

# **The Evolution, Application and Institutionalisation of Systemic Functional Linguistics in Southwestern Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines the historical trajectory, theoretical adaptations, and empirical applications of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) in southwestern Nigeria, with particular focus on the foundational contributions of the Ife School at Obafemi Awolowo University (formerly University of Ife). Tracing the origins of SFL from M. A. K. Halliday and the British London School, the paper details how the framework was introduced and contextualised in Nigeria through foreign-trained scholars, most notably Adebisi Afolayan, to address the realities of an English as a Second Language (ESL) and multilingual society. The study categorises local SFL research across Halliday's three core metafunctions: Ideational - dominated by transitivity analyses in political rhetoric, news media, election memoirs, advertising, and legal texts; Interpersonal - encompassing mood and modality analyses in educational and organisational settings, Appraisal theory applications in stance-taking and digital discourse, and Tenor studies evaluating power and intimacy across institutional contexts; and Textual - focusing on grammatical/lexical cohesion and collocation patterns, particularly within ESL learner texts, literary works, and media discourse. Furthermore, the paper highlights the contributions of key scholars, illustrating how they expanded SFL into literary stylistics, translation studies, pragmatics, multimodal analysis, and computer-mediated discourse. The paper concludes that SFL in southwestern Nigeria has evolved from a pedagogical grammar tool into a robust, multidisciplinary framework capable of unmasking power dynamics, sociocultural identity, and ideological structures across diverse text genres.

**Keywords:** Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Ife School, Language Metafunctions, Nigerian English, Transitivity, Textlinguistics.

## **Introduction**

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is one of the major approaches to the study of language championed by Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday in the early 1960s in Britain. It grew out of the London School

of Linguistics, with inspiration from anthropologist Bronisław Kasper Malinowski (1884 – 1942) and linguist John Rupert Firth (1890 – 1960), who viewed language as a social phenomenon, which is shaped by the cultural context of its use. Malinowski, a Polish-born British anthropologist and ethnologist did extensive ethnographic research among the Malenesians in Trobriand Islands and observed the ways the they used language to socialise by expressing the routines of their customs and traditions. He was reputed to be the founder of social anthropology and the originator of modern ethnographic fieldwork. Firth, following Malinowski, demonstrated the idea that language is a system of choices operating within a social context. He adopted Malinowski's ethnographic concept that words must be understood within their immediate cultural and social environment.

Systemic linguistics (or systemics) is a theory of language centred on the notion of language function. In contrast with the structural approaches to language description, systemics places the functions of language as primary, as a "fundamental property of language itself" (Halliday & Hasan 1985: 17), seeking to understand what it is that language does and how it accomplishes it. More generally, systemics looks at how language acts upon and is constrained by the social context in which it functions. Systemics grew out of the work of J.R. Firth, but it was through his student, M.A.K. Halliday, that it was extensively developed and refined to its present form. Halliday's contributions in this respect have generally been hailed as "the most important development of the ideas within the so-called 'London School' of linguistics" (Butler 1985: 1). Systemics began with Firth's attempt to develop a model to relate language function and context. To achieve this, he proposed a framework based on the concept of the system, defined as an "enumerated set of choices in a specific context" (Kress 1976: xiii). This gave rise to two sets of contexts for any item: the context of the possible choices in the system under consideration, and the surrounding context in which the system itself occurred. In a clausal structure such as S (subject) P (predicator), for example, there is a system which operates at P. This system opens a set of choices which are possible alternatives in that position. Clearly, the structural configuration restricts the choices that can be made since only intransitive verbs are permitted in the P position. If, however, the structural configuration were to be changed to S P C (complement), the system comprising only intransitive verbal elements at P will no longer apply. A changed context, therefore, gives rise to a system applicable in that context, and the description of such a

system depends on the statement of the context in which it occurs (Kress 1976: xiii). Formulated this way, the concept of the system gradually took on an increasingly important status in Halliday's successive revisions of the Firthian model.

SFL posits that language is a network of options from which speakers make choices of specific words and structures based on their goal. Language is also a system of signs deployed for social interaction. Language choices rests on the immediate contextual variables – of *field* (the topic, subject matter, and social action taking place), *tenor* (the relationship, power dynamic, and emotional distance between the people communicating), and *mode* (the channel of communication and the role that language is playing in the interaction) and the broader cultural background. According to Halliday, every time we speak or write, we do three things at the same time - we share ideas and talk about our experience of the world (Ideational function); we build and manage relationships, power, and feelings with others (Interpersonal function); and we organise our message so it flows well and makes sense as a whole (Textual function). These three functions are called the Metafunctions of language.

SFL later spread globally from Britain through academic migration, when Halliday and his students took prominent posts outside the United Kingdom, especially in Australia, North America, Asia, and Latin America. Halliday moved to Australia in the 1970s and founded the Linguistics department at the University of Sydney. This department became a major global centre for training scholars and publishing SFL research. SFL spread to Nigeria primarily through academic training, scholarly exchanges, and university curricula during the late 1980s. Several other linguists who joined Halliday to extend the frontiers of SFL include, Ruqaiya Hasan, Christian Matthiessen, Jim Martin, David Rose, Robin Fawcett, Margaret Berry, Geoff Thompson, Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen, Kay O'Halloran, and others.

Some Nigerian linguists trained abroad in the United Kingdom later returned to establish SFL frameworks within Nigerian universities' English and Linguistics departments. One of the Nigerian linguists who trained at the University of London, Adebisi Afolayan pioneered, anchored, and adapted SFL within the Nigerian academic landscape from the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University). Afolayan did not just consume SFL; he modified its descriptions to fit the Nigerian indigenous systems. Afolayan demonstrated preference for Hallidayan functional approach over Chomskyan Generative Grammar. He believed

that a multilingual nation like Nigeria required a grammatical framework focused on meaning-making and socio-cultural context rather than abstract, idealised rules which largely characterize Chomskian generative linguistics.

Afolayan applied SFL's principles of lexicogrammar to show how indigenous languages construct experiential realities. He developed a primary school curriculum entirely in Yorùbá to prove that native-tongue pedagogy yielded superior academic retention compared to English-only models. Alongside peers like Ayo Bamgbose of the University of Ibadan, Afolayan integrated SFL into the benchmark curricula for undergraduate and postgraduate English programmes across southwestern Nigeria. Afolayan utilised SFL's concept of Register to analyse how English functions as a second language in some Nigerian domains like administration, education, and law. He directly trained and inspired the next set of prominent Nigerian systemic functional linguists, including Niyi Oladeji, Oluwole Adejare, Femi Akindele, Bolaji Aremo, Chris Awonuga, Lekan Oyeleye, Wale Osisanwo, and others, who expanded SFL into early studies on literary and linguistic stylistics, as well as political discourse, media analysis, and pragmatics.

