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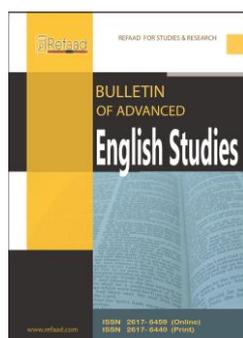
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A Categorization Strategy for Objects Metaphors in Ekegusii Pop Songs

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Abstract: The principle of Great Chain of Being Metaphor (GCBM) is normally resourceful in the analysis of metaphors. This is because the GCBM assigns a place for any phenomenon in the universe in a strict hierarchical system thus helping in understanding one thing based on another. For example, the objects chain is the second last level which is very useful in conceptualizing objects metaphors in society. Composers of Ekegusii pop songs (EPS) employ objects metaphors which refer to concreteness and abstractness to communicate their message in a subjective manner. However, the GCBM does not effectively account for concreteness and abstractness in objects metaphor analysis. The paper, therefore, devises a categorization strategy to aid in the analysis of the metaphors in EPS. Using a qualitative research design, the study identifies, classifies and interprets the metaphors in the selected EPS using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and the Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU). Obwanchani (Love) EPS by Ontiri Bikundo was purposively sampled for the study based on its richness in metaphors and popularity in FM stations in Kenya. The research found that the objects metaphors are source domains in the construction of metaphors related to human beings in EPS. The paper concludes that metaphors are crucial ways of communication and should be analyzed using a Cognitive Linguistics approach. The study recommends that language researchers should adopt a categorization strategy to effectively analyze the objects metaphors.



Keywords: *Objects metaphors, EPS, MIPVU, GCBM, Cognitive Linguistics*

1. Introduction

The principle of Great Chain of Being metaphor (GCBM) is useful in categorizing various things in society into different levels to help in their comprehension. The GCBM is used as a theoretical framework in mapping the attributes of different categories of the chain in order to understand one chain in terms of another (Lakoff & Turner, 1989). The major premise of the GCBM is that all things in the universe have their places in a divinely planned hierarchical order which is considered to be a vertical chain where different entity types occupy their corresponding places on the basis of their properties and behaviour (Kövecses, 2002; Ntabo, Gathigia & Nyarigoti, 2018). According to Kövecses (2002), the top most level is occupied by “GOD, then UNIVERSE, SOCIETY, HUMAN BEINGS, ANIMALS, PLANTS, OBJECTS and PHYSICAL THINGS respectively. Each of the chains contains specific characteristics which, however, can be metaphorically contrasted to help in comprehending other levels (Krzyszowski, 1997). The GCBM is reported to be a tool of great scope which allows human beings to understand the general human behaviours in terms of well understood non-human characteristics (Lakoff & Turner, 1989; Ntabo, Gathigia & Nyarigoti, 2018). However, the GCBM does not effectively account for the objects metaphors which refer to abstractness and concreteness in the source domains. The omission prompts this study to devise a categorization strategy to help reveal the meaning of the objects metaphors in Ekegusii pop songs (EPS). The proponents of the GCBM are the ancient philosophers like Plato and Aristotle. Nisbet (1982) posits that the ancient philosophers founded the GCBM to help understand different kinds of things in terms of others in society. Although the GCBM is very useful in

interpreting metaphors, this study is significant in unveiling a comprehensive categorization method of the objects metaphors which allude to abstractness and concreteness in the source domains in EPS.

The objects chain is the second last level in the Great Chain of Being metaphor (GCBM). The objects metaphors identified in the late Ontiri Bikundo's EPS Obwanchani (Love) highlight concreteness and abstractness in the source domains. These concepts of objects metaphors are not effectively accounted for by the GCBM. The study takes into consideration Chiape and Kennedy's (2001) proposition that a categorization strategy should be devised to assist in comprehending the objects metaphors which refer to abstractness and concreteness in the source domains. Furthermore, metaphor comprehension, as pointed out by Ntabo, Gathigia and Nyarigoti (2018), also requires a combination of comparative categorization and evaluative thinking to aid in meaning construction. López (2009) also notes that the process of contrasting a human being with an object elicits feelings of love and hatred depending on the object employed. Therefore, the present study classified the objects metaphors in EPS into two categories to aid in their comprehension. The first is the concrete objects metaphors (concreteness) and the second is the abstract objects metaphors (abstractness).

Cognitive Linguistics (CL) was used as a framework to reveal the meaning of the categorized objects metaphors in EPS. CL treats metaphor as a central issue in language analysis (Kieltyka & Klepanski, 2005). Kövecses and Benczes (2010) also posit that CL investigates the relationship between cognition, language and culture. Meaning, therefore, is a product of social physical experiences, language and the mind. Fauconnier and Turner (2002) argue that CL is a branch of linguistics that provides that meaning is the product of the general cognitive systems that human beings use to conceptualize all aspects of reality. According to Fillmore (1975), CL was originally started in the early 1970s out of dissatisfaction with formal approaches to language and linguistics like semantics and pragmatics which were dominant at the time. Palinkas (2006), therefore, developed a framework for explaining phenomena like analogy, metaphor, metonymy and counterfactual reasoning which are not accounted for by the formal linguistics approaches.

Metaphor which is the scope of this study is primarily a conceptual phenomenon used to comprehend one thing in terms of another (Aradi, 2017; Croft & Cruse, 2004). Etymologically, the word "metaphor" comes from the two Latin roots: "meta" which means "over," or "across" and "pherein" which means "to transfer" or to "carry beyond" (Gathigia, 2014; Glucksberg, 2001, p. 3; Ntabo, Gathigia & Nyarigoti, 2018). Metaphor, hence, enables people to understand human thought. Kövecses (2002) also points out that metaphor is vital in revealing human thought and reasoning. This means that metaphor creates human beings' psychological, cultural and social reality. The objects metaphors which form the scope of the present study are those which refer to lifeless things in society. They fall in the second last chain of the principle of Great Chain of Being metaphor. The motivation for a study on metaphor is because, metaphor, as propounded by Lakoff and Turner (1989), is powerful as it makes it possible for people to understand human qualities based on the characteristics of other levels in the GCBM.

The data for this study was selected from Ekegusii pop songs (EPS). Ntabo, Gathigia and Nyarigoti (2018) note that the EPS appeal to a mass audience because they are hilarious, have a danceable rhythm and have melodies which are repetitive. Besides, pop music is a fundamental reference for the construction and expression of who human beings are (McDonald, Hargreaves & Miell, 2002). Pop music is much more than an object of entertainment (De Nora, 2001; Sloboda & O'Neill, 2001) which, therefore, requires to be analyzed to reveal the message of the composers. Bicknell (2002) posits that the meaning of pop songs is normally traced to a conscious communicative effort of the composers. Since the meaning of pop music is as varied as there are composers, it is, therefore, necessary to interpret the metaphors in EPS to objectively disclose the message of the composers.

Scruton (2005) also notes that pop songs employ metaphors to convey the composers' message subjectively. Although the audience of EPS enjoys listening to the music, the meaning of the metaphors may be elusive (Ntabo, Gathigia & Nyarigoti). This study, thus, supports Dibben and

Windsor's (2001) proposition that the meaning of pop music should be analyzed to reveal its true message. The need to carry out this study was also motivated by Middleton's (2000) argument that, although pop music is almost omnipresent and everywhere in the modern society, the study of pop music is still in its infancy. This is because, as noted by Frith (1988), some critics consider pop music banal and their wordings, imagery and emotions feeble. However, the audiences of pop songs find them so pleasurable and the mass audience should be helped to interpret the metaphors used to understand the message of the composers.

The Ekegusii pop composers and singers employ metaphorical language and witticism to convey messages on the concepts of love and marriage relationships (Ntabo, Gathigia & Nyarigoti, 2018). For example, Ontiri Bikundo composed the EPS Obwanchani (Love), which has gained acclaim in Kenya because of its metaphorical language. Bikundo uses a fictitious male character, Bikundo and a female one, Kwamboka and sings about their romantic relationship. In the song, Bikundo succeeds in exposing an envious society that lacks appreciation for successful marriages.

Ekegusii is a Bantu language which is spoken in the western part of Kenya (Nurse & Phillipson, 1980). Basweti et al (2015) places the homogenous speaking areas of Ekegusii at the present Nyamira and Kisii Counties in Kenya. Guthrie (1971) classifies Ekegusii as a central Bantu language. The 2009 Population and Housing Census approximates Ekegusii speakers at 2.2 million (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). Bosire (1993) posits that Ekegusii has two dialects which are Ekerogoro (Northern) and Ekemaate (Southern). The two dialects are also commonly referred to as Rogoro and Maate respectively. According to Cammenga (2002), the Rogoro dialect is considered the standard variety because it is used in written works for example in grammar books to teach Ekegusii to primary school pupils in grade 1-3 and in Ekegusii Bible. Ntabo, Gathigia and Nyarigoti (2018) note that the Rogoro and the Maate dialects differ in the aspects of speech sound, vocabulary and sentence structure but the dialects have not presented variations in meaning.

2. Theoretical Framework

The study employed Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) to analyze the objects metaphors in EPS. Aradi (2017) notes that the CMT is a dynamically developing branch of Cognitive Linguistics which was proposed by Lakoff and Johnson in their seminal paper titled *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980. Kieltyka and Kleparski (2005) posit that the CMT views metaphor as conceptual and, therefore, cognitive instead of a purely linguistic phenomenon. According to Kövecses and Benczes (2010), the CMT presupposes that human thinking is in the form of propositions and image representations are metaphorical. This suggests that the conceptual system of the brain is made of concrete and abstract concepts. In the CMT, the brain maps the concrete concepts which are the source domains to the abstract concepts which constitute the abstract domains to help in meaning formation (Aradi, 2017). Therefore, the brain uses the concrete or physical things to comprehend the abstract ones. In the CMT, the commonly used notation is a capitalized mnemonic with the target domain stated first and linked to the source domain via the "copula" or "as" (Gathigia, 2014; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Ntabo, Gathigia & Nyarigoti, 2018). For example, the "TARGET DOMAIN IS /AS SOURCE DOMAIN" (Ntabo, Gathigia, Nyarigoti, 2018). The provisions of the CMT are, therefore, relevant in the analysis of the objects metaphors in the EPS Obwanchani (Love) by the late Ontiri Bikundo.

3. Methodology

This study used a qualitative research approach. A qualitative research approach is an exploratory method used to explain how things are by informing the reader about phenomena as experienced by participants and interpreted in relevant contexts (Bryman, 2006). In particular, the content analysis which is described as a research method which examines words or phrases within a

wide range of texts (Edman, 2010; Ntabo, 2018) was specifically used to evaluate the objects metaphors in Bikundo's EPS Obwanchani (Love). The choice of content analysis was considered relevant because, as noted by Patton (2002), it goes beyond the practice of counting words or extracting objective content from texts to evaluating meanings, themes and patterns that may be highlighted in texts. The Ekegusii pop song Obwanchani (Love) by Ontiri Bikundo was purposively sampled for study based on its richness in metaphors and popularity in Kenyan FM stations. The selected EPS was transcribed and translated into English by four native Ekegusii annotators. The annotators also helped in identifying 34 metaphors from the selected EPS using the criteria adapted from Steen et al's (2010) the Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universitet (MIPVU). For example, the annotators identified words as metaphors if such words are indirectly used in such a manner that their use may be explained by some form of cross domain mapping from a more basic meaning of the words as provided by Steen et al (2010). To ensure precision, an inter rater reliability measure was used in the identification of the metaphors. The study employed a provision by Cameron (2003) that a word which attains at least 0.75 in the inter-rater reliability measure qualifies to be considered a metaphor. Each annotator, hence, allotted 0.25 to the word considered a metaphor. An agreement by three annotators was sufficient to categorize a word as a metaphor. The inter rater reliability measure has also been effectively used by Gathigia (2014) and Ntabo, Gathigia and Nyarigoti (2018). The principle of Great Chain of Being metaphor (GCBM) was then utilized to classify the 34 metaphors in the EPS into the conceptual domains of: HUMAN BEING, ANIMAL, PLANT and OBJECTS. The paper then focused on the objects metaphors with an aim of devising a categorization strategy to aid in their analysis. The metaphors were presented in tables and evaluated for metaphor meaning by the Conceptual Metaphor Theory.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The study notes that the objects metaphors identified in Ekegusii pop songs (EPS) highlight concreteness and abstractness in the source domains. The tenets of the principle of Great Chain Being metaphor (GCBM) do not give provisions for abstractness. According to Chiape and Kennedy (2001), a classification method should be devised to comprehend the objects metaphors if they refer to concreteness and abstractness. Objects metaphors also require to be categorized to ensure effective evaluation (Gentner & Bowdle, 2008; Gibbs, 2011). This study, therefore, classified the objects metaphors in the selected EPS into two categories to help in meaning construction. The first is the concrete objects metaphors (concreteness) and the second is the abstract objects metaphors (abstractness). The metaphors are presented in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 below and evaluated for meaning using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) within the Cognitive Linguistics framework.

4.1.1 Concrete Objects Metaphors (Concreteness)

Crutch (2006) defines concreteness as the degree to which something may be perceived using the human senses. Concrete objects, therefore, express qualities or characteristics which are specific and tangible. Concrete objects are also relational in nature since they refer to objects which people can easily relate to (Crutch, 2006; Crutch & Warrington, 2005). This suggests that it is easy to comprehend concrete objects metaphors because they draw comparison with things that we can feel and socialize with. Table 4.1 below presents the concrete objects metaphors in the EPS Obwanchani (Love).

Table 4. 1: Concrete Objects Metaphors in the EPS Obwanchani (Love)

NO	Ekegusii	Gloss
1	Omonto n' egete	A human being is a stick
2	Omonti n' nyomba	A human being is a house
3	Omonto n' egari	A human being is a vehicle
4	Omonto n' e Toyota	A human being is a Toyota

Metaphor (1) above is employed to express the envy and malice labeled on happy couples in Bikundo's society. A stick, for example, is a tiny branch of a tree whose thin shape is normally caused by drying up. The egete (a stick) metaphor (1) below, therefore, insinuates a human being whose body weight has decreased over time. Thus:

(1) OMONTO N' EGETE – 'A HUMAN BEING IS A STICK'.

In metaphor (1) above, Bikundo laments that his wife, Kwamboka who was big in body size a few months before is presently comparable with egete (a stick). Rapid reduction of a person's weight and size cannot only be attributed to lack of sufficient food but also depression and general sickness (Barrett, 2001). In (1) above, *omonto* (a human being) is the target domain (TD) while *egete* (a stick) is the source domain (SD) according to the CMT. The conceptual mapping between the SD corresponding to the TD in this context is physical appearance corresponding to perception. Kwamboka, thus, is a slender, slim and an emaciated human being whose body weight has apparently drastically decreased due to depression. Bikundo apportions blame to his critics for Kwamboka's reduced body weight. He sings that his critics who have failed to accommodate his happy marriage in their society have succeeded to maliciously incite Kwamboka (his wife) against him and thus causing her unnecessary depression. Bikundo, therefore, suggests that his wife, Kwamboka has fallen into his critics' traps who apparently intend to sever their matrimonial relationship.

Jones (2006) observes that a house is one of the components of a home where affection and love are shared. Lovers in romantic love relationships are usually deeply concerned about the welfare of their companions (Kövecses, 1988). Therefore, the ability to provide a decent shelter can draw the emotional involvement of the lover in a romantic love relationship. Therefore:

(2) OMONTO N' ENYOMBA – 'A HUMAN BEING IS A HOUSE'.

In metaphor (2) above, Bikundo sings that he is not *enyomba* (a house) which suggests that a human being is a house in society. A house is a building which functions as a home where human beings dwell. It is also one of the basic human needs where family members acquire protection from the cold at night and shelter during the scorching midday sun. Kandula (2012) posits that human beings who own houses enjoy high social status in society since being able to possess one is an indication that a person is able to provide basic needs for family members. In metaphors (2) above, *omonto* (a human being) is the target domain (TD) while *enyomba* (a house) is the source domain (SD) as per the CMT. Therefore, one of the conceptual mappings between the SD corresponding to the TD is physical appearance corresponding to protection and affection. Example (2) above, thus, suggests that Bikundo is impoverished but beseeches his wife, Kwamboka to uphold their love relationship despite Bikundo's inability to guarantee her a house. In his song, Bikundo is optimistic of acquiring a family house once his fortunes change to provide protection and affection for his wife.

Possession of *egari* (a vehicle) is essential because peoples' movement from one place to another is made easy. People who own vehicles in third worlds like many developing countries in Africa are considered to be in a prestigious social class (Jones, 2006). The *egari* (vehicle) metaphors (3) and (4) below are employed in the EPS *Obwanchani* (Love) to present Bikundo's fears of losing his beloved wife, Kwamboka because he does not possess a vehicle. Thus:

(3) OMONTO N' EGARI – 'A HUMAN BEING IS A VEHICLE',

(4) OMONTO N' E TOYOTA – 'A HUMAN BEING IS A TOYOTA'.

