

# **A Morphosyntactic Analysis of Some Official Correspondence of the Lagos State Government, Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

This paper explores the use of English in Nigerian governmental correspondences. The data for this study are drawn from the Public Service Office of Lagos State Government at the Secretariat, Alausa, Lagos. Fifty internal memos and letters (twenty-five each) are selected for analysis using two layers (linguistic expression and clause) of the morphosyntactic level of Functional Discourse Grammar. The research discovers that, in applying the first layer, linguistic expression, all the types – coordination, (co)subordination, simple clause and extra-clausality – are identified in our texts. It indicates that co-subordination type of linguistic expressions with different types of embedded clauses has the highest number of sentences and reveals the complex nature of the governmental documents. Also, the first layer helps us to distinguish simple clauses from clauses with extra phrases thereby showing micro-templates in each clause (simple sentence) and the linear order of sequence of morphosyntactic units. In addition, another level of delicacy in grammatical analysis which is the second layer of morphosyntax in FDG helps to analyse clausal constituents of the correspondences. This analysis is significant in the sense that it helps us understand the syntactic functions and roles of clauses as well as active and passive constructions. The study further reveals that, ‘I am directed’ as an introductory clause occurs many times in our texts. It indicates that the writer is subordinate to the person who gives instruction. This is regarded as an instance of subtle command and profuse use of politeness principles in official government correspondences. The study concludes that the use of English in government is impersonal, less-effusive and shorn of unnecessary patronage.

**Keywords:** Morphosyntax, Lagos, correspondence, government, linguistic expression, clause

## **Introduction**

English plays a great role in communication in every establishment in Nigeria, being a multilingual country with many indigenous and foreign languages co-habiting with it in the country. This is because English has a special place as a second language in the country with constitutional backing as a lingua franca. In governmental institutions, official communication is done in English, the official channel of communication at all levels in Nigeria. All arms of government exchange information either horizontally, vertically, from top-down and from down-up; and this is achieved through the use of language. In other words, through language,

information is communicated or passed from one person to another in government or privately owned establishments.

In Nigeria, English is regarded as an official language. It is the language of communication at both national and international levels. At the national level, it is the language of education, politics, language of commerce, language of law, language of mass media and language of government. As a way to affirm this submission, Awonusi states that:

It is the language used for government transactions, verbal or written. Minutes of meetings are recorded in English, memoranda and letters are written in English, and it is also the language of protocol. Heads of State broadcast to the nation in this medium. Its use is pervasive in virtually all aspects of national life in the country (2009, p. 72).

Though we are aware of the fact that an indigenous language may also function as an official language, English plays a major role in the country. This is summarised thus:

Because of the extreme multiplicity of languages in most ESL countries and the relatively underdeveloped state of the indigenous languages, and also for reason of colonialism which has given a lot of prestige and bread and butter advantage to the study and learning of English, the language is used for official purposes, for education, commerce, administration, the media and for national and international communications (Njemanze, 2012, p. 20).

The above summary of the role of English indicates the language is used in almost every aspect in Nigeria though there are indigenous languages equally being used for various purposes.

In any system of government, there are many written documents used in communicating among employees, employers, stakeholders and the members of the society. These documents include circulars, memos, queries, letters, short articles, press releases, and other official correspondences. The use of English in these documents matters a lot as English is generally accepted and constitutionally recognised as the language of official communication in offices, government parastatals and business organisations in Nigeria. This is built on the premise that Nigeria is a heterogeneous country with “520 living indigenous languages” (Eberhard, et al., 2023) used simultaneously by citizens to communicate, build friendships, negotiate and carry on with life. We can then imagine how chaotic it will be if there is no unifying neutral language like English that can be used to bring these disparate entities together in a nation. Thus, effective use of the English language or its interpretation may aid understanding or cause misunderstanding especially within government circles and among people from all walks of life who have to relate to carry out government business daily. Effective communication is captured by Schaub thus:

When you plan to give a speech or write a report, your message may seem to be only the words you choose that will convey your meaning. But that is just the beginning. The words are brought together with grammar and organisation. You

may choose to save your most important point for last. The message also consists of the way you say it—in a speech, with your tone of voice, your body language, and your appearance—and in a report, with your writing style, punctuation, and the headings and formatting you choose (2017, p. 7).

