

Interactional Positioning and Stance Taking in Nigeria Online
Job Portals Discussion

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Abstract

This study identified stance-taking features used for interactional engagement in the discussions of Nigerian bloggers in selected online job portals. It also analysed the identified these stance features in the discussion and discussed the implications of the use of these features for the interrogation of unemployment in online discourse. The primary data for the study comprised 40 purposively selected postings together with their comments from two Nigerian online job portals - Naijahotjobs and Nairaland. The findings showed that self mention was significantly employed in the narration of frustrating experiences of participants and for solidarity and sense of community. Hedges were more common in threads where participants were discussing job vacancies, interviews, job invites and companies which is because of the communication gap between potential employers and job seekers. Boosters were however mostly used by participants to show off their wealth of knowledge and gather followers on the forum. They were also used to amplify appreciation to participants who have supplied valuable information. Attitude markers gave the reader a peep into the psyche and mind of the job seekers, as they were used mostly in threads where illegal job vacancies were being discussed. The study concluded that online job portals and discussion forums have provided a space for socially constructing attitudes, projecting, interrogating and promoting communal practice in handling the common problem of unemployment in Nigeria.

Keywords: job portals, hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions

Introduction

The ways that writers and speakers express their opinions have long been recognised as an important feature of language. The whole idea of interactional positioning is aimed at investigating the sequential and

interactional aspects of discourse, especially talk-in-interaction. It has its foundation on the view that interlocutors collaboratively construct and take stance in interactions as they employ certain discourse resources to signal their cognitive dispositions in terms of attitudes, feelings, judgements, or commitment towards the topic of the discourse.

Stance reflects writers' positioning which allows them to create a dialogic space with their readers. Research studies on stance-taking stress the importance of the processes of cognition to the social construction of discourse. Stance-taking does not just involve having an opinion on a topic; it involves using that opinion to align with or disalign with someone else (Myers, 2010). The study of stance taking, also known as metadiscourse, has been greatly explored in academic discourse. The central argument pushed by Hyland and other scholars is that "writers project themselves into their discourse to signal their attitudes and commitments" (Hyland (2004:133). This ultimately is a representation of the rhetorical and social distinctiveness of disciplinary communities. Working within the traditions of genre analysis, researchers of academic writing have been able to forge a link among such writings, authorial identity and professional communal practices (Ivanic, 1998; Hyland, 2004; 2010; 2011a). This study focuses on stance taking in online job portals.

The study of interactional positioning in online discourse is a relatively recent phenomenon. Scholars have established the presence of features which have been copiously discussed in face-to-face interactions, such as turn taking, turn allocation, coherence (Panyametheekul & Herring, 2003; Harrison, 2004; Taiwo, 2010). Scholars like Myers (2010); Langlotz & Locher, (2012) and Chandrasegaran & Kong (2006) report how writers mark their stance in public discussion blogs through the choice of cognitive and evaluative expressions as well as expression of attitudinal meanings. Existing studies on stance-taking in online discussions have focused mainly on political discussions, which typically entail possibilities for participants to position themselves through the signalling of their attitudes and relations to others (Myers, 2010). While the present study is also on online discourse, it is another kind of discourse where young people discuss jobs and career related issues and

in the process express their positioning in terms of their judgements and commitments towards the discussion. This practice gives them a public space to interrogate a major social issue, which is youth unemployment.

Interpersonal Positioning and Stance-taking in Discourse

Every time people get engaged in any interaction, they express their personalities, attitudes and cognitive states. This implies that they position themselves in a particular way different from or related to other through the stances they take. Hunston and Thompson (2000) refers to the writer's judgement, feelings or viewpoint about something as 'Evaluation'. Other scholars describe these varied linguistic resources as 'Attitude' (Halliday, 1994), 'Appraisal' (Martin, 2000; White 2003), Stance (Biber and Finegan, 1989; Hyland, 1999, 2005) and 'Metadiscourse' (Crismore, 1989; Hyland and Tse, 2004).

