that regard, any reasonable language interpretation should acknowledge this essence and therefore consider the communicative ability and purpose of language. Thus, in any conversational interaction, the first point to consider is whether meaning has been transferred and feedback is received. In such a situation, meaning becomes context-based while the situation determines the interpretation. The outbreak of COVID-19 has created new linguistic situations and scenarios and Nigerians have responded to these developments, especially in their use of English language to communicate their thoughts, ideas and feelings about the pandemic.

Nigerian English is the variety of English spoken in Nigeria. It is a second language variety of English, a relatively New English variety, which exhaustively catalogues the things, events and processes in the Nigerian environment and invariably caters for its communication needs. It is a 'natural response to [the] yawning linguistic and socio-cultural needs' of Nigerians, a variety of English 'doing what Nigerians want it to do' (Adegbija, 2004, p. 21-22). The variety maximally exploits the intrinsic dynamism and

functional potential of language giving rise to unique and distinctly Nigerian usages, Nigerianisms, at all levels of linguistic analysis and meaning. Achebe (as cited in *The New Yorker* May 26, 2008 issue) corroborates this: '[Nigerian English is] a new English, still in full communication with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings'.

Nigerian English reveals the degree of domestication and adaptation of the English language in order to express the norms of the linguistic behavior of its users in their sociocultural milieu (Akere, 2004). It is characterized by: Loan words from the many local languages, English words which have acquired new meaning(s), words coined for local situations, acronyms, creative development of English, distinctly Nigerian usages, attitudes and pragmatic use of language, innovations in lexical items and idioms and their meanings and transfer of phonological, lexical, syntactic and semantic patterns of Nigerian languages (Bamiro, 1994; Bamgbose, 1995). Like other New Englishes, it is different from the Older Englishes at all the levels of linguistic analysis, phonology (especially), lexis, grammar, and semantics. The linguistic innovations that characterize Nigerian English are seen in all situations in the Nigerian experience.

Linguistic studies on disease situations in the Nigerian context, with the exception of Igboanusi and Odoje (2016) and Kenneth (2020), have mostly focused on the domestication of English in patient-medical practitioner contexts. Notable among the studies are Odebunmi (2016) and Faleke (2014). Odebunmi (2016) examines the peculiar effect the Nigerian context has on Nigerian medical discourse in English. His study reveals the domestication of standard medical linguistic forms and coinages informed by local and contextual communicative initiatives to provide meaning in doctor-patient interactions in Nigeria. In a similar vein, Faleke (2014) notes linguistic innovations in the form of acronyms, abbreviations, medical jargons, and secret codes which facilitate communication in disease scenarios and enable health practitioners in Nigeria discharge their duties effectively. Igboanusi and Odoje (2016) and Kenneth (2020) however investigate epidemics and language use in the Nigerian context. Igboanusi and Odoje (2016) adopt the translation approach to identify Ebola associated terms in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba: the major Nigerian indigenous languages. The study identified these Nigerian indigenous languages' equivalents of some English terms and abbreviations associated with the prevention, screening, testing and spread of the Ebola virus when Nigeria recorded an outbreak in 2014. Kenneth (2020) on the other hand focuses solely on the pronunciation fall-out of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in Nigeria and identifies eighteen various ways that the Coronavirus is pronounced in Nigeria. This study engages the functionalist approach to investigate the overall Nigerian English response to the communication needs engineered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research methodology

Data for this study, which include recently coined words, abbreviations, phrasal expressions, syntactic structures, semantically extended and rejuvenated words that are associated with COVID-19 were collected from an online communication platform called *Nairaland*. Conversations on the platform are in categories: politics, health, religion, education, science and technology, sports, etc. Covid-19 related discourses are listed on all the categories but especially health and politics. The data were collected between March and September 2020. The number of conversational treads constituting the data varied with the months corresponding roughly with three periods of the pandemic: pre-lockdown, lockdown and post-lockdown. An average of 30 conversational treads per month was however randomly sampled for the analysis.

