

4. Analysing Officialese in the Benue State Civil Service

By

SHAGBA, Esther Iveren (PhD)

Department of Languages and Linguistics,
Benue State University, Makurdi
shagbaesther@gmail.com, 07032823836,

ADZER, Vanessa Chivir (PhD)

Department of Languages and Linguistics,
Benue State University, Makurdi
vanessaadzer@gmail.com, 08036808992,

ANTE, Godwin Edet

Department of Languages and Linguistics,
Benue State University, Makurdi
godwinante@gmail.com, 08061665188

&

ADZER, Msooter

Department of Languages and Linguistics,
Nassarawa State University, Keffi
msooteradzer@gmail.com, 08120999899

Abstract

This current study entitled: 'Analysing Officialese in the Benue State Civil Service' aims at critically analysing the language used in file processing by civil servants, especially as it pertains to the Benue State Civil Service. The study therefore appraised the codes and language system used by Benue State civil servants in file processing, identified the difficulties in understanding such language system and provided clarification and explored how office language can be seen as an asset to its users. Language is used variously, but for the sake of this current study, the researcher limits the study to the style of language used in Benue State civil service, the challenges therein and clarifications. To successfully achieve the set goals for the study, the researchers adopted Conversational Maxims Theory by Grice (1969) and Foregrounding Theory by Leech (1969). The analysis of data in this current study was guided by the principles and parameters of the theories mentioned above. Data for this study was generated from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources of data were files collected and examined at the different sections and departments of the Benue State Civil Service. The researchers subjected the documents collected at the

Benue State Civil Service to diverse levels of stylistic analysis such as graphological, lexical and syntactic which covered sentences/clauses, passivation/pronominalisation, the formulaic adjunct and adverbials. It was then found that, officialese is polite, impersonal and formal; and is characterised by the preponderance of passive structures and the use of the personal pronouns 'I' and 'you'. It was also concluded that, the Benue State Civil Service has many channels through which it communicates with not only its members but also members of the public. Some of these are; written, oral, or non- verbal channels. The researcher then recommended that: Studies such as this current one should be sought by the government and made available to Benue State civil servants, in order to equip them with the knowledge of the ideal language to be used in file processing and how to use it.

Key words: Civil Service, File Processing, Foregrounding, Language, Officialese

1. Introduction

Language is one of man's greatest gifts. It is an indispensable as well as an efficient tool which enables human beings to communicate, relate and share ideas, feelings, emotions and thoughts. It is a phenomenon which singles man and sets man apart from all other creatures. Language is the basic and fundamental tool for communication because, without language, human communication will be difficult. Omachonu (2011:1) opines that, language is so vital to human existence that there is hardly any situation or human function where language is not required. This can be seen as the reason why humans are born with the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). Omachonu (2011: 3) further adds that "language as a means of communication is essential in all speech communities and there is power in language (speech). Language is a system of conventional spoken, manual (signed), or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, express themselves. The functions of language include communication, the expression of identity, play, imaginative expression, and emotional release.

Human language is specie-specific. Only human beings make use of a system of verbal codes in communication. One of the things that distinguish man from every other creature is his possession of an organised system of communication called language. As a social phenomenon, language is basic to all societies because people use it to express their hopes, convey their thoughts, feelings and experiences. It is a system through which we engage in meaningful discourse (spoken or written). The message we intend to communicate is conveyed when we use language within the scope of the rules guiding its effective use.

The use of language is a varied and highly dynamic human activity. It is dynamic because language use is heavily dependent on context. And because context is

kaleidoscopic, language is often used in such a way that it reflects shades of ideas and contexts. Language use is therefore unique to its people, topic, setting and indeed its society. That is, every field of human endeavour is characterised by certain linguistic features that distinguish it from others. In the words of Hudson, (1996:34), every field employs special forms of language to give its discourse charm and influence which enables it to send different messages to different people at different orientations and levels at one time and within one piece of discourse. Every field uses language in subtle, manipulative and convincing way and coats their language with many characteristic features to serve their multi-directionality and multi-functionality simultaneously. Khalid & Zhang (2015: I 1) averred that, as we seem to observe with officialese where language is used to achieve several functions like directing or ordering, appealing, warning, instructing, informing, etc. Civil service is characterised by a peculiar language and style which is dependent on factors such as the writer, subject matter, and receiver of every correspondence.

2. Statement of the Problem

As clearly established, language is conventional and so is office language. As rules or conventions are followed in the use of Language, office language is not exempted as office language also has conventions that are followed while using it. Office language may simply be new inventions done to suit particular purposes or situations or a code used in exchange of information within and outside the civil service. It is however unfortunate that office language or jargon is criticised for lack of clarity, or making meaning and intention opaque and understanding difficult, even to some civil servants and the general public. This is a problem this current study will attempt to resolve.