The works of Afolayan (Afolayan 1976, 1977, 1979, 1980, 1984, 1989) applied SFL to the study of Yoruba and English as a Second Language. Following Afolayan, Oladeji (1989b) explored the application of SFL to literature in English as a second language, (ESL) situation, which Nigeria represents. Other earlier southwestern scholars applied SFL to different kinds of texts. The earliest research was on style in literary and political discourse. Scholars deployed aspects of SFL to investigate literary texts and rhetoric in the speeches of Nigeria's politicians like Obafemi Awolowo (Awonuga 1988, Oladeji 1989a) and Yoruba poetry (Oladeji 1990),

Much later, scholars focused on speeches of Nigerian political leaders, such as Olusegun Obasanjo (Awonuga 2005, Taiwo 2008, Oni 2013, Omisakin, *et al.* 2023), Goodluck Jonathan (Bolarinwa 2016. Osisanwo and Chnaguh 2018, Adegbenro 2022,), Muhammadu Buhari (Bamigbola 2017, Awoyemi and Ajayi 2023), and Bola Tinubu (Akinseye 2023, Alugbin 2023). Others merged the Hallidayan SFL approach with Critical Discourse Analysis to demonstrate how power asymmetries, ideological manipulations, and hegemony are revealed in political speeches (Taiwo 2008, Ogunmuyiwa, 2019, Oluwayemi 2023).

## **Studies on Metafunction of Language in Southwestern Nigeria**

### **Research in Ideational Metafunctional Analysis**

Studies using the SFG have copiously examined the metafunctions of language as explicated in Halliday's SFG. The Ideational function, perhaps, is the most widely researched with many studies on the Transitivity system. The Ideational Metafunction is the capacity of language to represent experience. It is the framework through which speakers encode their understanding of the real world, and their internal consciousness into grammatical structure. Ideational function is divided into two components: the Experiential function, which encodes our experience of the world as a configuration of happenings, entities, and surroundings. The primary grammatical tool of this function is Transitivity system. The second is the Logical function, which encodes how clauses relate to one another logically (e.g., cause, condition, time, sequence) using systems of taxis (parataxis vs. hypotaxis) and logico-semantic relations (expansion vs. projection). However, Transitivity is the most explored by scholars, most especially in the study of political speeches (Taiwo 2007, Ademilokun and Taiwo 2013, Ogunmuyiwa 2015, Adepoju 2016, Omotunde 2018, Ademilokun and Taiwo 2013, Ademilokun 2020, Alfred and Oyebola 2021, Tella 2021, Adepoju 2022 Olaleye 2022, Akinseye 2023, Ogundeji 2024, Ayoola 2025). The focus of scholars is mainly on the choices of lexicogrammatical resources, most especially the interpersonal ones - the processes, participants and circumstantial elements to account for the projection of the experiences, such as attitudes, beliefs and stances in the speeches.

Apart from political speeches, recent studies have examined Transitivity in media texts. Like many other studies, Transitivity analysis dominates studies on media discourse from the SFG lens. Such studies include, news reports (Babalola, 2009, Ayoola 2013, Igwebuike and Taiwo 2015, Babalola and Olarewaju, 2016, Olaleye 2018, Bello 2020, Jegede 2022, Akinmusuyi 2023, Akinseye 2025), Other studies dwell on online election Campaigns (Ogundele and Taiwo 2024), telecommunications service providers' advertisements (Dalamu 2019), elections memoir (Tella 2021, John and Atolagbe 2021), poetry (Adepoju 2018), Christian religion stickers (Oyewo and Taiwo 2023), secondary school pupils' compositions (Taiwo 1999), legal documents (Oyewo and Taiwo 2025), bank advertisements (Ajepe 2021), Advanced Fee Fraud emails (Akinmusuyi 2021)

## Research in Interpersonal Metafunctional Analysis

Research directions have also focused extensively on the Interpersonal metafunction, most especially in the investigation of mood and modality in identity narratives (Adetomokun 2012), students' disciplinary interrogations (Dahunsi 2017), Niyi Osundare' poetry (Dahunsi and Babatunde 2017), obituary and *in memoriam* advertisement (Oladejo 2018), online advertisement and jingles, advertisements of banks (Ajepe 2021), political advertisements (Ayoola 2021), research article abstracts (Olaniyan and Ige 2023), classroom interaction (Akinseye 2025, Chimamanda Adichie's novel (Bamgbose and Shogbuyi 2025). All these studies addressed discourses in different spoken social settings, such as schools, as well as texts media and literary texts.

A newer approach to the analysis of interpersonal function is the Appraisal Theory, which is an organic extension of SFL. It describes how language users build and maintain social relationships, as well as express feelings, attitudes and stances among the users. Like SFL, appraisal sees language as network of meaning making choices, which language users make through which they evaluate their experiences. These include attitude (affect, judgement and appreciation (Martin and White 2003, White 2025).

The Appraisal theory has been applied to diverse textual types by southwestern Nigerian scholar, especially from the purview of stance taking. These include political discourse (Jombadi 2022, Chiluiwa 2026) online discourse, such as job portals (Adebayo and Taiwo 2018, 2025a, 2025b), online news and social media and comments (Ugah 2019, Afe 2024, Olaleye and Dahunsi 2025), online protests (Chiluiwa 2018). Several other studies also investigated legal discourse, such as supreme court judgements (Daniel and Unuabonah), intimate partners' domestic violence (Kolo and Lanre-Atoyebe, Aragbuwa 2025), political speeches (Ayoola 2019), protest discourse (Chiluiwa 2012, 2015, 2018, Chiluiwa and Ifukor 2015, Chiluiwa and Iredele 2026). Appraisal in another aspect of the interpersonal metafunction is Tenor, which is the contextual variable that realizes the interpersonal metafunction. It defines the social roles, status, and interactive relationships between people taking part in a discourse, and shapes their enactment of attitudes, power, and intimacy through language. Tenor is understandingly investigated in interactional discourses. Some texts will normally allow for greater flexibility in evaluative and interpersonal features, which portray writers' attitudes and their engagements of readers. Approaches to Tenor explore relative authority or hierarchical standing between participants, frequently people

interact and how close or familiar their social connection is, and the emotional personal or regard that speakers/writers hold toward one another or toward the topic of their discussion. Tenor also operates in language through the use of grammatical choices, such as declarative, interrogative, or imperative modality (Taiwo 2027b). Studies on Tenor in southwestern Nigeria were carried out mainly after the year 2000 focusing on interactional discourse, such as pulpit discourse (Taiwo 2007, Adedun and Mekiluwa 2010, Adepoju 2016), politicians' broadcasts (Aroge and Irewole 2020).

