
Original Research Article

Thematic Perspectives and Meta-Schematic Analysis of the Speeches of the Nigerian Minister for Health on the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: The composition of English speeches has become a more significant component of educational materials. Public speeches are particular genres that are varied according to the communicative goals of the speakers, which are accomplished by using various schematic structures. It has been discovered that speakers vary in how they organize the strategic elements of the speech macrostructure, superstructure and microstructure in their persuasive writing. The three required steps are predetermined for the speech writing's structural completeness, but there is a lot of room for creativity and flexibility in the steps. There is a distinction between deductive and inductive reasoning since cultural norms will always have an impact. Nonetheless, it has been demonstrated that the contrast between the two ways of thinking in various cultures is complementary. Therefore, it is suggested that mastering the sensitivity and aptitude to discern the communicative goals of particular genres, encouraging a speaker to use imagination in schematic structures, and challenging conventional teaching and learning methods of writing will be crucial for speech writing. This article is limited to institutionalized or formal situations and conditions in health-related speech delivered by the Minister of Health in Nigeria. This research, in consequence, is concerned with the study of discourse analysis in Text Analysis. This study analyses the transcription of the speech. The text analysis is based on Van Dijk's design, in which the unit elements of the analysis are divided into three parts: macro-structure, superstructure, and microstructure. The ones which have been analyzed in this paper are limited and focused only in Macrostructure (Thematic) and Superstructure (Schematic). The Nigerian health minister's addresses to the country during the COVID-19 pandemic are the source of the data for this paper. The two speeches that were chosen for analysis have the thematic and schematic structures analysed using the descriptive method of data analysis.

Keywords: Thematic, Schema, Move, Macrostructure, Superstructure

Introduction

Public speaking is a crucial method for transmitting information to a target audience, requiring a good command of English. However, it is a demanding and socially driven activity. Effective language is essential, and speakers must use schema principles to remove ambiguity. They aim to integrate the message into the audience's social environment, focusing on organizing complex speech materials into orderliness and rationality. Effective speech requires careful organization and arrangement of speech materials, ensuring their propositions are easy to accept and analytical, capturing listener's attention and interest.

Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) argue that comprehending genres is critical to the activities of relevant discourse communities. According to Bhatia (1997), authors who deviate from generic conventions have devastating consequences. This is because languages differ significantly in how discourse topics are selected and developed in terms of exemplification, definition, and so on (Kaplan, 1987). Naturally, various languages have varied preferences for specific types of conversation patterns. Many social and cultural elements impact how speakers prepare and communicate. Genres contain schematic structures, indicating their potential for rhetorical activity (Himley, 1986). Acquiring expertise in many genres requires understanding the most appropriate discourse patterns for the context and goal of communication.

Different genres have varying levels of mandatory and optional actions and phases in their schematic structure, which can be negotiated. Specific realizations may need speakers to use different communication actions and processes to build their major ideas. Moves should be clear in a sentence or collection of phrases, whether written or spoken. Moves serve a coherent communication goal within their environment. Schematic structure refers to how a genre is organized in stages and steps. In other words, genres are hierarchical schematic frameworks composed of movements and stages. Each level of the genre contributes a portion of the total meanings required for the genre to be completed effectively. It is clear that movements and steps are possible strategies for realizing communication goals in various discourses.

The term "move" refers to a defined and bounded communicative act with a specific purpose, which can be mandatory or optional. According to Bhatia (199), textual boundaries reveal cognitive structures and areas of inquiry. In a given discourse, all schematic structures must be organized around a central theme. According to Dudley Evans and St. John (1998), a move is a unit that relates to the writer's purpose and content, while a step is a lower text unit that provides a detailed perspective on the options available to the writer in setting out the moves. Genres should be identified based on communicative purposes and the expected effects of discourse participants.

According to Gowhary (2015), conducting CDA involves three stages: text analysis (description), processing analysis (interpretation), and social analysis (explanation).

Nonetheless, the primary focus of this paper will be on Van Dijk's text analysis design. Three sections make up the unit elements on text analysis: macrostructure, which analyzes the text thematically and topically. The second section is called the superstructure, and it is here that the text's sections and overall structure are planned. The third section is referred to as the microstructure and includes analysis of rhetoric, syntactic, stylistic, and semantic elements.