Hyland (2005a) gives a clear definition of metadiscourse as the cover term for the self-reflective expressions used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, assisting the writer (or speaker) to express a viewpoint and engage with readers or listeners as members of a particular community. In another work by Hyland, he explains that Stance and Engagement contribute to the interpersonal dimension of the text, which involves writer-oriented features of interaction; the extent they want to commit themselves to or the attitude they want to convey to an entity or a proposition, to the reader or the listener. He then presents a model of interaction which entails stance (writer's textual 'voice') and engagement (alignment dimension where writers acknowledge and connect to others). The present study is focused on stance markers, which Hyland categorizes into four classes - Hedges, Boosters, Self-mentions and Attitude markers.

Hedges a term put forward by Lakoff (1972) are linguistic devices used to soften interpersonal imposition, limit commitment in order to show that a statement is based on plausible reasoning rather than certain knowledge thereby giving readers the freedom to dispute it (Hyland, 1998). According to Hyland (1996b:439) hedges "mitigate the relationship between propositional content and a representation of reality;

they hedge the correspondence between what the writer says about the world and what the world is thought to be like." Examples of hedges are: possible, might, kind of, sort of, nearly, rather, seemingly, perhaps, etc.

Propositional meaning can be formulated with different degrees of strength. Boosters are words which allow writers to express their certainty in what they say and to mark involvement with the topic and solidarity with their audience (Hyland, 1998b). Holmes (1984: 347) asserts that boosters express degrees of commitment or seriousness of intention.' They also create an impression of conviction and assurance. According to Hyland (1998c), "boosters, or certainty markers allow writers to project a credible image of authority, decisiveness,, and convictions in their views" (238). Examples of boosters are: clearly, obviously, I am sure that..., we firmly believe..., indeed, evidently, surely, obvious, no doubt, truly, etc.

Self-mention refers to the conscious choice of first person pronouns and possessive adjectives to present propositional, affective and interpersonal information (Hyland, 2001b). It is the presentation of the discursial self and how discourse participants stand in relation to their arguments in the interaction. Self-mention makes explicit personal stance by taking full responsibility of claims made in their writing. Self-mention includes the use of first person singular pronouns (I, me, myself) and plural pronouns (we, us, ourselves)

Attitude Markers linguistic elements indicate the writer's affective stances, such as: conveying surprise, agreement, importance, frustration, rather than commitment. According to Hyland (2011b:199), attitude is most explicitly signalled by modal verbs of obligation (must, should, ought to); attitude verbs (apologise, hope, regret, curious, agree), adverbs (surprisingly, interestingly, honestly, hopefully, unusually, overwhelmingly) and adjectives (serious, difficult, surprising, remarkable, essential). Studies of stance taking in online conversations in blogs or discussion forums are still unfolding (Rahimpour, 2013; Putnam, Ford and Tancock, 2012; Myers, 2010; Wegmann and McCauley, 2014; Chilwa, 2014). Moreover, little attention has been paid to stance taking in online job portals discussion.

Furthermore, studies on employment-related online discourse have focused on the use of code-switching in job portals (Olugesin, 2012) and interactional metadiscourse markers in job postings (Fu, 2012). These studies have discussed language choice, identity and self-presentation in the blogs. Also, closely related to this study is Taiwo (2015) and (2016). The former investigates the use of questions as engagement strategies in online forum. His findings reveal that two major kinds of questions were frequently used for engagement – wh- and yes-no questions and this represents two extreme levels of complexity in interrogation – open-ended and closed-ended levels. It also reveals that the two most prominent groups in the discussions (motivational writers and graduate job seekers) used questions for engagement purposes differently. The latter focuses on the use of the cognitive verb I think to take stances in online job forums. The findings showed that while the expression of cognition through the use of the verb think in the corpus may be similar to what obtains in English as a mother tongue speech context in terms of frequency of occurrence, its syntactic positioning and clusters mirror the patterns typical of some major Nigerian languages.

