

A STYLISTIC STUDY OF AKACHI ADIMORA'S *ROSES AND BULLETS*

Chiamaka Ogugua Ononye

&

Dr. Esther Anyanwu

Department of English Language and Literature

Nnamdi Azikwe University, Awka

Email: ec.anyanwu@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

This paper centres on the language and style of Akachi Adimora in *Roses and Bullets*. The aim is to find out how she creatively manipulated language so as to pass her message across to her readers. This study takes a different approach as it delves into analyzing some linguistic aspects like Linguistic Appositioning, Conversational framing and Discourse Implicature which were not accounted for in the previous researches. Data was gotten through a close critical reading of the novel, important points in the secondary sources were also taken through extracting words, phrases which prove useful to the study. Her language geared primarily towards the promotion of her culture as observed from the analyzed data. The research therefore recommends that young writers can use Adimora's style of writing since the aim of studying style is to improve the vigour of the writer's ability to communicate effectively. However, these languages should be effectively translated either directly or contextually so as to enhance the flow of meaning for non-native speakers of those languages.

Keywords: Style, Stylistics, Transliteration, Language, Culture

Introduction

The work of literature is written and showcased in diverse ways in order to bring out its creative nature. To accomplish this, the writer uses his/her unique manners, peculiar diction and form in presenting his/her message. This is what Style is known for. Style encompasses a writer's choice of words, narrative techniques, linguistic foregrounding, sentence patterning and structuring, direct transliteration, descriptive quality, tonal level and speech pattern among other distinctive qualities that distinguishes one out of a group of the likes of him or her. Style cannot be expressed and understood in vague, that is to say that it is done with a tool of language.

Language, being a key point in stylistics is the means by which a writer reveals his/her thoughts. We can only begin to comprehend in a small way the identity of a writer if we know his/her language. This can also be reflected in the writer's religious beliefs, folklore, proverbs, superstitions, attitudes towards life and death. We can therefore say that language and styles are intertwined in the stylistics analysis of any literary text. Most African writers have their stories revolving round the themes of exploitation, oppression, war etc. Akachi Adimora is not exception as her work centre on the theme of war.

The language of literature is unique as it is formal and is different from other kinds of language use. According to Akpan, "the language of literature is the language used in writing which differs in lexis and syntax from the language used in speech"(1). Creative writers use language in different ways and this use of language is determined by various factors ranging from subject matter, theme, purpose or intention, to the particular genre in which he/she is writing. Language is a medium of literature. Through it, knowledge, culture and tradition are maintained and transferred onto generations. Literary writers create style using language as a tool. According to Syal and Jindal, this is done by deliberate choice, sometimes by deviation from or violation of the rules of grammar (4).

The stylistic perceptivity that we get from a literary text can vary from one writer to another. This is because the language of literature is a highly shiftable aspect of writing. The writer is confronted with a wide range of linguistic options from which he/she makes choices of words with which he communicates his/her message. This choice is influenced by such variables as subject matter, setting,

mood, the writer's vocabulary stock and other related factors. However, the shared trait among novelists is that they present words in such a way that they capture the attention of the readers. The linguistic options selected by writers in a fictional work have a way of improving the understanding of texts. Crystal and Davy are of the view that:

The composition of good diction, figure of speech, idioms and idiomatic expression, the effective use of collocation, good and alternating sentence types, active and passive voices and a good knowledge of linguistic and extra-linguistic environment can produce a fine blend of a good piece of writing. (67)

Language which is central to literature must be put together in such a way that it conveys the message it carries while appealing to the reader's attention at the same time. The focus should be on using a language endowed with enough literariness (components/characteristics of literature) as to distinguish and highlight it from ordinary language. The African prose writer is expected to bring about an intelligible piece of writing which carries the intended message and has aesthetic value as well. In addition to that, the text must have a dense texture to be qualified as a text. These are requirements that must be met by the African writer and the task is made even more challenging by the fact that he/she is writing in a second language. To produce a work which has texture, a writer needs to structure the information he/she seeks to convey in accordance with Halliday and Hasan's view that:

If a passage of English containing more than one sentence is perceived as a text, there will be certain linguistic features present in that passage which can be identified as contributing to its total unity and giving it texture. (2)

The Concept of Style and Stylistics

Stylistics is a broad term that has shouldered diverse meaning from different linguistic scholars. But it can simply be put to be the study of style. Style on its own as defined by Lucas is "the effective use of language especially in prose, whether to make statements or to arouse emotions. It involves of all the power to put fact with clarity and brevity" (9). Style has also been defined as the description and analysis of the modifiable forms of linguistics articles in actual language use. The concept of style and stylistics interpretation in language is hinged on the prevalent idea that in language system, the content can be enshrined in more than one linguistic form. Thus, it is viable for it to exist in all the linguistic levels such as phonological, lexical and syntactic. Therefore, style may be regarded as a preference of linguistic items, as a total departure from the models of language use, as recurrent features of linguistic forms and as comparisons.

Leech and Short see Style as the linguistic characteristics of a particular text (11). Style however, is a relative term since it does not just refer to characteristics of language use but correlates these with extra linguistic factors such as context of situation and the likes. Leech and Short go further to explain that style is rarely studied for its own sake, that is, simply for finding out what use is made of language in text, but because we want to explain something (12). According to Chapman (11), Style is the usual adoption of a register by a number of people in a particular recurring situation.

Abrams (190-191) defines style as a manner of linguistic expression in prose or verse ". He moreover explains that the distinguishing trait of a writer may be analyzed in terms of its diction, or choice of its word and structuring of the sentence (193).

Ademilokun posits that stylistics seeks to account for the recurrent pattern of linguistic features, which characterize texts, literary and non-literary (263). Similarly, Turner defines stylistics as the study of style, particularly in literary text and more particularly with a view of replicating the relationship between the form of the text and its potential for interpretation (68). However, Adejare is of the view that style and stylistics are virtually synonyms (1). The core difference between them is in usage, as style is favoured by the critic while stylistics preferred by the linguist.

Fankuade (ed) also posits that:

One major concern of stylistics is to check or validate intuition by detailed analysis, but stylistics is also a dialogue between literary reader and linguistic observer, in which insight, not mere objectivity is the goal. (15)

He is of the view that linguistic does not replace the reader's intuition but it may prompt, direct and shape it into an understanding. While reviewing the generality of stylistics, it is also crucial to give attention to the idea of preference in the line of an author because preference is an important tool of stylistics since it deals with the variations and the choices that are available to an author. Traugott and Pratt (29-30) clarify the connection between language and choice as the distinguishing trait exhibited in a text. With the writer's choice, there is a reflection of his/her self-esteem and the social condition of her environment. The different definitions of style as discussed above suggest that style is something that has to do with individuality and personality.

Language and Culture

Language is an indispensable tool used by a speech community to interact with one another. Ogene defines language as a subset of vocals symbols by means of which human being communicate (6). He further says that language works according to the ability and disposition of the mind of the user as well as the purpose to which it is put and the situation in which it is used. The language we are dealing with is the language that brings about the literariness of a literary work; a language which Jacobson says is the kind that represents "an organized violence committed on ordinary speech" (quoted in Eagleton, 2). It is with language that Adimora was able to show the reader that "like history, literature helps to imagine those events we did not have the opportunity to witness- slavery, earliest day of colonization, traditionalist etc "(Ezugu 179).

Moreover, language and culture are interwoven and interrelated. Language is embedded in culture and it is one of the means of transmitting and expressing one's culture. According to Wardhaugh, "culture is the know-how that a person must possess to get through the task of daily living" (215). An individual's culture is evident in his/her day-to-day activities including their speeches and writing. Language is an integral and vital part of culture. One's language therefore depicts one's culture, and language talks more about one's cultural background.

