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Lexico-semantic Analysis of Sam Ukala's Skeletons: A Collection of Stories

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This study is devoted to Ukala's use of lexico-semantic devices in *Skeletons: A Collection of Stories*, to convey the themes of the text. The ability of a literary writer to use the appropriate lexical items and style in a text is expedient for the conveyance of meanings, and the themes of such a text. This is due to the fact that the ideational function of language can only be performed if the readers effectively grasp the subject matter of the text. Every literary artist strives to convey his/her messages in the best possible manner. This study explicates Ukala's creative strategies and choice of words in his text under study. Due to Nigeria's complex language problem, which is compounded by the British imposition of the English Language on Nigeria as a result of colonialism, creative writers are constrained creating literature in a second language, which is alien to African culture. To adequately articulate African culture, world-view and their literary visions in their texts, the English language has been domesticated through manipulation and adaptation. Ukala contextualizes English in *Skeletons* by the deployment of various creative devices, among which are figures of speech, proverbs, idioms, lexical collocation, and neologism. Due to the poetic license which creative writers enjoy, he violates the rules of semantic expectancy, in his linguistic and creative experimentation in *Skeletons*. This paper identifies and explicates the various lexico-semantic devices Ukala deploys, and their stylistic functions in the text. The study will be of immense contribution to knowledge because it will act as a springboard to researches in the language of African literature.

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INTRODUCTION

English Language has become and remained the official language in Nigeria, serving various purposes. This is as a result of the British imposition of the language on the country arising from colonial rule, and the multiplicity of languages in Nigeria. Moreover, ethnic rivalry did not help the issue of language in Nigeria; none of the ethnic groups would have accepted the language of another as the national language. English has automatically become the language of education and that of literature by implication. The consequence of this development is that literary writers encounter difficulties in articulating African culture, world-view, and their literary visions in English, a second language. The problem of literary creation in an alien language is consequent upon the fact that “a people’s culture and tradition influence their existential experience and also inform their creative operations in life” (Ajadi 219). Helen Chukwuma notes that African writers have no choice but to fashion the English Language in a way to be able to carry the heavy burden of the African experiences.

In order to tackle the language problem, and articulate adequately the African culture and their artistic visions in literary texts, the writers have resorted to devising linguistic-creative strategies. Igboanusi observes that they “have carried out this task with rigour and freshness, keeping within the English Language while capturing the idioms and nuances of African languages” (221). He also adds that the indigenization of English has helped African literature to acquire an identity that has been able to arouse global interest (230).

Sam Ukala was a professor of Drama and Theatre Arts in Delta State University, Baraka, Nigeria. He was a playwright and theatre director of international repute. As a literary artist, there are many plays to his credit. His published plays include *The Save Wife*, *The Log in your Eye*, *Akpakaland* (a winner of ANA/ British council Prize for Drama), *The Odour of Justice, among others*. He was also an award-winning short story writer and poet ... (Blurb). Ukala is an author of

description; in his *Collection of Stories*, he describes events, characters, and actions so vividly that he creates images in the minds of the readers. For instance, in *Embrace of a Mirage*, he paints a clear and an ugly picture of the physique of the owner of the hotel in the excerpt below.

His head was like a small clay pot while the rest of him was like a standing, giant iroko trunk. His little glistening eyes were at the base of a valley between his cheeks and forehead, which rose like two little, ebony hills. His nose was as broad as his mouth and both reminded me of the funny drawing of the moon in my primary four reader. As my eyes went a bit lower, I noticed the man’s fleshy breasts, which heaved regularly and tremulously over the enormous and dark steel pot, which he carries for a belly. (p. 18)

In the different stories in *Skeletons*, Ukala X-rays various aspects of the Nigerian society; he denounces societal ills and recommends corrective measures for reformation, aimed at a better society. Usunkentan stresses the importance of literature in his submission that literature is an essential element in national stability and development (314). This reintegrates the fact that literature is a vital means of societal reformation and stability, and emphasizes the contributions of literary artists to the society.

THE SYNOPSIS AND THEMATIC SURVEY OF THE TEXT

In *Embrace of a Mirage*, the first story in the text, Uje, a teenager from Mbiri, whose father cannot afford the fees for his secondary education on financial ground, hears a lot of fantastic things about Lagos, especially how enjoyable the life there is. Moreover, he has heard that Mr. Gabriel Nwagbogwu, a former primary school teacher in Mbiri is now very rich, and lives in Ikoyi, the Whiteman’s quarters in Lagos. As a result of these and the hardship in his village, Uje decides to relocate to Lagos saying, “I must go, see and conquer Lagos” (9). Against his father’s advice on the ground that they have no relation in Lagos to accommodate him, Uje leaves Mbiri for Lagos without his father’s knowledge. But before his departure, he drops a letter for his parents. Prior to

his relocation, he has assumed that as a very close friend of his family while at Mbiri, Mr. Nwagbogwu will accommodate and help him with a job, or send him to school in Lagos. Moreover, he believes that he will make money there, and become rich and influential like Mr. Nwagbogwu.