In metaphors (3) and (4) above, a human being is conceptualized as a vehicle. *Omonto* (a human being) is the TD while *egari* (a vehicle) is the SD. The conceptual mapping between the SD corresponding to the TD in this context is physical appearance corresponding to perception. Metaphor (3), therefore, insinuates that Bikundo is poverty stricken which causes him to have reservation about his wife, Kwamboka's commitment in their marriage, as he sings that he is not *egari* (a vehicle). Bikundo is cognizant that being in possession of a vehicle is necessary which prompts him to express optimism in metaphor (4) that one day he will be a Toyota. Kandula (2012) also posits that being in possession of a vehicle is associated with high social status especially

in a society with limited earnings. Kandula further postulates that vehicles are crucial in households to aid easy movements. Toyota is a brand name for Japanese automobiles manufacturing firm referred to as Toyota (Fujio, 2014). Fujio further notes that Toyota is the world's first vehicle manufacturer to assemble more than ten million vehicles annually. Metaphor (4) above, therefore, implies that Toyota cars are famous and prestigious prompting Bikundo to forecast of being one. Bikundo is, thus, convinced that *obwanchani* (love) can thrive if the couples live in optimism of filling the gap of what eludes them today. Bikundo also depicts a strong love for Kwamboka which authenticates Barcelona's (1995) argument that lovers cannot do without one another.

4.1.2 Abstract Objects Metaphors (Abstractness)

Abstractness is the extent to which something is not realized by the human senses (Crutch, 2006). This means that an abstract object is not specific or tangible. Abstract objects have been found to be more relational or schematic and they normally evoke other abstract concepts for instance feelings and reflections (Crutch, 2006; Crutch & Warrington, 2005). Abstract things also require a high level of analytical thinking to process (Chiappe & Kennedy, 2001). This study analyzed the abstract objects metaphors in the selected EPS to reveal meaning. Table 4.2 below presents the objects metaphors in *Obwanchani (Love)* EPS by the late Ontiri Bikundo.

Table 4. 2: Abstract Objects Metaphors in the EPS *Obwanchani (Love)*.

NO	Ekegusii	Gloss
5	Omonto n' ekeng'ong'ino	A human being is ugliness
6	Omonto n' obomwamu	A human being is blackness
7	Omonto n' oborabu	A human being is light
8	Omonto n' obobariri	A human being is redness
9	Omonto n' ekelele	A human being is noise

The ugliness metaphor (5) below reveals human being's subjective judgement about other people's physical appearance. Rhodes (2010) argues that human beings normally associate with what is considered attractive in society. Bikundo expresses admiration for his wife, Kwamboka in the EPS although other people perceive Kwamboka as *ekeng'ong'ino* (ugliness). Thus:

(5) OMONTO N' EKENG'ONG'INO – ‘A HUMAN BEING IS UGLINESS’.

Bikundo sings that his critics conceptualize his wife, Kwamboka as *ekeng'ong'ino* (ugliness) as shown in metaphor (5) above. Bikundo suggests that they do this to incite him to desert his beloved wife. Therefore, in (5) above, *Omonto* (a human being) is the TD while *ekeng'ong'ino* (ugliness) is the SD. The conceptual mapping between the SD corresponding to the TD in this context is physical appearance corresponding to perception. Rhodes (2010) defines ugliness as something which is unattractive or unpleasant to look at. An ugly person, thus, is one who is displeasing in appearance. Rhodes further notes that what one person considers ugliness might be perceived as beauty by another person. This is why Bikundo positively conceptualizes his wife, Kwamboka as a beautiful person unlike his critics who negatively label her as *ekeng'ong'ino* (ugliness). Bikundo's gentle feelings for Kwamboka authenticates the proverbial metaphor that beauty lies in the hands of the beholder.

Instantiations (6), (7) and (8) below reveal that we use language which highlight colour metaphors to help us understand what we see. (6), (7) and (8) highlight Bikundo's mastery of the use of colour images to help readers to have a glance at his mental state and infer his pain. Thus:

(6) OMONTO N' OBOMWAMU – “A HUMAN BEING IS BLACKNESS”,

(7) OMONTO N' OBORABU – “A HUMAN BEING IS LIGHT”,

(8) OMONTO N' OBOBARIRI – “A HUMAN BEING IS REDNESS”.

Bikundo laments that his wife, Kwamboka whom he equates with *obomwamu* (blackness) was once comparable with *oborabu* (light) and *obobariri* (redness). Bikundo, in the EPS *Obwanchani (Love)* reproaches *abagengi* (malicious people) for Kwamboka's *obomwamu* (blackness) state. Colour evokes not only cultural ideas but also psychological associations which symbolize issues,

attitudes and reflections (Malamed, 2009). For example, blackness which is a state of being black is a symbol of despair and depression. The obomwamu (blackness) metaphor reveals Bikundo's pain as Kwamboka is in a state of despair in their marriage relationship. Since context plays a part in colour symbolism (Malamed, 2009), the obobariri (redness) and oborabu (light) metaphors represent Bikundo's nostalgic feelings of joy, passion, and love the couple once enjoyed before abangengi (malicious people) incited Kwamboka against her husband, Bikundo. Metaphors (7) and (8) are, therefore, used to positively conceptualize Kwamboka whom Bikundo describes using the warm colours of obobariri (redness) and oborabu (light). This reveals the argument that human eyes, as pointed out by Malamed (2009), are attracted to bright colours since viewers derive meaning from what stands out. Metaphor (6) is used to negatively conceptualize a human being. Bikundo describes Kwamboka as obomwamu (blackness) which is a cool colour. According to Melamed (2009), cool colours normally recede. Bikundo, therefore, is in a deep mental pain which is motivated by Kwamboka's apparent depression.

The metaphor of noise as shown in (9) below is also used to conceptualize human beings. Since noise is usually distractive, a human being who meddles in other people's private matters is negatively equated with noise. Therefore:

(9) OMONTO N' KELELE –“A HUMAN BEING IS NOISE”.

Bikundo, in the EPS *Obwanchani* (love) sings that any person who pokes his nose in other people's personal matters is tantamount to noise. Scales and Snielder (1998) describe noise as unwanted sound judged to be unpleasant, loud or disruptive to the ear. Bikundo, thus, insinuates that his critics who have worked tirelessly to disrupt his matrimony by inciting his wife against him are the noises. Since noise hinders the realization of the expected signal (Scales & Snielder, 1998), noisy persons, thus, will hardly realize their objective in life. Metaphor (9) above, therefore, is given as a piece of advice to members of Bikundo's society to desist from interfering with married people's private lives.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

In line with the findings and discussion above, this study concludes in the following ways: first, categorizing the objects metaphors into concreteness and abstractness was very useful in evaluating the objects metaphors in *Obwanchani* (Love) EPS by Ontiri Bikundo for meaning; second, metaphors are essential ways of passing message and should be evaluated using a Cognitive Linguistics paradigm; third, the Conceptual Metaphor Theory was resourceful in unearthing the message of the composer of EPS regarding the objects metaphors in Bikundo's *Obwanchani* (Love) EPS; fourth, language is both embodied and situated in a specific environment, making it possible for the meaning of some of the metaphors used to elude the audience of EPS and ; lastly, the Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit is an effective method of identifying metaphors from songs.

The paper, therefore, suggests that for a better comprehension of objects metaphors in songs, it is important to devise a categorization strategy to aid in the understanding of the abstract and concepts used in the metaphors. In addition, the paper recommends the use of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Steen et al's (2010) Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit to help in identifying and analyzing the metaphors used in texts.

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Refusal Strategies in Offers and Directives: An Overview of Selected Texts from Radio Drama Episodes

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Abstract: This study attempts an overview of different refusal strategies used by characters in the drama genre, and by extension, humans in everyday communication. Although the study is neither strictly a stylistic nor pragmatic analysis of texts, it is an investigation of the stylo-pragmatic components that make the refusals potent and acceptable to the performer of the offer or directive. The drama episodes analyzed in this study are acted in English. In the performance of the speech act of refusing, participants of discourse have to be appropriate and skillful. Indeed, refusing in an appropriate way indexes a participant's pragmatic competence. When an offer or directive is made, whether the refuser is pleased with it or not, he/she employs a polite refusal strategy which sometimes involves making deceitful propositions. On the whole, refusal strategies in the drama genre and include expression of excuse, reason, willingness, self-defense, explanation, topic shift, alternative and dissuading one's interlocutor.

Keywords: *Refusal strategy, directive, offer, drama, stylistics, pragmatics*



1. Introduction

There is no limit to which participants of discourse can explore or deploy language. This is because meaning is a continuum. Various factors govern participants' choice of language. Coherence is crucial to conversation because it generates expected perlocutionary acts. Utterances in human interaction are immersed in shared knowledge and such utterances produce felicitous results to the interaction; because expressions have referents in the world, language has to be skillfully selected towards effective communication of illocutionary goals. Indeed, this process may involve the violation of linguistic norms. Language philosophers acknowledge that the goals of pragmatics is to process language for smooth communication. Thus, the functional dimension of language operates when language is representational. Language cannot be detached from its social context if the communication of meaning is language users' goal.

When non-native speakers of English perform the speech act of refusal effectively, they essentially demonstrate communicative competence in the language. Al-Kahtani (2005) notes that "second language (L2) learners' pragmatic competence has long been the subject of heated discussion in language teaching. Moreover, refusing can be a very challenging task to perform even in one's native language (L1)." This paper examines the linguistic structure of the speech act of refusing within and beyond the drama genre. As used in this paper, the following expressions should be noted:

- Offerer (the person making an offer);
- Offeree (the person receiving an offer);
- Director (the person giving a directive);
- Directee (the person refusing a directive).

2. Purpose of the Study

This paper attempts to find out:

- Common refusal strategies in the drama genre;
- The pragmatic nuances that determine refusal strategies in discourse;
- How offerees and directees use indirect refusal strategy in different contexts.

3. Literature Review

In this section, the study examines the literature of refusal strategy, stylistics and pragmatics

3.1 The Speech Act of Refusal

Studies on refusal strategies focus on different phenomena, and produce similar or different results, irrespective of their methodological differences. This view corroborates Al-Kahtani (2005) – a cross-cultural study of refusal strategy. Scholars believe that refusal strategies in a foreign language have to be consciously studied to avoid breakdown in cross-cultural communication. Seyyed Hatam Tamimi Sa'd and Zohr Qadermaz (2014) submit that “certain patterns of refusing are followed by both EFL and non-English learners, which might be indicative of the formulaic nature of the speech act of refusal. This conclusion might be tenable on the grounds that other speech acts, such as complimenting, have been found to be highly formulaic in nature... a finding that can turn to be generalizable to refusal behaviour as well...”

Fairclough (1996) shows that language use is indeed, a social phenomenon.

Elucidating the term **refusal**, (Xin Li and Jieqiong Sun, 2018, p. 68) cites Miles, (1994, p. 279) who posits that refusal is “asset of measures the communicator utilizes for the sake of smooth communication or adaptation to the social norms in which he lives.” According to Xin Li and Jieqiong Sun, *ibid.*, p. 68) the refusal speech act “can be performed either strategically or non-strategically... Strategic refusals are those which cater to the interpersonal needs of communicators. They often involved different types of politeness strategies (also known as refusing strategies) for the purpose of softening the illocutionary force embedded in refusals or redressing face-loss of the interlocutor. On the other hand, non-strategic refusals usually cater to the refuser’s own personal or actionable goal and the result of such communication often leads to international conflict or the deterioration of the relationship between the interlocutors”. In addition, Chen, Ye, and Zhang (1995) cited in Xin LI Jieqiong, (2018, p. 70) submit that “there are two main types of refusals: substantive refusals and ritual refusals. The former means those in which a refusal is intended while the latter means a polite act indicating the refuser’s concern for the person doing the offering or inviting. In other words, in substantive refusals the speaker says no and means no while what they called “ritual refusals” is characteristic of Chinese interaction in which speakers may say no to initiations such as offers and invitations when in fact they are willing to accept.” Numerous contemporary studies abound on the speech act of refusal. For example, Seyyed Hatam Tamimi Sa’ad and Zohre Qadermazi, 2014, p. 125) reports that “research into L2 production of speech acts in general and refusals in particular has been increasingly rigorous...”

3.2 Stylistics

Stylistics is simply the study of style – the way language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose. Leech and Short (1981) posit that “style can be applied to both spoken and written, both literary and non-literary varieties of language, but by tradition, it is particularly associated with written literary texts.” Stylistic analysis is rigorous and a systematic. For

a clear understanding of this field of linguistics, see Leech and Michael (1981), Fakuade (1989) and Lawal (1999).

3.3 Pragmatics

Pragmatics is the study of how context determines the use and interpretation of language. Concepts that explain pragmatics include speech act, presupposition, implicature, inference, shared knowledge, etc. See Austin (1962), Searle (1969), Grice (1975), Bach and Harnish (1979) and Mey (2001) for insights on pragmatics.

4. Methodology

This study examines twelve data in two groups of six. The first six are Offers while the following six are Directives. The data are adjacency pairs presented and analyzed in preferred tabular form. After presenting the situational context of the offer or directive, the refusal articulated by the offeree or directee is presented before the analysis which reveals strategy typology, style and the pragmatics.

4.1 Subjects/Participants

The participants of the discourses are actors and actresses (major and minor characters) in the drama episodes.

4.2 Instrument

The selected texts (offers 1-6 and directives 1-6) are generated via tape recording. They are extracted using certain parameters: status of the participants, situational context and indirect-act potentials.

5. Presentation and Analysis of Data

This section presents and analyzes the data as stated above:

<p>Offer:</p> <p>1. Have some wine, please.</p>	<p>Refusal:</p> <p>Exactly the type I drank a few minutes ago. I am not used to drinking much of it.</p> <p>Situational Context: The encoder receives a visitor in his residence, and attempts to entertain the visitor.</p> <p>Strategy: excuse; reason; explanation</p> <p>Style: The decoder aligns with his interlocutor's practice and gives an excuse.</p> <p>The Pragmatics: Even though the visitor has never taken that type of wine before, his strategy appeases the encoder because it gives credibility to both the offerer and the offeree. When people consume the same products, a sort of bond is established. In this text, the participants' world knowledge evokes bond. So long as the encoder is aware that excess wine intoxicates, his interlocutor successfully escapes the offer by stating that just a few minutes before the conversation, he took much wine.</p>
<p>2. Can I give you a lift?</p>	<p>Oh! Walking a short distance keeps me fit.</p> <p>Situational Context: A man drives a car out of his compound, meets his neighbour, and attempts to give his neighbour a lift.</p> <p>Strategy: reason; explanation</p> <p>Style: The "offeree" adds an excuse to an exclamation. The exclamation serves the purpose of establishing a positive feeling towards the offer.</p> <p>The Pragmatics: The offeree's utterance is persuasive because his interlocutor is also aware of the importance of</p>

	exercise to the body (shared knowledge). The exclamation is a preparatory locutionary strategy; in the situation of the utterance, the encoder of Ho! is certainly not frowning but laughing.
3. Consider these products for your health.	Wao! I have heard so much about their efficacy. The problem is lack of money. Situational Context: A sales representative of a pharmaceutical company meets a lady on a street and tries to advertise and sale the products to her. Strategy: expression of willingness Style: The offeree makes positive remarks about the products and concludes with an excuse. The Pragmatics: The offeree’s utterance is enough feedback, not just to the sales representative, but also to the company. Market acceptance of commercial products is of importance to manufacturers. Even if the offer is rejected, it can be inferred that the offeree believed the excuse.
4. Here is meal. Help yourself.	I am sure you’ll want me to be a responsible husband, having space in my belly for a wife’s dinner. Situational Context: A man visits his friend during a weekend. The friend’s wife prepared meal and encodes the offer. Strategy: reason; excuse; self-defence Style: The offeree engages the offerer in reasoning by making a logical conclusion. The Pragmatics: Hinging on the contextual structure of the offer (a domestic setting) as well as societal norm, the offeree perfects his excuse. Both the offerer and the offeree believe that marriage is a sensitive union that thrives when the rules are carefully and consciously obeyed.
5. These gifts are for our customers. Why not pick some?	Please, do not spoil me with your continuous gifts. Situational Context: The participants are in a bank. Assorted gifts were on a table. The encoder of the offer is staff of the bank. Strategy: dissuading Style: The offeree uses contextual recall to encode an implied gratitude. The Pragmatics: The participants have shared knowledge of related antecedents involving previous offers; the antecedents make the expressions spoil and continuous gifts cohere in the text.
6. I’ll hold your bag while you climb the tree.	Unless I climb with it, I am not yet a professional climber. Situational Context: After school hours, a teacher requests her pupil to climb a mango tree to pluck some mangoes for her. Strategy: reason; excuse; explanation; self-defense Style: The offeree uses professional ethics to justify his refusal. However, the utterance is mainly an excuse. The Pragmatics: The offerer is not comfortable with the offer because of the offeree’s status. The offeree thinks saying No to the offer would be rude.
Directive: 1. Complete the memo before my arrival.	Refusal: How I wish good memos are easily written. Situational Context: The speaker is a boss. He gives a directive to his subordinate in the office. The assignment that necessitated the directive is urgent. Strategy: expression of willingness Style: The directee’s predicate is an existential supposition; it implies that <i>good memos are not easily written</i> . The Pragmatics: The director infers that the directee is willing to obey the directive, but may not perform the task because of time constraint. There is therefore no reason for the boss to view his interlocutor’s action as an act of insubordination.
2. Remain here until the guests leave.	I do not pray to be pressed within this hour. Situational Context: The director (a boss) instructs his

