

THE IRONY OF COVID-19 OUTBREAK IN NIGERIA: A SPEECH ACT ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study examines the irony of covid-19 in Nigeria. The major objective of the study is to explore the expression of feelings and perceptions of some notable Nigerians about the outbreak or existence of covid-19 and its cure in Nigeria in relation to the psychological and emotional beings of the citizenry. Data analysis is anchored on Searle's (1975) Speech Act and Grice's (1975) Co-operative Principle (CP) respectively. The following are individuals whose speech acts were selected at random, presented and analysed simultaneously. They are: President Olusegun Obasanjo, Gov. Yahaya Bello of Kogi State, Apostle Johnson Suleman, DG NCDC (Chikwe Ihekweazu), Minister of Health (Osagie Ehanire), Gov. Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State, Gov. Oluseyi Abiodun Makinde of Oyo State, Ooni of Ife (Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi II) and Prof. Maurice Iwu. The findings among others show that there are three basic schools of thought on covid-19 in Nigeria; those who believe the disease exists in Nigeria, those who do not believe its existence in Nigeria and those who claim to have found cure for it. It is also discovered that most of the speech acts, especially those of persons in positions of authority are assertive, effective, verdictive and commissive; and some of their speech acts violate Grice's CP, especially the maxim of quality.

Key Words: Irony, Covid-19, Speech Act, Outbreak, Analysis

Introduction

There is a group of viruses called corona viruses which can be transmitted from animals to human beings, and can equally be transmitted from one person to another person. Its symptoms range from common cold, dry cough, then to a more severe respiratory disorder. The coinage Covid-19 was first mentioned in February 2020 after the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses and the World Health Organization (WHO) officially announced the virus and the disease it causes; which are SARS-CoV-2 and Covid-19. This disease derives its name from the words 'corona, virus and disease' but the number 19 indicates the year (i.e.2019) when the disease first emerged (Elflein, 2020).

The first record of covid-19 according to Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) was on the 27th of February, 2020. The index case in Nigeria was through an Italian man who tested positive for covid-19, but later tested negative for the disease in a hospital in Lagos after some time.

It is important to note that since the index case of covid-19 in Nigeria, there have been diverse opinions and/or perceptions by many Nigerians about the existence of the disease in Nigeria. Some would in their own perceptions say that the hot atmospheric condition of Nigeria could not allow the viruses to survive in Nigeria. In some quarters, there are insinuations that covid-19 is a mere cold and flu or malaria because its symptoms are equivalent to those of common cold and malaria.

Furthermore, there have been various claims on the discovery of covid-19 cure or drugs from individuals or institutions in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. First is Professor Maurice Iwu who claimed to have discovered cure for covid19. Others are: Ooni of Ife, Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi II and the governor of Oyo State, Oluseyi Abiodun Makinde who claimed to have discovered drugs (herbs) to cure covid-19. Also, the Madagascar Institute of Applied Research claimed to have discovered a drug called COVID-ORGANICS in May 2020 (www.bbc.pigin.com), which was purportedly effective in treating covid-

19. These perceptions and/or claims are ironical and capable of misleading the citizenry of Nigeria if not well verified scientifically. The perceptions or claims are ironical because the existence of covid-19 and its potential destruction to human race cannot be subjected to triviality in any part of the world.

From the foregoing, this paper is set to analyse the irony of expression of feelings and perceptions about the existence or outbreak and cure of covid-19 in Nigeria. Speech act theory is adopted as a framework upon which this work is anchored.

Speech act falls under the discipline of pragmatics. Pragmatics investigates an aspect of meaning which is derived not from the formal properties of words and constructions of a language but from the way in which utterances are used and how they relate to the context they are uttered (Leech and Short, 1987). Speech act analysis is one of the major preoccupations of pragmatics. When one says something in any speech event, one has performed what is called speech act. And such an utterance can be analysed using speech act theory.

In any speech event, however, it is assumed that the speaker has intention to portray and the listener makes some inferences, hence both the speaker and the listener share some facts pertinent to the conversation. These mutual facts are what Bach and Harnish (1979) call Mutual Contextual Beliefs (MCBs). According to Austin (1962), an utterance has three parts which are: locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act. The locutionary act is the act of uttering a sentence with a certain meaning. The illocutionary act is what the speaker might have intended his utterance to constitute, such as act of praise, criticism or agreement. While the perlocutionary act deals with the speaker's achievement from his utterances based on a certain consequent response from the hearer (Kempson, 1977).