Unknown to the teenager, all his assumptions and beliefs are mere dreams; milk and honey do not flow in Lagos. Contrary to his expectations, Mr. Nwagbogwu dehumanizes and rejects him. He also heaps abuses on his father, and even blames Elegbe, an Mbiri man, for directing Uje to his house. At that juncture, Mr. Nwagbogwu threatens to get both of them arrested if they do not leave his house immediately. Unable to accommodate Uje due to accommodation problems, Elegbe leaves Uje at Boundary market. Left with neither accommodation, nor money to travel back to Mbiri, Uje becomes confused and disillusioned.

‘The Certificate’ is the second story in Ukala’s text. As a casual staff in Ivory Soap Company, Nnenna is very hard working, and performs excellently in all the departments where she has worked in the company. But she faces the termination of her appointment because she lacks the Primary School Leaving Certificate, which is the prerequisite for permanent appointment in the company. To enable her to retain her job, her brother, Ike, buys her a forged certificate at the rate of fifty thousand naira. To the astonishment and displeasure of Ike and his wife, Nnenna rejects the certificate on account of her honesty. At that juncture, Ike decides to present the certificate to the company himself. Surprisingly, Nnenna discloses to the Personnel Manager of the company that the certificate is forged as Ike presents it to him in his office. Immediately, the personal Manager orders Ike’s arrest. To save her brother, Nnenna quickly snatches the certificate, swallows it, runs outside, and jumps into the lagoon. But she is immediately rescued and taken to the company’s clinic for treatment.

‘Money, Guns and Justice’, the third story, is about the atrocities committed by the Medical Director and Mortuary Attendant of Government

Specialist Hospital, and a human parts merchant, Chief Arogungbomo. The criminals set the Chief Mortuary Attendant up for exposing their crime. He is sentenced to imprisonment for lack of evidence, being betrayed by the unscrupulous policemen who witness the crime. In the story, the writer depicts criminal activities in government establishments, and the aiding and abating of crimes by corrupt members of the Nigerian Police Force.

The fourth and fifth stories entitled ‘Take Me to Mkpitime’ and ‘Masquerade Music’, respectively are about the abominable crime of repeated adultery, committed by Okpoko and Adafo, and its consequences on their families. In line with the tradition of the village, Mkpitime, the village deity, kills Okpoko for his crime. In anger and to avenge the death of her husband, Roselyn, his wife, murders Adafo, Uyo’s wife, whose life is spared by the deity despite being part of the crime.

According to Ise tradition, since Okpoko has been killed by Mkpitime, all his properties including his wife and son are forfeited to the deity. To avert Roselyns’s imprisonment for murder, and she and her son being inherited by Mkpitime, Lazarus, Roselyn’s corrupt brother, relocates them to his house in Lagos. But nemeses catch up with them. Uyo kills Roselyn after his release from prison, and Lazarus ends up in prison for his fraudulent practices in Nigerian Ports Authority. In the story, the writer conveys the themes of immorality and retributive justice.

‘Murder at Wilmer’, the last story, is about a corrupt Politician, Alhaji Bako, and his political opponent in their party primaries, Dr. Aro. Aimed at defeating his opponent by all means, Alhaji employs political thugs, and bribes the members of the women wing of the party; but he is betrayed by the women. In anger, Alhaji’s thugs attack and kill Mrs. Aro and Mrs. Udume, the prominent leaders of the women wing, who are in support of Dr. Aro. But due to the prompt intervention of the police, Alhaji and his wives are killed, and the thugs are arrested with bullet wounds. Bullet, their leader is sentenced to death by hanging. In this story, the author paints a clear picture of

corruption in Nigerian politics, portraying incessant assassinations, thuggery, and the use of money to purchase votes, among other vices associated with Nigerian politics.

DATA ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

We identify and analyse below the lexicosyntactic feature Ulala utilizes in the text, and explicate how they have contributed to both lexical and thematic cohesion in the stories. Note that the title of each story is represented by a word from its original title as follows:

Embrace of a *Mirage* – *Mirage*

The Certificate – *Certificate*

Money, Gun and Justice – *Money*

Take me to Mkpitime – *Mkpitime*

Masquerade Music – *Masquerade*

Murder at Wilmer - *Murder*

Figures of Speech

“Figurative language is a deviation from what speakers of the language apprehend as ordinary, or standard significance or sequence of words” (Abrams 77). According to Leech, figurative language involves alteration of the normal meaning of expressions (74). In literary works, figures of speech enhance the authors’ meanings and messages, and also add beauty to literary works. Figurative language manifests in simile, metaphor, irony, hyperbole, personification, among others as exemplified below.

Simile

Simile is a figurative expression involving the comparison of essentially different objects, things or groups of things which are similar in a certain aspect, using the terms, “like” and “as” to strike the similarity (Inyang & Ekpenyong 80). Below are examples of Ukala’s use of simile in the stories.

