



RESEARCH PAPER

Depersonalization of Power: A Lexicogrammatical Analysis of a Legal Text

¹Dr. Amjad Saleem* and ²Mahnoor Sher

1. Assistant Professor, Department of English and Applied Linguistics, University of Peshawar, Peshawar, KP, Pakistan
2. MPhil Scholar, Department of English and Applied Linguistics, University of Peshawar, Peshawar, KP, Pakistan

*Corresponding Author

ahmad453@yandex.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims at analysing the selected text i.e. a charge sheet letter, from three different dimensions—interpersonal (modality), ideational (transitivity) and textual (theme) (Halliday, 1994). The selected text is a charge sheet issued to an employee of a public-sector university in Peshawar for his non-compliance with prescribed terms of his duty. The selected text falls into two parts: the first part deals with the allegations levelled against the addressee for his failure to attend to his duties; the second part deals with penalties that might befall him in wake of his ‘disobedience’. The study offers a clause-wise qualitative textual analysis of the charge sheet and also anonymises the data by removing all references to the identity of the addressee or the workplace. The findings offer an insight into what Halliday calls ‘understanding’ of the text which in Hallidayan terms refers to the meaning(s), alternatives, and ambiguities. The analysis of the language of the charge sheet is focused on the construal of authority, control, and agency through the lexicogrammatical resources. Our investigation highlights the way the writer employs language as a resource of realizing power and authority in a legal text.

KEYWORDS Agency, Authority, Bureaucratic Discourse, Depersonalisation, Lexicogrammar, Power, SFL

Introduction

Language, according to Halliday (1994), is essentially a ‘meaning-making resource’: meaning is the end realized through the grammar of the language. Language in administrative and bureaucratic contexts is an exercise in the realization of commands and power to ensure implementation of laws and regulations. Bureaucratic language is thus an empowering tool for the government officials to exert their agency without adopting an intimidating and threatening tone. Different linguistic strategies such as passivization, nominalization, and impersonal pronouns are applied to let the speaker/author in the position of authority kill two birds with one stone: they convey the message authoritatively and they hide behind laws: they rarely speak in first person.

It is safe to assume that certain linguistic tools help maintain the unequal power relations which in most cases are seen as an inherent and powerful element of administrative communication. Moreover, while these linguistic tools let the writer/speaker retain the tone of objectivity and conventionality required for the administrative and bureaucratic discourse, the speaker exercises the agency without explicitly manifesting it. ‘Official’ bureaucratic language can be best evaluated for the realities it represents through the lens of systemic functional linguistics which serves as the

perfect model for the analysis of the meanings conveyed through the language of a profession. Moreover, effects produced in the text's world when the author detaches themselves from the reality (meaning) they construct and the powers they exercise from a 'distance' are also best studied through SFL.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that communication in the bureaucratic context requires language users to make linguistic choices that help them achieve a two-fold purpose—to exercise agency and authority and at the same time not to bear consequences that may follow. The controlling voice acts as the representative of the state, and the power structures preserve the effects of control and command needed for communication in legalese. Systemic Functional Linguistics provides the researchers with the right linguistic toolbox that assists them in analysing and uncovering the agenda of the language users in depersonalising the power and authority by the state's representatives. The analysis of the language in the present study through transitivity, modality and textual information units, can aptly reveal the administrative goals of the writer/speaker by examining their linguistic choices at clause-level to see beyond what is apparent and obvious.

Literature Review

The discussion above makes it clear that language is not only a medium of socialization and interaction, but it is also a tool of realizing authority and control. The linguistic realization of power is especially at work in bureaucratic and legalistic discourse. Shuy (1998) characterizes the traits of bureaucratic language in both government and private sectors. He presents nine case studies and shows how linguists can provide bureaucrats with tools for communicating more clearly and also the authority to implement their desired changes. Hodge and Kress (1993) investigate the obligational sense achieved by the use of modality in general. They draw attention to the use of modal operators as a means of showing tentativeness, uncertainty, authority and force. Examining the employment of interpersonal metafunction in corpora of nine English business letters, Xu (2012) claims that the mood realized in the business letters under investigation is unmarked declarative for the most part, followed by the imperative and interrogative mood. In addition to providing information to the receiver, keeping in view all the politeness principles, courtesy and considerations, the receiver is asked to comply with the commands made by the writer in the texts.

