

## Chapter 7

# President's Speech and Terminology Used During the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Interpretation of Linguistic Meaning in Context and Situational Context

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter investigates the interpretation of the South African President's terminologies during family meetings in a linguistic and situational context. During the COVID-19 pandemic, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa addressed the nation to communicate important information and updates about the virus and the measures taken by the government to curb the spread of the virus. The authors argue that most South African people do not know how to write and speak English; however, the information was delivered through the medium of English, excluding those who do not know the English language, with special reference to Setswana speakers. Hence, the chapter focuses on the South African President's speeches during the COVID-19 pandemic era. A theory of Afrocentricity will be employed in a qualitative approach to address the research questions and objectives of this chapter. At the end of this chapter, communication strategies are addressed in line with language use and cultural appropriateness.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 The Significance of the Chapter**

In this chapter, the aim is to reveal the importance of considering the linguistic and situational context when forming new terms for the community. The chapter highlighted the impact of new terms or instructions on cultural beliefs, Christianity, and spirituality. The outcome of this chapter can serve as a guide in forming new terms, considering the linguistic and situational context. The chapter's target is to assist organisations, universities, and government departments that deal with language translation or terminology, to create terms considering the linguistic and situational context of the community for the information to be well received and understood. This chapter focused on the dissemination of information during COVID-19, the language, culture, and identity of Batswana, the interpretation of terminology and its impact on society, and finally the marginalisation of society.

The primary purpose of this chapter is to explore the president's speech and terminology used during the COVID-19 pandemic with special reference to the interpretation of linguistic meaning in context and situational context in the case of the Setswana language. A qualitative desktop research methodology was employed in this research. Secondary research or desk research is a research method that involves using already existing data. Existing data was collected from reliable sources such as television broadcasts, newspapers, and governments' regulations and guidelines regarding COVID-19.

A theory of Afrocentricity was employed in a qualitative approach. Afrocentricity theory provides a lens through which to analyse and address the unique challenges faced by African and African diasporic communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. This theory places the experiences, perspectives, and cultural values of people of African descent at the center of analysis, emphasising the need for self-determination, cultural affirmation, and collective action. By applying the theory of Afrocentricity to the pandemic context, it becomes possible to understand the specific impact on these communities and develop strategies for resilience and empowerment. This theory helps to highlight the importance of acknowledging historical and structural factors that contribute to these disparities. To encourage the examination of how systemic racism, economic inequality, healthcare access, and other social determinants of health impact the well-being of these communities during the pandemic

### **1.2 Background**

There were misunderstandings and misinterpretations based on terms used that led to some regulations not being followed by all old and young South Africans. While many South Africans appreciated President Ramaphosa's efforts, there were also critiques and concerns voiced by some segments of the population. These included concerns about the impact of restrictions on livelihoods, disparities in the distribution of relief measures, and the effectiveness of certain strategies. However, the overall sentiment was that the family meetings served as a vital platform for open communication and dialogue on how terminology and messages were interpreted and received by South Africans. Indigenous communities often rely on traditional communication channels within their own networks, such as word of mouth, community gatherings, and local leaders. Trusted community members and leaders play a crucial role in disseminating information and interpreting it in a culturally appropriate manner.

When addressing the nation on the issue of the COVID-19 pandemic, the president used English as the language of communication. Language of communication is a choice, but it can disadvantage cul-

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