- *Ike froze like a stature. Rita gaped.* (p. 46)
The Certificate

- *At night Elegbe’s share of the floor was as narrow as the tail of a lizard.* (p. 29) *Mirage*
- *I looked like the devil’s high priest and wondered how my age mates in Lagos would have reacted if I walked into their gathering like that.* (p. 11)

In extract 1 above, Ukala compares Ike, Nnenna’s brother, to a stature. Because of her lack of Primary School Leaving Certificate, which is the prerequisite for permanent appointment in the Ivory Soup Company, Nnenna faces the termination of her appointment as a casual staff in the company. To avert the termination, Ike obtains a forged certificate for her with fifty thousand naira, but Nnenna rejects it on account of her honesty. The idea portrayed in the extract, is Ike’s state of shock and surprise as his sister rejects the forged certificate. His reaction is borne out of the fact that his sister can reject such an important document; the certificate will not only avert her dismissal from the company, but avail her opportunity of securing a permanent appointment there.

In example 2, the writer paints a clear picture of the serious accommodation problem in Lagos. Because Elegbe has no accommodation of his own in Lagos, he lives with his brother, who has a wife and four children in one room. In the extract, the literary artist compares the space where he sleeps at night to the tail of a lizard, thereby emphasizing how narrow the space is. The idea portrayed here, is the ugly and unhealthy accommodation situation in Lagos, where many people live in a congested room.

In extract 3, Ukala likens Uje to the devil’s high priest. He paints Uje’s ugly picture on his return from the farm one evening, having been blackened by coal and soot while working on the farm. The author has not only portrayed the sufferings and hardship associated with farming in the rural areas, but life generally in villages. Describing his ugly experiences for the two years he has worked on the farm, Uje says:

For two years, my palm acquired one thousand and one thickenings, but refused to make friends with the head of the cutlass and

the handle of the hoe. For two years, my shin was cut and scarred a thousand and one times by the blade of the cutlass and the hoe; my arm and body were lacerated daily by thorns, bamboo, and giant elephant grass. (p. 9)

Uje's ugly experiences described above inform his decision to relocate from Mbiri to Lagos in search of a white-collar job.

Metaphor

Metaphor is a figure of speech dealing with a kind of transference of meaning through an analogue, which involves two things being directly compared. Here is instance of its use by Ukala.

- *Unlike Dr. Aro, who had nothing but scathing word, Alhaji Bako had money and was willing to buy all the bonga fish in the party. (p. 116) Money*
- *"Ah Lagos! That is where Lazarus Ojogu is king ... " (p. 109) Masquerade*
- *I did not know where Ajegunle was but I was quite relieved to be out of the presence of the unbearded Nebuchadnezzar (p. 20) Mirage*

The metaphoric expression "bonga fish" as employed in example 1, denotes the corrupt party members, who are paid by corrupt politicians to vote for them during party primaries. The message inherent here is the corruption characteristic of Nigerian politics; the author lampoons the corrupt perpetrators of election malpractices in Nigeria.

"King", the metaphor used in sample 2 depicts power in the context of its use. Uyo calls Lazarus a king because of the influence and authority he has, to have arrested, tortured and imprisoned him when he is innocent of the murder of which he is accused.

"Nebuchadnezzar", the metaphor in sample 3 denotes wickedness. While searching for Mr. Gabriel Nwagbokwu, his relation in Lagos, Bola wrongly directs Uje to the owner of London Hotel. Not only does he subject Uje to inhuman treatment, but he sacks Bola, his security guard, for directing Uje to him. Ukala addresses the man as "Nebuchadnezzar" due to his wicked attributes just like the biblical "Nebuchadnezzar" who has

oppressed the children of Israel. Describing the boys' encounter with "Nebuchadnezzar", the authorial voice says:

As Bola fell to the ground, weeping and pleading, the monster turned to me, spread his monstrous claws over my head, pick me up like a chick and bellowed into my blinking eyes. He let go off my head and I fell, as though from ceiling. I scrambled up immediately and rushed outside, rubbing my head, and checking for blood ... But Bola was still writhing on the floor and I had to soothe him (p. 20).

Personification

Personification is a figurative expression in which animate attributes are transferred to inanimate objects. Sometimes human qualities are conferred on natural things, ideas, objects, and animals as exemplified below.

- *You're right, my sister. This word is tough. Justice can walk on its head. (p. 108) Masquerade*
- *Then the light waited for three seconds for you to catch your breath before taking you again through the sign – reading exercise... (p. 33-34) Certificate*
- *I have always said that this mirror tells lies. (p. 81) Mkpitime*

In sample 1, the human attribute of "walking" is conferred on an abstract entity "justice". In the context in which the expression is used, the idea portrayed is that justice has been perverted. This is borne out of the injustice done to Uyo. Instead of the arrest and detention of Roselyns who has murdered Uyo's wife, Lararus, her brother, has bribed the D.P.O, and Uyo is accused of his wife's murder, arrested, and locked up in cell. In this sample, the writer has not only conveyed the theme of bribery and corruption, but that of injustice.