Prasetya, Santosa, and Wiratno (2022) argue that transitivity as discussed in Systemic Functional Linguistics is an empowering tool to analyse the way realities are constructed through language. They explored the use of transitivity in circular letters as legal texts during Covid-19, the function of which was to regulate the rights and obligations of the addressees. According to them, the material processes dominate the discourse of the circular letter mainly in the content section. Not only are the material processes employed to inform the addressee about the issue being discussed in the letters but also to exercise authority over the employees of the concerned department, to direct, and order with the help of the different process types. Hence, transitivity not only realizes reality, it also regulates reality and social functions.

Pengsun and Yushan (2014) investigated the legal memorandums for the presence of transitivity, modality and theme to see how legal professionals make sense of their experiences of law with respect to their clients and cases. Since the principal objective of a memo is to deliver information, render suggestions, regularize individual's behaviour, give reasons, explanations, and directions, the writers primarily use declarative and performative imperative mood rather than exclamatory or interrogative. Also, the

unmarked theme is seen as most commonly employed in the text to retain simplicity, accuracy and clarity of the memos.

Zareifard, Hosseini, and Zarei (2020) explain the necessity of incorporating interpersonal elements in form of grammatical metaphors in Iranian legal texts–legal advisory theories. They find that the interpersonal metaphor dominates the Persian legal advisory theories followed by ideational and textual metaphors. Despite the nature and scope of the legal texts which require the author to remain objective, formal, and rigid, the presence of interpersonal grammatical (and therefore, not unmarked) metaphor establishes the importance of being conscious of the relationship between the addresser and the addressee. Miranda (2019) investigates the employment of Theme in the demand letters of credit cards. The study argues that the use of unmarked-marked themes not only assigns the addresser the authority but also paints the image of the addressee as a noncompliant person. Additionally, a pattern of linear theme and rheme is observed which hints at the emphasis the addressee intends to lay on the information contained in the rhematic clauses of the text.

In a word, it can be concluded that legal texts can be crucial in propagating ideologies, exercising power and control, regulating behaviour and social functions, delivering information cohesively and construing realities. The literature review shows the efficacy and value of SFL as a roadmap and guideline to unpack meanings in a text to make sense of the writers' or addressers' experiences.

Material and Methods

The selected text was obtained from the office of the registrar of one of the public sector universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It is a charge sheet letter issued by a university to one of its employees as a result of his defiance of the university's rules. The charge sheet letter is divided into two parts; the first half of the text is a reference to the allegations listed against the employee, also detailing the background and the cause of the incident that leads to the issuance of this charge sheet letter. The second half of the letter explains what the accused employee is required to do and the subsequent course of action that will be undertaken if the employee fails to comply with the commands of the university's authorities. The letter comprises of twenty clauses, all of which have been analysed for their relevancy to the transitivity framework chosen for this work, except for the last clause. This research breaks down the text of the charge sheet into clauses followed by a clause-wise tabular and interpretive analyses of the letter.

This work follows a qualitative textual analysis method to utilise Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)–a theory of language, to look at how language works and how it is used in a particular context, which, in this case, is the forensic context of a legal text–a charge sheet letter. SFL equips the reader with the key to unlock and understand the meaning of a text coded in the grammar. It explains the linguistic choices that the writer makes in a particular context, and the choices that they could have made but have avoided. It also enables the reader to evaluate the text in terms of its being successful and effective. According to SFL, meaning is a set of options in the grammar of a language and a writer/speaker chooses a particular form because of the kind of meaning they want to make. It means that meaning is not given but is constructed in the text. In other words, the grammatical choices made by the speaker/writer of the text result in construing a certain kind of meaning; different grammatical choices represent different kinds of reality or world views. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) describes language from the perspectives of three metafunctions: ideational/experiential; interpersonal; and textual.

