



## A FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF CHIEF OLUSEGUN OBASANJO'S OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT MUHAMMADU BUHARI

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### ABSTRACT

*Language is a tool of expression used by human beings in their day-to-day interactions. It is also an instrument that is employed by writers to speak truth to those who are at the helm of affairs. This paper examines the functional linguistic elements employed in Chief Olusegun Obasanjo's July 15, 2019 letter to President Muhammadu Buhari. The letter is sourced online and its examination is premised on descriptive method of analysis. For convenience of identification, the data are tagged as excerpts and numbered serially. The theoretical framework is Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics. The findings of the study are that fronting, apposition, long-winding sentences, conditional sentences and relativisation are syntactically employed. Binomials, loanwords and coinages are the lexico-semantic features; parenthesis, quotation marks and alphabetism constitute the graphological features. The paper concludes that linguistic structures are not just mere components of texts but functional resources that are used in conveying messages and entrenching meanings.*

**Keywords:** Linguistics, SFL, Graphology, Syntax, Lexico-semantics

### INTRODUCTION

Writers are conscious and sensitive beings. They are not only concerned about themselves but the well-being of the society at large. Writers write for various reasons and in different situations and circumstances. In most cases, they write because there are serious issues and compelling circumstances that should be critically addressed. Therefore, their role as the watchdog and regulator of the society should not be undermined.

The role of writers in the human society is inspiring, incalculable and unquantifiable. They assess the political, economic, social situations, among others and bring to the fore critical issues that affect individuals and the society at large. They also give a sense of direction, moderate and regulate actions and views. More importantly, the personality of a writer is a key factor to the recipient(s). It is important in the sense that it is a determinant of the sort of attention or attitude that will be accorded a text.

To communicate individuals and the public requires effective and efficient deployment of language. A writer or speaker has

a duty to make the optimal use of language to convey his message adequately and appropriately. He is duty bound to package his messages so that they will be able to achieve the intended effect. Thus, language use in text, especially those that are meant for public consumption are carefully composed and laced with linguistic paraphernalia so that they do not only possess emotional appeal but also elicit valuable reactions or contributions from the readers.

The norm all over the world is that presidents usually address their subjects/citizens at different times and on important occasions. The essence of communicating them is to keep them abreast on some of the developments within their domains and sometimes seek their support in the process of nation building. Thus, leaders discharge basic responsibilities such as informing, advising, encouraging, instructing, admonishing, among others to their followers, using the instrument of language.

In the annals of Nigeria, presidents and heads of state have addressed Nigerians on various occasions such as Independence Day, Democracy Day, Workers' Day, Inauguration Ceremony, among others. These are statutory occasions that Nigerian presidents are compelled to present speeches. It is unimaginative for presidents to skip speeches on these all-important events that have been characterised by

speech presentation. It is also worth stating that some other unforeseen events could necessitate presentation of speech to the nation by Nigerian presidents. For instance, President Muhammadu Buhari addressed Nigerians on three occasions in 2020 when coronavirus broke out across the nations of the world, Nigeria inclusive.

As it has been revealed, the norm all over the world is for presidents of nations to address their citizens on critical issues and on monumental occasions. Of concern in this study is when a former president communicates a sitting president on weighty issues and such a correspondence is made public. Such correspondences require scrutiny by scholars and those who are societally conscious. Of importance in such investigation are the issues at stake and the linguistic instruments used. These are the driving indices for the study of the correspondence of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, a former president of Nigeria to Muhammadu Buhari, the incumbent president. Based on the foregoing, this paper examines the issues raised and the functionality of the linguistic items used in the correspondence.

In Nigeria, few studies have been conducted on correspondences of past heads of state to incumbent presidents. Aikoriogbe and Ugwu (2014) carried out a pragmatic analysis of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo's open letter dated December 2, 2013 to President Goodluck Jonathan. The letter was titled "Before It is too Late." The outcome of the study was that Obasanjo employed lexical items from source domains – religion, military, business world and cricket game, among others, to implicitly or explicitly portray issues of corruption in the text.

Omojuyigbe (2015) conducted a research on the discourse markers and meaning in former President Olusegun Obasanjo's letter to President Goodluck Jonathan. The thrusts of the investigation were the functions and semantic implications in the text. Critical Discourse Analysis and Systemic Functional Grammar formed the theoretical frameworks of the study. The data selected for the study were representative of four segments of the Nigerian nation; namely, the presidency, political parties, security agencies and the Nigerian community. The findings were that the discourse markers were employed to convince Nigerians that President Jonathan was guilty of the allegations raised in the correspondence, blame him for the lapses and to depict that he (Chief Obasanjo) was a patriot.

