ACHEBE'S MANIPULATION OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE: A STYLISTIC STUDY OF *GIRLS A T WAR AND OTHER STORIES*

By

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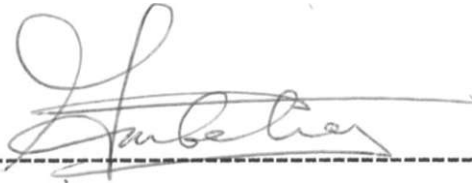
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DECLARATION

This dissertation is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

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EMMANUEL C. SATIA

This dissertation has been submitted for examination with our approval as University supervisors.

DR. G.N. MARETE

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~ **DR. M. MBATIA**

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to analyze Chinua Achebe's short stories within Leech (1969) and Leech and Short (1981) theoretical framework. Consequently, the work is divided into the levels of form, realization, the semantic level as well as ancillary branches.

In chapter one, we have an introduction to the study. This covers background information to the study. Such information includes Achebe's views on language, stylistic criticism vis a vis literary criticism, the statement of the problem, objectives hypothesis, theoretical framework, justification and methodology.

Chapter two deals with style at the graphological and phonological levels. The chapter covers the use of space, ellipsis and the creation of rhythmic effects.

Chapter three provides an analysis of syntactic aspects of style and the main issues discussed are the lexicon and syntactic structures.

In chapter four, the main semantic features of style are discussed. These include direct translations, neologism and figures of speech.

Chapter five deals with register and Pidgin English while in chapter six, summary and the conclusions made from the various levels of our analysis have been given.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This study investigates Chinua Achebe's use of language in his collection of short stories entitled *Girls At War And Other Stories* within Leech's (1969) and Leech and Short's (1981) theoretical framework.

1.1.1 Achebc on Language

The language question in African literature has been contentious since it was first raised by Obi Wali in an article 'Dead End of African Literature' (See Achcbe 1975:61). In that article, Wali argues that African writers not writing in African languages were pursuing a dead end.

Achebe, on his part, has expressed very strong views on the subject. For example, in response to that article, he raises two crucial questions:

> (i) *Can an African ever learn English well enough to be able to use*
>
> *it effectively in creative writing?*

> (ii) *Can he -ever learn to use it like a native speaker?*

To the first question, Achebe (1975:61) states that it is possible for an African to use English effectively and to the second one, he says that he wishes that that should not be

the case because 'it is neither necessary nor desirable for him to be able to do so' and then adds:

> *The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use.* (Emphasis mine)

In order to justify his use of the English language, Achebe (1975:62) says that the lanuuaue will have to carry the weight of his African experience but:

> *it will have to be a new English still in communication with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings. (Emphasis mine)*

Later, in The Role of the Writer in a New Nation', in Killam (1973:12), Achebe argues that where an African writer finds himself describing situations or modes of thought which have no direct equivalent in the English way of life, he suggests that the writer:

> *...can try and contain what he wants to say within the limits of conventional English or he can try to push back those limits to accommodate his ideas. (Emphasis mine)*

He further contends that 'those who can do the work of extending the frontiers of English so as to accommodate African thought patterns must do it through their mastery of English and not out of innocence'(pj»12). And of those who are masters of English like himself, he says:

... it is important for us to learn the rules of English and afterwards break

them if we wish.   (Emphasis mine)

Much later, in an article by Innes and Lindfors (1978:7), Achebe is quoted as asserting that '....the English language can be made African' while in 'A Conversation with Achebe[1] bv Nwachukwu JOJ in *Commonwealth - Essays and Studies* (1990:117), when asked whether he had noticed among new African writers any significant shift from what he and his generation of African writers had done in terms of stylistic and structural innovations, he starts his answer by saying:

There are many writers who are not so much concerned with creating

*language as I was**...**   (Emphasis mine)*

These views show that Achebe has made a deliberate effort to manipulate the English language in his works, and more specifically in his short stories, in order to be able 'to carry the weight of his African experience.' Achebe (1975:61)

1.1.2   Stylistics and Literary Criticism

Since our study entails the analysis of a literary work, we thought it imperative to distinguish stylistics from literary criticism. This helped us to delimit our scope.

