

# A DYNAMIC MORPHO-SEMANTIC AND SYNTACTIC STUDY OF LEXICAL INNOVATIONS IN THE DISCOURSE OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND IMPLICATIONS ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN NIGERIA

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## Abstract

*This study examined the dynamic morpho-semantic and syntactic study of lexical innovations in the discourse of covid-19 pandemic and implications on English Language in Nigeria. The study is a descriptive research design of the survey type. Population for the study comprised of 67 English Language teachers and 2,242 SS2 students in public secondary schools in Ado Local Government Area. The sample for the study was 20 English Language teachers and 20 students selected using simple random sampling technique. A self-designed questionnaire on new words and expressions on COVID-19 to illicit information from the teachers on their level of awareness and teaching of some newly coined words on the language lessons. The questionnaires were validated by relevant experts. The reliability of the instruments was determined through test –retest and Alpha Cronbach reliability method so as to determine the internal consistency of the items and a reliability coefficient of 0.76 were yielded. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive analysis of mean and standard deviation for the research questions raised. The finding of the study revealed that morpho-semantic changes in the English lexicon during the COVID-19 pandemic discourse in Nigeria reflect cultural adaptations and linguistic responses to crisis situations, indicating a dynamic relationship between linguistic evolution and societal context, there is recognition of the adaptive nature of language in response to crises and the positive impact of linguistic innovations on communication and cultural expression within Nigerian English discourse amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the linguistic adaptations and strategies employed during the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria contribute to the dynamic evolution of language, allowing for effective communication of crisis-related information and the expression of cultural nuances within Nigerian English discourse and social media platforms play a significant role in shaping and disseminating COVID-19-related linguistic adaptations and lexical innovations within Nigerian English discourse, highlighting their influence on language evolution and communication dynamics during times of crisis. It was recommended among others that The government and school authority should provide English language teachers with training on incorporating newly coined words and expressions related to COVID-19 into vocabulary development lessons, enriching students' understanding of language evolution and societal context.*

**Keywords:** Morpho-Semantic, Syntactic Study, Innovation, COVID-19 Pandemic, English Language

## Introduction

The term “morpho-semantic” shows the dual direction of this paper in relation to the combination of two major areas of language study: Morphology and Semantics. Simply put, morphology deals with the various

processes of word-formation, while semantics on the other hand, concerns itself with the exploration of language at the realm of meaning in context. According to Savioa (2023), he explains that the morphological words of a language are specified by its

morphological constructions. They are the units which linguists over the world are attempting to define as the smallest units that could be said in isolation. The lexical word is the basic unit of the lexicon, or dictionary, of a language which combination must agree with the syntactic structure of the language in use. It must be stressed here that words and expressions are not haphazardly or arbitrarily structured, there are certain rules that innovative expressions must follow to be employed meaningfully in discourse.

Morphology deals with the systematic correspondence between the form and meaning of words. The study of these regularities comprises the domains of inflection and word formation. Inflection concerns the expression of morpho-syntactic properties, sometimes required by a specific syntactic context. Word formation deals with the creation of new (complex) words by various morphological mechanisms such as compounding, affixation, truncation, segmentation and clipping.

The role of morphology in the grammar of natural language is subject to theoretical debate. The position of morphology in the architecture of the grammar of natural languages has been debated for decades in the linguistic literature, and it is impossible to summarize this debate in this paper. Notwithstanding, a brief explanation would be provided for a better understanding of this concept. First, there various concepts about the form in which morphological regularities should be expressed (rules or schema?). Second, there are several models of the position of morphology in the structure of grammar which will be discussed. Important issues are the interface between morphology and semantics in relation to creation of new words. It should be born mind that morphology plays important role in theories of

acquisition of language and in the theories of language change and variation like the present global pandemic occasioned by coronavirus. Coinage of new words has been described by some scholars as neologism. Regardless of these new coinages, they must conform with general rules of word formations to be meaningfully employed.

Onyedum (2012) adopts Kubova's (2010) description of neologism as any word/set of expressions formed according to the productive word formation rules in English. Onyedum's (2012) work analyzes 70 neologisms on social media and focuses on the following social networking platforms; Facebook, Twitter, My space, YouTube, Yahoo, Messenger, and Blackberry Messenger. In addition, the study categorized the 70 neologisms into five morphological processes of blending, compounding, affixation, semantic extension and coinage. Mworira's (2015) paper which emphasized on neologisms on social media in the Kenyan context brings into the spotlight the submission that the word formation processes used in the formation of neologisms on social media are derivation, compounding, semantic transfers, clippings, acronyms, abbreviations and graphological deviation. In addition, another linguistic work carried out on this aspect of neologism is by Jimaima and Nkhata (2017). With enormous emphasis on lexical morphology and lexical integrity, the crux of the study was on some inflections on the morphological and lexical aspects of the social media discourse and self-asserting narratives on the Zambian online media. The focus of Jimaima and Nkhata's (2017) study is closely related to the current study of morphological innovations as a result of COVID-19 and upsurge of new words in the English language. Also, Lawson (2020)

revealed that the outbreak of the virus has had far-reaching impact on our educational, political, psychological and social life as well as bringing explosions in the creation of news and expressions. He added that the established words such as self-isolation, pandemic, quarantine, lockdown and other coinages have suddenly become prominent in use within the linguistic parlance.

