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DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES IN THE RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE OF SELECTED NATIVE DOCTORS FROM ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examines the discursive strategies of deception in the online religious discourse of selected native doctors from Anambra State Nigeria on Facebook and YouTube. The study focuses on how language is used to construct authority, influence audiences, and sustain patronage within the digital religious economy. Specifically, it investigates four manifestations of deceptive discourse: exaggerated claims of supernatural influence, fabricated testimonial narratives, selective highlighting of positive outcomes, and fear- inducing rhetoric. The study adopts Fairclough's Dialectical- Relational Approach (DRA) to Critical Discourse Analysis, complemented by Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and van Dijk's concepts of ideology and social cognition. A qualitative research design was employed, and data were drawn from eight purposively selected recorded video excerpts involving four prominent online native doctors from Anambra State, Nigeria. Through textual, discursive, and social analysis, the study reveals that the practitioners strategically deploy transitivity, modality, appraisal resources, metaphor, imperatives, and performative declarations to construct spiritual authority and persuade audiences. The findings further show that social media platforms enhance the visibility, accessibility,

popularity and commercialisation of these religious performances by enabling direct interaction with followers and potential clients. The study concludes that deceptive discourse in digital native doctor practices is sustained through linguistic manipulation, cultural symbolism, and fear- based persuasion, which collectively reinforce dependence on spiritual practitioners for economic, social, and personal solutions. The study contributes to scholarship on religious discourse, digital spirituality, and the intersection of language, ideology, and power in contemporary Nigerian society.

Keywords: Discursive, Ideology, Deception, Persuasion, Rhetoric

Introduction

Discursive strategies are the linguistic and rhetorical techniques through which speakers or writers construct meaning, negotiate social relations, and achieve communicative objectives. These deliberate language choices shape audience perceptions and attitudes. Hence, discursive strategies of deception are language- based techniques used to mislead, manipulate, exaggerate, persuade and conceal information in order to influence the beliefs and actions of an audience. This manifest as authority construction, exaggeration, false certainty, testimonial narratives fear appeals, positive self- presentation and negative other presentation, use of emotional manipulation etc.

The development of online communication technologies has greatly influenced how religious activities are conducted in contemporary society. Social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram now serve as spaces where religious leaders and spiritual practitioners interact with audiences, advertise services, and share beliefs with large audiences. In Nigeria, many native doctors have also embraced these online platforms to promote spiritual consultations, rituals practices, healing, and other traditional religious services. The growing presence of online religious culture reflects the increasing connection between spirituality and communication.

Traditionally, native doctors in Anambra State, Nigeria occupied important positions within indigenous religious systems as healers, diviners, and custodians of cultural knowledge. Their activities were mainly limited to local communities and face- to- face interactions. However, the presence of social media platforms has extended their reach, allowing them to communicate with audiences from different parts of countries and across Nigeria. Through online videos, live broadcasts, testimonies, and ritual displays, many online native doctors present themselves as capable of addressing challenges relating to business, health, relationships, protection, and personal success.

However, as the visibility of online native doctors continues to increase, scholars and observers have shown growing interest in the language and communication strategies used in their online content. Some online traditional practitioners flaunt wealth, use persuasive expressions, symbolic titles, emotional appeals, and dramatic demonstrations to attract attention and sustain audience engagement. In many cases, such discourse emphasises supernatural ability, promises of success, protection from enemies, or solutions to personal problems. Language, therefore becomes a significant tool in the construction of spiritual authority and influence. Through metaphors, modality, imperatives, appraisal expressions, and cultural references, online native doctors construct identities that project confidence, power, and legitimacy. These linguistic and discursive strategies play important roles in shaping audience worldview and building the credibility of traditional practitioners online. Their discourse often combines traditional beliefs with modern media practices, making their messages more accessible and appealing to online audiences. Consequently, examining the discursive strategies of these discourses can provide insight into how persuasion and deception are achieved within contemporary online religious communication.