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Warren and Wellek (1949:177) state that stylistics aims at 'contrasting the language system of a literary work of art in its general usage of time' while Turner (1953:241) says that stylistics is 'a study of nuances.' Kitsao (1975), on the other hand, states that stylistics aims at studying style while taking into account all aspects of language. Literary criticism, on the other hand, aims at criticizing literature. Turner (1953:236) says that literary criticism 'is more than the study of style' but does not clarify what he means by this. But Kitsao (1975:20) clarifies this a little. He states that literary criticism 'usually pays attention to literary texts in an attempt to point out some loopholes and suggest amendments.'

Secondly, Kitsao (1975) points out that stylistics describes a text so as to give a general picture of it. Its methods are therefore objective. Literary criticism, on the other hand, is by implication subjective. Coombes (1953:8), writing on literary criticism, quotes DH Lawrence who states that literary criticism:

> '...can be no more than a reasoned account of feeling produced upon
>
> a critic by the book he is criticizing. Criticism can never be a science:
>
> it is ... much too personal and is concerned with values that science
>
> ignores.)

Literary criticism also describes a text only as a starting point and then goes on to evaluate it. This is a view that is held by Hough (1966:3) and Widdowson (1975:5). Hough says that 'its purpose is to elucidate works of literature and to establish as far as may be a true judgement of literary matters' while Widdowson says, 'I assume that the

ultimate purpose of literary criticism is to interpret and evaluate literary writings and that the primary concern of the critic is to explicate the individual message of the writer in terms which make its significance clear to others.' So while the most important value of stvlistics 'is that of revealing the rich complexity of language' (Turner 1953: 242) and pointing 'out how a text has been presented' (Kitsao 1975:22), literary stylistics' prime objective is evaluation. Turner (1953:235) adds that it 'includes an aesthetic or non-scientific element, assuming one style better than another, but is rational in that it discusses whether a chosen style achieves or supports a given end, the purpose of the literary work.' Coombes (1953:9), too, quoting Lewis FR adds that the analysis and judgement of literary art belong to the literary critic.' In addition, Coombes (1953:7) states that literary criticism:

> *gives us a considered response to a writer, a play, a novel, a poem, an essay etc and so help us a fuller enjoyment of the experience in and behind the writing, [reveal] the elements in the writing which contribute to make its particular quality.*

Stylistics is, therefore, descriptive while literary criticism is evaluative.

Thirdly, the differences between these two areas lie in their scope. Kitsao (1975) and Ngara (1982) are in agreement that stylistic analyses take into account all aspects of language while literary criticism usually pays attention to written texts. Warren and Wellek (1949:178) have clarified these aspects of language. They state that in its broadest sense:

> *[Sty lis tics J investigates devices which aim at some expressive*
>
> *end and thus embraces far more than literature or even rhetoric.*
>
> *All the devices for securing emphasis or explicit ness can be*
>
> *classed under stylistics: metaphors... all rhetorical figures,*
>
> *syntactical   patterns.*

In addition to paying attention to written texts, literary criticism 'has a psychological and social dimension as well as an artistic one'. (Sainte-Beuve quoted in Kitsao 1975 :.20)

But it is probably Turner (1953:239) who best summarizes the scope of stylistics. He states:

> *The linguist will try to discover hidden patterns in apparently*
>
> *free choices, building, like other scientists, a scheme of order*
>
> *where the layman sees only chance. He will devise means of*
>
> *describing the subtleties of tone, stress, and rhythm in speech,*
>
> *construct ways of revealing ambiguities in syntax and show*
>
> *hidden parts of association   in   vocabulary.'*

Stylistics is therefore different from literary criticism in terms of aims, goals, approaches and scope as illustrated in the foregcang.

1.1.3. Style and Stylistics

Enkvist (1964) and Kitsao (1975) have given detailed discussions on the concept of style and consequently we have not revisited the discussions. We have, however, for the purpose of this study, used the following terms with the following readings:

Stylistics - the study of literary style or 'the study of the use of language in literature.' Leech (1969:1) as well as Indangasi's (1988:6) ' a linguistic realization of aesthetic effects'.

Style - 'the linguistic characteristics of a particular text' Leech (1969: 12) which 'consists in the choices made from the repertoire of language' where choice is limited to those 'aspects of linguistic choice which concern alternative ways of rendering the same subject matter', Leech and Short (1981: 38 - 39).