"Waiting", a human attribute is conferred on "light", an abstract entity in excerpt 2. This is in the writer's attempt to describe how the artistically inscribed letters, on the sign board of the Ivory Soap Company works at night.

Similarly, “mirror”, an inanimate object, is given a human attribute of telling lies in sample 3 for stylistic effect. The expression “this mirror tells lies” used in the example implies that “the mirror does not reflect the true images of objects placed in front of it”. Roselyn puts on her best dress, and views herself in the mirror. She makes the assertion in the expression above because the mirror does not reflect her expected image.

Proverbs are well known statement that enables the speaker to display his wit, wisdom, and his distinctive ability to manipulate the language (Emenyonu 157). In African culture, especially among the Igbo and Yoruba people of Nigeria, proverbs are very important. Proverbs are sayings in more or less fixed form, marked by shortness, sense and salt and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth expressed in them. They portray various aspects of the people’s lives, culture, viewpoints, values, and norms (Finnegan 67). With the use of proverbs in literary texts, writers achieve verisimilitude and add local colour to characters’ conversations. We exemplify and analyse below few of the proverbs deployed by Ukala in the text for artistry.

- *A man, who calls a child his wife, must take her insults.* (p. 11) *Mirage*
- *“The child that’d not let its mother sleep, will not sleep”.* (p. 108) *Masquerade*
- *The he-goat’s head has fallen into the he-goat’s bag, our people would say.* (p. 112) *Masquerade*

The proverb in extract 1 above denotes that one should accept the consequences of one’s action, in the context in which Uje’s father has made it. The proverb arises from the price he has to pay for sending Uje to Catholic primary school, which has denied him Uje’s services in the farm. This is due to the frequent engagements of the school children, in both school and church activities by their teachers and the Church catechist.

Sample 2 is a proverb among the Ika people of Delta Stat; it has been made by Uyo who is suffering in prison having been framed up and

arrested by Lazarus for an offence he has not committed. The proverb means that whoever denies another peace, will never have peace.

The proverb in excerpt 3 arises from the fact that Lazarus, a former Customs Officer, earlier sacked as a result of his corrupt practices in the Nigerian Ports Authority, is now a “clearing and forwarding” agent in the same Port Authority. As the authorial voice puts it:

a corrupt Customs Officer dismissed for corruption yesterday re-enters the ports

today as a clearing and forwarding agent! (p. 112)

However, nemesis soon catches up with Lazarus; he ends up in jail for corruption because ironically Flimsy whom he has employed with the intention of using her to facilitate his dubious activities in the port is Inspector Akhigbe of the CID in disguise. The writer paints a clear picture of corruption in Nigerian Ports Authority in particular, and Nigeria in general. As prevalent in Nigeria since independence, the same set of corrupt government officers, politicians and leaders keep occupying important positions of authority, to the detriment of the country and the people. This set of corrupt who indulge in all forms of corrupt practices have looted the treasury, thereby impoverishing Nigeria. This is the major factor responsible for Nigeria’s underdevelopment today. Drastic steps should be taken to eradicate this socio-political malaise in Nigeria.

Idioms

This is another literary form deployed in literature as a stylistic device. An idiom is a group of words whose meaning cannot be derived from its separate words, but interpreted with a consideration of its situational context of use. Here are examples in the text.

- *Mkpitime, the deity that kills by elephantiasis, killed Okpoko, Roselyn’s husband, for basking in the thrill of Adafu’s thighs.* (p. 90) *Mkpitime*

- *And he had not the good sense to avoid swimming in cloudy, netted waters.* (p. 60) *Money*
- *When they got to the Customs, they indeed saluted Lazarus and cleaned him away from his Job like pus on a boil ...* (p. 110) *Masquerade*
- *He hated the man for spoiling his sister.* (p. 95) *Masquerade*
- *Upstairs, everything was calm. Ike had mimed a promised to pay a huge bribe and the Sergeant had relaxed.* (p. 51) *Certificate*

The idiomatic expression in sample 1, “basking in Adafo’s thighs”, denotes having sexual intercourse with Adafo. Okpoko is killed by Mkpitmeas as a result of his repeated act of adultery with her. In this sample, Ukala condemns adultery, and immorality in its entirety. Okpoko’s death acts as a deterrent to immoral members of the society.