Tenor also reflects in the choice of pronoun (*you*) vs. (*one*), or polite vs. familiar forms of address and lexical selection to project a formal or casual tones. For instance, studies have been carried out on written texts (Adejare 2014, Akinseye 2025), social transformation campaigns (Ademilokun 2019), political speeches (Ayoola 2021, Adebomi 2025), news reports on homosexuality (Adegbola 2019), newspaper editorials (Ojo 2020, Alfred 2021), government policies (Dahunsi and Aragbuwa 2024). These studies show that modality is used to strategically manage interpersonal stance. Interpersonal themes are also studied to show how interpersonal communication is managed, most especially in Nigerian English conversations (Oyeleye 2012, Dalamu and Fatuase 2021)

### **Research in Textual Metafunction**

Research has also been carried out on Textual Cohesion. In SFG, textual cohesion is the surface-level semantic and grammatical binding mechanism that actualises the textual metafunction. It provides the *texture* that allows a sequence of sentences to function as a unified, meaningful whole rather than isolated fragments. Cohesion is a primary tool within this metafunction. The concept of cohesion was first comprehensively expounded by Michael Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan in their seminal book, *Cohesion in English* in 1976. Cohesion is a system of meaning, not just strict grammar rules. It occurs when one part of a text cannot be decoded meaningfully without looking at another part. Halliday and Hasan define it as "the set of linguistic links that hold a text together and give it meaning" (Halliday and Hasan (1976). SFL categorises cohesive ties into two major systems: grammatical and lexical cohesion. Grammatical cohesion is further categorised into: Reference (using pronouns or demonstratives (*he*, *this*, *those*) to point backward or forward to other items; Substitution (replacing one item with another (*do*, *one*, *so*); Ellipsis (omitting a structural element when the surrounding context supplies the meaning); Conjunction (using

linking words (*and, but, therefore, meanwhile*) to establish logical-semantic relationships between clauses. Lexical cohesion includes: Reiteration (repeating a word, or using a synonym, antonym, or superordinate term and Collocation (utilising words that naturally and frequently co-occur in the same semantic domain). Research on Cohesion typically engages students' writings. Some prominent ones in the south west include: (Taiwo 2005, 2012, Olateju 2006, Babalola, 2013), Other kinds of texts investigated for cohesion by southwestern Nigerian scholars are literary texts (Alabi 2019, Ojo 2019), administrative writing (Agbeleoba 2017), academic writing (Akindele 2011), and advertising discourse (Dalamu 2018).

Collocation is another area of research. It refers to the habitual co-occurrence of words and they are essential for producing fluent writing and speech. The study of collocations dates back to the work of J. R. Firth (1957), who famously stated, "You shall know a word by the company it keeps." This principle highlights the idea that meaning emerges not only from individual words but also from their co-occurrences with other words. Later corpus-based research, particularly by Sinclair (1991), provided empirical evidence for this claim, demonstrating that corpora can identify statistically significant word combinations, or collocations, in authentic language use. Firth identified the importance of collocation, which is identified at the syntagmatic level of the structuring of language. Studies of collocations in the Southwest typically direct attention at ESL learners' text production (Taiwo 2003, 2004, 2010, Olaniyi 2013)

### **The Ife School of SFG**

The Ife School refers to a prominent Nigerian tradition of SFL and discourse analysis located at Obafemi Awolowo University, (formerly the University of Ife) in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. The school has a prolific tradition of functional linguistic scholarship rooted in the Department of English Language headed by Adebisi Afolayan. The Ife School played a pivotal role in establishing functional approaches to language across West Africa. Adebisi Afolayan is widely considered the patriarch of English functional linguistics at Ife. His early works laid the pedagogical groundwork for studying English grammar as a functional, communicative tool rather than a rigid, prescriptive set of rules. The school grew out of a need to address English as a Second Language (ESL) in a highly multilingual environment. In the following sections, we will discuss prominent scholars in the Ife School of SFL.

## Adebisi Afolayan

Adebisi Afolayan is the pioneer of SFL in the country, Nigeria. He used SFL's concept of Register (how language varies according to its context of use - specifically *Field*, *Tenor*, and *Mode*) to analyse the coexistence of English and indigenous languages in Nigeria. Afolayan mapped out the functional distribution of languages in Nigeria. He argued that English and local mother tongues (like Yoruba) should not compete destructively; rather, they serve different fields of discourse and societal functions. He also utilised the idea of *situational context* to advocate for a bilingual national policy where mother tongues handle early childhood education, and English functions as the official register for higher administration and globalisation.

Afolayan revolutionised the teaching of English to non-native speakers in ESL situation by shifting the focus from rigid structural rule-bound exercise to communicative, systemic functions. Afolayan's works treated English as a tool for empowerment and functionality within the ESL context. He stressed that an ESL learner does not need to mimic a British accent or British idioms to be functional; they need to master the functional systems of the language to convey their localised realities.

## Oluwole Adejare

Another prominent scholar in the Ife School is Oluwole Adejare, who is widely celebrated for pioneering Systemic Functional Stylistics and Textlinguistics in Nigeria. He famously took M.A.K. Halliday's framework and engaged it to demystify complex African literature - most notably the works of Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka. Adejare used Hallidayan SFL to map out Soyinka's distinct *literary idiolect* (an individual's unique use of language). He demonstrated that Soyinka's text operates on multiple levels of meaning, and that by tracking his grammatical choices systemically, the texts become completely accessible. He developed a textlinguistic framework, which built upon SFL's concept of context and semantic layers to formulate his highly influential Three Orders of Meaning for interpreting African bilingual texts **Primitive Level (Base Level)** – (the literal surface grammar, lexis, and syntax). At this level, the direct, denotative message of the sentences are decoded. Before a reader can understand cultural nuances, they must first comprehend the literal phrasing of the European language being used. The second level is **The Second Order Level (Intermediary Level)**. This layer handles linguistic interference. It is where the author changes the imperial language to accommodate native rhetorical patterns, local

idioms, and social hierarchies. The third level is ***The Prime Order Level (Top Meta-Level)***. This level synthesizes the Primitive and Second Order layers to project the deeper thematic commentary of the text, such as political resistance, spiritual crises, or postcolonial identity (Adejare 1992). Adejare analysed how Soyinka infuses English words with underlying Yoruba cultural assumptions, idioms, code-switching, and mother-tongue interference. The Second-Level Order: The ultimate artistic or metaphoric meaning of the text (e.g., how characters use dialogue to represent themes like political apostasy, corruption, or systemic rot).

### **Niyi Oladeji**

Niyi Oladeji another scholar utilised early Hallidayan models to demonstrate that text has a structure beyond the sentence (Textlinguistics). His analytical work broke down how narrative texts build cohesion, how choices in vocabulary (*lexical collocation*) reinforce themes, and how grammatical structures function as indicators of ideological positioning. On his translation of Akinwumi Isola's Yoruba play, *Ẹfúnṣetán Aníwúrà: Iyálódé Ìbàdàn*, a highly idiom-dense, culturally-grounded Yoruba text into English, Oladeji relied on a functional linguistic framework to achieve cultural and situational equivalence rather than strict, word-for-word translation.

