

On the Issue of Linguistic Corruption in the Interpretation of the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The paper stemmed from Aristotelian three doctrines of thought and the receptor theory in pharmacology. In all, it is a type of Applied Linguistics; that is the application of language models and theories in solving language-related issues. About this, the concern of meaning stands out. Hence the paper argues, from both Aristotelian Doctrines of Meaning and the receptor theory interrogate the issue of reality and truth about the outbreak in Nigeria. The symptoms of the disease as presented by WHO and NCDC are the semantic markers. Contextualizing this to the ongoing debate about the distemper, the paper argues that the issue of form and substance are in contrastive order. While the name (Covid) may seem strange to those of us in this clime, not certainly the substance. The paper then intends to interrogate the reality of the outbreak, thus using Aristotle’s three laws of thought and the receptor theory in pharmacology to do a content analysis on the claims of WHO and NCDC. The paper concludes that the issue of Covid 19 outbreak in Nigeria is a question of form against reality. Hence, NCDC should be dissolved as the body has become another means of looting the state. As well, the minister of health should be tried by the EFCC and the senate for linguistic corruption and economic disruption.

Keywords: Covid-19 Pandemic, interpretation, linguistic corruption, law of contradiction, law of identity

1. Introduction

Meaning is one way humans relay their experience about a social condition. Beginning first with a naming system, it provides the knowledge community with a longing for further enquiry. But whether in matters of outright ruling or in issues of exceeding controversy, the one who examines meaning must exhaust both form and substance. As the monists put it, no object of enquiry is separable from its substance, for inherent in the object are other meanings for our evaluation.

The object of enquiry, whether material or phenomenological, should also avail its audience whether it is the kind that stems from regional experience or universal sharing. Further about its naming system, beginning first with concept, the reality about the object must not be corrupted with language, for one all human experiences are essentially linguistic (Gadamar, 1962). But whether the object of enquiry is one of reality or another type of linguistic corruption, unless the language is rightly applied as Plato puts it in Nwigwe (2010) society is most likely to be led astray. It then follows that in the year 2020 the African Community, precisely the Nigerian audience were led astray. The nation had received, through media bullet, a naming called – Covid. While the naming may be far from what we know already as a people, the substance for both forms is the same. Perhaps, the substance may not have been shared in Wuhan City of China where the distemper first broke out, in Africa, precisely Nigeria, the substance is the type commonly shared by all.

Now for most country folks, the word being strange to their hearing, not the substance to say, the state used it to beguile them and rip the economy hard. What this shows is that humans are capable of doing things with words. The purpose of the paper then is to show, well clearly, how the naming – Covid as defined by WHO and NCDC is another type of linguistic corruption. Hinged on the laws of thought and receptor theory, the researcher argues that the claims of these bodies violate valid reasoning. On the laws of thought, all knowledge communities must comply with the doctrine of identity, the doctrine of contradiction, the doctrine of excluded middle and the doctrine of sufficient reason.

Hence, in almost all professions people use naming for reference purposes and sometimes too to beguile another. For the naïve especially, and when such a naming system is from a more advanced clime, usually the fellow falls prey. For one, three things are society is asking from us: our money, our soul, and our loyalty. To achieve this, diverse means are employed by the swindler to have his way. But out of these devices, none perhaps is as persuasive and mind-engaging as the language used.

About the issue of naming then, while there may be variations among others, it is certainly not in their encounter. Speech or linguistic communities in all societies have their choice of words or signs through which they relay their encounter or experience about their world. Sharing the word with another clime does not or in itself withhold the experience from the people. Although there may be slight differences in form, the experience is oftentimes universally shared.

It then follows that the word Covid as designated by WHO and NCDC is a mere naming and not a reality in Nigeria. And as said, there is something about naming among humans. It is sometimes used to beguile another. For those of them in NCDC, and just like any other, they employ the word to do away with our common knowledge about the distemper. This is in congruence with Austin (1962). In his work – how to do things with words- Austin claims that names sometimes are mere references. For the one who adopts them sometimes too, he adopts them to beguile another. In Ferdinand de Saussure’s coinage about arbitrariness, he expresses the same, arguing that every speech or linguistic community has its own choice of words or signs through which it represents her encounter. Thus then while the word Covid may be new to Nigerians, not certainly the symptoms associated with it. Hence, the naming Covid as gainfully projected by NCDC and WHO has been used to beguile Nigerians.