Sample 2 is another instance of the writer’s deployment of an idiom to expose societal ills in the text. In its context of use, the expression, “swimming in cloudy, netted waters”, in the sample denotes “taking risk”. Tosin’s exposure of the sale of human parts in Government Specialist Hospital mortuary is regarded as an act of “taking risk” due to its consequences. In collaboration with the Medical Director of the hospital, the Mortuary Attendant sells human parts to Chief Arogungbomo, a corpse merchant. The three criminals involved in the dirty, but lucrative business are dubious, rich, and respected members of a socio-cultic brotherhood, Z.O.Z. As members of the brotherhood, they do not care about the sources of their money; they can do anything for money and get away with it. Ukala expresses Tosin’s action as a risk because the culprits plan and set him up. The case later turns against him in court, and he is imprisoned innocently. In this extract, the writer X-rays the Nigerian society, pointing out the societal ills prevalent in it.

In extract 3, the artist conveys the theme of retributive justice with an idiom, “cleaned him away from his job”, which means “relieved him of

his appointment”. Lazarus is relieved of his job as a Customs Officer due to his corrupt practices in the Nigerian Ports Authority.

The idiomatic expression “spoiling his sister” in sample 4 denotes “impregnating his sister”.

For impregnating Roselyn, his younger sister, at a tender age of thirteen while still in school, Lazarus hates Mr. Okpoko, the reason for which he neither stepped into his house, nor related with him. Lazarus is angry because the unwanted pregnancy has resulted in Roselyn’s early marriage, as his parents force Okpoko to marry her in order to extenuate their shame. Moreover, it deprives her of education and a good life. In this excerpt, the themes of immorality and hate are conveyed.

Ukala reiterates bribery and corruption prevalent in Nigeria in excerpt 5. To enable Nnenna, his sister, to retain her job in Ivory Soup Company as she faces termination at the expiration of her casual appointment, Ike presents the forged certificate that she has earlier rejected to the Personnel Manager. As Nnenna discloses that the certificate is forged, the Personnel Manager immediately orders Ike’s arrest. To avert his arrest, he promises the Sergeant in charge of the case a huge bribe. Having been promised a bribe, the Sergeant addresses Ike as a gentle man, and says to the Personnel Manager:

You shall also come with us. You’d have to make a statement about how you came to be so certain that the certificate is forged. (51) *Certificate*

Here, the author exposes and ridicules the corrupt members of the society including the Police.

Functional Conversion

As a lexico-semantic strategy, functional conversion is a situation where a word is deliberately adapted to a new grammatical function without, a change in form in literary texts for stylistic effect. Leech calls it zero affixation. Below are instances where the author deploys it in *Skeletons* for artistry.

- *But I had gone to the Personal Director to wonder ... just to wonder if the company*

couldn't waive the certificate prerequisite in your case, in view of the brilliant reports on you, which clearly indicates that your lack of a Primary School Leaving Certificate has not handicapped you in any way in the performance of any of the duties that has been assigned to you as a casual. (p. 39) Money

- *Little wonder she is ripening faster than her friends, ripening like fast-yield pawpaw.* (p. 79) Mkpitime
- *Many of the women were still around Roselyn, but their humming had giving way to silence, a well-known medium for conducting condolences, especially where crying was tabooed.* (p. 77) Mkpitime

In excerpt 1 above, Ukala puts functional conversion to use artistically. He condemns the emphasis on paper qualification in Nigeria to the detriment of job performance. Nnenna lacks the Primary School Leaving Certificate, which is the prerequisite for permanent appointment in Ivory Soup Company. Despite her excellent performance in all the departments where she has worked as a casual staff in the company, she faces termination of appointment as a result of her academic deficiency. Conventionally in English Language, the lexical item, 'handicap' is an adjective, which modifies a noun. But it is converted to, and functions as a verb by the attachment of the bound morpheme and tense marker, "ed". In its context of use in this extract, it implies "it has no adverse effect". The message inherent here is that Nnenna's academic deficiency has no adverse effects on her job performance.

In the same vein, the adjective "ripe" has been converted to function as a verb in the present continuous tense in extract 2, by the attachment of the bound morpheme, "ing" for artistry. The writer utilizes it to express Rosalyn's very rapid growth, compared to her friends as a result of her good feeding habit. Ukala depicts the importance of balanced diet to human health in this example.

Extract 3 is another instance of the use of functional conversion in the text. The bound morpheme "ed" is attached to the noun "taboo" thereby, converting it to the verb in the past tense

"tabooed". Stylistically, "crying was tabooed" as used in the example means that "it was a taboo to cry". The idea portrayed here is that it is forbidden to cry for any one killed by Mkpitime, the deity, with elephantiasis. This explains the silence among the women who have come to console Roselyn on the bad death of her husband, killed by Mkpitime for his repeated adultery with Adafo.

Loan Blend

Loan blend is another stylistic-creative device deployed in Nigerian literature. It involves the process of bringing together lexical items of both indigenous and English languages to form a compound word. Writer's resort to the use of loan blends in literary creation when indigenous words lack English equivalents with which they can be expressed in target texts. Below are few instances of Ukala's use of loan blend in the text under study.

