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EDITORIAL

Nigeria is a blessed country. It is not an undue sentiment to quip that the large expanse of geographical space and sometimes very difficult to determine list of tribes, myriads of cultures with ever increasing indigenous languages constitute great blessings for Nigeria. So our diversities make us blessed.

As is normal, where there are diverse representations, there would also be diverse interests, and diversity of interests is a brewing ground for conflicts. So we may say that the marriage of conflicts we experience in Nigeria, ranging from opposing tribal and regional conflicts, political instability, up-surge of sometimes violent interest groups to very destructive terrorism and endless record of cases of violation of public order are 'normal' in a country as Nigeria.

Irrespective of the copiousness of Nigeria's social, political and security challenges, one factor – the use of Language in Nigeria- has always been the guarding force keeping the bond of unity of Nigeria together. This factor underscores the relevance of a national association such as ours – The National Association of Teachers Languages in Colleges of Education and Polytechnics in Nigeria. We dare claim that the combined sections of colleges of education and the polytechnics produce – probably second to the primary section – the largest number of educated Nigerians who work to transform Nigeria from moribund or obsolete traditions to state of modern culture and technology.

In essence, it is not gain-saying to express the relevance of our journal – NATELCEP Journal of Language and Communication Studies – NJLCS to our nation's educational system. This journal publishes researches by scholars on issues relating to teaching, learning and general use of Language in Nigeria. The journal is multi lingual and therefore publishes research works in English Language, French, other foreign languages and the indigenous languages from scholars within and outside the polytechnic and colleges of education sectors of Nigeria educational system. We therefore encourage our readers to always publish their well- researched articles in NJLCS.

The journal is published annually and consecutively this is the 15th volume. We regret any error in this volume and we affirm our commitment to improvements in subsequent editions

Aaron Ndu Nwoke
Editor-in-Chief
08065633293,
ndunwoke1@yahoo.com

SIMPLE SENTENCE AS STYLE MARKER IN THE POETRY OF EBI YEIBO

By

Ahiebholoria Confidence

07063737030 eroconfidence@gmail.com

and

Okagbare Emuejevoke Victor

07037135578

School of General Studies

Delta State Polytechnic – Otefe Oghara

ABSTRACT

This paper is a functional study of Ebi Yeibo's use of simple sentences in his two collections of poem 'Shadows of the Setting Sun' and 'A Song for Tomorrow'. Yeibo systematically employs the simple sentences to communicate the socio-political health of the Niger Delta people and Nigerian nation. The simple sentence structure contributes to the literary themes and effects of the poems. Furthermore, it is also geared at indicating the political and social plagues which have hampered the development of the Niger Delta area and Nigeria as a nation. This paper examines the poet's functional use of simple sentences and their effects, exploring linguistics-stylistic parameters. The Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) as propounded by Halliday is used and the concepts under it as springboards for analysis. The simple sentence structure is strictly analyzed into some prominent elements like; Subject, Predicate, Complement and Adjunct. The sentence structure is also assessed by the counting the functional elements provided by the structures. The analysis reveals how simple sentences are used to enunciate ideas that help in nation building.

INTRODUCTION

If we critically examine the writings and utterances of African creative writers, religious leaders, and social critics, it would reveal that there is a great concern about the neglect of national development in Nigeria. As a result, there has been a need to stimulate the machineries involved in nation building. Numerous political leaders in Nigeria have had series of reforms in our democratic process, but the general feeling is that our leaders have missed a link in the chain of things. According to Okuyade, 'the despair and bureaucratic failure of African governments have created a permanent mood of depression for the African people' (1). In order to put things right, the works of literary writers, especially poets who are enormously committed to the socio-political and historical realities of the people must be stylistically examined.

In the light of the above, Alo notes that, 'the verbal style includes all the devices of language that are used to achieve communication in speech and writing' (1). This means that linguistic features are required to comprehend the message and aesthetics of a literary work. Language is the major means of human communication as Obobolo maintains that 'language is a creation of man and is thus charged with the heritage of a linguistic group' (246). Literary language is expressive and literature is endowed with thought and emotion. This goes to show that literary

works are not merely for aesthetic and artistic purposes but discuss and profile remedies to economic and socio-political predicament of nations like Nigeria.

Considering the poetry of Ebi-Yeibo, much has not been carried out linguistically on his works. Most works, like 'Grounded Spaces: Deictic-anaphors in the Poetry of Ebi Yeibo' by Aihebholoria, C. et al, on his poetry have ostensibly concentrated on literary and cognitive stylistics, paying attention to thorny issues relating to theme, figuration and mental component of meaning creation process in textual analysis. However, Yeibo's poetry draws interest and critical probing for the fact that it serves as a springboard of poetic discourse that incorporates socio-political messages with characteristically distinguished medium of communication. His poetry evokes a number of important socio-political matters of international, intra-national and transnational relevance.