The word organisation as shown in Schaub's explanation may be regarded as the textual function of a text. To Morley, language performs a textual function when it serves as a means to create text as opposed to merely isolated and disconnected sentences. This suggests that written text must be well organised for effective communication to take place. It is different from oral communication where the speaker may clarify his message or support oral delivery with no-verbal cues or gestures.

In a government establishment where many people from different cultures, backgrounds and languages come together to work as a team, English is needed to ensure a flow of communication from one person to another either at horizontal or vertical levels. This is further buttressed by Akinyosoye's assertion on communication in the workplace that:

Communication is an integral aspect of an organisation. Without communication, the corporate objective of a company will not be achieved both internally and externally. Therefore, it is important to develop good speaking/writing and listening/reading skills to function effectively in a work place. For example, talking with co-workers, listening to or giving instructions and asking questions in the work place requires good communication skills (2016, p. 20).

Apart from the fact that English is used for official transactions, how the language is used is also important. When it comes to the use of English, there are varieties according to subject matter and attitude (Aremo, 2014). Likely, the variety of English used in writing administrative documents in organisations may be different from other documents in the choice of lexical and grammatical features. Aremo even states that the variety used in official correspondence is complex. According to him,

There are explicit, more carefully completed major sentences, often of the compound-complex subclass[,] and passive constructions are preferred to active ones. This is the variety usually adopted in official correspondence, government publications, scholarly papers, students' essays, and textbooks (Aremo, 2014, p. 640).

Therefore, we are concerned with the grammatical structure of the selected government documents and how such documents are different from one another in terms of style, structure, form, formality, casualness, elegance, etc. In the words of Keizer (2015), "stylistically the language of academic texts differs considerably from that of an informal letter, even when they deal with the same topic ... there will be differences in the type and complexity of the grammatical constructions used (passive vs active constructions, complete clauses vs clause

fragments etc.) as well as differences in punctuation, etc.” Moreover, Smith and Samuel opine that “It is only when English phrases are longer or more complex that the language reverts to its aesthetic function . . . What may be regarded as linguistically simple by some may be deemed difficult by lower-level consumers” (2020, p. 166). All these depend on how a document or text is structured in terms of its ideational, interpersonal and textual configuration (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004).

On written communication, Ekwueme-Ugwu, Adeniyi and Olaluwoye (2017, p. 98) identify the following as varieties of writing: letter writing, journalistic writing, poetry, biographies, scripts, memos, reports, minutes, research writing, speech writing, direct and report writing. Similarly, forms of writing according to Olateju and Olaosun (2013) are minutes of meeting, notices of meeting, letter writing, public announcements, memoranda, report writing, essay writing, and curriculum vitae. These forms are regarded as written channels by Schaub (2017) which according to him are letters, memorandums, purchase orders, invoices, newspaper and magazine articles, blogs, e-mail, text messages, tweets, and so forth. In this study, we are concerned with how English is used for internal communication in correspondences with a focus on letters and memos.