- *raw garri* (p. 77) Mkpitime
- *sweet akara* (p. 30) Mirage
- *oyibo work* (p. 98) Masquerade
- *banza police work* (p. 102) Masquerade

In the excerpt above, "raw", an English lexical item, modifies "garri", thereby specifying the particular type of *garri* referred to by the writer. "Garri" which is made from cassava is used either to make food, or soaked in cold water and eaten. "Garri" has no English equivalent.

"Sweet" modifies "akara" giving more information about it. "Akara" is a popular type of fried food made from beans that is eaten in Nigeria. The writer resorts to the use of loan blend in example 2 because the word "akara" has no English equivalent. Here, the indigenous word has also been modified by an English one.

Again, "oyibo", a local lexical item, modifies the English one "work" for artistic purpose of specifying the type of work the artist refers to in example 3. "In Nigerian context of use, "oyibo work" means "white collar job".

“Banza” is a Hausa word meaning “foolish”. It modifies police work in this instance to indicate the type of work.

Lexical Collocation

Collocation is “the habitual association of a word in a language with other particular words in sentences” (Robins 64). To heighten his meanings in the text, the writer uses some lexical items which co-occur. But due to the poetic license available to them, literary writers sometimes assemble lexical items which do not collocate for artistic effect. This is referred to as collocational clash. Here are few of the examples utilized by Ukala to convey the themes of the text under study.

After ransacking the house and finding no one else, the policemen arrested all the money in the house, laid me on the floor of their van, beside their dead inspector, and drove off. (p. 125) Money

And only a few weeks back, Lazarus employed what he’s been looking for, a lady whose irresistible charm should lubricate his company’s relations with the new Customs. (p. 112) Masquerade

I have seen two pockets picked and, in this mad crowd, many more pockets yearn to be picked. (p. 31) Mirage

The author deploys collocational clash in sample 1 above for a stylistic effect. The verb “arrest” used is an aberrant usage because it does not collocate with the noun, money. The message inherent in the excerpt is that the policemen stole all the money in the house. This is an attack on the Police Force with many unscrupulous officers, who take advantage of every opportunity to steal and extort. Cases even abound where such officers steal the money, mobile phones and other valuable items belonging to accident victims and apprehend criminals.

In excerpt 2, the use of the lexical item “lubricates” as a collocate of company is aberrant. However, Ukala deploys it for artistry; in its context of use, it implies “boost”. The idea depicted in the excerpt is that the lady’s

irresistible charm should boost the company’s relations with the new Customs. We observe that Ukala has used some lexical items aberrantly in above extracts for stylistic effects due to the poetic license enjoyed by literary artists as stated earlier.

As used in sample 3 above, “mad” an adjective, which modifies the noun “crowd”, is an instance of collocational clash also. Though it is an aberrant usage, but the artist has utilized it for stylistic effect; he describes the abnormal crowded nature of Lagos, especially in bus stops. Some streets are even as crowded as market places. The message inherent in this excerpt is that Lagos is densely populated.

Neologisms

Neologism which involves the creation of new words and expressions for communicative purposes is a common practice in language use. The need to form new words by writers and speakers is usually to foreground or reinforce messages. The use of coined words is inevitable in Nigerian novels, especially with regards to the expression of culture-bound Nigerian concepts without corresponding equivalents (Edokpayi & Ibhawegbe 188- 189). In the English Language, word formation strives most on affixation and compounding (Osakwe 121). While affixation subsumes preffixation and suffixation, compounding involves bringing two or more lexical items together to form one word. Below are examples of neologisms used in the text.

Compounding

Compounding is a rich source of new words in English, and many compounds are numbered among recent additions to the language. In English, the new words are derived from already existing ones, by the process of compounding as exemplified below.

- *Primary School Leaving Certificate (p. 39) Certificate*
- *Chief Body Guard (p. 119) Murder*
- *mad crowd (p. 31) Mirage*
- *evil spell (p. 114) Masquerade*

- *Ivory Soap Company (p. 33) Certificate*
- *Managing Director (p. 32) Certificate*
- *Permanent appointment (p. 49)*
- *Uniformed man (p. 18)*

In each of the examples above, the compound word is formed by bringing together separate words. The coinages involve combinations such as noun + noun (N + N), adjective + noun (Adj + N), noun + verb (N + V) and so on. Almost all the coinages are of Nigerian origin, created by Ukala to verbalize the speech habits of the Nigerian characters, thereby reflecting their Nigerian context of use.

Affixation

Affixation in language is a morphological process, which involves the attachment of morphemes to bases. The two types of affixations are prefixation and suffixation. When attached to the beginning of the base morphemes, affixations are referred to as prefixes. But when the attachment appears at the end of the base morphemes, they are referred to as suffixes. Here are examples of Ukala's use of affixation in the text.