To transmit culture is one of the functions of language. A writer's thought revolves around his/her belief, exposure and way of life. In affirmation of this assertion therefore, Wardhaugh states that "the culture of a people is clearly seen in the language they employ: because they value particular things and do them in certain ways, they come to use their language in ways that reflect what they value and what they don't" (216).

Our use of language can tell our listeners or readers a great deal about us, in particular, our regional origins, social backgrounds, occupation, age, level of education and sex. Furthermore, language presents the belief, thoughts and norms of the people through what Onwudiwe calls "local colour". As he puts:

A writer's background is discovered in his work as he cannot completely hide his identity as he writes. Some of it he shows in his choice of words. These things come from the writer's wealth of knowledge which is built in his culture (21).

Transliteration Markers

Despite Adimora's linguistic/cultural patriotism, she put in mind her non-Igbo speakers and even Igbo speakers who do not understand the language. Despite her wide range of code mixing and code switching in her novels, she succeeded in taking the non-igbo and even Hausa in the flow of meaning. A careful study of her work reveals that all non-English words/expressions central to the derivation of meaning from the text are either directly stated or implied such as in context. Onukaogu and Onyerionwu stated three main strategies in the realization of the meaning of non-English expressions. The three main strategies are linguistic appositioning, conversational/narrative framing and discourse implicature (291).

Linguistic Appositioning

"This is the process of placing Igbo expressions side by side with their direct or contextual English equivalents in the narration. In this strategy, the meaning of the Igbo word, phrase or sentence is

located in the very next or previous or almost next English word, phrases and sentence to it". (Onukaogu, 275)

Narrative / Conversational framing

In narrative/conversational framing, the meaning of the Igbo expression is farther, deeper in the narrative, sometimes as far as a paragraph away. According to Onukaogu (276), most times the direct translation of the Igbo words comes up but within the narrative frame, not next or almost to the Igbo expression that usually demands interpretation.

Discourse Implicature

This is the most indirect linkage technique that is used in realizing the meanings of Igbo expressions in a work of art (Ezechi 12). Unlike the other two strategies, there is no direct clue to the meanings of the Igbo expressions. This does not mean that the meanings of the Igbo expressions are not traceable. They merely allow the reader to drill meaning from the flow of the narrative, thereby exercising his or her liberty to imply. (Igboanusì 56)

Data Analysis

To bring out the aesthetic beauty of her work, Adimora used different techniques to achieve that. The techniques as discussed above include:

Linguistic Appositioning

Examples

"*Adamma*, beautiful daughter, welcome to my house", she greeted Ginika. (*Roses and Bullets*, 61)

"Nwakire, *nno*, welcome back", Lizzy said as she got up to follow Ubaka. (*Roses and Bullets*, 46)

"There was hardly any warning before *Katakata*, confusion and commotion engulfed the whole town (45).

"*Ijeoma*, *nwam*. Safe journey" she called out to him. (*Roses and Bullets*, 43)

"Aunty Lizzy sighted several women sitting behind tables on which *abacha*, edible shredded and dried tapioca was displayed". (*Roses and Bullets*, 14)

"Miss Ezeuko, *kedu?* How are you?" (*Roses and Bullets*, 21).

"The stocky one called the other *ogwu azu*, fish bone". (*Roses and Bullets*, 31)

Adimora's style of writing consists of certain narrative strategies that are used in a bid to make the works appear truly and genuinely Nigerian, but still remaining in the English context. The narrative strategy in the novel includes untranslated words, syntactic fusion and code-switching. In the examples given above, a sentence in Igbo is accompanied by the exact English translation. Those phrases are not strategically vital in the narrative, but still it is clear that Igbo rhetoric has adorned the text. It is strongly visible in some dialogues like, "...there was hardly any warning before *Katakata*, confusion and commotion engulfed the whole town" (*Roses and Bullets*, 45). So, the meanings of those Igbo phrases are placed immediately or in few sentences after it.