Thus then the significance of this study is to help offer a linguistic paradigm that is capable of resolving doubts and nay-saying about the outbreak in some climes. For one, humans cannot be wrong in language and be correct in thought; Public guidance largely depends on the right application of language. Hence, the objectives below:

1. Establish all that is in naming
2. Establish, by dialectics, how covid 19 is a type of linguistic corruption in Nigeria.

Arising from the objectives are the following research questions:

1. What is all in naming?
2. How is Covid-19 a type of linguistic corruption in Nigeria?

2. Methodology

The research design adopted for the study is the descriptive approach. The primary data for the study is the commentaries on the disease as relayed by WHO and NCDC. These commentaries or remarks about the outbreak were generated from the internet. The selection method of posted commentaries was a purposive sampling technique. An instrument for interrogation of claims is the Aristotelian laws of thought and the receptor theory in pharmacology. On the laws of thoughts or reasoning, there are four such doctrines, thus the law of identity, the law of contradiction, the law of excluded middle and the law of sufficient reasoning. The paper adopted three out of these laws together with the receptor theory to interrogate the claims of NCDC and WHO about the existence of the outbreak in Nigeria. The paper then intends to do a content analysis of their claims.. This approach seems more suitable for the study in that it is systemic and shuns a hasty conclusion. In his idols of the marketplace, Bacon thinks that one way to resolve logical errors in social interpretations is to try them with some kind of language mould (as cited Nwigwe, 2010). As a formal science, it is empirical, not necessary in terms of statistical collections but in terms of language data.

RQ1:

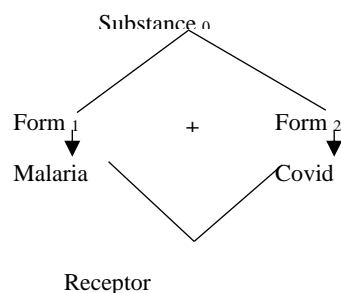
What is all that is in Naming?

The meaning our words convey is not always all that there is. Certain words are of private meaning and they serve the purpose of universal sharing. For such words, the supplier of meaning, unawares, relays the operations of his own mind. No doubt, humans cannot relay their feelings or claims about their world without first finding a naming for it. But this must be coopted in such a way that the experience relayed is shared by all, otherwise, to the one hearing, it is a thing of private experience. The supplier of the word must guard against the tempter to slay an all-time truth with mere language interpolation.

In his *Tractatuslogicophilosophicus* Wittgenstein (1922) postulates that the limit of our understanding of the world stems from the limit of our language. A claim in congruence with Whorf (1929) it is believed that human beings do not live in a contractual world alone or the world of social activity as ordinarily perceived but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of interaction with another. For such societies then, Whorf as cited in Franklin (2014) claims that in too many cases, our language habit predisposes us to a certain choice of interpretation.

It then follows that in naming an object there is always the tempter to beguile another with it. The sketches below explain issues inherent in the naming(Covid).

Figure1. Semantic- resolve(SR)



This reads that one substance or manifest feature produced different forms (names) that are the same root (substance) on the feature (+).

- It is malaria** → +receptor
- + (-) Cough
- + Chest tightening
- + Pains
- + Zinc

- Covid** → + receptor
- + (-) Cough
- + Chest tightening
- + Pains
- + Zinc

Rq1:**How is Covid-19 a type of linguistic corruption in Nigeria?**

About the issue of meaning in social conditions, Platorian-Aristotelian interpretation avows that unless the language is rightly applied, society is most likely to be led astray. Plato in his dialogue claims that social activities depend largely on the meaning humans designate to things. In other words in all climes and spheres, the production desk of men begins first with naming. This implies as relayed in Austin (1962) that humans do things with words.