The importance of office language especially in the civil service cannot be ignored as it creates economy of words, time or space thereby saving resources. In the Benue State civil service however, civil service office language that should be used in file processing is not well thought of and materials containing such formats and their interpretation are not always available to explore. Staff, especially new ones, on the job are left to learn by asking the old staff. This has slowed down the smooth running of the civil service file processing.

3. Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this research is to bring to limelight various language entities/codes used by Benue civil servants in file processing and also analyse how such language system is used in file processing in the Benue state civil service. The objectives of this research are therefore:

To identify the codes and language systems used by Benue State civil servants in file processing.

To ascertain the difficulty involved in understanding such language system and provide

clarification.

To determine how office language can be seen as an asset to its users.

4. Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the codes and language systems used by Benue State civil servants in file processing?
2. processing?
3. Is the office language used by Benue State civil service in file processing clearly understood and used appropriately by civil servants and the general public?
4. How is office language an asset to its users?

5. Methodology

Data for this current study were gathered through both primary and secondary sources of data collection. For the primary method, oral interviews were conducted using some unstructured questions. Both serving and retired civil servants were randomly sampled and interviewed in order to get the desired result. The secondary sources of data were collected from Benue State civil service commission as well as published and unpublished materials such as: Magazines, newspapers, office files and documents from the Benue State civil service as well as books, dissertations, theses, project works and so on.

6. Literature Review

Language has structures that are rule-governed and is systematic in nature. Following this assertion, Tremholm (2000:82), looks at language as a rule-governed system of symbols that allow the users to generate meaning and, in the process, to define reality. Despite the arbitrary nature of language, Gimson affirms that it has a pattern of conventions, rules covering sound units, the inflections and arrangement of 'words' and the association of meaning with words that learners of English as a second language have to brace up with for proficient performance.

From the above view of these scholars, one can conclude that, every language exhibits certain important characteristics; it is made up of symbols, it is rule-governed; it is productive and it affects individuals' view of the world. Stock (1992:34) sees "language" as the expression of ideas through sounds which is combined into words, words into sentences and then sentences into thoughts. Language is the most important medium of human communication. It is both unique to the species and universal within that same species. Only human beings can make use of verbal communication and all humans can learn it. It is pertinent to note that, in each context, a different form of language is applied. Human beings are able to manipulate language in different styles to suite each social context as well as fields of human endeavor. Any study that seeks to look deep into the system of language

or codes of communication as it pertains to a specific field, organisation, context, group of people and so on is therefore studying the style or stylistic analysis of such a field.

6.1 Stylistics

There are several definitions of stylistics as there are scholars or stylisticians. Crystal and Davy (1969:69) observe as follows: that (stylistics) is primarily concerned with the study of style of some or all of the language habits of one period... a selection of language habits, the occasional linguistic idiosyncrasies which characterise an individual's uniqueness. Style may refer to some or all of the language habits shared by a group of people at one time, or even over a period of time, as when we are talking about the style of the poets, the style of Old English 'heroic' poetry, the style in which civil service forms are written.

Leech and Short (1981:32) hold that style is needed in linguistics to describe choice which language makes available to a user, above and beyond the choices necessary for the simple expression of meaning. Stylistic choices are designed to have effect on the reader or listener, which are generally understood as communicating meanings which go beyond the linguistically determined meanings, communicating attitude (as in persuasive effect/style) and expressing emotions. They further aver that stylistics is the study of literature using methods, theories and concepts from linguistics. It is the study of the relationship between linguistics and literary function.

According to Missikova (2003: 11), stylistics is a field of study where the method of selecting and implementing linguistic, extra-linguistic and artistic expressive means and devices in the process of communication are studied. Abubakre (2011:3), cited in Dada (2014:8), says that stylistics is the aspect of linguistics which deals with occasions of distinctive language use objectively by providing both the literary and functional interpretation of such usage in literary and non-literary discourse.

6.2 Communication and Effective Communication

Communication in the words of Gartside (1976:67) is "the basic essence of language". Gartside further opines that "It is possible to communicate pleasures by a smile, approval by a nod of head. and pain by a groan". If the term effective communication is to be rightly understood and situated within its utility context as a relationship between individuals, groups and peoples, it must be broadly defined. It is basically the process of passing information and understanding from one person to another. It is the channel for passing, not only information, but also understanding. Information that has been passed, but not understood and therefore implies 'not executed' means that effective communication has not taken place. In this perspective, communication is seen as an interaction between the minds of at least two people, the sender and the receiver.