Membership of *Nairaland* is free and voluntary but predominantly made up of Nigerians within and in diaspora. Membership as at October 12, 2020 stood at 2, 559, 665. Also, the membership cuts across all social and educational classes so that the forum is a microcosm of the Nigerian society. In fact, *Nairaland* is one of the online communities that are popular among Nigerians. Created by Seun Osewa in March 2005, the online discussion forum enables Nigerians to undertake both formal and informal written exchanges on numerous topical issues of national interest. Language use on the forum therefore replicates Nigeria's social-cultural and linguistic realities.

The choice of the online discussion website is first hinged on its large membership and wide outreach which covers all strata of the Nigerian society. Also, conversations undertaken in the website are in English language that is typically Nigerian—Nigerian English. This makes it appropriate since the study's focus is on Nigerian English usage in the face of the emergent coronavirus pandemic. In identifying the data, conversations on *Nairaland* that centered on the corona virus within the said period were randomly sampled and recurrent lexical innovations identified. A total of 350 covid-19 related discourses were investigated. Table 1 contains a list of the identified new Nigerian English expressions. The words and expressions are new by virtue of their having come into use with the incidence of the corona virus pandemic. Table 2 shows the percentage frequency of use of each innovation. Also, the examples given to illustrate the use of the new Nigerian English expressions were culled from written conversations on COVID-19 that were carried out in the forum. Having gathered these Nigerian English forms, attempts were made in the study to analyze them. Below is the URL of *Nairaland*: https://www.nairaland.com/nairaland

Results

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly altered the social realities of Nigerians. Part of this alteration can be seen in their language use since the emergence of the pandemic. An investigation of the English language usage of Nigerians in COVID-19 related discourse on *Nairaland* reveals a preponderant use of certain words, expressions, acronyms, collocations and metaphors. Some of these words and expressions are new while some others, although already existent English words, have acquired new meanings, new collocations, and new meaning associations. Table 1 contains a list of the identified words and expressions presented in four main language structural headings: *Morphemic coinages, Word/Phrasal Resuscitation, Phrasal Formation/Collocation and Acronym*

S/N	Morphemic coinage		Word resuscitation	Phrasal formation		Acronym	
1	Covid 419	7	Webinar	12	Palliative package	15	PTF
2	Covidiot	8	Palliative	13	Physical distancing	16	NCDC
3	Coronapocalypse	9	Coughing and sneezing	14	Social distancing	17	CACOVID
4	Audio death	10	Veronica bucket				
5	Covid fund/figure	11	(A)symptomatic				
6	Scamdemic						

Table 1: COVID-19 vocabulary/ expressions in Nigerian English

Table 1 above captures the words and expressions which have come into preponderant use in COVID-19 discourse in Nigeria. While a number of them like Covid-fund/figure, Covid-419, audio death, palliative package and CACOVID are peculiar to Nigeria, some like social distancing/physical distancing are common in other countries too. Their peculiar usage in the Nigerian context, as will be seen in the examples of usage and in the analysis, stands them out. Others like (a)symptomatic, webinar, veronica bucket and coughing and sneezing are neither new nor peculiar to Nigeria. They are mentioned here because they have come into frequent use in the event of the pandemic. They are listed under 'word resuscitation', nos. 8 -11. The table additionally reveals the following linguistic processes at play: morphemic coinages (MC) (by way of compounding and affixation) (numbers 1-7), acronym (AC) (numbers 15-17), phrasal formation (PF) (numbers 12-14), semantic extension (SE) (numbers 8 and 9) semantic restriction (SR) (numbers 7 and 13) and lexical resuscitation (LR) (numbers 10, 11 and 14).

Table 2 shows the percentage frequency of the identified lexical innovations. It reveals the most productive linguistic process(es) and possibly the most popular and acceptable additions to Nigerian English vocabulary.

