

A Systemic Functional Analysis of Clausal Subordination in *Daily Trust* and *Aláròyè* Newspaper Columns

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Abstract

Clausal and phrasal systems are very often examined in the study of syntax. However, grammatical elements such as subordinators are not often examined especially in a syntactic analysis of a text. It is against this background that this research has a keen interest in the examination of subordination of clausal items in the back page columns of *Daily Trust* and *Aláròyè* newspapers published in English and Yoruba respectively. Whereas the newspaper columns possess eclectic linguistic features, the research is limited to a syntactic study of subordinated structures. The choice of these two texts is based on the fact that they are primarily published in North and South of Nigeria respectively even though they both permeate the entire country in terms of spread. Findings show that relative pronouns usually possess the meaning of the preceding nominals in *Daily Trust* but they do not possess the sense of the preceding nominal in *Aláròyè*. This implies that relative pronouns entirely lack ideation in the Yoruba-medium newspaper. Similarly, complementizers are mobile in the former but fixed in the latter. It is also discovered that other subordinators, apart from relativizers, have a strong ideational influence on the sense of the subordinate clause in both *Aláròyè* and *Daily Trust*.

Keywords: *clause, subordination, Aláròyè, Daily Trust, Systemic Functional Grammar, Yoruba*

Introduction

Studies on the syntactic features of English and Yoruba in written texts abound (Oladele Awobuluyi 1978; Ayo Bamgbose 1990; and Emmanuel Sharndama 2014). Sharndama (2014) specifically focuses on the clausal coordination in legal texts while Timothy Baldwin (np) studies coordination and subordination in Japanese. There is dearth of studies using Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) in the analysis of clausal subordination in written texts, particularly in Nigeria. The study is, therefore, justified since subordinators are often ignored, or at least less focused upon, in grammatical teachings (Ammu Abrafi Adjei and Rebecca Williams 2014). While their roles as linkers are often emphasized, the conditions for their use appear not to have been given due attention despite the fact that they are capable of signifying particular meanings and having functional impacts on the overall meaning of a sentential unit.

SFL provides the theoretical foundation for this study. Specifically, the meta-theory of the model is used. SFL generally holds that choice of expression is the basis of communicating meaning in language use. The choice of using one form of expression instead of another underlies the fact that a particular meaning is intended to be communicated rather than the

other. While the theory recognizes that meaning is multifaceted and contextually created, it identifies three meta-functions (or meanings) of language use: ideational, interpersonal and textual. Ideational meaning suggests that language is used to chiefly communicate our experience, feeling, observation and opinion to other language users. For instance, this particular research is presented to readers through language, and therefore, achieving an ideational purpose. The interpersonal function of language holds that language is a tool for social integration of users: they solidarize, socialise and felicitate with one another through language medium. Textual function has a linkage effect. That is, language is capable of linking one experience or message to another.

This research is a systemic functional analysis of subordination in English-medium and Yoruba-medium newspapers drawing data from *Daily Trust* and *Alàróyé* respectively. The research is significant in many respects. At least, two sets of people can benefit from the findings of this work. First, news writers (English and Yoruba) can immensely benefit from this study in that they could be exposed to possible semantic functions of certain subordinators in Yoruba and English. Secondly, the findings of this research can also be useful to other researchers in systemic linguistics and/or contrastive linguistics.

The Place of Subordinators in Systemic Functional Grammar

The technique of subordination allows language users to construct a meaning through “multiple clause structures” (Quirk and Greenbaum 1973: 309). Quirk *et al* identify a number of indicators of clausal subordination among which are an over subordinator, an introducing *wh-* element, subject-verb inversion, and non-finite verb (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik 1985: 997). For the purpose of this research, these indicators would be grouped into two: overt and covert indicators. The overt indicators represent identifiable lexical items such as subordinating or adverbial conjunctions, and relative pronouns subordinating a clause to another. The covert indicators, on the other hand, refer to indicators, such as inversion and non-finiteness that have to do with structural peculiarity of a clause or a verb.

Subordinators are generally capable of evoking different semantic implications. The conjunction, *since*, for example, may be employed to introduce a clause of reason or time. Similarly, some clauses may have two or more semantic roles. Some temporal or time clauses, for instance, may imply relationships of concession and condition, and some others may have the relationship contrast (Quirk et al. 1087). In SFL Meta theory, the possibility of linking clauses relates to textual and ideational functions. While the textual functions have to do with the connection between two clauses, ideational function deals with the resultant meaning this connection evokes (Eggins 254). This means that a series of clauses may be bound together by a diversity of logical relations. These relations are technically referred to as ‘logical meaning’. Logical meaning has two subsystems: taxis and logico-semantic systems. The taxis or tactic system refers to the kind of interdependency between clauses correlated into a clause complex. Taxis also has subsystems: parataxis (coordination) and hypotaxis (subordination) (Eggins 255).