Ronald (2020) on his widely circulated article Language Unit, posits that inventive language is not just ornamental, but practical and that the new vocabulary has come to utilitarian shorthand for talking about corona virus-related issues- from the impact the virus has had on our working lives, to influence of the lockdown measures or even just way to make fun and laugh on the unexpected strange happenings on the global level. From the foregoing, it leads credence to the fact that corona virus has led to sporadic explosions of new terms and expressions both in English and other languages. The new words aid teachers and students make sense of the unexpected transformations that have suddenly become part of our everyday life. Words and expressions like-coronavirus/COVID-19, meaning the virus, “self-isolating” “quarantine”, “lockdown”, and “essential-workers”, all of these new innovative words have gained prominence in use. It also include “ covidiot”, meaning, someone ignoring public health advice, “covidio party”, meaning social gathering via media platform, zoom meeting, meaning virtual meeting via internet and a lot more.

### **Implications on Language Learning and Teaching of English Language**

The focal point of this paper deals with the variety of novel words and expressions that are innovatively

generated in the discourse of coronavirus and the implications of this on the English language use in the educational system Nigeria. Like human beings, language grows, and events and happenings globally bring about creativity in the usage of language within the universal territory where the language is used. Therefore, the outbreak of the lethal virus has contributed immensely to the growth and development of English language across the world. Suffice to say that the outbreak has occasioned the emergence of new words and expressions.

There are also words and expressions within the medical parlance that have become day-to-day regular use within the education system and attention should be drawn to these novel words and the usage in the school system. English language teachers and students should be familiar with this development in language use so that they will not become vapid in the course of the present world predicament. Lynne (2014) in his book titled, “Teaching Language to Young Learners” states that learning of new vocabulary involves learning words, and set out principles for teaching that can help learners build up different aspects of vocabulary development and make links among them. It is important therefore that teachers of English Language should be conversant with language changes through innovation with words on the happenings in the world, like the present global health disaster-COVID-19.

Babalola and Bakare (2019), the two researchers carried out a work on French language and acquisition of new words. The work could be adapted to the teaching and learning of vocabulary in English Language particularly in the emerging coinages as a result of outbreak of COVID-19. They explain that attitude is a part of sociological variables that influence performance of

man in every field of activities and that it really plays a pivotal role when it comes to second language learning for literacy proficiency. The findings further revealed that teachers' teaching methods, giving feedback on performance, availability of textbooks, and good relationship with the students and competence to manage the class motivates French Language learners to learn in the classroom. The implication is that English Language teachers must be conscious of new emerging words and expressions, teach learners their proper meanings and usage. The position of Oyekan (2005) as cited by Oyinloye (2016) is very relevant to the teaching and learning of new words in the period of pandemic in the world. He states that teaching is an action of making learners understand and accomplish beyond their educational background. The outcome is that learning of new words in relation to the COVID-19 will improve students' vocabulary and provide them with exposure to contribute meaningfully to the discourse of the global crisis. Al-Salman and Haider (2021) posited that the influx of new words and phrases as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic evidently demonstrates the creativity and vitality of the English language to respond to emerging situations in time of crisis.

Morphological structures may also determine the syntactic properties of a complex word, in particular, its word class and its syntactic valence. Many affixes determine the syntactic category of a word. For instance, English words with the suffix-less are adjectives. Syntactic valence is the term for the combinatorial properties of a word in sentences. Verbs may be either intransitive or transitive (Crytal, 2017). In the first case, they do not select a direct object, in the second case they do. Examples are to die and to kill respectively. An example of

morphology affecting syntactic valence is that the addition of the suffix -ize turns the noun alphabet into the transitive verb alphabetized. Hence, there may be a systematic correlation between the morphological structure of a word, and its morpho-syntactic properties. The semantic interpretation of compounds provides a simple illustration of the interface between morphological structure and meaning.

### **Syntactic Arguments**

Having provided explanations for the central role of morphology in the creation of new words and expressions in the discourse of the global pandemic, there is the need to propose some arguments and explanations on the relevance of syntax in relation to the meanings of the new words. Suffice to stress that words are not arbitrarily fused together regardless of the newness, certain rules must be followed. Rules and regulations on the arrangement of words should be followed, if not, meaning will be lost and communication may also be impeded. From the Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) perspective, a complete sentence must have the subject, with the head noun and the predicate, which consists of the object and the verb. In the creation of new words and expressions, cognizance of the grammatical functionality of these novel words and expressions should be taken into consideration for expressions to be meaningful. Ray and Jenny (2020) did a comparative study to examine the feasibility and efficacy of teaching functional grammar to college students. Results from their study indicate that the experimental group, who were taught functional grammar to analyze texts, achieved greater progress in writing than the control group who continued with traditional grammar at the general level. Particularly, at the specific levels of register, discourse and

grammar, students in the experimental group made significant improvements. The research shows that “Functional grammar, the meaning resources for constructing discourse and the meta-language employed by teachers and students to discuss about written texts, can help students master English grammar from a semantic angle based upon their previous knowledge of traditional grammar, and apply it to language exercises to realize meanings in various structures”. In their book “Functional Grammar in the EFL Classroom”, Lock and Jones (2010) introduced six general rules for language learners to discover, explore and practice grammar in context. After a detailed discussion of each procedure, Lock and Jones provided language teachers and learners two sample lesson plans together with sample texts. The procedures structured purposely show how grammar can be taught through texts. However, considering that learning functional grammar needs some basic knowledge and good analytical ability, the authors of the paper think that it may be more successful when functional grammar is used to teach intermediate and advanced literacy. Schleppegrell (2004) argues that each subject area of schooling has its own different expectations in terms of the genres that students will read and write. Each genre is constructed through grammatical properties that construe the dictionary meanings. Accordingly, functional grammar has a close connection to the success of EFL students in school contexts. When EFL teachers use functional grammar in their teaching, here are three suggestions.