The general objective of this research, therefore, is to subject some perceptions or speech acts of some prominent individuals about the existence and cure of covid-19 in Nigeria into analysis examining

the effects of such speech acts on Nigeria and its citizenry, especially in the areas of psychological and emotional feelings of the people.

Covid-19

Covid-19 is a new form of corona virus disease due to the novel virus SARS-CoV-2 that causes acute infection with respiratory symptoms. This new virus is different from the ones that cause SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) or MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome), (<https://www.thoracic.org.com>).

According to Memish, Zumla, Al-Hakeem, Al-Rabeeh, & Stephens, (2013), MERS-CoV is a member beta-coronavirus subgroup and phylo-genetically diverse from other human-CoV. The infection of MERS-CoV initiates from a mild upper respiratory injury while progression leads to severe respiratory disease. Similar to SARS-coronavirus, patients infected with MERS-coronavirus suffer pneumonia, followed by renal failure. In February 2019, WHO was informed by the Chinese government about several cases of pneumonia with unfamiliar aetiology. The outbreak was initiated from the Hunan seafood market in Wuhan city of China and rapidly infected more than 50 people. The live animals are frequently sold at the Hunan seafood market such as bats, frogs, snakes, birds, marmots and rabbits (Wang, Horby, Hayden, & Gao, 2020).

According to Wang, et al (2020), by January 2020, the National Health Commission of China released further details about the epidemic, suggested viral pneumonia. From the sequence-based analysis of isolates from the patients, the virus was identified as a novel coronavirus. Moreover, the genetic sequence was also provided for the diagnosis of viral infection. Initially, it was suggested that the patients infected with Wuhan coronavirus induced pneumonia in China may have visited the seafood market where live animals were sold or may have used infected animals or birds as a source of food.

However, further investigations revealed that some individuals contracted the infection even with no record of visiting the seafood

market. These observations indicated a human to the human spreading capability of this virus, which was subsequently reported in more than 100 countries in the world. The human to human spreading of the virus occurs due to close contact with an infected person, exposed to coughing, sneezing, respiratory droplets or aerosols (<https://www.researchgate.net>).

These aerosols can penetrate the human body (lungs) via inhalation through the nose and mouth which are primary reservoirs and hosts of corona viruses. The source of origination and transmission are important to be determined in order to develop preventive strategies to contain the infection. In the case of SARS-CoV, the researchers initially focused on raccoon dogs and palm civets as a key reservoir of infection. However, only the samples isolated from the civets at the food market showed positive results for viral RNA (Ribonucleic Acid) detection, suggesting that the civet palm might be secondary hosts (Wang, et al, 2020).

According to WHO (2020), symptoms exhibited by covid-19 disease range from fever, cough, respiratory symptoms, shortness of breath, and breathing difficulties ([https://www.ijidonline.com/article/S1201-9712\(20\)30281-2/pdf](https://www.ijidonline.com/article/S1201-9712(20)30281-2/pdf)). Fatal outcomes can include lower-respiratory tract illnesses, such as pneumonia and bronchitis, or acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in severe diseases. These complications are more pronounced in patients with underlying health conditions such as cardiopulmonary disease, immuno-compromised individuals, infants and the elderly (Ohia, Bakarey, & Amed, 2020).

Outbreak

Outbreak, according to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, means a sudden start of something unpleasant such as war or disease. When there is an outbreak, lives and properties are at stake because destruction is inevitable. The covid-19 outbreak took the whole world

unaware; it was initially not taken serious but when its effects started manifesting, there was a standstill the world over. In Nigeria, for instance, the outbreak of this deadly disease was initially made jest of by some personalities.

Irony

According to Booth (1974), the term irony is derived from the Ancient Greek expression *εἰρωνεία* *eirōneía*, meaning dissimulation, feigned ignorance. It is a rhetorical device, literary technique, or event in which what appears, on the surface, to be the case or to be expected differs radically from what is actually the case. Irony can be categorized into three major types, which include verbal irony, dramatic irony, and situational irony. Verbal, dramatic, and situational irony are often used for emphasis in the assertion of truth (Allan, 2008).

