

## LANGUAGE OF THE MILITARY: AN ANALYSIS OF THE FORMS AND FUNCTIONS OF EXPRESSIONS USED IN PARADE, SUBDIVISIONS, RANK DISTINCTIONS AND WEAPONS DESCRIPTION

**Samaila Yakubu**

Department of English and Literary Studies  
Faculty of Humanities, Management and Social Sciences  
Federal University Wukari

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### ABSTRACT

This study is an analysis of military language associated with parade, rank distinctions, subdivisions and weapons description. Not much researches have been carried out on these four domains hence the need for this study. Qualitative and discursive approach was adopted as method of investigation. Based on this approach, expressions associated with parade, rank distinctions, subdivisions and weapons description were identified and analysed. The study is limited by lack of cooperation by the military personnel to explain some military terminologies to the researcher. The result of the analyses showed that the expressions used in the four domains differ. The expressions used in parade indicate commands; those used for rank distinctions indicate how rank differ from one another; those used for subdivisions indicate how military is subdivided into different groups based on the number of personnel that constitute each group while the ones used for weapons description show different types of weapons and their uses. The purpose of the study is to analyse military language so that non military personnel would grasp their meanings; it is significant because it establishes the worth of military language in every military establishment; it sheds light on the varieties of English used in parade, rank distinctions, subdivisions and weapons description. The study impacts positively on readers generally as it provides a stable means of communication for both military and the civilians.

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**KEYWORDS:** Military Language, Forms And Functions, Parade, Rank Distinctions, Subdivisions, Weapons.

### INTRODUCTION

Every profession uses language which is distinct from others; military is not an exception, it also uses language which is different from other professions. Amafah (1990) quoted Colby (1960) as saying "what makes official Army language different --is rules." "Forms and functions of language embody the kinds of constructions involved and the functions they perform. The constructions are in form of sentences and phrases; the functions they perform are grasped in the context of use. The expressions used in parade and for weapons description are in uniformity throughout the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. 'Parade halt' which means to stop action while on parade and 'to march' which denotes to move briskly in formation, are widely used in the three armed forces. 'Pistol' is the name used to call a short gun used for firing at close range in the army, the Navy and the Air Force. Cannon is the name given to a large heavy gun on the aircraft throughout the military formations in the world. The expressions used for subdivisions and those used for rank distinctions are distinct from each of the three armed forces. A battalion in the Army and a Wing in the Air Force are equivalent but they are called different names. Major in the Army, Lieutenant Commander in

the Navy and Squadron Leader in the Air Force are equivalent but they are given different names.

### Objectives

The aim of this study is to identify and analyse language of the military with the following specific objectives:

- (i) To examine the features of military language associated with parade, rank distinctions, subdivisions and weapons description.
- (ii) To explain the denotation and connotation meanings underlying military language or expressions.

### Method of Investigation

Qualitative and discursive approach was adopted as method of investigation. The approach is considered appropriate mainly because it permits explanation of the use of certain linguistic items in a given context.

### Analysis

In this section, samples of military language associated with parade, rank distinctions, subdivisions and weapons description are presented, analysed and discussed under the following headings:

Table 1: Expressions Used in Parade

Expressions	Remarks
To march.	To move briskly in formation
To salute.	To pay compliment to an officer who is higher in rank by raising the hand to the forehead.
Attention! ( Often realised as 'tion').	Command for soldiers during a parade to stand straight without movement.
Order arms!	Order for the soldiers on parade to place the butts of their guns on the ground and remain motionless.
Shoulder arms!	Order during a parade for the soldiers to grip their rifles by their sides at shoulder level.
Eyes right!	A command for soldiers on parade to turn their faces to the front after leaving the place where the dignitaries are.
Left wheel!	A command during a parade for the soldiers to turn to the left while moving.
Right wheel!	A command for the soldiers on parade to turn to the right while moving.
Left turn!	A command during a parade ordering soldiers to turn to the left while they stand still.
Right turn!	A command for the soldiers on parade to turn to the right while they stand still.
About turn!	A command for the soldiers to turn totally and face the direction which they were backing before whether they stand still or move on parade.
As you were! (Often realized as 'ajuwaya').	A command for soldiers on parade to stand as they were before because order is not properly carried out.
Stand at ease! (Often realised as 'standard ease').	An order for soldiers on parade to stand with their legs apart, hands at the back and be motionless.
Permission to fall in!	Permission to participate in the parade.
Permission to fall out!	Permission to disengage from the parade.
Right about turn!	An order for soldiers on parade to turn to their right and face the direction which they were backing before.
Left about turn!	A command for soldiers to turn to their left and face the direction which they were backing before during a parade. ( Extracted from Amafah,1990).