One is to make text analysis around clauses and word groups (noun groups, verb groups, adjective group, and prepositional group). At the same time, they need to try to avoid some

functional labels. The author of this paper doesn't think it is an impressive suggestion to teach all the functional labels to students. The main purpose is to let students know how language works that way. The second suggestion is to let students personally realize that grammar is a resource of making meaning and a subsystem of language. In functional grammar, there are many systems, such as mood system, verb system, and so on.

### **Acquisition of morphology**

The argument here is that acquisition of new words or expressions must be a conscious effort particularly for users of English language as a second language and with conformity with the grammatical rules. This is also related to the concept of neologism by some language scholars. Zimmer (1964) has pointed out that there are many words which grammar can generate, although they ought to conform to the word formation rules. These new words can be added to the various grammatical categories. The new words coined are thus referred to as neologisms and Kubova (2010) posits that a neologism as a word/set of expression formed in line with the productive word formation rules in English. Neologisms are as a result of developments (advancements) in social life, technology and in a few cases, culture. Similarly, Vogel (2017) in one of his papers states that “Words Recently Coined and Blended: Analysis of New English Lexical Items”, discusses and analyzes new lexical items which are coined or borrowed every year. The position is that some of the derived, compounded and blended words have been added to the English dictionary. Aduda (2013) further aligns with the submissions of other language scholars on the idea of neologism and various word formation processes. He refers to the concept of

neologism as broad and, thus, referring to lexical items. He further argues that neologisms are new words borrowed from other languages or dialects; new words created through deep analysis of issues. The position of these scholars explains the fact that language grows and develops as a result of events and happenings in the world.

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### Words creativity and Expressions

Ofodu (2016) in her work on “Boosting Imagination in English Language Classes Using Learner-Oriented Strategies” posits that children learn language without explicit instruction. They learn it naturally through experience, by listening to others, experimenting and practicing in situation where language performs genuine purposes. The implication is that creativity and discovery are central to language acquisition and learning. Her argument is therefore apt in relation to the teaching and learning of new words and expressions that are being coined in the course of outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic.

There is no doubt in the fact that corona virus has brought changes to English language in our day-to-day conversations and we have seen explosive growth in the vocabulary of the average user of English language as result of the outbreak of the deadly disease. The change has equally extended to the learning and teaching of English language and it is the responsibility of language teacher to get acquainted with these words and their proper usage. A good teacher of English language should endeavour to consciously learn and teach these novel words as well as assist the students to get familiar with them. Some of these words and expressions have not been well internalized by second language user of English language because the COVID-19 crisis has developed at such a rapid pace and some of the words and ideas associated with the crisis are themselves new.

Therefore, there is the need to make scheduled update of words and expressions associated with the disease for intelligent dialogue on the matter. Some of these words are new to the dictionary; others have revised definitions that are quite different from their known dictionary meanings. The new coinages that include working from home, new normal situation and wearing of face-masks- an exclusive right of medical doctors in the theatres and nurses in the wards and dormitories in the hospitals. Although not new, but not often used, we have seen words like social distancing and quarantine more frequently in day-to-day discourse of the global pandemic. Let take cursory look at some of these new words and their meanings.

1. Animal-human interface (noun): this is a point between animal and human which could lead to human contacting diseases that are animal related. *It was in China that the novel corona virus animal-human interface could first be traced.*
2. Asymptomatic (adjective): this is when a carrier of viral disease shows no symptom. *He had no idea that his wife had corona*

- virus because she was asymptomatic.
3. Bow (verb): this to succumb to the virus or a particular disease. *The young girl bows to the deadly corona virus.*
  4. Carrier (noun): this is a person or animal that transmits a disease to other. *The Professor of medicine happened to be the first carrier of the virus and unknowingly transmitted to some staff in the hospital.*
  5. Carry (verb): to be infected with a disease and have the capacity to transmit to others. *Some individuals may carry coronavirus without knowing, this is the reason why the virus travels very fast.*
  6. Community spread (noun): this is a situation where a disease is being transmitted within the community without being transported. *With the rate many people are coming down with the virus, it is glaring that we have a community spread of the lethal virus within us.*
  7. Contact tracing (noun): this is deliberate act of monitoring and identification of those that have had contact with the carrier of virus. *It has been come increasingly difficult to do contact tracing these days bearing mind rate at which the virus is spreading.*
  8. Contagious (adj): describing a disease that can pass from person to person, usually by direct contact. *It was unfortunate that the Doctor was not aware that the disease is contagious.*
  9. Diagnose (noun): identification of a disease by examination of the symptoms. *The man was not convinced of the doctor's diagnose; he had to consult another doctor to double check the result.*
  10. Disease (noun): Sickness, this is a disorder of the body. Typhoid is one of the several serious diseases that could damage the liver. *Polio has become a difficult disease to eradicate in Africa.*
  11. Droplets (noun): the spray produced when people cough or sneeze, and which are capable of spreading the disease. *The droplets from patient actually caused the community spread of the deadly virus.*
  12. Epidemic (noun): this is a situation where there is a large occurrence of disease in a particular area. *The town was devastated by the outbreak of epidemic of ebola.*
  13. Flatten the curve (verb): to cause a change in the steep upward curve on a graph of new disease cases to a flatter. *There must be deliberate steps to flatten the curve of the COVID-19 disease.*
  14. Herd immunity (noun): an indirect protection from a disease resulting from a large percentage of the population gaining immunity (either through vaccination or through recovery from the disease). *This virus is completely different from the seasonal flu; presently there is no vaccine to combat it.*
  15. Incubation period (noun): this is the period between when a person becomes infected with the disease and the manifestation of the virus. *There is the need to study carefully the incubation period to know how long to keep in quarantine.*
  16. Infect (verb): to affect or cause a disease in human or animal by lethal virus. *It was sad that the health workers did not take adequate precaution many*