Ekharefor and Ambrose (2015) conducted a research on discourse analysis of Obasanjo's letter to President Jonathan. The finding was that the letter stemmed from the misunderstanding between the addressee and the recipient. They concluded that the former President employed power and superiority, metaphorical extensions, linguistic irony, pun and Face Threatening Act to convey the tone of the letter.

Aworokoroh (2016) also did an analysis of politeness and face management strategies in President Obasanjo's open correspondence to President Goodluck Jonathan. The paper investigated the use of pragmatic principles-politeness markers and face management strategies in the two correspondents and how adherence or flouting of the principles affected interpersonal communication. The theoretical constructs for the study are Leech's politeness

maxims; Brown and Levinson's face management strategies and Mey's (2001) pragmatic acts. Findings revealed that the correspondences were characterised by impolite and face threatening acts. They were composed as a decoy for political tussle and, as such, contravened all the rules of interpersonal communication.

Aremu (2019) researched conceptual mappings and face management strategies in former President Obasanjo's letter captioned: The way out: Clarion call for Nigerian movement to President Buhari. The study adopted eclectic theoretical frameworks of Gerald Steen's (1996) Deliberate Metaphor Theory, Van Dijk's (2006) Socio-cognitive Theory and Brown and Levinson's (1987) Face Management Theory. Findings of the study were that Obasanjo's correspondence was marked off by deliberate mappings of a nation as a horse and lice infested clothes; governance as a horse; a political leader as a horse rider and poor performance as lice. The study also showed bald-on-record face threatening acts utilised to expose President Buhari's inadequacies in governance and face-saving acts to influence Nigerians on the need to effect a change in governance.

Adebomi (2020) investigated former Chief Obasanjo's letter to President Buhari. The study identified the linguistic categories that were utilised to expose perceived social problems that characterised Buhari's government. The theoretical framework for the study was Ulrich Oevermann's Objective Hermeneutics Theory of discourse analysis. The findings were that Obasanjo utilised linguistic elements such as nouns, pronouns, modals, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, lexical collocations and wise sayings to perform three basic functions which were condemnation, malfunction of Buhari's government and recognition of himself as a watchdog.

These studies have been able to investigate Chief Obasanjo's correspondences through discourse analysis and pragmatics but with little attention on functional linguistic properties. None of the study focused on such levels of language as graphology, syntax and lexico-semantics. It is in the light of this that this study is premised on the functional linguistic elements that former President Obasanjo employed to inform Nigerians of the perceived lapses in the Nigerian nation.

## Methodology

This research is an analysis and description of the correspondence of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo to President Muhammadu Buhari with special attention on the three levels of language; namely, graphology, syntax and lexico-semantics. The data from the 17-paragraph letter dated July 15, 2019 was obtained through tertiary source (online) from [www.pulse.ng](http://www.pulse.ng) on February 14, 2021. The theoretical framework is Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar. Each of the data was tagged as an excerpt and serially numbered. The essence of doing so is premised on ease of identification and referencing.

## Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

Linguistics as a concept is generally described as the scientific study of the human language in all its aspects and ramifications. Linguistics does not operate in a vacuum. It

has to do with language and the human language is a composition of levels. The human language operates at the phonological, syntactic, lexico-semantic and graphological levels. Linguistics is not only concerned about the existence of these levels of language in texts but how they are deployed. The use of levels of language in texts is not haphazard; it has to be objective and methodical. Hence the use of language should be subjected to thorough analyses that are not only verifiable and but also result-oriented. Linguistics is therefore instrumental to orderly collection, presentation and interpretation of data.

The theoretical framework for the study is Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) also known as Systemic Functional Grammar. The proponent of the theory is M. A.K. Halliday. SFL views language not only as “system of meanings” (Bloor and Bloor,) but in terms of function. As the name denotes, SFL is an amalgam of system and function. It is function-based in that language is used by people to perform a myriad of activities. The functional aspect of the theory deals with how functions are regimented to generate meaning. The theory is resourceful in that it takes into consideration the parameters that can be effectively utilised in the explication of linguistic elements in texts.