The process involves the production, perception and understanding of information

consisting ideas, facts and emotions, interchanged between two or more persons. The sender or communicator, conceives an idea, chooses a suitable channel which may be verbal or non-verbal and pushes it out to the desired receiver, through his chosen channel. The receiver, if tuned to the right channel gets the message, gives it his own understanding and makes use of it. For Eboh (1986:13), effective communication therefore involves:

- i. Clear articulation of an idea or message.
- ii. Accurate conception of the idea
- iii. Choice of the right channel
- iv. Correct understanding of the information
- v. Correct utilisation of the information and feedback.

Effective communication must therefore be understood as the meeting of minds between the sender and the receiver, on the particular information being transmitted. Every communication always has a goal, a purpose and it is only when the purpose is achieved that communication can be regarded as effective. Some of the aims of communication in an organisation are:

- i. To establish and disseminate the goals of the establishment
- ii. To develop plans for their attainment
- iii. To organise human and other resources in the most effective and efficient way.
- iv. To select, develop and appraise members of the organisation

To lead, direct, motivate and create a climate in which people can be free to make their contributions (Eboh, 1986:37).

No organisation can achieve its objectives without effective communication. It is therefore a paramount responsibility for the management of any establishment to ensure that effective communication is the bedrock of interaction between people within the given system. But for there to be effective communication, certain basic qualifications are sine qua non to the employee. They are:

An analytical mind.

- i. Logical thought processes or the ability to reason logically
- ii. A command of words and skills in manipulating the language.
- iii. An appreciably wide vocabulary, which helps one to know what one is talking or writing about. (Shaw, 1977:33).

Since effective communication is about a meeting of minds, it is much better and easier between people who are friendly towards each other. That is why some organisations take deliberate measures to establish personal relationships between members of their staff, their suppliers, customers and other regular contacts. In some organisations, informal relations on first name basis are encouraged among members of staff. In addition, when speaking or writing, it is necessary for the communicator to have some appreciation of what the addressee already knows. When a lawyer writes to another lawyer, he can use legal

language and be sure that he will be understood. But when he writes to a client, he will have to use ordinary language if he wishes to be understood (Mills *et al*, 1986:29). If the civil servant for instance, in writing to a layman on the street begins his message with "I am directed...", the layman gets a different impression altogether. Yet another civil servant will readily understand him.

The communicator has a duty to make himself understood. It is useless to blame the recipient of a communication if he does not understand it (Mills *et al*, 1986:30). In order to communicate and understand what is communicated effectively, one must learn the technical language of the relevant profession. In the case of civil service, this could be referred to as office language.

6.3 The Concept of Civil Service

The concept and scope of civil service in a particular country depends on the legal framework, which defines the areas of public and private sectors and their relationship. In some countries, such as the United Kingdom and Ireland, the boundaries between the two sectors are not distinct. The organisational and social environments of civil servants and private sector employees in those countries have many similarities. Other countries (such as France and Germany) have distinct personnel management systems in the private and public sectors.

The corpus of civil service consists of civil servants who work in central and local public administrative institutions. In many countries, civil service consists of upper-level civil service, mid-level civil service, and civil servants who work for coordinating, independent, and auxiliary institutions. However, as has already been mentioned, the scope of civil service in different countries varies. Some states apply a narrow concept of the national civil service (e.g. Ireland and Poland), whereas others use a broad definition (e.g., France, Finland, the Netherlands). In some countries (such as Lithuania), civil service includes state (various central government departments) and local administration; other countries (such as Poland) have only state administration (various central government departments, i.e a narrower concept).

However, there are countries (such as Italy), where civil service is a broader concept and covers not only central and local government officials who perform administrative functions but also public sector employees who provide public services, such as employees of educational institutions, doctors, etc. Nevertheless, all countries are characterised by the fact that the purpose of civil service, regardless of the political situation and changes of governments, is to ensure efficient, professional, transparent, and politically neutral implementation of the objectives of the state. The saying that "politicians change, but the administration (civil servants) remains" will be always relevant. According to Smalskys, (2016:43) a non-politicized and professional civil service, when political

forces change, guarantees continuity of activity and commitment to society. Every state must ensure the high quality of performance of employees who come to work in the civil service and be sure that only qualified civil servants are accepted to the civil service through the selection process, competition, or appointment.

6.4 Benue State Civil Service

The Benue State Civil Service is a body of professional Civil Servants entrusted with the responsibility of carrying out the policies of the Benue State government in relation to infrastructural development and social service delivery. The Benue State Civil Service was created in 1976 at the time when Benue State was created. The Civil Service, led by the Head of Service, as an organ of government is functional through the activities of individuals who make up this body. The Civil Servants are found mainly in the Ministries, departments and agencies where they perform their duties, progressing based on qualifications and seniority. There are certain core values that exist within the Benue State Civil Service which all Civil Servants are expected to share, obey and uphold. These core values are integrity, meritocracy, discipline, professionalism, patriotism, impartiality and secrecy of government information except where the information divulged conforms with the Freedom of Information Act. The Benue State Civil Service is founded on ethical principles- work ethics which every organisational member must comply with.