- *That is, if he has the support and votes of every member of our great party in addition to the votes of party less men and women, who openly or secretly admire our progressive programmes. (p. 116) Murder*
- *As the two men ate silently, Oluwatosin noticed the differences between his dish and Gobo's: his was watery eba with dark, meatless vegetable soup; Gobo's was smooth, pounded yam with glittering egusi soup and lumps of bush meat. (p 67) Murder*

In extract 1, the bound morpheme "less" is attached to the free morpheme "party" to form the word "partyless". "Partyless men and women" as used here means "men and women who do not belong to any political party".

"Meatless" in excerpt 2 also consists of two morphemes, "meat" and "less". The bound morpheme "less" has been attached to "meat" to form "meatless", which implies "without meat".

Therefore, "meatless vegetable soup" implies "vegetable soup without meat". As stated in the excerpt above, Gobo, a notorious prisoner, is served a special and rich dish in the cell. But Tosin, his cellmate, is served watery eba and soup without meat. The author exposes and reiterates corruption in the Nigerian Police Force. Because the DPO of the police station gets a share of the loot of each of their successful operations, Gobo and his gang members are given preferential treatment in prison. It is important to state that the creation and use of new words by the writer in this text is borne out of his stylistic/creative needs.

The employment of neologisms is of stylistic significance in literary works. Creative writers avail themselves of the opportunity of the use of neologisms. They deploy the most appropriate words that adequately express their visions, opinions, feelings, and intentions in their texts.

The Varieties of English in the text

Constrained by many factors in literary creation in a second language as earlier stated, Nigerian creative writers have resorted to the deployment of various strategies in their works, among which is varieties differentiation. We observe Ukala's use of different varieties of English comprising standard, sub-standard and the Pidgin English in the text for artistry. This is in his attempt to adequately present the speeches of his multilingual characters in the stories. The use of African varieties of English in African literature is appropriate for the situation in which the writers find themselves (Igboanusi 222). We exemplify below the writer's use of the various varieties of English in the stories and their stylistic significance.

The Use of the Standard Variety of English

Below are few instances of the writer's use of the Standard variety of English in the text.

- *Two days after I assumed duty, I called the hoodlums to the vast background of Alhaji's house for what I christened "Routine Shooting Practice". I contrived a target on the wall fence instructed Alhaji's cut-throats*

to aim and shoot at it, one after the other. (p. 119) *Murder*

- “I didn’t like these amendments, sir”, the C.M.A. complained after going through the typewritten report.
- “Why inquired the M.D” “They turn the report into a leaflet, sir, like an ordinary handbill, with no addressee and no provision for even my signature” “That’s how it should be” the M.D. advised ... (p. 61) *Money*

In above samples, the author deploys the Standard variety of English to present the speeches of educated characters. In extract 1, Bullet, a university graduate, employed as Alhaji’s Chief Body Guard, explains how he has trained Alhaji’s other political thugs to shoot in preparation for their nefarious acts of election malpractices.

In sample 2, Ukala also presents the dialogue between literate characters, the M.D., and C.M.A. of the Specialist Hospital. The C.M.A. complains about the M.D.’s attempt to change the report he has written on the sale of human parts in the hospital mortuary. This is in the M.D.’s attempt to exonerate he and the mortuary attendant involved in the illegal and dubious practice. In each of the samples above, the author conveys the theme of nefarious activity in Nigerian society.

The Use of the Sub-standard Variety

- He immediately offered me the post of a Chief Body Guard and commanded Jill and Jackijoko, who had been in his employ for over a year to subordinate themselves to me. (p. 119) *Murder*
- Yet for two years after my National Youth Service, I languished in penury as I found no decent job. And I said to myself, “Are you a fool?” (p. 119) *Murder*
- “Uyo, tell us where Saturday, your brother, is so that someone may go call him”. (p. 108) *Masquerade*
- “Salute Lazarus for me. Tell him I say I will return his kindness. (p. 110) *Masquerade*

In each of the extracts above, we observe the use of sub-standard English. For instance, “I have been in his employ” and “to subordinate

themselves to me” in sample1, “And I said to myself” in extract 2”, and “may go call him” in extract 3, are expressions in sub-standard English. “Salute Lazarus for me” and “And I say I will return his kindness” in excerpt 4 are also sub-standard usages. In literary works, authors deploy sub-standard variety of English to present the speeches of semi-illiterate characters, or conversations between educated and semi-illiterate characters.

Pidgin English

Pidgin English refers to the English Language with markedly reduced grammatical structure, lexicon, and stylistic range. It is another variety of English usually deployed as a means of communication among people without a common language of communication. It is of stylistic significance in Nigerian literature due to its creative potentials, and the fact that it is used to achieve correlation between situations of use, themes, and characters. Dialogues between some characters in Pidgin English in the stories are exemplified below.