Verbal irony, according to Storey & Allan (2008), is a statement in which the meaning that a speaker employs is sharply different from the meaning that is ostensibly expressed. An ironic statement usually involves the explicit expression of one attitude or evaluation, but with indications in the overall speech-situation that the speaker intends a very different, and often opposite, attitude or evaluation. Dramatic irony, on the other hand, exploits the device of giving the spectator an item of information that at least one of the characters in the narrative is unaware of (at least consciously), thus placing the spectator a step ahead of at least one of the characters. While, situational irony is defined as a situation where the outcome is incongruous with what was expected, but it is also more generally understood as a situation that includes contradictions or sharp contrasts (Allan, 2008).

On the whole, irony constitutes a complete or total opposition between what is thought and what is seen. It is a deliberate intention whereby something real and perceptible is brought directly under the concept of its opposite.

Speech act

According to Agbedo (2015), speech acts are different forms of actions speakers try to achieve in their utterances. Speech act theory was first developed by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), and second, Grice's (1975 and 1978) theories of conversational implicature. Conversational implicature is, in this regard, basically connected with certain general features of discourse arising from the fact that if our talk exchanges are to be rational, they must comprise utterances which are in one way or the other connected to one another. What informs this connection is called the Co-operative Principle (CP) of (Grice, 1975). CP states: make your contribution such as is required, at the stage which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. In order to comply with this principle, speakers are required to follow a number of sub-principles, which fall into four maxims: quantity, quality, relation and manner (Grice, 1975).

The maxim of quantity states that a speaker should make his contributions as informative as required, and not more informative than is required. The maxim of quality states that one should not say what one believes to be false and one should not say that for which one lacks adequate evidence. The maxim of relation states that one should say only what is relevant at a particular time. Equally, the maxim of manner says that a speaker should be perspicuous; i.e. express ones opinion clearly where the process of inference from premises to conclusion is explicitly laid out (Agbedo, 2015).

According to Searle (1979), there are five main categories of speech act. They are: (a) Assertive speech acts, which are phrases used to form specific ideas or propositions. Speakers commit themselves to something being true using assertive statements. (2) Directive speech acts are employed to call the addressee to action without the sender reciprocating any action of his own whatsoever. (3) Commissive speech acts are speech acts used by a speaker to commit themselves to a future action. (4) Expressive speech acts are hinged upon psychological state and relate to the expression of feelings or emotions to the receiver. (5)

Declarative speech acts. Declarative can be sub-classified into: effective and verdictive speech acts. The effective speech act refers to utterances made by someone in a position of authority that are capable of changing institutional state of affairs. While verdictive speech acts refer to judgments made by persons vested with certain levels of institutional power whether such judgments or pronouncements are in reality accurate or not.

The speech act theories of Searle (1979) and Grice (1975) as examined above are evidently relevant to this present study, hence they are adopted for analysis. This does not rule out the relevance of other speech act theories such as Austin (1962), Searle (1969) and Grice (1978) but relatively for the purpose of specificity.

Methodology

This study adopts a secondary method of data gathering whereby speech acts of some prominent Nigerians, in relation to their perceptions about the existence of covid-19 or its cure in Nigeria, are gathered from the online version of Nigerian newspapers. The following are those whose speech acts are randomly gathered and analysed. They are: President Olusegun Obasanjo, Gov. Yahaya Bello of Kogi State, Apostle Johnson Suleman, DG NCDC (Chikwe Ihekweazu), Minister of Health (Osagie Ehanire), Gov. Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State, Gov. Oluseyi Abiodun Makinde of Oyo State, Ooni of Ife (Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi) and Prof. Maurice Iwu. Their perceptions and/or speeches are analysed using the speech act theories of Searle (1979) and Grice (1975). On the whole, the study does not involve any form of statistical analysis because it purely relies on secondary rather than primary data.

Data presentation and analysis

As noted in section 3 above, the data were gathered from the online version of Nigerian newspapers where speech acts of some prominent Nigerians on covid-19 relevant to this work are gathered and

analysed pragmatically. The data are, therefore, presented and analysed simultaneously thus:

President Olusegun Obasanjo

“There is no coronavirus in Nigeria, The minister of health cooks the story to defraud the Government, I want to see the Italian man, I wan get the virus too” (<https://africacheck.org/>).