Ideational meaning relates to linguistic representation/construction of real-world experience, that is, how events in the outside world are construed through language. Central to the concept of ideational meaning is the system of transitivity which consists of process-type, participant(s), and circumstance(s). Processes are realized by verbals, participants by nominals, and circumstances by adverbials. According to Halliday (1994), different types of experience can be divided into six basic process types, namely, material, mental, verbal, relational, behavioural, and existential. Material processes are processes of doing a material action, such as 'give' built', 'cook'; mental process are processes of cognition and affection, such as 'know' 'like', 'want'; 'verbal processes are processes of verbal action such as 'say', 'express', 'mumble'; relational processes are processes showing some kind of relationship, such as 'be', 'seem'.

Interpersonal meaning refers to the linguistic construal of relationships and identities between interlocutors in communication. According to Halliday, we use language to establish relationships between interactants. This is achieved by taking on the speech roles of either giving or demanding some kind of 'commodity' by the interlocutors. The commodity exchanged may be information, or goods and services and the interactants may take up the role of initiator or respondent. Speech functions are realized through the mood structure of the clause that can be imperative, assertive, or interrogative (Halliday, 1994). The choice and particular configuration of subject, finite, predicator, complement, and adjunct determine the aforementioned moods of the clause. In general, modality establishes the degree of commitment of the speaker towards an utterance (Fowler, 1996). Modality has two dimensions: modalization/epistemic modality (expressing probability: must, definitely, certainly; will, probably; might, possibly or frequency of events: always; sometimes, usually, normally; can) and modulation/deontic modality (expressing obligation: must, have to; essential; should, supposed to, advisable; can, allowed desirability and necessity of events). Mood and the related grammatical area of modality is the realization of the tenor (the social role relationship which may be friendly or authoritative between interactants) of discourse situation (Eggins, 1994).

Textual meaning relates to the organization of text, i.e. how different semantic and lexicogrammatical means are employed to produce a unified whole: how parts of text are woven together. Textual meanings are realized through the system of Theme and Rheme. Thematic choices realize textual meanings and are concerned with the organization of the clause through ordering different clause constituents/components. In other words, it deals with the logical progression, connectivity, and sequence of ideas and with what goes to the beginning (Theme) or ending (Rheme) of a clause. Halliday (1994) defines Theme as "the starting point for the message". Themes can be divided into three different types: topical/experiential themes; interpersonal themes; and textual themes. An experiential theme is one to which a transitivity role can be ascribed, i.e. (process, participant, or circumstance). An Interpersonal theme, on the other hand, gets a Mood element (such as unfused Finite, and different forms of Modal adjuncts) to the beginning of the clause. Textual themes refer to those themes when linguistic elements make clauses stick together, or link them to the context (i.e., time and place). Textual themes are mostly realized through conjunction, co-ordinations, ellipsis, and substitution. Textual themes show logical relationship between clauses. Thematic organization contributes to the cohesive development of the text, and enables the reader to make sense of the communication. In short, thematic choices make the text 'hang together' (Eggins 1994). After having discussed the theoretical framework, the following sections will offer a clause-wise analysis of the text.

Results and Discussion

In the text under discussion, modality entails detachment, involvement, obligation and control. The letter starts with the authoritative voice of the writer (i.e., the registrar), declared in the first person to proceed against the addressee. The first instance of modality i.e., 'mood adjunct' occurs after the writer has announced who he is and after having stated his purpose. This is what Halliday (1994) calls 'interpersonal metaphor'. Through the use of the mood adjunct '*I consider*', the writer gives his opinion. Although it is subjective and explicit, he gives this personal opinion on the basis of a list of evidence and through the power conferred upon him by his office. In other words, what appears as his personal opinion is in fact rooted in the evidence against the accused. But the '*I*' disappears, not to be seen again. The remainder of the text is mostly built around passive constructions, and the voice of the addresser is suppressed through the use of either passive voice or objective modulation. A common occasion for the use of modulation is where coercion is masked by rationality and objectivity.

