



A SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS OF SELECTED 2019 NIGERIAN GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONEERING SLOGANS

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ABSTRACT

Language is a tool of politics. Hence, literature is fraught with different linguistic studies on the nature and functions of political language. However, only a dearth of study exists on the language of political slogans. Hence, this work syntactically studied the gubernatorial slogans of the ruling political party in Nigeria (All Progressives Congress) with a view to discovering the

Introduction

Language is human vocal noise or the arbitrary graphic representation of this noise used systematically and conventionally by the people of a particular community for the purpose of communication. Language plays a vital role in communication (whether verbal, written or non-verbal) Osisanwo (2008). It is a sort of code system, a carrier of information which is capable of transmitting meanings intended. Makinde and Odeneye (2010) submit that language has the power to stir emotions, shape things around people and condition their feelings towards those things. Without language, the existence of human beings would have been difficult because communicating effortlessly with one another would have been an uneasy task. Therefore, language as a concept, can be said to be a resource in all human endeavour especially in political campaigns (Aduradola & Chris, 2013). Language is an indispensable verbal communicative tool in politics owing to the unique purposes and functions it performs.



Expounding the functions language performs in politics, Beard (2000) avers that, “looking at the language of politics as an occupation is important because it helps us to understand how language is used by those who wish to gain power, those who wish to exercise power and those who wish to keep power” (p. 2). Barber (1999) also argues that language is employed to influence the way people behave which makes cooperation possible. Schaffner (2004) submits that political language could be used to represent language in the political context, which is, using language to specifically achieve a politically motivated function. It could also be used to denote political vocabulary including words and phrases that refer to extra-linguistic phenomenon in the political field. The use of language in politics has certain distinctive features when compared to other varieties of language use. These features remain unique with politicians as the language of political campaign is embodied in propaganda and rhetoric which is persuasive in nature. As part of language of politics, political slogans are veritable tools

kind of grammatical structures mostly exploited for the slogans and why? Systemic Functional Grammar was employed as the theoretical framework and with that, the grammatical structures of fifteen (15) 2019 APC gubernatorial slogans of aspirants that won the election were analysed. Findings revealed that majority of the APC slogans were nominal groups, which meant that the slogans focused on more on portrayal of aspirant’s personality and through that persuade and convince the electorate to see the aspirants as the most excellent. Therefore, the study concluded that the structure of political slogans is exploited to essentially to implicitly condition the feelings of electorates’ and to influence them. Hence, this paper recommends that electorates and the entire citizenry of Nigeria should be wary and sensitive to political language which politicians often exploit for selfish motives.

Key words: Systemic Functional Grammar, Political Slogans, Political Parties.



of electioneering campaigns. They are characteristically concise, striking and memorable. Political slogans are probable capable means which politicians use to influence the decisions, actions and voting patterns of the electorates. They are intentionally coined or adopted by politicians in order to cajole the electorates to vote for them and their parties during elections. Political aspirants use slogans to present themselves as the ones that can turn around the poor economic, social and political conditions of a particular society.

In politics, people fight for power to put into practice certain political, economic and social ideas and this is where the role of language is felt. Ike-Nwafor (2015) avers that, “every political action is prepared, accompanied, influenced and played by language” (p. 2). It is on this premises that scholars in linguistics have deemed it fit to show keen interest in the linguistic structure of a text and its relationship with the social or socio-political context that surrounds the text.

Diverse linguistic studies have been done on commercial and political slogans within the framework of linguistic stylistics (Emmanuel & Ibrahim, 2013; James, 2014,), pragmatics (Abbas & Risala, 2018, Beverlyne, 2018, Seino, 2017) and Critical Discourse Analysis (Jackson & Vero-Ekpris, 2018, Shaimaa, 2013). The major focus had been on the description, analysis of style and how politicians use and manipulate linguistic structures persuasively to win the hearts of the electorates with strategic persuasions.

However, it appears that not much work has been done on structural analysis of Nigerian political slogans. Hence, this work investigated the syntactic structures of the gubernatorial electioneering campaign slogans of All Progressives Congress (APC) in 2019 to discover how the structures are used to appeal to the electorates and whether the structures chosen are apt.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Analytic research design was employed to uncover the grammatical structures of the selected slogans.