Parataxis refers to certain paratactic conjunctions that express the logical relationship between two clauses although they can sometimes be linked without explicit markers. Among the

commonest paratactic conjunctions are ‘and, or, so, yet, neither... nor, either...or’. Hypotaxis, on the other hand, denotes subordinating relations between clauses. The commonest among hypotactic conjunctions include ‘if, while, because, when’ (Eggins 255).

Logico-semantic system is the second subsystem of the lexical meaning that deals with the specific kind of meaning relationship between joined clauses. In turn, it has two forms: projection and expansion. Projection clauses have relations of quoting and reporting. The first one is locution or what is projected while the second stands for the idea or what is thought (Eggins 271). Expansion refers to the relations of development and extension where the main clause is developed or extended by another (Eggins 279).

Systemic Functional Linguistics’ View on Cohesion and Coherence

Subordinators are chiefly used for the purpose of cohesively linking units within a text, but they also have a carryover effect on the coherence between the units being linked. The concept of “cohesion” is explained in detail by Halliday and Hasan (1976). According to them, the writer is able to hold together meanings in the related sentences in a number of ways, and cohesion is created to establish the structure of meaning (26).

While cohesion is perceived as the overt linguistic signal between propositions, coherence may be seen as the relationship between two functions inherent in alpha and beta clauses. The sentences in a text are not going to be considered coherent unless the actions performed by them are recognised. Discourse involves the context and needs to be interpreted through the understanding of discourse structures and the use of many strategies. For instance, to comprehend discourse, language users would interpret the discourse based on the assumption that, if one thing is said after another, the two things are related in some way.

To Schiffrin (1987), cohesive devices are clues that help locate meanings and accommodate the understanding of a conversation. Discourse coherence, therefore, is dependent on “a speaker’s successful integration of different verbal and nonverbal devices to situate a message in an interpretive frame and a hearer’s corresponding synthetic ability to interpret such cues as a totality in order to interpret that message” (39). With regard to coherence, discourse markers, some of which are subordinators, are part of participants’ linguistic tools that facilitate oral communication and are both verbal and nonverbal features for the participants who “jointly integrate forms, meanings, and actions to make overall sense of what is said” (39). Schiffrin also points out that arguments may be organised without discourse markers. She proposes that markers are not compulsory when a conversation moves on within their contexts and “the potential meaning relationship between them is already constrained” (319). The semantic relations of propositions are usually adequately clear for listeners or readers to identify the meanings held between two discourse units without the presence of markers. While this is tenable for spoken discourse, the same may not be said of written discourse which has to be supported with virtually all possible textual details in order to present the message as clearly as possible.

Methodology

Although syntax deals with a wide area ranging from phraseology to clausology, this study is only concerned with the instances of subordination in the newspaper columns written in English and Yoruba. Whereas the newspaper possesses eclectic linguistic features, the research is limited to a syntactic study of subordinated structures. Two newspapers have been selected for study: *Alaroye* and *Daily Trust*. The former is used in the demonstration of the techniques of subordination in Yoruba while the latter provides the data for English. In addition, the back page columns of these newspapers are the focus of the study. The newspaper columns used fall between November 25, 2014 and February 6, 2015. The data taken from the newspapers have some connection with one another in that all the columns selected from *Daily Trust* emanate from the same writer/columnist, Adamu Adamu, while those ones taken from *Alàróyé* are also from the same writer/columnist, who goes by the pen-name, Omo Odo Agba. All the instances of subordination in the columns are randomly selected.

Overt Subordination in *Daily Trust* and *Aláròyé*

Clausal subordination in *Daily Trust* and *Aláròyé* exhibits different patterns, each having its peculiarity. In overt subordination, subordination is signalled through the use of different types of subordinators. These are examined below.