This present study focuses on simple sentence which is a crucial area of syntax. According to Yeibo 'the grammatical level is as important as any other level of linguistic description because literary artist essentially selects lexico-grammatical options to encode his textual message (928).

Based on the above fact, Obobolo notes that 'this deliberate and systematic use of language is what distinguishes literature from other subjects (247). To this end, poets combine words from both literary and non-literary works to enunciate societal ills and dilemma that have overwhelmed a particular people.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In Systemic Functional Grammar, language is conceived as 'a network of systems', not just rules (Michael 94). The system aids the language users to make a choice. Thomas Bloor and Meriel Bloor note that when people use language, their language acts produce or, or more technically, construct meaning. From this point of view, grammar becomes a study of how meanings are built up through the choice of words and other grammatical resources such as singular and plural, negative or positive, and other linguistic forms such as tone and emphasis (2). It is obvious from the above explanation that systemic functional grammar recognizes meaning (semantic) and use (functional). It is functional because it permits people to participate in critical functions in their relationship with other persons in any linguistic context.

Halliday's claim in this theory is that language structure bends back to the social uses to which language is put. Michael maintains that systemic functional grammar (SFG) unlike other grammatical models, describes any structure of language in its original state whether written or spoken. He notes in this regard that language is seen as being made up of three primary levels;

- i. Substance
- ii. Form
- iii. Situation

According to Michael, the substance is the raw material of language, that is, the string of the actual sound a person hears or stretches of writing or text a reader sees. The form describes the structure or arrangement of the language sign or sounds. It may be the words, i.e lexis or grammar i.e the rules which define the relationship of written text or writings. The situation refers to the linguistic and social circumstance surrounding language use, speeches and even textual works. The situation context/experience influence language uses generally (94).

Meaning is germane in systemic functional grammar. It forms an integral part of the grammar. Morley opines that systemic grammar formally incorporates a semantic functional dimension. It interprets a language as being an enormous system network of meaning potential. He explains that the task of the grammar is to specify the total grid of options available to a speaker of language; in other words, it accounts for what the speaker 'can do' linguistically, that is to say, what he 'can mean', and indeed how he can represent the meaning through the lexico-grammar and the

phonology. Meaning is pivotal in language use. It makes communication happen and facilitates the basis of language existence as a social tool.

There are three semantic components in the grammar as described by (Michael 95):

- i. **The Ideational Component**
This semantic component describes the underlying content of an utterance. It looks at the processes, participants and circumstance contained in a stretch of language. The ideational component centres on the world view or experience people have about events, actions or even other people. This experience helps to account or decipher the underlying meaning or interpretation of our environment.
- ii. **The Interpersonal Component**
This component is concerned with interaction among people, the possible influence or outcome of such interactions. It includes other sub components such as social function, which deals with instances of interaction such as greetings and instrumental functions which serves as means of getting at people such as request, inquiry and warning. The interpersonal component in sum defines norms that govern relationship among people.
- iii. **The Textual Component**
This is the component which defines textual or graphological encoded pieces of information. The component describes the coherent and cohesive nature of subject matters or common themes of a text. The semantic components described above are Halliday's metafunctions in systemic functional grammar.

Systemic functional grammar also employs the notion of rank. Michael notes that in systemic functional grammar, components of language are usually rank scales. The sentence is the highest on the rank, while the morpheme is the least. The sentence is followed by the clause, the clause is followed by the group or phrase, the group in turn is followed by the word, the word is finally followed by the morpheme. He explains that the linguistic interrelatedness among these units of language is such that a high component contains the lower component (96). Considering the above explanations, the sentence is the largest unit consisting of clauses, clauses consist of groups, groups consist of words, and words consist of morphemes. Every unit contains members of the next below and each unit gives the constituents of the unit next above. Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar has sociological and functional appeal. In taking cognizance of the social use to which language is put, Osakwe opines that the language of the poet mirrors the function and purpose of a poem—like any other linguistic text which is also dependent upon major situational factors (xiv). Language by this token is viewed as a social barometer of human advancement and interaction.

The Concept of Stylistics

Stylistics is the branch of linguistics that study style, especially in literary texts. Pushpinder and Jindal state that:

Stylistic study provides clear evidence in the text, on the basis of which judgment can be made. They add that the evaluation of the 'greatness' or otherwise of literary works can thus be made on the basis of objective facts of language found in the text itself (62).

Their statement points to the facts that the interpretation and appreciation of literary texts have been made based on reactions or feelings without making available the evidence for such judgment in the text.