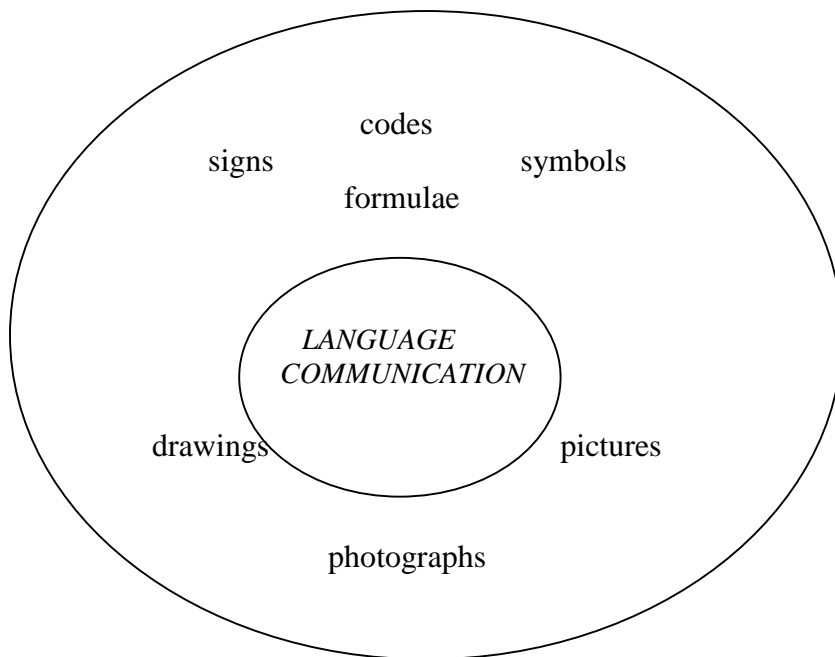
### **Organisational Communication**

Njemanze defines communication as “the process of interaction which is carried out in a variety of ways; gestures, facial expressions and talking, to influence the behaviour of others. Whenever we do these, we are communicating, thereby transferring meaningful ideas, information, thoughts, feelings etc. from the communicator to the receiver” (2012, p. 18). This definition shows that communication involves the transmission of information from one person to another, hence the process of information. From the linguistic point of view, communication is based on “mental system of language codes for expressing and understanding thought, feelings, and ideas” (Njemanze, 2012, p. 18). The definition of communication from the linguistic perspective corresponds to the opinion of Alturo, Keizer, and Payrató regarding linguistic communication. They are of the opinion that:

Taking a top-down approach, every linguistic communication starts with some communicative intention and its corresponding mental representation at the prelinguistic conceptual level. These intentions, which are contained in the Conceptual Component, trigger the operation of Formulation in the Grammatical Component, which converts them into interpersonal (pragmatic) and representational (semantic) structures (Alturo, Keizer, and Payrató 2014, p. 185).

The above explanation of linguistic communication shows that language and communication share things in common though the two may be differentiated when it comes to communication that does not involve the use of language. This is captured by Daramola with the diagram below:

## Similarity and Difference between Language and Communication



**Diagram 1: Language and Communication (Daramola, 2019, p. 37)**

The above diagram shows that language is found within communication and that communication is broader than language. This is because communication can take place without language. Pictures, photographs, drawings, signs, codes, symbols and formulae as shown in the diagram are other means of communicating with people. This is supported by Syal and Jindal (2010) who state that “gestures, nods, winks, flags, smiles, horns, short-hand, braille alphabet, mathematical symbols, morse code, sirens, sketches, maps, acting, miming and dancing” (p. 5) are means of communication. Similarly, Mweu opines that communication is done “by using symbols, including words and images which convey meaning” (2001, p. 11).

As explained by Daramola (2009), Syal and Jindal (2010), and Mweu (2001), it is clear that communication is done through other means apart from using language. Adeniyi and Ekwueme-Ugwu (2020) confirm this assertion in their study of how posters are used to pass information to the public. They show that “the visual representation of ideas and information through images such as pictures and similar mnemonic designs” is one of the ways communication is done.

Oluga (2001) defines organisation as “a stable system of individuals who work together to achieve, through a hierarchy of ranks and division of labour, common goals” (p. 22). Similarly, Obisi (2005) sees organisation as a system. It is “a well-defined system and structure through which individuals collectively work and relate for the attainment of objectives” (p. 21). In an establishment where people work together to achieve the same purpose, there is a need

for interaction as well as communication. Organisational communication may be internal or external. While internal communication occurs between or among members of the same organisation by passing information from one person to another, external communication occurs outside an organisation. Tingum (2019) identifies Emails and memorandums, business letters for outside communication, business reports for conveying information, transactional documents to conduct business with clients, and financial documents to manage the business as types of business documents. He further explains that:

A company uses documents to communicate, transact business and analyse its productivity. Business documents range from brief email messages to complex legal agreements. Some documents are prepared by employees and business owners, while others are drafted by professionals from outside of the company, such as accountants and lawyers. Since documents provide proof of an organisation's dealings and may be referred to for years to come, it is important that they be well-written (Tingum, 2019).

The above assertion underscores how important communication is in a company or organisation. It also emphasises the importance of documentation for future uses.