Relative Pronouns

We have numerous instances where relative pronouns occur as indicators of subordination in *Daily Trust* columns. Amongst such instances are:

- the Palestinian proposal, *which called for peace with Israel within a year, an end to the Israeli occupation...* (January 2, 2015)
- and it was Nigeria's abstention *that defeated the Palestinian dream.* (January 2, 2015)
- In governance and budgetary process, *he who controls the power,* controls the purse. (January 9, 2015)
- the two-state solution, *which the Security Council voting had now negated,* was no solution at all... (January 2, 2015)

In each of the above instances, the italicized relative clauses are functionally subordinate clauses where relative pronouns are the binders or linkers between the subordinate clauses and the main or part of the main clauses. The relative pronouns, here, ideationally retain the meaning of the noun which they post-modify. In (i), for instance, the relative pronoun, *which*, is the subject of the relative clause and, therefore, it is 'the Palestinian proposal that called for peace with Israel'. Consequently, an important idea is given in the subordinate clause but this is not as important as the nominal which it post-modifies. Textually, however, the subordinator makes the nominal, the Palestinian proposal, connected to the relative clause.

In (ii), the subordinate clause appears like what may be termed as a false subordinate clause. This is because the sentence itself is an instance of cleft construction. In cleft constructions, an otherwise single clause is broken into two, each with its own verb. The initial clause of the resultant construction has the structure: it + be + focus/theme. The focus is the part of the uncleft clause that is meant to be the focal point of the message in the new construction. Hence, a cleft construction such as the above consists of one clause in its deep structure while it has two clauses in its surface realization. At ideational level therefore, no idea is subordinated to another in the real sense.

In (iii), the relative clause is central to the meaning of the post-modified pro-nominal, he. Hence, ideationally, the meaning of the pro-nominal can only be retrieved from the clause since it does not have any cataphoric reference. This ideational function of the subordinator (relative pronoun) is closely linked to its textual function. In other words, the pronominal may be avoided (so that the sentence reads as : ... who(ever) controls the power, controls the purse) but the removal of relative pronoun or relative clause in this construction may fail to produce this required effect.

In (iv), the relative clause is not very important because it is not central to the meaning of the preceding nominal. Nevertheless, the relative pronoun, at ideational level, still retains the meaning of the nominal it is post-modifying. Textually, it makes the nominal linked with the rankshifted relative clause.

Overt subordination with relative pronouns can also be found in *Alàróyé*. Among the instances of such are:

- | | | |
|------|----|---|
| v. | a. | kò sí ìdì kán tí òò fí sẹ̀ bẹ̀è... |
| | b. | No is reason any <i>that I will _ do that...</i> |
| | c. | There is no reason for me to do that... (Apa Keta) |
| vi. | a. | ... ìtàn tí mó ñ sọ... |
| | b. | ... story <i>which I am saying..</i> |
| | c. | ... the story I am telling (Apa Karun un) |
| vii. | a. | Gẹ̀gẹ̀ bì mo tí wí lára ìwé tí émi ñ ló... |
| | b. | As _ I _ said in those book <i>that I am using ...</i> |
| | c. | Just as I said in some of the materials I use... (Apa Karun un) |

In these three instances, the relative clauses are central to the preceding nominals. It, therefore, appears that relative clauses are restrictively used in Yoruba, at least in the columns used for this research. The relative pronouns, at ideational level, do not have meaning in themselves, neither do they carry over the meaning/sense of the preceding nominal. Nevertheless, they fulfil a textual role in that the entire construction would be ungrammatical without them. They link the preceding nominal to the rankshifted clause.

that-Complementizer

Subordination in *Daily Trust* columns is often realized through *that*-complementizer. Instances of such include:

- viii. And it did so blissfully unaware *that this attempt to create the Palestinian state will indeed have advanced their so-called two state solution* (January 2, 2015)
- ix. It is said *that budgeting is the process of worrying about expenditure before incurring it...* (January 9, 2015)
- x. *That there was conquered territory or that he said this* might be the second tragedy of Nigeria. (January 9, 2015)
- xi. The only difference here is *that the others can be – and are- kept on a cultural leash.* (February 6, 2015)

In (viii), the complementizer, *that*, has an important role in textually linking the earlier part of the sentence to the subordinate clause. It also has a vital role in making the clarification about the sense of the adjective, *unaware*. This means that, although the complementizer makes the clause in which it appears a subordinate clause, it has an ideational role in making the adjective, *unaware*, restrictive and less general. In other words, the adjective, *unaware*, has the sense of ‘generalness’, which can be limited or restricted by either an *of*-prepositional phrase or *that*-clause. Thus, the restrictiveness of the adjective in the above sample is achieved by the introduction of a *that*-clause.