According to Leech and Short "stylistics", simply defined is the (linguistic) study of style, is rarely undertaken for its own sake, simply as an exercise in describing what use is made of

language (11). The opinion held by Leech and Short is that humans study style when they intend to explain something, and literary stylistics contains implicit and explicit aim of drawing a relationship between language and artistic function. They further note that style being a relational concept, the aim of literary stylistics is to be relational in a more interesting sense than that already mentioned: to concern critic's concern of aesthetic appreciation with the linguist's concern of linguistic description (11). Being relational therefore means that linguistic observation modifies literary insight which further triggers linguistic observation.

It is obvious from the above statements that there is a close relationship between stylistics and style. Style according to Leech and Short refers to the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose, and so on (9). In linguistics, style refers to the specific way a particular writer or speaker expresses himself. It is involved in anything we do or say and it cannot be separated from language. Pushpinder and Jindal opine that:

The study of style is important in literature as each literary text is an individual use of language reflecting the unique personality and thoughts of the writer. Every writer uses language in his or her own way, making changes and variations at each level of the language: word choice, sentence structure and sound patterns (61).

It is therefore clear that stylistics is a systematic study of characteristics of style and variations in style at each level of language structure.

Stylistics has afforded practitioners a myriad of tools to analyze ways in which meaning is constructed in text through linguistic means. Simpson views stylistics as:

a method of textual interpretation in which primacy of place is assigned to language. He further asserts that the reason why language is so important to stylistician is because the various forms, pattern and levels that constitute linguistic structure are important indices of the function of the text. This means linguistic properties do not on their own make up meaning in a text (2).

However, they function to ground interpretation, and assist to explicate why, for the practitioner, certain types of meaning are possible.

The Simple Sentence and Style Markers

The simple sentence is usually considered the first type of sentence whose place is the highest on the rank scale while the morpheme is the least. Adejare remarks that 'the simple sentence consists of a single alpha clause and it is realized by a variety of simple structures...' (61). The alpha clause is also known as the free or main clause. Morley notes that 'the term 'free' is subject to different constraints'. He adds that 'an element of sentence structure which is free ought to be capable of functioning as a simple unit of sentence rank' (9 – 10). This means the simple sentence is also an alpha clause because it makes a single statement. In the description of the alpha clause or simple sentence, Morley emphasizes that clause structure makes use of five elements, out of which four are extremely basic; subject (S), predicator (P), complement (C) and adjunct (A). He maintains that the subject is connected to the nominal group, the complement with the adjectival group, the predicator with the verbal group, and the adjunct with the adverbial group and the prepositional group. (10). Example:

S P C A A

The politicians/ held/ their party/ quietly/ in the garden.

Style makes point to the linguistic elements uniquely used by a literary writer in a text. Yebo describes style markers as 'those linguistic features deliberately deployed in a given text or discourse by an author, to encode aspects of meaning and also achieve particular aesthetic effects. They are the linguistic features of texts which are significant for semantic

implications and aesthetic functions' (930). The words of Kamalu give credence to the aforementioned when he notes that 'the analyst who sees style as the linguistic characteristics of a work of art will focus on how the writer deploys the resources of language for effective communication of meaning' (10). In other words, these linguistic elements act as channel through which a reader or an analyst can comprehend the ideology of a writer and how he makes sense of his immediate environment and the world we live in.

It is obvious from the words of Yeibo that 'stylistic analysis focuses on the significant, salient or foregrounded aspects of an author's linguistic coding in a text, in relation to social or pragmatic contexts'. (1930). This critically infolds the identification, description and interpretation of uniquely explored linguistic elements whether in line with the everyday use of language or foregrounded.

Analysis:

The Simple Sentence

In Systemic Functional Grammar, the simple sentence is made up of four major constituents: the subject (S), predicate (P), complement (C) and adjunct (A). Eight basic clause patterns are recognized for the English simple sentence, namely, //P//, //P/C//, //P/C/A//, //P/A//, //S/P//, //S/P/C//, //S/P/A// and //S/P/C/A// which are derivable from the (S)P(C)(A) formula. Just to establish the structural patterns leading in Ebi Yeibo's poetry, the researcher attempts to analyze the first simple sentences to crop up in each poem under examination. The outcome is shown in the table below:

Simple Sentence		Source		Structural Analysis			
1.	A handshake is a prompter of memories	Scramble sunlight (Shadows of the setting sun)	S	P	C	A	
2.	A politician's mouth is full of monuments	Broken covenants (Shadows of the Setting Sun)	S		P		C
3.	The clan will continue to crumble	Apocalypse (Shadows of the Setting Sun)	S		P		A
4.	A shrewd designer made the layout	Eclipse of the rainbow (Shadows of the Setting Sun)	S		P		C
5.	The python strolls freely at Tuomo	The blaring bard (Shadows of the Setting Sun)	S	P	A		A
6.	Spent statement wear a new garb	Godfathers (Shadows of the Setting Sun)	S		P		C
7.	The silent sun can swallow	Black cobwebs (Shadows of the Setting Sun)	S		P		C
8.	I have seen the domestic rat	Sobering shadows (Shadows of the Setting Sun)	S		P		C
9.	The wilderness is a testing ground	The wilderness (Shadows of the setting sun)	S	P		C	
10.	Hyacinths are callous barriers on waterways	A strutting symphony (Shadows of the setting sun)	S	P		C	A
11.	This is an emphatic proposition	Peep-hole (Shadows of the setting sun)	S		P		C
12.	The wind blows across the land	Nightmare (A song for tomorrow)	S		P		A
13.	Dictatorship is a hungry guest	Tears in the home (A song for tomorrow)	S		P		C
14.	We can all see friends	The prop (A song for tomorrow)	S		P		C
15.	This is the green beginning	The land of Canaan (A song for tomorrow)	S		P		C
16.	The skylark is caged	Silhouette (A song for tomorrow)	S		P		C
17.	I hear chants of war	Lagos, NUGA games (A song for tomorrow)	S	P	C	s	s
18.	This is the spot	Warri crisis II (A song for tomorrow)	S		P		C
19.	I am the duck	Born again (A song for tomorrow)	S	P		C	
20.	One tests the depth of a river.	Worse devils (A song for tomorrow)	S	P	C		A

A close study of the above table reveals that the simple structures in the sampled poems are preponderantly 'SPC' pattern. We have just three SPCA, two SPA and one SPAA. This statistics is statistically extremely vital in that the simple sentence type explored in the poems reflect the simplicity, clarity, accuracy and atmosphere of the poems. The simple sentence is more explicit than other types of sentence. It is the vehicle Yeibo ostensibly exploited to enunciate the social-political calamity that engulfs his immediate environment

and region. His quest to redeem himself and his people is well furnished with the simple sentence type. The words of Kekegbe give credence to the above statements that as a humanist, the modern Nigerian poet finds himself in an apparent dilemma- the quest to save himself, his immediate environment; and of course the Nigerian nation which harbours multi-faceted ills and quandaries' (66).

The structures SPCA, SPA and SPAA pinpoint that the poet makes use varied structures to reflect the missing links in the chain of things in his homeland. He uses the structures to point at the cruel activities of political leaders and the battered democratic process of the Nigerian society. The simple sentences, 'the pattern stroll freely at Tuomo' 'One tests the depth of a river' and 'the clan will continue to crumble' send signals of warnings and the persistency of the woes unleashed on the Niger Delta people by the so called leaders. The sentences are also used to reveal the implacable problems contending with the Niger Delta people.

In a nutshell, the simple sentence types exploited above are indications that the poems selected are relatively simple. This simplicity of the poems has the capacity to enhance the reader's comprehension of the picture, Yeibo tries to paint. This depicts that simplicity is stylistically associated with his poems.

Again, the poet uniquely manipulates the simple sentences, 'The python strolls freely at Tuomo' (SPAA) and 'Hyacinths are callous barriers on waterways' (SPCA) to communicate the problems in his region and the disturbing socio-political tragedies that permeate the Nigerian society. In the first sentence, the poet employs the image of a 'python' to bring to our recognition the poisonous and deadly nature of our political leaders. It is deduced from his expressions that these politicians explore every slight opportunity to grab and swallow the resources meant for human and infrastructural development. They embark on primitive acquisition of property both at home and abroad. Achebe notes that 'the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership' (22). These politicians are evil and heartless. They always have a reason to steal and plunder whatever will benefit and alleviate the perennial poverty of the people.

The poet perceives these political leaders as hyacinths barriers on waterways. The destiny of the Niger Delta region has been marred and devaluated by myriads of cancerous problems invented by our own political leaders. No one thinks about nation building with an empty stomach, even the leaders are far from it. Yeibo's extreme concern is to salvage the Nigerian nation from wandering into doom and he employs words, groups, clauses and sentences stylistically in his poetry to give the kiss of life to the nation.

Conclusion

Ebi Yeibo's use of simple sentences has the effect of revealing the human activities that engender the dearth of development in the Niger Delta and the Nigerian nation. The poet creates an environment in which cruel, egocentric and callous persons pilot the political system of a people and move against human capital development. Nigeria is such an environment where the democratic process and economic health are battered, and people inflated with extreme poverty.

Under a stylistic account, we understand the manner in which the poet uses simple sentences to present real socio-political situation confronting national development.

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