### **The English Language and its Varieties**

In the words of Aremo, the term "English is a complex of many different varieties of language used in all kinds of situation in many parts of the world" (2014, p. 636). This implies that there are many varieties of English in the world today. This may be as a result of contact of other languages with the English language. Akindele and Adegbite (2005) classify varieties of English according to their geographical locations and social usage thus:

#### **Geographical**

World English:	The international community
National English:	British English, American English, Indian English, Nigerian English
Regional English:	Irish English, Scottish English
Ethnic English:	Yoruba English, Hausa English, Ibo English

#### **Social**

Educated/Standard:	South East English, BBC English, Correct English
Non-educated/Non-standard:	Interference English, Pidgin English

Similarly, Aremo (2014) identifies two main kinds of varieties of English. These are varieties according to user and varieties according to use. He further classifies varieties according to the user into regional and social dialects. He categorises regional dialects into native regional dialects and derivative regional dialects while he simply identifies educated and uneducated English as types of social dialects. On regional dialects, he writes:

The major regional dialects of English are British English, American English, Canadian English, Australian English, New Zealand English and South African English. All of these are used by native speakers of English (who learn English as their first language) and they are therefore the regional dialects of the language in the normal sense. But there are also regional dialects of English that are used by speakers for whom English is only a second language: Indian English, Nigerian English, Ghanaian English, etc (Aremo, 2014, p. 636).

Still on the varieties of English, Awonusi (2010, p. 4) identifies different levels of varieties of English thus:

Origin/Base:	British English, World English, International English
Continental:	Asian, American, African
Regional/Sub-continental:	West African
National/Sub-regional:	Nigerian, Ghanaian, Kenyan
Sub-national/ethnic	Yoruba English [Hausa English & Ibo English]

The above identified varieties show that there are different varieties of English based on the nations, regions, ethnicities and social status of the users of English. Raheem makes it clear that “different regional varieties of the language [English] have developed with variations existing at virtually all levels of language ... while regional differences in pronunciation and lexicon are often tied to sociolinguistic factors such as different mother tongues ...” (2013, p. 183). This is supported by Mbisike who claims that “As a result of the spread and diversification of the English Language, many local forms and standards have emerged amongst native and non-native speakers of English. Hence, with time, the English language has undergone a process of nativization” (2007, p. 29). Similarly, Akindele (2017, p. 57) observes that:

The English language has continued to spread across the globe and since language adapts to its new environment and is sensitive to its context of culture, its various realizations at different levels of linguistics are inevitable. This simple fact has led to varieties such as British English, Nigerian English, Canadian English, Australian English, and American English among others.

It could be deduced from the above assertion that there are varieties of English today as a result of its contact with other cultures in the World. The language is adapted to its new environment and given a national name based on the nation where it is being used.

### **Government Correspondences: Letters and Memoranda**

Written communication is done to disseminate information. In government organisations, written communication is done in different forms. These include policy, regulations letters, memorandum, circulars, executive orders, and press releases. For this study, our focus is on two government correspondences – letters and memorandum.



**Letters:** Though there are different types of letters, we are concerned with official letters (formal letters) in this work. “A formal letter is defined as a letter that has an official, agreed pattern. It is impersonal and written to persons in their official capacity” (Ukwuegbu et al., 2016, 13). This is buttressed by Olateju and Olaosun (2013) that formal letters serve official purposes. They further identify the following as the features of formal letters:

- The writer’s address and date
- The addressee’s address
- The salutation and subject heading
- The opening paragraph
- The body of the letter
- A final paragraph
- Closing

For official letters written by organisations, there may not be any need for the writer’s address because organisational letters are always typed on the organisational letterhead; however, they contain other features as mentioned above.

**Memorandum:** There are informal and formal memoranda. The informal ones are used internally for communication in organisations while formal memoranda “are usually written specifically for particular persons or committees to provide them with information about certain matter” (Okanlawon, 1998, p. 53). It must be noted that the structure or format of formal memorandum is different from informal memorandum. Also, the formal memorandum is longer than the informal one. On this, Olateju and Olaosun (2013) note that “a memorandum [informal memo] is a very precise write-up or document ...” (p. 333). On this, Ekwueme-Ugwu, Adeniyi and Olaluwoye state that: “Memos are short, written pieces of information, for the purpose of communicating important notices to persons in an office or work environment. It can also serve as a reminder, for example of an earlier scheduled meeting” (2017, p. 101)