Research objectives

- i. To investigate the macrostructure of the minister's speeches
- ii. To analyse the superstructure of the speeches.
- iii. To examine the microstructure strategy used in the speeches.

Review of related literature

According to Van Dijk (2015) the unit elements on the text analysis are divided into three parts, namely macro structure, in which the text is analyzed thematically/topically. The second part is supra structure in which parts and order of the text are schemed in whole. Then the third part is called microstructure, consisting of sematic analysis.

Many scholars in various fields have used Van Dijk's, (1985) levels of structural analysis. For instance, Esfehiani, (2013) produced macrofiction by fusing macrostructure and microstructure. Zhang, Pan, and Zhang, (2014) carried out a superstructure-level contrastive analysis between VOA, BBC, and NPR. Al-Saaidi, (2016) looked at the discourse of incitement's macrostructure and microstructure in terms of lexicalization. Pratiwi & Refnaldi, (2018) investigated the macrostructure and superstructure in Indonesian presidents' speeches. The macrostructure and microstructure of football texts were examined by Olagunju, (2019).

The macrostructure and superstructure of the discourse on corruption in Indonesian newspapers were examined by Mardikantoro, (2020). Since its inception, COVID-19 has also been the focus of extensive research. During COVID-19, social interactions were studied. For instance, Mondada, (2020) looked at the social activity of paying during the pandemic, while Katila, Gan, and Goodwin, (2020) looked at social distancing among politicians. Abbas, (2020) demonstrated how the pandemic was used for political and ideological ends in the Chinese Global Times and the American New York Times newspapers using Van Dijk's news schematic analysis, and Prieto, (2020) talked about how the World Health Organization (WHO) and newspapers implied social and ideological beliefs when they named the disease.

Chen, (2020) tracked the development of the data set of the virus on Twitter as a social media platform. In addition, Recuero and Soares, (2020) tackled the disinformation of discourse when discussing COVID-19's cure on Twitter.

Van Dijk's Schematic Analysis

An analytical framework for examining news discourse was offered by Van Dijk, (1988). Three levels of structural analysis make up this framework: the "local structure"

level and two levels that are part of the "global structure." "Macrostructure" and "Superstructure" are the two tiers that make up the global structure. The discourse's topic or theme is the focus of the macrostructure, also known as the "thematic structure." Van Dijk, (1985) claimed that the three summarizing principles known as "macrorules"—"deletion," "generalization," and "re-(construction)"—is what gives this thematic structure its realization. He also added that the macrostructure is distinguished from the cognitive construction of background knowledge.

However, according to Van Dijk, (1988), the superstructure, or "schemata," is related to the norms and regulations that control how meaning is arranged in discourse. The "microstructure" addresses the sentential level of discourse analysis from various linguistic perspectives, such as semantic, syntactic, stylistic, rhetorical, etc., is another component of local structure.

Features of schematic structure

Van Dijk (1998) demonstrates that a text has three text dimensions: macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure. Macrostructure is utilized to communicate thoughts, facts, and explanations about events that occur. The two speeches selected will have the standards that match the following structure: introduction, body, and conclusion. The superstructure will include the background, details, intent, presuppositions, sentence form, pronouns (he, his, her, and we), while the microstructure encapsulate vocabulary, visuals, figures of speech, and proverbs are among the aspects of microstructure.

Macrostructure

Macrostructure is a discourse which can be observed by seeing the topic without analysing a word, a sentence, a proposition and a phrase. A text meaning can easily be inferred by seeing the topic. Therefore, the speaker must make the topic of the speech interesting as possible to ease understanding to the readers or listeners of the speech. Van Dijk defines topic as the macrostructure of a text. The topic gives a thematic projection of the text.

Superstructure

The superstructure is the sketch of discourse: how the structure and the elements are arranged on the text entirely. Schematic becomes the most important element and included into the superstructure. The schema describes the general form and structure of a text. The structures include the introduction, the content, the problem, the limitation and the conclusion.