1.2 Statement of the problem

It has been claimed by many that Achebe is the master manipulator among Africa's literary writers. Achebe has himself claimed that he is one of the writers concerned with creating language. However, these claims have not , to the best of our knowledge, been investigated with regard to his shorter fiction. This study therefore seeks to investigate the strategies that Achebe's employs to realize this in his short stories in *Girls at War and Other Stories.*

1.3 Hypotheses

We have postulated two hypotheses for this study. These are stated below:

(j)   Writers manipulate language in order to realize aesthetic effects.

(ii)   Deliberate deviation from the standard language enhances the realization of aesthetic effects.

1.4 Objectives

The first objective of this study is to show the strategies that Achebe employs to manipulate the English Language in order to express his African experience in his short stories in *Girls at War and Other Stories.*

The second objective is to explain why he has chosen to use the strategies that he employs.

1.5 Scope and Limitations

All the short stories in *Girls at War and Other Stories* have been subjected to intensive reading and an analysis of each story's phonological, graphological, semantic, syntactic, and ancillary aspects undertaken. But in each of these levels only the most salient aspects have been dealt with in keeping with Davy and Crystal's (1969:60) suggestion that 'they would expect any adequately descriptive grammar to incorporate, as part of its rules, all stylistically important information.' More specifically, that we should be concerned not

•with everything that goes on in the text but only with what can be shown to be of stylistic importance.'

At the semantic level we have dealt with aspects that are 'analyzable at the linguistic level', as Ngara (1982: 17) would put it. Consequently, we have analyzed Achebe's use of fmurative language, the shifts in the meaning of lexical items and the use of proverbs. A semantic shift is exemplified by Achebe's use of a word like 'people' in 'The Madman'. In that story, when Nwibe runs to the market place naked, someone says:

'Doesn't he have *people*, I wonder.' (p.7J *(Emphasis mine)*

The lexical item, "people", has been broadened to include kinsmen

At the graphological and phonological levels, we have confined ourselves to the author's use of ellipsis, space, as well as the creation of rhythmic effects in the stories.

Lexical aspects such as the use of small or big words and the use of indigenous words for example *Amalile (p25), osu (p36)* and *nwifulu (p.37)* have been examined at the syntactic level. In addition, we have examined the types of sentences used and also discussed the cohesive devices used in the short stories. As Warren and Wellek (1949: 180) state, we have also observed 'the deviations and distortions from normal usage, and [tried] to discover their aesthetic purpose.' Whenever purely literary matters like themes and characterization have been raised, that has been determined on the basis of the inseparability of form and content.

As far as ancillary branches are concerned, we have only delved into the author's use of dialect as well as register.

1.6 Justification of the study

We have undertaken to study short stories because there is need to do so. Mwanzi (1995:4, 13) has observed that '...critics have tended to ignore the short story in favour of the novel.' Later, she adds, 'on the short story in Africa, critical works are scanty.' This study is therefore necessary as it contributes towards the filling up of the lacuna referred to by Mwanzi.

Secondly, although there are many books on the criticism of literary works, many tend to deal with aspects of theme, characterization, plot as well as 'paralinguistic affective devices' rather than 'linguistic features proper' as Ngara (1982) would have it. This study therefore serves as a contribution in that end.

Achebe's work has been chosen because, in spite of being one of Africa's finest prose writers, there have been few studies on his use of language from a purely linguistic point. We therefore think that this study is justified. Also, although some critics like Garreth Griffiths in 'Language and Action in the novels of Chinua Achebe', Innes, in 'Language, Poetry and Doctrine in *Things Fall Apart*" and Felicity Riddy in 'Language as a Theme in *No Longer at Ease,* . [see Innes and Lindfors (1978)] have discussed Achebe's language, this study, being purely linguistic in approach will be a contribution in this area.   v

Studies in the area of applied linguistics as opposed to studies in theoretical linguistics do not seem to have generated much interest. This study, therefore, intends to redress this imbalance as well as stimulate interest in this area of study.

Finally, Carroll (1980) and Githae-Mugo (1978) have undertaken a study on *Girls at War and Other Stories* but only dealt with plot and thematic aspects of the short stories. Our purely linguistic approach to the study of these short stories will be an addition to the scholarly work already undertaken by them and is hence justified.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

We have used the theoretical framework propounded by Leech (1969) and Leech and Short (1981) in the analysis of the short stories as we have found it suitable. The framework derives from both linguistics and literature and places a strong emphasis on linguistic aspects.

The framework proposes four levels from which style could be analyzed. These levels are realization, form, semantics and ancillary branches.