This study aims to investigate the discursive strategies of deception employed in the religious discourse of selected online native doctors from Anambra State, Nigeria on Facebook and YouTube. The study focuses on discursive strategies such as exaggerated claims of

supernatural influence, testimonials, selective emphasis on positive outcomes, and fear- related rhetoric. Adopting Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics and Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, particularly the dialectical- relational approach, as well as van Dijk's socio- cognitive approach, the study examines the role of language in online religious space and how discourse reflects broader issues of authority, persuasion, and social practice in contemporary Nigerian society. This research contributes to the field of discourse analysis by extending research on language use in spiritual and traditional contexts. It also provides insights into how language functions as a tool of persuasion and deception in Nigerian religious space. Again, this study will be valuable to sociolinguists, discourse analysts, and cultural researchers interested in the intersection between language, belief, and power.

Concept of Religious Discourse

Religious discourse refers to the use of language in expressing religious beliefs, practices, values, and spiritual experiences. According to Fairclough (1995), discourse is a form of social practice through which power, ideology, and social relations are constructed and maintained in religious settings. Discourse functions not only to communicate beliefs but also to establish authority and influence followers. Similarly, van Dijk (2008) explains that discourse shapes social cognition by influencing how individuals perceive reality, authority, and social relations. Religious discourse, therefore, plays a major role in shaping belief systems and behavioural patterns within society. In another perspective, Halliday (1978) argues that language is a social semiotic resource used to create meaning within context. This suggests that religious language is carefully structured to achieve interpersonal, ideational, and textual purposes. Also, Halliday and Hassan (1985) maintain that language reflects cultural and social functions, making religious discourse an important means of transmitting ideology and communal values.

Online Religion and Social Media in Nigeria

Nigeria's religious landscape is diverse, encompassing Christianity, Islam and Traditional Religions. The religious activities encompass a wide range of rituals and practices, such as daily worship, private prayer, festivals and rites of passage. In Christendom, Chiluwa (2012) submits that they construct their websites within a structure that combines both elements of interactive forum and non-interactive presentation of church programmes and activities. The latter comprises normal church services, sermons and other leadership-based functions like 'anointing services', 'healing school' or 'communion services' (p. 736). All of these make up what is known as 'Internet spiritual worship' in Nigeria. These activities, as Chiluwa (2012) argues, are intended to ensure that virtual participation meets the spiritual needs of worshippers. Hence, online worship easily supplements real -life church attendance.

In contemporary studies, Campbell and Vitullo (2016) indeed show that religious institutions have always been among the first to adopt Internet technologies, from online resources like digitally recorded sermons and video footage replacing tape and CD- based sermon series to video conferencing; the use of several websites, churches stream services to wider, disparate, and diasporic communities. According to Thumma and Travis (2007) almost all mega churches in America, maintain a website about their church, particularly those founded by young ministers. Highlighting religious activities online, Campbell (2012) suggests the creation of; websites, blogs, forums, social network sites, virtual worlds and online evangelism, while Cheong (2014, pp.11-12) underpins "outreach and community building efforts including media campaigns intended to address certain controversial issues or spread particular messages". Campbell (2013, p.2) avers that "a great deal of digital religion involves the ethnographic study of religious activities online" which he highlights as an important landmark. But in his early study, Campbell (2006, pp. 4-6) identifies more encompassing forms of online religious activities such as: (i) religious information online, (ii) worship in cyber

churches/ online rituals (such as e-prayer and virtual pilgrimages), (iii) online missionary activities, and (iv) religious online communities.

Through social media platforms, religious leaders and practitioners can now reach wider audiences and maintain virtual religious communities. Likewise, Hoover (2006) argues that media technologies have significantly reshaped religious practices and authority structures in contemporary society. Furthermore, Helland (2005) distinguishes between 'religion online' and 'online religion', noting that digital platforms not only present religious information but also facilitate active participation and interaction. In the African context, Adogame (2010) observes that African religious movements increasingly utilize digital technologies to expand influence, attract followers, and commercialize spiritual activities beyond local communities.

Studies on Native Doctors and Online Spirituality

In African Traditional Religion, native doctors have shown that traditional religious practices can also adapt to changing social and technological environments. Mbiti (1989) explains that this religion is closely linked to everyday life, cultural values, and communal identity**.** This perspective highlights the important role of native doctors as intermediaries between the spiritual and physical realms. In the same way, Idowu (1973) argues that African Traditional Religion is maintained through ritual practices, symbols, oral traditions, and belief in supernatural forces.