Two clauses, starting with '*You are liable to strict disciplinary action...*' and '*You are hereby required to submit...*', where modulations occur, are evidential in nature and in which the addressee's behaviour is being regulated according to the laws. These clauses pass judgements on the addressee in the light of the allegations already levelled against him. The addressee is held accountable and the judgement is passed in an objective and detached manner.

Based on the modality analysis, the relationship between the interlocutors is of unequal power: it is asymmetrical in nature and is illustrated through the use of objective modulation. Being addressed in the second person: '*You are liable to strict disciplinary action...*' and '*You are hereby required to submit...*', the agency of the command is hidden yet the function of directing and castigating the addressee is being fulfilled at the same time. The commands are 'depersonalized' (Egins, 1994), however, the authoritative tone in both the clauses does not prevent the absence of an explicit agent from minimizing or reducing the intimidating effect inherent in the commands. Interestingly, all clauses in the text are declarative. The use of incongruent declarative instead of congruent imperative for realizing the meaning of command indicates that the text is two-layered: it serves not just as an informational text reporting on the addressee's defiance; it essentially realizes orders without using a single imperative clause. In other words, the meaning of the command is objectively realized through the passive expansion of the predicator constituent/verbal element.

These directives are passed on the authority of laws which are referred to every time the addressee is charged. The accused is shown to have violated the official code of conduct and as a result he is answerable to the law. The registrar is construed as someone who acts on behalf of the laws who merely presents the facts and their implications in a dispassionate manner. The text is largely built around obligation, but modulation is not the only way to realize obligational meaning. The meaning of obligation is also realized through the use of the finite verbal operator '*should*'. However, it is in contrast with the indirect expression of realizing obligation through modulation. '*Should*' is the direct expression of the writer's attitude with a strong obligational sense. The use of '*should*', therefore, marks the reappearance of the writer in the text who after having remained hidden behind the objective modulated formulations in almost the entire text, announces his presence again almost towards the end. This time there is no reference to any statutes and his voice is representative of the office of the authority with no direct reference to or mention of the '*I*'. The persona and agency of the writer is thus minimized by foregrounding the authority of office.

The modal operator 'may' refers to the degree of likelihood in terms of imposition of penalties. This is an expression of the writer's degree of certainty of the prescribed punishment; it follows the registrar's declaration of the addressee being 'liable to strict disciplinary action'. The use of 'may' in 'which may lead to the imposition of major penalties' shows the writer's tentativeness towards the allegations leading to the punishment. The use of 'may' also includes the meaning of 'may not'. The writer resorts to the passive structure in the use of modal operator towards the end of the text, and it ensues as a necessary consequence of the addressee's failure to comply with the directives of the authority. Also, 'It shall be presumed' is ambiguous. It is not clear as to 'it shall be presumed' by whom? By the writer, the inquiry officer? or the laws? About such ambiguity inherent in modality, Brewer (1987) claims:

modality in general establishes the degree of authority of an utterance and that the modal auxiliaries perform this function but that they contain a systematic ambiguity about the nature of authority—whether it is based primarily on knowledge ... or on power .

The use of 'median' value *shall* indicates a greater degree of certainty in presuming the addressee's failure to defend himself, as compared to the low value *may*. Interestingly, the most notable part of the letter is the pairing together of objective modulation 'you are liable to strict...' with the low value 'may' against that of 'your written defence should reach...' with the high value 'shall'. A clause that begins with 'Failing which it shall be presumed that either you have no defence to offer or you decline to offer the same.' Notwithstanding whatever dimension of modality the writer uses, he is very much in control of the discourse by essentially giving commands. He is, however, not in control of the actual disciplining of the addressee since it lies beyond his domain of power. He exerts control through the use of modality while keeping a detached commanding tone.