Ethics is seen as the principles or standards by which behavior is evaluated in an organisation or in a society. Some standards of behavior are almost universally valued and cherished- such as honesty, integrity, respect for others, trustworthiness and those who violate these ethical standards are evaluated negatively. And those who stand by the standards by which behavior is evaluated are influenced by the profession, position or relationship ties of the person taking the action. For that reason, it is found that the ethical standards applied to specific positions, for example public officials - lawyers, engineers, clergy reflect the roles and relationships common to that position.

The fortunes of the Nigerian Civil Service which the Benue State Civil Service is a part of, generally took a downward turn. Unfortunately, due to lack of serious efforts to handle and arrest the situation and absence of a sustained interest in the efforts to sanitise the conduct of Civil Servants coupled with application of ineffective remedial measures, the degeneration escalated by the day to the present era. However, the promotion and compliance of a sound ethical culture especially in regards to language use in file processing in the Civil Service and the enlarged Nigerian society has been the driving force underpinning every action of government and its agencies in present day Nigeria. According to Pevkur (2010:55) as enshrined in the Public Service Charter for Africa, ethical culture manifests in an officer, when among others, he performs his duty efficiently, displays discipline, dignity, integrity, equity, impartiality, fairness, public spiritedness and

courtesy in his actions.

7. Theoretical Framework

The theories related to this study in various ways are reviewed. Subsequently, the data collection and analysing process will be guided by the principles and provisions of such theories.

7.1 Foregrounding Theory

This research is based on Foregrounding Theory. The theory originated from the philosophy of Aristotle and later developments in the works of Russian formalists and the Prague structuralisms. The theory was propounded by British stylisticians such as Leech (1969) and Roger (1966). They argue that, basically, the notion of foregrounding was formed through deviation of a norm or parallelism, so that these two devices employed by authors created the "literariness" we recognise in literary texts.

From the above, it is clear that a foregrounded item in a text in most cases is a deviation from the normal or conventional way of writing which is basically for stylistic effects. Foregrounding can be achieved through the use of devices such as capitalisation, collocation, repetition and abbreviation. Others are acronym, numbering, pidgin/creole, diction and style. Foregrounding is aimed at directing the attention and interest of the reader towards the text he or she is reading. It is invaluable in stylistic analysis, whether literary or linguistic, because the foregrounded features are easily noticeable and impact greatly on the reader.

The stylistician is interested in oddities, deviations, messages in any discourse, language and grammar at the levels of lexis, syntax, phonology and semantics which are all considered in foregrounding theory. The theory explores the medium through which a piece of discourse is realised.

This researcher adopts foregrounding theory because this current study seeks to examine the stylistic significance of words, acronyms, file processing language, codes of communication and other features of civil service correspondences.

7.2 Conversational Maxims

Conversational implicatures have become one of the principal subjects of pragmatics. An important conceptual and methodological issue in semantics is how to distinguish senses and entailments from generalized conversational implicatures. A related issue is the degree to which sentence meaning determines what is said. Historical linguistics traces the evolution of conversational implicatures into idioms. Grice (1969: 11) developed an influential theory to explain and predict conversational implicatures, and describe how they arise and are understood.

The cooperative principle and associated maxims play a central role. Grice proposed that participants in a communicative exchange are guided by a principle that determines the way in which language is used with maxims efficiency and effect to achieve rational communication. He called it the cooperative principle. This cooperative principle is an umbrella term for nine components that guide how we communicate. These nine components are grouped together into four categories, called the maxims of conversation: the maxim of manner (perspicuity), the maxim of quantity (informativeness), the maxim of quality (truthfulness), the maxim of relation (relevance).

The "more or less, no categorical nature of pragmatic rules should make us expect exceptions. Accordingly, those exceptions should be seen as exceptions, not necessarily as counter-examples. The general maxims should be supportable as requirements for the rational continuation of the legislative enterprise.

The Maxims of Manner

- i. Avoid obscurity of expression
- ii. Avoid ambiguity
- iii. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)
- iv. Be orderly

The easiest of the four conversational maxims to apply to legislation is the fourth, manner: 'Be perspicacious'. This is fundamentally different from the other maxims, because it is concerned with how a conversational contribution is made rather than with what is said. As such, it and its sub maxims apply directly to legislative speech; of course, a legislature should avoid obscurity and ambiguity- its utterances (statutory provisions) should be orderly and not unnecessarily prolix. Compared with normal multilateral conversation, one-sided, legislative discourse requires perspicuity and clarity more intensively. If it is to communicate with its audience, the legislature will be limited in its choice of language. The language has to be clear enough for any common person to decode.