While the present study just like Taiwo (2015, 2016) sourced its data from the similar online context - job and career portals, its focus is not as restricted as the two studies, which investigate the use of questions for engagement (Taiwo, 2015) the use of cognitive verbs for stance-taking (Taiwo, 2016). The present study directs attention to the four categories of stance features identified by Hyland (2005) thereby presenting a more comprehensive picture of the rhetorical functions enacted in the discourse process and the interactional positioning of participants.

Online Job Portals

Online job portals are virtual communities whose sole focus is job-related discussions, especially discussions related to job search. One of the gravest economic concerns in Nigeria is youth unemployment. Several Nigerian universities yearly produce over a million graduates. These graduates are released into a society that does not have enough resources to keep them gainfully employed. As a result, we have scenarios where every graduate tries to outdo the other sourcing information and positioning themselves to be chosen from more than a

million applicants. However, this still leaves many graduates unemployed, underemployed and most times frustrated.

The unemployment problem in Nigeria has led to the proliferation of human resource agencies, job consultancy firms, recruitment agencies, job scammers and also online job forums. These agencies and forums serve as avenues where information about job openings is accessed. They also provide trainings on how to write curriculum vitae and also how to write and pass aptitude test and interviews.

Moreover, the topics on online discussion forums or online job portals could range from the poor treatment of job-seekers by potential employees, warnings against scammers, and series of advice on how to perform excellently in aptitude tests and even to giving information of job vacancies. Like every other blog or online forum on the Internet, bloggers or participants in Nigeria online job portals try to project a voice or 'stance' in their postings or comments. The unemployment problem in Nigeria has led to the production of mass frustrated, desperate and angry youth who resort to the vast cyberspace to express their anger, hope and frustration.

According to Hoffman *et al.* (2004), the Internet has become indispensable to individuals, families and social groups and a major influence on people's everyday lives. Participants now network and form virtual communities as a platform for information exchange (Chiluwa 2014). Blogging has become an essential part of our society especially among the youth.

However, there are peculiarities of online discussion and communication that make it distinct from other forms and means of communication. The way people use language in a virtual community is quite different from the way it is used in our ordinary community. This kind of communication is now studied under the topic 'Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) or Computer-Mediated Discourse (CMD). This relatively new field of linguistics has received scholarly attention from the mid-1990s. CMC has been argued to combine not just elements of language of writing but also elements of spoken discourse.

Methodology

The data for this study comprise of 40 posts and their comments totaling about 369, 942 words which were selected from postings on *Naijahotjobs* and *Nairaland*. They are websites with forums for job seekers and employers that address all manners of issues pertaining to employment in Nigeria. Five postings were selected from *Naijahotjobs* and thirty five postings from *Nairaland*. This is because the latter is richer and it is the most visited job portal in Nigeria with an average traffic statistics of one million guests per day. The data selected were purposively selected from various subcategorisations such as banking, oil and gas etc. After the collection of data, the various instances of stance taking in the selected threads were analysed. We also investigated the role of shared history and experiences in the use of the stance markers frequently used. The context and functions that determine why, when and with whom stance-taking devices are used are as well identified. The data were categorized into five according to the topics of the thread:

Category 1: Job vacancies related job postings. This category centres on threads that relate to job vacancies announcements. In these threads, a job vacancy is posted on the forum and it generates comments which could be on enquiries on such vacancies. Comments on these threads could also be the participant's hope and expectation to get the job announced. There are eleven threads on this category. There are 104,912 words in this category.

Category 2: Advice on general attitude to job search postings. This category is on general advice on job search, participants' questions on job search and their experiences. There are fourteen threads on this category which comprise 103,596 words.

Category 3: Illegal or scam vacancies related job postings. This category focuses on threads that relate to complaints and criticisms of the activities of neo-life drug marketers and scammers. These people post vacancies online and send invites to job seekers pretending to be big multinational companies. These job seekers are scammed to honour the invite. At the supposed screening centre, participants are tortured to a long motivational talk before they are asked to pay a sum of money to get

the products they are being recruited to sell. There are four threads and 46,647 words in this category.