It then follows that the issue of meaning perhaps beginning first with Heraclites (540 BC) to the period of the ordinary language school has continued to engage all forms of social thinking. About the concern of each period, while the pre-Socratic school concerned itself with substance and form as the true meaning of things, the medieval period examined the factors that determine to mean for humans, such as illumination and society; the positivists only concerned themselves with language data and what the data just says without infiltration, and then the ordinary language school looked at meaning in context.

In all of these periods one point of convergence is that of interpretation; whether social or abstractionals. Nwala (2015) then submits in his work: Linguistics a first course- that all human activities end with meaning and interpretation.

On interpretation, the most helpful about it, whether in textual criticism or socio-semiotic analysis, is that it promotes the appreciation of the text and aids our understanding of society. Interpretation then, beginning with the original essence for hermeneutics was to help circulate hidden meaning in a word as men have the facility to use their words to hide intention, kill reality and bury the truth (Williams, 2022). Some hermeneutic schools then, in response to social activities have risen in recent times, some of which are;

1. Stylometric hermeneutics
2. Psycho hermeneutics
3. Forensic hermeneutics
4. Spatial or environmental hermeneutics
5. Ethno hermeneutics
6. Archeological hermeneutics
7. Biblical hermeneutics
8. Anomalist hermeneutics
9. Natural hermeneutics
10. Legal or statutory hermeneutics
11. Normative cumphilosophical hermeneutics
12. Science – hermeneutics,etc. Each of these as seen in day-to-day social activities requires a critical study for society to be properly shielded from her moral men of ills.

3. On Aristotelian Three Doctrines of Thought: The Issue of Linguistic Corruption in the Interpretation of the Covid-19 Pandemic

To introduce a word, perhaps to help explain a social activity or condition, does not also contend that a newer phenomenon or idea has been born. One can also, unknown to many, be playing around the same old event.

Thus, the doubt about the outbreak of the pandemic in Nigeria has been the case of form and substance in contrastive order. Williams (2022) in his work: *A Semantic investigation of the Hate speech bill in Nigeria*, defines linguistic corruption as an escape from reality and truth through the medium of language. Majorly on the issue of form and substance, Ogum (2017) in his doctrine on the monists argues that certain interpretations are where form and matter are inseparable. In other words, about the meaning of things, the one who examines such must exhaust both form and substance. Maduako (2003) in her response to the debate about meaning for naturalists and conventionalists claims that the relationship between words and their meaning is most times arbitrary. Hence, two words may have different forms but maintain the same inherent meaning despite the regions where they are used. In Nwigwe (2012) arbitrariness of words exists where a linguistic community chooses to adopt a different sign to represent her encounter in the social space. That includes that the idea being represented may be universally shared, but the written and oral versions may be different.

It then follows that the debate about the outbreak of the pandemic in Nigeria is a question of form and substance. Against each other, the coinage Covid-19 does not in any way show a different substance from what we experience in Nigeria. Although the claim from WHO and NCDC is that the pandemic is vira induced rather than malaria associated, this however is a way to gainfully sway the world. While it may be true, to some degree, that two different organisms sometimes show up nearer symptoms, it is however clear from the heuristic account that both organisms will respond to different chemical compositions, considering their claim of evolution.

Hence, regarding the linguistic corruption associated with the word Covid-19 there are such issues arising from the claims by NCDC and WHO:

1. The question of identity
2. The question of contradiction as arising from the receptor theory
3. The question of excluded middle
4. The question of sufficient reason.

4. The Question of Identity

About the principle of identity Nwala (1997) avows that a valid reason raised against an object must constantly be maintained for it to be true. For one, unless our language is rightly applied, what needs to be done, remains undone (Emenanjo, 2013; Nwigwe, 2012). An object or a social condition is what it is because of its inherent features. If it is defined or named with the symbol A, it is A and not B at the same time (Udabah, 1998). The position of the scholar is in line with what Aristotle refers to in his work: Categories as primary substance and accidents. Aristotle believes that properties and qualities exist in the object and do not have separate existence of their own. Other exponents of this school include B. Spinoza, John Locke, G.W. Leibniz, D. Hume, Immanuel Kant, etc. Thus, then in the issue of identity, the substance is the same as the entity or object and the accident is the same as the quality of the object, the one who examines meaning is to beware of the danger of contraries or sub-contraries. This is to avoid, as it is today, plunging society into a debate about a social condition.