Civil service file processing language is, also limited by the medium it must use to reach its audience-the printed word. It is thus deprived of many of the expressive devices common in social, and oral discourse. Obvious examples are emphasis, pauses, facial expression, and gestures. Thus, Grice's maxims of manner apply more strictly to Civil service file processing language than they do to everyday discourse. The differences spring mostly from the one- sidedness of legislative speech; the hearer (reader) cannot say "Would you rephrase that, please, I can't understand it as it is". But with legislative speech we might go even further than merely applying the usual constraints of manner with special strictness.

8. Data Presentation and Analysis

8.1 The Communication Model in Civil Service in Benue State

The communication model, as a relatively new approach to the study of government and politics, focuses on communication processes as the central aspect of politics. The essential function of government and politics is to receive and process the messages or information, decide on what actions to be taken, and then steer and coordinate human efforts towards the attainment of selected goals.

The data in the messages or information are processed in such a way that the decision center drawing on its memories (e.g., files, or other records of its past decisions) and its values (preferences for certain outcomes rather than others), can take a decision which is then communicated to the effectors, which in turn translate the communicated decisions into actions. The processes are again linked by feedback loops. All organisations, including the State have feedback mechanisms which may allow them to change and adapt in response to information. In the Benue State Civil Service, Communications Model were found to comprise seven basic elements which are as follows:

The originator or sender of the communication:

For effective communication, this source must be credible, and recognised by the receiver to be so. The message in the communication must be put in a form that is comprehensible to the recipient. This process which is called encoding may take a written or unwritten form.

The channel chosen for transmitting the message or information from the sender to the receiver must be appropriate. This could be written, verbal or non-verbal sign language, or a combination of two or more channels, or even all.

The decoding process: which involves how the recipient perceives the encoded information and interprets it. What meaning the recipient attaches to the transmitted information, and the basic factors such as status or gender that permits the decoding and encoding process to achieve the desired congruence? The nature and expectations of the receiving individual group or audience: Where a communication's message conflicts with the interest or perception of the recipient, it may be ignored or rejected.

The feedback: This helps the sender to assess the effectiveness or otherwise of his communication. It also offers the sender the opportunity for response through the quality and nature of the feedback. Noise: This refers to any form of disturbance that can interfere with the transmission of the message or information. Noise can occur at any point in the communication process.

8.2 Patterns of Communication Flow

with their Unique Language in Benue State Civil Service

The flow of communication in an organization can be upward, downward or cross-wise.

This means that communication could be uni-directional (one way) or bi-directional (two-way). Bi-directional or two-way communication is superior to uni-directional or one-way communication. This is basically because in two-way communication, the receiver has an opportunity to seek clarification for what is not understood, or to improve his understanding of the message. This opportunity is non-existent in a one-way flow of communication. If for instance, an employee does not understand information passed to him, and cannot ask for clarification, then chances are that he cannot carry out effectively what is required of him.

Upward communication is a communication that emanates from sub-ordinates and then moves upward through the hierarchy of the organization. The advantage of this is that it allows top management to know what is happening low down in the hierarchy. But the practicability of this type of information flow depends on whether or not the top hierarchy provides the enabling environment where the sub-ordinates need have no fear of possible victimization for being too bold or outspoken. This type of communication is a necessary feedback format for the higher executives and helps them to have proper checks and balances.

Downward communication flows from superiors to sub-ordinates. The problem with this management style is that, it is authoritarian, and subordinates may view it as management by intimidation, and simply carryout directives without initiative, especially if they are not en a chance to comment. This management style which tends to treat sub-ordinates as robots is in most cases not good for the organization. Cross-wise communication is a communication pattern that flows horizontally between people on the same level or diagonally between people at different levels, in different sections of an organization. Crosswise communication speeds-up the flow of information and improves understanding, because it cuts across the chain of command to by-pass the slow process of information from one department to another.

In the Benue State Civil Service, these three patterns of information flow are used in combination because none of them can be successful in isolation. Both upward and downward communication are employed together in order to achieve a two-way communication flow. The multi-directional crosswise communication is added to this in the Benue State Civil Service which is why there is effective communication in the Benue State Civil Service.

The Benue State Civil Service therefore has many channels through which it communicates with not only its members but also members of the public. Some of these are; written, oral, or nonverbal channels. Very often, this study found that, in the Benue State Civil Service, the channels that are used within the civil service, depends on:

- I. What is to be communicated?
- ii. Who is doing the communicating?

- iii. At who is the communication targeted.
- iv. What is the feedback

The wrong channel would naturally result in the target audience missing the message or information altogether. The channels below, were found to be in use in the Benue State Civil Service.