	<p>interlocutor not to leave an on-going public function because it is the duty of this interlocutor to take proper care of the speaker's luggage as he goes out to receive a phone call.</p> <p>Strategy: excuse</p> <p>Style: The directee mentions an envisaged emergent context which justifies disobeying the directive.</p> <p>The Pragmatics: The directee is absolutely willing to obey the directive, but may not, for a reason that the speaker understands and accepts; the speaker puts himself in his interlocutor's situation and has no reason to misinterpret the response.</p>
3. All contestants should wear the tags.	<p>You'll see mine if the hooks are good.</p> <p>Situational Context: The Coach of a debate competition directs his contestants to abide by the regulations of the competition by wearing their tags.</p> <p>Strategy: excuse; self-defense; explanation</p> <p>Style: The speaker uses a conditional clause to make a commissive (promise).</p> <p>The Pragmatics: The decoder's reply counts as compliance because the decoder presupposes that the hooks are good. The expression <i>You'll see mine</i> strongly implies implicit obedience because seeing the tag is only possible if it is worn.</p>
4. Do not sit now.	<p>My legs will betray me.</p> <p>Situational Context: The director, a teacher, orders his students to remain standing during a class.</p> <p>Strategy: reason; explanation</p> <p>Style: The directee uses a futuristic clause to imply the certainty of non-compliance.</p> <p>The Pragmatics: The speaker infers that since he lacks knowledge of his interlocutor's reason for not relying on the ability of his legs to keep him standing (shared knowledge), this interlocutor's utterance should be believed. If this interlocutor eventually sits, perlocutionary sequel is relocated – the speaker's interlocutor has not offended him.</p>
5. Remove your vehicle from my compound.	<p>Please, can I have your mechanic's phone number?</p> <p>Situational Context: A driver's car developed a problem and he had to park it in front of the nearest compound. Suddenly, the landlord appears and encodes the above directive.</p> <p>Strategy: topic shift; alternative; dissuading</p> <p>Style: The offerer's interlocutor uses a pathetic topic shift that is germane to the emergent situation.</p> <p>The Pragmatics: The landlord's emotion and sense of reason are evoked by the refusal strategy; the driver presupposes that the landlord is not aware that the vehicle broke down, and cannot insist that the vehicle be removed from the compound, particularly when his interlocutor engages him in the effort to find a solution to the problem. The fact that anyone can be in such a position prevents the landlord from agitating further.</p>
6. Seek my permission before leaving.	<p>You said I always did so unless I could not reach you.</p> <p>Situational Context: A boss gives a directive to his subordinate at a work place after a report reached the boss that at times, this subordinate (Secretary) goes home before actual closing time.</p> <p>Strategy: expression of willingness; self-defense</p> <p>Style: The hearer reminds the speaker of his trust and belief.</p> <p>The Pragmatics: The emergent context is not yet speaker-hearer experience. If the offeree were aware that the report reached his boss, his response would probably have been different. Naturally, people feel empowered when their atrocities are not yet public knowledge.</p>

Table(1) below ranks the refusal strategies articulated by the participants:

Table(1): Ranking of Refusal Strategies

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Reason	5	19%
Excuse	5	19%
Explanation	5	19%
Willingness	3	12%
self-defense	4	15%
Dissuading	2	8%
topic shift	1	4%
Alternative	1	4%

6. Results, Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis done in this study reveals that the concept **style** is crucial in the performance of any speech act of refusing. Fakuade Gbenga (1998, p. 13) submits that “the word style, etymologically is derived from a Latin word “stylus” which means a pointed object. As time went on, it was known as a pointed object for writing and later as a manner of writing.” Halliday (1971, pp. 332 and 334) establishes three functions of language:

“1. The ideational function conveys the contents of a text;

2. The interpersonal function comprises two levels of expressing the individual: the interactional and the personal level. It is concerned with the personal contribution of the speaker to the act of communication and with the speaker’s attitude and options and her/his relation to the context.” The characters in the drama texts analyzed in this study demonstrate the functions that language is engaged to perform in human communication. Indeed, the formal properties of language are deployed in discourse to perform social and personal needs.

Pragmatics is crucial to the literature of refusal strategy because speech act, which is the core of pragmatics, is the main instrumentality for refusing offers, directives, suggestions, invitations, etc. In the data analyzed in this study, it is clear that the socio-cultural norms of the operative language, English, do not significantly direct the use of speech act of refusing.

Different strategies abound for refusing not only offers and directives, but other speech acts. The strategies include: regret, excuse, reason, expression of willingness, explanation, adjuncts, alternatives, principles, rules, alerts, degree adverbs, educating, criticizing, self-defense, Yes... but, fake agreement/promise, expressing the gratitude, dissuading interlocutors, etc. Thus, the few strategies discovered in this study are products of the limited scope of the investigation. Hinging on the Projection Principle which justifies using selected samples to make generic, logical conclusions about research phenomena, the frequency of each strategy – as evident in table 1 above: reason (19%), explanation (19%), excuse (19%) willingness (12%), self-defense (15%), topic shift (4%), among others – can be used to state that in the drama genre, the common refusal strategy in any context of situation is giving excuse, explanation and reason; these strategies establish the rationale for refusing and also prevents confrontation. The choice of the drama genre for a research of this kind is significant. Drama is a representation of life. Through characterization, themes and plot a lot about everyday human interaction is presented through drama.

The analysis shows that in a given communication situation, multiple refusal strategies can be used to refuse an offer or a directive. I contend at this juncture, that it takes speech act fusion for refusals to be incredibly potent in any context of situation. This is important to the participants who are primarily interested in politeness when they refuse an offer, a directive, a suggestion, an invitation, etc.

7. Limitations of the Study

The twelve corpora (Offers 1-6 and Directives 1-6) appear insufficient for a research of this kind that investigates refusal strategies in the drama genre and human communication in general. This limitation is significant given the fact that the more the selected corpora (data), the more the situational contexts, and this can enhance the readers' understanding of the stylistic and pragmatic underpinnings in the speech act of refusing in various communications.

8. Suggestions for Further Studies

The following suggestions are important:

- There should be more research on the teaching of the normative properties of English in ESL contexts;
- More research on cross-cultural and universal features of the speech act of refusal will enrich the literature. Such research will significantly be supportive to the works of Beebe et al., (1990, pp. 72-73) and Liao (1994).

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Participant Roles in Selected Nigerian Newspaper Editorials

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Abstract: The study investigated participant roles in selected editorials in Nigerian newspapers. The data for the study were editorials. The editorials were taken from The Nigerian Tribune, The Punch and The Vanguard. Seven editorials were selected and each editorial was labelled T1, T2, ... T7 for proper analysis. Each main clause of the editorials was also numbered for accurate accountability and reference. The selected editorials were critically read and the participants were identified and their roles were interpreted and discussed. The findings revealed that most of the messages of the texts were realised by participants such as actor, carrier, attribute and goal. The study concluded that the dominance of participants such as actor, carrier, attribute and goal in the editorials showed that editorials were not meant to tell us what happened, but rather, how things were and should be.



Keywords: Editorials, Participants, Systemic Functional linguistics, Experiential Meaning

1. Introduction

Editorials are not only found in newspapers, they are also found in magazines, periodicals, journals, among others. Editorials are not about the writers but about events happening in a given context (Daramola, 1999; Hoffman, 2007). Thus, editorials are the ideas of the writers (Van Dijk, 1996). All ideas about specific events are being developed from contexts, rather than from the personal views of an editor.

An Editorial is the position of a media organization on a particular event which the public is interested in (Afolabi, 2012; Duyile, 2005). Thus, editors write on behalf of their organisations on issues that are of interest to the public. Similarly, Okoro and Agbo (2003:125) consider editorial as “a critical evaluation, interpretation and presentation of significant, contemporary events in such a way as to inform, educate, entertain and influence the reader.” Editorials, thus, shed light on trending issues, and at the same time, enlightens the reader with its succinct use of language. According to Ukonu (2005), a good editorial must be plain and unambiguous, always be exact, be rich in human interest, be well-researched, and be based on concrete facts, not speculations.

This paper, thus, examines participant roles in selected Nigerian newspaper editorials. The study tries to illuminate our understanding of how editors use participants (the nominal group) in driving home their ideas about specific events based on different contexts.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Systemic Functional Linguistics

The study focused mainly on the ideational metafunction, which is about the natural world in the broadest sense, including our own consciousness, and is concerned with clauses as representations (Eggins, 2004, Halliday, 1994). Although sharing the traditional view of transitivity that the focus is on the verb group (the Process), the system describes the whole clause (Thompson,

1994) and does not use the labels 'subject', 'verb' and 'object', seeing that 'verb' is a word class, while 'Subject' is a functional term. Instead, different functional labels are given to Participants (realised by nominal groups), Processes (realised by verbal groups) and Circumstances (realised by prepositional phrases or adverbials signifying time, place or manner) of each process type.

The choices of participants for each process type (as exemplified by Halliday, 1994 and Eggins, 2004) are itemised below:

- a) Material process: Actor (obligatory), Goal, Range and Beneficiary (optional)
- b) Mental process: Senser and Phenomenon
- c) Verbal process: Sayer (obligatory), Receiver and Verbiage (optional)
- d) Behavioural process: Behavior (obligatory), Behaviour and Phenomenon (optional).
- e) Existential process: Existent
- f) Relational process: which is of three types: (a) identifying (b) attributive, and (c) possessive which involves roles such as Token and Value (obligatory) for Identifying, Carrier and Attribute (obligatory) for Attributive, and Possessor and Possessed for possessive.

3. Methodology

The data for the study were editorials. The editorials were taken from The Nigerian Tribune, The Punch and The Vanguard. Seven editorials were selected and each editorial was labelled T1, T2, ... T7 for proper analysis. Each main clause of the editorials was also numbered for accurate accountability and reference, and carry the label 'S' as in 'S1' meaning 'sentence 1'. The mathematical symbols '+' and '-' were used in the analysis to indicate the presence of a participant '+' or its absence '-'. The selected editorials were critically read and the participants were identified and their roles were interpreted and discussed. The analysis of the data was based on Halliday's (1994) and Haggins (2004) Systemic Functional Linguistics model.

4. Analysis of Data

4.1 Categorisation of Participants

Table 1: Participant Options in the Selected Texts

S/N	Participants	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	Total	% 100
1.	+Actor + Goal	10	08	06	02	07	06	10	49	15
2.	+Actor -Goal	03	06	04	04	05	05	09	36	11
3.	+Actor +Range	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	01	0.3
4.	+Actor +Goal +Range	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.3
5.	Beneficiary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6.	+Senser +Phenomenon	01	0	0	01	01	0	02	05	1.5
7.	+Sayer +Receiver	03	0	0	01	01	0	01	06	1.8
8.	+Sayer Receiver	01	0	0	0	0	0	01	02	0.3
9.	Verbiage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10.	+Behavior +Behaviour	0	01	0	0	0	0	0	01	0.3
11.	Phenomenon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12.	Existent	01	01	0	0	0	01	0	03	0.9
13.	+Token +Value	0	06	05	04	06	03	0	24	7.2

14.	+Carrier +Attribute	05	18	10	03	05	02	02	45	14
15.	+Carrier -Attribute	04	08	06	04	05	04	03	34	10.3
16.	+Possessor +Possessed	0	01	0	0	0	0	0	01	0.3
	Total	44	81	52	30	49	32	41	329	

Table 1 above shows that 25.8% of the messages of most of the texts, T1, T2, T5 and T7 are realised by the ‘actor’. T1 has 13 actors realising its message, T2 has 14; T5 has 12; while T7 has 19.

Another participant that realised the message of the texts is ‘carrier’. ‘Carrier’ significantly realises the messages of T2, T3 and T5. “Attribute” (13.6%) and “goal” (14.8%) also help in realising the message of T2, T3, and T1, T2, T5, T7 respectively. Other participants serve as supports or assistants in the realisation of the message of the texts. These participants, in order of significance, include value (7.2%), token (7.2%), senser (1.5%), phenomenon (1.5%), sayer (1.8%), existent (0.9%), receiver (0.6%), range (0.3%) and behavior (0.3%). Some participants do not exist in the texts at all. They are represented with ‘0’ in table 2 above. They include beneficiary, verbiage, behaviour and phenomenon.

4.2 Participant Roles

In this section, the participant roles are illustrated and interpreted.

A. +Actor +Goal

Example 1

1. ... we treated it as a national emergency ... (T1, S9)
2. ... heavy vehicles observed these provisions ... (T1,S13)
3. Their compliance with the law saved the heavy build up of traffic on the highways ... (T1, S15)

The processes in the examples above are carried out by certain participants, such as actors (Their compliance with the law (15), heavy vehicles (13), we (9), on certain other participants, goals, (it (9), these provisions (13), 70 percent (10)). These two participants help in realising the message of the text.

Example 2

1. ... he had to adopt an “anecdotal figure” of 40 million ... (T2, S3)
2. ... unemployment affects the entire economy ... (T2, S14)
3. The global economic meltdown has caused job losses in many countries ... (T2, S17)

The actions in the above examples are carried out by actors (he, the global economic meltdown, unemployment) on other participants, goals (‘an anecdotal figure’, ‘job losses’, ‘the entire economy’), telling us the role certain people and events have played in the battle against unemployment in Nigeria.

Example 3

1. ... this should worry all those who have the interest of the country at heart. (T3, S6)
2. The prosecution has worsened matters. (T3, S21)

The material processes in the above examples are carried out by certain participants, actors (‘the prosecution’, ‘this’), with certain goals (‘matters’, ‘all’). These participants also make us understand the message of the text further. They reveal that there is no sector of the country’s life that is exempted from corrupt practices and this should worry all those who have the interest of the country at heart. They also emphasize that the prosecution has worsened the matter. They make the readers

understand that corruption thrives because those engaged in it are no loser because they are the nation's greatest statesmen.

Example 4

1. ... we abandon our women ... (T5, 6)

Material processes (abandon) in the example above talk about the tangible action carried out by the actor 'we' on the goal 'our women'. These two participants reveal how we abandon our women, sometimes to their fate. It also tells us the warning of obstetricians and gynaecologists about the ravaging cervical cancer that is prominent among Nigerian women.

Example 5

1. Some banks lobby states ... (T7, S4)
2. We commend the bank ... (T7, S14)
3. ... the states had been exploring funding opportunities (T7, S15)

The action clauses in the examples above describe processes of doing concrete, tangible actions by certain actors ('some banks', 'we', 'the state') on certain goals (states, the bank, funding opportunities), to realise the message that some banks lobby states into doing business with them, while already the states had been exploring funding opportunities in banks following their shrinking revenues from the statutory allocation from the federal government.

B. + Actor –Goal

In the selected texts, some actors do not have goals. The following are some of them.

Example 1

Corruption thrives. (T1, S24)

This participant, despite the fact that it has no goal, still helps in realising the message of the text because corruption thrives in all the sectors in the country.

Example 2

... the owners of the pictures have admitted. (T4, S2)

Their actions carried out by these two actors help to realise the message that the nude pictures of some members of the Ogun State House of Assembly published in the papers truly belong to the owners and the owners had sworn to a different oath from the one in the Nigerian constitution.

Example 3

... no suspect ... has been duly convicted ... (T6, 14)

The actor 'no suspect' in the above example helps to realise the message that many accused persons standing trial in anti-graft cases have, through their lawyers, systematically devised effective means of whittling down and undermining the effectiveness of the courts in the speedy disposal of the cases against them. Also, some members of the executives manipulate some anti-graft cases in favour of some former state governors and high personalities.

C. +Actor +Range

Example

... Obstetricians and gynaecologists warn about the ravaging cervical cancer ... (T5, 10)

The two participants 'Obstetricians and gynaecologists' (actor) and 'about the ravaging cervical cancer' (range) reveal how we abandon our women, sometimes to their fate. They also tell us the warning of obstetricians and gynaecologists about the ravaging cervical cancer that is prominent among Nigerian women. According to PACA, this cancer is the commonest that affect women in the northern part of the country.

D. +Actor +Goal +Range

Example 1

... we treated it as a national emergency ... (T1, S9)

The three participants in the examples above ‘we’ (actor), ‘it’ (goal) and ‘a national emergency’ (range) realize the message that corruption is a major problem in Nigeria and the problem is so great that it has to be seen as a national emergency.