In his translation, Oladeji carefully mapped how characters choose their words to negotiate power. By looking at interpersonal systems (such as respect structures and proverb deployments), he managed to preserve the *tenor* (the relationship between characters) and the *field* (the institutionalised power of the female protagonist) across a completely different linguistic system. Oladeji used functional analysis to decode historical political rhetoric. He analysed how different sub-groups within the Yoruba nation systemically selected specific dialects, slurs, and praise poems (*oriki*) to reinforce hegemony, create political boundaries, and manage ethnic tensions during the 19th-century civil wars ().

### **Christopher Olatunji Awonuga**

Christopher Awonuga's scholarship focused on how grammatical choices yield objective interpretation in both literary art and institutional socio-political text. One of Awonuga's primary theoretical platforms was refining the scientific objectivity of literary criticism. In his highly celebrated inaugural lecture, *What Does This Text Mean? Stylistics and the Process of Interpretation*, he directly targeted standard literary

analysis (Awonuga 2017. Awonuga argued that traditional literary critics often leap directly from *intuition to conclusion* without proof. He championed the Hallidayan premise that a text's theme must be decoded via systematic linguistic description. Like his contemporary Adejare, Awonuga was preoccupied with using functional linguistics to unlock the highly intricate layers of canonical African literature, thereby being one of the first set of linguistic stylisticians in Nigeria.

Awonuga's early foundational research, his doctoral thesis, titled - *Language Use and Literary Meaning: A Study of Linguistic and Stylistic Realisation of Theme in Wole Soyinka's 'The Interpreters'*, broke down how complex stylistic structures are not decorative, but motivated choices (Awonuga 1982). By tracking how Soyinka used textual metafunctions, Awonuga proved that the author's allegedly dense prose has a perfectly predictable, organised system of meaning. He pioneered blending Halliday's Transitivity models with Prague School's foregrounding theory (how texts deviate from standard rules to highlight meaning). In papers looking at modern poetry, he analysed how systematic rule-breaking (like selectional restriction violations) alters the textual and ideational expectations of a reader (Awonuga 1982).

Awonuga successfully shifted SFL outward from literature into the volatile sphere of political text and socio-political hegemony. In his classic stylistic breakdown of President Olusegun Obasanjo's 2002 broadcast, Awonuga used structural-functional tracking to map out political power alignment (Awonuga 2005). He demonstrated how a politician's precise choice of personal pronouns, analogies, and textual structures work together to engineer public compliance.

### **Isaac Adewale Osisanwo**

Wale Osisanwo, another member of the Ife School pioneered the interface of methodology in Nigerian linguistics. He believed that while SFL's lexicogrammar provides the physical, structural description of a text, Pragmatics is required to decode the hidden, psychological intentions of the speaker. He paired d Hallidayan metafunctions with Austin and Searle's Speech Act Theory and Grice's Cooperative Maxims and provided researchers with a dual-lens toolkit to analyse everything from everyday conversations to complex political propaganda.

Osisanwo wrote extensively on Textlinguistics and focused on Halliday and Hasan's (1976) models of cohesion. He was preoccupied with the notion of texture, which gives a sequence of sentences the quality of being a unified text rather than a random arrangement of

words. He created diagnostic frameworks for tracking *Reference* (anaphora and cataphora), *Substitution*, and *Ellipsis* in Nigerian media and literary writing (Osisanwo 2008). He designed accessible practical models for analysing *lexical chains* and *collocations* (how words naturally cluster together), turning abstract cohesion theory into an objective, verifiable method for evaluating student essays and news reports. Osisanwo also examined mood in literary texts (Osisanwo 2006).

### **Dele Oluwafemi Akindele**

Femi Akindele was a highly influential scholar of the Ife School of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) at Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU). He was directly exposed to SFL, having studied at the University of Nottingham, with a strong presence of SFL. Akindele combined Hallidayan SFL with Sociolinguistics, Conversation Analysis, and Political Discourse Analysis. His scholarship focused primarily on how cultural norms, political authority, and everyday interactions in Nigeria are systematically mapped out within the functional architecture of language. His scholarship, began with his doctoral thesis on family conversation, titled *Speakers' Rights in English and Yoruba English Family Discourse*, supervised by the prominent SFL scholar Margaret Berry (Akindele 1986). Beyond analysing family conversation, he worked on casual discourse and political rallies. He demonstrates how Nigerians actively navigate the intricate, functional network of grammatical and cultural choices.

While many SFL scholars of his generation focused heavily on written literary texts, Akindele engaged in analysing natural and casual spoken dialogues. Akindele investigated bilingual Yoruba-English speakers structuring of everyday household dialogue by engaging the Interpersonal Metafunction (specifically the Mood system and conversational turn-taking rules). His analysis revealed cultural hierarchies, such as respect for elders and gender roles (Akindele 1990). He demonstrated that these are not just abstract behaviours, but are physically encoded in the grammar of spoken Yoruba-English clauses. He wrote extensive, foundational works on how speakers index social status, distance, and politeness through specialized naming and address systems (Akindele 1990, 1991, 1993). Akindele was also among prominent linguists in Southwestern Nigeria to systematically unpack the speeches of major historical leaders to show how political ideology maps onto grammatical functions (Akindele 1989).

## **Adewale Bandele Adegbite**

Wale Adegbite's broader research spans sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and language education, Adegbite's distinct contribution to SFL lies in synthesizing systemic grammar with pragmatic text description and applying the Hallidayan framework to institutional, medical, and literary discourses.

A major theoretical hallmark of Adegbite's scholarship is his assertion that SFL should not be used in isolation when dealing with complex, real-world data. He pioneered a dual-lens approach in Nigerian textlinguistics. He combined SFL's lexicogrammar (which provides a precise, physical description of a text's structure) with Pragmatics (which decodes the speaker's psychological intentions, contextual factors, and hidden power dynamics).

Adegbite shifted SFL off the purely literary page and used it as a diagnostic tool to study power asymmetries in critical Nigerian institutional encounters, Doctor-Patient and Herbalist-Client Interactions. In his famous comparative field studies, Adegbite analysed conversational encounters between traditional Yoruba herbalists and their clients, alongside modern doctor-patient consultations in English (Adegbite 1991, 2006).

Utilising the Interpersonal Metafunction (specifically turn-taking routines, mood choices, and modality systems), he demonstrated how medical practitioners structurally dominate interactions (Adegbite 2006). He mapped how an uneven social status leaves the control of an interaction in the hands of the practitioner, who uses specific clause structures to maintain authority and manage patient compliance. Wale Adegbite's contribution is rooted in making SFL a highly applicable linguistics in Nigeria. His work proved that systemic functional grammar is a flexible, rigorous tool capable of unmasking hidden meanings across highly diverse data—from legal arguments and biblical passages to medical consultations and political rhetoric.