8.3. Written Channels of Communications in the Benue State Civil Service

a). Memorandum: A memorandum is a short statement, report or note, used daily in the civil service within and outside departments. It could be formal or informal, but its main characteristics are that it is relatively short in comparison to reports for instance. Often referred to as memo, it is written on pre-printed memo forms showing who the message is from, and to whom it is being addressed. It is a relatively fast and an easy way to communicate in the service. One shortcoming however is that, on account of its shortness, it does not give a full exposition of the matter under consideration.

b). Minutes: Minutes are views, opinions, advice, information or directives expressed in writing during the course of day-to-day work in the office. They are usually enclosed in paper jackets known as files. Each file bears a reference number by which it is easily identified. A minute is usually much shorter than a memorandum. While a minute in normal circumstances should not exceed five pages, a memorandum can be much longer. A minute is more informal than a memorandum, both in language and in style. Whereas a minute is addressed to a particular person, a memorandum is usually meant to be studied and considered by as many people as are concerned or interested in the subject. For this reason, abbreviations are often used in minutes and constitute the normal short hand in minutes writing, they are considered improper in memo writing.

c). Reports: Reports are official written accounts of any matter, which are usually written after analysis or investigations have been concluded on the subject matter. Unlike memoranda, reports are usually very long and detailed. They are meant to provide the reader with a complete analysis of the matter under review. Reports could be written on a daily, weekly, monthly or annual basis depending on the requirement of the department concerned, and the issue at stake. One feature of a report is that which also constitutes its main weakness. And that is that; the bigger the report, the better executives think of it. But the bigger it is, the less chance there is of its being read. Civil service departments are almost like waste paper bins as there are masses of files very few people have knowledge of; reports people don't read. The correct information is in there, but it is disguised and people don't have time to dig it out.

d). Press Releases: This is a method used by government departments to inform the public about what it wants the public to know. The information is usually typed or printed and distributed to the public. However, government officials hope that the press would reprint or broadcast the released information to give it wider publicity.

d). Press Conference: In a press conference, public officials face the press and give out written statements read to the press by an official, who also answers questions from the press. The President or Governor and many other high officials, use this method to release information on important topics. It is an effective communication strategy because it provides immediate feedback in the form of questions asked by reporters. Such questions tend to clear away any misunderstanding of the message communicated.

e). Executive Orders: There are directives issued by the Governor directly, or by others, in their names. They communicate desired actions to those concerned. Executive orders usually have the force of law, and even after they have been announced orally, they are normally printed and distributed.

f). Gazettes: Gazettes are official government publications aimed at informing the public about government decisions. It includes all kinds of information about various aspects of government activity. Most often, government decisions do not take effect until they are published in a Gazette. The gazette is published weekly, and is widely distributed within and outside the civil service.

g). Letters: Letter writing is a normal feature of bureaucratic activity in the service. It could be to people within or outside the service. If the subject matter concerns many people, it is presented as a "circular" letter written and distributed to all concerned.

h). Pamphlets: Pamphlets are printed publications without covers, concerning any subject or topic, and are usually distributed to everyone who might be interested. They are fast and cheap ways to communicate with interested parties.

i). Handbooks: These are short reference books that contain information on particular subjects. Any government office can publish handbooks explaining any aspect of its activity. Such publications are very useful to people who have to deal with the particular government agency.

They help to reduce the volume of direct enquiries by the public.

j). Bulletin Boards: There are boards upon which notices are pasted informing people on various matters. They are always conspicuously displayed. It devolves on the public to read such notices and be informed about government policy and activity.

k). Circulars: There are short written messages intended for wide circulation. They are regularly used within the civil service as a means of communication to civil servants. Circulars always show from who they emanate and to whom they are addressed.

l). Petition: This is a special appeal directed formally to an ultimate authority, for special consideration on a matter affecting a civil servant. There is usually a definite laid down procedure for sending petitions. If an officer believes that he has been wronged, he must in following due process, take the matter up with his immediate superior. If he is not satisfied by the solution proffered by his immediate superior, then he could submit a formal petition to the Head of Government. Such a petition must be routed through his immediate superior

and Head of his Ministry the Permanent Secretary. If the petition deals with appointments, promotion, transfer or discipline, it should be addressed to the Secretary to the Federal or State Public Service Commission as the case may be. If it deals with conditions of service; it is addressed to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Establishments. Normally a petition should end with a short summary of the redress being sought.

n). Newsletters: Newsletters usually contain information that are of interest only to a particular group. The newsletter of any government agency is meant principally for the information and entertainment of members of the particular agency. They may contain information on transfers, promotion, meetings seminars and so on. Social news is often also included.

On the whole, written channels of communication are often preferred by the Benue State civil servants because they provide a retrievable record of what has been communicated. This reduces the chances of someone claiming that a particular message did not exist. The problem with written communication strategy as confirmed by some civil servants however is that, it creates a lot of paper work. Civil servants often complain of being weighed down by a mass of paper work, leaving them little time to act on them. Written channels can also cause confusion when the message is unclear. Unclear messages lead to more paper work in an attempt to clarify things.