The expressions used on the parade ground are full of commands. Parade commander gives order; soldiers on parade carry out the orders.

Table 2: Rank Distinctions in the Nigerian Army: Non -commissioned Officers

Ranks	Remarks
Recruit.	Someone who has just joined the Army.
Private.	A soldier who is higher in rank than a recruit but lower than a lance corporal.
Lance corporal.	Non-commissioned officer above a private and below a corporal.
Corporal.	Non-commissioned officer below a sergeant and above a lance corporal.
Sergeant.	Non-commissioned officer above a corporal and below a staff sergeant.
Staff Sergeant.	Non-commissioned officer slightly above a Sergeant and below a warrant officer.
Warrant officer ( First and second class).	Highest grade of non-commissioned officer.

Table 3: Rank Distinctions in the Nigerian Army: Commissioned Officers

Ranks	Remarks
Second Lieutenant.	Army officer below a lieutenant and above warrant officer.
Lieutenant.	Army officer of rank between a second lieutenant and a Captain.
Captain.	Army officer below a major and above a lieutenant.
Major.	Army officer below a Lieutenant Colonel and above a captain.
Lieutenant Colonel.	Army officer above a major and below a colonel.
Colonel.	Army officer above a Lieutenant Colonel and below a brigadier.
Brigadier.	Army officer of rank between a Colonel and major general.
Major General.	Army officer next above a brigadier and under a Lieutenant general.
Lieutenant General.	Army officer of rank between a major general and a general.
General.	Army officer who is higher in rank than lieutenant general and below a field marshal.
Field marshal.	Army officer with the highest rank. (Extracted from Amafah, 1990).

There are eighteen rank distinctions in the Nigerian Army. Seven non-commissioned officers ranks and eleven commissioned officers ranks.

Table 4: Rank Distinctions in the Nigerian Navy: Non-commissioned officers

Ranks	Remarks
Trainee.	The lowest rank in the Nigerian Navy.
Ordinary Rating.	Naval officer above a trainee and below Able Rating.
Able Rating.	Navy officer of rank between a Leading Officer and Ordinary rating.
Leading officer.	Navy officer next above Able Rating and under petty officer.
Petty officer.	Navy officer above Leading officer and below chief petty officer.
Chief petty officer.	Navy officer above Petty officer and below Warrant chief petty officer.
Warrant chief petty officer.	Highest grade of non-commissioned Navy Officer.

Table 5: Rank Distinctions in the Nigerian Navy: Commissioned Officers

Ranks	Remarks
Mid-shipman.	Commissioned officer below Acting Sub-lieutenant and above warrant chief petty officer.
Acting sub-Lieutenant.	Navy officer above Mid-shipman and below Sub-lieutenant.
Sub-lieutenant.	Navy officer of rank between Acting Sub- lieutenant and Lieutenant.
Lieutenant.	Navy officer above Sub-lieutenant and below Lieutenant commander.
Lieutenant commander.	Navy officer next above Lieutenant and under commander.
Commander.	Navy officer of rank between Lieutenant Commander and Captain.
Captain.	Navy officer above commander and below commodore.
Commodore.	Navy officer next above Captain and under Rear Admiral.
Rear Admiral:	Navy officer of rank between Commodore and Vice-Admiral.
Vice-Admiral:	Navy officer above Rear Admiral and below Admiral
Admiral:	Naval officer next above Vice- Admiral and under Admiral of the fleet.
Admiral of the fleet:	Navy officer of the highest rank. ( <a href="http://www.nigerianprofessional.com/military-ranks.html">www.nigerianprofessional.com/military-ranks.html</a> )

There are nineteen rank distinctions in the Nigerian Navy. Seven non-commissioned officers ranks and twelve commissioned officers ranks.