Udabah (1998) in his illustration asserts that if a proposition is true based on its manifest characteristics, it is not something else. For example, A is A, D is D, and F is just itself. Man is a man and not an animal. In like manner, an animal is an animal, and not a man. So also, Covid is Covid, because it has different substances or manifest features with different treatments. But the experience we have proves otherwise. How come the same drugs for malaria are used in the treatment of diseases?

4.1 On the Law of Contradiction as against receptor theory

On the law of contradiction this doctrine, Hegelian wise, states that no proposition can be both true and false. It is either the statement made is true or false. For example, a man cannot be a man and not a man. Nothing can be both C and not C at the same time and in the same context. Bringing it home as it relates to the pandemic:

1. Covid is not malaria but it is higher than malaria
2. Covid is not malaria but a new strange of malaria
3. Covid is not malaria, but almost like malaria
4. Covid is not malaria but can be treated with the same malaria drugs e.g These statements are contradictory. For one, as medically observed in Pharmacological studies by John Newport Langley and Ehrlich, a receptor is a pad in an organism specifically for a specific drug. That implies that every organism has its own binding side. The interpretation of this as required in the present discourse is that anti-malaria drugs for a parasite cannot be used in the management or treatment of a virus.

Hence the idea that a response or healing only emanates from a receptor when it is engaged or occupied by appropriate drugs, calls for contradiction in the proposition held about the outbreak of the disease in Nigeria.

4.2 On the Issue of Excluded Middle

This doctrine holds that a statement or a social claim is either true or not. Either an object is green or not green. It cannot be both green and not green at the same time. While it is possible the object can change its colour, we cannot however at the moment assert that the object is green as at the time speaking and also not green as at the time speaking. Thus then in our social interpretation of the outbreak, the claim by NCDC and WHO about the viral disruption in the world, is that while it is not malaria it is at the same time treatable with malaria drugs.

Bacon as cited in Law head (2000) claims that language can interfere in our pursuit of truth. On his idols of the tribes he avows that as to the matter of public good and valid reason, the one who examines meaning must exhaust both form and substance, as both are inseparable (Ogum, 2017).

In other words in resolving conceptual issues, a number of cases must be paid attention to The Semantic –Resolves (SR) below explain:

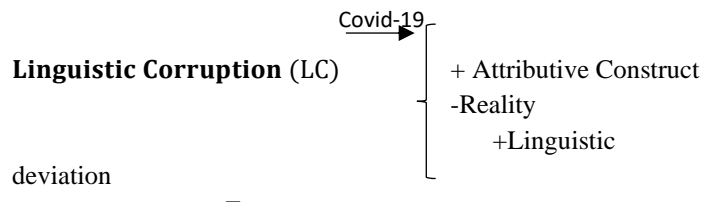


Figure2. Semantic-Resolves

5. Attribute Construct

Attributing the symptoms of pains, cough, and breathlessness to the vira-break is not enough reason to call that a newer pestilence has befallen the world. It was only a mere way to guile society as it is believed that the masses do not think.

As Marx put it in Law head (2002) it is the work of the intelligentsia to enlighten the masses. As well, folks were asked to distance one another but parents and children slept together, and ate together and no harm was recorded. While must the vira break respect indoors and not befall them in their closet. History tells us that disease is in the air, so is no respecter of space.

6. The Issue of Reality

The reality about hand-washing and social distance is no strange one. Most cultures in Asia Minor and even today in some parts of our local communities practice this as a way to check their hygiene. In many ways, it is an inherent truth in man to regularly wash his hand and body. But most humans do not pay attention to this. In Europe, people diligently practice this culture, yet the vira so-called claimed many. It is not then a case of hand-washing, it is a culture that has always lived with man. Also, the idea of social distance. Experts in communication call it personal space, as much closeness to one another during fellowships, meetings, or outdoor interactions poses fear in the other. People have been practising these habits without having to consider their health benefits.

7. The Error of Escape

For the world not to easily detect their knavery, the authorities NCDC and WHO did a well-calculated approach. They adopted a new name (form) as a medium of swaying the world, knowing that it cannot be called malaria as this will not readily help gain the attention of the world. But among medical practitioners, some never agreed to the term. This also proves a great contradiction in the truth about the outbreak (Stella, 2020).