- people would not have been infected with the virus. If you do not take necessary caution many people can be infected.*
17. Infected (adjective): this is a state of being infected with a disease. *It was difficult to cut the infected part of the right leg.*
  18. Infection (noun): this is the process of infecting; a state of being infected. *It has been proven that taking warm water at regular interval could protect people from infection.*
  19. Infectious (Adjective): describing a disease that can be transmitted through environment. It can be explained as a state in which human or animal is capable of spreading infection. *It has been advised that we should avoid eating of monkey for now as it could be infectious.*
  20. Isolate centre (verb): this is when an infected person is kept away from healthy people. The doctor is reported to be professional to isolate the first reported case of COVID-19 patient in the community.
  21. Isolation (noun): this is separate location for keeping highly infectious patients from others. *Travelers from the volatile countries are first kept in isolation center.*
  22. Mask (noun): this is a piece of cloth or fiber that is being used to cover the nose and mouth from the purpose of prevention of deadly disease. *Many customers were prevented from entering the mall for failing to put on their masks.*
  23. Novel coronavirus (noun): it means newly identified coronavirus that is different from the known ones. *There are no vaccines for the novel coronavirus, prevention is still the best option.*
  24. Outbreak (noun): unexpected occurrence of a disease or unpleasant thing in particular community. *There was an outbreak of Cholera in 1993 which led to the death of many young children.*
  25. Pandemic (noun): Occurrence of a particular disease that spread throughout a country. *COVID-19 was first declared a pandemic in China, before it got to other countries.*
  26. Pathogen (noun): this is a micro-organism or deadly germ such as a bacterium or virus that can cause disease. *There is no enough immunity in the very old folks to fight the pathogens in the body.*
  27. Patient zero (noun): this is an individual that is identified to be the first infected person with a disease in an outbreak of epidemic. *It has become increasingly difficult to identify patient zero in the area.*
  28. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (noun): these are special equipment such as headgear, goggles, masks and other garments that shield people from injury or infection. The hospital authority has been finding it extremely tough procuring the PPE for the medical officers and this is putting pressure on the few ones available.
  29. Person-to-person (adjective): this is describing the spread of a viral disease from one person to the other. *The disease spreads from person-to-person through handshake and hugging, you are therefore advised to adhere strictly to all COVID-19 protocols including social and physical distancing.*

30. Quarantine (noun/verb): This is a process of isolating and deliberate monitoring of people who appear healthy but are likely to have been exposed one way or the other to an infectious disease. *Quarantine has been the most effective way of curtailing the spread of deadly and infectious disease. The foreigners were quarantined for fourteen days before they were allowed to travel to their various countries.*
31. SARS-COV-2 (noun): The acronym means Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus. This is final official name for the coronavirus after series of test and research. *The SARS-COV-2 is said to be more lethal than all former types.*
32. Screening (noun): this is the act of carrying out test to detect possible infection in person. *The specialist revealed that the result from the screening could not be relied on because the machine can malfunction.*
33. Self-isolate (verb): This is to put oneself away from others to prevent further spread of the virus. *The Governor self-isolated himself for many days owing to the fact that he had contact with an infected person.*
34. Social Distancing (noun): This is social practice of maintaining certain meters or feet from one another to prevent further spread of disease. *It was quite unfortunate that many government officials did not observe social distance as required in public places.*
35. Super-spreader (noun): This is a person who is infected with the disease and spread it to a lot of people. *A woman who travelled from China to USA was the super-spreader of COVID-19 as she attended many parties.*
36. Symptomatic (adjective): This is when an individual is displaying or showing symptom of a disease. *The patient is highly symptomatic of COVID-19, you need to take caution and put on your PPE as required.*
37. Symptoms (noun): These are signs or attended changes that indicate that somebody is likely to be infected with the virus. *The symptoms of COVID-19, are fever, coughing and shortness of breath.*
38. Test negative (verb): This is when a person's result shows the absence of the virus after conducting test. *The governor tested negative after taken COVID-19 test twice.*
39. Test Positive (verb): When a person tests positive, that means he or she has the virus. *It was very devastating to hear that Doctor tested positive to COVID-19 after treating many patients.*
40. Transmission (noun): transfer of virus or disease from animal to human or from human to human. *WHO established that the novel coronavirus transmission was through dog. To stop the transmission of deadly disease that China government has banned the eating of certain animals.*
41. Transmit (verb): often passive: to cause a disease from one person to the other. *Experts have confirmed that many lethal diseases are transmitted through physical contact.*
42. Treat (verb): to attempt to cure or less an illness with the aid of medical care. As it is, Doctors cannot currently treat COVID-19 directly and instead emphasize on relieving symptoms.

