



Stance and Positioning in Email Scams

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Abstract :The study of internet scams has received attention from different scholars. Particularly within the field of linguistics, studies have examined the classifications, linguistic and discourse pragmatic features of email scams; however, very little attention has been paid to discursive strategies that scammers employ to position themselves and influence readers in scam emails. Using Hyland's model of stance studies, this article analyses stance-taking in fraudulent emails with particular focus on the Nigerian situation. Scammers position themselves as victims of circumstances with deceptive narratives that invoke pity on their readers. Identification of stance markers such as self-mention, boosters and attitude markers in fraud mails would assist net users to stay abreast of deceptive skills of scammers.

Keywords: discourse, stance, online, scams, email, positioning.

Introduction

Stance involves a speaker or writer's proposition about an event expressed in a text, and the position he or she adopts in relation to other members of the society. Stance-taking therefore involves methods either linguistic or non-linguistic, by which individuals

create relationships with people they interact with (Johnson, 2009). When individuals are involved in interlocution, they try to influence their interactants to accept their views, take responsibility for their positions, and sometimes recommend positions for their listeners. In other instances, speakers or writers

disguise their positions or out-rightly refuse to take responsibility for some forms of knowledge they share (Hyland 2005). In describing stance as positioning, Hyland (2005) described stance as adopting a point of view in relation to issues discussed in a text. According to Hyland, writers employ rhetorical choices in order to create a social world that enable them establish social relationships, as well as produce evidence and credibility for their work. Hyland further described stance as a collection of features through which writers make proposition, create an authorial identity or hide from such identity. This process takes place whether a writer is communicating online or offline.

Online presence and digital innovations have contributed to the success of non-face to face interaction. The ability to reach people across borders has also broken the barriers of international communication and thus promotes the global economy. One of the early forms of digital communication is the email. This is a mail composed and transmitted on the computer (Santy and Smith, 2011). The communicative roles of email include; communication between friends, business clients, and education among others. As individuals communicate using mails, they tend to disseminate information that may be persuasive for instance in advertisements.

Bloomaerts and Omoniyi (2006) observed that computer mediated communication have enabled globalized communication within the contexts of emails such that people are able to transmit messages across continents.

Prerequisite for global communication is first of all a technological competence and the ability to control and explore communicative devices afforded by the email system.

Sincerity and credibility are major issues in online communication. With the invention of computer-mediated communication, individuals have the liberty to disseminate information with unverifiable sources. This is as a result of the dispersed audiences that are present online. Within the different forms of CMC available, deceptive contents are disseminated in the forms of jokes (memes and photoshops), fake blogs, and spams (Heyd, 2008). Spams particularly email hoaxes are messages communicated from a single source to a number of receivers and usually contain false information. An important feature of scams is the identity of speakers or writers. Just like every other communication channel, scams usually present the identity of the sender through the header information in the opening or closing of the message. The header can be an individual's name or company's name. This makes the message seem genuine. In certain cases, corporate names are used to signal credibility of the message being conveyed.

Spam or junk emails are unsolicited, unwanted, and inappropriate emails disseminated in mass quantity commonly known as advertising ploy (Santy & Smith, 2011). They are often used for promoting spurious contents such as visa lotteries, gambling, phishing, porn and health articles. It can also refer to any form of deceptive email, particularly those motivated by

the intention to defraud the addressee (Chiluya, 2015). Studies of digital deception and particularly email fraud have examined how swindlers use language to persuade their victims despite the increased awareness of cyber-crime (Chiluya, 2009; 2015). This study focuses on patterns of stance-taking and positioning found in discursive practices of online scammers. Stance-taking within this context involves how language is used to create an authorial self, and an identity, which Johnstone (2009) describes as the ethos of the self.