Microstructure

Microstructure is a discourse which can be observed by analysing a word, a sentence, a proposition, and a paraphrase which are used in a text. Semantics, syntaxes, stylistics and rhetoric are included in the microstructure. Rhetoric answers the questions 'what' and 'how'.

Move

A move is an element of a spoken or written text that serves a specific function within the text. A move is the fundamental unit for analyzing the target text, as asserted by Swales. Mirador, (2000) provided the following conceptually developed definition, which was based on the genre analysis of tutors' written feedback to students: The logical strategy used by communicators in spoken or written discourse is called a move. A sentence's or a group of sentences' cohesive functional meaning in a written or spoken text is an example of this maneuver. Regarding its context, each sentence or group of sentences serves a single, overarching goal.

Research Method

This study employed a qualitative research technique. Qualitative research generates descriptive information from people's written or spoken words, as well as their activities (Mulyani, 2020). The data collecting method employed is content analysis. This research's data comes from two speeches given by Nigeria's minister of health. The researchers apply Teun van Dijk's discourse analysis technique, which focuses on the text's macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure.

Data presentation and analysis

Two speeches by the Nigerian minister of health were selected for the purpose of this study. In the table below are the title of the speeches and the date of the presentation. For the sake of clarity in the analysis of the paper, the speech title serial numbers will be referred to as serial number as text 1 and serial number two as text 2.

S/N	Title of the speech	Date of presentation
1	Speech presented by the minister of health Dr. Osagie Ehanire at the ministerial briefing on Covid-19 in Abuja	3rd April, 2020
2	A speech of the honourable minister of health, Dr. Osagie Ehanire at the presidential task force on covid-19 press briefing	28th April, 2020

Analysis of the macrostructure

According to Yanti, (2019), the macrostructure covers the themes or topics in a text. The themes or topics above are the macrostructure of the two speeches of selected for the purpose of this study. It is the macrostructure because from seeing the topics meaning of what the speech is going to be about can be inferred. Text 1 is

Speech presented by the minister of health Dr. Osagie Ehanire at the ministerial briefing on Covid-19 in Abuja

This shows that the speech was presented on the Covid-19 by the minister of health in Abuja Nigeria. The title of the second speech is similar to the first speech as can be seen below

A speech of the honourable minister of health, Dr. Osagie Ehanire at the presidential task force on covid-19 press briefing

The only difference between the titles is the date the presentation. However, it is easily deducible that minister in both addresses was talking about the Covid-19.

Analysis of the superstructure

Superstructure is the examination of a text within the framework of schema, such as the powers of dominating speech or writing, which begin with the opening, content, and closing sections. According to Mita (2024), each report begins with a title that serves as a synopsis. The lead part introduces the subject and serves as a reference for the reader as they progress through the main discourse.

Text 1 is divided into twelve short paragraphs. Some of the paragraphs are made up of just a sentence. The use of short paragraphs was adopted for sake brevity and being concise. The first three paragraphs of text constitute the opening/introduction of the speech because the paragraphs highlight the background information of the figures and statistics of the spread of Covid-19 in Nigeria and other parts of the world as can be seen in the excerpt below from text 1.

The global number of COVID-19 cases has crossed the one million mark, just 3 months after the outbreak was first reported in Wuhan, China. It is an indication that it is a public health challenge we must not take lightly.

Here in Nigeria, we have recorded 10 new COVID-19 cases over the past 24 hours, so that cumulatively, as of the 3rd of April, we have 190 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Nigeria across 12 states and the FCT, 2 fatalities and 20 cases discharged from treatment. Lagos has 98 patients, FCT 48, Osun 20, Oyo 8, Akwa Ibom 5, Edo, Kaduna and Ogun, 4 each, Bauchi 3, Enugu and Ekiti 2 each, while Rivers and Benue have 1 each.

We are already seeing what may be indications of sustained community transmission in the sense that 30% of the cases have incomplete epidemiological information, while 51% are imported cases and 19% are contacts of known cases. We are using the small window of opportunity remaining to intensify investigations to identify cases and their sources.