More recent studies have drawn attention to the digital transformation of religious practices. Campbell (2010) notes that currently, online platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram have provided religious practitioners with great opportunities to develop new forms of authority and engage wider audiences. Even in the Nigerian context, Ukah (2008) notes that online spiritual figures largely depend on social media performances, testimonies, and visual presentations to attract large followers and to maintain relevance. Despite the contributions of scholars such as

Obadare (2018) and Ukah (2008) who have examined issues relating to online religion and the media in Nigeria, limited scholarly attention has been given to the deceptive discursive strategies employed by online native doctors from Anambra State, Nigeria, using the integration of Systemic Functional Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis. Most existing studies focus on Pentecostal Christianity, media evangelism, or African Traditional Religion, with little emphasis on how native doctors strategically use language on platforms such as Facebook and YouTube. This presents a gap in the literature that the present study seeks to address.

Theoretical Framework

This research adopted Critical Discourse Analysis, specifically Norman Fairclough's (1995) Dialectical- Relational Approach (DRA), van Dijk's Socio- Cognitive approach and Halliday's (1978) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Fairclough's (1995) dialectical-relational approach captures how language interacts with society, power, ideology, and social structures. This approach is commonly analysed through three levels; text analysis (description), discursive practice (interpretation) and social practice (explanation). The textual analysis focuses on linguistic features, discursive practice examines how texts are produced and consumed; while social practice investigates broader ideological contexts. Van Dijk's social cognition and ideology further explain how native doctor discourse captures in-group and out- group relations and influences audience beliefs, ideologies, and mental models. Halliday's SFL will analyse how spiritual authority, persuasion, and ideology are linguistically constructed. Hence, through choices of transitivity, practitioners can present themselves as powerful agents capable of influencing people and events. In addition, modality and appraisal resources allow speakers to express certainty, obligation, and emotional evaluation, thereby influencing audience views and trust. Halliday's (SFL) also presents language through three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings. In this study, the ideational focuses on how language represents experience and reality

through transitivity structures; the interpersonal examines relationships and interaction between speakers and audiences; and the textual metafunction explores how information is organised coherently within discourse**.**

This study brings these two frameworks together. While CDA focuses on revealing hidden power structures and ideological manipulation in native doctor discourse, SFL provides a linguistic framework for analysing how meanings is constructed. This integration therefore, enables a comprehensive investigation of deceptive strategies, showing how language is strategically used to influence belief and construct religious authority.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design by employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly Norman Fairclough's dialectional- relational model and van Dijk's social cognitive approach to examine the discursive strategies used in the online religious discourse of selected native doctors in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study also integrates Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics to provide the linguistic foundation for the analysis of their discourse.

Data Collection

Data were collected from social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube pages of the online native doctors under study. Eight recorded online videos from YouTube and Facebook featuring the selected four online traditional practitioners from Anambra State, Nigeria were watched, downloaded, transcribed, translated and analysed using CDA and SFL as analytical tools. The data selection was purposive based on visibility, location, and net worth.

Analytical Framework

The study applies content analysis, CDA and SFL to analyse online religious discourse of the selected native doctors under study.

Ethical Considerations

User anonymity was maintained, and content was analysed within the framework of Nigeria's Cybercrimes Act, ensuring compliance with ethical standards on digital discourse research.

The Case Studies

S/n	Name	Nick name	Networth	Location
1.	Onyebuchi Okocha	Onyeze Jesus	Three hundred million naira	Nkpor, Idemili north, Anambra State
2.	Ugochukwu Nnajiofor	Man Pass Man	Nine hundred million	Orifite in Anambra State
3.	Ibubu Oba,	Double Transformer	Two billion naira	Oba in Anambra State
4.	Ikenna Nwaeyi	Alusi Egwuruegwu 1 na Okija	Four billion naira	Okija in Anambra State

Data Presentation and Analysis of Discourse Samples

Case Study 1: Case Study Presentation: Chris Global Media. Onyeze Jesus said that he needs a private jet

> Excerpt 1:
> Onyeze Jesus: This private jet others are flying, we will have it this year. There is division of labour. I just want to show you people money that my clients came with. Two persons brought these for their tithe. If you are not happy, go and bury yourself. My mission is to give men the power to make wealth.