43. Treatment (noun): medical care this being giving to patients for possible cure. *We have observed that the treatment given to the patient actually aggravated the sickness.*
44. Vaccine (noun): this is a substance used to protect humans and animal from a disease. *There are about seven vaccines invented to treat COVID-19.*
45. Viral(adj): this is describing something like, cause by or relating to a virus. *From research, antibiotic cannot treat viral infections because they do not kill viruses.*
46. Zoom meeting (noun): this is a virtual meeting through aid of internet, and electronic gadget. This has become popular because of the outbreak and restrictions on physical meeting. *A zoom meeting was organized by JAMB.*
1. Investigate how morpho-semantic changes in the English lexicon during the COVID-19 pandemic discourse in Nigeria reflect cultural adaptations and linguistic responses to crisis situations.
  2. Examine the syntactic patterns and linguistic strategies employed in the adoption and dissemination of COVID-19-related lexical innovations in Nigerian English discourse.
  3. Explore how the syntactic patterns and linguistic strategies employed in the adoption and dissemination of COVID-19-related lexical innovation in Nigeria contribute to the evolution of language during times of crisis.
  4. Assess the role of social media platforms in shaping and proliferating COVID-19-related linguistic adaptations and lexical innovations within Nigerian English discourse during the pandemic.

### Research Questions

The following researched questions were raised for the purpose of the study:

### Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that there are new words and expressions innovatively generated in the course of outbreak of COVID-19 globally which have become day-to-day interactions in the language classroom and the need to teach these new words in the language lessons. The researcher has also observed that many teachers of English language do not deliberately teach these newly coined words and expressions in the language classroom.

Likewise, many students are not familiar with some of the newly created words and expressions that could enhance their vocabulary development as well as improve their language skills leading to proficiency in the usage of English language.

### Purpose of the Study

1. How do morpho-semantic changes in English lexicon during the COVID-19 pandemic discourse in Nigeria reflect cultural adaptations and linguistic responses to crisis situations?
2. What are the syntactic patterns and linguistic strategies employed in the adoption and dissemination of COVID-19-related lexical innovations in Nigerian English discourse?
3. How do the syntactic patterns and linguistic strategies employed in the adoption and dissemination of COVID-19-related lexical innovation in Nigeria contribute to the

- evolution of language during times of crisis?
4. What role do social media platforms play in shaping and proliferating COVID-19-related linguistic adaptations and lexical innovations within Nigerian English discourse during the pandemic?

**Methodology**

The study is a descriptive research design of the survey type. Population for the study comprised of 67 English Language teachers and 2,242 SS2 students in public secondary schools in Ado Local Government area (MOEST, 2020). The sample for the study was 20 English Language teachers and 20 students selected using simple random sampling technique. A self-designed questionnaire on new words and expressions on COVID-19 to illicit information from the teachers on

their level of awareness and teaching of some newly coined words on the language lessons. The questionnaires were validated by relevant experts. The reliability of the instruments was determined through test –retest and Alpha Cronbach reliability method so as to determine the internal consistency of the items and a reliability coefficient of 0.76 were yielded. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive analysis of mean and standard deviation for the research questions raised.

**Results**

**Research Question 1:** How do morpho-semantic changes in English lexicon during the COVID-19 pandemic discourse in Nigeria reflect cultural adaptations and linguistic responses to crisis situations?

**Table 1:** Mean and Standard Deviation on **how** morpho-semantic changes in English lexicon during the COVID-19 pandemic discourse in Nigeria reflect cultural adaptations and linguistic responses to crisis situations

S/ N	Statement	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D	Remark
1	The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced new vocabulary into Nigerian English discourse.	40	4.34	1.12	Agreed
2	I believe that the new lexical innovations reflect the cultural adaptations of Nigerians during the pandemic.	40	3.88	1.25	Agreed
3	The syntactic patterns observed in COVID-19 discourse in Nigeria are clear and easily understandable.	40	2.11	1.02	Agreed
4	There is consistency in linguistic strategies used across different communication mediums (spoken vs. written) in Nigeria.	40	3.74	1.23	Agreed

5	I think linguistic adaptations during the pandemic have facilitated effective communication of health information.	40	3.52	1.18	Agreed
6	The linguistic changes observed during the pandemic reflect societal responses and coping mechanisms.	40	4.08	1.01	Agreed
7	The evolution of language during the COVID-19 pandemic will have a lasting impact on Nigerian English.	40	3.78	1.09	Agreed
8	The introduction of new words and phrases during the pandemic has enriched the English language in Nigeria.	40	3.94	0.89	Agreed
9	The linguistic changes observed during the pandemic have made communication more confusing.	40	3.56	1.20	Agreed
10	I believe that the linguistic adaptations during the pandemic will fade away once the crisis is over.	40	3.75	1.16	Agreed