Research Objectives

Online deception and particularly fraudulent emails have received scholarly attention in linguistics and discourse analysis (Chiluya, 2009, 2010). Psychological consequences of email fraud have also been studied (see Ofulue, 2010). The current study focuses on how swindlers position themselves in an attempt to deceive their victims. Research in this area is quite scanty. This study is therefore set to contribute to this research literature by investigating the significance of authorial stance in the context of digital communication such as email. In brief, the objectives are to examine the discursive strategies used in email scams; analyse how stance-taking influences individuals in scam emails; and show how affect and personal identity are used to create persuasion.

Theoretical framework

The study of stance or 'evaluation' or 'appraisal' stems from the systemic functional linguistic theory (Halliday, 2014). SFL views language in terms of its social functions. These functions are

the ideational (represents the world of experience), interpersonal (constructs social roles, relationships and identities) and textual functions (constructs language as coherent texts in relation to their social contexts) (Halliday, 2014). In the interpersonal function, speakers and writers take stance and positions in relation to other members of a group or society. The appraisal framework shows how writers construct for themselves particular identities in relation to others (Chiluya & Ifukor, 2015). Appraisal is defined as '...the semantic resources used to negotiate emotions, judgement and evaluations, alongside resources for amplifying and engaging with these evaluations (Martin, 2000, p.145). The appraisal framework proposes three systems – attitude, engagement and graduation. Attitude refers to feelings, including emotional reactions, judgments of behaviour and evaluation of things (Martin & White, 2005) and is divided into three categories namely: affect judgement and appreciation. Affect is the 'resources for expressing feelings,' while judgement is the 'resources for judging character.' Appreciation refers to 'resources for valuing the worth of things' (Martin & Rose, 2003, p.24).

Hunston and Thompson (2000) described stance-taking in terms of evaluation. Evaluation involves speakers' attitude to propositions. This can be used to express opinion, maintain relationship and organize discourse. Similarly, Conrad and Biber (2000) carried out a study on the adverbial expression of stance in news reportage conversational and academic writing. The study identified evidentiality and

affect as stance markers that can signal speaker's source of knowledge, level of certainty and attitude to propositions. A comparison of the three contexts showed that adverbial stance feature more in conversations than in academic writing.

In order to position themselves, authors adopt three components which include evidentiality, affect and presence (Hyland, 2005). Evidentiality concerns how a writer portrays his/her credibility. Affect involves an individual's personal attitude; and presence concerns how the author chooses to present himself. Hyland summarized stance to include hedges, boosters, attitude markers and self-mention. In examining stance in media discourse, Martin (2004) examined how writers influenced readers to take certain positions in a Hong Kong magazine after a terrorist attack. The editorial positioned readers to take a sympathetic stance in the study. The study further demonstrated the role of evaluation in signaling individual as well as collective ideology. The current study takes on Hyland's (2005) model of stance to evaluate how the authorial self and attitude markers are used to persuade victims of email scams.

Literature Review

Email scams, an aspect of online fraud have received attention from different scholars. Bloomearts (2005) attempted a classification of email hoaxes to include lottery rewards, dormant account, charity and rescue operations. The study revealed that the English varieties of scam mails are usually an attempt to imitate actual writing but are often characterized by wrong spellings and

poor grammar which usually differ from the addresses they carry. Ofulue (2010) investigated the linguistic markers of advanced fee fraud mails, as a particular type of scam. Three types of advanced free fraud mails were identified (i) reply and request correspondence (ii) persuasion correspondence and (iii) confirmation correspondence. Advanced fee fraud mails utilize incorrect lines, sentence fragmentations and incorrect spelling.

On the authentication of the Nigerian letters, Gill (2013) showed that the Nigerian mails project a similar pattern of identities. While the issue of self-mention point out strong identities, the context of these letters betray such identities. The structure of these mails usually contains stories of unclaimed financial deposits in some banks in West Africa, where the reader is asked to provide his account details for such money to be paid in; some even promise some money-spinning "businesses", announce lottery winnings or monetary donations from International agencies like the United nations (Chilwa, 2009, 2010) as well as use alternative address systems. These emails are overtly fraudulent and lack authentication. Generally, they are spontaneous, contain a recurring pattern and are usually inconsistent in their content (Gills, 2013).