Textually, the speaker employs assertive and declarative expressions such as 'we will have it this year', 'I just want to show you', and 'my mission is to give men the power to make wealth', which project certainty, confidence, and authority. The repeated use of the first-person pronoun 'I' foregrounds the speaker's personal agency and leadership, while references to 'private jet', 'money', and 'tithe' create a semantic field of wealth and material success. The dismissive imperative 'go and bury yourself ' further establishes dominance by rejecting

opposing opinions and positioning the speaker above criticism. At the **discursive practice level,** the discourse is constructed as a motivational and persuasive message directed at followers, using visible displays of wealth and testimonies of clients' financial contributions to reinforce the speaker's credibility and attract audience trust. The reference to clients bringing money as tithe functions as evidence intended to legitimise the speaker's spiritual and financial claims. **Socially,** the discourse reflects the growing commercialisation of religion and online religious entrepreneurship, where material prosperity is presented as evidence of spiritual authority and divine favour. It also reproduces an ideology that links faithfulness and financial giving with wealth acquisition, thereby reinforcing the speaker's institutional power while encouraging followers to perceive prosperity as both a spiritual aspiration and a measure of religious success. This discourse therefore illustrates how language is strategically employed to construct authority, legitimise wealth, and sustain religious influence within contemporary religious practice.

Case Study Presentation: Onyeze Jesus. I still remain Onyeze Jesus A.K.A Aka na Asa Ucha Worldwide. The father of all men

> Excerpt 2:
> Onyeze Jesus: There is something I want to tell you; No matter how stubborn any full- fledged man is, there is a certain amount of money you show him that will claim him down. Money answereth all. Go and look for money.

Textually, the speaker employs declarative and authoritative statements such as 'Money answereth all' and the imperative 'Go and look for money', which present wealth as the ultimate solution to life's challenges. The opening expression, 'There is something I want to tell you ', functions as an attention –grabbing device that establishes the speaker's authority and prepares the audience to receive the message as valuable guidance. The hyperbolic claim that even 'the most stubborn man' can be persuaded by money reinforces the discourse of material

power, while the biblical- style expression 'Money answereth all' borrows religious language to lend the message greater credibility and persuasive force.

Discursively, the discourse is structured as motivational instruction aimed to influence the audience's beliefs about success and social relationships. By presenting wealth as the key to resolving conflicts and achieving influence, the speaker constructs a persuasive narrative that encourages listeners to prioritise financial acquisition.

Socially, the discourse reflects the ideology of materialism that increasingly characterises contemporary religious entrepreneurship, in which economic success is portrayed as the primary indicator of power, fulfilment, and social acceptance. It also illustrates how religious language is blended with entrepreneurial values to legitimise the pursuit of wealth, reinforcing the belief that financial prosperity is both desirable and essential for personal and social advancement. This discourse therefore demonstrates the close relationship between language, ideology, and power in shaping follower's perceptions of wealth and success.

Case Study 2: (Ugochukwu Nnajiofor, A.K.A Man Pass Man) Man Pass Man's Admonition to his Fans

> Excerpt 3 …A lazy man cannot light firewood with a palm kennel in his mouth. It is Man Pass Man, the light that gives light in Oriefite talking, the spirit that cures. Whatever you are doing in this life, be courageous; do not be scared, otherwise your enemies will defeat you. Never get scared in whatever you are doing. Be strong and courageous in life.

Textually, the excerpt combines exaggerated claims with fear-inducing rhetoric through the proverb 'A lazy man cannot light firewood with a palm kernel in his mouth'**,** which contrasts human limitation with supernatural power, and through the apposition 'It is Man Pass Man…the spirit that cures' presents the speaker as connected to a force that goes beyond normal human ability. The conditional 'do not be scared otherwise your enemies will defeat you' and repeated

imperatives 'be courageous, Never get scared' construct fear and the need for courage.

Discursively, the use of the title 'Man Pass Man' and the undefined enemies allow the audience to map personal fears onto the message.

Socially, the discourse constructs the speaker as possessing power beyond human capacity, creates a sense of ongoing spiritual danger, and positions the audience as needing the speaker's protection and directives.