Category 4: Aptitude test/ Interview/job invite related job postings.

This category comprises threads where participants announce aptitude tests and interviews. There are ten threads and 122,958 words in this category.

Category 5: Governments' role in youth unemployment in Nigeria related job posting.

This category is on criticism of the government for its inability to reduce the unemployment rate but instead putting up a hypocritical stance that indicates that the situation is improving. There is just one thread in this category titled 'Nigeria Records 85% Employment in Six Months'. The words on this thread are 6,505.

Findings and Discussion Table 1 Shows the Frequency of Stance taking Devices in the Original Postings of the Different Categories of Threads Collected.

Table 1: Frequency of Stance taking Devices in the Original Postings of the Different Categories of Threads

Category of	Total No of Total % of of Words Attitude	Total Frequency Total % of of Stance Self-mentions	Total % of Hedges	Total % Boosters
	Markers			
Category 1	1810	31	51	--
	--	49		
Category 2	8766	487	7.2	06
	8.2	79		
Category 3	1954	49	26.5	12.2
	18.4	42.9		
Category 4	976	28	3.6	3.6
	10	82		
Category 5	840	01	--	--
	100	--		

This table shows that the original post on the threads on illegal or scam job invites has the highest occurrence of hedges, boosters and attitude markers while the thread on the attitude of government to unemployment has no occurrence of hedges. Self mentions are the most frequently used stance-taking device in all the threads.

Table 2 shows the summary of the percentages of the frequencies of each stance-taking devices in the comments of each of the five categories already presented.

Table 2: Summary of the Percentages of the Frequencies of each Stance-taking Devices in the Comments of each of the five categories

Category	Total No of Total % of of Words Stance Self-mentions	Total No of Hedges Features	Total % of Total % of Total % of Attitude
	Markers		
Category 1	108102	4796	5
	5	87	
Category 2	94830	3849	4
	6	85	
Category 3	44936	1708	2
	5	90	
Category 4	122282	6299	5
	3	89	
Category 5	5665	149	7
	9	79	

Table 2 shows that the highest frequency of hedges and attitude markers occur in comments on threads that focus on the attitude of government towards unemployment, while comments on illegal or scam job related postings have the highest frequency of self-mentions. In all the categories, the most frequent stance-taking device is self mention. In the first category of threads, self mention is followed by Hedges and Boosters. In the second

and third categories, it is followed by attitude markers. In the fourth category, it is followed by hedges and in the last category, attitude markers. This shows that in participants' comments on online job portals

discussion, attitude markers are the second most frequent stance taking devices followed by Hedges and then Boosters.

Table 3: Summary of the Percentages of the Frequencies of Stance-taking Features in the comments of the five Categories already presented

Category Percentages	Total No of Stance	Total No of Words
Category 1 5%	4796	103102
Category 2 6%	3849	94830
Category 3 4%	1708	44830
Category 4 5%	6299	122282
Category 5 3%	149	5665

Table 3 reveals that threads on attitude to job search have a higher occurrence of stance features in their comments than the others. The findings do not clearly show that stance-taking features are more frequently used in a particular topic than the others. In fact, findings show that interactions in online job portals are not linear as participants veer in and out of the threads indiscriminately. There are sometimes a derail of about three pages where participants are mainly appreciating someone or just dropping their email addresses. However, it is worthy of note that the use of the different stance markers may be affected by the topic being discussed.

Self Mentions

Self mentions are the most frequently occurring stance taking devices in the entire data. Self-mentions are associated with the degree of explicit writer presence in the text measured by the frequency of first-person pronouns. For the purpose of this research, the self mentions will be classified into two: personal mentions, such as I and me and collective mentions, such as we and us.