Narrative/Conversational Framing

Here, Adimora did not give a direct translation of the Igbo expression as factors of content will enhance meaning.

Example 1

"By the way, is it not the one people call "*chop-and-go council?* Mama Nnukwu, my uncle's wife calls it *Olokara kansul* because, according to her, members of the council embezzle funds meant for executing the war and steal relief material meant for their refugees (*Roses and Bullets*, 66)

Example 2

"...and what is the meaning of your name, Osondu"? Does it mean "race for survival" (*Roses and Bullets*, 39)

"Look at the *ngidi* where we sit to do it. He pointed, directing Eloka's gaze to a raised platform with a hole configured to perfectly accommodate human buttocks. (*Roses and Bullets*, 91)

“Ginika, the *akara* looks and smells so nice. Where did you learn to fry *akara* like this? ... Ginika smiled as she removed the golden bean cakes from the frying pan and put them in a large sieve”. (*Roses and Bullets*, 195).

In order to realize the meaning of these expressions, the reader has to take into consideration the narrative environment and the kernel of discussion. An anaphoric reference in a narrative framing gives the meaning of the Igbo word ‘Osondu’ which is “race for survival”. In the last example given, the writer didn't give a direct translation of *Akara*. She allows the reader to drill the meaning of the Igbo word from the content of the narrative. So, we can deduce that *Akara* means golden bean cake, owing to the environment in which the word was used.

'*Ngidi*' in example 2 also explains or suggests a type of chair/stool that has a hole-like structure or shape. There was no translated meaning attached to the Igbo phrase '*Ngidi*', we only had to deduce the meaning from the content of use.

Discourse Implicature

In this technique, there is no direct clue to the meanings of Igbo expressions. Adimora allows the reader to drill meaning from the flow of the narrative.

Example 1

“...and the other a bowl filled with *udara*. As soon as she had washed her hands, Ginika fell to; she ate and ate until she was tired. The gummy juice of fruit smeared her lips and she had to use her finger to rub it off”. (*Roses and Bullets*, 66)

Example 2

“Ginika was overjoyed; she loved *udara* and she was sure Udo would welcome her with a hug, for he too enjoyed the succulent fruit with hard seeds the colour of red wine.” (*Roses and Bullets*, 59)

We could deduce from the discourse environment in (66) that the word '*udara*' is a kind of a gummy juicy fruit. There is also a subtype of discourse implicature. In this type, the class of phenomena to which the particular object or thing designated by the Igbo expressions belong is placed close to it, so that it is easy to imply a member- class relationship.

Example 3

Ube and Udara trees (*Roses and Bullets*, 59)

Ata grass (*Roses and Bullets*, 41)

Oha soup (*Roses and Bullets*, 63)

Okays drivers (*Roses and Bullets*, 9)

Onugbu leaves and Uziza seeds (*Roses and Bullets*, 167)

If we cannot get the exact English language, lexical or phrasal equivalents of the aforementioned, we can best settle for the discovery that the first example are kinds of tree, the second is a kind of grass, the third is a kind of soup, the fourth is a kind of drive and the last is a type of leaf and sees respectively.

Code Alternation for Gap-filling

There are many lexical gaps between English and other indigenous languages in Nigeria based on typological differences. Writers/speakers switch codes partly to fill these gaps.

Example 1

“She was certain she wanted to be a dancer, not a drummer or an *udu* beater” (*Roses and Bullets* ,156)

Example 2

“He swung his left arm and then the right to adjust his *agbada*” (*Roses and Bullets*, 89)

Example 3

"He hated eating *Garri* with fork and knife..." (*Roses and Bullets*, 94)

Example 4

"I have been talking to you and you just look at me like a *Moo-Moo*" (*Roses and Bullets*, 129)

'*Udu*' is a special drum used by the Igbo especially during ceremonies, '*agbada*' means local embroidery worn mostly by Yoruba Chief while '*garri*' is a type of food made from cassava. *Moo-Moo* is when someone bears a look that shows foolishness. The writer used the nature/cultural terms

to capture the concepts vividly. This is because there are no words that can adequately express their meanings. It is therefore not a surprise that Adimora borrows from the indigenous codes because by doing so, she distinguishes the Nigerian variety of the English language from the British and other native varieties.