Egbeigwe at Man Pass Man's Rehabilitation Home

Excerpt 4:

> Egbeigwe: We are at Man Pass man's rehab centre. He does not play in Igbo land. He rehabilitates madness got from drugs or smoking. He is Man Pass Man of Orifite, the light that gives light, seeing is believing, the snake that swallowed others. Anybody I identify with must be somebody that is very genuine because he tells the truth. Man Pass Man, please can you introduce yourself? Man Pass man: My people, use my voice to identify me. I am the three horn. I cure mad people and help businesses to flourish if god permits. I do not even have clients as much as my father. I tell you the ones I can cure but the ones I cannot, I will tell you to try elsewhere...

Textually, the excerpt relies on Systemic Functional Linguistics resources to construct identity and services. Material processes such as 'rehabilitates madness, I cure mad people'**,** and 'help businesses to flourish' foreground the practical work of the speaker, while the conditional adjunct 'If god permits' softens the claim and introduces a sense of limitation. The text realises exaggerated claims and selective highlighting of positive outcomes through apposition and metaphorical identifying processes like 'the light that gives light and the snake that swallowed others' function as nominal groups that give the speaker a distinctive, powerful persona, and the direct address 'my people' establishes an inclusive interpersonal tone.

Discursively, the text appears as self- introduction within an interview-style segment, likely shared on a video platform, given the YouTube link. The question 'please can you introduce yourself?' prompts a personal narrative, and the speaker's reply blends self-branding with a disclaimer about boundaries, which is typical of digital -native doctor content that seeks to build rapport while managing audience expectations.

Socially, the text presents spiritual healing as visible and easy to access online. By talking about both what is possible and what is not, the speaker comes across as balanced and trustworthy. This kind of approach speaks to people's concerns about whether someone is genuine and legitimate, helping the speaker stay credible and relatable in the online space where those qualities really matter.

Man Pass Man's Political Prophecy on February 19th before the Presidential Election 2023.

Excerpt 5:

Man Pass Man: I say that Nigeria is pregnant and about to deliver. I decree that she shall deliver a good child not a bad one.

Audience: Iseeee!

Man Pass man: What I am asking god is that this leader we want, he will win but they will give it to another person. You people need to be prayerful. Our candidate will win but they will rig the election. He won but they gave the vote to the opponent. Everybody should be prayerful so that it will not come to pass. Everybody should also prepare because they have already rigged the election in favour of the lunatic opponent. They have already concluded the whole election.

Textually, the excerpt showcases exaggerated claims and fear-inducing rhetoric through the metaphor 'Nigeria is pregnant and about to deliver' and a relational process, which frames the election as a natural, inevitable event, while the performative high- modality clause 'I decree that she shall deliver a good child' frames the election as under spiritual control. The adversative structure 'he will win but they will give

it to another person' and the perfect aspect 'They have already concluded the whole election' construct a threat of manipulation as inevitable. The material processes like 'will rig, gave the vote, have already rigged' construct a contrast between the people's preferred candidate and an unnamed 'they' who manipulate the process. The imperative mood in 'you people need to be prayerful and everybody should be prayerful' shifts the text from description to directive urging the audience to act.

Discursively, the excerpt functions as a live- streamed prophecy that invites audience participation, as evidenced by the audience response 'Iseeee!' The speaker blends spiritual authority with commentary on a current political event, using a Facebook link to anchor the discourse in a digitally interactive context. The shift from prophecy to warning about rigging serves to maintain engagement and justify continued prayer and attention to the speaker. This style- blending religious talk with commentary on everyday issues - is typical of digital native doctor content that touches on both spiritual and social matters.

Socially, the text reflects a worldview in which spiritual actions can shape politics. By saying they can help deliver a good child and claiming the election has already been decided for one side, the speaker presents himself as a link between the spiritual and political worlds. This makes the audience feel they need to rely on the speaker's prayers and take prayerful action to prevent manipulation. In doing so, the excerpt helps make digital -native doctors appear more legitimate in public discussions and supports the idea that spiritual authority can carry more weight than formal institutions.

Case Study 3: (Ibubu Oba, Double Transformer A.K. A 2.2 billion kg) cooking yam without water

Excerpt 6: I said that I will surprise everyone today. I will cook this yam without water and anyone that eats that yam will start making money in his business.