	WORD/EXPRESSION	NO OF OCCURENCES	% FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE
1.	COVID 419	245	70
2.	COVIDIOT	105	30
3.	CORONAPOCALYPSE	4	1.1
4.	AUDIO DEATH	227	64.9
5.	COVID FUND	40	11.4
6.	SCAMDEMIC	237	67.7
7.	WEBINAR	215	61.4
8.	PALLIATIVE	203	58
9.	COUGHING AND SNEEZING	213	60.9
10.	VERONICA BUCKET	175	50
11.	(A)SYMPTOMATIC	190	77.1
12.	PALLIATIVE PACKAGE	250	71.4
13.	PHYSICAL DISTANCING	311	88.9
14.	SOCIAL DISTANCING	311	88.9
15.	PTF	330	94.3
16.	NCDC	285	81.4
17.	CACOVID	167	47.7

Table 2: Percentage frequency of occurrence (use)

Morphemic coinages

Morphemic coinages identified in the data include new words formed from compounding two existing words, a word and a figure (alpha-numeric), and blending (compounding parts of two existing words). Whereas number 1 (Covid 419) is alphanumeric, 2, 3, and 6 are blends: Covid and idiot; corona and apocalypse; scam and pandemic. Numbers 4 and 5 are compound words while 15-17 are acronyms. These words and acronyms have been specially coined to reflect the new normal in Covid-19 Nigeria. They not only reveal the prevailing socio-cultural and economic realities of Nigerians but also their attitudes towards them. The coinages sometimes have slightly varying particles or collocations. The usage examples below are particularly insightful.

The issues which engendered the conversations and responses have been included for proper understanding of the context.

1 ***Covid 419***

i) *It is over 6 months that* ***covid 419*** *started reigning and I have not set my eyes on anyone coughing or sneezing in Lagos. Abi everybody dey hide to cough or sneeze? (or are people coughing and sneezing in secret?) Well, cough and catarrh syrup full chemist shops.* ***(cucumbae(m): 5:52am On Jul 05, 2020)***

ii) *This* ***covid 419*** *thread no dey get traffic as before. That is to tell you people don tire to dey hear numbers without proof [people are tired of listening to figures without proof]* ***(Modify: July 5, 2020****).*

Covid-419 is an expression that relates to fraudulent acts associated with the corona virus disease in Nigeria. 419 is a section of the Nigerian Criminal Code that deals with fraudulent practices and obtaining things by deceit or pretense. In Nigerian English, one who is usually fraudulent in his dealings is referred to as a *419er* while a fraudulent act is usually referred to as *419*. The term has therefore been coined to capture the real and perceived government insincerity and fraudulent activities surrounding the pandemic in Nigeria and consequently the average Nigerian attitude to the pandemic: denial. The speaker in example (i) has not seen anyone coughing or sneezing in Lagos, the supposed epicenter of the pandemic in Nigeria, in the past six months. Coughing and sneezing ordinarily very evident symptoms of the corona virus disease are also symptoms of common cold. The speaker seems to believe that even people with common cold have gone into hiding for fear of being falsely and forcefully designated 'covid-19 victims' by the officials of the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).

2 ***Audio death***

iii) *How many test have they carry out in this country since over 3 months now and no one has been seen to slump and die of corona virus, except the* ***audio death*** *dish out every day (sic).* ***(astonished: 6:35pm On May 26, 2020***)

iv) *With these 40 something deaths being announced on a daily basis on Covid 419 we supposed dey see obituary poster plenty, Ncdc ought to be announcing the states where the death and infections are coming from. This* ***audio death*** *wey na only midnight them dey announce am. Na so USA and Europe dey do their own? [With the number of deaths announced on a daily basis, obituary posters should have been everywhere. Ncdc ought to be announcing the states where the death and infections are coming from. What kind of death is only announced at midnight? Is this how USA and Europe announce theirs?]* ***(comshots(m): 2:06am Jul 09, 2020***)

Audio death refers to the daily media Covid-19 data update. The deaths are only *audio death:* no real life evidence of the deaths announced in the media, no obituary announcements, no announcement of the particulars of the deceased (examples iii and iv). Moreover, the testing facilities in Nigeria are grossly inadequate so it is unlikely that the number of infected persons announced were tested (example iv). The data can as such only be fake data especially as it is usually announced at an hour when no one would be around to question it (example iv). This further reinforces the expression *Covid419*. Due to this lack of faith and trust in the government, the figures presented in the media as the number of infected, recovered and dead people are *covid figures* (fake).