Data, Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The data for this research are the 2019 gubernatorial electioneering campaign slogans in Nigeria.

The selected slogans were sourced from election posters, newspapers, and official social media accounts of aspirants. The population for this research is thirty (30) gubernatorial electioneering slogans used by All Progressives Congress (APC).

The sample size for this study is fifteen (15) out of the sixteen gubernatorial electioneering slogans of the All Progressives Congress (APC) gubernatorial aspirants that won the election in 2019. Only fifteen were studied because there was no campaign slogan for APC gubernatorial candidate in Imo State. The choice of the party stemmed from the fact that APC is presently the ruling party in Nigeria, coupled with the fact that the party won in sixteen (16) states out of the thirty (30) states where gubernatorial election was conducted. Therefore, the party was purposely selected for this research. However, it must be stated that.

Theoretical Framework

This research is hinged on Halliday's (1985) Systemic Functional Grammar, specifically; it examined the structures and functions of the slogans.

Data Analysis

Datum One: Four plus Four (4 + 4) by Yahaya Bello of Kogi State

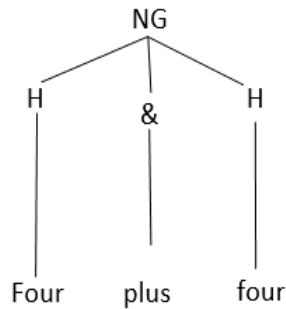
The Grammatical Structure of the Slogan

This slogan falls under the nominal group in the English grammatical rank scale. Many a time, slogans are structurally coined using phrases; this is evident in this campaign slogan. The laconic tagline, follows the submission of Foster (2012) that it could be difficult to convey a complex message using a single word. Hence, this non-verbal political slogan serves as the official campaign catchphrase for Yahaya Bello's re-election as the Governor of Kogi State in 2019.

The mathematical slogan is purposely used to solicit the support of the people of Kogi for Yahaya Bello for the renewal of his mandate for



another four years in office. The sign of the slogan is done by raising one's two hands and spreading all fingers of each hand, leaving out the thumbs. The four fingers of each hand spread apparently represent each of the four-year periods of the two terms constitutional limit that are stipulated in the Nigerian constitutions for both governors and president. Below is the tree diagram of the slogan:

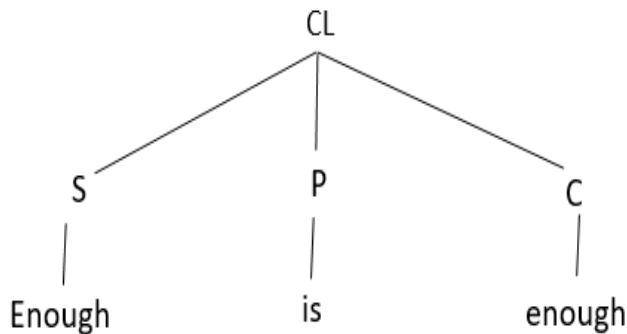


It is apparent from the tree diagram above that the emphasis of the slogan is on the two content words (four and four), being the head words. Mathematically, four plus four is equal to eight ($4 + 4 = 8$), this means that Yahaya Bello's expired four-year tenure as the governor of Kogi State should be renewed by the electorates through their votes so that he would be able to serve them for another four years.

Datum Two: O To Gee (Enough is enough) by Abdul Abdulrazaq of Kwara State

The Grammatical Structure of the Slogan

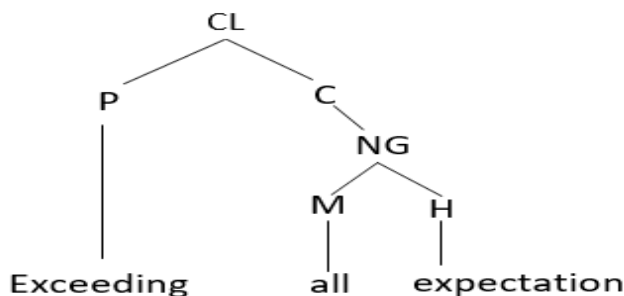
One of the goals of a slogan is that it must be coined in such a way that it will be short, catchy and easily recited, this is the case of this slogan. "O to gee" is a Yoruba language coinage which literally translates to "enough is enough" in the English language. It is in a simple sentence form made up of just three words, which makes it easy to remember. The key word in the English version of the Yoruba mantra is "enough" and it is even repeated twice (enough is enough), to show how key the word is in the mantra. The clause literally means: "no more will be tolerated or it has to stop". This implies that the APC candidate (Abdul Abdulrazaq) is ready to put an end to bad governance as a result of dynastic system of governance orchestrated by Saraki's family only if he is voted for. The tree diagram for the catchphrase is shown below:



