



The Discursive Dynamics of Food Security Discourse: Policy Communication for Agricultural Transformation

Ajibade Elizabeth Tobiloba

Department of General Studies, Federal Polytechnic Ilaro, Ogun State, Nigeria

Author email: tobiloba.mohammed@federalpolyilaro.edu.ng

Introduction

Food security and agricultural transformation are essential to sustainable development, especially in the emerging economies. Effective policy communication ensures policies are understandable and enforced. In this research, food security discourse is examined using discourse analysis and pragmatics, looking at how policymakers frame narratives and influence farmers. While current studies highlight economic and technological drivers, the role of language in policy adoption is understudied. Scholarship by Maxwell (2019) and Patel (2012) addresses socio-economic concerns, and FAO (2021) focuses on technology, while few studies touch on language obstacles, especially rural, multilingual settings. The current study closes the gap through an examination of how policy words influence comprehension, interpretation, and implementation in agricultural development.

Methodology

This qualitative study employs critical discourse analysis (CDA) and pragmatics in analyzing food security discourse. Policy briefs, government reports, media releases, and agricultural extension materials serve as data sources, selected via purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews among policymakers, experts, and farmers examine the notion of policy communication and linguistic accessibility. Content analysis of mass media and the internet also evaluate the framing of food security for public engagement. Thematic analysis reveals linguistic patterns, rhetorical devices, and power dynamics, analyzing technical discourse, mother tongue usage, and the impact of digital and mass media. This provides a comprehensive image of language's role in agricultural change and economic sustainability.

Results and discussion

The results unveil that food security policy documents employ extremely technical vocabulary, thus impeding comprehension for farmers and grass-root stakeholders. Employment of global and official languages in agricultural communication even limits participation further, particularly in multilingual rural communities. Interview results show that the majority of farmers do not comprehend policy directives, thus leading to poor adoption of recommended agricultural practices. The study also identified the role of the media in shaping food security discourse. While mass media platforms, like television and radio, provide oversimplified versions that increase public awareness, digital communication remains inaccessible to non-literate and linguistically excluded groups. Displacing local languages from policy discourse perpetuates inequalities in the diffusion of agricultural knowledge, making linguistically inclusive strategies all the more significant.

Conclusion

This study emphasizes the importance of integrating linguistic elements into food security and agricultural policy. Clear, culturally appropriate, and multilingual communication enhances the understanding and impact of policies, with indigenous languages promoting greater involvement. By centering language as a core aspect of agricultural transformation, this study promotes a multidisciplinary framework where linguistic innovations are integrated with technological and economic innovations so that communication barriers do not hinder policy benefits or sustainable development.

Keywords: Pragmatic functions, government policy discourse, indigenous languages, speech act theory, critical discourse analysis, policy accessibility