SFL is unique in that it affords a language user the benefit of making choice among the possibility that language offers. Such possibility includes diction, tense, transitivity, mood and modality, phonetic, grapheme, among others. It is also a useful theory because it takes into consideration the context in which a text (whether written or spoken) is composed. This means that it does not rely preponderantly on what is in a text but the situation surrounding it (context of situation). The situation in which a text is formed is an illumination to a reader in that it gives background information/knowledge.

SFL operates on metafunctions. The metafunctions are the ideational, interpersonal and textual. The ideational metafunction deals with how language is deployed to form, coordinate and express human experience. It is a metafunction that bifurcates into experiential and logical. According to Bloor and Bloor (2004, p.10), experiential is mainly concerned with contents or ideas while the logical deals with the relationship between the ideas. The interpersonal metafunction provides the grounds for the enactment and sustenance of communicative roles among interlocutors. The interpersonal metafunction involves such communicative acts such as informing, questioning, judging, persuading and dissuading people. The interpersonal metafunction shows a speaker's opinion in a specific situation and depicts the motives of the speaker in a communication encounter (Alabi and Olowe, 2020). The textual metafunction is connected with the formation of text. Linguistic elements are employed for the creation of text. Text in this context refers to whatever is written or spoken.

## Analysis and Discussion

### Graphology

Graphology refers to the visual characteristics and designs that a writer employs to enhance the overall meaning of his text. The graphological features in the text are parenthesis, quotation marks and alphabetism.

Parenthesis is the addition of a word, phrase or sentence to a speech or piece of writing. In writing, it is separated from the rest of text through the use of brackets, commas or dashes. There are examples of parenthetical use in the text.

Excerpt 1: Whatever may be the grievances of Fulanis, *if any*, they need to put out in open and their grievances, *if legitimate*, be addressed;

Excerpt 2: Without being immodest, *as a Nigerian who still bears the scar of the Nigerian civil war on my body and with a son who bears the scar of fighting Boko Haram on his body*, you can understand, *I hope*, why I am so concerned.

The use of the parentheses “if any” and “if legitimate” in Excerpt 1 indicates that Chief Obasanjo does not rule out the possibility that the Fulani ethnic group may have grievance against Nigeria. He states that if there are such grievances, they should be made known. He also reveals that not all grievances are legitimate and that legitimate grievances should be presented for solutions.

The basic function of parenthesis in the text is that it supplies additional information. In Excerpt 2, two sentences are marked off as parentheses. They are “as a Nigerian who still bears the scar of the Nigerian civil war on my body and with a son who bears the scar of fighting Boko Haram on his body” and “I hope.” The writer impresses it on the president that he should remember the negative effects of the Nigerian civil war in which he (Chief Obasanjo) suffered. He also affirms that his son has been a victim of Boko Haram's attack. He enjoins President Buhari to avoid a repeat of the past. The parenthesis “I hope” is used to court the attention of President Buhari and to seek his cooperation in that regard.

### Quotation Marks

It is a pair of marks placed around a word or sentence. Some uses of quotation marks in the text are:

Excerpt 3: The unfortunate situation is that the criminality is being perceived as a 'Fulani' menace unleashed by Fulani elite in the different parts of the country ...

Excerpt 4: With the death of Funke ... some sympathetic Nigerians are saying “enough is enough.”

Excerpt 5: Prof. Anya ... has this to say “We can no longer say with certainty that we have a nation.”

Excerpt 6: As we say in my village “May God forbid bad thing.”

The quotation marks in Excerpt 3 absolve the writer of accusation or bias. He posits that the perception in some quarters and of some Nigerians is that the Fulani ethnic group is responsible for the upheavals in the country. In Excerpts 4 and 5, the writer affirms the views of Nigerians either as individuals or collectively. Thus, the views of Nigerians could have been the basis for which the writer is also lending his voice to the process of nation rebuilding. Excerpt 6 is an echo of the norm in the writer's ancestral home and it is employed as a wish to avert untoward occurrences.

Quotation marks are useful linguistic device in that they convey expressions in their original forms. They show the beliefs and disposition of people as evident in the examples above. They are also veritable premises on which arguments can be built and sustained. It is not surprising that the writer has exploited the expressions in the quotation marks to drive home his message.