1.7.1 The Level of Realization

This level deals with 'how to pronounce and write forms of the language,'(Leech 1969:39) i.e. phonology and graphology respectively. Graphology is made more explicit in Leech and Short (1981:131) The authors state:

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> *Graphological variation is a relatively minor and superficial part of style... concerning such matters as spelling, capitalization, hyphenation, italicization and paragraphing.*

Phonology, on the other hand, deals with how forms are realized and therefore entails an analysis of phonological aspects such as the use of alliteration, rhythm, stress, tone, and assonance e.t.c. In Leech's (1969:37, 39) view, implicit phonology is determined by choices of words and structures at the syntactic level. Leech sees phonology and graphology as being in an 'either - or relationship' because 'English graphology imitates phonology.'

1.7.2   The Level of Form

This level deals with the study of vocabulary in a language and 'how items of the vocabulary are to be used in constructing sentences,' Leech (1969:37) This is the syntactic level as it comprises both the lexicon and structure.

At this level of analysis, the writer's choice of vocabulary as well as syntactic structures used has been undertaken. More specifically, as far as the lexicon is concerned, the investigation has centered on neologism and indigenous words. The analysis of structure has entailed an analysis of the sentences in terms of their typology. In addition, the structure of the Noun Phrase in some of the stories has been examined.

Leech (1969:39) observes that the lexicon and grammar are in a 'both - and relationship' since sentences are made up of words.

1.7.3   The Semantic Level

At this level the focus is on the realization of meaning in a work. This could be either at the cognitive or denotative level. Indangasi (1988:94) sheds more light on this by identifying different types of semantic deviation namely; semantic redundancy, semantic absurdity and semantic ambiguity. Under semantic redundancy, he identifies devices such as pleonasm, tautology and periphrasis. The use of oxymoron and paradox are identified as aspects of semantic absurdity. The pun is given as an example of semantic ambiguity.

1.7.4   Ancillary Branches

This level deals with three main areas. These are dialectology, register study and historical linguistics.

Leech (1969:41) defines dialectology as the 'study of dialect,' and says that 'register study is concerned with variations according to the function of language within society' while 'historical linguistics charts the development of language through time.' We shall examine Achebe's use of Pidgin English in our analysis of dialectology. For example, we find the following conversation in "Vengeful Creditor" :

'My brodder come tell me. '

When did your brother come?'

'Yesterday for evenings-time. '
<

Why didn 't you bring him to see me?'

7 no no say Madame go wan see am. ' (p. 52).

Our register study, on the other hand, has entailed an examination of the various registers employed in the stories such as military register and romantic register among others.

1.8 Literature Review

We have reviewed both published and unpublished works. Our review has taken three dimensions. First, we have reviewed works on the subject of stylistics in general then works on matters pertaining to style and finally some relevant publications on Achebe's works.

Indangasi (1988) has written a basically pedagogic text in which he gives an overview of the historical evolution of stylistics and then goes on to elaborate how style is manipulated at the phonological, syntactic and semantic levels. He then winds up his exposition by surveying properties of the various literary genres namely, prose, poetry and drama. The text concludes with an examination of both linguistic and paralinguistic cohesive strategies used in texts such as anaphora, cataphora, reference, symbolism as well as point of view.

Turner (1973) discusses the various ways through which language can be manipulated as well as the relationship between language, style and situation, the functions of language as well as the uses of styfistics. In addition he focuses attention on the specific areas of language that can be manipulated towards the creation of feeling and impressions that a writer wishes tg create. Turner identifies these areas as syntax, vocabulary, and the

sounds of language, context as well as register. The text, *Stylistics,* provides an incisive discussion on the various ways of manipulating language. For example, at the level of syntax, Turner discusses the uses of the periodic sentence, the loose sentence, sentence complexity and sentence length among others. His discussion goes further to minute syntactic details such as the manipulation of the nominal group, the verbal group and adjective sequences. At the level of sounds of language, Turner discusses the possibilities available to a writer. Here he discusses such issues as tone, intonation, rhyme, rhythm etc.

Burton (1973) illustrates the various approaches to criticism by discussing issues such as tone and intention, diction, imagery and rhythm. His approach to rhythm is of particular interest to us since Burton specifically discusses prose rhythms. In addition, Burton discusses the function and elements of style. *The Criticism of Prose* is designed for pedagogic reasons and consequently worked examples and practice passages are included at each stage of the exposition.