E. +Carrier +Attribute

The examples described in this section both have carrier and attribute.

Example 1

1. It is an offence ... (T1, S1)
2. The road remains uncompleted (T1, S22)
3. A starting point could be education of road users (T1, S25)

The relational clauses in the text are determined by certain carriers (it, The road, A starting point) which are assigned certain attributes (an offence, uncompleted, education), which establish a relationship between the carriers and the attributes in the process of disseminating the message of the text.

Example 2

1. That honest admission is commendable ... (T2, S2).
2. The minister’s anecdotal figure is depressing ... (T2, S8).
3. ... its social cost is also high (T2, S12).

The above examples have clauses which are of the relational (attributive) type. This relational process is carried out by certain participants, carriers (The honest admission, the minister’s anecdotal figure, its cost). These participants are given certain attributes (commendable, depressing, high) to drive home the message of the text.

Example 3

1. ... the legislature is a close circuit system ... (T3, S9).
2. This seems a ploy to free suspects. (T3, S23).

In the above examples, carriers (the legislature, this) are given certain attributes (a close circuit system, a ploy) to drive home the message of the text. The message being that the legislature is a close circuit system that covers up the corrupt practices of its members. The judiciary on their own part worsens the matter by ruling that the prosecutors have no substantial evidence to convict the accused legislators, which the editor of the article describes as a ploy to free suspects.

Example 4

1. Nude pictures of some members of the Ogun State House of Assembly ... are minor indices ... (T4, S1).
2. Allegiance is to Nigeria ... (T4, S15).

In the examples above, carriers (Nude pictures of some members of the Ogun State House of Assembly, Allegiance) are ascribed certain attributes (minor indices, to Nigeria) to realise the message that elected officials don’t take to the oath they swear when being sworn in into their offices seriously but instead, opt for oaths sworn at a shrine as evidenced in Ogun State House of Assembly. This is the central message of the text.

F. +Token +Value

In text two, relational identifying options are used to assign certain participants (token) some identity (value). The attributive clauses used are shown in the following sentences, e.g.,

Example 1

1. The unemployed represent 32 percent of the population. (T2, S4).
2. Unemployment equals to higher levels of family breakdowns, alcohol and drug abuse, suicide and crime. (T2, S13).

The clauses in the above examples are used to assign certain participants, token (the unemployed, unemployment) some identity, value (32 percent of the population, higher levels of family breakdowns, alcohol and drug abuse, suicide and crime). The value helps us understand the message

that '32 percent of the population in Nigeria is unemployed and unemployment is the reason why we have higher levels of family breakdown, alcohol and drug abuse, suicide and crime in Nigeria'.

Example 2

1. Suspects include federal, state and local government officials. (T3, S4).
2. Their responsibilities range from electricity to education ... (T3, S5).

In the same way, the relational (identifying) clauses in the examples above are used to assign certain tokens (suspects, their responsibilities) some values (federal, state and local government officials, from electricity to education (5)). The message being that those who engage in corrupt practices are federal, state and local government officials, with more incidents in the power and education sector.

G. +Possessor + Possessed

Example

Government has an obligation to create job opportunities (T2, S35).

The attributive possessive clause helps in encoding meaning of ownership and possession between clausal participants, such as possessor (Government) and possessed (an obligation) in the text. The interpretation of this is that government owns the obligation to create job opportunities for the youths in the country. In other words, Government need not be told to provide these opportunities since it is its obligation.

H. +Senser +Phenemenon

Example 1

we forget the promises to mitigate the factors (T1, S24)

In this example, the senser (we) forgets the phenomenon (the promises).

Example 2

We thought the days allegiance to individuals were through ... (T4, S9)

In this example, the senser (we) thought the phenomenon (the days allegiance to individuals) is gone. The phenomenon being the days allegiance to individuals were through with incidents at the Okija shrine six years before.

Example 3

... PACA believes that cervical cancer is comparable to something more than HIV. (T5, S23)

Here, the mental process option is cognitive, where the senser (PACA) believes the phenomenon (cervical cancer) is comparable to something that is more than HIV/AIDS.

I. +Sayer +Receiver

Example 1

1. NEMA Assistant Zonal Coordinator Apollos Jediel said this ... (T1, S7).

2. 70 percent of the accidents, he said, could be avoided ... (T1, S10).

3. The oath-takers said oath was a forced Pledge of their allegiance to the governor ... (T4, S6).

In sentence 1 and 2, sayers ('NEMA Assistant Zonal Coordinator, Apollos Jediel', 'he') carried out the verbal process on the receiver (this, 70 percent of the accidents) to whom the verbal process is directed. In sentence 3, the verbal process (said) employs a sayer (the oath-takers) who relates the process to the receiver (the oath) which the sayer later describes as a forced pledge of their allegiance to the governor.

J. +Sayer -Receiver

Example

1. Accounts say that over 500,000 women die of maternal mortality ... (T5, S16)

2. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) said ... it would limit business of Banks (T7, S1)

In the first example, the verbal process (say) employs an unconscious participant, sayer (accounts) who is responsible for the verbal process, telling us the fact that over 500,000 women die of maternal mortality, of which cervical cancer is said to be responsible for 300,000 deaths annually worldwide. In the second sentence, the sayer (The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)) relays the message that the

CBN will limit business of banks with their preferred customers in the public sector, which will make some more room for the private sector that had been crowded out of the banking halls.

K. +Behaver +Behaviour

Example

... governments all over the world worry about rising unemployment ... (T2, 6).

The behavioural process (worry) in the example above is used to show the psychological state of the behaver (government all over the world), the behaviour (about rising unemployment) being what leads to the psychological state of the behaver. This means that unemployment is a critical issue worldwide that governments all over the world worry (are affected psychologically) about the rate at which unemployment is rising.

L. +Existent

Examples

1. There are occasional mentions of this fact ... (T1, S4).
2. There is a strong correlation between unemployment and poverty ... (T2, S9).
3. There should be responsible criminal investigation and prosecution. (T7, S18).

In example 1, the existent (there) shows that corruption exists in Nigeria. In the second example, the existent (there) reveals the fact that unemployment has a strong correlation with poverty, both of which are very high in Nigeria. In the third example, the existent suggests that a responsible criminal investigation and prosecution agency or body should be in Nigeria to curb corrupt practices in Nigeria.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The findings reveal that some of the participants include human beings, who are involved in certain processes of acting, saying, describing, thinking, believing, worrying and non-human participants. Some participants are also used to make appeal to relevant authorities to proffer solutions to certain problems such as unemployment, bad roads, the failing judicial system, partisan politics, economic instability and the poor health system. These appeals are both cognitive and verbal. They are also used to expose the ills of the society and give information about both past and current events in the nation.

Editorials also share important cultural assumptions, values and ideas. The impact of thoughts and culture cannot be underestimated in the study. The root of ideology is in thoughts and culture. The issues raised in the editorials have their roots in the participants' thoughts - participants being the editors, the readers and those referred to in the editorials. There can be no ideology if certain participants have not thought about something, which in some cases require some processes such as material (action), verbal (spoken), behavioural or mental. All these reactions occur together in the context of a particular culture. Stronger ideological opinions and experiential meaning are expressed when the issue being discussed contravenes the cultural expectations of the society where the issues are raised. Thus, editorials help us understand news, by using language carefully and skilfully to articulate thoughts and ideas about burning issues.

5. Conclusion

This study presents Halliday's (1994) and Haggins (2004) Systemic Functional Linguistics as useful tools for the analysis of newspaper editorials. In particular, the participant option of the ideational metafunction helps us understand the roles participants play in the construction of texts. Participants helps us determine what action is performed, what/who receives the action, what is said, what/who gives certain information, what exists and behavioural or mental action or state are adopted in editorials.

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Is Informal English A True Gremlin to International Students and Consequently Affecting Their Daily Life Communication With Native Speakers?

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Abstract: This study is of twin purpose. First, it tries to investigate the linguistic difficulties encountered by international students studying in the UK in the use of Informal English and its effect on their daily life communication with native speakers. The second, it aims at finding out whether some other extra linguistic factors are responsible for this struggle of using or understanding the Informal English used by native speakers. In order to achieve the major objectives of the study fully, a survey has been designed to explore the main source and reasons behind these difficulties. Fifty, male and female, students studying in the UK, of various specializations, have been chosen carefully to participate in this survey. Accordingly, a statistical method/technique has been conducted to analyse, examine and describe the respondents' answers. A frequency count as well as a frequency rate is practised to assess the major source responsible for hindering these students to interact and communicate properly with native speakers whether in class environment or outdoor. Furthermore, the study has provided a brief account of how English being global along with some perspectives of Formal and Informal English as well as the differences between the two.

Keywords: *Informal English, Formal English, gremlin, difficulties, international students, native speakers, survey*



1. Introduction

1.1 The problem

International students studying in the UK may find it difficult for them to communicate properly with others, especially native speakers because of their lack of knowledge of the Informal English language terminology daily used. No surprise to get them hindered to maintain a sound interaction with native speakers communicatively and collaboratively, since they have not been earlier exposed to such variety in their homelands, along with being unable to develop a new interpersonal relationship, awareness of others' activities and information exchange. Accent difference could be a reason of difficulty. International students may find it difficult to understand their lecturers as well as other students of other nationalities, particularly at the beginning of their presence in the UK. There are some obstacles that naturally arise in a new country and academic environment, such as language issues which are immediately apparent. Because of the language limitations, it might not be easy for international student to fully understand what the professors say or what the professors want at the beginning, not to mention participating in class discussions. And, the language problem could also indirectly increase the workload burden of international students. (Gao,2008). Therefore, they might feel embarrassed.

The schooling educational system; primary, secondary, colleges and universities in the most of these students' countries concentrate in their curriculum on the formal language and formal settings, likewise the focus of teaching/learning is on the academic language and on its three main components; vocabulary, grammatical structure and functions. It differs entirely from the informal spoken language usually used outside the classroom, since it is formal, structural and culturally

prestigious. This has led to the ignorance of informal form of English language, which is the most commonly used aspect of English language in everyday life activities in the UK, and which definitely reflects the authentic culture of the society. In addition, some other extra linguistic factors, such as homesick feeling, integration problems, family worries, finance, and culture shock could be responsible for these difficulties since students feel not encouraged/enthusiastic or willing to maintain proper communicative conversations with native speakers. (Keele University: 2017)

1.2 Objectives of the study

The main objectives of this study are to investigate whether Informal English is a true gremlin for international students, to diagnose the obstacles and difficulties impeding these students studying in the UK in using this language properly, and the reasons as well as the factors responsible for such difficulties. The study also tries to identify the nature and the effect of these often occur difficulties on their daily life communication with native speakers. Moreover, the study aims to inspect whether some extra linguistic factors could affect the proper use of informal language. Eventually, the study tries to positioning some solutions for the problems diagnosed.

1.3 Significance of the study

The findings of the study have redound to the significance of Informal English as a means daily communication between international students and native speakers in the UK as well as the role it plays in the international students' lives academically and socially. Therefore, the study has pointed out the significance of students being well prepared and having some knowledge of Informal English before heading to the UK. Such act will spare time and efforts which both, in fact, are crucial factors in in the international students' lives. Based on the participants' answers, the study advices these students to have some practical courses in Informal English in their home countries. Further, the researcher has taken the burden to achieve this study and tackle the problem due to not having previous studies dealt with the issue of Informal English and its importance for foreigners living or studying in the UK. Therefore, hopefully, this study paves the way for further studies relevant to this issue.

1.4 Hypothesis

It is believed that international students studying in the UK facing such difficulties due to various factors. One of them is that these students usually study, in their schools, the formal rules of English language and accordingly write and pronounce decent sentences, but when they are out of their classroom and away from the textbooks, they are encountering a type of language that breaks all these rules. Therefore, they start to struggle when they become exposed to such linguistic situations. The second factor could be due to the nature and characteristics of the idiomatic usage of the Informal English language. Communicating with the native speakers of English can be quite a confusing experience to international students. In English language, there are some phrasal expressions, which native speakers regularly use. This kind of expressions is called "idioms" or a proverb if they are longer. An idiom is "a group of words whose meaning is different from the meanings of individual words" (Hornby, 2015: 771).

The other factor that might be responsible for hindering the international students is the fast pace of informal exchanges and the lack of knowledge of slang which international students are unfamiliar with. Hornby (2015:1444) defines slang as "very informal words and expressions that are more common in spoken language, especially used by a particular group of people".

Examples:

1. *Think on your feet*

Meaning - Adjusting quickly to changes and making fast decisions.

- A good salesman must be able to **think on his feet** to close the deal.

2. *Get ducks in a row*

Meaning - Getting your things well organized.

- To ensure a successful product launch, we must **get our ducks in a row**.

3. *Full of beans*

Meaning: To have loads of energy.

- All the children were **full of beans** at the party today. I couldn't get any of them to sit still!

4. *Blighty*

Meaning: an informal and typically affectionate term for Britain or England, chiefly as used by soldiers of World War I and World War II.

- There are **blighty** troops abroad.

5. *Pear shaped*

Meaning: This means something has become a disaster.

- I was trying to organise a surprise birthday party for her, but it's all gone **pear shaped!**

6. *Piece of cake*

Meaning: When someone is boasting or thinking something is extremely easy to do, he/she would use this.

- What did you think of the exam? I thought it was really difficult.
- No, it was a **piece of cake!**

7. *Booboo*

Meaning: A mistake.

- I made a **booboo** on the last question of the exam.

8. *Kook*

Meaning: A peculiar/crazy person.

- Stop acting like a **kook**.

9. *Make waves*

Meaning: cause problems.

- Teachers don't like students to **make waves**.

10. *Quarterback*

Meaning: leader

- James is the **quarterback** of the team.

1.5 Procedure

The study will tackle some perspectives regarding formal and informal language along with providing a brief account of the Informal English relying on the fact that language is an integral part of any culture, our primary source of communication and being the main instrument by which people understand each other's thoughts as well as their social life. It is the main intermediary tool for the conveyance of cultural understanding. In addition, the study will show the indispensable distinction between formal and informal learning settings debates about second language development. It is felt necessary and crucial to provide some literature about the power and dominance of English as a global language used worldwide.

A survey (questionnaire), which is the major source of data and highly based on qualitative research method, has been tailored. Through analysing and describing the responses of the participants to this questionnaire, the feedback will explore and show the respondents' experiences of their interacting with native speakers and the difficulties they encounter in using Informal English

language in their daily life communication. The questionnaire comprises a number of questions to specify the factors responsible for these difficulties. Respondents (students) are of different cultural backgrounds studying at a wide variety of fields in the UK. They are specialized in Architecture, Education, Business, Design, Literature, Drama and Music respectively. The students have been fully informed about the nature and purpose of the questionnaire and required to answer the questions objectively throughout their own personal experiences. A statistical study of the responses will be carried out in order to locate the trouble-spot and accordingly decide the difficulty rate. Eventually, the findings arrived at through the administration of the afore-mentioned questionnaire will be analysed, examined and described, and consequently suggesting and recommending especially tailored specimen strategy and plan in order to helping international students studying in the UK overcome their difficulties in the area of Informal English language use.

2. English as a Global Language

Language is our primary source of communication. It is the means people usually use to communicate and share ideas, thoughts and feelings with each other. It is a system definite to humans. It is an aspect of social practice which reflects our mental capability realized in speech articulation. This awesome faculty makes human beings superior to other species. "Language is a social energy, and our capacity for articulate speech is the key factor that makes us different from other species" (Hitchings, 2008:3).

English, which is the most international and worldwide spread language, is one of the Germanic languages. English to some extent is different from other Germanic languages (Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Icelandic, Norwegian, and Faroese). English language is much more prominent and distinguished compared to the other Germanic languages in its history and being exclusive in its status as a global dominant language in the 20th century. Although China and India are top world population of native speakers respectively, English is superior to the languages of these two countries in the number of people using English worldwide. There are probably more than one billion people who speak English either as a first or second language. All available evidence tells us that this number will go on growing. "Although Chinese has more mother-tongue speakers, no language rivals English in the extent to which it is used across the world" (Dalby, 2004:166).

Crystal confirms that "The first significant step in the progress of English towards its status as a world language took place in the last decades of the 16th century. At that time, the number of mother-tongue English speakers in the world is thought to have been between five and seven million, almost all of them living within the British Isles. Between the end of the reign of Elizabeth I (1603) and the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth II (1952), this figure increased almost fiftyfold, to around 250 million, the majority (around four – fifths) living outside the British Isles" (2003:92).