### Alphabetism

It is a graphological feature that is regarded as an acronym and is pronounced as a sequence of letters. The text has two instances of alphabetism. These are UK and US. UK refers to United Kingdom and US is United States. These alphabetisms are commonplace because they are prominent places that some Nigerians are familiar with, especially the elite who constitute the target audience. This could have informed why they were not fully written.

Ogunsiji (2004) avers that while acronyms result in a formation pronounced as a word, for instance Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), alphabetism does not yield a formation that is pronounced as a word. Thus, in alphabetism, each letter is pronounced.

### Syntax

Syntax deals with the way words are combined to form grammatical units such as phrases, clauses and sentences. Focus, apposition, long winding sentences, conditional sentences and relativisation are the syntactic features in the text.

### Focus/Fronting

Focus occurs in a text when some elements in a clause other than the subject feature before the sentence. Conventionally, in a declarative sentence, the subject of a sentence precedes the predicator (verb). In linguistics, what comes first is called the theme. The theme is usually the subject. Placing a clausal element other than the subject in front of a sentence is called fronting. The text shows instances of fronting. The following are some examples:

Excerpt 7: *Say what you will*, Boko Haram is still a daily issue of insecurity for those who are victimised, killed, maimed, kidnapped, raped, sold into slavery and into forced marriage ...

Excerpt 8: *For the sake of Nigeria and Nigerians*, I pray that God may grant you, as our President, the wisdom, the understanding, the political will and the courage to do what is right when it is right and without fear or favour.

“Say what you will” as focus/fronting affirms the conviction of the writer that President Buhari will always have justification for the state of insecurity in Nigeria and why it has not abated. It is also employed to foreclose whatever excuses the president may want to advance to justify the prevalence of the activities of Boko Haram in the country. The import is that there is nothing that the president can present as a defence that is acceptable. S the chief security officer, he is largely responsible for the state of insecurity in

Nigeria.

In Excerpt 8, “For the sake of Nigeria and Nigerians” is an act of acknowledging the similarity between Nigeria as a country and her peoples (Nigerians). Chief Obasanjo admits that Nigeria is a country that is inhabited by peoples and without her peoples, there cannot be a country called Nigeria. Thus, it is an expression that he uses to foreground his message. It is a reminder and an emphasis that President Buhari owes Nigeria and Nigerians his allegiance and the duty of preserving the sovereignty of the country by ensuring the welfare of her citizenry.

The essence of focus/fronting is that it accords prominence or emphasis to a sentence with a view to highlighting its relevance to the overall effectiveness of communication. Focus is significant in a text in that it is an illumination that gives background information to the reader. Thus, it serves as a preview.

### Apposition

Apposition is a term used in grammatical description and it refers to a sequence of units which are constituents at the same grammatical level and which have an identity of similarity of reference (Onyemachi and Fakuade, 2014). In this text, it is the use of a noun phrase immediately after another noun phrase which refers to the same person or thing. Instances of apposition in the text are:

Excerpt 9: With the death of Funke, *Chief Fasoranti's daughter*, some sympathetic Nigerian groups are saying “enough is enough.”

Excerpt 10: Prof. Anya, *a distinguished Nigerian merit Laureate*, has this to say “We can no longer say with certainty that we have a nation.”

Apposition gives clarity to a text. If apposition were not employed in the text, it will be difficult to know the true identity (information) of the person the writer refers to in Excerpts 9 and 10, since *Funke* and *Prof. Anya* are human names. The apposition “Chief Fasoranti's daughter” avails the reader the true identity of the referent. Similarly, it may be difficult identifying who Prof. Anya is. The apposition “a distinguished Nigerian merit Laureate” affirms the personality of the referent as well as his achievement.

Apposition, aside from establishing clarity in a text, supplies additional information which can assist a reader to know more about a person or thing that is being mentioned. It also affords a reader the opportunity to know the worth of a person or a thing in the positive or negative form hence it is a useful syntactic unit of assessment or evaluation of a thing or a person.

### Long-winding Sentences

A striking syntactic feature in the text is the use of long-winding sentence. The text is replete with sentences that are difficult to classify structurally as complex or multiple sentences. However, the amorphous nature of the sentences does not obstruct or impair the realisation of meaning.

Example 11: Since the issue is of momentous concern to all well-meaning Nigerians, it must be of great concern to you, and collective thinking and dialoguing is the best way of finding an appropriate and adequate solution to the problem.

Example 12: When people are desperate and feel that they cannot have confidence in the ability of government to provide security for their lives and properties, they will take recourse to anything and everything that can guarantee their security individually and collectively.