8.4. Oral Channels of Communications in the Benue State Civil Service

The most effective communication is the face-to-face communication between interested persons in which process, speech is accompanied by gesture and facial expressions. It can then be perceived immediately whether or not, what is being communicated has been understood. It also permits further explanations to be given, and the right words chosen to express the desired concept.

Often the quickest and best way to ensure co-operation is to discuss the matter through direct conversation with the persons involved. Most often, oral communication precedes a written communication on the subject previously discussed. This could be formal or informal. Instructions given by a boss to a subordinate orally may be considered formal if it is official. But oral conversations may also be unofficial, which makes it informal. One of the most important problems of oral communication is the absence of a record or evidence of it. It can be easily denied by either party, even when it is tape-recorded. No record of oral communication is normally kept for later reference. In spite of this, it is a very important communication strategy in the Benue State Civil Service. In the service, there are various forms of oral communication. They could take the form of meetings, seminars, public lectures or telephone discussions.

i). Meeting: Regular meetings are essential for the smooth running of any organization including the Civil Service. Meetings could be daily, weekly or monthly depending on the requirements of each department. Meetings allow members of staff to contribute to

decision-making, and given them an opportunity to air their views. Heads of sections or department often use the opportunity provided by meetings to inform the staff of new policies and procedures or to get their comments on any issue.

ii). Seminars: Seminars are meetings that are organized around a specific topic. It is usually done to explain particular issues, subjects or topics. Experts in the relevant areas are invited to present papers on different aspects of the subject to participants. At the end of each paper, discussions are held to clarify any cloudy points.

iii). Telephone Discussions: These are very important means of oral communication in the Civil Service. It is relatively cheap and saves time for traveling and movement for face-to-face communication. Now with the coming of the GSM in Nigeria, telephone communication has assumed greater importance and utility in the civil service.

8.5 Analysis of the Language used by Benue State Civil Service in File Processing

8.5.1 Graphology

This is a discussion of style accounts for and entails the foregrounding or peculiar use or deliberate neglect of the norms of punctuation such as capitalisation, or lower-case letters, the use of question mark, interjection, the comma, the colon, the semi-colon. Others are paragraphing, spacing as well as bold prints. Graphological level of stylistic analysis has to do with the analogous study of a language's writing systems, the formalised rules of spelling and pronunciation. That is, there are specific rules that direct or regulate the way and pattern graphic symbols are written or encoded to bring out meaning. That is, it is the way or pattern of putting graphic symbols to encode meaning. Such features include question mark, dash, italics, spellings, capitalization, and bold print.

The study observes the use of capitalisation in the data even when the capitalised letter, words or phrases occur medially in structures as we find below:

i. I write with reference to the appointment offered you ref...as SECRETARIAL

ASSISTANT 1 for one year.

ii. You will be on TEMPORARY APPOINTMENT for another one (1) year on salary.

iii. You will be on a TENURE APPOINTMENT for another one (1) year on salary scale.

iv. It has been observed that you have formed the habit of not coming to work in the office as is expected of every Civil Servant and also you always refuse to carry out responsibilities assigned to you by your superior officers.

Capitalisation makes such expressions or phrases stand out in the linguistic context of their occurrence. Besides, this feature has a meaning making motive. For instance, in the examples above, the receiver knows at a glance the nature of appointment offered him. The feature also facilitates attention and shows emphasis.

8.5.2. Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronyms and abbreviations abound in the data. Some of the Examples of the acronyms found on files in the Benue State Civil Service are presented in the table below:

S/NO.	ACRONYM	MEANING
1	a.b.c	At back cover
2	A.I.E	Authority to incur Expenditure
3	a/m	Above mentioned
4	a/n	Above name
5	Afo	And so forth and other
6	Ag.	Acting
7	ASAP	As soon as possible
8	b.c	Back cover
9	b.o.f	Back of file
10	B.U	Bring up
11	C/o	Care of
12	Cap	Chapter of laws
13	Cc	Copy
14	d.o	Demi Official
15	Dept.	Department
16	e.g	For example
17	E.T.A	Estimated time of arrival
18	E.T.D	Estimated time of departure
19	encl.	Enclosure
20	F & R	File and return
21	f.n.a	For necessary action
22	F.R	Financial regulation
23	F.R.R.	Financial regulations
24	f.y.i	For your information
25	h/w	Here with
26	i.d.c	In due course
27	i.e	Ide est.: that is: in other words
28	i/c	Incharge of
29	K.I.V	Keep in view
30	L.P.C	Last pay certificate
31	L.P.O	Local purchase order
32	n.a	Not applicable
33	N.B	Nota Bene, take notice, take note
34	n.f.a	No further action
35	O & M	Organization methods
36	O/C	Office in-charge of
37	P	Page
38	P.A	Put away
39	P.U	Put up
40	P.V	Payment voucher
41	pp.	Pages
42	R.V	Receipt voucher
43	S.f.s	Submitted for signature
44	S.f.c	Submitted for Consideration
45	s.f.i	Submitted for Information
46	u.f.s	Under flying seal

The basic essence of these acronyms is for economy of words. That is, what should have been said in a long sentence is said very briefly occupying little space. The acronyms give directions to where a mail can be located in a file. Number (6) above for instance, directs one to an unnumbered mail in a file. That is, a mail without a file number is placed at the back of the file and indicated on the cover of the file (refer to b.c).

