

Review of: "African languages and COVID-19: Translations and interpretations of COVID-19 information in rural communities in Igbo land, Nigeria"

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This article makes a much-needed attempt to understand multilingual crisis risk communication in a less well-documented context. It offers fascinating evidence for the diversity and creativity of folk speech improvised in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The manuscript is well written and easy to follow. This reviewer appreciates the authors' efforts to conduct this study and the insights it offers. For further improvement of the manuscript, three issues are raised for the authors to consider.

1. Most of the works reviewed in the Introduction and "Contextualizing the study" sections are situated in the local context. It would build a better grounding for the study if more observations and discussions reported from other contexts could be included. For instance, the 2020 special issue "Linguistic diversity in a time of crisis: Language challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic" in *Multilingua* includes cases from across the globe where pandemic-evoked language concerns were raised and addressed in various ways. It would also help researchers working from and on contexts other than Africa relate to the observations and make meaningful comparisons.

2. In the discussion headed "Igbo language translations and interpretations of Covid-19: Misinformation?" the authors seemed to remain suspicious as to whether the knowledge or information 'gaps' revealed in the local parlance should be read as evidence for misinformation. Yet, there were places where the authors uttered a more assertive voice (e.g., "There is misinformation in the Igbo translations and interpretations of COVID-19 information."). As such, the informants' responses regarding their perceptions of the virus were interpreted as resulting from misinformation. In a conclusive statement, the author noted, "The ideological shades of translation bred misconceptions and misinformation that run contrary to scientific facts about COVID-19 and may inform understanding of the Covid-19 as well as the behavioural response among the communities, particularly the safety measures." It is confusing how this conclusion could be drawn from the qualitative findings presented in the excerpts. The quoted informants mentioned their (mis)understandings of the virus, and their observations were primarily based on individuals' lived experiences. One may interpret the linguistic evidence as revealing for the misconceptions and misinformation on the informants' part. Yet, it may need extra work to prove that the misconceptions and misinformation can be attributed to the ideological shades of translation.

3. The title of the manuscript indicates the diversity of the African languages, Igbo being one of the significant languages spoken in the area. Being a non-speaker of the African language, this reviewer wonders whether there are intra-linguistic

variances, e.g., dialectal differences, within the Igbo language, which has been described in the linguistic literature as a complex member of the Niger-Congo language family. Since the data source covered several rural communities, were there any interesting differences between communities where the same message was rendered subtly differently due to dialectal differences? Could these differences play a role in affecting the community members' perceptions and actions? A finer-grained analysis may offer a more nuanced understanding of the situation and a better appreciation of the language.