Similarly, text 2 has about 12 paragraphs; in text 2 the first paragraph of the speech gives the background information of the speech as is seen below

As of today, 28th April, 2020, 1,337 people have been confirmed to have COVID-19. The 64 new confirmations are distributed as follows: 34 in Lagos, 15 in FCT, 11 in Borno and 2 each in Gombe and Taraba. 255 persons have been successfully treated for COVID-19 and discharged, and

sadly, 40 deaths have been recorded. The concern at these figures is understandable as stronger signs of community transmission, but it is not altogether unexpected. The highly propagated social measures like distancing and postponement of non-essential travel have had only limited success; they must therefore also be a reminder that we need to reduce our efforts to comply with advisories.

In line with the superstructure schematic outline, the content of the text comes up after the background or introduction in a speech or a text. In text 1 the minister explains the reason for a lockdown. The content in text 1 are in paragraph 4 as is in the excerpt below

This is one of the purposes for which the lockdown of 2 States and the FCT was proclaimed by the President. These areas, especially Lagos as primary epicenter, but also other parts of the Federation, need to speed up their activities to detect and isolate COVID-19 patients I shall do everything to support this process. During and following the lockdown, we expect to see an increase in cases, as a measure of improvement in case finding. If social distancing and other measures are adhered to, the incidence of positives cases can be better controlled.

The content of text 2 is paragraph three of the minister's speech as is below

There is national concern about the sharp increase of COVID-19 positive cases in Kano concentrated in 7 municipal Council areas and also about certain so-called "unexplained" deaths. The authorities have explained that the latter were not out of the ordinary. His Excellency the Governor of Kano is well known for his interest in health and has agreed to receive a high-powered 9-man delegation sent to Kano by the FMoH on a fact-finding mission and to offer support to the COVID-19 response in Kano. The multidisciplinary technical experts will assess the needs and the design for on-site capacity building for State teams and advise on the state response and preparedness plan. Ambulances are also to be deployed urgently to Kano to support the State on provision of emergency patient transport services, as the State is on lockdown.

In the same vein the content of a text expresses solutions to problems in writing a text, especially if the text follows the problem solution pattern. Paragraphs 5 and 6 of text 1 contains the solution to the problem of the moment

We have tested nearly 3,000 samples so far in Nigeria, and are working to scale up our capacity in a targeted approach.

The Coronavirus Treatment Center Accreditation Committee was inaugurated yesterday by the Hon. Minister of State for Health and has begun developing an accreditation checklist, as well as a protocol for

management of isolation centres. We are compiling a list of trained health workers to man Centres as they become operational.

In the same vein the content of a text expresses solutions to problems in writing a text, especially if the text follows the problem solution pattern. Paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 of text 2 contains the solution to the problem of the moment

The Ministry of Health has set up a Ministerial expert advisory committee, made up of eminent Nigerian virologists, public health experts, Infectious disease and diagnostic experts and others, to study the evolution and development of the COVID-19 outbreak and the responses in Nigeria and advise on the national strategy and action plan, using lessons learned as we go along, and those learned from strategies in place across the globe. This will help us to identify and adopt the promising strategies and align our plans with best advisories and practices.

The announcement of new measures for non-pharmacological intervention by Mr. President, will allow FMOH additional time for contact tracing and testing. We implore citizens to wear face masks or face coverings at all times when leaving their homes, as required for individual and public safety.

Advisories have also been issued for staying protected during this Ramadan season, as risk communications has also been intensified by airing jingles in local languages on physical distancing and stigmatisation across all states.

The last segment of the superstructure schema is the closing of a speech or text.

Analysis of microstructure

Microstructures have to do with the local structure of words, clauses, sentences or turns in conversations. Texts are usually structured both locally (connection between clauses and sentences) and globally (connecting larger fragments of discourse such as paragraphs). The microstructure can also be realised through the syntactic rules, the meaning of the words in sentences etc.

Conclusion

In-text structuring of the schema, descriptions of routine events (e.g., scripts) and associated information (e.g., plans, likes, dislikes, capacities, and possibilities) exemplify affiliation to the macrostructure. Texts 1 and 2 adhere to the macrostructure principles in order. Additionally, it was shown that both ordinarily developing and hearing-impaired children responded appropriately to event sequencing. The bulk of the events were found to be arranged mostly in the order that they occurred.

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