The above comment was made by Former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo who does not believe in the existence of covid-19 in Nigeria. In his humorous manner, Mr Obasanjo said “I want to see the Italian man, I wan get the virus too”. He also alleged that the minister of health is only using the purported existence of coronvirus to short-change the Nigerian government. Ironically, President Olusegun was sighted undergoing covid-19 test on 9th of August, 2020 (see: <https://dailypost.ng/2020/08/09/obasanjos-covid-19-test-result-revealed/>).

On the contrary, if coronavirus does not exist in Nigeria, why did Mr Obasanjo undergo covid-19 test? His earlier perception about covid-19 has, therefore, been defeated. President Obasanjo was initially too sure that coronavirus does not exist in Nigeria; his perception or proposition is that of assertive speech act of Searle (1975) where speakers commit themselves to something being true owing to their perceptions. Also, Mr Obasanjo violates the CP of Grice (1975) when he said: “There is no coronavirus in Nigeria, the minister of health cooks the story to defraud the Government...” This is because the maxim of quality states that one should not say what one believes to be false and one should not say that for which one lacks adequate evidence.

Gov. Yahaya Bello

“Whether medical experts and scientists believe it or not, COVID-19 is out to shorten the lifestyle of the people, it is a disease propagated by force for Nigerians to accept...” (<https://www.thecable.ng/nigerians-made-to-accept-covid-19-by-force-says-yahaya-bello>). “It is a disease that has been imported,

propagated and forced on people for no just cause. Nothing kills faster than fear. I urge you all not to accept cut-and-paste as COVID-19,” (<https://www.sunnewsonline.com/gov-bellos-covid-19-cocktail/6th July 2020>).

Governor Yahaya Bello of Kogi State, just like President Olusegun Obasanjo, did not initially believe the existence of coronavirus in Nigeria, Kogi State to be specific. He alleged that people of Nigeria are being forced by NCDC to believe that there is covid-19 in Nigeria. But it is ironical to hear the Kogi State Commissioner of Education, Science and Technology, Hon. Wemi Jones, say: “His Excellency has given the marching order to fumigate all schools to ensure that the lives of learners and teachers are not endangered in Kogi State”. Also, the State’s Commissioner for Environment, Hon. Victor Omofaiye said: “We thank the governor for being proactive in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic” (<https://tribuneonlineng.com/covid-19-kogi-govt-begins-fumigation-of-schools-ahead-of-resumption/>).

It is evident from the above expositions that Gov. Yahaya Bello’s speech act on covid-19 in Nigeria, specifically Kogi State, is assertive. However, his earlier position or perception to covid-19 existence in Kogi State has been ironically countered by speeches of his two commissioners as noted above. His allegation against NCDC forcing covid-19 on Nigeria violates Grice’s maxim of relation which states one should say only what is relevant at a particular time. Gov. Bello’s assertive speech acts on none existence of covid-19 has, therefore, become irrelevant based on his two principals’ later submissions.

Apostle Johnson Suleman

“Please permit us to go and pray for COVID-19 patients. Allow us to go there; that is why there are men of God. If you are really anointed to pray for the sick, this is the time because what is holding the world is sickness. So, we’re begging the government to permit us into isolation centres; that is the only way we can reduce this nonsense because it will improve every day”

(<https://www.thecable.ng/extra-allow-us-heal-covid-19-patients-apostle-suleman-tells-fg>).

Apostle Johnson Suleman, the founder of Omega Fire Ministry, has requested the Nigerian government to allow men of God heal covid-19 patients in Nigeria. He is categorically sure in his assertive speech act that all he needs is government's permission to go to the isolation centres; "...we're begging the government to permit us into isolation centres..." to heal those suffering from covid-19. Apostle Suleman believes that the only way to put covid-19 to an end is to go spiritual, hence seeking government's approval to that effect. But the ironical question is: does he actually need government's permission to do so? His speech act on this ground is, therefore, not as informative as required, hence violating Grice's maxim of quantity.

Health Minister, Osagie Ehanire

"COVID-19 will also spread more to rural areas, and we should be ready for that". (<https://dailypost.ng/2020/08/03/covid-19-will-also-spread-more-to-rural-areas-be-ready-health-minister-tells-nigerians/>).