There is no definite and official definition for a global or a world language. Otherwise, it refers to a language which is learned, taught and spoken internationally. A language is classified global according to the number of its native and second language speakers, geographical spread and its use as a main tool of communication in international organizations as well as in diplomatic relations. Likewise, a language gets the prestige of being global when it earns the official rank and education choice in a number of countries, which consequently is going to be used by other people as well and sounds superior to other languages used. Graddol states "The press release for the launch of the British Council's English 2000 project in 1995 summarised the position of English: World-wide, there are over 1,400 million people living in countries where English has official status. One out of five of the world's population speak English to some level of competence. Demand from the other four fifths is increasing. ... By the year 2000 it is estimated that over one billion people will be learning English. English is the main language of books, newspapers, airports and air-traffic control,

international business and academic conferences, science technology, diplomacy, sport, international competitions, pop music and advertising” (2000:2).

In the process of foreign language learning/teaching, scholars distinguish between two types of languages functionally used. The first is a ‘language of communication’, and the second is a ‘language of identification’. These two terms which are coined by the German applied linguist Werner Hüllen (1992) have been converted to lingua franca in the context of English language. It is believed that English can be used as a language of communication without being necessarily a language of identification (Fiedler, 2011:79). Therefore, a global language operating as a lingua franca permits people from diverse backgrounds and different countries to communicate and understand each other while their native languages are different. “Although English is not the language with the largest number of native or ‘first’ language speakers, it has become a **lingua franca**. A lingua franca can be defined as a language widely adopted for communication between two speakers whose native languages are different from each other’s and where one or both speakers are using it as a ‘second’ language” (Harmer, 2001:1). Likewise, Graddol states “English increasingly acts as a lingua franca between non-native speakers. For example, if a German sales manager conducts business in China, English is likely to be used” (2000:13).

English has become the most widely spoken language. It has been used internationally for wide-ranging communication. “The spread of English in recent years is, by any criterion, a remarkable phenomenon” (Graddol, 2000:3). English has become part of the lives of a vast number of people and has helped to reduce a number of cultural barriers between countries. It has become the lingua franca of the present time. Bryson believes “English has become the most global of languages, the lingua franca of business, science, education, politics and pop music” (2009:2).

It is also believed that English is the closest language to be global. Its worldwide spread is much greater than anything accomplished historically such as Latin or French, for example. Its extension and spread was tremendous around many parts of the world. This vast growth of English language could mainly be attributed to the British and American trade and influence. “in the 19th century the British empire, with its distinctive mix of trade and cultural politics, consolidated the world position of English, creating a ‘language on which the sun never sets’” (Graddol, 2000:6). It is the native language of English-speaking colonies, and the second language of many other states that continue to need and use English as an international language. Worldwide, English rates as the most popular second language. Harmer states “Estimates of speaker numbers are somewhat variable. For example, Braj Kachru (1985) suggested between 320-380 million people spoke English as a first language, and anywhere between 250-350 million as a second language” (2001:1). For the time being, these numbers are not accurate as above mentioned. The number exceeds one billion and keeps on increasing. Accordingly, Crystal confirms “English is now the dominant or official language in over 75 territories, and is represented in every continent and in the three major oceans-Atlantic (e.g. St Helena), Indian (e.g. Seychelles), and Pacific (e.g. Hawaii). It is this spread of representation which makes the application of the term ‘world language’ a reality” (2003:106).

“The idea of ‘World English’ was first paraded in the 1920s. Now it is a reality. Today there are more people using English as a second language than there are native speakers. English is spoken, with at least some degree of fluency, by more than a billion people. In truth the figure may be closer to double that, especially if we are prepared to accept competence in lieu of expertise” (Hitchings, 2008:339). English language has its own characteristics that make it superior to other languages. One of them is the range and quality of English literature throughout history which demonstrates to be the language of culture and elegance. As a result, it carries with it a certain authenticity, substance and significance that few other languages can match. “Most books on English imply in way or another that our language is superior to all others” (Bryson, 2009:8)

Scientifically speaking, the main factor for the foundation of a global language is being used and spoken by dominant powers such as military, business, economy, media and politics. “Languages

become ‘great’ not because of the inherent qualities they may be deemed to have, but because of the political, military and intellectual force behind them” (Hitchings, 2008:9).

There are distinct reasons behind the prominent status of English and its linguistic global domination at present. The first reason is the expansion of British colonial power which has reached its highest point at the end of the 19th century. The second reason is the upsurge of the United States pioneering role in the world as a very important industrial, political, and economic power of the 20th century. “The position of English in the world today is thus the joint outcome of Britain’s colonial expansion and the more recent activity of the US. Any substantial shift in the role of the US in the world is likely to have an impact on the use and attractiveness of the English language amongst those for whom it is not a first language” (Graddol, 2000:9).

Crystal is confident that “The USA contains nearly four times as many English mother-tongue (EMT) speakers as the most important EMT nation (the UK), and these two countries comprise 70 per cent of all EMT speakers in the world (excluding creole varieties). Such dominance, with its political and economic underpinning, has given the Americans a controlling interest in the way the language is likely to develop” (2003:106). Therefore, “The continuing diffusion of English is, we can see, a consequence of capitalism and globalization, conflict and the Americanization of popular culture” (Hitchings, 2008:336). The dominance of the United States due to its political, military and economic powers had a great effect on English language status- to be recognized by the International Community as a global language. United States is considered the principal engine of global English. Because of its worldwide effect, many people from all over the world- Chinese, Brazilians, etc., are highly willing to have some knowledge of English language.

English is used increasingly as a language of international communication. Countries all around the world realized the pioneering role of this language. Thus, they have given it special status and start to study and practise it vastly although English is not their mother-tongue. Their academic institutions such as primary, secondary schools, colleges or universities, are teaching English language as a foreign language as well as using it as a medium of instruction. However, there will be no community who don’t speak English in the future. “For members of smaller speech communities, the need to study foreign languages is strong, and English tops the list, as it occupies a dominant position in so many fields. Among these are diplomacy, trade, shipping, and the entertainment industry and youth culture. English is the lingua franca of computing and technology, of science and medicine” (Hitchings, 2008:336). Thus, the status of English as a Global Language at present time gives the impression that it is in an unbeatable position. It is the universal language of diplomacy and science, the principal language of internet, press, newspapers, books, travel, business and education.

3. Some Perspectives of Formal and Informal English

Formal and Informal English are two different styles, and each is used to serve different purposes. The choice and arrangement of words syntactically as well as syntagmatically vary between the two styles. They are two different styles or varieties. They are different in the word choice, usage, and grammatical structure. The former is used mainly in writing as well as official situations. It is used in official conversations and gatherings. It is free from the idiomatic and slang use that is not universally accepted or understood. The latter is the type of English that local communities use with all the idiomatic, slangy and quirky richness. It is used in everyday conversations and personal interactions as a casual style. It is used among friends and family members. Linguistically speaking, each language has its own entity, but through its history, the features of this entity are subject to many changes. Language in its very nature changes over time as cultures change and these changes may happen for political, social or cultural reasons. English language is not an exception. It has experienced many changes in various aspects. These changes are valid to words, Grammar, spelling, punctuation, and pronunciation. According to Hitchings “The

fight is most often about ‘the fundamental fact’ of language identified by Whitney. Change happens. All living human languages alter: meanings shift, and so do pronunciations and grammatical structures. We may feel that the language we use is stable, but this is an illusion” (2011:4). Swan (2005:293) agrees with Hitchings in this respect stating “Languages change over time. Younger people adopt newer forms of expression, while older people often resist change; so even people who speak the same standard language do not speak it in exactly the same way”.

Language is a social energy, and it is an integral part of any culture. Since people use language to communicate with each other, they are definitely practicing a kind of social relation and usually in such activity, it is presumed the concerns as well as the involvement of individuals or persons talking to is available. Therefore, different varieties or styles of language needed to be used depending on the social situation and the relationships with those who are involved. In addition, there are more linguistic choices to encounter the society social diversity.

The idea of language variety means our use of linguistic expressions is ruled by situational factors depending on how people from a particular region or profession speak and write in different situations. “To have only one style at our disposal, or to lack a sense of appropriateness in stylistic use, is disempowering and socially disturbing. Not only are we no longer in control of the situation in which we find ourselves, we soon discover that stylistic ineptitude is the first step on the road toward social exclusion” (Crystal, 2004:10). Similarly, Hitchings believes “Language is form, not substance; not communication, but a system of communication. . . We are the agents of change. The ‘facts’ of language are social: changes occur in a language because there are changes in the conditions under which the language is used” (2011:4). Dalby, in his turn, states “We need to speak to inform interest and persuade others. Doing this effectively often means using a style that is different from our written language” (2004: XIV).

Through the history of English language formality, informal language which refers to non-standard English was inaccurately underestimated in comparison to the formal language which refers to Standard English. “No account of the history of English should ignore the whole of the language’s formality range, but the informal levels have been seriously under-represented in the traditional accounts, partly because they have been so much associated with regional dialect speech” (Crystal, 2004:11). Similarly, “scholarship crystalized the standard form, often through inaccurate statements about non-standard forms, such as the assertion (in 1900) by Henry Sweet that ‘Most of the present English dialects are so isolated in their development and so given over to disintegrating influences as to . . . throw little light on the development of English . . .’” (Hitchings, 2011:207). Further, “Many people think that dialects are corrupted forms of a language, spoken by ignorant people who make mistakes because they have not learnt correct grammar. This is not all true. A standard language is not linguistically ‘better’ than other dialects; it is simply the dialect that has been adopted for official purposes such as government and education” (Swan, 2005:288).

The word ‘Standard’ implies the notion of using a language of standardised words and grammar which eliminates the use of informal features, like slang and incorrect grammar. “The standard language is not a homogenous phenomenon, internally consistent throughout in the way it uses pronunciation, spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and patterns of discourse. The common impression that such consistency exists, within an English-speaking community, derives from the fact that most of the written English we see around us is *formal* in character. It is English on its best behavior” (Crystal, 2004:7). Swan tries to identify the distinction between formal and informal language confirming “there are some words and structures which are mostly used in *formal* situations. When people are careful about how they express themselves: for example, in official notices, business letters or reports, meetings or conferences, or polite conversations with strangers. And some words and structures are mostly used in *informal* situations: for example, in conversations with friends, or letters to one’s family. Writing is more often formal, and speech is more often informal” (2005:293).

Spoken and written languages differ from each other mainly in language use and language structure. The grammar and vocabulary of speech is not the same as that of writing. Therefore, "Different standards should be applied to the spoken and written forms of the language. Yet, often people discussing the use of English fail to recognize the distinction. . . With reference to both speech and writing, most of us practise linguistic hygiene, brushing, or swabbing away what we see as pollutants – jargon, vulgarism, profanity, bad grammar and mispronunciations – and sometimes in the process replacing one kind of evil with another" (Hitchings, 2011:10). This view is not completely of use, since Standard English can be spoken in any regional accent. "To speak of someone using a 'regional' dialect is to mark oneself as a speaker of Standard English. But Standard British English . . . is itself a (social) dialect. Its 'standard' nature is hard to define and is not regulated by an official body. In reality a language is a parcel of dialects. When I talk about the 'regional', it is with a heavy awareness that this is a fiction. All usage is regional; it is just that some regions are less readily identified, and other are more assertively stigmatized" (Ibid: 205).

It is important to recognize that when a new technological method of communication comes up, the whole way of communication will be greatly affected. Consequently, another form of language will be introduced. "The technologies that laid its foundation were originally developed as an aid to formal communication within the American military; the internet's precursor, the ARPANET, took its name from the US Department of defence's Advance Research Project Agency and grew briskly in the early 1970s" (Hitchings, 2011:290). The Internet, which allows people from all over the world to interact regularly and obviously, has significant consequences on language. It has led to the idea of the so-called global village. Also, the Internet has contributed in terminating the barriers among diverse communities around the world and has created a boundless society of speakers, categorized by special languages. Gooden mentions "Three or four new words and phrases make their debut in English every day. This phenomenon will only be intensified by modern mode of communication like blogging, texting and tweeting, all of which have greatly accelerated and broadened the spread of information" (2009:161). Similarly, Hitchings states "Electronic media have changed the rhythms of living. Barriers to communication have been removed: information flows more freely and inexpensively, . . . Furthermore, we are able to shape the information we exchange: everything can be digitized, and everything that has been digitized can be transformed" (2001:292).

Consequently, texting and messaging have increased the use of informal language via the internet and social networking sites like Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp which are becoming increasingly important in our daily life communication. It sounds that Crystal is highly confident about the role of the internet in consolidating the effect and the increased use of the formal English when he says "I see the arrival of Netspeak as similarly enriching the range of communicative options available to us. And the Internet is going to record this linguistic diversity more fully and accurately than was ever possible before" (2004:241).

4. Informal English and the International Student

International students could understand the academic English, which is formal, relying on the way they have been studying English in their own countries, but they may struggle to understand and socialize with native speakers due to the high volume and speed of slang, dialect and colloquial English used in UK. Slang, vernacular and colloquial English do not always resemble the usage or vocabulary the students have learned in preparation for studying abroad. In other words, good knowledge of academic language may not suggest a good command and competence in informal communication. Therefore, international students could face a kind of communication problems and difficulties in engaging a proper informal interaction. Although some international students have language skills, they may face hard times due to cultural differences. British cultural aspects, patterns and terminology might be problematic since it is a representation of another cultural community

making it difficult for them to comprehend informal English conversations. As a result, insufficient command and discomfort of the informal target language may be experienced within social contexts and consequently international students may feel incompetent and apprehensive to communicate with native speakers.

Therefore, informal interaction may be a challenging factor for international students beyond classes; whereas in the class environment students are at relief since the medium of instruction is Formal English. They may find themselves not familiar with the vocabulary of the Informal English language used in the UK as well as the wide-range use of idiomatic phrases and slangs by native speakers. They communicate well in formal situations but have difficulty with the common conversation takes place outdoor. For most international students English is just a non-native language. English is considered as a foreign language rather than a second language in this context and is not used as a medium of communication or for other purposes in society. Consequently, international students' limitation of a decent knowledge of English cultural terms, make them feel misled in English-based social activities. In addition, the culture difference between native speakers and international students may be a hampering factor of informal communication engagement and social interaction.

English language has many local dialects and accents, and every minor locality of England has its own distinctiveness of accent and vocabulary. These dialects have developed and changed over time. Hinchings tries "to clarify that accent and dialect are different. . . Accent is only one feature of a dialect, which is a variety of language that also differs from other varieties in its vocabulary and grammar. Moreover, while a dialect has its own slang, it is wrong to say that dialects are slang" (2011:192). These various features of the language are the most distinguished characteristics of daily usage of English language by native speakers and have been measured as an image of very nature of the society of which international students have no idea. Everyday English mostly consists of non-standard or informal features of the language: common, colloquial, slang and idiom. Idiomatic phrases and slang are widely used in the UK. Regretfully, international students have not often learned such aspects of English in their formal language learning environment. Therefore, they are limited and not in ease with colloquial, spontaneous conversation, and find it challenging to recognise certain conversational principles. Informal language features' usage is the main instrument for everyday settings. It represents the notion of community social life and its culture. Informal language is the language that states the tangible realities of the people around us. Worldwide, formal English learning is achieved in school and conducted under a teacher's guidance. It is believed that international students can learn many aspects of knowledge related to everyday English by means of self-study in home and other possible channels, like watching English movies and through interaction with the native speakers or exposure to authentic language input through technology to practice English in listening and speaking. By such activities international students may master the everyday language use since it is rich with slang, idioms, and informal language patterns.

5. Description of the Survey

Generally speaking, a survey is a tool or method usually used to gather information or data as reported by participants in order to examine and understand the opinions of a group of people. Surveys are used in various fields of study. They are realized in two forms; either a questionnaire or an interview. They are usually used to achieve various purposes and could be conducted through a printed questionnaire, over the telephone, by mail, in person, by diskette, or on the web (<https://www.hr-survey.com/WhatIs.htm>). Questionnaires usually contain a list of questions designed and administered to investigate respondents' perspectives about a specific issue. There are two types of questionnaire; namely, the unstructured one in which the respondents express themselves in any

course of interest they think through and the way they consider, and the structured in which the respondents fill out the survey on their particular questions depending on their own convenience and experience. Questionnaires, mainly and regularly, use closed-ended questions which are followed by response options in order to limit the respondents' answers to these options.

The two major methods practiced to conduct a questionnaire are the qualitative and the quantitative. The former is considered the most excellent one in providing a wide range of detailed information and explanation, whereas the latter supplies information that is entirely precise and detailed depending on gathering statistic and numeric data.

The survey undertaking in this study is a form of qualitative questionnaire containing 10 closed-ended questions. The number of the participants is 50, both male and female. In order to avoid any misunderstanding, the respondents have got a clear explanation about the content of the questionnaire. They are advised to maintain their answers to the point in order to meet and achieve the main objective of this study.