Chapman (1973) examines how literature and linguistics illuminate each other. He shows that linguistic analysis can make a precise and stimulating contribution to literary criticism. For him, literary language is a distinctive style. Chapman's text could be divided into two main areas, one dealing with the general areas of linguistics and literature like the relationship between literature and stylistics, language, literature and history and the more specific one dealing with issues such as syntax, rhythm, metre and words and meanings. Unlike the other authors, Chapman's illustrations are based on

verse. This has, however, not inhibited our study as points made can equally be applied to prose works.

Kitsao (1975) in his thesis - *A Stylistic Approach Adopted for the Study of Swahili Prose Texts* discusses the various opinions raised on the notion of style and then after examining a number of definitions he provides a working definition of style. He then examines the approaches that could be utilized in the analysis of Swahili texts after giving a survey of what Swahili scholars say. Kitsao analyzes extracts from newspapers, texts, poems, plays, and novels in order to exemplify this using Crystal and Davy's (1969) approach. In the last part of the thesis, Kitsao compares two prominent Swahili prose writers; Shaaban Robert and Kezilahabi in their two works , *Wasifu wa Siti Rinti Saad* and *Rosa Mistika* respectively. His thesis, therefore, provides a framework within which Swahili works of art could be analyzed. In his study, Kitsao sheds light on some of the approaches that will be used in our analysis of Achebe's short stories, for example the exploitation of grammar, lexis and semantics. One of the approaches he proposes for the analysis of Swahili works is Leech's (1969) framework of analysis at the levels of form, realization, semantics and ancillary branches.

Mwanzi (1995:) examines the stylistic features of Kenyan short stories written by Ngugi, Kibera and Ogot but limits her scope to 'dialogue, irony, suspense, symbolism and point of view.' (P.6-7) Her study is different from ours in two respects. In the first place, she uses a conceptual framework. In her words, 'a comprehensive approach to literary criticism.' (p.9) and so she employs 'pyscho-analytical criticism' and to a limited degree,

list criticism.'(p.9) Secondly, she limits herself to a definition of style that is from ours. She adopts Lucas' definition of style quoted below:

Style is simply the effective use of language, especially in prose, whether to make statements or to arouse emotions. It involves first of all, the power to put facts with clarity and brevity; and with as much grace and interest as the subject permits. (P. 5)

Of interest to our study will be her analysis of irony, which is a dominant feature of style in Achebe's short stories.

Wasamba (1997) examines the use of language in Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye's fiction. He investigates how the author's use of 'lexical and syntactic preferences together with symbolism, relate to and enhance character, theme and meaning in his selected texts.'(p.4) Of particular interest in Wasamba's work will be his chapter 'Language Use and Syntactic Preferences.' In this chapter Wasamba sheds light on the methods of analysis of syntactic and lexical aspects of the novels selected in his study. For example he identifies the effects of the short sentence as the creation of speed, reflection of a character's limited knowledge of English, to create humour e.t.c, and the use of jerky sentences to create confusion, happiness e.t.c. (p.54.) In addition, Wasamba identifies a number of sentence types and explores their use in the fiction he sets out to analyze. This, again, has been useful in our analysis of syntactic aspects of Achcbe's short stories.

Mumia (1999) in *Stylistic Tension Between Extension and Intension of Meaning in Omondi Mak Oloo's Prose Texts,* 'seeks to make evident that the paradoxical relationship between extensional and intensional meanings in the [chosen] literary texts is not disruptive but constructive of textual tension.' (p.4) Mumia uses New Criticism and Stylistics as his conceptual framework. Consequently, he scrutinizes   stylistic paradoxes, symbolism, rhythm, irony, and narrative strategies....' (p.l) with the view to finding out whether they 'contribute towards textual harmony.' (p.l) As with Mwanzi's study. Mumia's analysis of irony enhanced our analysis of the same feature in Achebe's work. It also shed light on our analysis of rhythm in the short stories.

Naumann's article ^The Semantic Structure of Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of The Savannah '* which appears in *Commonwealth Essays and Studies (1990)* is another work that is of relevance to our study as it deals with semantic aspects of Achebe's latest novel. The work provides an insight into Achebe's semantics by making certain general statements about Achebe's works in general. For example, he argues that Achebe's semantic structures in his works show the inflexible heroes'... double failure against foreign powers and flexible African forces adding that 'the opposition between the flexible and inflexible forces can be 'explained in terms of the Igbo opposition between Sky and Earth.... King and masqueraders.[1] (p.l 12) This article although dealing with what Ngara (1982) calls 'para-linguistic affective devices' widened our perception of semantic aspects in Achebe's works.