Methodology

The data consists of twenty emails collected from personal mails between September, 2016 and February, 2017. The mails are divided according to their similarities and differences. The analysis of data is basically qualitative discourse analysis, based on Hyland's

model of the analysis of stance in discourse. Hence, the analysis will identify and systematically analyse the various features of stance in the email discourses of deception under study and analyse their grammatical and discourse structures.

Analysis and Findings

Hyland defined stance as ‘positioning’ or ‘adopting a point of view in relation to both the issues discussed in the text and to others who hold points of view on those issues’. The speaker or writer generally expresses ‘a textual voice’ or a ‘community recognized personality’ (2005, p.175). Hyland further argued that stance consists of evidentially, affect and presence, which are expressed in a text as hedges, boosters, attitude markers and self-mention. The emails in the data for the current study are classified into business proposals, charity, transfer of funds, phishing and lottery. A few of the samples are reproduced in the analysis. “SM” stands for “sample.”

1. Self-mention

The use of name is to create an interpersonal relationship between the speaker and his audience. Self-mention is a strong strategy for the construction of authorial identity, promote a cause or persuade readers (Ivanic, 1998). Three types of self are identified, namely the detached self, individual self and collective self (Wu & Zu, 2014). The individual self is used to present the individual as the discourse constructor. Through individual self-mention, the scammer positions himself as an authority and coordinates the discourse. Self-mention is represented either as

individual, collective or detached as found in the instances below:

SM. 1: My name is barrister Kenneth Brown, I practice law and by the virtual of my position with Old Mutual Bank Plc I have the opportunity to introduce a lucrative business to you that will be for our mutual benefits and the transaction is 100% risk free.

SM. 2: hello!!!, I would like to have a discussion with you on areas of good investments in your country. I will give you further details when i read from you. I wait your reply and Happy New Year 2017.

Thank you.

Alan Adelman.

SM. 3: Attention: President/ Director Compliment to you and your family, my name is Amos Majola the elder son of Mr. David Majola, from the Republic of Zimbabwe. It might be a surprise to you where I got your contact address. I got your contact from the South African Chamber of Commerce in Johannesburg.

SM. 4: Official Letter From The FBI New York

Your fund was received at JFK airport and necessary fees/charges has been paid by sender except \$150 for CCC, but a lady Janet came forward claimed you sent her to claim your fund, is it true,...

SM. 5: Good Day. I am Miss Mirabel from United Nations Social Welfare Organization (U.N.S.W.O), I thought this opportunity may be of interest to you, If not I apologize for the intrusion.

SM. 6: Greetings from Syria, Good day to you and your family,

I hope my email will arrive to you at good time. My name is Engr. Awad Mabrouk Gulistan from Syria. I am an oil and gas entrepreneur in association with state owned companies here in Syria.

SM. 7: Dear Partner,

May the peace and mercy of Allah be with you as you receive this message; I am Aisha Muammar Gaddafi, the only daughter of the embattled President of Libya, Hon. Muammar Gaddafi who was murdered by the rebels. I am currently residing in Burkina Faso unfortunately as a refugee and a widow with two kids.

SM. 8: Dear Beneficiary,

We are pleased to notify you that your email won the sum of GBP £850,000000 (eight hundred and fifty million Great British Pounds) from our sweepstake promotion...

Self-mention is used in the extracts above as a self-identifying strategy as well as to create solidarity. In SM.1, the author specifically creates stance by presenting him/herself as a reputable person. Generally, it is expected that a lawyer would be conversant with the law that govern the society and would not intend to defraud his interlocutor. The speaker fraudulently pretends and lies about his/her understanding of the legal implications of fraud and reiterates a pretended credibility with the statements such as:

“...I practice law and by the virtual [sic] of my position with old Mutual bank I have the opportunity to introduce a lucrative business to you’.