The use of split subject in two clauses reinforces the objective tone. One clause states: and whereas *I consider* that in light of the facts of the case and in the interest of justice *It is necessary to hold an enquiry against you* Under section- 11 of the said statutes. Whereas, the other clause asserts: *It has been reported (that) you remain absent from the mosque during the prayer time*. Here the clauses have discontinuous subjects: The empty 'It' forms the first part of the subject and the 'postposed' embedded 'that you remain absent from the mosque during prayer time' and 'to hold an enquiry against you', forms the second part in the two clauses respectively. The split subject is a useful resource to avoid expressing personal judgement. The first of these clause is especially very interesting, because it modalizes a fact as explicit objective after the use of an explicit subjective mood adjunct '*I consider*'. The expression of personal opinion is immediately followed by an impersonal fact '*It is necessary*'. Thus, in order to rid the clause of the 'interpersonal loading', the postposed subject is carefully employed by the author.

The text under investigation is predominantly of material process type and represents doings: the doings ascribed to the addressee. This is especially the case with the section where a list of allegations is brought against him. He is held responsible for the acts of insubordination and disobedience in several clauses.

You were **working** at Masjid-e-Wasta.

You **tendered** an apology.

That you will not **repeat** the mistakes.

You failed to **mend** your attitude.

But you failed **to do** so.

Thus, the addressee is construed as playing the role of the actor in all these clauses. In fact, he has been construed in the role of the actor of disobedient and non-compliant actions, earning him this charge sheet. Being someone who disobeyed the authorities serves a useful functional purpose: by attributing a continuous series of material actions to the addressee, he is shown in the act of continuous defiance. Moreover, the text sheds light on an unequal relationship between the writer (i.e. registrar) and the addressee. The registrar, being in the position of power and working as the agent of the laws, implicates the addressee by showing him in active violation of the 'good conduct' and thus tries to justify any potential punitive treatment.

The letter also has a large number of circumstantial elements which add to the experiential content of the text and specificity of the information. The dominant circumstances are that of location: time (when), space (where), cause (why), and manner (how). These circumstances are crucial to the understanding of the discourse as the text is largely built around them. The density of circumstantial elements is consistent with the text being written rather than spoken.

Furthermore, the thematic positioning of circumstantial elements helps organize the information as a sequence of events. As far as participants are concerned, 'you' is the most obvious participant. But 'you' (addressee) is reduced to the recipient of the commands, as the whole text is addressed to and directed at him as summons and history of charges against him. Either he is made the actor of material processes attributed to him or is presented as the range or goal of these processes. Where he is presented as the range, the actor of the process is singularly missing. But we can retrieve the actor from the text: it is the one who gives command. The first instance of this occurs in the; '*now, hereby you are charged that*'. But who is charging the addressee? The same is the case with the next clause: '*accordingly you were transferred to Masjid-e-Bilal*'. In both these cases, the 'actor' can be worked out as either 'the registrar, or 'the office of the registrar', nevertheless, the passive construction conceals the agency of the addresser. By omitting it, the addresser has distanced himself from the action.

An important point regarding transitivity is related to the system of projection. Among the process types, mental and verbal can project. Projection occurs in clause complex, where clauses occur in sequence and are adjacent to each other. In such clause complexes, one clause projects the other either by quoting or reporting. Both the projecting and projected clauses are analysed for transitivity and mood structures because both of these are separate clauses and employ two distinct processes. All three projecting clauses report. The first instance is in the very first clause of the text. Here, a mental process of cognition '*decide*' projects a material process.

'I, the registrar,...*have decided to proceed against you*'.

The other two are examples of verbal projection. The projected processes are material.

And (you) *assured* that you *will not repeat* the same mistakes.

You are verbally *directed* again and again *to ensure* your presence...