The personal mentions are more frequent than the collective mentions due to the nature of interaction in online job portals. Participants in online interactions use the forums to make personal enquiries on the topic of the thread. These enquiries may require more information on a job vacancy announcement, how to answer interview questions, requests for materials that can be used to practise for aptitude tests. Self-mentions are also used by participants when expressing frustrations in their bids to secure jobs. It is also sometimes the case that participants in the online job portals interaction tend to make themselves quite visible and audible through the use of personal pronoun I, which is the most frequently occurring stance marker in the data. Narratives of participants portray the cognition and psyche of youths in their active years, striving in the competitive world of job search in the country. T1 is an extract from an original thread with the topic ‘Woes of an Unemployed Graduate’

T1: Its of general knowledge that evri1 has different ways of dissipating their pains when life tends 2 be unfair. Some lights dia marijuanas, some, pray, some head 2 d brothel while majority hits d bottle. But as for me, I love 2 write it out. So dnt mind any form of grammatical blunder or aberration in dix text cos a frustrated and half-sane graduate is currently on the keyboard. Just about a year ago wen I finished my nysc (just clocked 24 then), d hopes were extremely hig Tho its no news dat jobs aint readily available bt I was unpertubed cos I bliv am exceptionally different (I still am) and my chances are high due my being intelligent, smart, young, innovative only 2 mention few and above all armed wt a good 2-1.D job hunt started d day after my passing out(13th feb 2014) and till dz moment I haven't gotten a job and dia z no sign of one forth-coming. I can read ur mind @ dz junction! U are actually tinkin wats wrong wt dz one? He has just spent a year for job-hunting and he is complaining already? I'm sure I guessed right!

The poster in T1 uses self mentions to spell out his frustrations, the use of self mention drives home the point so significantly that other unemployed graduates who might have even gone through similar or worse experience might be forced to align with the aspirations of this blogger. In online discussion portals, acting the most frustrated and most deprived often get participants noticed. For instance, the following comment, T2 is a response to T1.

T2: First, be grateful to God that you had 2.1, which has given u d opportunity to write so many test. I Have had my shares of Ups and down. I printed over 1000 copies of CV within the space of 3years of job search. Attended 2 batches of recruitment process of so MANY companies, some 3. Sent several email applications. By d way, I equally had 2.1. Every site I try to log on to say USER ID ALREADY EXIST. HAD OVER 37 WE are sorry...regret MAILS in email folder. At least 4 interview stages where the Employer could recognise face from the previous recruitment process. By the way, I started tinkering spiritual.

The participant in T2 narrates tales of frustrations, showing in details the numerous applications sent out, interviews attended and regret mails received. This extract shows another set of participants in online job portals, the concerned employed graduate. These ones have gone through the hellish experience of job search and survived. They are on the forum to encourage the people who are still in the experience. They do this by sharing their experiences and giving advice afterwards. These experiences are shared in such a way that they are aesthetically or stylistically emphatic in describing experiences of participants so as to get comments and likes from the other participants. The participant in T2 uses self mentions to empathize with the poster in T1, trying to portray a worse experience than the poster in T1. This is typical of online job portals discussion. Everyone tries to prove that they have had the worse experience especially in threads that instigate them to share their experience on job search. Personal self mentions are therefore used to create individual recognition, thereby generating accolades from other participants.

Collective self mentions on the other hand are not as frequent as the personal self mentions. We is the most frequently occurring collective self mentions. It occurs in more frequently in messages sent by companies to participants of online job portals. Companies also use it to refer to themselves when announcing vacancies.

T3: Thank you very much for your recent application to Access Bank Entry Level Training Program We are pleased to inform you that you have been shortlisted for the next stage –Aptitude Test. You have been provided with some practice questions in order to prepare you for the test. These practice tests are available below. Please note that you have been scheduled to write the test ...

Companies use the collective self mentions to refer to themselves to project the idea that they are big and well coordinated. This can also be a way of showing that the company does not see itself as an entity but a group of people who see everyone in the company as pillars that hold it in place. Collective self mention is also used to stress that the forum is a community of like-minded people when circumstances call for it.