The excerpt presents a statement by a digital- native doctor about cooking yam without water to bring financial success to those who eat it. **Textually,** Systemic Functional Linguistics resources are used to construct the speaker's authority and the extraordinary nature of the act. The declarative clauses 'I said that I will surprise everyone today' and **'**I will cook this yam without water' use material processes that present the speaker as agentive and capable of defying ordinary practice. The conditional clause 'anyone that eats that yam will start making money in his business' employs a relational process to link consumption of yam with economic outcome, creating a cause- effect relationship that positions the act as transformative.

Discursively, the text operates as promotional content within a YouTube video. The statement is framed as a surprise and demonstration, a common strategy in online native doctor discourse to capture attention and encourage viewing and engagement. The direct first-person narration positions the speaker as both the performer and the guarantor of the outcome, while the promise of business success addresses a practical concern for the audience. The genre blends demonstration, testimony, and advertising, which is typical of content aimed at building credibility and attracting clients online. **Socially,** the excerpt presents spiritual practices as a means of addressing everyday practical problems. The example of cooking yam without water is used to illustrate what is described as an unusual or supernatural power. By linking eating the yam to financial success, the speaker is positioned as someone who can help open up economic opportunities through spiritual means.

Case Study 4: Ikenna Nwaeyi, A.K.A Alusi Egwuruegwu 1 na Okija, performing a ritual for a Client

Excerpt 7:

Alusi Okija: Today, the person we are performing this ritual for, so long as an eagle does not sleep, the charm will never rest. That you will remain active in Eke, Orie, Afo and Nkwo.

Client:	Iseeee!
Alusi Okija:	Anyone who blesses the owner of this charm will be blessed but anyone who wants to bring problem either at his business or office through witchcraft will meet his end.
Client:	Iseeee!

Textually, Systemic Functional Linguistics resources are used to construct the charm's potency and the client's expected outcomes. The conditional simile 'so long as an eagle does not sleep, the charm will never rest' uses a relational process to link natural permanence with the charm's continuous action, while the declarative 'That you will remain active in Eke, Orie, Afo and Nkwo' employs material process to remain active and promise ongoing functionality across Igbo market days. The second turn uses a binary conditional structure. 'Anyone who blesses the owner... will be blessed but anyone who wants to bring problem...will meet his end'. This contrast between blessing and consequence uses material processes 'bless, bring problem, meet his end' to establish protection and deterrence. The repeated client response 'Iseeee!' functions as a verbal affirmation that validates the ritual.

Discursively, the text operates as a documented segment of a live ritual, likely shared online to demonstrate the practitioner's authority and the efficacy of the service. The practitioner speaks in a performative, authoritative voice, while the client's interjections show participation and acceptance. The use of culturally specific market days Eke, Orie, Afo, and Nkwo grounds the discourse in local context, making the promise of activity tangible for the audience. The genre blends prayer, declaration, and warning, which is typical of digital religious content aimed at showcasing spiritual services and building client trust.

Socially, the excerpt reinforces the role of the native doctors as protectors and enables of business activity within a community context. Here, there is a manifestation of exaggerated claims of supernatural

influence in 'I cure mad people, or the charm will never rest', as the speaker presents himself or his practice as having extraordinary, direct power over health, business, protection, or life events. By linking the charm's power to the client's activity in local markets and by contrasting blessings with consequences for harm, the discourse constructs a moral and spiritual order where the practitioner mediates safety and success. This helps sustain the practitioner's relevance and authority in a digital space where clients seek both spiritual assurance and practical outcomes in their economic lives.

Ikenna Nwaeyi, A.K.A Alusi Egwuruegwu 1 na Okija, presenting a thanksgiving offering from a Client
Excerpt 8:

Alusi Okija: ...it is one of your sons that has come to appreciate the good thing you have done for him. He came and asked for some things and you granted his request. Now, he has come with a goat, money and kolanut to thank you. Great mother, while the spirits work for man, man also works for the spirits. I ask you now to prosper his business, remove witchcraft and grant him divine connection. Evil people will be far away from him. Open more doors and bring more money to him.

Client: Iseeee!

Alusi Okija: Bring him more, more money and fight against those who would envy him and try to bring him down. Surprise him with your blessings.

Client: Iseeee!