5.1 Criteria of Selecting the Respondents

Care has been taken to ensure that all the respondents are of different nationalities, cultures and linguistic backgrounds and that no erroneous factors are allowed to affect the results of the questionnaire. All the participants are studying in the UK in a wide variety of fields, such as Architecture, Medicine, Education, Business, Design, Literature, Linguistics, and Music. Participants have been highly enthusiastic and willing to do the job objectively. They never get together, and the job done individually. No time limit considered. They have got the required time to achieve the assignment fully and honestly. Prior to answering the questionnaire, respondents encouraged to ask for any explanation regarding the form of the questionnaire, and were given the instructions as to the way to perform the job. Moreover, they have been asked the following questions before taking the survey in order to avoid any erroneous factor which could affect the results:

1. Have you had earlier any course in any type of English outside school or abroad?
2. Have you ever been to an English-speaking country before coming to the UK?
3. Have you ever attended any class of Informal English?
4. Do you communicate with friends through social media using Informal English?
5. Have you been taught by native speakers of English who use slang English?
6. Do both or one of your parents from an English-speaking country?

None of the participants answered with **YES**, a fact which ensured the survey's objectivity as well as the absence of any sort of interference with the results of the survey so designed.

5.2 Objectives of the Survey

The survey aims at:

1. diagnosing the reasons relative to the daily life communication difficulties encountering international students studying in the UK through their experiences of interacting with English native speakers and their struggle of using and understanding Informal English,
2. finding out through accounting for the answers obtained , and through a statistical study of their frequency which factor is mainly responsible for getting international students hindered from efficiently communicating with native speakers in the UK, and whether some extra-linguistic factors are involved,
3. finding out through frequency count of the answers as well as the frequency rate of the difficulties or problems the major source responsible.

5.3 Objectivity of the Survey

The survey is an objective one aimed at assessing the cause of the difficulties and problems facing international students studying in the UK and the factors behind these difficulties in using Informal English and its effect on their daily life communication with native speakers. All the respondents are adults, both male and female. They are all asked to perform the same task and supplied with the necessary information and instructions. As mentioned earlier, they got the opportunity to ask any question related to the questionnaire along with giving them the time required to achieve the assignment fully and objectively. Further, the survey is objective since all the respondents have provided the same negative answers to the above seven questions. This ensures that no erroneous factors have affected the respondents' answers.

5.4 Method of Analysing, Describing and Scoring the Results of the Survey

As earlier mentioned, the survey is anticipated to inspect through the respondents' feedback, the major factors responsible for hindering international students studying in the UK from achieving a sound interact and communication with native speakers. It is also expected through frequency counts of the respondents' answers to spot the difficulty range of each item in the survey by summing up the identical answers. An analysis of the answers will make it possible to detect and investigate the reasons underlying these difficulties. The higher percentage of similar answers will certainly reflect the top responsible factor of the difficulties; in the sense, the more the number of the respondents giving the same answer, the more difficult the factor is. Then, the difficulty rate will be considered downwise. If scoring of the responses shows that only a small number of the respondents provide the same answer, this may be attributed to one or more than one of a variety of factors.

It is obvious that the type of English used and taught in the international students' homelands' schools is the Formal English. Therefore, it is the rules of this variety of English that the students have mastered and well knowledgeable about. The respondents' answers for each item of the questionnaire is scored independently in order to find out the most serious issue behind each difficulty. The number of the similar answers will determine the relative difficulty rate of each item. The participants are all international students of different backgrounds studied Formal English at their schools. They received instruction in English from supposedly equal teachers in their level of training and used almost the same approach. Eventually, the answers are tabulated and arranged in accordance with their frequency of occurrence. This procedure will help arrange the answers their potential rate of similarity, and pointed out above a comparison of counts of the responses in every item versus every other item will help decide the rate of each difficulty. The figures in the table show the number of the respondents choosing each item of the questionnaire and represent the percentage to be secured through every frequency count made here, since the number of the participants is 50 and the items of the questionnaire is 20. This procedure of tabulation is intentionally followed to facilitate attaining the results of the statistical study and to achieve accuracy.

5.4.1 Accounting for the Respondents' Answers

A glance at the table shows clearly the respondents' experience about the level and the source of the difficulty of each factor according to the frequency of their answers. The vast majority of the respondents agree that they communicate with their nationals using their native language. 96% of the respondents have answered with YES, while only 4% have said NO for question #9 in the questionnaire. A fact which indicates that these students are like isolating themselves from native speakers, and this will definitely result in losing the chance to get them exposed to Informal English language input. The difference between Formal English learnt at schools and Informal English daily spoken is also a major obstacle to the international students studying in the UK to interact or

communicate fully with native speakers. This proves the hypothesis made that informal communication is a highly challenging issue since the schools' curriculum is focusing on formal language settings and not the informal ones of which students are unfamiliar. 94% of the students have answered with YES, while 6% have said NO for question #1. Therefore, these students are at relief in formal communicative situations or class environment, whereas they find themselves inefficient and struggling in achieving proper outdoor common conversations. In line with this and as the answers for question #8 show, respondents affirm that they communicate with their classmates using Formal English. A fact which still confirms that these students are at ease in such communicative situations, since they have some knowledge of this variety. Therefore, 92% have answered with YES and only 8% with NO. This really again supports the hypothesis made that these students could successfully achieve official conversations and fail to achieve informal ones. This shows that although the respondents are of different cultural backgrounds, they can communicate fully and easily with each other using Formal English, while they are facing the same communicative problem with native speakers using Informal English. Therefore, they have something common and unwanted which may consequently affect and kill the opportunity to improve their learning skills of Informal English terminology.

Respondents, according to their answers for question #6, prefer to have some courses, at their homelands, in Informal English before coming to the UK. These students believe that the vocabulary difference between the Formal and Informal English is a confusing factor hindering them from interacting with native speakers. These students assure that if they have had courses in Informal English before coming to the UK, they would have felt confident to start conversing beyond class environment owing to the knowledge they had already acquired in this respect. By such knowledge, it is meant the vocabulary and nature of the Informal English. Thus, having such sort of knowledge, would make it easier for them to integrate and lead a smooth peaceful daily conversations. The percentage record of this question is quite identical to that of question #8. English language centres, offering such courses, could help a lot, if they were available in the students' countries.

According to the respondents' answers for question #2, they are not familiar with the idiomatic phrases. This lack of familiarity of idiomatic phrases may be relatively a barrier to achieve informal communication. In daily life communication, native speakers usually and continuously use a lot of idioms that often make it hard for international students to grasp and understand. Thus, communication with native speakers in the UK can be quite a confusing experience to international students. These students have not been in tangible proximity with the informal form of the language, and their lack of familiarity with idiomatic phrases may hamper them of affirmative informal communication. The percentage for this question is 88% YES and 12% NO.

The respondents' answers for question #3 are almost matching that of question #2 and show the percentage of 86% YES and 14% NO, which indicates that it is not only unfamiliarity of idiomatic phrases that shapes the source of difficulty, but some other factors as well. So, in order for these students to get familiar with the terminology as well as the nature of Informal English, they are required to engage and get exposed to Informal English language input.

Respondents may be desperate and under stress when using colloquial terminology, specifically when getting involved in spontaneous conversations. It is well known that Informal English including colloquial, slang and dialect usage which contain fix-word collocations, phrasal verbs, idioms, proverbs as well as many regional differences in vocabulary usage. This will definitely affect international students' daily communication with native speakers. Therefore, it is anticipated that these students face serious problems and difficulties in this respect, and may hold negative attitudes towards Informal English. Consequently, 80% of the respondents have answered with YES, whereas 20% have said NO for question #5.

Since international students are profoundly adhered to the formal form of English language, they are keen to maintain the rules and structure of this variety. Therefore, they find the informality

in the electronic communicative procedure, specifically through the social media, has led to the inaccurate use of the systematic rules of English particularly in grammar and spelling. Their answers for question #10 reflects this view which is represented in the percentage of 74% YES and 26% NO. This, in fact, gives the impression that all their electronic communications follow the formal style, whereas the social media are highly considerable tools to practice the informal language.

Linguistically speaking, language is part of the culture of any society. Some believe that culture difference is a source of difficulty for international students studying in the UK. Some of these students are extremely influenced by their own culture and cannot easily adjust to the new culture. They may encounter a number of difficulties, specifically at the beginning, related to the academic environments as well as social interactions. International students may suffer to establish a reasonable social interaction and making friendship with native speakers. They are expected to struggle when sharing various topics, views and interests with native speakers. Therefore, culture difference represents a type of extra-linguistic factor responsible for the difficulties which consequently driving international students to interact with people from their own countries as earlier mentioned, and just few of them contribute and participate in activities or students' societies at the university and other English social life issues. This could be well realized in their response percentage of 66% YES and 34% NO for question #4.

For question #7, 8% of the students have confirmed their use of Informal English in their communications with classmates. This is one more fact that shows their unwillingness to use this variety. 92% of these students communicate with classmates and native speakers using the formal one which has been earlier confirmed due to their answers for question #8. This formula of the dichotomy of the results of question #7 and 8 proves the great objectivity of the questionnaire used as well as the hypothesis made, since exactly the opposite results obtained between the YES and NO. Thus, they often choose to interact with fellow speakers using their own native language or using the formal one to communicate with speakers of other languages. They may find it easier for them to communicate with other international students using Formal English, since they share the common knowledge of this variety already acquired at their homelands schools. Again, such act will give the impression that these students highly tend to use the Formal English and avoid using the Informal English owing to be hesitated, under stress, unconfident and embarrassed for fear that they misunderstand others informal communications.

6. Summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations

The study has concluded that international students almost always use their mother tongue when communicating with each other. Such conduct certainly keeps them isolated and lose the opportunity to get exposed to the Informal English input, while it is well known that language is usually acquired through practice and communication with the native speakers of that language. Therefore, these students get hindered to communicate properly with native speakers in the UK. Moreover, talking to classmates of other nationalities using the Formal English learnt at schools is the second factor responsible for shaping the difficulties facing international students, and consequently hampering them to achieve daily life conversations duly. Thus, our concern whether Informal English is a sort of gremlin to these students is true specifically at the first years of their study. In order for international students to overcome this problem, it is recommended that they should stop using their mother language with their nationals as well as Formal English with classmates of other nationalities, and try to focus on using the one daily used by native speakers. Such act will make the chance available for them to gain some linguistic knowledge through communication/practice and consequently improve their skills of using informal language. It is also found that the difference between the vocabularies of Formal English learnt at schools and Informal English, which these students are not familiar with, is a major factor responsible for the

difficulties encountering international students to maintain sound communicative conversations. Further, the idiomatic phrases as well as the colloquial terminology of which students are unfamiliar is a true barrier for them particularly when they get involved in spontaneous conversations with native speaker whose speech is rich with such phrases they often daily use. Thus, informal communication is a highly challenging issue since the school's curriculum is focusing on formal language settings and no consideration set for engaging students in Informal English courses. Since these students are extremely willing to have such courses, it is recommended that schools should create, adapt and add these courses to their curricula. Public and private English language centres could also help and play a major role in organizing the required courses. Certainly, such courses will equip international students with the tools and knowledge required, and drive them away from stress and hesitation in communicating with native speakers the time they arrive the UK.

The study has arrived at the fact that many of these students are intolerant of violating the systematic rules of English, specifically in grammar and spelling through the modern electronic communication tools. This shows their tendency to use the formal one which they have used to practice in their communications. But, this gives the impression that they didn't try to learn some informal aspects of English language from such electronic tools.

It has also been found that culture difference is a factor that makes international students not easily adapt to the new cultural environment, specifically at the beginning of their academic and social life. Consequently, they try to group with their nationals in order to avoid embarrassment, stress and being unconfident. This is an extra-linguistic factor responsible for some difficulties. In order to avoid the struggle with language usage and insufficient adjustment, international students are recommended to be open-minded, positive and keep in touch with British nationals, drop negative attitudes, and take part in all students' academic and social activities at school and outdoor. On the other hand, academic institutions, such as universities, need to assist international students to overcome those difficulties arise from cultural and linguistic differences. Principles and guidelines for structuring formal as well as informal curricular activities and services are suggested. They are also required to motivate students and ask teachers to take responsibility and working on developing intercultural engagement and understandings as well as being concerned enough to international students. Eventually, we recommend that the authorities concerned work on creating an internationalized curriculum that could consequently develop intercultural competencies in international students. Thus, students across institutions are required to get engaged and follow a specific internationalized agenda in order to gradually improve the interaction between native speakers and international students.

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Appendix I. Items of the questionnaire:

1. Do you think that informal English is quite different than that you have learnt at school?
2. Do think that you are not familiar with idiomatic phrases?
3. Do you think that you are entirely unfamiliar with Informal English?
4. Do you think that culture difference is a hampering factor in one way or another?
5. Do you think that you are not in ease and under stress when using colloquial, spontaneous daily conversations with native speakers, and accordingly holding a negative attitude?
6. Do you think having courses in Informal English before coming to the UK is necessary and helpful?
7. Do you communicate with your classmates using Informal English?
8. Do you communicate with your classmates using Formal English?
9. Do you communicate with your nationals using your own native language?
10. Do you believe the use of informality has led to the inaccurate use of the systematic rules of English such as grammar and spelling?

Appendix II

Table 1: Difficulty Rate of Focal Elements

Item No.	Point of Focus	Average answer percentage		Rate of Reason of Difficulty
		YES	NO	
1	Informal English is different than that learnt at school	94%	6%	2
2	Lack of familiarity with idiomatic phrases	88%	22%	4
3	Whether entirely unfamiliar with Informal English	86%	14%	5
4	Culture difference	66%	34%	8
5	Not in ease when using colloquial, spontaneous conversations	80%	20%	6
6	Courses in Informal English are not available before coming to the UK	92%	8%	3
7	Communicating with classmates using Informal English	8%	92%	9
8	Communicating with classmates using formal English	92%	8%	3
9	Communicating with their nationals using mother language	96%	4%	1
10	Whether the use of informality in electronic communication leads to inaccurate grammar and spelling	74%	26%	7

From The Theory of Mimesis to Moral Corruption in The Family: A Literary Critique of Helon Habila’s Measuring Time

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Abstract: This paper investigates the motif of moral corruption that has taken root in the modern family. The focus is on Helon Habila’s novel, *Measuring time*, and analysis is provided on Habila’s use of language, characterisation, symbolism, collocation and the saturation technique to expose the motif of corruption that recurs in several aspects of human life and existence. It is the position of this paper that literature is a representation of life, and as a matter of fact, the key issues presented in the novel through different techniques reflect the reality and universality of moral corruption as seen in human behavior and experience. In this light, the meaning of corruption is applied to one key theme raised by the author: the concept of the broken family together with other related issues of corruption observed in the wars and politics of Nigeria and her sister African countries. Again, this paper investigates Habila’s use of language as an intriguing medium to communicate his views on corruption as captured in *Measuring time*.

Keywords: *Mimesis, Moral Corruption, Broken Family, Nigeria, Characterisation, Collocation, Saturation Technique.*



1. Introduction

This paper investigates the causes and effects of moral corruption on the modern African family. Corruption generally can be divided into categories such as political, economic, moral and so on. No matter the kind of corruption involved, two things are clear: corruption is a “cultural phenomenon” and every type of corruption could have a “devastating effects” on the society and its population (Melgar, Rossi and Smith, 2010, p.1) The loss of “the very rule of morality, of our sense of good and evil” is what constitutes moral corruption (Besancon, 2007, p.36). The inability to discern between good and evil, and the inability to fight for the one and against the other is what leads to corruption in general. Many societies in Africa and across the world are unable to fight against corruption because they are limiting it to only the public life of the leaders while neglecting what goes on in the moral lives of the families that constitute the nation. Yet it is the family which produces the leaders. Habila’s novel redirects our attention to this lacuna by concentrating on the rippling effects of moral corruption on the families that populate his novel, *Measuring time*. In this light, the meaning of corruption is applied to one key theme raised by the author: the concept of the broken family together with other related issues of corruption observed in the wars and politics of Nigeria and her sister African countries.

The theory used to advance argument in the paper is Aristotle’s theory of mimesis which is also referred to as “imitation” (Aristotle, 1982, p.173). To Aristotle, imitation is not only “natural to men” but through imitation, men “are pleased when they see images because they have the experience of learning...” (1982, p.72-73). Both pleasure and knowledge are thus obtained through imitation.

The methodology used in gathering, presenting and analyzing data is qualitative in nature. Primary data is obtained from Habila’s novel, *Measuring time* while secondary data is obtained from a review on the literature of mimesis and the literature on corruption in general. A literary and stylistic reading

of the primary text is done by looking at the techniques of characterisation, symbolism, saturation technique, and collocation which are used to delineate the theme of moral corruption in the family in Helon Habila's narrative.

2. Literature Review

Literature is a representation of life (Agyekum, 2007, p. 2). It is therefore not surprising that many writers take the raw materials of their stories from the realities they either encounter or observe. Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, rightly observes this art of representation artists engage in and terms it imitation. To Aristotle, imitation occurs primarily because [it is an instinct that lies] deep within the human nature, "implanted in man from childhood". He further opines that men enjoy seeing their likeness because in observing the imitation, they find themselves "learning" and "inferring" so that even if one happens to have not seen the original, one may still derive pleasure in the apt execution of the imitation (Butcher, 2015, p. 5).