3 ***Covidiot***

v) *Hmm, scary I must say…Hope online and offline* ***covidiots*** *will learn. Listen to that old* ***covidiot*** *in the video saying until he sees dead people surrounding him, he won't believe...I pray he doesn't end up a covid corpse (****ntyce(m): 5:46am On Jul 09, 2020****)*

vi) TheGiftedOne: *Travelling amidst the inter-state lock down. What a* ***covidiot*** (***Nobody: 11:27pm On Jun 29***)

Covidiot is a blend borne out of the Covid-19 experience. *Covidiot* is formed from the words 'covid' and 'idiot'. The slang denotes anyone who doubts the reality of the Covid disease or calls it a government or WHO or NCDC scam. In the Nigerian socio-cultural context, idiots are anti-social, anti-progress, stupid and to be avoided. *Covidiots* are therefore threats to the war against Covid-19. Just like fools or idiots, covidiots also extend to those who either are uninformed about the pandemic or else live in denial of it (example v) and those who do not observe travelling restrictions (example vi).The data however reveals that "covidiots" outnumber "non-covidiots" given that the expression constitutes only 30% of the data.

4 ***Covid fund***

vii) *The trouble with Nigerian government is that people don't trust them again. It has always been like that from Obasanjo to Goodluck and the present one. For example how many times has the president had live audience with Nigerians, rather what we see are ministers. Did Nigerians vote for ministers? Look at covid figures, where do they get them? Where are testing equipment for over 200 million people? What about* ***covid fund****? (****Bluntemperor, July 9, 2020****).*

viii) *As you are probably aware, we are doing everything possible to continue to support our entrepreneurs, artisans and self-employed residents. We assisted over 200 businesses to access the covid loan from CBN through the Microfinance and Enterprise Development Agency (MEDA). We will also ensure that Ekiti residents benefit from the multiple initiatives from the Federal Government to support the economy, including the recently launched* ***covid Survival fund.*** (***Truetalk3139: 8:24pm On Sep 13***)

Covid fund or *Covid survival fund* (example viii) is a term coined to denote foreign, private and public sector donations towards the cause of the Corona virus pandemic in Nigeria. It also includes Nigerian Federal government's monetary aid to states as well as state governments' supposed monetary aid to poor communities and individuals to contain/cushion the effects of the pandemic. Unfortunately however, Nigerians do not feel the impact of the fund: not in the upgrading of testing facilities nor on their standard of living (example vii). The government is therefore accused of forging figures of infected and dead persons.

5 ***Coronapocalypse***

ix) *Like seriously!! Speaking Of WORKING FROM HOME...With distilleries shifting production to the hot black market hand sanitizer trade, it got governors and NCDC across the country thinking. Could they allow bars to stay open and ensure a safe experience for their citizens during* ***coronapocalypse****? You mean keep people from earning a living and providing for their families? Yeah I'm pretty cynical. There is a sense of urgency so something has to be done now ...(* ***Yenefer(f): 7:04am On Mar 23, 2020****)*