8. Lingua-Dominion

Language power played the most effective role in the fears communicated to Nigerians about the outbreak. Through the instrument of media bullet, emphasis was laid and constantly employed to threaten our communal sharing. The media and NCDC did much of this role having known that there is much to gain in return.

In other words, in the use of Lingua Dominion, it is said that persistence overcomes resistance. By much hearing, the words of the speech maker dominate the people. It is obvious that Nigerians would not have paid attention to the ‘outbreak’ but to the constant relay from NCDC and the Media Desk.

Another is the use of the term second-wave of the outbreak. This is a mere coinage by the knavery. If there is a second-wave, why not a third and fourth wave? The effect of this typology is that the NCDC used it in reaping Nigerians hard. In many ways, people constantly use language to guile the most naïve. Just like the one who goes to the local eateries to take a repast, he is told of the different names designated for the meals. Those names sway him to drop his money because they are strange to his hearing. But on the other hand, that could be the same victual the fellow passes by on his street.

Also was the use of labelling approach, folks soon began to withdraw their case file from their health workers so that they are not labelled Covid patients. Those who were sick of malaria were labelled Covid partaking and were treated with malaria drugs – such as zinc, Panadol, quinine etc. There may be changes in the chemical compositions of the drugs, but it was all a way to guide the world, for one all roads lead to Rome.

On the issue of number, also as an art of lingua dominion, NCDC used it to beguile Nigerians by way of inflating and doubling their records of supposed victims in suspected states. There is no doubt, that not a single soul in Nigeria died of the outbreak. Folks have always suffered some ailments, but during the distemper, whoever died, was considered Covid partaking. Hence, Covid as a type of linguistic corruption becomes:

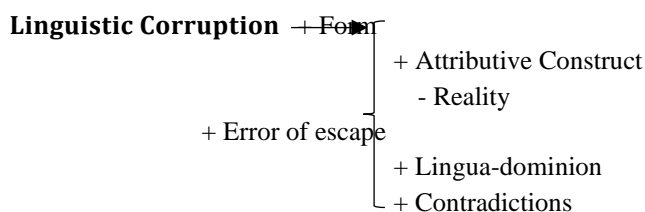


Figure3. Linguistic corruption

9. Conclusion

There is an interdependence between our language structure and the structure of reality. Social activities and claims, in terms of their true existence, are best understood from our language composition. The supposed outbreak –of Covid 19 – never befell Nigerians. It was a question of form against reality. Contradictions in the NCDC with well careful examination of language's role in social display account for the fact that Covid, by the principle of identity and substance as examined in the work, is our own understanding of malaria. The coinage – Covid – was a way to beguile the world and the effect of this was that Nigeria lost much of her economy as compared with a loss in twenty years! The saying therefore that all roads lead to Rome is the position of the paper. While it may be called covid in another clime, our experience as a people is the one of malaria.

10. Recommendations

1. There is the need that the state to dissolve NCDC for now, as it has never really contributed to the nation's economy but to beguile her. It is not enough to alert Nigerians about the outbreak of a disease, there is also the need for success breakthrough in the production of locally manufactured antibiotics.
2. The minister of health should be tried by the EFCC and the senate for linguistic corruption, and economic disruption.
3. Above all, critical thinking and dialectics should be introduced in our national curriculum and be made compulsory from elementary to university and this is all the states need to advance with the rest of the world.

About the Author

O. E Williams occupies the editorial desk of Familia House Publishers, here in Rivers State, Nigeria. An Alumnus of the University of Port Harcourt, Department of Linguistics, and Communication Studies, he has since then, upon his master's, retained his research interest in Semantics and Statutory interpretations. O. E. Williams is fast pushing in his country for a legal reform that seeks to acknowledge the role of the Legal Semanticists in Statutory Interpretation. OBUZOR MEZEWO (ORCID... 0000-0001-7836-3977). She lectures in the Department of Sociology, at Rivers State University. She is currently a PhD student in Social Work and Social welfare Administration

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