## **Mojisola Ajibike Olateju**

Engaged in adapting, and expanding Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) within the Nigerian educational and socio-cultural landscape. Moji Olateju's research champions the Hallidayan view of language as a strategic tool used for making meaning, asserting social power, and driving community development. Her primary contributions to Systemic Functional Linguistics in Nigeria lie in her advancement of the field of Multimodality by merging traditional SFL principles with digital and

visual realities. She developed a specialized framework that explicitly leverages SFL to track how text, graphics, typography, and layout work interdependently to formulate message delivery (Ademilokun and Olateju 2020).

Her foundational doctoral and ongoing research targets the functional mechanics of English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms in Nigeria (Olateju, 2003, 2004, 2006). Her works investigate classroom discourse control, interactional patterns in secondary school science and humanities lessons, applying systemic theories to evaluate classroom controls, classroom talk and how students navigate communicative challenges in an ESL environment. She has also extensively published on how Nigerian learners achieve textual cohesion (using SFL frameworks for grammatical and lexical cohesive devices (Olateju 2006).

Much later in her research she applied her linguistic knowledge to literacy in which she advocated literacy empowerment for the girl child (Olateju 2007) and advanced concerns for Nomadic Literacy Empowerment. She adapts SFL concepts of register and communicative needs to design functional literacy programmes for nomads and herdsmen in Osun State to facilitate their language acquisition and ensure language learning directly aligns with their daily socio-economic demands (Olateju 2010).

### **Olurotimi Olorunfemi Taiwo**

While the early patriarchs of the Ife School focused primarily on literary stylistics and bilingual primary education, Rotimi Taiwo pioneered a major evolutionary shift: Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) and Digital SFL (Taiwo 2010a, 2012a). He is arguably the most cited authority on how the functional architecture of language adapts to the Internet, mobile messaging, and social media in Africa. Taiwo took Halliday's SFL framework and brought it into the 21st-century digital landscape, analysing how the Internet alters human meaning-making systems.

Taiwo analysed the innovative English structures used in mobile phone text messaging in Nigeria. Rather than viewing text-speak shortcuts and creative respellings as bad grammar, he applied an SFL lens to prove that these variations are a deliberate manipulation of the Mode of discourse, engineered for maximum communicative efficiency under digital constraints (Taiwo 2007, 2010b, 2013, 2015).

Taiwo's seminal paper utilises the SFL register variable of Tenor (which dictates the social role relationships between participants in a discourse) (Taiwo 2005, 2008). He analysed radio, television, and internet sermons by prominent charismatic Nigerian preachers. He unmasked how these religious figures strategically choose specific grammatical structures (such as changing interpersonal mood types from declarative to highly imperative or using specific modal verbs) to structurally establish absolute divine authority, project power over the congregation, and build a sense of psychological intimacy over a broadcast medium.

Taiwo has extensively paired SFL's Ideational Metafunction with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to reveal how political hegemony, crime, and security crises are framed in the Nigerian press (Taiwo 2008, 2020). In his widely cited article on language, power and ideology in news headlines, Taiwo looked at how news headlines act as ideological shortcuts (Taiwo 2007). By micro-analysing the Transitivity System, he proved that editors systematically select Material, Verbal, or Mental processes to subtly assign blame, construct ethnic "otherness," or shield the political elite from accountability (Taiwo 1999, 2001, Oyewo and Taiwo 2025).

Collaborating with younger scholars, Taiwo has analysed the rhetorical functions of Thematic Choices (Theme/Rheme distribution) in editorials addressing national terrorism and separatist group declarations (Taiwo 2011, Chiluwa, Taiwo and Ajiboye, 2020). This body of work shows how information is packaged to project specific national security alignments. He wrote pioneering chapters breaking down the lexicogrammar of Nigerian Electronic Advance Fee Fraud (419/Yahoo-Yahoo) emails (Taiwo 2012, Onanuga and Taiwo 2020). Taiwo exposed how cybercriminals systemically weave specific Relational and Material processes alongside highly manipulative Interpersonal Modalities to manufacture urgency, feign authenticity, and trick unsuspecting victims. This is an enduring contribution to SFL and a worthy legacy of updating knowledge in the discipline. He successfully proved that Hallidayan grammar is not a static tool limited to academic texts or traditional literature, but a dynamic, resilient instrument perfectly capable of parsing the complex, hybrid, and chaotic language of cyberspace and pop culture.

### **Emmanuel Taiwo Oladipupo Babalola**

E. T. O. Babalola's most definitive contributions to SFL is his book, *Nominal Group in Standard Nigerian and American English: A Systemic Linguistics Description* (Babalola 2009). SFL treats the nominal group as a crucial structural unit that carries experiential and logical meaning. Babalola's major contributions to Systemic Functional Linguistics focus on the structural, syntactic, and functional organisation of English grammar, as well as its practical applications in discourse and pedagogy. Babalola engaged systemic tools to structurally map out how standard Nigerian English handles pre-modifiers, heads, and qualifiers compared to American English (Babalola 2005, 2010). This work provided an empirical, descriptive (rather than prescriptive) validation of Standard Nigerian English (SNE) as a rule-governed, distinct systemic variant rather than a collection of errors. He has analysed the nominal group (noun phrase) through an SFL lens, detailing its structural components (Modifier, Head, Qualifier) and how it functions as a primary resource for construing ideational meaning.

Babalola also advocates for a functional approach to language teaching. He has consistently criticized traditional, prescriptive grammar teaching methods that focus purely on rote-learning rules. In SFL, Register (categorised by Field, Tenor, and Mode) explains how language varies according to its situational context (Babalola, 2009, 2013). Babalola applied these parameters to the study of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in Nigeria. His work helps map out how the English language adapts when used in specialised domains, such as Nigerian academic writing, professional administration, and media, illustrating how the context of situation shapes the grammatical choices of the speakers (Babalola 2007, Babalola and Onanuga, 2016).

### **Adeyemi Adegoju**

Adeyemi Adegoju, has made vital contributions to the extension of SFL in Nigeria. His research predominantly intersects Multimodal Stylistics, Social Semiotics, and Rhetorical Criticism. Instead of keeping SFL locked within pure grammatical formulas, Adegoju utilises Hallidayan functional grammar as a foundational diagnostic engine to analyse conflict rhetoric (Adegoju 2009), nation-branding, corporate advertisements, and internet humour. One of Adegoju's most vital contributions is expanding Halliday's textual and interpersonal metafunctions into the domain of multi-semiotic systems. He examines

how meaning is co-deployed across different "modes" (such as text, layout, colors, and audio) in public spaces.