Conclusion

The stylistic features found in the novel have been enumerated with examples from the text. Through her narration, Adimora argue for a subtle harmony between the foreign language and the indigenous one forged through artistic expertise and narrative ingenuity. The author used different techniques to accomplish her goals. These techniques have helped in portraying the author's feelings, her mastery of artistic craft of storytelling and the disastrous effect of the civil war on the society. Her portrayal of vision and artistry is superb not only through the point of view and characterization but in her manipulation of language. The success of the narrative lies on her ability to create psychologically and physically balanced characters who portray her themes and culture. Nigerians and Africans at large should always try to reflect their cultures and languages in their works. The pride they feel for Africa, their homeland should be reflected in their language. In doing this however, they should put their readers in mind and like the writer skillfully interpreted non-English expressions whether directly or contextually, because it helps sharpens the perception of readers and arouses their interest. Readers also should not be hasty drawing meaning of words from a text because some words depend on the context to get the meaning; their meaning cannot be derived directly.

Works Cited

- Abrams, M.N. *Glossary of Literary Terms: Fourth Edition*. New York: Carnell University, 1983. Print.
- Adejare, O. *Language and Style in Soyinka: A Systemic Text Linguistic Study of a Literary Idiolect*. Nigeria Girarde Press, 1992. Print.
- Adedimeji and Alabi. *Basic Elements of English Language Grammar: Studies and Discourse in English Language*. Ilorin: Haytee, 2003. Print.
- Adegbite, W. *English Language Usage, Uses and Misuse(s) in a non-host second language context, Nigeria*. Inaugural Lecture Series 231. Obafemi Awolowo University Press, 2010. Print
- Ademilokun. *Papers in English and Linguistics (PEC)* vol. 12, 2011. Print.
- Adimora-Ezigbo, Akachi. *Roses and Bullets*. Ibadan: University Press, 2011. Print
- Adimora-Ezigbo, Akachi. "Interview" by Sumaila Umaisha. New Nigerian newspaper, 2011. Print
- Ayeomoni, Moses. *The Role of Stylistics in literary Studies*. Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press, 2003. Print
- Awolaja, O and Awolaja A. *University English Courses and Applied Linguistic Courses Book 1*. Ilorin: Ibitola Printing Press, 2012. Print.
- Chapman, R. *Linguistics and literature: An Introduction to Literary Stylistics*. London: Edward Arnold Ltd, 1973. Print.
- Crystal, David and Davy Derek. *Investigating English Style*. London, 1969. Print
- Daria, T. *Style Beyond Borders: Language in Recent Nigerian Fiction*. Belgium: University of Liege, 2009. Print
- Igboanusi, Herbert. *Igbo English in the Nigerian novel*. Ibadan: Enicrownfit Publishers. 2002. Print
- Okolo, I. *Indigenous thought in African Urban Fiction*. Unpublished MA dissertation. University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 2008.
- Onukaogu, A.A and Onyerionwu, E. *Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The Aesthetics of Commitment and Narrative*. Ibadan: Kraft Books, 2010. Print
- Onwukwe, E. *An Introduction to General Stylistics*. Owerri: Alphabet Nigeria Publishers, 2019. Print
- Orakwue, E. E. *A Linguistic Stylistic Analysis of Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus and Half of a Yellow Sun*. Unpublished paper. Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, 2014.
- Owolabi, D. The Domestication of the English Language for Literary Purpose in Nigeria: Creating a National Identity. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities*, 2(6), 488-492. 2012. Print.