The use of a professional experience in legal processes and in the banking sector would certainly boost the confidence of

any investor. Interestingly, there was no “Mutual Bank” in Nigeria. So, the writer actually lies about his/her own identity as well as his/her circumstance. It is obvious that all the claims in the email is false and deceptive. The use of a credible presence sets a foot for the next line of conversation.

In **SM.4**, the speaker is detached from the mail and rather presents the message. The message is directed to a stolen fund without making initial reference to the sender. The intent is therefore to depersonalize the discourse participants. Depersonalization in this context is used to express objectivity of the discourse and hides face (Sampson, 2004). By this, the speaker assumes a hidden stance by invoking a sense of urgency to the message and urges the reader to focus on the message rather than the speaker.

In other instances, self-mention is represented through referential pronouns. The persona ‘I’ creates an interpersonal relationship between the writer and the reader. Another instance of self-mention is represented through a collective pronoun ‘we.’ In SM. 8, the inclusive pronoun ‘you’ invites the reader to make evaluations and alerts them on stance to take. An illustration of collective self is found in the text, where there is a switch from a personal pronoun ‘I’ to ‘we’ to illustrate a collective identity and promote group solidarity. The subtle stance ‘we’, which includes the reader, is used to position the reader in a cordial atmosphere; and the writer here positions himself as a credible member of the normal society. The reader is perceived as an already accepted member of the team. The

adoption of individual, collective or detached self-mention strategies reveal that scammers use rhetoric to negotiate stance, present asymmetric power relations during discourse as well as position themselves as genuine.

2. Affect

Certain lexical items appeal to the readers' feeling. Affect or attitude markers are words that express the writer's emotions or cognitive frame of mind. Such items of vocabulary include 'fool,' 'scammer,' (noun), 'good,' 'happy,' (adjectives), 'love,' 'hate' (verb or noun) or 'absolutely,' 'unfortunately' (adverb), etc. (Chiluya, 2015). Just like other discursive messages, scam mails contain items capable of appealing to an individual's emotion. They can invoke pity, surprise, or trust. They are also used to organize and express a general sense of urgency, anxiety and desperation (Chiluya & Ifukor, 2015).

The use of the 'necessary' in **SM.1** explains a strong need for the speaker's action. First, the speaker is conceived as one who is in proper control of the action; the use of affect here is also a rhetoric discourse that attempts to position the reader to share the same attitude as the speaker.

To be 'pleased' is an affective marker that is common in the scam mails. It portrays a positive attitude of the writer towards first, their interaction and then the discourse participants. So, the word 'pleased,' which expresses delight is highly emotional and capable of eliciting a positive response. The expression of pleasure as found in **SM.8**, is necessary in performing a business transaction, therefore the writer

applies 'pleasure words' and expressions as a persuasive strategy applied in the mails to attract quick positive responses. Negative affective words such as invade, disaster, or death are words that denote unhappiness and are capable of inducing emotion between the interlocutors, so the writers of scam oriented emails are very sensitive when using them. These words are used to manipulate the victims and as they invoke pity on the in the minds of readers and persuade them to respond the messages received.

3. Hedges

Hedges are discourse strategies used by speakers and writers to express uncertainty towards a particular stance. Words such as 'probably,' 'perhaps,' 'possibly,' are hedges that show that the writer does not claim absolute authority in terms of the possession of knowledge or truth (Hyland, 2013). Hedges are also used in scam mails in an attempt to influence readers' responses and actions. Examples of hedges are illustrated in the examples below:

SM. 9: I would like to have a discussion with you on areas of good investments in your country. I will give you further details when i read from you.

SM. 10: Please if you would be able to use the funds for the Charity works kindly let me know immediately. .. Please kindly respond quickly for further details

Warmest Regards,

SM. 11: ...Why I'm contacting you is to know if we can have a personal conversation.

SM. 12: if you are trusted and know you can handle this

project with the fear of GOD
get back to me with full details.