Table 6: Rank Distinctions in the Nigerian Air Force: Non-Commissioned officers

Ranks	Remarks
Recruit.	Air Force officer of the lowest rank.
Aircraftman.	Air Force officer of rank between Recruit and Lance Corporal.
Lance Corporal.	Air Force officer above Aircraftman and below corporal.
Corporal.	Air Force officer next above Lance –Corporal and under Sergeant.
Sergeant.	Air Force officer above Corporal and below Flight Sergeant.
Flight Sergeant.	Air Force officer above Sergeant and below Warrant officer.
Warrant officer.	Air Force officer of rank between Flight sergeant and Master warrant officer.
Master warrant officer.	Air Force officer above Warrant officer and below Air warrant officer.
Air warrant officer.	The highest grade of non-commissioned officer in the Nigerian Air Force.

Table 7: Rank Distinctions in the Nigerian Air Force: Commissioned Officers

Ranks	Remarks
Pilot officer.	Air Force officer below Flying officer and above Air Warrant officer.
Flying officer.	Air Force officer above Pilot officer and below Flight lieutenant.
Flight Lieutenant.	Air force officer of rank between Flying officer and Squadron leader.
Squadron Leader:	Air Force officer above Flight lieutenant and below wing commander.
Wing Commander:	Air force officer next above squadron leader and under Group captain.
Group captain:	Air force officer above wing commander and below Air Commodore.
Air commodore:	Air force officer of rank between Group captain and Air vice-marshal.
Air vice- marshal	Air force officer higher than commodore but below Air marshal.
Air marshal:	Air force officer next above Air vice-marshal and under Air chief marshal.
Air chief marshal:	Air force officer of rank between air marshal and marshal of the Nigerian air force.
Marshal of the Nigerian Air Force	Air force officer of the highest rank. ( <a href="http://www.nigerianprofessional.com/military-ranks.html">www.nigerianprofessional.com/military-ranks.html</a> ).

There are twenty rank distinctions in the Nigerian Air Force. Nine non-commissioned officers ranks and eleven commissioned officers ranks.

Table 8: Subdivisions in the Nigerian Army

Subdivisions	Remarks
Section :	A group of soldiers smaller than platoon.
Platoon:	A small body of soldiers which is part of a Company commanded by a lieutenant.
Company:	A body of soldiers (about 120) forming part of a battalion usually commanded by a captain.
Battalion:	A group of 500 or more soldiers made up of four or more companies and usually commanded by a lieutenant colonel.
Brigade:	A group of about 5000 soldiers consisting of four or more battalions and commanded by a colonel or a superior officer.
Division:	A large group of soldiers consisting of four or more brigades commanded by a general. (Extracted from Amafah, 1990)

The Nigerian Army is subdivided into six subgroups.

Table 9: Subdivisions in the Nigerian Navy

<b>Western Naval Command</b>
The western naval command headquarters is at Apapa in Lagos. The command controls the sea and coastal areas ranging from Nigeria/ Benin border to Delta state from Nigerian coastline to the end of the country's Exclusive Economic zone. This command has ten units under its control, and it is headed by an officer of the rank of Rear Admiral often known as flag officer commanding (F OC) Western command.
<b>Eastern Naval Command</b>
The eastern naval command controls sea area from Delta state to Nigeria/Cameroun border and from the Nigerian coastline to the end of the country's Exclusive Economic Zone. The headquarters of this command is located at calabar, and it is headed by a naval officer of the rank of Rear Admiral, usually known as Flag officer commanding (FOC) Eastern Command. It has seven units under its control.
<b>The Naval Training Command</b>
The Naval Training Command ( NAVTRAC) trains personnel based on standards set up by the Navy Headquarters. Flag officer commanding (FOC) The Naval Training Command (NAVTRAC) heads this command and is assisted by nine principal staff officers ( PSOS). There are six units under this command.
<b>The Logistics Command</b>
This command is also headed by a Flag Officer Commanding (FOC) of the rank of Rear Admiral. The headquarters of the command is located at Oghara, Delta state although its responsibilities are being carried out in Sapele currently.
<b>The Autonomous Units</b>
These units are so significant that they require effective control at the high level. It is because of this reason that they report their activities directly to the Chief of Naval staff at Naval headquarters.
<b>The Nigerian Naval Dockyard</b>
This unit is at Victoria Island, Lagos. It is responsible for the maintenance of ships. It often engages in overhaul of ships' engines, addition and alterations, and redesigning of ships.
<b>The Naval Shipyard</b>
This unit is located in Port- Harcourt. The shipyard repairs small ships of the Nigerian Navy and merchant ships. It is accustomed to building tugboats and barges for private organizations. All the commands and the autonomous units are under the authority of Naval Headquarters (NHQ) headed by the chief of the Naval staff ( CNS).( <a href="http://www.nigerianafsc.org/Docs/read/roles%2520of%2520NN%2520intenet%2520version.Pdf&amp;Sa=">http://www.nigerianafsc.org/Docs/read/roles%2520of%2520NN%2520intenet%2520version.Pdf&amp; Sa=</a> )