- “You bi good man Tosin. You bi good man. But you bi foolish man too. Proper foolish man. You go de help government fight crime. We Nigerians no de like such person. We de call am, mumu. Olodo, or ewu ... Even Govment no like am ...” Na people like us Govment like. No bi guardroom I dey here-o. Na rest house. Na my arrangement with D.P.O. be dat. If I succeed with better operation, I gogo meet D.P.O. - yes, Divisional Police Officer - and give am his share. Then e go put me and my boys for Rest House. (p. 66) *Money*
- “Oga sef” the M. A. continued. “So, you jus’ de wack your own share of di money like dat, you no even know wetin I dey sell to bring de money?” The Medical Director replied that he cared nothing provided that the M. A. did not get into trouble. If one cared so much about wherefrom or how money came, one would never really enjoy its sweetness. (p. 60) *Money*
- “Una no go your?” Nebuchadnezzar’s attendant asked”. The dog de come chop una – o.” (p. 20) *Mirage*

- “Woman!” ... You go knock your belle for ground- o. “You no say you
- pregnant, yet “you de rush for molue”. (p. 22) *Mirage*

In sample 1, the writer utilizes Pidgin English to present the speech of an illiterate leader of an armed robbery gang, Gobo. In the speech, he reiterates corruption in Nigeria, especially the involvement of the police in crimes. The notorious arm robber condemns Oluwatosin, his cellmate, for his attempt to expose the sale of human parts, which has led to his imprisonment. He also confesses his activities as a criminal, and the aiding and abating of criminals by the police. Such activities by the unscrupulous policemen prevalent in Nigeria are the major reasons why curbing crime in Nigeria has been very difficult over the years.

The writer presents the conversation between a highly educated M.D., and an illiterate M. A. in Pidgin English in excerpt 2. In the sample, the writer exposes their involvement in the sale of human parts in a hospital mortuary, to a human parts merchant for money. Here, Ukala does not only expose corruption and illegal activities among Nigerians, but their quest for money.

Sample 3 is a warning issued in pidgin by Nebuchadnezzar’s illiterate attendant to Uje and Bola, against Nebchadnezzar’s dog, whose grunt vibrates like thunder. While searching for his relative in Lagos, Bola directs Uje in error to Nebuchadnezzar, the wicked owner of London Hotel. In anger, he subjects the boys to harassment and torture. Having been released from Nebuchadnezzar monstrous claws spread over his head in fury, Uje tries to soothe Bola, who is still writhing in pain on the floor. Nebuchadnezzar tortures and sacks Bola from his security job, just for directing Uje to him. In this extract, Ukala deploys Pidgin English to portray wickedness and oppression prevalent in the society.

Pidgin is used in excerpt 4 to paint an ugly picture of transportation problem in Lagos, the most highly populated city in Nigeria, and the danger it poses to lives. Due to the chaotic transportation

problem, large crowd of passengers are common sights in bus stops. At Iddo bus stop, many of them recklessly rush into a bus on motion through the windows even before the bus stops while those inside fight to disembark. A pregnant woman who rushes into a *molue* in order to secure a seat, is admonished by other passengers in Pidgin English in the extract. The messages inherent in this extract are transportation problems in Lagos, the danger it poses to lives, and the need to tackle the problem.

It is worthy of note that with the deployment of the various varieties of English in the stories, Ukala has reflected the use of language in Nigerian literature, thereby reflecting the language situation in Nigeria generally. There is multiplicity of languages, and English is in contact with various indigenous languages and Pidgin.

Code-Switching and Code Mixing

Code-switching and code mixing are some of the strategies devised by Nigerian writers to tackle the nagging language problems in Nigerian literature. They are sociolinguistic phenomena, features of language in contact, and the effects of bilingualism and multilingualism in a society. Code-switching is a situation where a speaker changes from one language to another in a speech event while code mixing involves the insertion of the words of other languages into the sentences of the English target text. Below are few instances of Ukala’s use of the phenomena in the text.

- “Asusuanyi nu”, came my reply... “Our language, sir”. I translated my earlier answer. (p. 19) *Mirage*
- “Enyi wu ndi Mbiri” Elegbe told her in Ika, expecting that to work a miracle “Where are you from?” Elegbe reverted to English. (p. 26) *Mirage*
- “His case is a very serious one, wallahi talllahi!” (p. 103) *Masquerade*
- “Today is neither Eken, our native Sunday, nor the white man’s Sunda y. It is a day for farm work ...” (p. 11) *Mirage*

- “*Hol your sis pencie-o Kosi change-o*” (p. 22)

In extracts 1 and 2 are instances of the writer’s use of code-switching while 3 and 4 exemplify code mixing. Both devices are aspects of language use in Nigerian society, and by extension, Nigerian literature.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have stated that the prevailing sociolinguistic and socio-cultural factors in Nigeria are constraints to literary artists, and that the manipulation and adaptation of the English Language in literary texts, are aimed at tackling the problem of the use of English in Nigerian literature. In the analysis of the text under study, we have established that Sam Ukala displays artistic craftsmanship in his use of language and style in his text under study. The lexico-semantic strategies put to his stylistic advantage to adequately convey his messages and intensions in the text include figures of speech, proverbs, idioms, lexical collocation, neologism, varieties of English, among others.

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