Adegoju's early and foundational doctoral work on Nigeria's historical June 12 political crisis relies on the critical components of SFL's interpersonal grammar - specifically person deixis (how pronouns like *we*, *you*, *I*, *they* were deployed to express interpersonal meanings in different texts. He tracks how political actors weaponised simple pronominal choices to engineer ideological "*us versus them*" divisions (Adegoju 2005). He demonstrated how pronouns were not just to be seen as mere grammatical placeholders but calculated systemic tools used to forge ethnic or national solidarity while alienating political rivals (Adegoju 2014). Adegoju has heavily contributed to mapping interpersonal resources, such as attitudes, feelings onto digital political discourse. In collaboration with a colleague (Oyebode and Adegoju 2017), Adegoju mapped out how internet users and political campaigns deployed appraisal systems via political memes and social media messages to construct satire. They showed how humour acts as a highly systemic, rhetorical choice designed to deconstruct the authority of opposing candidates while fostering community alignment (Adegoju and Oyebode 2015).

Adegoju has used critical functional linguistics to evaluate how the Nigerian government attempts to project institutional identity, contrasting it against the public's linguistic resistance. In his twin studies on the state's public relations campaigns, he explored coercive persuasion and internal branding (Adegoju 2016, 2023). Using SFL and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), he unpacked how official government discourse utilised specific grammatical projections to force a narrative of patriotism, while demonstrating how the populace used alternative text networks on the internet to resist, parody, and dismantle state propaganda. He also applied Hallidayan ideational and textual metafunctions to systematically map out how poets make specific grammatical selections to encode the socio-economic "push and pull" factors driving African youth to undertake irregular migration (Adegoju 2007).

Adegoju treats Hallidayan linguistics not as a passive academic method, but as a critical social tool that proves that grammar, visual signifiers, colour choices, and digital humour can be systematically deconstructed to map out conflict resolution, public resistance, and ideological manipulation in Africa.

## **Mohammed Ayodeji Ademilokun**

Mohammed Ademilokun has made major contributions to Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), specifically through its integration into Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and Corpus Linguistics. While traditional SFL centers mostly on textual grammar, Ademilokun's work expands Hallidayan concepts into the visual, auditory, and digital domains of modern Nigerian socio-political life.

One of Ademilokun's most definitive contributions is extending SFL's three metafunctions (Ideational, Interpersonal, and Textual) beyond spoken or written text into multimodality. In his seminal doctoral and fellowship research he used SFL alongside Jay Lemke's multimodal semiotic theory (Ademilokun 2015). He argued that in Nigerian political rallies, meaning is not just driven by the speech (verbal group), but is simultaneously constructed through a network of other semiotic resources: political adornments, songs, dance, visual campaign imagery, and even surrogate linguistic signs, like talking drums (Ademilokun 2015). Ademilokun has been able to demonstrate non-verbal modes' realisations of interpersonal meaning and ideational meaning construction of political identity. He frequently interfaces SFL with Corpus Linguistics to track language shifts on a larger empirical scale (Ademilokun 2019, 2021).

A primary area of his research is the study of Modality - an essential component of SFL's interpersonal metafunction that portrays language users' stance, judgment, or commitment. Some of research analysed Nigeria's national transformation campaigns, such as, *Change Begins with Me* advocacy (Ademilokun 2019). In this paper, he used corpus tools to isolate modal verbs and resources. His research maps out how state and non-state actors engaged modal grammar to negotiate power, express civic resistance and project authority (Ademilokun 2019).

Ademilokun has also utilised systemic frameworks to study the projection of identity by contemporary educational institutions. In collaborative research analysing the web presence and digital branding of Nigerian universities, he engaged SFL to show how institutions structure their digital text and visuals to meet specific corporate objectives through the marketisation of their institutions. Through this, he demonstrated how website contents functionally operate as semiotic tools for building prestige and attracting international stakeholders (Ademilokun and Taiwo, Taiwo and Ademilokun 2023).

Overall, Ademilokun took Halliday's functional grammar out of the static textbook and applied it to the dynamic, multimodal realities of modern Nigeria, proving that protests, campaign rallies, digital media, and cultural artifacts are highly organized linguistic structures designed for social meaning-making.

### **Other Major SFL Scholars in the Southwestern Nigeria**

Outside the Ife School, notable scholars who worked within the traditions of SFL in southwestern Nigeria have contributed to defining scholarship through this approach. They include scholars who presently work and were trained at the Universities of Ibadan and Lagos as well as some other universities in the southwest.

#### **Albert Lekan Oyeleye**

Lekan Oyeleye trained under Adebisi Afoloyan at the University of Ife. He also did part of his studies at the University of London. His doctoral thesis titled *The language of Achebe's Early Novels (in the context of Nigerian English): A study in Literary Stylistics* explored contextual use of English in Chinua Achebe's novels (Oyeleye 1983). His academic research covers stylistics, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and pragmatics. Oyeleye famously treated Halliday's theories as part of his broader "My Father's House" philosophy, the title of his 2016 Inaugural Lecture at the University of Ibadan (Oyeleye 2016). In this view, the English language is a vast, shared house containing diverse, context-driven variations. Oyeleye leveraged SFL to show how non-native speakers adapt and functionally validate English to meet local socio-political needs.

Working on Register Analysis, a core aspect of SFL, Oyeleye applied the concept of Register to the English usage in Nigeria. He coined and analysed the concept of *Glibspeak* within the Nigerian socio-political register. Through an SFL lens, he argued that when Nigerians redefine or re-semanticise standard English words, they are expanding the language's meaning potential, thereby neutralising the prescriptive Western concept of lexical errors. (Oyeleye 2016)

Oyeleye combined SFL with Speech Act Theory and Conversation Analysis to interpret formal institutional interactions in Nigeria's legislative discourse. He engaged the interpersonal metafunction, specifically to break demonstrate how the mood system and interrogative structures are deployed in legislative debates. He evaluated media

representation during crucial Nigerian general elections engaging SFL's Ideational metafunction and lexicalisation networks.

Oyeleye also analysed the cover stories of prominent magazines like *Tell* and *The News*. He tracked how social actors were lexically packaged and structurally framed in clauses and provided empirical proof of how the Nigerian press uses systemic language choices to mask political bias, advance specific ideologies, and manipulate public opinion.

### **Opoola Ayotunde Ogunsiji**

Ayo Ogunsiji's contribution to Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is his treatment of Systemic Linguistics as an interpretive bridge to chart how African writers and ordinary citizens navigate the complex meaning potential of English in a deeply pluralistic society. Ogunsiji engaged in SFL-driven literary stylistics. He worked on Wole Soyinka's literary works (Ogunsiji 2001). In one of his articles, he engaged classical SFL to analyse a genre that blends fact and fiction, which he called "faction". Ogunsiji's analysis of Soyinka's works showed that specific phonological repetitions (alliteration/assonance) and graphological nuances were engaged to perform an Ideational function building a multi-sensory, uniquely African narrative environment that captures the sights, historical memories, and sounds of post-colonial Nigeria (Ogunsiji 2005, 2007).