For better understanding of what a memorandum is, Oluga defines memorandum as “a form of communication used to circulate important information within an organisation or to remind members of an organisation of already discussed ideas or of a new development in the organisation” (2001, p. 117). This definition captures an informal memorandum which is also known as internal memorandum. According to Okanlawon, internal memoranda (or memos) “are letters written in the course of normal official duties to people within the same establishment or business organisation ... for internal communication” (1998, p. 50). Though Okanlawon sees memos as letters, they are two different documents. In the words of Oluga, ‘a memo is similar to other forms of business correspondence in that it has similar features like the name of an organisation, reference number, date, subject, title, the sender and the recipient, and body of the memo.’ All these features are common in writing memos in organisations with a little modification in some organisations. That is, though memos generally have their format, this may be modified by the individual organisation.



### **Theoretical Framework: Functional Discourse Grammar**

The theoretical framework that is adopted for this work is Functional Discourse Grammar (FDG). FDG, according to Hengeveld and Mackenzie (2008), “is a typologically based structural-functional theory of language.” It is a grammatical model designed to interact with non-grammatical components (Conceptual, Contextual, and Output Components) to account for “a wide range of linguistic phenomena”. It was introduced by Hengeveld (2004). Its origin is functional grammar as propounded by Dik in the late 1970s. Dik may be regarded as the FDG traditional father while the modern father can be said to be Hengeveld. FDG as a theoretical framework is concerned with the functions of grammatical structures. According to Alturo, Keizer and Payrató (2014), FDG as a functional theory is concerned with grammatical features as well as the aspects of discourse context in which utterances are used. They explain why this kind of grammar is functional and discourse-oriented thus:

It is functional in that it assumes that the structure of linguistic utterances is not arbitrary but motivated by the communicative function these utterances fulfill. It is discourse-oriented in that it acknowledges that the structure of utterances can be systematically influenced by the communicative context in which they occur. It is, in other words, assumed that the grammar of a language does not exist in a vacuum and can only be fruitfully studied as part of a wider theory of verbal interaction (Alturo, Keizer and Payrató, (2014, p. 1).

As indicated above, FDG considers both the structures and functions of language in its theoretical postulation. It deals with the communicative role of linguistic expression and also deals with the grammatical units and their relation with the context of situation in which they are used. FDG is a structural-functional theory of language thereby accounting for both structure and functions of any language. This is better captured by Keizer thus:

FDG believes in a functional explanation of the form of linguistic expressions. FDG takes, in other words, a ‘function-to-form’ approach: taking as its input a speaker’s communicative intentions, a process of formulation takes place which translates these intentions into two functional representations (one containing pragmatic, the other semantic information); in turn, these representations form the input to a process of encoding, which determines the morphosyntactic and phonological form of the utterance (2015, p. 12).

The above from Keizer indicates that FDG may account for all language structures, whether a unit that is larger or smaller than a sentence. Hengeveld explains the relevance of FDG to all language descriptions thus:

The model of a Functional Discourse Grammar (FDG) presented here is thus both hierarchical and modular. A major feature of the model is that it works in a top-down fashion, that is, decisions at higher levels and layers of analysis

determine and restrict the possibilities at lower levels and layers of analysis (2004, p. 1).

Moreover, the FDG approach is discorsal. FDG as a discourse grammar paradigm serves as a model that helps to analyse grammatical units that are larger or smaller than a sentence.

### **The Morphosyntactic Level of Analysis**

FDG is a broad theory, but we are concerned with grammatical components with a focus on the morphosyntactic level of analysis. The morphosyntactic level accounts for all the linear properties of a linguistic unit, both with respect to the structure of sentences, clauses, and phrases and with respect to the internal structure of complex words. Its organisation is similar to the basic grammatical units in SFG (see the comparison between FDG and SFG below). It is also concerned with the syntactic functions of subject and object. At the morphosyntactic level, four basic units are:

- The Linguistic Expression (Le)
- The Clause (Cl)
- The Phrase (Xp), where X represents the head of the Phrase
- The Word (Xw), where X represents the head of the Phrase, i.e. noun, verb, adjective, adverb or adposition. (Keizer, 2015, p. 175)

Hengeveld and Mackenzie list the layers relevant at the morphosyntactic level thus:

(Le1): Linguistic Expression

(Cl1): Clause

(Xp1): Phrase

(Xw1): Word

(Xs1) Stem

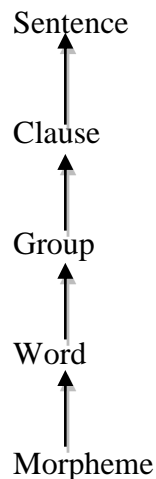
(Aff1) Affix

The above is explained by Hengeveld and Mackenzie:

Linguistic Expressions as the highest category in its morphosyntax; FDG creates a possibility of dealing straightforwardly with holophrases and non-sentential utterances... A simple Clause is a grouping of one or more Phrases and possibly (grammatical) Words and is characterized, to a greater or lesser extent, by a template for the ordering of those Phrases ... Phrase (Xp) is headed by a lexical item... The Word itself (Xw), especially in incorporating languages, can be highly complex apart from the fact that it may consist of Stems (Xs) and Affixes (Aff) (2008, p. 19).

The first two layers are exemplified, illustrated and discussed in the data for this study. The morphosyntactic structure and description above are similar to that of the basic

grammatical units and their description in Halliday's Scale and Category Grammar (Halliday, 1961, Butler, 1985). Grammatical units may be arranged in order of hierarchy as shown below. The structure of grammar shows a relationship among grammatical units. Sentences are made up of clauses, clauses are made up of groups, groups are made up of words, and words are made up of morphemes. Crystal and Davy (1969) explain that grammar is a series of interrelated components that deal with aspects of grammatical structure.



FDG does not mention sentence and morpheme which may be equivalent to linguistic expression and stem and affix respectively. A sentence is the largest unit of grammatical rank-scale, that is, a correctly punctuated written piece that ends with a terminal punctuation mark while a morpheme is the smallest grammatical unit and is made up of free morpheme (stem) or bound morpheme (affix). It must however be noted that linguistic expression may be any text that performs communicative function though the context of usage is considered. According to Keizer (2015, p. 177), "Linguistic Expressions, as the highest units of analysis, contain one or more clauses, clauses contain one or more phrases, and phrases contain one or more words". She gives examples of a sentence thus:

- a. John put the money in the safe.

She further states that "Linguistic Expressions need not contain a Clause: they may also consist of a combination of phrases or words, or even of a single phrase or word as illustrated below:

- b. (What did you buy?) Two books, one DVD.
- c. (How many books did you buy?) Two.

In (b) and (c), 'Two books, one DVD' and 'Two' which are a combination of phrases and a single word are linguistic expressions. It should however be realized that the second example, 'Two' is equivalent to a morpheme.

## Data Presentation and Discussion

There are many documents used in government organisations that are responsible for delivering government services to people and one another. This study focuses on letters and memos, the correspondences used to communicate with staff members, officials and departments. Our data for this study are drawn from the Public Service Office of Lagos State Government at the Secretariat, Alausa, Lagos. Our focus is on how English is used in the selected correspondences. In order to examine the use of English in the texts, fifty internal memos and letters (twenty-five each) are selected for analysis using two layers (linguistic expression and clause) of the morphosyntactic level of FDG. These layers help us to account for the structure and function of the selected texts.

In comparing the two correspondences selected, it is found that memos are generally used for inviting staff members or group of staff to meetings or ceremonies, and only to the staff, whereas letters are routinely sent to individuals or departments within or outside the Secretariat, and they cover a range of subjects such as Application for Annual Leave, Confirmation of Assumption of Duty, Deployment/Completion of Industrial Attachment, Internal Posting, Letter of Acceptance, Assumption of Duty, Notice of Voluntary/Statutory Retirement, etc.

## Morphosyntactic Analysis of Linguistic Expressions of the Selected Documents

For the purpose of analysis and based on the FDG claim that the linguistic expression serves as the highest layer of the morphosyntactic level of grammatical component, fifty (50) of such expressions are selected. Examples according to their types are given below:

**Coordination:** Coordination in FDG is equivalent to a compound sentence. It is made up of clauses joined by coordinating conjunctions and each of the clauses joined together can stand on its own though in numbers 1 and 2 below, embedded clauses are joined with ‘and’.

1. I have the directive of the Permanent Secretary to inform [you] on the above captioned and invite you to a meeting schedule[d]to hold...
2. I am directed to confirm Mr. M ... and that he reported for duty on 19<sup>th</sup> September, 2018.