Datum Three: Exceeding all expectations by Abdullahi Sule of Nasarawa State

The Grammatical Structure of the Slogan

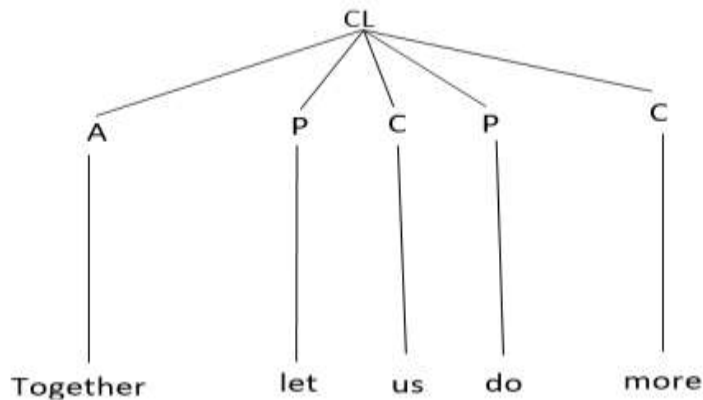
Structurally, this slogan falls under clausal group. Hence, “exceeding” in the slogan is employed here to express the aspirant’s readiness to surpass the electorates’ positive expectations if voted for as the governor of the state. The tree diagram is given below:



Datum Four: Together let’s do more by Bako Lalong of Plateau State

The Grammatical Structure of the Slogan

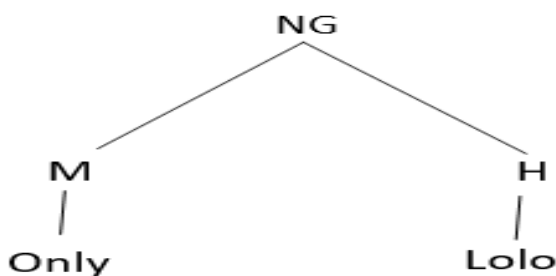
Structurally, the slogan is realised as a clause. The objective pronoun “us” in the structure intrudes between “let” and “do” (the main verbs) and it signifies “togetherness and cooperation”. Through this slogan, the aspirant sought the cooperation of the electorates for his second term in office as the governor of the state. The tree diagram is indicated below:



Datum Five: *Sai Lolo (Only Lolo)* by Abubakar Sanni Bello of Niger State

The Grammatical Structure of the Slogan

Structurally, “Only Lolo” is from a nominal group under the English grammatical rank scale. Originally, the slogan is in Hausa language (*Sai Lolo*) and it means “Only Lolo” in English. The name “Lolo” as the aspirant (Abubakar Sanni Bello) is fondly called in his state, is the head word, hence, emphasis is on it. It implies that he sees himself as the only one who can bring development to the state out of the many candidates that are vying with one another for the coveted seat. Below is the tree diagram of the slogan:



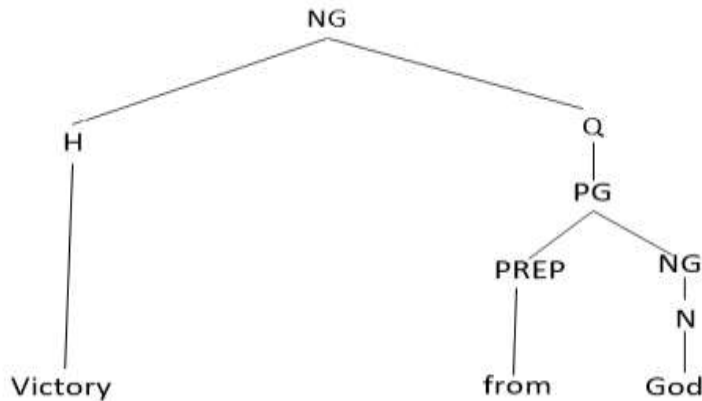
Datum Six: *Nasara dagas Allah (Victory from God)* by Muhammadu Yahaya of Gombe State