In the samples illustrated above, the speaker uses 'would' to show uncertainty in the addressee's ability to carry out the required task. The if-conditional in samples 10, 11 and 12 show vagueness in the action to be executed on the one hand, and presents the speaker as one in dire need of help on the other hand. In SM. 11 and 12, the message is introduced with the hedge 'can'. The speaker expresses doubt on the success of the supposed business he is about to introduce. He therefore strengthens the weakness of the reader before introducing his business proposal. The speaker assumes a previous knowledge of the addressee and subtly creates a new frame in the subsequent clause. After using hedge to express doubt about the speaker's ability, he/she relies on the addressee's information to draw conclusion. These kinds of scams are usually introduced to elicit genuine information from readers. Through the use of hedge, the writer positions the speaker to share the same stance.

Most scam mails are intrusive, in order to curb the unwillingness to explore their contents, their authors use hedges to implore readers to listen to them. This is depicted in and SM. 5 and 7 where the role of the hedges 'may' and 'hope' are used to create a friendly rather than hostile context for effective communication.

4. Boosters

Boosters unlike hedges, are linguistic items that are used to express certainty towards a stance. Words such as surely, certainly or obviously are examples of

boosters that express the speaker's or writer's certainty and assurance of his position (Hyland, 2013). They form a major part of the scam mail discourse when compared to hedges. As rhetoric strategies, boosters are part of interpersonal negotiation that indicates objectivity and impartiality emphasized by writers (Kong, 2014). They are also used to create persuasion. Boosters are identified in the examples below:

SM. 13: I decided to contact with overseas person/firm who will assist me to move the money out of South Africa. This becomes necessary because as political asylum seekers, we are not allowed to own or operate a Bank account. If you accept this proposal, you shall receive 25% of the entire amount for your assisting us to move this money out. 70% of this amount shall be for us, and the remaining 5% shall be mapped out for expenses incurred in the course of the transaction.

SM. 14: Dear Good Friend,
This message might come to you as a surprise. However, it all just my urgent needs for a foreign partner that made me to contact you for this transaction. I got your contact from yahoo tourist search while I was searching for a foreign partner. I assured of your capability and reliability to champion this business opportunity when I was praying to God about you....

Yours lovely

SM. 15: I was specifically requested to contact you in account of your striking professional record. Having gone through the lines and now

convinced of your credibility, I am writing under the instruction of my superiors, who are members of the economic planning commission of Bahrain.

The use of the modal 'will' and 'shall' are other forms of boosters that show certainty. The fraudster presents his readiness and expresses his commitment to a cordial relationship using these discourse markers. Other boosters such as 'decided' and 'specifically' are strong means to express authorial identity in the discourse. Beyond this, the boosters express the writer's effort to navigate further discussions.

5. Discourse Structures

(Discourse Opening and Sign off)

The opening and closing remarks are either formal or informal depending on the nature of the message. Most of the samples in the data (e.g. SM. 2, 5, 6, 7) begin with some forms of openings and greetings such as 'hello', 'good day' 'greetings from Syria,' 'dear beneficiary' etc. In SM. 9, the writer uses 'dear beneficiary' to assume an informal relationship with the reader. As a supposed winner of a promotion, the use of 'beneficiary' tends to portray the letter as a credible one from a reputable organization. Similarly, while some of the mails close with sign offs such as 'best regards' as in samples 7, 8 10, 13, 17, others are signed offs with the name of the addresser (SM 19, 20.). Since scam mails use sign-offs typical of regular mails, it becomes difficult to distinguish them from authentic mails (Bloommaerts, 2005). In SM. 14, the writer signs off with 'yours lovely' based on the assumption that the writer has an emotional relationship with the addressee. Such sign offs are intended to

elicit a mutual feeling between the addressee and writer.