In (ix), the complementizer and the clause where it appears are different from (viii) textually and ideationally. Whereas, superficially, the complementizer links the earlier part of the sentence to the other part of it, this is not so in the real sense. The subordinate clause, here, syntactically functions as a delayed or postponed subject. In other words, it is the real subject of the clause, ‘it is said’, where the ‘it’ is simply an empty category. This situation is often technically referred to as clausal extraposition. It is often used for suspense, end focus and emphasis. Ideationally, therefore, the meaning of the empty ‘it’ is delayed until the later part of the construction. Textually, the complementizer serves as a support for the subordinate clause. This is because, if the subordinate clause is moved back to its original position, it still needs the support of the complementizer for its survival.

In (x), the subordinate clause is occupying its real position. The complementizer, therefore, as mentioned above, gives it some kind of support by way of performing a textual role. It is rather a link between the two clauses of the sentence: the dependent and independent clauses, where the latter functions as the subject in the former. Ideationally, the complementizer signals some certainty-like effect which makes the event in the subordinate clause sound somehow convincing.

The peculiarity of (xi) lies in the fact that the subordinate clause functions as the subject complement. Therefore, the entire construction is not meaningful without it. But, in addition to this, the complementizer, which links the subordinate clause to the earlier part, adds some force to the ideation conveyed by the subordinate clause itself.

There are also some instances of subordination with complementizer in *Alàróyé*. Some of them are:

- xii. ... ní pé bí è bá tẹ átẹ̀jísẹ̀ nàà tí n ko bá fẹ̀sì ...
... is *that if you _ send text even if I not do reply ...*
... is *that even if you send a text , and there is no reply...* (Apa Keta)
- xiii. ohún tó sẹ̀lẹ̀ ní pé átẹ̀jísẹ̀ tí í mǎá n dé ọ̀wọ̀ mì pọ̀ lààrín ọ̀sẹ̀ kàn
something that happened is *that text which _ _ get hand my many within week one*
what happened is *that the text messages that I receive within a week are many.*

In these instances, the complementizers and the clause appear to be fixed unlike in *Daily Trust* where some of them can be moved. The complementizer has the textual role of linking the clause within which it appears and the main clause. Ideationally, the complementizer makes the event in the subordinate clause relevant to that in the main clause. At this level, therefore, a complementizer performs similar ideational functions in *Daily Trust* and *Alàróyè*.

Adverbial Subordinators

Adverbial subordinators refer to those subordinators which appear in a clause, and subsequently make the subordinate clause functions as an adverbial. These are some of the instances in *Daily Trust*:

- xiv. And for this, president conquered territory is anywhere other than Igboland *because he had said that ...* (January 9, 2015)
- xv. *In order to stop the possibility of the nation witnessing a re-enactment of the president's nepotism, ...* (January 9, 2015)
- xvi. And *when it came time for making allocations*, he decided ... (January 9, 2015)

Each of the subordinate clauses above ideationally performs different adverbial functions. In (xiv), the subordinator signals the reason for the event in the main clause. However, this reason is contained in the subordinate clause itself (i.e. he had said that). The subordinator, therefore, textually links the event in the main clause to the reason for it, which is contained in the event in the subordinate clause.

In (xv), the subordinator, in order to, ideationally gives a justification to the event in the main clause. It is also a link by which this justification is linked to the event in the main clause. The subordinate clause in (xvi), at ideational level, has a temporal value. However, it is the subordinator itself that conveys this sense. In the same vein, it is the subordinator that allows this temporal value of the clause to be connected with the event in the main clause.

In *Alàróyè*, there are also instances of overt subordinators with adverbial subordinators. Some of these are:

- xvii. a. *Bì n̄ bá sò ọkán tí ko bá rí bẹ lojú ẹnikèní, ...* b.
b. *If I _ say one which not _ is so in the eyes anyone*
c. *If I say something that is not acceptable by anyone ...* (Apa Keta)
- xviii. a. *Nigbá tí mo sò pé lásiko tí wòn dà*
b. *when which I said...*
c. *When I said that the time they mentioned...* (Apa Keta)
- xix. a. *Nítòrì kí iyá mà bàà jẹ ẹ ...* (Apa Keta)
b. *so that _ suffering will not consume him ...*
c. *so that he will not suffer ...*
- xx. a. *Gègè bí mo ti n̄ sò nípá ágbàrá Ìbàdàn léyì ...*
b. *Just as I have been saying about power Ibadan this ...*
c. *Just as I have been saying about the influence of Ibadan...* (Apa Karun)

In these cases, the subordinators (*bí*, *nigbá*, *nítòrì*, *gègè*) have a strong ideational influence on the sense of the subordinate clause just as found in *Daily Trust*. In (xvii), *bi* subjects the event in the clause to a condition. It, therefore, means that the subordinator is central to the

appropriate interpretation of the entire clause. At the same time, the subordinator allows the event to be textually linked to the event in the main clause.