According to Aristotle, one of the means through which artists engage in imitation is by means of an object of imitation. Consequently, Aristotle chooses his object of mimesis as men in action who must either be of a higher or lower type, and such men, according to him, must be imitated or represented as better than in real life, worse or as they are (Butcher 2015, p.1).

Rene Girard presents another thought-provoking view on the theory of mimesis. Employing the concept of imitation, Gerard identifies and explains the function of violence in human culture. He refers to his perspective as the mimetic theory and stipulates that mimetic desire is the main foundation from which hostility and violence which typifies the human species spring. In other words, man's mimetic desire is the driving force behind the violence and negativity that rakes the world because therein breeds the conflicts of interests. In his book *Violence and the Sacred*, Gerard explicates this further by observing that:

Once his basic needs are satisfied (indeed, sometimes even before), man is subject to intense desires, though he may not know precisely for what. The reason is that he desires being, something he himself lacks and which some other person seems to possess. The subject thus looks to that other person to inform him of what he should desire in order to acquire that being. (1977, p.10)

From the above is an indication that goes a long way to support Aristotle's view on mimesis that it is intrinsically inherent in human nature and that there is always an object of desire which either consciously or unconsciously informs humans' mimetic needs. Gallese is of a similar view and attempts to explain Gerard's assertions as regards "appropriative mimicry" by observing that "it is the compulsory tendency of mankind to imitate other's desires, so that what is really desired and sought for is whatever is desired and sought for by others" (2009, p.2).

The art of imitation, however, goes beyond the mere representation or mimicry of negative desires, and both Gerard and Gallese acknowledge this. Gerard (1977, p.24) stresses that, "mimetic desire, even when bad, is intrinsically good, in the sense that far from being merely imitative in the small sense, it's the opening out of oneself" and it is also "the basis of love, viewed as the imitation of a positive model" (Gallese, 2009, p.3). Mimesis, representation or imitation can therefore be considered as a trait that is basic to mankind. It is employed as a tool or a means of propagating both positive and negative ideals in various human endeavours.

Following the idea of imitation or representation as postulated by Aristotle, modern writers imitate or represent the reality they experience in life in literature for several reasons and for several purposes. While some write with the aim of educating and entertaining, others write because they want to criticise the ills they find in society while upholding the commendable acts or behaviour they observe. In any of the preceding situations, the utilitarian aspect of literature or art cannot be denied. This is what Achebe means when he observes that, "Art is important but so is education of the kind I have in mind" (Achebe, 1977, p. 45).

It therefore comes as no surprise that Helon Habila, just like his cohorts, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Sefi Atta imitates and represents myriads of social, cultural, political, economic issues they find within their society in their novels. In these novels, readers find the authors depicting the good, the bad and the ugly; the successes and failures representative of their various societies are depicted with the ultimate aim of correcting the ills they find in them.

Through his use of language and narrative technique, Habila discusses the theme of corruption as represented in the broken family, war and the petty politics observed within the Nigerian society. In this paper the definition of corruption is limited to the disappearance of family values such as love, parental support, care and warmth; the petty political bickering that results from the excessive human desire to wield political power at all cost and the ill effects of war on especially the people who experience it. In other words, corruption here refers to the loss of “the very rule of morality, of our sense of good and evil”(Besancon, 2007p. 36).

The theme of corruption that recurs in several aspects of human behaviour and experience is one that Habila dwells on extensively in his works. Corruption as a universal age-old demon is a motif that seems to have been entrenched in human life, and writers knowing the evils associated with it and its accompanying rippling effects have castigated the phenomenon from time immemorial till date.

The issue of corruption is almost always restricted to the negative practices that occur especially within political and government establishments such as the civil service, the legislature, executive and judicial arms of government. Consequently, a good number of writers all over the world pen their views on what they observe as corruption, especially within government institutions and establishments.

Writers like George Orwell, Elie Wiesel and Dante Aligheri in their writings *Animal Farm*, *Night* and *Inferno* all criticise what they view as corruption. Dian Fajrina in her work entitled “Character Metaphors in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*” concludes that *Animal Farm* which was first published in 1944 aimed at covertly disparaging “Stalin’s way of governing by analogising it with the animal government” which had become a metaphor for the abusive communist government practiced by Stalin and his “Soviet Union leaders at the beginning of the 20th century” (80). The story of *Night* by Elie Wiesel, just like *Animal Farm*, also exposes the corruption associated with characters in positions of authority and reveals how the humane principles of love, kindness, benevolence, sympathy and empathy are gradually declining in human nature. Set within the confines of World War II, Wiesel, the author of *Night* reveals how many German doctors and scientists who were supposed to live up to their oath of providing care and health support to patients rather collaborated and massacred many Jews with the intention of helping Hitler achieve his demonic ideology of racial cleansing. In his work titled “Perspective Without Conscience” Wiesel himself admits that

... during the period of the past century that I call *Night*, medicine was practiced in certain places not to heal but to harm, not to fight off death but to serve it... One day Hitler and Himmler’s health minister made it known to leaders in the medical field that, ... executioners. (2005,1551)

In fact, supposedly “powerful” Jewish prisoners were also perpetrators of similar inhumane acts on their fellows. In wanting to gain favour from the German SS guards, these “powerful” prisoners brutalized their compatriots to obtain better living conditions for themselves. Such prisoners referred to as “Kapos” willingly beat other inmates, and in return received things such as better food, clothes and better living conditions. Wachsmann elucidates on the role Kapos played in the furtherance of the Holocaust:

Kapos generally served the interest of the Germans, principally the SS. Their privileges did not exempt them from meeting SS expectations and failure to meet those could lead to punishment and dismissal. Serving SS interests translated into brutality on the part of most kapos... escorting condemned prisoners to execution sites, or killing them. (qtd in Akinrinade, 2017, p.10)

Not only European writers have captured the phenomenon of corruption in their works. In fact, African writers in a bid to make bare the stench of corruption in their various societies have written extensively about the subject. Writers like Chinua Achebe in *A Man of the People* and *No Longer at Ease*, Ayi Kwei Armah in his *Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Osiris Rising* comment on the state of post-colonial Nigeria, Ghana and Africa by painting a strong imagery of corruption and discussing the rippling effects of corruption on the conscience of the people who experience it. Macheka commenting on the issue of corruption and political disillusionment in Ayi Kwei Armah's *Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* categorically states:

The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born conveys a sense of resentment with the way in which corruption and bribery are universally accepted in Ghana as the only way to prosperity...Armah stresses his view by the use of symbols of sexual drawings on the toilet ...corpse. (2012, p.16-17)

The above reveals Ayi Kwei Armah's conscious and effective application of vulgarity___ through his association of corruption with the imagery of filth and rot___ to paint a mental picture of how corruption and sexual immorality has become endemic in his Ghanaian society. From the above, it becomes clear that indeed political disillusionment is a motif in Armah's novels, aimed at Ghana's and Africa's political corruption and failed advancement. It is again a reflection of the residual effects of imperialism on many post-independent African nations and the extension of a sequence of both social and economic marginalization. His gaudy depiction of the filth, rot and corruption of man's environs, where the community lavatory becomes the "cinema" for a people's depravities and the mark of civil and civic corruption indeed cannot go without mention.

More recent writers have viewed corruption from the negative effects people's actions bring to bear on the environment. Their views on decadence reflect the corrupt practices people engage in to dissipate and destroy the environment. In his publication entitled "Corruption and the Environment," Alexandra Leitao observes that "the earth's ecosystems are under increasing pressure from human activities, because of rising levels of greenhouse gases, habitat and species extinction, pollution, global climate change, and fish and water scarcity"(2016, p.1). He again identifies the unwillingness of institutions to deal with environmental issues and the lack of knowledge on the part of people as contributing factors to the menace of environmental corruption which he links with "...environmental degradation [that reflect and include] deficiencies in the basic needs of housing, clean water, sanitation, and health care"(2016, 1). The implication that could be drawn from the above is that the issue of corruption is not only related to lack of morality; it rather runs deeper to include the problems of the environment that contribute adversely to the lives of people. Corruption, then, is indeed a phenomenon that has negative consequences on the moral, social, political, cultural and economic well-being of a people and therefore must be combatted in order to minimise it.

Writers have succeeded in portraying and continue to portray the corruption and decadence within government establishments and the environment, and it appears that their attention is lost on the corruption that is steeped in the age-old institution of the family. The institution has been the bedrock upon which societies are built but its unity and ability to nurture are now under new challenges. In her article entitled "Declining Family Affinity and Decadence in Society", Helen Ovbiagele bemoans the state of the modern family as follows:

Once upon a time, not so long ago, family was everything to us. Parents, siblings, family members, all came first in our lives. You couldn't do without them. They were the first you turned to in adversity and in sharing of good news. The family had so much influence on the individual that you thought ...Sadly, that affinity seems to be disappearing fast as [sic] among young people of this generation... the thought that [most people] could prefer...friends to ...relatives didn't make sense to me... I began to realize this could be the trend now...(https://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/03/declining-family;affinity-decadence-in-the-society/)

The sorry state of affairs of the institution of the modern family and its inability to provide the necessary warmth, comfort, love, sense of belongingness, discipline and so on such that people are beginning to lose faith in it is worrisome. It appears people are losing sight of the fact that values ___either positive or negative___ cultivated at home are the same perpetrated in the open society. As Helen Ovbiagele rightly observes: "A parent who thinks it's alright to steal public funds, asks for bribes, cheats in business, spends money entrusted to his/ her care is unlikely ...honest citizens." (https://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/03/declining-family;affinity-decadence-in-the-society/) Again, she opines that "those parents, who feel that having good moral values are meant for characters in fiction books on religion and not for real life, are ...wrong." (https://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/03/declining-family;affinity-decadence-in-the-society/) She is of the view that that "children brought up by parents who are uncouth, disruptive, and who settle...citizens." (https://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/03/declining-family;affinity-decadence-in-the-society/)

It follows then that society as a whole has a problem now that almost all positive values cultivated from this bedrock which are needed for the survival of the society are being shunned. A frightening fact is that the youth who are the future leaders are already engaged in irresponsible acts, and what is worse, many of the adults of this generation are negative role models. Consequently, morality like caution has been thrown to the wind such that "the texture of social life of contemporary world and [for that matter the family] is permeated with evil and threats, family disorientation, divorce, adultery, marital infidelity, child abuse..." (Iherue, 2011, 25). The importance of the family to individuals, societies, nations and states, then, cannot be overemphasized if there is the slightest chance of redemption. It is a popular axiom that charity begins at home. It is therefore laudable and heartwarming that novelists and writers in general have and are still making significant strides to engage the minds of readers on the corruption that contributes to the breakdown of the family and the other attendant effects it visits on the society in terms of wars and the petty political foolery evident in many societies, especially in Africa. To examine corruption is to reveal the nature and the enigma of human behaviour in order to expose the hypocritical tendencies within man that draw him constantly to the evils of corruption (moral, political, economic, social and the likes). Man openly despises these ills but secretly adorns and even relishes. The tendency to corrupt and be corrupted is in man, and it takes a critical and candid approach to uncover the veil that hides it from sight.

3. Synopsis Of The Novel

Measuring time, to a large extent, examines the corruption or decline of family values of parental love, support, warmth and care as the root cause of the myriad social challenges in modern times. It is the story of twin brothers Mamo and Lamamo who hail from Keti. They reside with their father Lamang and their paternal aunt, Marina in the absence of their late mother Tabita. Mamo and Lamamo are resentful against their father Lamang because he shows no love and interest in their lives, and because they come to believe the village rumours that their father Lamang is the cause of their mother's death, they decide to punish him by running away to join the military without his knowledge or blessing. Lamamo succeeds, while at back at home, Mamo fights to deride his sickle

cell disease and tries hard to make his life useful. Meanwhile his father, Lamang, pursues his political ambitions which terribly back fires. As Mamo grows, his life as a history teacher and as the biographer of his village's history exposes to him the reality of the failed leadership of his family and village.

4. Analysis

Measuring time is proliferated with the thematic concern of corruption of moral ideals demonstrated in the loveless relationships and the generational conflicts that exist between parents and their children. Because the family acts as a microcosm of the bigger picture involving the society, the corrupted moral ideals adopted from the home, by extension, have an adverse effect on the society at large as exemplified in the petty political gimmicks and squabbles observed in the modern African home and community respectively. Through the author's use of symbolism, language, extensive or detailed characterization and the saturation technique, Habila succeeds in portraying, the condition accountable for "the breakdown of the family or the disappearance of family values of [fidelity], parental love, care, warmth and support [as the] root of the myriad social pathologies afflicting contemporary societies" (Anyokwu, 2008, p. 7).

Anyokwu (2008, p.7) postulates that "Helon Habila uses the Lamang family as a paradigm or template to mirror the unsavory state of affairs of the family as a social unit in the contemporary world." Right from the beginning of the story, readers encounter the character Lamang who is described as the king of women___ a name he acquires as a result of his excessive philandering before and after his marriage to Tabita, the mother of his twins.(Habila, 2007, location103) Through gossip and the popular village songs hummed by women of the sexual escapades of Lamang from his village Ketu to the state capital, his twin sons learn of how he breaks their mother's heart because he marries her not for love but because he sees Tabita, their mother, as a means of accruing the wealth of Tabita's old father for himself: "...Lamang, a shrewd business man, even then, had immediately seen the financial benefits of such marriage"(Habila, 2007, location 122). After all, he had been refused a chance to marry the love of his life Saraya because of his "penniless charms" (Habila, 2007, location 111). Tabita, consequently becomes the scape goat who bears the full brunt of the rejection and pain Lamang suffers from his denial. In fact, the pain Tabita experiences throughout the fifteen months she marries Lamang is personified in her final thoughts at the point just before she gives up the ghost. She does not know that despite her sickly disposition, she successfully brings two young lives into the world:

Tabita screamed and thrashed about and in lucid moment just before she died, she contemplated how life had given her all she had wanted with one hand and then taken it away with the other: she had married the man of her dreams, but he was in ... (Habila, 2007,location 142)

In Tabita's pain, she personifies life, an abstract idea as a being capable of giving willingly and snatching forcefully what it gives. She bemoans her suffering as a result of the loveless marriage she enters into with Lamang and dies a forlorn woman knowing that she, as a married woman, never experienced what true love is. Surprisingly, Tabita is not the only one who suffers Lamang's loveless dispositions; her two sons too experience same. Right from the very moment they are born, their father, Lamang, rejects them when their aunty Marina approaches him with the twins: "...she lifted the bloody bundle and approached her brother with it, but he lifted his hand, stopping her..." (Habila, 2007, location 150). Because of Lamang's rejection, the twins when taken by Aunty Marina to live with Uncle Iliya and his wife Amina, are referred to as "orphans" as if they had lost both their parents: "Take them, poor orphans, they are now yours..." says Aunty Marina. (Habila, 2007, location153) Consequently, the severance of ties between Tabita and her children and by extension Lamang and his sons weigh a toll on the boys causing them to hate their father. As Anyoku rightly puts it:

The severance of ties between mother and children (and by extension between father and sons) symbolizes a form of alienation from nature as maternal essence, nurturing, protective, therapeutic and remedial. The impression of the world gained by the twin brothers is that of existential xenophobia, cosmic ennui, despair, and meaningless misery... (2008, p.7)

Lamang, therefore, serves as a symbol of failed authority whose moral corruption is exemplified in his loveless relationship with his wife and children as well as his infidelity and these contribute to the emotional abuse the twins go through in life. The consequence is that both the wife and children also view society as bereft of love and incapable of nurturing.

Zara's young family is another one Habila uses further to symbolize the concept of broken home and its attendant moral corruption. As a young woman, Zara marries the love of her life. However, the joy and happiness that characterises her family's life is short lived since her husband, George, a shallow young military man, after the birth of their son Sam begins to seek comfort and joy outside his matrimonial home with his friends in the arms of other women. The neglect and loneliness Zara feels causes her to experience extreme psychological trauma that almost pushes her to murder her own son. When she goes to seek advice from her mother, the mother deserts her by asking her to cope with the husband who beats and molests her mercilessly. To Zara's mother, Zara's husband is the man and it is expected of soldiers to behave the way does. Zara refuses the advice of her mother and divorces her husband but quickly falls in love again with Mamo. After several sexual escapades with him, Zara deserts Mamo and flies to South Africa with her university heartthrob, Thembe, on a mission to commence a charity foundation. They both enter a contractual marriage of convenience, but when Thembe begins to desire real commitment from Zara, she deserts him yet again and quickly flies back to Nigeria to start work in a clinic as an auxiliary nurse.