In his professional perception above, the Minister of Health, Osagie Ehanire is conclusively sure that covid-19 in no distant time shall spread to rural dwellings in Nigeria. His speech act is both expressive and verdictive. It is expressive because it affects the psychological and emotional states of being of the hearers. And it is verdictive because Mr Osagie holds a strategic position (Minister of Health) in the Nigeria health sector, so whatever he says about the ravaging coronavirus could be accepted by Nigerians hook line and sinker whether his judgment is true or false.

Gov. Babajide Sanwo-Olu

"Another round of interminable lockdown of movement and business activities would be introduced if there is no improvement in the adherence to the guidelines initiated to break the cycle of transmission of the dreaded virus."

“We will be forced to take a painful decision of bringing the entire system under lockdown if we continue to see evidence that Lagosians are determined to flout the rules.” (<https://www.africanews.com/2020/06/01/nigeria-coronavirus-hub-updates-covid-19/>).

As the number one citizen of Lagos State, Gov. Babajide Sanwo-Olu’s warning about possible non-adherence to NCDC guidelines on covid-19 is that of effective speech act because he is in position of authority and his pronouncement is capable of bringing institutional change in the affairs of the state. He adopts commissive speech acts in his second expression when he says: “We will be forced to take a painful decision of bringing the entire system under lockdown if we continue to see evidence that Lagosians are determined to flout the rules.” This is because he is committed to future action (s) should there be any further non-adherence to government guidelines to surmounting the disease.

DG NCDC, Chikwe Ihekweazu

“You can’t hide this. Eventually, it will emerge. There is absolutely no doubt that there are people that have pneumonia, acute respiratory infections in your states” (<https://www.premiumtimesng.com>). “No state, no single state in Nigeria is COVID-19 free, not one. No country in the world is COVID-19 free. Even New Zealand that is an island state is still having new cases after a period of not having any” (<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/399068-no-state-in-nigeria-is-free-of-covid-19-ncdc.html> June 22, 2020).

The Director General of NCDC, Dr Chikwe Ihekweazu is an authority in the Nigerian health sector, and being the head of disease control institution in Nigeria (NCDC), his comments about covid-19 in Nigeria are always authoritative. He adopts both assertive and expressive speech acts in addressing issues concerning covid-19. For instance his expression “No state, no single state in Nigeria is COVID-

19 free, not one...” is both assertive and expressive. It is assertive because he is very sure that the disease is everywhere in Nigeria. And the statement is expressive because it affects both the psychological and emotional beings of the hearer. His speech acts are also verdictive because he is always being judgmental in his expositions.

Gov. Oluseyi Abiodun Makinde

“My very good friend and brother, Dr Muyideen Olatunji is the one in charge of the Primary Healthcare for Oyo State. He came to me and said, look, I am going to send to you this black seed oil; it boosts immunity. So I mixed it with honey and took one teaspoon in the morning and one in the evening.”

“I have lost a little bit of weight which I think is good. When you are in isolation, the tendency is just to watch television and eat, I was eating amala. But I was also using the treadmill. It has also been a period to reflect and look at the programmes, policies and the things we want to do for the people of Oyo state and also reflect on how the COVID-19 is going to affect us socially and economically” (<https://www.premiumtimesng.com>).

From his perceptions about covid-19, the Executive Governor of Oyo State, His Excellence, Oluseyi Abiodun Makinde in his speech acts above believes that there are possible treatments for covid-19 in Nigeria. He asserts that the disease can be cured using herbs. His second expression leaves the hearer in doubt whether covid-19 actually exists in Nigeria. He becomes so humorous and ironical in his speech act, “When you are in isolation, the tendency is just to watch television and eat, I was eating amala...”

Ooni of Ife, Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi II

“Truly, the world will NEVER remain the same again!!! To solve this ailment is through natural elements put together above all from nature. It has been tested!!! I have used it and also used it for some of the chronic Corona patients with testimonials”

(<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/384977-ooni-of-ife-claims-he-has-tested-cure-for-coronavirus.html>).

From the traditional perspective, a paramount ruler from Yoruba Kingdom, the Ooni of Ife, Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi, claims that covid-19 can be treated using natural elements. In his assertion, he said “I have used it and also used it for some of the chronic Corona patients with testimonials”. The ironic question is that if truly natural elements can be used to cure this world threatening disease, why has it not been adopted outside his domain?