Nigerians are fundamentally religious. With 46.3 % of its over 200 million population as Christians, 46% as Muslims and 7.4% as traditional worshippers, Nigeria is unarguably the most religious nation in the world (BBC News, 2004). This religious streak colours all their sociocultural and linguistic interactions. The term *Coronapocalyse* is evidence of this. The term is a blend from 'Corona' and 'apocalypse'. Apocalypse is a religious term which refers to an unraveling of great knowledge or widespread destruction. It is believed to be associated with the complete destruction of this world order (Carey, 2017). Due to the turn of events, especially the closure of churches and other worship centres, Nigerians fear that the pandemic is a gateway to the 'end of time'. Chimuanya & Igwebuike (2021:400-401) opine that this 'apocalyptic worldview' of the pandemic derives from the peculiar socio-religious ideologies of Nigeria covid-19 which portrays the pandemic as an invention of dark forces and omen of the 'end times.' The term therefore depicts the period of revelation of government insincerity and insensitivity, a period of universal lockdown; a turning point that is full of hardship in the lives of Nigerians. The speaker in example (ix) is unhappy that people are forced to stay at home hungry and deprived, while some companies like distilleries are allowed to make money through production of hand sanitizers instead of drinks. The data however reveals that the expression is not popular as it constitutes less than 2% of the data.

6 ***Scamdemic***

x) *I am so furious about lots of gullible Nigerians who still believe this* ***SCAMdemic****. No covid-19 in Nigeria, it's a BIG SCAM, evidences are coming out every day, but no media house think about it and asked questions, all they do is to broadcast whatever this fantastically corrupt government dish out to them.(* ***astonished: 6:35pm On May 26, 2020****)*

xi) *The school authorities already knew that COVID19 is nothing but just a* ***scamdemic****. But since everyone who can profit from the* ***scamdemic*** *is already doing so, they decided to join the bandwagon and make some cool cash of out the* ***scamdemic****.*(***bluefilm: 3:16pm On Sep 29, 2020***)

As a result of the perceived government insincerity and fraudulence evidenced by audio deaths and misappropriated covid-fund, what exists in Nigeria is believed to be a *scamdemic,* a scam of enormous and far-reaching proportions, an avenue for profiteering (by the government, school authorities and NCDC), not a pandemic.

Phrasal formation/semantic restriction

The phrasal expressions found in the data are mostly new collocations which have emerged in Nigerian English as a result of COVID-19 outbreak: numbers 12-14. Although the constituents of the phrasal expressions are existing words in the English language, their pairing (collocations), contexts of use and connotations are informed by the COVID-19 presence. Consider the examples below:

7 ***Palliative package***

xii) *Ndi mgbu (wicked people), it's only during elections that they become elegant and vibrant. A lot of families can't feed any longer because of lockdown not even a good* ***palliative package*** *was given* (**Tonymegabush(m), July 2, 2020**).

xiii) *The Edo State Government in collaboration with the United Nations (UN) Women and the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, has provided* ***palliative packages*** *to women in Edo State. Commissioner for Women Affairs and Gender Issues, Hon. Mrs. Maria Edeko, said the items were distributed to women in Abudu in*

Orhionmwon Local Government Area (LGA) and Uromi in Esan North East, LGA, specifically to Women Living with Disabilities, aged women, People Living with HIV and widows (***talk2anderson23(m): 7:38pm Jul 19, 2020****)*

Palliative package (number 12) has been coined for the monetary and food aid supposedly given by the Nigerian federal and state governments as well as the private sector to IDP (internally displaced persons), poor communities and supposed poor individuals to cushion the economic effects of the pandemic. The public interest and concern generated by these packages is attested to by the relatively high incidence of its occurrence in the data, 71%. At a point, young Nigerians forcefully broke into warehouses where the palliative packages were hidden by politicians and looted them.