T3: I believe those saying we are competing and no need for co-operation must have clearly tasted what it means to work alone when NL was offline. Now they know better.

T4: Its a rebirth now. A new land has emerged, a green field worth every naira every land can offer. So lets join hands and rebuild all was lost. The hackers thought dey deleted about 210 pages of this thread and crippled this land for days, buh lets remind them that they may hack our profiles and delete our message, buh they cant delete we nairalanders. We are here and will always be stronger than ever and watch this land flourish again. Doronairaland! Doro

T3 and T4 extracts from postings that are the aftermath of a breakdown on Nairaland in which many pages of threads and comments were lost. Also, participants on the site could not interact for a while. These comments emphasize that when situations hit on the job portals it transforms from a self-seeking community to a close-knit group of people with one interest, ‘bonding’.

- T5: We beat one of them last month in my area
- T6: I wish this people can be arrested. Its not fair for people like us who are job hunting
- T7: Monday morning. I noticed a number of the applicants wearing Italian shoes. If the windowless building was the only insult, we wouldn't have been so angry, they came late, like two or three hours late. The woman staying upstairs said that dat the so called company arent the owner of the venue, We dey later arrived, we filed in like primary school pupil, wrote the aptitude, yawa gas after d test wen that started saying something like 'in Nigeria, the big companies don't fulfill their promises,...

T5-T7 are comments on the post 'The Plain Truth about GNLD'. The collective self mention marker we is used in the extract to emphasize the number of people that fell for the scam job invites. It is the way the participants say 'look I fell for it but I was not the only one, we were many'. Instead of remaining an individual and be called a fool who fell for a job scam, participants in online job interactions will rather use collective self-mentions to prove that anyone in their shoes would have fallen for the same scam.

Attitude Markers

Attitude markers are used to show the writer's affective attitude to propositions, which usually convey surprise, agreement, importance, obligation, frustration and so on (Hyland, 2005a, 2005b). Attitude markers can be realised by different forms; adverbial attitude markers, adjective attitude markers and main verb attitude markers. Adjective attitude markers used in this data are cool, noted, most challenging, earnest, difficult, the funny thing is, interesting, incredible, interested, beautiful, nice, funny, silly ,grateful, helpful, disappointing, necessary, ridiculous, indelibly grateful, desperate, so true etc.

These adjective attitude markers are sometimes used to pass a remark on a previous comment or post which they find impressive or otherwise. For instance,

T8: You self get brain o. Nice piece, these are some of the problems we have and I think graduate can't think of how to navigate there career and some needs motivation or counseling which is not available, hence, most people take the 25k teaching job. They say start from there. It's good o, but I will also say, its limit yourself.

T9: Nice one OP

T8 and T9 are extracts from comments on a post titled 'The Typical Nigerian Graduate' that focuses on the inability of most Nigerian graduates to put up the right attitude towards their job search. The original poster lists some bad attitude of graduates to their job search. The attitude markers highlighted in the extract above are used to signify agreement with a previous post. Seriously is the most frequently used adverbial attitude marker in the data. Its frequent recurrence in the data is an indication that participants in the online job portals discussion want to be taken serious. Other frequently recurring attitude markers like honestly, candidly, honestly speaking, emphatically, sincerely and honestly also depict that participants in online job-related discussions struggle to get a more serious treatment and attention as individuals than others. Most times, in the data, these attitude markers are used to express urgency, for instance:

T10: A sister is seriously in need of it.

T10 is an extract from the comments on PWC Nigeria Graduate recruitment. On the thread, someone has offered to send study packs to participants to prepare for the aptitude test to be organized by the company. This shows that aptitude tests pose a great obstacle to unemployed graduates on the route to getting their dream job. As a result, they deploy everything possible to ensure that they perform excellently in the attitude tests.