The Nigerian Navy is subdivided into seven subgroups.

Table 10: Subdivisions in the Nigerian Air Force

Subdivisions	Remarks
Section:	A group of air force officers not as large as a flight.
A flight:	A flight is equivalent to a platoon in the Army.
A squadron:	A squadron is equivalent to a company in the Army which often comprises of 120 soldiers.
A wing:	A wing is equivalent to a battalion in the Army which is often made up of between 500 and 1000 soldiers.
A group:	A group is equivalent to a brigade in the Army which usually comprises of about 5000 soldiers.
A command :	A command is equivalent to a division in the Army that often comprises of large group of soldiers made up of four or more brigades. ( <a href="http://www.nigeriana-fcsc.org/Docs/read/History%2520Roles%26%2520">http://www.nigeriana-fcsc.org/Docs/read/History%2520Roles%26%2520</a> )

The Nigerian Air Force is subdivided into six subgroups

Table 11: Weapons Description

Weapons	Remarks
Rifle.	Rifle is the most essential weapon of the infantry soldier.
Bayonet.	A large knife which is fitted at the end of the barrel of a rifle and is used in fighting an enemy at close quarters.
Grenade:	Grenade is a small bomb carried by an infantry Soldier. If its pin is pulled out, soldier throws it at the enemy and it explodes after a few seconds killing all those that are close to it.
Mortar:	This weapon is used for firing at an enemy who is nearby but hidden. It sends a shell high into the air, then lands on them from above.
Mines:	Mines are explosives that are placed under the ground or in the sea. They explode when heavy objects are placed on them. A heavier object than man is needed to explode an anti-tank mine. It won't explode if a person treads on it.
Anti-personnel mines:	These mines are designed to kill human beings who tread on them.
Mine-detector:	This is not a weapon but a device used to detect where mines are being laid.
Tank.	Tank is a big armoured- vehicle that carries a big gun and other weapons.
Machine-gun.	Machine-gun is the type of gun which keeps on firing many rounds of ammunition as long as the firer presses the trigger.
Pistol and revolver.	These are short guns used for firing at close quarters.
Cannons.	Cannons are large heavy guns on the aircrafts. They fire shells.
Rockets:	Rockets are bombs or missiles which are driven by gases burning inside them. They explode when they hit their targets.
88mm guns:	These guns fire shells within a diameter of 88m. (Extracted from Montgomery etal, 1981).

Twelve different types of weapons described above are used by the military personnel of other countries also; they are not only used by the Nigerian military personnel alone.

**CONCLUSION**

This study has exhibited some terms and expressions associated with the military. It has revealed that there are terms and expressions peculiar to the parades, rank distinctions, subdivisions and weapons description. Most of the terms associated with the above are professional as they are hardly used in other professions such as the legal profession, medical profession or politics. However, these are terms familiar to men and women of the military. Outside military communication, these terms and expressions means nothing. As it is believed, many professions use language that mystifies those outside, the military terms and expressions mystifies the men in the society.

There are terms that overlap in usage across the Army, the Navy and Air force. These terms are associated with parade and weapons descriptions. The study, however, revealed that those terms and expressions used for rank distinctions and

subdivisions are unique to each of the three armed forces. The study has also revealed some of the functions of the terms and expressions. The expressions used in parade, for instance, are principally commands; those used for rank distinctions exhibited the differences in the military ranks; those used for subdivisions indicate the various subgroups of soldiers in the military while those used for weapons description describe different types of weapons and their uses. Military language as revealed by this study is a restricted and closed language that only ESP Practitioners and those experienced in the profession can teach.

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