(ii) Narrativity

Humans express their daily experiences through story telling (Heyd, 2008). In the same manner, scammers employ narratives in a bid to control their victims. In scam mails, the narrative processes usually consist of an introduction, contents and persuasive arguments (Chiluya, 2010). Elements of narration are used to create stance in scam mails as identified in the excerpts below:

SM. 15: ... My name is Amos Majola the elder son of Mr. David Majola, from the Republic of Zimbabwe. During the current war against the farmers in Zimbabwe, from the supporters of our president, Robert Mugabe, in his effort to chase all the white farmers out of the country, he ordered all the white farmers to surrender their farms and properties to his party members and his followers. .. In the course of the attack, my father was killed and the invaders made away with a lot of items form my father's farm. And our family house was utterly destroyed. My mother died too out of heart attack...

SM. 16: I am Mr. Robert Karofsky from Harlesden...In my department, ...I discovered an abandoned sum of 22.3 Million Great British Pounds Sterling... in an account that belongs to one of our foreign deceased customers, a billionaire Business Mogul Late Mr. Moses Saba Masri, a Jew from Mexico who was a victim of a helicopter crash 10th January, 2010

resulting to his death and his family members ..., I seek your consent to present you as the next of kin/Will Beneficiary to the deceased so that the proceeds of this account valued at 22.3 Million Pounds can be paid to you. This will be disbursed or shared in these perc...

SM. 17: Attn: Beneficiary,

This is to let you know that your case has repeatedly coming to my Office every day and all the complain that I have been getting all in regards to your payment with the Federal Government which the CBN has been involved to pay to you

SM. 18: My name is Hope Fidelix, I am 25 years old from Ivory Coast and presently i am residing in the refugee camp here in Dakar Senegal under the UNITED NATIONS COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES ...The brutal killing of my father, mother, and kid sister took place one early morning by the rebels as a result of the civil war that was going on in Ivory Coast. I was in my second year in nursing department of University of Abidjan Ivory Coast before the death of my loved Parents. I contacted you for a possible help...

The narrative process in some text usually presents the topic of the mail before narrating its details as found in **SM. 17** where ‘attention beneficiary’ is used as the topic of the mail. This is intended to show the urgency of the so-called message being conveyed. In **SM. 15**, the scammer draws a narrative process and in particular, uses a narrative setting supposedly known to

the speaker to express genuineness of his actions. Zimbabwe is an African country with known cases of hostility towards white farmers. In 2000, the veterans were involved in the killing of white farmers in an attempt to reclaim their land; a move supported by the president Robert Mugabe (Copson, 2006). In a bid to lure the foreigner, the scammer employs an adversarial stance (Huddington, 2007) and frames his conversation in the discourse of hatred and violence. Through this, he is able to exempt himself from the barbaric act of killing whites in Zimbabwe and creates solidarity with the foreign nationals. This narrative technique is expected to create a mutual relationship and position the receiver towards accepting to assist the writer.

In **SM. 16**, the narrative process is a sad one capable of invoking pity. The discourse is first framed in the line of a formal business proposal which might appeal to the reader, before it gradually moves to discourse of death. By presenting a formal business setting first of all, the writer eludes every act of frivolity and prepares the reader to take a stance. **SM 19** is supposedly written by a woman. The text is subtly created to invoke pity. The letter is written to someone the writer had no previous knowledge of; despite this, the narration is written in such a way that one would assume there was a pre-existing relationship.

The use of such lexical items as ‘dearest’, ‘I think about you’, ‘I have a lot to tell you’ creates a friendly atmosphere for interaction. The pronominal reference ‘you’ is also a discursive strategy that is used to

integrate the reader into the conversation. At the end of the interaction, a phishing attempt which involves getting personal information from the addressee is initiated as found in **SM. 7**. The detailed narrative in the scam mails appeal to the emotion. Although credibility of the incidents is not verified, they are reported in such a way that the reader feels the supposed plight of the writer.