**(Co) subordination:** This type of linguistic expression abounds in the selected memos. It is a complex sentence and it contains independent clause(s) and dependent clause(s). It carries the highest number of sentence types in the texts analysed and it has different types depending on the embedded clauses.

3. I wish to apply for my annual leave which is going to be 14 days ....
4. In the course of his attachment, he was taken through all the practical rudiments of IT Department in which he exhibited great zeal, ardour and commitment to all assigned responsibilities.
5. This is to inform you that Oje [has] successfully completed his six (6) months industrial attachment ...
6. I am to emphasize that he is not under any disciplinary action.

7. **Kindly** note that the deployment is with immediate effect.
8. **The information** is required to process his statutory retirement benefits.
9. **He** has been advised to be of good character for the period of his industrial attachment.
10. With reference to your application on the above subject..., **approval** is hereby conveyed to you to proceed on twenty-five (25) working days pre-retirement leave.
11. In line with the vision of ... state government, **I am directed** to convey to you the approval of the Permanent Secretary for your immediate deployment ....
12. **I am directed** to forward the notice of voluntary retirement from the State Civil Service of the name above to the State Public Service Office.
13. **I am directed** to return the corrected list of employees due for statutory retirement for the year 2019 in the ministry.
14. **I am directed** to forward the letter of notification of statutory retirement from the State Civil Service ....

All the underlined units from numbers 3 to 14 are subordinate to the main clauses. It is worthy of mentioning that all above have embedded clauses – clauses within clauses. In numbers 3 and 4, the embedded clauses function as modifiers. In 3, ‘which is going to be 14 days’ is a relative clause that modifies ‘my annual leave’. However, numbers 5, 6 and 7 are ‘that-clauses’ and all of them function as direct objects. Examining numbers 8-14, we have different templates though they are all realised by ‘to-infinitive’ and they perform the same function. All the embedded clauses function as objects because each of them comes after a verb except item 10 that is preceded by a prepositional phrase ‘to you’ functioning as an adjunct.

**Simple Clause and Extra-clausality:** The last linguistic expression which may be regarded as a simple sentence found in our data is simple clause or extra clausality; it is a sentence with one clause. It is regarded as extra-clausality if a clause has a phrase or more as shown in number 22 to 25; all the italicised phrases are extra in the sense that they are inserted into the structure of clauses to perform discourse functions. This structure is different from the expressions in number 15 to 21. This distinction helps us to understand micro-templates in each expression. By templates, we mean “linearly ordered sequences of morphosyntactic units” (Keizer 2015:308). Butler further explains that “templates are postulated for the various layers in the structure of the sentence. It is recognised that there is considerable variability in templates across languages” (2007:253). This is also true of all the texts analysed.

15. **She** is not under any disciplinary action.
16. **He** is **therefore** highly commended for his co-operation.
17. **The leave** will commence from 8<sup>th</sup> October to 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2018.
18. **Your letter of introduction with Ref. No. LS/C.5...** refers.
19. **His industrial attachment** ends in August 2019.
20. **The office** wishes him well in his future **endeavor**.
21. Please acknowledge receipt.
22. *For the Muslims, today’s celebration* is very unique.

23. **The Action Programme** should reach the commissioner, *latest by Tuesday*.  
 24. **This** was disclosed today, *during the press interview with the General Manager*.  
 25. *After the conference*, **Mrs. S** took questions.

Attention must be drawn to Text 7 ‘Kindly note that the deployment is with immediate effect’ and Text 21 ‘Please acknowledge receipt’. ‘Kindly’ and ‘please’ are formulae of social exchange. They are gratitude expressions used as politeness markers. Though Texts 7 and 21 start with gratitude expressions, they have inherent meanings. The sentences are imperatives which have a command tone, and recipients are expected to respond to them without delay.

The word ‘endeavor’ as an American spelling in Text 20 may be compared with ‘ardour’ (a British spelling) in number 4. This shows that both spellings are used in Nigeria and it is a feature of written English in civil service in Nigeria. Though it is British English that is adopted in Nigeria, but American English is freely used in Nigeria, even within government circles.