T11: add d schools n way of application to these scholarships please
cox I am seriously in need of one T12: Honestly, with this
kinda skill range, you should be an employer

T11 and T12 are extracts from the thread titled 'All Working Class, Let's meet here'. In T11, the participants who post the comments use seriously

to give his post a strong effect and evoke quick response from the participant who posts about foreign scholarships. In T12, a poster that is definitely not a working class, has posted his skills so that the working class people on the thread can help him secure a job. However, the skills posted must have been so impressive that the poster of T12 has to use the word honestly to strongly advise the poster to become self employed.

Also, the frequent occurrence of the attitude markers that depict the desire of a poster to be taken seriously shows the nature of online communication generally. Participants in online interactions fabricate stories so as to get responses from other participants. As a result, participants in online interactions do not take one another seriously. However, as a result of the serious unemployment situation of the country, instead of struggling for identity, participants in online job portals interactions place themselves on a pedestal where they are seen as the one who is most desperate in the midst of many desperate job seekers. In other ways too, the ones who use these words when answering a question or giving an advise use it to prove that they have a first-hand experience on whatever they are saying and not just carving a online niche for themselves.

Verb attitude markers are most frequently used in online job portals interaction and the frequency of their occurrences stress the conscious nature of the participants towards their discourse. The verb wonder is the most frequent verb attitude marker in the data.

T13: I wonder y no one is saying anything about CVBANC!!! Job seeker beware of CVBANC!!! our 650 naira just go like that. imagine when 30000 nigerian applicants pay 650 naira!!!

T14: U a very correct.It happened to me.I bought their useless scratch card out of ignorance n till date they's nt even called me to write a letter let alone an aptitude test. I wonder where this country is going. Thanx 4 that powerful observation.

T13- T14 are extracts from the posts titled 419 recruitment agency. The verb wonder is used in these extracts to express frustration at the activities of some organizations to scam unemployed graduates by either extorting, manipulating or tricking them to take up some odd jobs. In

fact, most of the attitude markers in the data are used to express one grievance or the other.

Another remarkable attitude marker that occurs 31 times in the data is hope. The frequency of this word reveals that participants in online job portals are optimistic in their job search endeavour. It is also used to express a strong desire to give information that will be of great help to other participants in the forums.

- T15: Goodmorning peeps! I made some enquiries yesterday, and I can confidently Deduce that second stage test is a combination of essay writing and general awareness test. This link might be helpful
<http://www.bestsamplequestions.com/catquestions/generalawareness/generalawareness.html> there are over 200 questions to go through, in addition, get any useful global current affairs material like d one hawked in traffic. It's really helpful. In addition, "characteristics of money has
- T16: I really hope its in batches coz I haven't gotten any mail yet ooh, wedaa pass or fail. I also wrote d 2nd stage on the 13th.
- T17: Serzly, 5tests and 2 interviews! Yes its d last, d partner interview. I jst hope dey invite a nice partner 2 handle it o, cos it will b sooo painful droppin out in dat last stage

In T15, the poster gives a piece of information and expresses his desire that the information truly helps someone. In T15 and T16, the posters use the attitude marker hope to express confidence in their present job pursuit. When an unemployed person is given the opportunity to pursue a particular job vacancy, they put in their all into it seeing that particular opportunity as the one that will give them their desired jobs.

Boosters Boosters are the least occurring stance markers in the data. However, in the instances they occur, they are used sometimes by the participants to show their superiority in terms of getting the right information over the other participants.

- T17: In terms of pay, PwC surely pays higher than KPMG at entry level ,but I think the pay for seniors in KPMG is higher o, because when u become a senior in KPMG your pay jumps

sporadically. Anyway both firms are good. Lastly, I think life-work balance is prevalent in PwC, even my KPMG folks can testify to that.

Also, boosters are often used to show intense gratitude, especially when great help or valuable information has been rendered. Such appreciation can be towards God also. In a thread where the original poster uploaded a link where the other participants can download professional materials that can further their job search for free, the other participants used boosters like really, in fact, surely, indeed, really, great to show appreciation as in T18 and T19.