8 ***Physical distancing***

xiv) *Do I need to say anything about* ***physical distancing****? We simply don't see any need for it. People sit together chatting and playing nonsense games (****highbee02(m): 12:58pm On Jul 13, 2020****)*

xv) *I think* ***physical distancing*** *should be applied by specifying the space between worshippers instead of fixing the no. of persons. Churches and Mosques should be allowed the freedom to arrange seats based on advised physical distance. Consideration should be given to the size of the Church/Mosque* (**streetfabulous: 8:54pm Aug 01, 2020**)

9 ***Social Distancing***

xvi) *Since the outbreak of the corona virus disease 2019 (Covid-19), we have been practicing* ***social distancing****, no handshake policy, even staying indoors. Many people have adopted different greeting strategies as handshake is on hold for now.* (**BankyGee(m): 2:47pm , Apr 07, 2020**)

xvii) *Campaigns are actively ongoing in Edo state oo with so many crowds with markets and other things moving well, but just mention opening school and semi illiterate Nigerians will remember* ***social distancing****, and how difficult it is for children to practice, as if ghosts are the ones doing campaigns. Is Nigeria not a wonderful place?* (**Mistakemaker: 1:25pm , Sep 05, 2020**)

Physical distancing (number 13) is distinguished from *social distancing* (number 14). *Social distancing* in the Nigerian context is restricted to social behaviours and activities: greeting by hugging, shaking hands, kissing, partying, clubbing etc., (examples xvi and xvii) while *physical distancing* is interpreted as avoiding physical contact or abstaining from any physical touch (examples xvi and xv) so non-contact greeting is viewed as maintaining *social distance* (example xvi). The meanings of the expressions are as such restricted in the Nigerian context.

Semantic extension

This involves the expansion of the semantic scope of existing English words. Part of the Nigerian English response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been the use of some native English words to express additional experiences and meanings (numbers 10 and 11). Consider the examples below:

10 ***Palliative***

(xviii) *Do you know that some of the so called private school teachers still eat bc [because] they have their public counterparts to borrow money from? Either campaign for*

schools to resume or ***palliatives*** *for private school teachers* (**bettermike, July 9, 2020**).

(xix) *Furthermore, many philanthropists have exhibited their humanitarian altruistic nature during this rampaging Covid-19. They donated* ***palliatives*** *both to government and individuals to ameliorate the effect of the virus on the society* (**grassrootsig, July 9, 2020**).

A palliative (noun)[number 8] ordinarily is a 'symptom-treating medicine'. It refers to preliminary medical care given to a sick patient but this meaning has been expanded in Nigerian English in recent times as seen in examples (xviii and xix) to include monetary aid, food (especially rice and noodles) and medical supplies given by the private sector to the government or given by the government and the private sector to communities and individuals to mitigate the economic effects of the pandemic. Thus palliative (noun) as currently used in Nigerian English in response to COVID-19, means 'something that cushions the economic hardship and effects occasioned by the pandemic.' Also, *Coughing and sneezing* (number 9) reported and reputed to be symptoms of COVID-19, have acquired new connotations in the Nigerian context (example i). They have become synonymous with the disease such that people rarely cough or sneeze in public anymore for fear of stigmatization and detention by NCDC (Nigerian Centre for Disease Control)!

Word resuscitation

Resuscitated words in the data include hitherto unused words which have gained currency in Covid-19 Nigerian. Numbers 7, 10 and 11 webinar, Veronica bucket, and a(symptomatic) are lexical items which were almost non-existent in everyday Nigerian English vocabulary prior to the pandemic. As table 2 reveals, these words have gained currency in Nigerian English. Webinar occurred 215 times (61.4%), Veronica bucket occurred 175 times in the data (50%) and a(symptomatic) occurred 190 times (77.1%). The reasons for this are not far-fetched. The term *Veronica/Monica bucket,* relatively unknown in Nigerian English prior to the pandemic, has come into frequent use because of the WHO and NCDC (Nigerian Centre for Disease Control) insistence on hand washing with running water. The bucket has a tap fixed at the bottom. It was invented by Veronica Bekoe, a Ghanaian, to help contain the spread of infectious diseases through hand washing in the absence of conventional running water. The bucket has become a common sight at shops, restaurants, garages, petrol stations and such other public places in Nigeria and therefore become part of the linguistic repertoire of an average Nigerian. Also, due to stringent restrictions on movement and the emphasis on non-contact meetings, government establishments, business enterprises and other cooperate bodies have resorted to online meetings hence the reintroduction or resuscitation of the word *webinar. A(symptomatic)* although usual in medical discourse has become common from over-use in awareness campaigns and media broadcasts on Covid-19.