Ogunsiji has applied the concept of language as socio-semiotic resource extensively to the sociolinguistic realities of Nigeria. His extensive research on multilingualism and identity maps how linguistic pluralism enables speakers to switch registers. He demonstrates how these switches are not accidental errors but systematic modifications of SFL's Interpersonal metafunction, which allows multilingual Nigerians to portray their identities in different discourse (Ogunsiji 2003). Ogunsiji's application of Halliday's SFL frameworks to the stylistic investigation of African writers and the realities of a multilingual populace has proved that SFL remains a veritable diagnostic tool for capturing the evolving nature of the English language in Nigeria.

### **Ayodele Osisanwo**

Ayo Osisanwo specialises in Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), Media Linguistics, and Pragmatics. Within the University of Ibadan school of thought, his contribution lies in hybridizing Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) with Theo van Leeuwen's Social Actor Network and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Osisanwo engages SFL as a critical

tool to unmask how language is manipulated during national security crises, acts of terrorism, and political conflicts (Osisanwo 2016). Osisanwo engages the corpus method in many of his papers, such as Osisanwo 2024, Osisanwo 2025).

Osisanwo also utilises Halliday's Transitivity System to isolate Material, Verbal, and Mental processes, linking them directly to Theo van Leeuwen's sociological framework for representing social actors. He provided empirical proof of how Nigerian newspapers use structural *Role Allocation* (activation vs. passivation) to frame the actors. By tracking who is placed as the grammatical "Agent" (the active force) versus the "Beneficiary" or "Goal" (the passive recipient), Osisanwo unmasked how the media linguistically manufactures a "discourse of fear," delegitimizes the terrorists, and constructs state counter-terrorism efforts.

Osisanwo frequently deploys SFL to capture the linguistic fracturing of Nigerian unity, analysing media accounts of secessionist agitations (e.g., the Yoruba Nation or pro-Biafra movements) and national insecurity (Osisanwo and Akano 2023, 2024). Osisanwo's research demonstrates how newspaper editorials and online forums use systemic resources to classify certain groups as "freedom fighters" and others as "terrorists," tracking how public sentiment and national identity are structurally pushed and pulled during the times of civic stress. As discourse mutated in the 2020s, Osisanwo aggressively expanded his research into the digital and visual spheres (evaluating social media spaces like X/Twitter and Nairaland, as well as internet memes).

Osisanwo took functional grammar from being an abstract classroom drill and turned it into an empirical diagnostic framework capable of dissecting the most volatile socio-political issues in modern Africa – including terrorism, political propaganda, and digital warfare.

### **Adeyemi Matthew Daramola**

Adeyemi Daramola earned his Ph.D. from Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia – the global epicenter of Hallidayan Systemic Linguistics. This background allowed him to directly transplant, internalise, and adapt the core principles of M.A.K. Halliday to the Nigerian, most especially, the southwestern part's sociolinguistic landscape. Daramola's most distinctive methodological contribution is his development and application of Functional-Semiotic Discourse Analysis. Through this, he synthesised Halliday's social semiotics with Eija Ventola's multi-level systemic approaches (spanning Genre, Register, and Language planes) to provide a structured blueprint for

analysing Nigerian social realities and how they are expressed in text. Daramola's 2008 study, engaged the functional-semiotic framework to deconstruct political transitions in Nigeria. He meticulously demonstrated how political leaders deploy specific linguistic configurations to justify shifts in governance and institutional actions (Daramola 2008).

Daramola's early research focused on pushing SFL boundaries beyond Anglo-centric constraints. In one of his papers he presented a universal description of the processes in systemic functional linguistics (Daramola 1996). In the paper, he critically examined how process networks operate across typologically diverse languages, particularly contrasting English structures with African languages like Yoruba.

His inaugural lecture at the University of Lagos, titled *The English in Nigeria as Discourses of Life and Death*, Daramola engaged SFL to deliver a deep socio-cultural diagnosis of Nigeria. Daramola argued that language in Nigeria is not a passive tool but a linguistic verbalisation of life and structural power (Daramola 2019). Using SFL's Ideational (experiential) and Interpersonal metafunctions, to analyse how the misuse or rigid application of formal versus informal English creates social friction, alienates citizens, and shapes institutional inequalities.

Daramola has also consistently criticised traditional structural, or psychological methods of teaching English in Nigeria. He has continued to advocate a shift toward sociological and functional linguistic theories (specifically SFL and Pragmatics) in Nigerian classrooms. His argument is that since in SFL language is a resource for making meaning, rather than a rigid set of syntactic rules, it should be made to empower Nigerian students to understand the social context behind their language choices in order to enable them to communicate more effectively in real-world environments. Overall, Daramola's legacy lies in his localisation of SFL to analyse Nigeria's political texts, indigenous Yoruba proverb, and educational challenges of Nigeria.

### **Babatunde Olusola Ope-Davies**

Babatunde Ope-Davies' scholarship uniquely merges SFL with modern technology, political communication, and legal settings, showing how Hallidayan grammar can adapt to the digital age. He is one of the Nigerian scholars who systematically combine SFL with Corpus Linguistics to analyse political discourse. He pioneered using digital software to analyse thousands of political texts simultaneously. While his research is deeply rooted in Discourse Analysis and Applied Linguistics,

he later pioneered Digital Humanities in the country (Opeibi 2019, Ope-Davies 2022). He also worked extensively on governance and civic engagement (Opeibi 2011). He utilises SFL's Ideational Metafunction (specifically the *Transitivity system*) and the Interpersonal Metafunction (*Mood and Modality choices*) to study Nigerian politicians' discourse (Opeibi 2004, 2016, 2018).

As social media platforms like X (Twitter), Facebook, and blogs came to dominate Nigerian civic life, Ope-Davies leveraged SFL to understand how citizens interact online. Ope-Davies treats digital platforms as unique Contexts of Situation, mapping out how the SFL variables of Field (what is happening), Tenor (the relationship between users), and Mode (the digital medium) shift rapidly on the Internet. Ope-Davies has made significant contributions to institutional forensics by applying SFL frameworks to the Nigerian legal system (Opeibi 2018).

In his co-authored research analysing the official proceedings of regional Election Petition Tribunals in Nigeria, he focused heavily on SFL's Appraisal System (the system used to map out attitude, engagement, and alignment (Opeibi 2012). His work shattered the notion that courtroom witnesses are completely passive. By breaking down the clause patterns during rigorous cross-examinations, he showed how witnesses use deliberate linguistic choices (such as calculated evasion or pleading forgetfulness) to actively resist and renegotiate the institutional power exerted by lawyers.