Of particular significance is the clause *And (you) assured that you will not repeat the same mistakes*. In the text, it is the only representation of the addressee, thus suggesting the lack of agency of the addressee through the partial and little to none representation of his experiences in the outside world. The fact that these clauses report rather than quote emphasizes the remoteness; quoting gives the sense of immediacy to the text. These clauses are grammatically intricate and complex. The complexity is seen mainly at the level of transitivity: first, it is due to the clause projection where two processes occur back-to-back where one projects the other; second, there are two clause complexes where a single process gets realized by a complex of verbal groups; third, circumstantial elements, too, are heaped together in these clauses, all of which makes this part of the text complicated and dense. There is also a very long non-finite clause i.e. *'explaining as to...heard in person'* which occurs in a clause complex; this is an embedded clause with another embedded clause within, accompanied by their own attendant circumstances.

The striking feature of the present text is the use of marked themes. The text has five marked themes which occur at particularly significant junctures in the text. Three of the marked themes occur in the section where the addressee is formally charged. The first marked theme i.e. *'Prior to your posting at Masjid-e-Bilal'* marks a break with what was being claimed up until this point. Hitherto, the registrar was using the authoritative *'I'* to announce actions against the addressee. Before spelling out the details of the actions anticipated to be taken against the addressee, the addresser lays out the facts regarding the addressee's job and behaviour. The addressee is reminded of the details of his job in three clauses occurring back to back, with marked themes.

'Prior to your posting at Masjid-e-Bilal', *'however, subsequent to a complaint lodged against you by the mosque management committee'*, and *'in response thereto'* are the three marked themes which set out the facts quite candidly. First, the person is told about where he was working; second, he is reminded of his defiant actions which led to a notice of explanation served on him; third, he is made to recall his apology as compensation for his insolent actions. Hence, there is a smooth transition from where he worked to what he did.

After having established the charges against the addressee, he is finally charged in the subsequent two clauses, starting with marked themes. The markedness further substantiates the allegations by referring to the weight of proof against him. *By reason of the above* and *as per enclosed statement of allegations* respectively, not only mark a transition from stating facts to declaring him guilty but also emphasize the evidence against him. In the clause, *By reason of the above you appear to be guilty of misconduct and indifference to your duties ...* the writer, thus, carefully foregrounds the circumstantial information by thematizing it. The first two marked themes are temporal and refer to information through time. The last three are the circumstances of cause; of them the first one refers to the cause in response to which he tendered his apology. The next two marked themes set out the factors (in form of proof) which ensured him being likely to face disciplinary actions as a consequence of his indiscretions.

Therefore, the text is set in a cause and result pattern. The addressee's actions are made the causes for the results he is going to face. This cause-and-effect pattern is achieved in the text mostly through the employment of derived and linear thematic progression. According to Martin (1992), in a derived thematic progression, themes relate back to a hyper-theme which establishes the topic for a long stretch of text. The hyper-theme, in the present text, is set in the clause as follows: *'Now therefore you are hereby charged that:'* The next 9 clauses relate to the same topic. The text following the hyper-theme contains the list of charges showing the cause and effect pattern of the charges and their reasons already

discussed above. The themes in 9 clauses of the text centre round the rheme i.e. *'are hereby charged that'*, thereby, employing a linear theme pattern.

The rest of the text mainly moves through linear progression, where one or more elements of rhemes are picked up in thematic position in the clauses which follow the rhematic clause. The clauses starting with *'by reasons of the above'*, and *'as per enclosed statement of the allegations'* relate back to the rhematic element of allegations set out in chunk of text just preceding these clauses. In the very next clause starting with *'which may lead to...'* the *'which'* refers to the rhematic element of *'strict disciplinary action'* in the preceding clause. *'You'* in *'you are hereby required'* is the theme of the next clause which is obviously the rhematic *'you'* in the *'you are liable to strict disciplinary action...'* in the preceding clause. The same pattern is seen in the next clause where the theme *'Your written defence'* refers to *'your written defence'* in the rhematic position in the clause before it. The part of the theme of the next clause *'failing which'* refers to the failure of the addressee's reaching of the written document set out as rheme in the clause occurring before it.