Long-winding sentences could be taxing for a reader in that he could lose count of important information. A look at the examples above indicates that there are no complex expressions or words that can impede comprehension. Since the text is not meant for the President alone but for Nigerians and non-Nigerians, the writer is cautious in his choice of words/expressions to convey his noble intention and fear. The need to express his views without obstructing the pace of reading could have informed the use of long-winding sentences. Long-winding sentences may not necessarily be a syntactic aberration since the writer has clearly stated his views.

#### Conditional Sentences

They are sentences premised on what is expected to occur when certain conditions are fulfilled. They are employed to form statements about events, phenomenon or specific situation. The following excerpts are examples:

Excerpt 13: No one can stop hate speech, violent agitation and smouldering agitation *if he fans the embers of hatred, disaffection and violence.*

Excerpt 14: *If there is failure*, the principal responsibility will be that of the President and no one else.

Each of the above sentences comprises a main clause and a subordinate clause. The subordinate clause is introduced by the subordinate conjunction (if). The condition in the subordinate clause must be realised before the action in the main clause in the first sentence is achievable. The subordinate clause in the first sentence is an indirect caution to President Buhari. It is a warning that if he, as the president, causes hatred, disaffection and violence among Nigerians, he should not expect peace. In Excerpt 8, the writer avers that there could be a failure if President Buhari fails to take necessary action. He stresses that in a situation whereby failure occurs, the president will be largely responsible, even though some people are likely to share in the blame.

#### Relativisation

It is the process of forming a relative clause construction. Relativisation is the use of a relative pronoun to introduce a clause in the process of subordination. Relative pronouns involve such pronouns as who, whom, which, what and that. The text evinces the use of relative clauses.

Excerpt 15: ... but even more unfortunately, many Nigerians and non-Nigerians *who are friends of Nigeria* attach vicarious responsibility to you as a Fulani elite and the current captain of the Nigeria ship.

Excerpt 16: It is time to confront this threat headlong and in a manner *that is holistic, inclusive and purposeful.*

The relative clause in Excerpt 15 “who are friends of Nigeria” refers to Nigerians and non-Nigerians. It is a description of a category of people that is concerned with the plight of the country. The relative clause in the text shows who the true friends of Nigeria are. In a specific way, the writer asserts that not all Nigerians are patriotic. This informs the use of “many” as against “all” Nigerians.

In the same vein, the relative clause “that is holistic, inclusive and purposeful” is a pointer to what the writer feels should be the approach to tackling insecurity and the result that is expected. He affirms that to address the problem of insecurity, it must be in a manner that is “holistic, inclusive and purposeful.” This means that without them, insecurity will continue to fester in Nigeria.

#### Lexico-Semantic Features

Lexico-semantics studies the meaning of words and involves the ways in which some word meanings are connected to others. Binomials, loanwords and coinages are the lexico-semantic features in the text.

##### Binomials

Pairs of nouns that are coordinates syntactically and semantically related are known as binomials. Carbello (2006) cited in Sharndama (2018) notes that “a binomial is a sequence of two or more words or phrases belonging to the same grammatical category joined by syntactic devices such as *and* or *or*.” Sharndama also states that binomials can be grouped as synonymous, antonymous and complementary. Examples of binomials in the text are:

Excerpt 17: A number of articles ... have been attributed to me by some people who I believe may be seeking added credence and attentive audience for their *opinions* and *viewpoints*.

Excerpt 18: ... and for children forcibly recruited into carrying bombs on them to detonate among crowds of people to cause maximum *destructions* and *damage*.

Excerpt 19: But the issue I am addressing here is serious; it is the issue of *life* and *death* for all of us and our dear country, Nigeria.

An examination of the excerpts above indicates the use of binomials. *Opinions* and *viewpoints* are synonyms in that they both refer to the comments of Nigerians. Similarly, *destructions* and *damage* are cognate references to the evil perpetrated by criminally-induced elements. Thus, *destructions* and *damage* are synonyms. However, *life* and *death* in Excerpt 19 are contrastive words and are, therefore, antonymous. The use of antonymous words is a reference to the precarious situation in Nigeria.

##### Loanwords

Using English in a multilingual environment gives room to manifestation of non-English words and expressions in texts.