Ope-Davies's foray into Corpus Linguistic and Digital Humanities gave younger SFL researchers the digital toolkit necessary to run automated syntactic and semantic queries over massive datasets (such as digital archives of news, government speeches, or social media trends (Ope-Davies 2022). Ope-Davies took SFL out of the analogue classroom and pushed it into the digital era. Ope-Davies has shown that Halliday's social semiotic model goes beyond a tool for analysing texts, but an essential framework for investigating multi-modal and connected realities of digital democracy, computational discourse, and internet-age politics.

### **Roseline Abonego-Adejare**

Roseline Abonego-Adejare lectured at the Lagos State University, Ojo. She has contributed significantly to SFL and Systemic Grammar, by using its application to Second Language Acquisition and English language pedagogy in Nigeria. Her work focuses on bridging the gap between abstract grammatical theories and classroom practice, viewing

language as a context-dependent, meaning-making resource. In doing this, she engaged in the description of SFL and Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) and applies them to L2 and English language pedagogy in Nigeria.

Adejare's work centres on bridging the gap between abstract grammatical theories and classroom practice. She viewed language as a context-dependent, meaning-making resource. Adejare's work spans almost every aspect of SFG, such as mood and modality (Adejare 2014), transitivity and voice (Adejare 2015), tense and aspect (Adejare 2014, 2022), the English verbal group (Adejare 2014), pronouns in presidential debates (Adejare 2018), existential clauses (Adejare and Maledo 2026). All these researches are grounded in SFL and they extensively mapped the textual functions of language using real-world spoken and instructional corpora, such as recorded classroom discourse.

Adejare also extensively researched on the textual functions of verbal groups using real-world spoken and instructional corpora like recorded classroom discourse. Her research identified dozens of situational textual functions of verbs, and evaluated how factors like the imperative mood, the verb *BE*, and tense are deployed by instructors in delivering meaning in their classes (Adejare 2014b). She has also shown the limitations of existing syntactic models in West African classrooms by arguing that specific syntactic models misrepresent the natural language used by ESL students. She advocates for Halliday's original Systemic Grammar framework, which establishes five distinct syntactic units of sentence, clause, group, word, and morpheme.

Like some other Nigerian linguists, such as Unuabonah, Adejare's research has advanced the SFL framework by incorporating corpus-based studies of Nigerian English. Her research utilises the International Corpus of English (ICE-Nigeria) to track systemic patterns of modern grammar, such as preposition placement and the pragmatic mechanics of existential clauses (Adejare 2020, 2021).

### **Innocent Eberechi Chiluwa**

Innocent Chiluwa primarily made a name for himself in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Pragmatics, and Digital Discourse Studies. CDA connects with SFG. SFG provides CDA with a clear method to link words and grammar to social life. Chiluwa frequently pairs Halliday's lexico-grammatical systems with critical, approaches to critical analysis of discourse in order to analyse media representations of war, terrorism, online deception, and digital activism.

Chiluwa started his research by engaging in the analyses of print media, focusing on the ideological language in news reports. He relied on SFL's Ideational metafunction (how reality is constructed) and Textual metafunction (how messages are structured) to investigate newspaper headlines on conflicts. His research demonstrated how subtle grammatical variations in headlines represent biases of the editorial body of a newspaper. He showed how the layout, in the clauses and structure work together to manipulate public perception and frame state actions.

Chiluwa engaged the Interpersonal metafunction of SFL particularly, the Appraisal stance

to prove that linguistic choices represent interpersonal systems deployed by radical groups to establish ideological solidarity and construct an antagonistic *Us versus Them* reality. His study of online activism, such as #BringBackOurGirls, #EndSARS, and secessionist protest discourses like IPOB), x-ray activists' engagement of cyberspace to the dissemination of their attitudes, beliefs and goals.

Chiluwatreats digital threads, tweets, and social media campaigns as vast networks of meaning potential. His analysis of online protesters reveals that social media communication is a highly organised system for disseminating radical ideas of extremist groups like Boko Haram, as well as views and attitudes of protesting groups. Chiluwa's contribution to SFL lies in his merging and adaptation of the methods of SFG and Critical Discourse Analysis for interrogating conflict, radicalism and protest as discursive events. He demonstrated that linguistic choices in media texts, especially newspaper headlines about herders-farmers clashes and terrorists' language are governed by ideologically-laden nuances.

### **Foluke Olayinka Unuabonah**

Although Foluke Unuabonah is renowned for her research in Discourse Analysis, Corpus Linguistics, and Pragmatics, her research interfaces with SFL specifically by mapping out how non-standard linguistic items operate within SFL's Interpersonal and Textual Metafunctions. Her research sees language as an adaptable, context-driven social semiotic system.

She is a leading global expert on bilingual pragmatic markers, which are indigenous expressions or interjections borrowed from African languages (like Yoruba, Akan, or Swahili) or Nigerian Pidgin into standard English. Her studies investigate speakers' establishment of relationships through their stances, and how they manage social

distances. Her studies have shown that particles like *o*, *sha*, *abi*, *haba*, *abeg*, *sef*, and *na* are not just syntactically optional filler words, rather, they are pragmatically relevant contributor to meaning in discourse. Just like Chiluba and Osisanwo discussed earlier, her prolific corpus-based studies demonstrate that bilingual pragmatic markers are highly structured, rule-governed interpersonal semantic resources, which mitigate commands, convey intense emotions, emphasise shared knowledge, reduce social distance, and reinforce cultural solidarity.

Unuabonah has helped modernise African discourse studies by championing Corpus Pragmatics of ICE Nigeria and the GloWbE corpus. Using these corpora, she provided empirical, quantifiable validation for how functional grammar behaves across different text types in formal speech and informal language use. Her empirical studies have shown that the meaning in West African English varieties is structurally divergent from Euro-centric varieties. Her studies therefore may support endonormative stabilisation and validation of African English varieties.

## Conclusion

This study set out to map and evaluate the trajectory of research in SFL within Southwestern Nigeria. It explores the vibrant intellectual landscape of the application of SFL to the context of southwestern Nigeria. Early SFL scholarship in the region primarily focused on pedagogical applications and stylistic analysis of literary works of Nigerian writers, particularly, Wole Soyinka. However, contemporary research has extended the frontiers of research to cover approaches that can be described as offshoot of SFL, such as Evaluation and a blend of approaches to SFL with critical discourse analysis and multimodal discourse analysis.

A defining strength of Southwestern Nigerian SFL scholarship is the domestication of the approach to the context of the region. Researchers have successfully harnessed Hallidayan frameworks to interrogate post-colonial realities and multilingual ecologies (including English-Indigenous language interfaces). Research activities have domiciled in three first generation universities in the southwestern Nigeria – Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), University of Ibadan (UI) and the University of Lagos UNILAG), with OAU being the pioneering institution.

Ultimately, SFL research in Southwestern Nigeria is not merely an academic exercise in theoretical reproduction, but a dynamic, evolving toolkit for social critique and problem-solving. SFL scholarship in the

region remains well-positioned to make enduring contributions to both Nigerian applied linguistics and the wider global SFL community.

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