Considering the life of Zara, one can conclude that Zara becomes a representation and an embodiment of loss due to the loveless and abusive experiences she goes through in the hands of her husband and her mother. George is an embodiment of patriarchy gone wild: a symbolic representation of a tyrannical, self-serving authorities who derive their own importance by spiting, thrashing and emotionally and psychologically abusing others they deem weaker or subservient to them. Zara, rendering an account of her experience with her husband George recalls that:

I remember the first time he slapped me. I had caught him red-handed with a girl in his car as I passed them on the street. When I asked him about it later at home he just raised his hand and slapped me...The next one was this one with a belt. He ...I drove to my mother, and only when I got there did I realize how much I was bleeding... (Habila,2007, location 1608)

Zara's mother is an ironical foil of the progress achieved so far in the fight for equality pursued by women all over the world. Her character trait is in consonance with the village widows of Keti who willingly throw themselves at Lamang hoping to catch his attention; they are detractors to the struggle for progress or change. Zara's mother's silent endorsement of George's brutality is beyond comprehension; and it is against all efforts made by theorists and practitioners of feminist ideological principles to bridge the gap of inequality and fairness between women and men. The widows' overly dependence on Lamang reveals the truth about how the concept of patriarchy is deeply rooted not only in some men but also certain women who are so programmed by patriarchy that they believe, even in this modern day, that their self-worth depends on their ability to secure a man in marriage or otherwise who will bear the cusps of all their needs and wants? It is not surprising therefore that such women, like the widows, are true agents of patriarchy. They sit idly without making any attempts at positive and acceptable initiatives that are likely to set them on the path of attaining emotional, psychological and financial independence. Patriarchy, like leprosy, has crippled such minds and blinded their eyes so that they have become incapable of imagining any kind of existence without relying or depending on men.

Again, it seems against all odds for a woman and a mother for that matter to force her daughter back into a loveless and terrible marriage simply because of material gains. When Zara first approaches her mother in order to confide in her about her marital woes, the mother tells her “that [is] how military men behaved, that [she] had to be patient; that he’d soon come home, and that after all he had bought [her] things, jewelry, and recently a car...” (Habiba, 2007, location 1597) The Marxist principles of commodification and consumerism are both implied here since according to Zara’s mother, Zara’s worth depends on her exchange value for material wealth and how often such material items are showered on Zara’s mother.

When the situation gets worse such that Zara barely escapes with her life and that of her child, her mother reprimands her and sends her back to her husband’s house. Zara refuses; her mother becomes angry and accuses her of wanting to bring shame to their family... that she is too strong minded not like her sister. (Habiba, 2007, location 1597) It is the same emotional appeal that Uju’s mother resorts to in “Possessing the Secret of Joy” in order to blackmail Uju and force her to go into a loveless marriage. Both Zara’s and Uju’s mothers are not mere agents of patriarchy or women committing violence on other women, but they contribute significantly to the rippling apart of the family by denying their daughters a mother’s love and by pushing them in marriages bereft of love and the nurturing capabilities that are intrinsic in the institution of the family.

Zara’s situation worsens when her mother willingly gives Zara’s child away to George, her husband, without thinking of the trauma Zara would go through. This situation sets the ball rolling for Zara’s insatiable thirst for belongingness, happiness, peace and inner joy which all elude her and consequently drive her into other different promiscuous, loveless affairs and later on to the depression she suffers finally.

Regardless of the differing opinions on the myriad feminist ideological stance (whether radical feminism, stiwanism, motherism and so on (Walker, A. 1983, Ogundipe, L. 1994, Acholonu, C. O. 1995), none endorses treating women as beasts. It is therefore worrisome to know that brutality of women still seems to be acceptable even among some women. For such people, education seems to be the only key capable of rescuing them from their ignorance. To Anyokwu:

Zara represents in *Measuring Time* unrealized and botched potential: a gifted and intelligent beautiful woman, starry-eyed and ambitious, and potentially revolutionary [against the weight of patriarchy condoned by some women], she is separated from her child and cannot settle down with a man of her dreams, and shorn of family support, Zara ends up an embodiment of loss. (2008, p. 10)

Turning to the family of Uncle Iliya, there is evidence in the novel to indicate that the man is a complete symbol of hope. Iliya is the elder brother of Lamang. He is first mentioned to readers when the twin brother’s Mamo and Lamamo are sent to him and his wife after their mother dies through child birth. For the three years Mamo and Lamamo lived with him and his family, they grow up believing him and his wife, Aunty Amina, to be their real parents only for Lamang to shatter their illusion one day.

Uncle Iliya is a purposeful man, a firm disciplinarian who will not compromise on his moral principles just to please anyone. He is to Mamo the father he never had in Lamang, but to his own son, Asabar, Uncle Iliya is the albatross threatening to ironically “destroy” his “peace”, and his desire to satisfy his self-indulgent cravings eventually leads to his doom. Asabar is the symbol of rebellion characteristic of modern youth who blatantly show disregard and dishonor for authority symbolised in Uncle Iliya. As regards him and Lamamo, they are the epitomes of the uncurtailed fantasies of adventure in the modern youth who are zealous, willing and eager to experiment everything without enough knowledge and wisdom. Asabar and Lamamo are foils to Mamo whose traits prove that zeal with character, knowledge and wisdom produce positive results.

As a strong, purposeful altruistic man, Uncle Iliya forecasts the future of his village and foresees a foreboding menace if nothing is done to salvage the future of the youth. He selflessly dedicates his life to educate the future generation to equip them with the necessary skills needed for survival by

establishing a vocational school. The school serves as the community's training center even though Lamang's political ambition, to some extent, jeopardizes the administration of the school because his political opponents use it as a tool to stifle Lamang's political ambitions.

Uncle Iliya, like Zara, is a symbol of change, hope, revolution ____ a revolution that is not nipped in the bud like Zara's but one that actually materializes as inspiration for others. He is the wide eyed sentinel who would watch and guard society against influences ____ either from within or without ____ that are most likely to have negative consequences, and will question norms and practices he views as abhorrent and inexplicable in the context of his society. He tells his Nephew Mamo never to accept issues "at face value" and not to "agree with what a man says because he has lived longer... or because he claims that is our way using history as evidence..." (Habila, 2007, location 1227) In his stoicism and pragmatism, Iliya has the strength to acknowledge and accept that fallibility is accustomed to every aspect of human existence. Therefore the older generation cannot be allowed to perpetrate customs and practices which are obsolete without explaining their relevance to modernity. Uncle Iliya advocates understanding and pragmatism as opposed to gullibility. He opines that "If [one] wants to follow tradition, [one] must follow it because [one] understands it, not because some old man told [one] it is our way..." (Habila, 2007, location 1249). His views on religion are as revolutionary as they are on culture and tradition, and he cautions those who indulge in fanaticism because to him "[it] is never the answer [but] gives rise to fascism and all sorts of racial and religious fundamentalism." (Habila: 2007, location 1249)

Lamang, Uncle Iliya, Mamo, Zara, George, Lamamo and Asabar are symbols that reveal the dichotomy of modern society where there is a constant defiant struggle between the forces of good and evil, rationality and irrationality as in Christopher's Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1984, p.31). Through these characters, Habila succeeds in portraying to readers the moral corruption that has gripped the modern family as exemplified in the coarse relationship between fathers and sons, mothers and daughters; and husbands and wives and the rippling effects they have on the society at large.

In Key Terms in Stylistics, Nina et al define the study of stylistics as "the study of the ways in which meaning is created through language in literature as well as other types of text" (2010, p. 1). In order to beautifully and accurately communicate his message to his readers, Helon Habila consciously employs the elements of style and figurative language to reveal the oddities and corruption he observes within his society and particularly within the institution of family.

In the publication entitled "Deviant Collocations as a Writing Technique in African Literature: A Stylistic Study of Helon Habila's *Measuring Time*", Onyekachi Jacinta Awa observes that Habila makes extensive use of deviant collocation in his work. In explaining collocation, she refers to Sinclair (1991) who defines the term as "items that occur physically together or have stronger chances of being mentioned together." According to Hill and Lewis (2000, p.13), collocation handles word combinations that are predictable. For instance, it is highly predictive that the word "handsome" will naturally collocate with either a man or a boy as in the expression "a handsome boy" or a "handsome man, and the word "blond" will also collocate with "hair" as in the expression "blond hair."

Habila deliberately bends the naturally accepted rules of collocation arbitrarily to portray the confusion and complexity his characters find themselves in. These deviant collocations are typified in the personifications, metaphors, paradox and oxymoron he employs in presenting the incongruity and decadence he finds within his society. For instance, as stated earlier in the novel, readers are informed that Tabita's involvement in a loveless marriage with Lamang causes her too much pain, such that at the time she is delivered of her babies, she personifies life, an abstract idea as a being capable of giving willingly and snatching forcefully what it gives. By personifying an abstract idea as a being capable of giving willingly and snatching forcefully what it gives, she bemoans her suffering as a result of the loveless marriage she engages in with Lamang. Readers are made to experience Tabita's situation of loneliness, seclusion and isolation she feels even in a marriage which

is in sharp contrast to the feelings of love, warmth and companionship one is to feel in marriage and within a family. Again, Lamang's rejection of her newly born sons after their birth and immediately after the death of their mother makes his sister Marina refers to them as "...the mewling content of the blanket..." This incongruous fusion of descriptive words given the twins in referring to them as "...mewling content of the blanket..." (Habila, 2007, location 153) reveals a deviant collocation of words which merge or transfer animalistic description to humans in order to paint a grotesque mental imagery of loneliness and vulnerability. As Onyekachi Jacinta Awa (2016, p. 30) observes it in her paper, "Helon Habila uses [such] metaphorical distortions to depict the beastly behavior of some humans, especially the ruler towards their fellow humans (the ruled)" which, in this case, signifies Lamang's inhuman treatment of his children and his wife even to the point of his refusal to attend the final funeral rites of his wife, Tabita. Another example of a character who suffers loneliness amidst friends and relatives is Aunt Marina. To vividly portray her loneliness, Habila gives readers a sense of her loneliness in the description below:

The stories she told us and the neighbourhood children in front of the mud kitchen, far into the moonlit night, she told not only to entertain us, but also to push back the time when she'd have to go to her lonely bed and stare at the bare wall that mocked her nightly with images of her failed life (Habila, 2007, location 208)

In the above quotation, the word "story" is made to have the ability of "pushing back", and the word "wall" is given the human quality of mocking. Knowing that Aunt Marina comes to live with her brother, Lamang, because of her failed marriage as a result of her inability to produce children for her husband, readers are made to experience at firsthand, the dejection Marina feels. She is surrounded by Mamo and Lamamo; and their father Lamang, yet Marina still desires the company of the people who truly define her existence and her relevance in her community: her husband and her unborn children. Mamo and Lamamo are no exception to the feelings of loneliness and dejection. In fact, from the time they are brought into the world, they meet loneliness staring them right in the face. Their mother dies through childbirth; their father shows no interests in their young lives. They have to live with foster parents, and this leaves a constant longing and yearning for the love and presence of their biological parents. Indeed, the first time they are introduced to uncle Iliya, they are referred to as "...the mewling contents of the blanket" exposing their weakness and vulnerability even when surrounded by family. Again, the constant longings and yearnings that are never satisfied make Mamo, the elder twin try against all odds to obtain some mental and psychological connection to the motherly love he desires from his dead mother. In the biography he later pens about Keti, he writes about his own mother and tries to depict the happenings of the moment before she gave up the ghost which happens to be the very night he himself is born:

Tabita lay in a narrow bed, sweaty, fainting, her hands grasped tightly by the midwife who was sitting on the edge of the bed. A single lantern, fighting valiantly against the wind that leaned with both hands on the wooden door and the darkness that advanced and withdrew playfully in umbra and penumbra... (Habila, 2007, location 140)

It is observed from the above that Mamo, through his diction, paints a horrifying gloomy picture that creates a mental imagery of the confusion and despair that shrouds his birth and the death of his mother. It also becomes the fuel that burns his hatred for his father in that the personified descriptions reveal the background to the pain their mother goes through as a result of their father's neglect. From this, readers are given a sensual, unpleasant feel of the mystery that surrounds life and death as binary opposites and an irony: there is death in life and life in death. The imagery evokes a sense of sadness and pity in readers for Mamo and Lamamo because a vacuum that can never be filled leaves a hollow within it.

Tabita's sadness in the lifetime of her brief marriage coupled with Mamo's constant fight to deride the sickle cell disease is depicted in the following quotes: "The glow on their mother's cheek hid the incipient dark tinge of sadness and apprehension" (Habila, 2007, location 214) and "she taught me to

live with it, how to deride it even” (Habila, 2007, location 191) respectively reveal the paradox that surrounds Tabita and Mamo’s life and by extension the lives of all characters in *Measuring time*.

To as well reveal the dilemma representative of his country, Habila adopts a writing technique that allows him to set his story in history which, to a very large extent, exposes and reflects Nigeria’s “checkered history of military dictatorships, economic stagnation, social misery and political misrule... from the mist of antiquity through pre-colonial, colonial to post- colonial era” (Awa, 2016, p.20). The novel explores the missionary history of Nigeria as a precursor to colonialism and uncovers the root causes of the religious violence in Jos Plateau region. According to the historical depictions in the novel, the first Mai of Keti is a Christian but the subsequent Mai’s inability to uphold the Christian tenets of monogamy and his subsequent decision to convert to Islam sparks religious violence and turbulence in the region (Akung, 2012, p. 147).

In addition, *Measuring time* (just like his other novels *Waiting for an Angel* and *Oil on Water*) reveals the failure of the political institutions and the military in alleviating poverty and minimising corruption, looting, inflation, high cost of living, poor management of resources, blatant disregard for human rights, and electoral fraud (Akung, 2012, p.147).

The history of the Biafran war is not left out in Habila’s historical novel as it reflects the effects of the war on the lives of people, particularly soldiers, represented in the lives of Uncle Haruna, Uncle, Iliya George and Lamamo. Uncle Iliya in describing the absurdity of war says:

My war ended in 1968. I was shot in the arm... I spent the remaining months of the war in a military hospital in Kaduna. It was a terrible time. I saw more death and more suffering than I had seen in the second world war... (Habila, 2007, location 542)

Uncle Haruna, on the other hand, is unlucky because the war destroys the human essence in him: “But by now, it [was] clear that there [was] something wrong with uncle Haruna__ he didn’t seem to be able to remember much” (Habila, 2007, location 548). Haruna’s loss of self as a result of his long stay at the war front is in consonance with Lomba’s loss of self as a result of his long confinement in jail without trial in *Waiting for an Angel*. Lamamo’s experience also depicts that of mercenary soldiers who get involved in wars fought in other neighbouring states. Through Lamamo’s letters, Habila adopts an epistolary approach as he is able to narrate from the characters perspective firsthand experience of the brutalities of war without authorial interruption. George is a representation of the class of military men who are irrational, visionless and lack ideological values. Lastly, Habila exposes the issue of electoral fraud in Nigeria and by extension Africa as a whole. The problem of electoral fraud otherwise known as vote rigging as an illegal interference with the process of an election has increasingly gained notoriety in many parts of the world. Even in countries well known for best practices when it comes to democracy such as the United States, the phenomenon is still a threat. One typical example occurred in the United States in relation to what has become known as the “Bleeding Kansas” election of March 30, 1855. Held to decide whether Kansas was to be a free state or a slave state, the election saw massive rigging and subsequent riots which claimed the lives of both pro-slavery and abolitionist members (Napier, 2011, 29-30).

Africa’s experience in electoral fraud is no exception, and that is what Habila aims at portraying in order to engage his readers. He depicts this phenomenon by presenting Lamang and Asabar as symbols of political sycophancy in order to condemn the act. When Mamo chances upon Asabar and his political thugs who work for Lamang, he finds them thumb-printing ballot papers they have forcefully taken. He questions them, and the following ensues:

“What are you doing?”

“We are voting already”, Asabar said with a laugh. The three echoed his laughter as they dipped their thumbs into a blotter of ink before pressing them on the white square space next to the rooster logo on the ballot...

“So what are you going to do with the cards?”

“You don’t want to know” Asabar said but then he went on almost

eagerly “we will take them to the polling station and put them in the ballot boxes. That is how you win elections” (2007, Location 2646)

By raising this issue, Habila appears to be implying that this canker must be smoked out in order for the peace that people, societies and nations enjoy be maintained.

5. Conclusion

This paper has examined corruption as a motif in the gradual destruction of the institution of family together with its rippling effects of war and petty political bickering on the society and the nation. The concept of corruption has been applied to the key issue raised by Habila in his novel. The broken family is the source of moral corruption which leads to war and politics; and the negative effects they have on the physical and psychological makeup of the people in the fictional world of Habila’s novel. Through characters such as Mamo, Lamamo, Lamang, Uncle Iliya and through narrative techniques such as saturation, symbolism, unusual collocations and the epistolary style, Habila succeeds in imitating and representing real life issues in his novel with the aim of drawing the readers’ attention to the crises the family as an institution is faced with. The rippling effects of such crises on the society, the nation and the world at large are also fictionalised in Habila’s novel.

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