Prof. Maurice Iwu

“Honourable Minister, Sir, I am here to formally brief you about our drug discovery project, which has led to the identification of a potential treatment agent for Coronavirus infections” (<https://www.newsbreak.ng/my-research-team-has-developed-treatment-for-coronavirus-maurice-iwu/>).

The former boss of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Professor Maurice Iwu, in his address to the minister of health, claimed that his health institution has discovered treatment for coronavirus. Prof. Iwu impliedly adopts directive speech act in his address to the minister because he expects immediate actions from the minister. Ironically, no genuine response has come from the minister or government, thereby truncating the dream of Maurice Iwu towards curing covid-19.

Summary of findings and conclusion

The findings from analysis done in section four are summarized in this section for further clarification based on the objective(s) of the study. Conclusion is also drawn to justify how the research has been able to solve the problem identified.

Summary of findings

From data analysis in section four, it is discovered that there are three major schools of thought on covid-19 in Nigeria. The schools of thought are: those who believe there is covid-19 in Nigeria, those who believe there is no covid-19 in Nigeria and those who claim covid-19 can be cured in Nigeria. The findings of this research are premised based on these three schools of thoughts.

The first school of thought is: those who believe the existence of covid-19 in Nigeria. Those in this group as analysed in this work are: DG NCDC (Chikwe Ihekweazu), Minister of Health (Osagie Ehanire) and Gov. Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State. Their perception about covid-19 is that the disease is in Nigeria but has no cure or treatment yet; the only way to avoid contracting and spreading it is to adhere to NCDC guidelines of social distance, washing of hands regularly, wearing of face masks etc. The findings show that those in this school of thought adopt assertive, expressive, effective, verdictive and commissive speech acts in their expression of feelings concerning covid-19 in Nigeria because they are in positions of authority. Their speech acts such as the expressive and verdictive, for instance, affect both the psychological and emotional states of the citizenry.

The second school of thought is: those who believe covid-19 does not exist in Nigeria. Those in this group as analysed in section four are former President Olusegun Obasanjo and Governor Yahaya Bello of Kogi State. Their speech acts are mainly assertive because they believe categorically that the claim about the existence of covid-19 in Nigeria is a mere manipulation. Their speech acts, however, violate Grice's CP; specifically the maxim of quality which states that one should not say what one believes to be false and one should not say that for which one lacks adequate evidence. It is ironical, for instance, to discover that President Olusegun Obasanjo later did covid-19 test which is contrary to his earlier perception of the disease.

Those in the third school of thought are those who claim that covid-19 can be cured or treated in Nigeria. They are: Apostle Johnson

Suleman, Gov. Oluseyi Abiodun Makinde of Oyo State, Ooni of Ife (Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi) and Prof. Maurice Iwu. This school of thought believes that covid-19 exists in Nigeria but can be cured spiritually, traditionally and/or naturally. It is discovered that the speech acts of those in this group are mainly assertive and directive. It is, however, ironical to note that none of their claims has been formally certified by relevant authorities. This has left their claims in doubt because the assertions created by them have not been buttressed outside their domains.

Conclusion

In this study, perceptions of some prominent individuals in Nigeria about covid-19 have been examined using speech act theories of Searle (1979) and Grice (1975) respectively. From the findings, it is evident that there are three major schools of thought or perceptions about covid-19 in Nigeria. The first perception is that covid-19 is real and measures must be taken to avoid its spread because it has no cure. The second perception is that covid-19 does not exist in Nigeria; hence it is a mere imagination created by relevant authorities forcing it on the people. In the third category, it is claimed that covid-19 can be cured or treated in Nigeria adopting spiritual, traditional or natural approach. Ironically, however, if covid-19 is real based on the speech acts of those in relevant authorities as examined in this study and there are no cures for it, one could be in doubt for what actually responsible for the change of status of those who initially tested positive for covid-19 but later tested negative after some times in isolation centres.

In conclusion, the speech acts of those in relevant authorities, in their expositions on the disease, should be mild in nature in order not to create much fear in the minds of the people. Also, those who believe there is no covid-19 and those who claim the disease can be cured in Nigeria should prove their perceptions or theories to logical conclusion to conform to Grice's maxim of quality which says one

should not say what one believes to be false and one should not say that for which one lacks adequate evidence.

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