### **Morphosyntactic Analysis of Clauses in the Selected Documents**

Having identified and classified the linguistic expressions in the preceding section, this section deals with another level of delicacy in grammatical analysis. In this section, we present the analysis of clausal constituents of the second layer of morphosyntax. It must be noted that clauses in FDG are not different from clauses in other grammatical theories. In FDG, however, a clause is defined as “the layer at which syntactic functions are assigned” (Keizer 2016: 184). Keizer (2016) further gives examples of possible combinations of clauses thus:

- (a.) John put the money into the safe  
 (Cl1: [(Np1)Subj (Vp1) (Np2)Obj (Adpp1) ]Cl)  
 (b.)Do you know where Sue is?  
 (Cl1: [(Gw1) (Np1)Subj (Vp1) (Cl2)Obj ] Cl)

The clause in (a) consists of four constituents: two noun phrases, a verb phrase and a prepositional phrase. The clause in (b) also consists of four elements: a word (‘do’ which is regarded as dummy verb), a noun phrase (you), a verb phrase (know), and an embedded clause (where sue is). It should be noted that the word is a grammatical word (the dummy element ‘do’). This analysis is significant in the sense that it helps us understand the syntactic functions and roles of clauses as well as active and passive constructions. Texts 1 to 25 above in 4.1 are also used for analysis in this section.

### **Syntactic Function: Subject**

**Subjects realised by nouns/noun phrases:** The subjects in our texts are realised by proper nouns Oje and Mrs. S as shown in Text 5 and 25 respectively, a common noun *approval* in Text 10 and noun phrases *the deployment, the information, the leave* and *Your letter of introduction with Ref. No. LS/C.5, His industrial attachment, The office, today’s celebration, and The Action Programme* as in Texts 7, 8, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22 and 23 in that order.

**Subjects realised by pronouns:** Two types of pronouns are identified in our data; these are personal pronouns *I, he, she* and *you* though 'I' has the highest frequency since letters and memos are always written from one person to another. Examples are: **I** wish to apply...., **I** am to emphasize .... and **I am directed** to .... It must be explained here that 'I am directed' as an introductory clause occurs many times in our texts. It indicates that the writer is subordinate to the person who gives instruction. In the context of government organisation, the majority of letters and memos sent out are always issued by the Permanent Secretary who is the head of the ministry. It may be said that the Secretary is the one instructing their subordinate to write on their behalf. This may be supported by the syntactic function of 'I' as the undergoer of the action 'am directed'. This shows that 'I am directed' is in the passive form. Similarly, 'He' in Text 16 is the one that is 'highly commended'.

### **Syntactic Function: Object/ Complement**

The syntactic function of object is assigned pronouns *you* (Text 1), *him* (Text 20), a noun *questions* (Text 25), a noun phrase *the commissioner* (Text 23) and clauses as in Text 5, 6 and 7.

### **Conclusion**

This study examines the use of English in the Nigerian governmental correspondences within the Lagos State government using the morphosyntactic level of analysis of Functional Discourse Grammar. Two layers – linguistic expression and clause – help us to account for the structure and function of the selected texts. The analysis of the linguistic expressions indicates that co-subordination type of linguistic expressions with different types of embedded clauses has the highest number of sentences and reveals that governmental correspondences, especially letters and memos, have fairly complex structure. This is in line with Aremo's assertion (2014) that the variety of English used in official correspondence is complex.

Moreover, the study through the application of FDG helps us to distinguish simple clauses from clauses with extra phrases thereby showing micro-templates in each clause (simple sentence) and the linear order of sequence of morphosyntactic units. Also, the analysis of the clause layer is significant to the understanding of syntactic functions and roles of clause constituents in active and passive constructions.

Furthermore, in the data analysed, there are instances of subtle command and profuse use of politeness markers. This is largely dependent on the kind of letters being written, requests being sought, and the kind of relationship existing between the writers and the recipients. It is equally discovered that excessive greetings or sharing of pleasantries are avoided in the data analysed. It should be borne in mind that these are essentially official texts that are naturally expected to be impersonal, less-effusive and shorn of unnecessary patronage.

Lastly, the data analysed show that delegation of authority through the use of the expression 'I am directed to' is a common expression used in public service writing. Also, in a polite manner, some recipients are commanded to carry out a task either in writing or otherwise through a subtle use of language.



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