T18: Wow, u guys are hot. Infact I have dowloaded all this and I see it useful for me. Thanks a lot guys especially the one who posted this.

T19: Thank you for this great job you have done. We need someone like you in this country. If you are in better position say like minister i surely know that you will help million of poor masses. Keep on doing the good job. God will surely reward you.

Hedges The frequency of hedges in online job portals discussion is seen especially in comments that relate to giving information or explanation on an inquiry. Companies try to be highly covert with what they really expect from their potential employees, which might make their screening exercise a very tough one. It is often the case that most Nigerian companies pride themselves on the strictness of their screening process, and people generally tend to think that the stiffer a company's potential employees' screening process, the better the company's salary and emoluments. This has oftentimes proven to be right. The most frequent hedges in the data are I think, I guess, maybe, seems and probably.

T20: Yeah, it will bring up an acknowledgement with ur details. If you didn't get an acknowledgement mail as well, I think you should apply again.

T21: yes, I very well think a sworn affidavit can be used. For your passport, right click on it an select edit. On the top pane, select

resize. Choose pixel from the box that pops up and change the vertical and horizontal size to 300 then click ok.

Also, it is often the case that when participants use the expression I heard, it is a way of saying they that they were not very sure about the information they are giving. Most often the expression is used to signal a desire to make clarifications. This is typified in T22 and T23 below.

T22: pls can any one say something about g-invest exam that was carried out in Abj 15th of february? i heard that they have started sending out message for deployment to different state. Any one with a usefull information? The one in connection with NEPZA

T23: The ve not started given appointment letters i heard by next week or so

Hedges are also used in online job interactions to cast subtle aspersions or criticize other participants. This is still as a result of the competitive spirit and the desire to show oneself as more knowledgeable that is typical of every youth group. For instance:

T24: Hope you won't see my response here as being harsh. But the truth is that if you had truly studied your Physics well enoufh , then you wouldn't hav asked that question. Physics is both the foundation and the hallmark of Science and Technology. Go to Wikipedia and search for 'Outlines of Physics'. Maybe that would be helpful since it seems that the 4 or five years you spent in school studying the great Physics haven't been useful in helping you choose a line of carreer(s).

T24 is a response to the original poster's question about what the chance of a graduate of Physics is in the employment market. The poster of this comment has tried to use hedges to mitigate the insult that the post might imply. Also, this kind of post also shows the level unawareness of some Nigerian graduates on the relevance of their disciplines the society after graduation.

Conclusion

This study has shown how participants in online job portals position themselves through their conscious or unconscious choices of stance

markers when involved in discussions. Self mention, which is the most frequent stance marker is used in narratives of participants to share their personal experiences of frustration and despair in the process of job seeking and express sense of solidarity and community.

The study also shows that attitude markers were employed to express attitudinal judgements on how serious participants considered an issue or how seriously, they wanted to be taken on an issue. In addition, online job seekers express a lot of hope and optimism in their job search through the use of attitude markers. The use of these attitude markers gives the opportunity to peep into the psyche and cognition of a job seeker who are often frustrated as a result of the harrowing experience of job search in the country. Booster were employed to demonstrate superiority in knowledge among the participants, the goal of which is to solicit for admirers in the forum. They are also used to show intense gratitude and appreciation to posters who give very vital information that will assist members of the group in their job search.

Hedges were shown to be more common in threads where participants discussed job vacancies, job invites and interviews. The wide communication gap between potential employers and job seekers, which makes the latter to be devoid of necessary information, generates doubts and encourages the use of hedging in discussions by job seekers. For the instances of attitude markers, they are mostly used in threads where issues of illegal job vacancies or scams are discussed. The study has demonstrated how young people congregate in virtual community to share and express solidarity and ownership of a common social problem, such as unemployment. Participants' expression of their experiences on these job portals through their narratives, arguments and sharing of information have provided a social space for interrogating, creating awareness and seeking solution to the problem of unemployment.

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