Thompson (as cited in Hasan et al., 2007) observes that the linear progression points towards the argumentative nature of a text. It is a step by step development of the case. In building up the case against the addressee, the rhematic element is picked up as the theme in the next clause. This is how the case is logically developed in a consistent and planned manner. It also indicates the well thought-out nature of the text. The discourse here is thematically planned and developed as the arguments unfold.

Another aspect of thematization is the method of development. It refers to the way the writer selects certain participants in thematic positions. The development of a text this way gives the reader the clues as to what and who the text is all about. In the present text, the subject *'you'* has been thematized 9 times. The text is, thus, about the person who is repeatedly presented as a target of intended commands. On the other hand, the addresser is thematized only once: in the very beginning of the letter. For the rest of the text he remains hidden.

The method of development is simple. The thematic choice of *'you'* makes it easier to work out the contents of the text. This simple and almost constant way of thematic development owes itself to the cohesive and logical nature of the text. Textual elements are also used in thematic positions before the topical theme. They are mostly conjunctives which logically connect one clause to the other either by contrast or comparison. The use of *'whereas'*, *'and'*, *'therefore'*, *'however'*, *'but'*, and *'which'* is frequent. Apart from logically connecting the clauses, these words also contribute towards lexical density of the text. As declarative is the only mood structure used, there is no thematization of modality, the absence of which, consequently, can be taken as a resource to create the impressions of remoteness and authority on part of the writer in the text.

Conclusion

This paper analyzed the interplay of interpersonal (switching from personal to impersonal, based on institutional authority, and back again), and the experiential in a charge sheet letter. The analysis revealed that the text performs a dual function of summons and history of the charges. The text was shown to be an exercise in authority and control realized through language. As a set of commands and directives, the text was meant to mould the addressee's behaviour as desired by the addressor. Although the writer does not frame or make the rules, he certainly is in a superior position in relation to the addressee by virtue of exercising power invested in him by his office. The analysis of grammatical choices and their configurations, especially the choice of mood and modality

indicated the inequality of power between the interlocutors i.e., the officer and the subordinate. Hence, the commanding tone of the letter: command presupposes inequality of power and position. Moreover, the author is construed as a mere agent of the laws. The text offers particular examples of ambiguity which is mainly due to clause complexes, complex prepositional phrases and syntactic discontinuities. Although, legal discourse is marked by such complexity owing to the emphasis on inclusivity and comprehensiveness, clarity and precision are sacrificed in the process, making the legal discourse an area of persistent debate with both linguists and legal experts.

References

- Eggins, S. (1994). *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics*. London: Pinter.
- Fowler, R. (1996). *Linguistic Criticism*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1994). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Hasan, R., Matthiessen, C., & Webster, J. (2007). *Continuing Discourse on Language: A Functional Perspective (Vol 2)*. London: Equinox.
- Martin, J. R. (1992). *English Text: System and structure*. Philadelphia and Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Miranda, H. (2019). Looking into Theme-Rheme Structure Through Demand Letters as Collection Instrument. *Proceeding of the 5th International Conference on Education, 5*, 95–104
- Pengsun, J. & Yushan, Z. (2014). Linguistic Functional Feature Analysis of English Legal Memorandum. *Higher Education of Social Science, 6(3)*, 12–18.
- Prasetya, M. B., Santosa, R., & Wiratno. T. (2022). Revealing Transitivity of Circular Letters as Legal Text Using Systemic Functional Linguistics Approach. *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding, 9(10)*, 364–373.
- Zareifard, R., Hosseini, Z., & Tayyebi, Z., (2020). The Investigation of the Grammatical Metaphors of Iranian Legal Texts. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation, 3(2)*, 173–179. DOI: 10.32996/ijllt.2020.3.2.20
- Xu, B. (2012). An analysis of English business letters from the perspective of interpersonal function. *English Language Teaching, 5(7)*, 75–80.