Some of the acronyms give individuals the authority to carry out an activity for instance number (2) above, gives the procurement department the go ahead to carry out a financial responsibility that has been approved but yet to be published. Acronyms in the civil service indicate necessity as in number (21) above, once sent and received, the recipient sees and understands that it is expedient to act on the instruction that has been sent in that particular file. These acronyms are also used in indicating what is important to a particular course and what is not for instance, number (32) above, it signifies that a particular information is not applicable or needed in a given course. The civil servant knows that official correspondences must not be wordy so as to make reading and understanding easier.

9. Conclusion

After subjecting the documents to diverse levels of stylistic analysis such as graphological, lexical and syntactic which covered sentences, clauses, passivisation, pronominalisation, the formulaic adjunct, adverbials and so on, the study discovered that officialese is polite, impersonal and formal; and is characterised by the preponderance of passive structures and the use of the personal pronouns 'I' and 'you'.

It was also concluded that, the Benue State Civil Service has many channels through which it communicates with not only its members but also members of the public. Some of these are; written, oral, or non-verbal channels. Which depends on: What is to be communicated? Who is doing the communicating? At whom is the communication targeted and what the feedback is. The researcher concluded that, just like some other government institutions, the Benue State Civil Service communicates through both written and oral channels, the written channels include: Memorandum, Minutes, Reports, Press Release, Press Conference, Executive Orders, Gazettes, Letters, Pamphlets, Handbooks, Bulletin Boards, Circulars, Petition and Newsletters.

The oral form of communication found included: Meetings, Seminars and Telephone Discussions. It was also observed that, although the communication flow in the Benue State civil Service is commendable, it is faced by the following barriers: The psychological barriers concern the emotional and other personality characteristics of the sender or recipient of information being communicated; emotional disturbances concerning such private feelings of anger, love hatred and such other emotional conditions that may lead to disturbances in the mental state of the individual. All of these could cause a

message to be inadequately sent or poorly received. Social distance has to do with the social class and status of the persons who need to communicate. If the person, owing to his being in a much lower class, finds it difficult to say what he really thinks or wishes to communicate, then this will hinder a proper interaction. On the other hand, a person in the higher social class will tend to give only commands to the other party. In the final analysis, social distance becomes a barrier to normal relationship between the sender and recipient of communication, as none of the parties understands the premises of the other.

Uses of abbreviations were found to be used in file processing in the Benue State Civil Service. Some of the Examples of the acronyms found on files in the Benue State Civil Service include HATISS, NAPEP, NECO, while the abbreviations are VOL, A&PC, APPT, REG, CC NCP, and SCC. The researcher then concluded that acronyms and abbreviations are used in the data probably because the writer in each case wants to be brief, direct and punchy (effective and forceful), or to save time since the writer has a lot of correspondences to attend to or write. In addition, the writer is mindful of the space within which he is expected to function. That is, he knows that official correspondences must not be wordy so as to make reading and understanding easier.

Also, thirty five out of the sixty sentences identified in the BSCS Niere conuolex sentences while fifteen were simple sentences. The remaining ten are compound-complex sentences. Most of the sentences are largely declaratives with the normal order of elements in Systemic Functional Grammar, SPCA (subject, predicate, complement, Adjunct). It was therefore concluded that the sentence structure used therein is complex.

10. Recommendations

From the data presented and analysed above, and the experiences during the study, the researchers make the following recommendations:

1. Studies such as this current study should be sought by the government and made available to Benue State civil servants, in order to equip them with the knowledge of the ideal language to be used in file processing and how to use it.
2. Other researchers should consider studying the nature of the language implored by higher ranked civil servants in directing, instructing and or communicating orally to lower ranked civil servants during office activities.
3. One of the basic problems, encountered by this current study was scarcity of available study materials relating to this current study. The Linguistic Association of Nigeria should therefore consider publishing the electronic copy of the study, to feed online websites, so as to increase the number of available studies on this subject matter.
4. Benue State Civil Service should consider, publishing the language used in public file processing and in their general communication to the public, so as to enable a free flow of communication between them and those who are not civil servants and do not know or

understand the language.

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