The Grammatical Structure of the Slogan

This slogan falls under the nominal group in the English grammatical rank scale. The slogan is in Hausa language and it means “victory from God”. Structurally the head word is “victory”. Hence, this shows that the word is emphasised. The implication is that the aspirant acknowledges God as



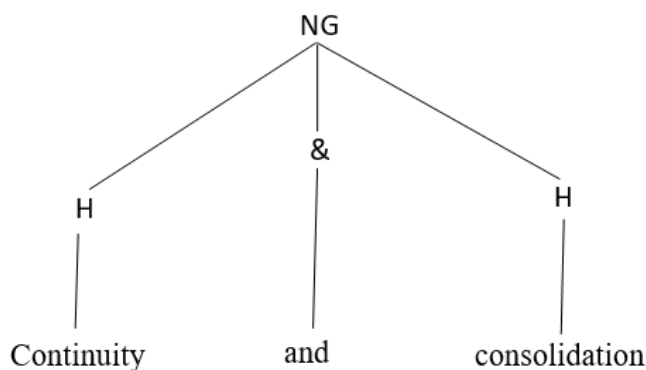
the only One that can make him victorious in the election. The tree diagram is indicated below:



Datum Seven: Continuity and consolidation by Mai Mala Buni of Yobe State

The Grammatical Structure of the Slogan

This is another slogan from a nominal group. Its grammatical structure shows that there are two head-words in the slogan which are “continuity” and “consolidation”. Emphasis is intentionally placed on these two words to show the determination of the aspirant (Mai Mala Buni) to continue and strengthen the work of his predecessor. Below is the tree diagram of the slogan:



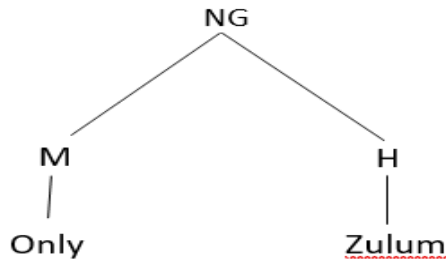
Datum Eight: Sai Zulum by Babagana Zulum of Borno State

The Grammatical Structure of the Slogan

This is another slogan in Hausa language which mean “Only Zulum” in English language. “Only Zulum” is from a nominal group. The aspirant’s



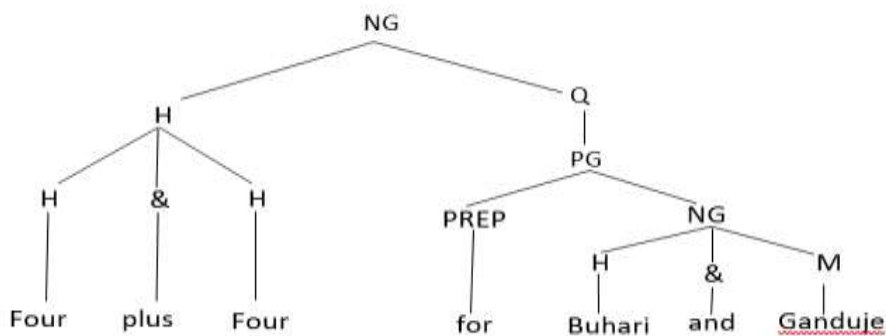
name (Zulum) form part of the two-word slogan and it is the head word. Hence, emphasis is on the name “Zulum”. The message of the slogan is that, apart from Zulum, no other aspirant is qualified to make life better for the people of Borno State (in terms of good governance). The tree diagram is indicated below:



Datum Nine: 4+4 Buhari da Ganduje (Four plus four for Buhari and Ganduje) by Abdullahi Ganduje of Kano State

The Grammatical Structure of the Slogan

This slogan falls under nominal group. Just like that of the slogan of Yahaya Bello of Kogi State, it is also mathematical in the sense that the four plus four sign of the slogan is done by raising one’s two hands and spreading all fingers of each hand, leaving out the thumbs. The four fingers of each hand spread, apparently represent each of the four-year periods of the two terms constitutional limit that are stipulated in the Nigerian constitutions for both governors and president. The implication is that, the APC candidates (Buhari and Ganduje) are ready for the second four years in office. Below is the tree diagram of the catch phrase:



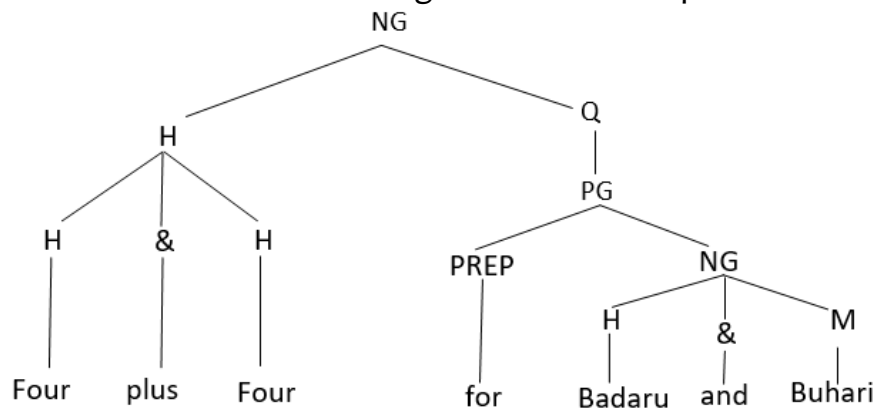
According to the structure of this slogan, all the content words are head words. Thus, this shows how important each of them is.



**Datum Ten: 4+4 Badaru da Buhari (Four plus four for Badaru and Buhari)
by Badaru Abubakar of Jigawa State**

The Grammatical Structure of the Slogan

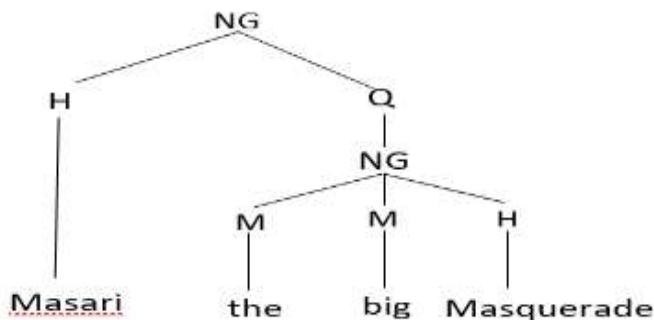
This slogan is also mathematical just like that of Yahaya Bello of Kogi State and Abdullahi Ganduje of Kano State in the sense that the sign slogan is done by raising one's two hands and spreading all fingers of each hand, leaving out the thumbs. The four fingers of each hand spread represent each of the four-year periods of the two terms constitutional limit that are stipulated in the Nigerian constitutions for both governors and president. Below is the tree diagram of the catch phrase:



Datum Eleven: Masari! The big Masquerade by Bello Masari of Katsina State

The Grammatical Structure of the Slogan

This is a metaphorical slogan and it is from a nominal group. The aspirant compares himself to a big masquerade. Structurally, the head words are “Masari” and “masquerade”. Through this slogan, Masari presents himself as a force to reckon with as far as politicking is concerned in Katsina State. This also implies that he is a powerful force, hence, nothing is stopping him from winning the election. The tree diagram of the slogan is given below:

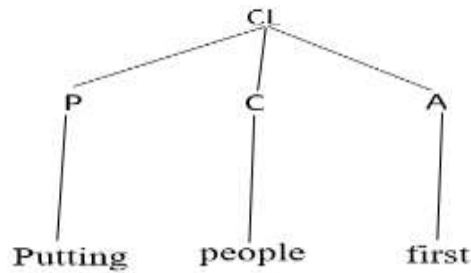




Datum Twelve: Putting people first by Nasir El-Rufai of Kaduna State

The Grammatical Structure of the Slogan

Below is the tree diagram of the slogan:

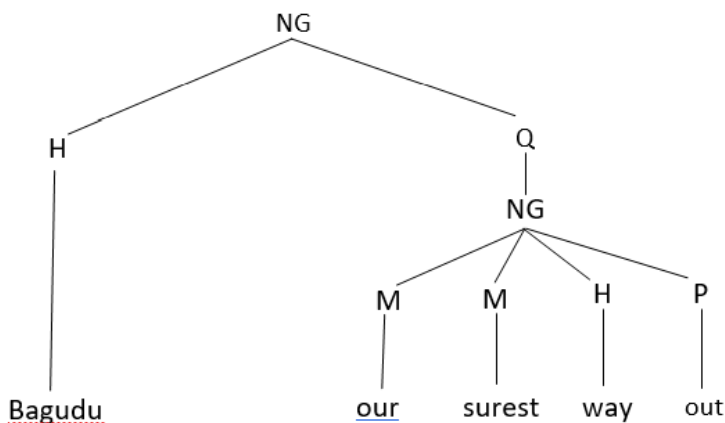


Structurally, this slogan is a clause. If re-elected, El-Rufai intends to consider the people of Kaduna first, he aims at putting people's interest at heart and putting smiles on their faces.

Datum Thirteen: Bagudu! Our surest way out by Atiku Bagudu of Kebbi State

The Grammatical Structure of the Slogan

Below is the tree diagram of the slogan:



The structural analysis of this slogan reveals that it is from a nominal group. Bagudu uses this slogan to assert that electing him as the governor is the only solution to the sufferings of the people of Kebbi State. He projects himself as the “surest way out”. This implies that the people of Kebbi State need a “savior”, a “messiah” that will free them

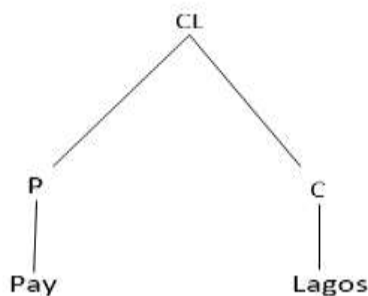


from corrupt leaders and develop the State in all ramifications. The aspirant's use of possessive pronoun "our" shows that he is also affected by the poor governance of the state.

Datum Fourteen: Sanwo Eko (Pay Lagos) by Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State

The Grammatical Structure of the Slogan

This slogan "Sanwo Eko" is from Yoruba language. The English version of the slogan is a combination of a finite verb (pay) and a noun (Lagos). In English, "sanwo" means "pay" and "Eko" means Lagos. It can be deduced from the grammatical structure of this slogan that the aspirant (Sanwo-Olu) is expected to make Lagosians happy by making sure money is not lacked and good governance is experienced. The tree diagram of the slogan is indicated below:



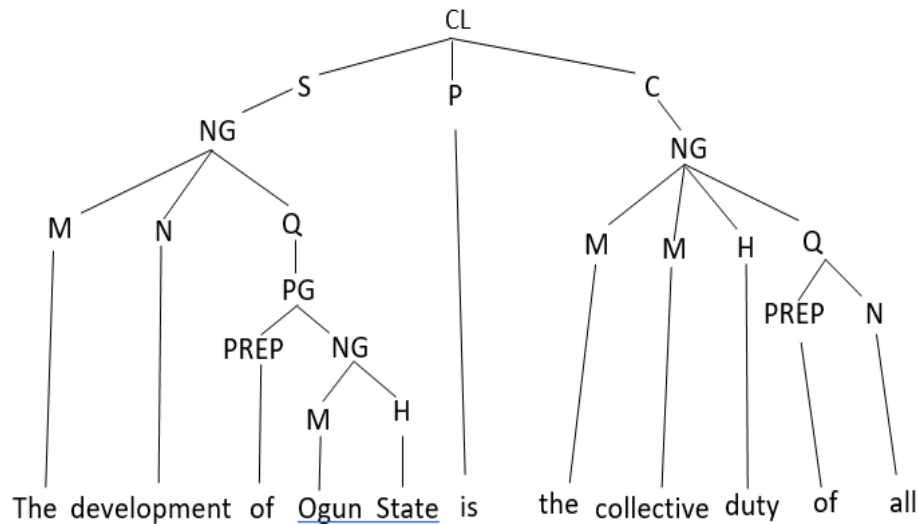
Datum Fifteen: *Igbega ipinle Ogun, ajose gbogbo wa ni* (The development of Ogun State is the collective duty of all Dapo Abiodun of Ogun State)