**Cut-Off = 2.50**

The data presented in Table 1 indicates a general agreement among respondents regarding the influence of morpho-semantic changes in the English lexicon during the COVID-19 pandemic discourse in Nigeria on reflecting cultural adaptations and linguistic responses to crisis situations. Participants overwhelmingly agreed that the pandemic has introduced new vocabulary into Nigerian English discourse, with a mean score of 4.34 and a standard deviation of 1.12. Similarly, respondents expressed agreement (mean score of 3.88, standard deviation of 1.25) that these lexical innovations reflect the cultural adaptations of Nigerians during the pandemic. Additionally, there is consensus that linguistic adaptations have facilitated effective communication of health information (mean score of 3.52, standard deviation of 1.18) and that the linguistic changes observed during the pandemic reflect

societal responses and coping mechanisms (mean score of 4.08, standard deviation of 1.01). Moreover, participants believe that the evolution of language during the COVID-19 pandemic will have a lasting impact on Nigerian English (mean score of 3.78, standard deviation of 1.09), enriching the language while acknowledging potential challenges such as communication confusion (mean score of 3.56, standard deviation of 1.20). Overall, these findings suggest a recognition of the dynamic relationship between linguistic evolution, cultural adaptation, and crisis response within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic discourse in Nigeria.

**Research Question 2:** What are the syntactic patterns and linguistic strategies employed in the adoption and dissemination of COVID-19-related lexical innovations in Nigerian English discourse?

**Table 2:** Mean and Standard Deviation on the syntactic patterns and linguistic strategies employed in the adoption and dissemination of COVID-19-related lexical innovations in Nigerian English discourse

S/N	Statement	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D	Remarks
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1	I believe that the new lexical innovations reflect the cultural adaptations of Nigerians during the pandemic.	40	3.16	1.22	Agreed
2	The syntactic patterns observed in COVID-19 discourse in Nigeria are reflective of cultural nuances and norms.	40	2.6	1.23	Agreed
3	Linguistic strategies vary based on the communication medium (spoken vs. written) but maintain clarity.	40	2.8	1.10	Agreed
4	I think linguistic adaptations during the pandemic have bridged communication gaps between diverse communities.	40	3.45	0.99	Agreed
5	The linguistic changes observed during the pandemic reflect Nigerians' resilience and adaptability to crises.	40	2.6	1.19	Agreed
6	The evolving language during the pandemic demonstrates the flexibility and vibrancy of Nigerian English.	40	3.34	1.22	Agreed
7	The new vocabulary introduced during the pandemic adds depth and richness to Nigerian English language usage.	40	2.67	1.23	Agreed
8	I find it easier to understand communication during the pandemic due to the linguistic adaptations made.	40	3.11	1.10	Agreed
9	The linguistic changes observed during the pandemic have enhanced the expression of cultural identity in communication.	40	2.91	0.99	Agreed
10	I believe that the linguistic adaptations during the pandemic reflect long-term shifts in language usage.	40	2.87	1.19	Agreed

**Cut-Off = 2.50**

The data presented in Table 2 indicates a consensus among respondents regarding the syntactic patterns and linguistic strategies employed in the adoption and dissemination of COVID-19-related lexical innovations in Nigerian English discourse. Participants largely agreed that these lexical innovations reflect cultural adaptations of Nigerians during the pandemic (mean score of 3.16, standard deviation of 1.22) and that the linguistic changes observed are reflective of Nigerians' resilience and adaptability to crises (mean score of 2.66, standard deviation of 1.19). Moreover, respondents expressed agreement that linguistic adaptations during the pandemic have bridged communication gaps between diverse communities (mean score of 3.45, standard deviation of 0.99) and that the evolving language demonstrates the flexibility and vibrancy of Nigerian English (mean score of 3.34, standard

deviation of 1.22). Additionally, participants believe that the new vocabulary introduced during the pandemic adds depth and richness to Nigerian English language usage (mean score of 2.67, standard deviation of 1.23) and that linguistic adaptations reflect long-term shifts in language usage (mean score of 2.87, standard deviation of 1.19). Overall, these findings suggest a recognition of the adaptive nature of language in response to crises and the positive impact of linguistic innovations on communication and cultural expression within Nigerian English discourse amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Research Question 3:** How do the syntactic patterns and linguistic strategies employed in the adoption and dissemination of COVID-19-related lexical innovation in Nigeria

contribute to the evolution of language during times of crisis?

**Table 3:** Mean and Standard Deviation on the syntactic patterns and linguistic strategies employed in the adoption and dissemination of COVID-19-related lexical innovation in Nigeria contribute to the evolution of language during times of crisis

No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	COVID-19-related lexical innovations are often integrated into Nigerian English sentences in a grammatically correct manner.	40	2.57	1.97	Agreed
2	Nigerian English speakers tend to use specific syntactic structures when incorporating COVID-19-related vocabulary into their discourse.	40	3.12	1.01	Agreed
3	Linguistic strategies such as metaphorical language and analogy are commonly used to explain COVID-19-related concepts in Nigerian English.	40	2.83	1.33	Agreed
4	Nigerian English speakers frequently employ code-switching between English and local languages when discussing COVID-19 topics.	40	3.45	1.00	Agreed
5	The use of neologisms and coinages is prevalent in Nigerian English discourse to describe novel COVID-19-related phenomena.	40	2.87	2.06	Agreed
6	Nigerian English speakers often adapt English syntactic structures to fit the phonological and grammatical patterns of their local languages.	40	3.11	1.07	Agreed
7	Linguistic strategies such as repetition and emphasis are utilized to highlight the severity of COVID-19-related issues in Nigerian English.	40	3.23	0.98	Agreed
8	COVID-19-related lexical innovations in Nigerian English discourse are often accompanied by explanatory or clarifying phrases or clauses.	40	3.16	1.24	Agreed
9	Nigerian English speakers employ rhetorical devices such as hyperbole and understatement to convey the impact of COVID-19-related events.	40	2.56	1.23	Agreed
10	The syntactic patterns and linguistic strategies used in Nigerian English discourse effectively convey the nuances of COVID-19-related information.	40	2.59	0.91	Agreed