Textually, Systemic Functional Linguistics features structure the interaction as a prayer and petition. Material processes like 'he has come with a goat, money and kolanut' and 'remove witchcraft and grant him divine connection' present concrete offerings and requests, while mental and verbal processes such as 'I ask you now to prosper his business' frame the speaker as an intermediary making requests on behalf of the client. The use of imperative mood in 'open more doors'

and 'bring more money to him and bring him more, more money and fight against those who would envy him' constructs the speech as a directive to the spirits, with high modality implying expectation of compliance. The vocative 'Great mother' and repeated affirmation 'Iseeee!' from the client create a dialogic, participatory structure typical of ritual discourse.

Discursively, the excerpt functions as a recorded segment of a consultation or blessing, likely shared to demonstrate the practitioner's efficacy and role as mediator. The turn- taking between Alusi Okija and the client shows co- construction of the ritual, in which the practitioner leads the prayer and the client affirms it. The inclusion of offerings such as goat, money, and kolanut reflects customary practice, while the language shifts between gratitude for past help and requests for future benefits, framing the relationship between client, practitioner, and spirits as reciprocal.

Socially, the text reinforces the role of the native doctor as a facilitator between clients and spiritual forces to address everyday concerns such as business success, protection from witchcraft, and social envy. This captures the manifestation of exaggerated claims of supernatural influence. There is also recruitment and trust- building in Iseeeee! to help viewers trust the process. By articulating requests for prosperity and divine connection, the discourse presents spiritual intervention as a legitimate means of managing economic and social challenges. The ritual exchange also normalises the practice of reciprocity through offerings, positioning the practitioner as essential in maintaining this balance and sustaining trust in digital practices.

Discussion of Findings

From the analysis, it appears that the selected digital Nigerian native doctors strategically employ language as a persuasive resource to construct spiritual authority and sustain audience engagement on Facebook and YouTube. In many cases, through exaggerated claims, symbolic expressions, testimonials, and fear- related rhetoric, the native doctors present themselves as powerful religious figures capable of

solving personal, financial, and social problems. From all indications, these discursive strategies are carefully selected to influence audience perception and to encourage patronage. Apart from that, the analysis of the excerpts shows that transitivity patterns, modality, appraisal resources, metaphors, imperatives, and performative declarations play important roles in projecting confidence, certainty, and legitimacy. For instance, material processes such as ' I cure mad people' and 'We prepare charms and it works' foreground the traditional practitioners as active agents of supernatural intervention. In the same vein, metaphorical expressions such as 'the light that gives light' and 'the snake that swallowed others' present entities associated with power, dominance, and mystery. The study argues that these linguistic choices strengthen the speakers' credibility and position them as exceptional spiritual figures within the digital religious space.

In addition to the foregoing, fear- induced rhetoric seems to function as a major persuasive strategy in the discourse of digital native doctors. Expressions relating to danger, failure, or spiritual attack create anxiety and emotional dependence among audiences. Through this, the practitioner positions himself as a source of protection, deliverance and spiritual security. Therefore, discourse here serves to shape belief systems and reinforces dependence. Finally, the study reveals that deceptive discourse is not only sustained through language but also through cultural symbolism and ideological framing. Digital -native doctors use a combination of indigenous beliefs, traditional titles, and social media platforms to construct identities that appear authentic and culturally grounded.

Conclusion

This research examined discursive strategies of deception in the religious discourse of selected online native doctors from Anambra State, Nigeria on Facebook and YouTube platforms. Using CDA and SFL, the study explored how language functions as a tool for constructing authority, persuading audiences, and sustaining patronage within digital religious spaces. The study concludes that digital- native

doctors strategically deploy linguistic and discursive strategies such as exaggerated claims, metaphorical expressions, selective highlighting of positive outcomes, appraisal resources, testimonials, imperatives as well as fear- induced rhetoric to project spiritual power and influence followers. These strategies appear to be reinforced by social media platforms that enhance visibility, accessibility, and audience interaction. The research concludes that deceptive discourse reflects broader issues of ideology and power. Through carefully structured language and cultural symbolism, traditional practitioners create identities that appear authentic and capable of addressing personal and social challenges. Consequently, language is not only a communication tool but also an instrument that shapes beliefs, and perception and sustains deception.

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