Bernth Lindfors in *African Literature Today* discusses the role of proverbs in Achebe's four novels narfrely; *Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease, A Man of the People* and

Arrow of God. Lindfors' study is based on the premise that 'Achebe is a skilful stylist [who] achieves an appropriate language for each of his novels largely through the use of proverbs' and that by studying his proverbs 'we are able to interpret his novels' and we hasten to add, *his short stories.*

I indfors(1978:6) summarizes the function of proverbs in Achebe's works thus:

> *Indeed Achebe's proverbs can serve as keys to an understanding of his novels because he uses them not merely to add touches of local colour but to sound and reiterate themes, sharpen characterization, to clarify conflict, and to focus on the values of the society he is portraying.'*

Since ihe use of proverbs is integral in Achebe's works, and since proverbs enhance meaning in a text, Lindfors' analysis of proverbs has served as a good starting point for our understanding of the same in the short stories.

Carroll (1980) Githae-Mugo (1978) are the only scholars we came across having analyzed the stories in *Girls at War and Other Stories.* Carroll analyzes these stories under three categories based on the story's thematic concerns. He, however, concentrates his discussions on plot and, very superficially on theme. Micere-Mugo, on the other hand, discusses some of the stories from a purely thematic point of view. The stories that Micere- Mugo discusses are "The Voter", "Vengeful Creditor" and "Girls at War". Our approach to the short stories is purely linguistic unlike Carroll's and Githae-Mugo's.

1.9 **Methodology**

Our research was library based. It entailed a review of relevant secondary data. Secondly, the stories were intensively read before subjecting them to a rigorous analysis.

CHAPTER TWO

GRAPHOLOGICAL AND PHONOLOGICAL FEATURES OF STYLE

2.1 Graphological Features

The graphological features that we intend to discuss in this section are the use of italics and the use of space.

2.1.1 The Use of Italics

Achebe utilizes italics for a number of reasons. They are used to mark emphasis, to reflect foreign (to English) concepts or cultural beliefs as well as to create humour.

The use of italics for emphatic reasons is illustrated in several stories. In 'The Voter", while talking about Rufus' role in the political affairs of the Umofia village, the narrator says that they did not need a lot of his guidance in those difficult political times for other than, one of their own sons being a Minister of Culture in the outgoing government and certainly the incoming one, the village already belonged *en masse* (p. 11) to the People's Alliance Party (PAP). By using italics for *en masse* Achebe, in addition to introducing a different register, emphasizes the great numbers with which the people of Umuofia had joined the People's Alliance Party.   In the same story, during the campaigns, when Rufus is approached by Chief Honourable Marcus Ibe's opponent's chief campaigner and bribed to vote for his masters' opponent, he is given the *iyi* charm to bind him. The *iyi* is foregrounded graphologically by the use of italics so as to underscore its potency. It also emphasizes its alien origin to English.   The emphasis of its potency is further made explicit in the campaigner's overt threat when he says:

> *The iyi comes from mbanta.   You know*
>
> *what that means.   Swear that you will vote for Maduka.*
>
> *If you fail to do so, this iyi take note. (p. 16)*
>
> *(Emphasis   mine)*

In "Akueke'\ we are told that Akueke's grandfather used to call her *Mother* because he was very fond of her for taking after his own mother, and for 'being the older woman returned in the cycle of life.' (p.30) The italics used here underscore the extent of the old man's love for his granddaughter.

Italics are, in some cases, used for an ironic reason. In "Vengeful Creditor", when Mrs. Emenike tells Martha, Veronica's mother, that her daughter (Veronica) had attempted to kill her baby by giving it red ink 'to drink' (p.67), [L]*to drink*' is italicized to show its ironic use in the context. Instead of being life sustaining, it is meant to be life depriving. A similar use is made of in "Dead Men's Path". Upon Obi's appointment as the headmaster of Ndume Central School, Obi asks his wife:

> *'We shall make a good job of it, shan t we? '...(p. 70)*

and his wife replies that they would do their best and then she adds:

> *'We shall have such beautiful gardens and everything will be just modern and delightful... '(p. 70) (Emphasis mine)*