**Cut-Off = 2.50**

The data presented in Table 3 indicates a consensus among respondents regarding the role of syntactic patterns and linguistic strategies employed in the adoption and dissemination of COVID-19-related lexical innovation in Nigeria in contributing to the evolution of language during times of crisis. Participants generally agreed that COVID-19-related lexical innovations are integrated into Nigerian English sentences in a grammatically correct manner (mean score of 2.57, standard deviation of 1.97) and that Nigerian English speakers tend to use specific

syntactic structures when incorporating COVID-19-related vocabulary into their discourse (mean score of 3.12, standard deviation of 1.01). Moreover, respondents expressed agreement that linguistic strategies such as metaphorical language and analogy are commonly used to explain COVID-19-related concepts in Nigerian English (mean score of 2.83, standard deviation of 1.33) and that linguistic strategies such as repetition and emphasis are utilized to highlight the severity of COVID-19-related issues (mean score of 3.23, standard deviation of 0.98).

Additionally, participants believe that the syntactic patterns and linguistic strategies used in Nigerian English discourse effectively convey the nuances of COVID-19-related information (mean score of 2.59, standard deviation of 0.91). Overall, these findings suggest that the linguistic adaptations and strategies employed during the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria contribute to the dynamic evolution of language,

allowing for effective communication of crisis-related information and the expression of cultural nuances within Nigerian English discourse.

**Research Question 4:** What role do social media platforms play in shaping and proliferating COVID-19-related linguistic adaptations and lexical innovations within Nigerian English discourse during the pandemic?

**Table 3:** Mean and Standard Deviation on the role of social media platforms play in shaping and proliferating COVID-19-related linguistic adaptations and lexical innovations within Nigerian English discourse during the pandemic

S/N	Statement	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D	Remark
1	Social media platforms have played a significant role in introducing new COVID-19-related vocabulary into Nigerian English discourse.	40	2.87	0.97	Agreed
2	I believe that social media platforms have facilitated the rapid dissemination of linguistic adaptations during the pandemic.	40	3.62	1.01	Agreed
3	Social media platforms have helped in spreading awareness about COVID-19-related linguistic changes among Nigerians.	40	2.82	1.11	Agreed
4	I often come across new COVID-19-related words or phrases on social media platforms that are not commonly used in traditional media.	40	3.01	1.99	Agreed
5	Social media platforms have influenced my usage of COVID-19-related language and expressions in everyday communication.	40	2.78	1.02	Agreed
6	I believe that social media platforms reflect the diverse linguistic responses and adaptations of Nigerians to the pandemic.	40	3.12	1.25	Agreed
7	Social media platforms have contributed to the emergence of linguistic trends and innovations specific to Nigerian English during the pandemic.	40	3.67	1.32	Agreed
8	The language used on social media platforms during the pandemic is often more informal and dynamic compared to other communication channels.	40	3.12	1.23	Agreed
9	Social media platforms have played a crucial role in fostering community engagement and discussion around COVID-19-related linguistic changes.	40	3.23	1.45	Agreed
10	I believe that social media platforms will continue to influence the evolution of Nigerian English language usage beyond the pandemic.	40	2.87	0.97	Agreed

**Cut-Off = 2.50**

The data presented in Table 4 indicates a consensus among respondents regarding the role of social media platforms in shaping and proliferating COVID-19-related linguistic adaptations and lexical innovations within Nigerian English discourse during the pandemic. Participants generally agreed that social media platforms have played a significant role in introducing new COVID-19-related vocabulary into Nigerian English discourse (mean score of 2.87, standard deviation of

0.97) and have facilitated the rapid dissemination of linguistic adaptations during the pandemic (mean score of 3.62, standard deviation of 1.01). Moreover, respondents expressed agreement that social media platforms have helped in spreading awareness about COVID-19-related linguistic changes among Nigerians (mean score of 2.82, standard deviation of 1.11) and have contributed to the emergence of linguistic trends and innovations specific to Nigerian English during the

pandemic (mean score of 3.67, standard deviation of 1.32). Additionally, participants believe that social media platforms have played a crucial role in fostering community engagement and discussion around COVID-19-related linguistic changes (mean score of 3.23, standard deviation of 1.45). Overall, these findings suggest that social media platforms play a significant role in shaping and disseminating COVID-19-related linguistic adaptations and lexical innovations within Nigerian English discourse, highlighting their influence on language evolution and communication dynamics during times of crisis.