Acronym

Acronym found in the data include abbreviations or first letters of terms, names, institutions and governmental and non-governmental organizations which have emerged in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the activities to contain its spread and fatality. They include abbreviations derived from newly established committees like PTF (Presidential Task Force on COVID-19), or some humanitarian organizations like CACOVID (Coalition Against COVID). Also, NCDC (National Centre for Disease Control)

although long in existence has gained currency in its use. Below are some examples of their uses in some expressions.

(xx) *The **ncdc** said that a sudden loss of taste and smell with fever, headache or runny nose may be COVID-19 and not malaria. "Do not ignore these symptoms. Call your state hotline to arrange for a COVID-19 test immediately* (**Perfecttouchade, July 23, 2020*).***

(xxi) *They'll definitely come up with something before their next* ptf *briefing, we can as well tag some national TV stations like channels TV, Arise news etc*.(**Yenefer, March 23, 2020**)

(xxii) *According to some media reports, BUA donated N1billion to the* cacovid *basket fund put together by the organised private sector to support the federal government. It also reportedly bought 20 pickup vans and 4 Ambulances for the Kano State Government, and gave Edo State government N100 million and two Ambulances* (**Damistorian, April15, 2020**).

Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, Nigerians rarely knew of the agency that is saddled with the responsibility of controlling the spread of diseases in the country - National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) but since the outbreak of COVID-19, it has become a household acronym. *NCDC* is the only authorized agency that carries out COVID-19 tests and issues results; it also releases all medical and diagnostic information and protocols relating to the disease. *NCDC* officials, who are almost present in every state in Nigeria, coordinate efforts aimed at stemming the tide of the disease. In example (xx), the speaker relays information released by *NCDC* on symptoms of COVID-19. To have a united front in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, the Nigerian government headed by President Muhammadu Buhari on March 9, 2020, established the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 (PTF), "to coordinate and oversee Nigeria's multi-sectoral intergovernmental efforts to contain the spread and mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria (https://statehouse.gov.ng/covid19/objectives/). *PTF* which is headed by the current Secretary to the government of the Federation Mr. Boss Mustapha has a national outlook and coordinates all efforts geared towards combating the pandemic. It holds briefings, releases guidelines to all tiers of government and institutions and reports directly to the President. Owing to its pivotal relevance in the fight against COVID-19, *PTF* has become an often used acronym in official and informal communications as exemplified in (xxi) where the speaker is looking forward to another of its regular briefing. The Coalition Against COVID-19 (CACOVID) is a private sector task force in partnership with the Federal Government, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) with the sole aim of combating Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Nigeria (https://www.cacovid.org/). As a task force, *CACOVID* receives donations from industries and business organizations, as seen in example (xxii), to support government in providing, equipping and improving medical facilities across the country. These acronyms represent further evidence of the linguistic effect of COVID-19 on Nigerian English.

Conclusion

This study provided valuable ideas that are to be added to second language speaker response to the communication needs occasioned by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has altered Nigeria's socio-economic and political realities. This alteration has affected Nigerians' communication habits and requirements especially their use of the English language. They have adjusted their linguistic capabilities to effectively grapple with the situation. To this end, they have coined new words and

extended or resticted the meaning of some existing English words to cater for their expressional requirements. New phrasal forms and collocations whose method of pairing as well as context of use is purely Nigerian have also emerged. Some hitherto dormant words have gained currency and new acronyms spring up. The study thus identified parts of the Nigerian English response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and observed that the emergence of the disease has impacted greatly on the linguistic framing of most Nigerians. This reiterates the fact that language is dynamic and infinitely amenable to change, even pandemic-induced change.

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Contact

Onyebuchi Nwosu
Department of English and Literary Studies,
Alex Ekwueme Federal University
Ndufu-Alike
Nigeria
buchinwosu@yahoo.com