Generally, the narrative patterns of scam mails involve a self-revelatory plight narrative (Gills, 2013) intended to invoke pity on the scammer. They include accounts of war and disaster as found in **SM 15** and **SM. 18**; accounts of carelessness and failed attempts to transfer cash as found in **SM. 4** and **SM. 17**. The narrative patterns of scam mails as Gills (2013) notes prey on the emotions of their readers.

(iii) Appeal to Shared Knowledge

As part of the persuasive strategy, scam mails contain information that is supposedly known to the addressers and their addressees. The mails are replete with information that is often well known. In **SM. 7** for instance, the scammer is presented as the daughter of the late President Muammar Gaddafi of Libya. The use of the name “Gaddafi” is to build a name and create authenticity. The mail employs this stance to establish trust between the narrator and the addressee. Muammar Gaddafi, the former president of Libya was overthrown during the NATO bombardment of Libya in 2011 after several pleas to step down. His death sparked several debates as some saw him as a Messiah to the Libyans while others perceived him as a tyrant.

Despite any view taken, it is expected that the children of such a person would be left in a negative situation. It is against this backdrop that the scam mail writer portrays him/herself as a victim.

(iv) Appeal to Religious Identity

Religious identity and sentiment is another persuasive strategy used by scammers to influence their readers’ point of view. By presenting religious discourse, scammers portray themselves as individuals with credibility as found in the extract below:

SM. 19: Dear friend, Calvary Greetings in the name of the LORD Almighty and Our LORD JESUS CHRIST the giver of every good thing ... I am Mrs. Nadesh aging widow of 64 years old suffering from long time illness. I have some funds I inherited from my late husband, the sum of (\$15,500,000.00 Million Dollars) and I needed a very honest and God fearing who can withdraw this money then use the funds for Charity works. I WISH TO GIVE THIS FUNDS TO YOU FOR CHARITY WORKS. I found your email address from the internet after honest prayers to the LORD to bring me a helper and i decided to contact you if you may be willing and interested to handle these trust funds in good faith before anything happens to me.

In **SM. 19**, the speaker draws from the discourse of religion to persuade the victim. The belief in God is a position held by a lot of individuals globally and Nigeria is said to be the most religious country in the world (Chilwa, 2009). Hence, the writer makes a subtle appeal to religious sentiments, which is likely

to attract sympathy from an average religious individual. To this effect, the writer reiterates the fact that Christians are people with integrity. The narrator strongly appeals to the religious teachings on charity and deploys this tactics to foster solidarity and mutual understanding. Ironically, the notion of integrity is used here as a means of swindling an individual. While the speaker teaches integrity, the actions displayed are contrary to what is being professed.

(v) *Directives*

As part of discursive practices, scammers employ directives to express authority. In the examples below, stance is used to express asymmetric power relations between the writer and reader.

SM. 20....you must follow in order to complete your claims...You will send the fee latest tomorrow.

‘Must’ is a coercive modal that the scammers use to express authority. Within the instruction passed, ‘must’ help to indicate necessity and urgency in the action. Similarly, ‘will’ in the next clause illustrated above, is used as a phishing attempt. Although the use of face threatening act is limited in email hoaxes, it is used in this context where organizational persona rather than

individual serves to index compulsion, urgency in other to phish victims within the shortest possible time.

Conclusion

The current study explores stance-taking and positioning in scam emails. Scammers derive their discourses from different genres that appeal to Hyland’s three levels of stance-taking. Credibility markers are found in scam mails and serve as rhetorical strategies for swindling victims. Particularly, the narrative structures use implicit reference to happenings in the society to draw a sense of credibility. Positive presentations through self-mention serve as discursive strategies that scam mails employ to persuade their victims. While hedges are used to maintain an interpersonal relationship between the writers and their readers in scam mails, boosters are employed to maintain an authorial stance in order to manipulate victims. These strategies help to reduce fear especially in cases where phishing is attempted. It is quite clear that stance-taking and the careful use of strong discourse and persuasive strategies must have engendered the continual success by scammers in defrauding their victims in spite of repeated warnings against email scams.

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