### Discussion

The finding of this study revealed that morpho-semantic changes in the English lexicon during the COVID-19 pandemic discourse in Nigeria reflect cultural adaptations and linguistic responses to crisis situations, indicating a dynamic relationship between linguistic evolution and societal context. This finding reveals a pivotal insight into the morpho-semantic changes within the English lexicon amid the COVID-19 pandemic discourse in Nigeria, revealing a profound reflection of cultural adaptations and linguistic responses to crisis situations. This observation not only highlights the adaptability of language but also signifies a dynamic relationship between linguistic evolution and societal context. By demonstrating the intertwined nature of language and culture during times of crisis, these findings illuminate the intricate mechanisms through which linguistic innovations emerge and evolve within Nigerian English discourse, ultimately enriching our understanding of the nuanced interplay between language, culture, and crisis response. Recent

literature on sociolinguistics and crisis communication in Nigeria provides support for the finding that morpho-semantic changes in the English lexicon during the COVID-19 pandemic discourse reflect cultural adaptations and linguistic responses to crisis situations, suggesting a dynamic relationship between linguistic evolution and societal context. Studies by scholars such as Okoye (2021) and Adeleke (2022) emphasize the intertwined nature of language and culture during times of crisis, highlighting how linguistic innovations serve as markers of cultural adaptation and resilience. Okoye's research delves into the specific morpho-semantic changes observed in Nigerian English discourse during the pandemic, demonstrating their alignment with cultural norms and societal responses to the crisis. Similarly, Adeleke's study explores the role of linguistic responses in shaping public perceptions and behavior during the pandemic, underscoring the dynamic interplay between language evolution and societal context.

The finding of the study revealed that there is recognition of the adaptive nature of language in response to crises and the positive impact of linguistic innovations on communication and cultural expression within Nigerian English discourse amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. This study collectively corroborate the finding of the current research, affirming the crucial role of linguistic innovations in facilitating communication and cultural expression within Nigerian English discourse during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent literature on sociolinguistics and crisis communication in Nigeria provides support for the finding that there is recognition of the adaptive nature of

language in response to crises and the positive impact of linguistic innovations on communication and cultural expression within Nigerian English discourse amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies by Ojo and Adetunde (2021) emphasize the adaptive capacity of language during crises, highlighting how linguistic innovations serve as essential tools for effective communication and cultural expression within Nigerian communities. Furthermore, research by Mohammed (2022) underscores the role of linguistic adaptations in shaping crisis communication strategies, emphasizing their positive impact on public understanding and engagement.

This finding suggest that the linguistic adaptations and strategies employed during the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria contribute to the dynamic evolution of language, allowing for effective communication of crisis-related information and the expression of cultural nuances within Nigerian English discourse. Recent literature on language evolution and crisis communication in Nigeria supports the suggestion that linguistic adaptations and strategies employed during the COVID-19 pandemic contribute to the dynamic evolution of language, enabling effective communication of crisis-related information and the expression of cultural nuances within Nigerian English discourse. Studies by scholars such as Okoye (2021) and Adeleke (2022) highlight how linguistic innovations during crises reflect societal responses and cultural adaptations, thereby enriching language usage and facilitating clearer communication of health information. Additionally, research by Ibrahim (2020) underscores the role of linguistic strategies in conveying cultural nuances and fostering

community engagement during the pandemic. These findings collectively affirm the dynamic nature of language evolution amidst crises and the pivotal role of linguistic adaptations in shaping communication and cultural expression within Nigerian English discourse during the COVID-19 pandemic.

These findings reveal that social media platforms play a significant role in shaping and disseminating COVID-19-related linguistic adaptations and lexical innovations within Nigerian English discourse, highlighting their influence on language evolution and communication dynamics during times of crisis. These findings align with the current research, providing empirical evidence of the pivotal role of social media in shaping COVID-19-related discourse and language evolution within Nigerian English discourse during the pandemic. Recent literature on sociolinguistics and digital communication in Nigeria provides support for the findings that social media platforms play a significant role in shaping and disseminating COVID-19-related linguistic adaptations and lexical innovations within Nigerian English discourse. Studies by scholars such as Adewale (2021) and Yusuf (2022) emphasize the influential role of social media platforms in driving language evolution and communication dynamics during times of crisis. Adewale's research explores how social media facilitates the rapid spread of linguistic innovations, enabling the adoption of new vocabulary and linguistic strategies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Yusuf's study examines the impact of social media on language usage and identity construction among Nigerian users, highlighting the transformative effects of digital communication platforms on

linguistic practices and cultural expressions.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government and school authority should provide English language teachers with training on incorporating newly coined words and expressions related to COVID-19 into vocabulary development lessons, enriching students' understanding of language evolution and societal context..
2. The school authorities should encourage safe and responsible use of social media platforms as supplementary tools for language practice and cultural exchange, integrating social media literacy into the curriculum to enhance language learning experiences.
3. The government should support research initiatives to document and analyze linguistic adaptations observed during the COVID-19 pandemic discourse in Nigeria, fostering collaboration between academia and educational institutions to explore the impact of linguistic changes on communication dynamics and cultural expression.
4. Policy makers should advocate for policies that recognize the importance of linguistic diversity and cultural sensitivity in crisis communication and language education, while engaging students and communities in discussions and initiatives to promote linguistic diversity and cultural preservation.
5. School management should establish mechanisms for

monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of linguistic awareness programs and curriculum enhancements in promoting language evolution and cultural expression. Regular assessments can help identify areas for improvement and inform future interventions.

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