The Grammatical Structure of the Slogan

Structurally, this slogan is a clause. The slogan, which is originally coined in Yoruba, is made up of eleven words in its English version (The development of Ogun State is the collective duty of all) this makes it to be the longest slogan. Despite the fact that the English version is longer than the original Yoruba version, it is still simple to memorise and recite. The copular verb "is" is serving as the pillar of the slogan, creating a dependent relationship between the subject and the predicate of the



slogan. The slogan implies that, without a collective duty, it will be difficult for development to take place in Ogun State. The tree diagram of the slogan is shown below:



The Imports of the Grammatical Structure of the Slogans

From the grammatical structural analysis of the selected slogans, it was discovered that, out of the fifteen (15) selected APC slogans, ten (10) are nominal groups while the remaining five (5) are clauses. Therefore, from this analysis, it is clear that majority of the APC slogans are nominal groups. The implication of the foregoing structures is that slogans hardly occur as single words, nonetheless for succinctness and memorability they are structured in group form, particularly the nominal group which is employed to impel the electorates to focus on the personality and identity of the aspirant. The tables below show the slogans that are nominal groups as mentioned above:

	Slogans	Aspirants	States
1	Four plus four	Yahaya Bello	Kogi
2	Exceeding all expectations	Abdullahi Sule	Nasarawa
3	Only Lolo (<i>Sai Lolo</i>)	Abubakar Sanni Bello	Niger
4	Victory from God (<i>Nasara daga Allah</i>)	Muhammadu Yahaya	Gombe
5	Continuity and consolidation	Mai Mala Buni	Yobe



6	Only Zulum (<i>Sai Zulum</i>)	Babagana Zulum	Borno
7	Four plus four for Buhari and Ganduje (4+4 Buhari <i>da</i> Ganduje)	Abdullahi Ganduje	Kano
8	Four plus four for Badaru and Buhari (4+4 Badaru <i>da</i> Buhari)	Badaru Abubakar	Jigawa
9	Masari! The big Masquerade	Bello Masari	Katsina
10	Bagudu! Our surest way out	Atiku Bagudu	Kebbi

APC Slogans that are Clauses

	Slogans	Aspirants	States
1	O to gee (enough is enough)	Abdul Rahman Abdulrazaq	Kwara
2	Together let's do more	Bako Lalong	Plateau
3	Pay Lagos (<i>Sanwo Eko</i>)	Babajide Sanwo-Olu	Lagos
4	Putting people first	Nasir El-Rufai	Kaduna
5	The development of Ogun State is the collective duty of all (<i>Igbega ipinle Ogun, ajose gbogbo wa ni</i>)	Dapo Abiodun	Ogun

Forming Slogans from Aspirants' Name/Inclusion of Aspirants' Names in Slogans

The inclusion of aspirants' names abounds in the slogans. Seven (7) of them have aspirants' names. The implication is that: The inclusion of aspirants' names helps in capturing the attention of the electorates quickly and easily. This is shown below:

	APC	ASPIRANTS
1	<i>Sai Lolo</i> (Only Lolo)	Abubakar Bello (Popularly called "Lolo")
2	<i>Sai Zulum</i> (Only Zulum)	Babagana Zulum
3	Four plus four for Buhari and Ganduje	Abdullahi Ganduje



4	Four plus four for Baduru and Buhari	Baduru Abubakar
5	Masari! The big masquerade	Bello Masari
6	Bagudu! Our surest way out	Atiku Bagudu
7	Sanwo Eko	Babajide Sanwo-Olu

Conclusion

This research examined the language of political slogans. Particularly, it studied the grammatical structures of fifteen (15) Nigerian gubernatorial slogans in 2019 to give a comprehensive account of the selected slogans employed by each APC gubernatorial candidate. Findings revealed that majority (67%) of the APC slogans were nominal groups, which were employed functionally to impel the electorates to focus on the personality and identity of the aspirants. Therefore, the study concluded that the language of political slogans is exploited to stimulate the electorates' psyche and covertly control the electorate. Hence, this paper recommends that electorates and the entire citizenry of Nigeria should be wary and sensitive to political language which politicians often exploit for selfish motives.

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