A non-English word that features prominently in the text is Fulani which is said to have owed its derivative from *Fula*. Fulani is a name for the description of an ethnic group and mass inhabitants that are widely dispersed in Africa, but most predominant in West Africa (Ajibefun, 2017).

The writer accuses President Buhari of tacitly indulging his Fulani herdsmen in causing instability in the country. The Fulani have been perceived by other ethnic groups in Nigeria as being responsible for the pillaging, raping, killing and kidnapping in Nigeria. Their activities have been linked to severe internal and security threats that have dire political, economic and environmental consequences for the country.

On the use of loanwords in English-bound texts, Teilanyo (2012, p.154), remarks that “the tendency to infuse words from indigenous languages into sentences that are essentially English is one of the most discussed features of the vocabulary of Nigerian and African English.” This explains why some words or expressions that are indigenous or alien to English are inevitable in texts because they do not have English equivalents.

### Coinage

It is the creation of lexical items to account for new ideas, concepts and inventions (Alagbe, 2018, p.53). The use of English in Nigeria has engendered the emergence of innovation and creation of new words not only in the language but in other languages. *Boko Haram* is a coinage that has featured profusely in English texts in Nigeria due to its daily havoc and dangerous operation.

According to Adibe (2014), *Boko Haram* is an admixture of the Hausa word “Boko” which literally means “western education” and the Arabic word “Haram” which figuratively means “forbidden.” The claim of the sect is that it is not only opposed to western education but also to the secularisation of the Nigerian nation. The claim is supported by Campbell (2014) and Amodu and Oryila (2018) that *Boko Haram* is a radical Islamic sect shaped by its Nigerian context and reflecting Nigeria's history of bad governance and abject poverty in the north. The sect is notorious in that it combines sectarian, radical Islamic agenda with violence. Thus, *Boko Haram* is a coinage from two non-English languages to depict a group of people that are associated with evil and criminality.

The need for concrete identity for ethnic groups and their philosophy has engendered other coinages in Nigeria. These coinages have become ingrained in Nigeria and are known to those who are familiar with the history of her political developments. Niger Delta, North East, South East, Middle Belt and Northern Elders Forum are coinages that featured in the text. Niger Delta is a reference to such states as Delta, Rivers, Cross River, AkwaIbom, Edo and Bayelsa. These states are also referred to as oil-producing states because that is where Nigeria gets the bulk of its crude oil.

Although there is no legislation that backs the use of some coinages in the political life of Nigeria, the country has been unofficially divided into six geo-political zones, namely, North-West, North Central, North East, South West, South

East and South South. Thus, North East comprises Borno, Yobe, Gombe, Bauchi, Adamawa and Taraba States. South East includes Anambra, Abia, Enugu, Ebonyi and Imo States. Middle Belt, though not among the six geo-political zones, comprises states in Nigeria like Plateau, Nasarawa, Adamawa, Taraba, Niger, Kwara, Kogi, Benue, Federal Capital Territory (Abuja), Southern Kaduna, Southern Bauchi, Southern Kebbi, Southern Gombe, Southern Yobe, etc. The Middle Belt was created to differentiate the aforementioned enclaves from the core north. Hence, it is used to depict a kind of movement against the political and hegemonic burden of the northerners, who are believed to wield enormous political power in Nigeria.

Different socio-political groups in Nigeria abound. For instance, among the Yoruba, *Afenifere* exists; so also are *Ohaneze Ndigbo* for the Igbo and *Arewa Consultative Forum* for the Hausa. The Northern Elders Forum is another body in the northern part of Nigeria and it comprises reputable leaders who serve as her mouthpiece. The use of Northern Elders Forum by Chief Obasanjo in the text was to indicate that his comment on the state of insecurity in Nigeria was justified if a notable pressure group had expressed similar views.

### Conclusion

This study has shown that language is indeed a tool of expression; expression of the intentions, attitudes and viewpoints of individuals as demonstrated in its functionality. It has been established that symbols in language are significant on account of their unique functions as evident in the graphological features. Syntactic elements are indicative of the resourcefulness of the writer, considering the choices of words that he has selected in transmitting his messages. The relationship between words and their meanings, which is lexico-semantics, has been brought to the fore through the use of cognate words, importation of non-English words and creation of new words, with particular reference to the context in which they are employed. On the whole, the study has demonstrated that the core of communication involves linguistic elements that former president Obasanjo has employed at various levels to ensure effective delivery of his message and smooth comprehension by the reader.

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