Similarly, the subordinator *nigbá* confers a temporal value to the clause but it also fulfils a textual role by placing the event in the main clause in the context of time of the event in the subordinate clause. Constructions (xix) and (xx) are no different from this textually and ideationally.

Covert Subordination

In this situation, the subordinate clause lacks an overt subordinator. This is a result of different syntactic patterns. Instances of covert subordination in *Daily Trust* include:

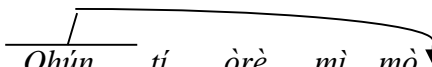
- xxi. ... at any event, Nigeria abstained from *casting its vote for the resolution*... (January 2, 2015)
- xxii. ... unaware that this attempt *to create the Palestinian state* will indeed have advanced ... (January 2, 2015)
- xxiii. for the budget *drawn by President Goodluck "Latter-day Praise" Jonathan last year*, charity began at home (January 9, 2015)

Each of the underlined is a subordinate clause. However, there is no overt subordinator in any of them. These three clauses have non-finite verbs, which render them subordinate clauses. There are *-ing* non-finite verb (casting), *to* non-finite verb (to create) and *-ed* non-finite verb (drawn) in (xxi), (xxii) and (xxiii) respectively. Despite the shared similarities of non-finiteness, these verbs are functionally different and the clauses within which they appear occupy different syntactic positions in the constructions. In (xxi) and (xxii), the non-finite verbs are transitive and, therefore, take direct objects, *its vote* and *the Palestinian state* respectively. The subordinate clauses where they appear are, by no means, syntactically the same. The former functions as a prepositional complement while the latter is a post-modifier in a noun phrase. Ideationally, therefore, the former is central to the preposition (and, therefore, the entire construction) since a preposition always takes a complement. The latter, on the other hand, is less vital to the construction since its removal will not do a grammatical damage to the construction. Nevertheless, it serves as some kind of emphasis or clarifier since the sense of the subordinate clause is intrinsic in the deictic item, *this*. At textual level, the subordinate clause in (xxi) is firmly linked with the preposition but the one in (xxii) does not have this firm link since its role is that of clarifier without which the noun phrase, *this attempt*, lacks almost nothing.

In (xxiii), the verb in the subordinate clause is an *-ed* non-finite verb and it is in its passive state. This gives the reason why it loses its object. The clause itself functions as a post-modifier in a noun phrase but, unlike in (xxii), it is ideationally important to the noun phrase because it does not only clarify the noun, it also identifies it. It is, therefore, ideationally and textually relevant to the noun.

Covert subordination is not replete in *Alàróyé*. This may be because of the non-existence of finite-non-finite dichotomy in Yoruba verbs. That is, Yoruba verbs do not respond to change

in tense and number. However, there is still an instance of covert subordination identified in *Alàróyè*:

xxiv.  *Ohún tí òrè mì mò tí ko fè sòò ...*
something that friend my know that he not want say ...
what my friend knows but does not want to say...

Here, subordination is due to the unusual arrangement of the clausal elements. The direct object (*Ohún*) of the verb, *mò*, has been taken from its original position to the initial position of the clause. This is, sometimes, called fronting or topicalisation. If the direct object is returned to its original position, the status of the clause will change from subordinate to main:

- òrè mì mò *Ohún* tí ko fè sòò
- Friend my know what _ he not want say
- My friend knows what he does not want to say

Ideationally, therefore, the fronting of the direct object reduces the rank of the clause and makes it dependent on another clause (main clause) within the sentence. This has also made it textually linked to the main clause. From the foregoing, it is clear that and subordinators in *Daily Trust* and *Alàróyè* share some similarities and, at the same time, have their differences.

Conclusion

This research has also shown that, in the case of subordination, relative pronouns usually possess the meaning of the preceding nominal in *Daily Trust* but they do not possess the sense of the preceding nominal in *Alàróyè*. This implies that relative pronouns entirely lack ideation in the Yoruba-medium newspaper. Similarly, complementisers are mobile in the former but fixed in the latter. It is, however, discovered that subordinators have a strong ideational influence on the sense of the subordinate clause in both.

It can, therefore, be posited that subordination is a veritable tool by which ideas, thoughts, meanings or propositions may be neatly woven together resulting in compactness or economy most of the time while subordinators may essentially affect the meaning of the entire construction. Second learners of either Yoruba or English need to be taught the technicalities of clausal subordination in the two languages. Knowledge of these will enhance adequate capturing of ideas and thoughts appropriately.

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