The word *modern*, in italics, is ironically used for while they actually go on to make the beautiful gardens, the gardens are destroyed one night following a dispute with the village priest of *Ani.* The irony is made even more poignant when, the morning after, the

white supervisor they so wanted to impress comes to 'inspect the school and [writes] a

 asty report on the state of the premises.'(p.74)

Grapholoaical highlighting of mood is found in "Sugar Baby". In that story, Achebe uses

italics to stress Cletus' angry mood. This is evident when Mercy tries to steal Cletus'

sugar. The author says:

> *'Cletus dropped the kettle of hot water*
> *he was bringing in and pounced on her.*
> *That I saw clearly, ' (p. 100) (Emphasis mine)*

Later, when Cletus calls Mercy a 'shameless grabber just like all the rest of them' (p. 101)

and Mike reminds him that he, Cletus, did not find that out until, he (Mike) took him a

packet of sugar, Cletus scowls at him:

> *'We know you brought it, Mike. You 've*
> *told us already. But that's not the point, '*
> *(p. 100) (Emphasis mine)*

In these two cases, the words 'that' and 'you' are italicized to emphasize Cletus' angry

mood.

Italics are also used for phrases and sentences. In "Marriage is a Private Affair', Nene's

and Nnameka's father's letters are ,gll written in italics. This foregrounds the letters.

Given that those letters contain the main conflicts in the story, they too help to highlight

them ar^ how they are resolved. At a different level, given that they come at regular intervals, the infusion of the letters enhances the rhythmic qualities of the story. We shall, however, revisit this point later.

In "Civil Peace", we find another case of italics used in longer extracts. In the story, one night after the end of the civil war, Jonathan Iwegbu's family is invaded by rather 'civil' thieves. These thieves knock on his door and identify themselves as thieves.

'Na tief-man and him People... (p.86)

Iwegbu's wife and children then raise an alarm. The loudness of the alarm is graphologically captured in italics.

'Police -o! thieves -o! Neighbours -o! Police-o!
we are lost! We are dead! Neighbours,
are you asleep? Wake up! Police-o! (p. 86)

The thieves, not scared by this scream, rather humorously offer to help Iwegbu's family get help by screaming out even louder. Again, the loudness of their scream is graphologically marked by the use of italics.

We asserted, at the beginning of our discussion, that Achebe uses italics to indicate foreign - to English concepts. The evidence for this is found in his italicized *iyi* in "The Voter". Other than stressing the potency of the charm, the term expresses a concept that

•s alien to the English culture. Other words used for similar reasons are *'Amalile'* (p.26),

afa'> (P-31)'''obi*∗ (p,33)' '^"'(P-36)' *'nwifulu'* (p.37) and *'AnV* (p.73).

jn "Marriage is a Private Affair", when Nnaemeka fails to heed to his father's wishes, Madubogwu, an elder, suggests to Nnaemeka's father to give Nnaemeka *'Amalile'*, "the same that women apply with success to recapture their husbands' straying affection' (p.25) since he considers the boy's mind diseased'. *'Amalile'* is a charm which lacks an appropriate English equivalent. *'Nwifulu* defined as [4]a talking calabash' also lacks an English equivalent.

In some instances italics are used for lack of an equivalent word in English with the same depth of semantic field. This is the case with Achebe's use of *'osu'* and *'obi* An *'osu'* is said to be an outcast but not of the same sense with the English sense of outcast-'person driven out of a group or by society' (Hawkins, J.M. 1981: 353). The unique feature about Achebe's meaning of outcast as it pertains to *'osu'* is that a person can make himself an outcast. *'Obi'* on the other hand, is a house but not with exactly the same reading as the English lexeme 'house' defined as [k]a building for people to live in.' (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English 1978: 508).

'AJa and 'ani' are used in reference to oracles and therefore show the religious beliefs of the communities depicted by Achebe in the story.
Hie only instance when italics have been used for the creation of humour is in "Civil Peace". In the story, we are told thaf people having turned in 'rebel money', the Treasury

aid them an ex-gratia award. However, many of the beneficiaries called it *egg-rasher* 'since fe^w could manage its proper name,' (p.85). This phonological deviation, araphologically highlighted by the use of italics, is a source of humour.

2.1.2 Use of Space

Space is used in a number of stories. When used, it either marks transition of time or a shift in the focus of the action.

In "The Madman", empty space segments the story into episodic parts. The story's first part describes the madman's preoccupation after which space marks a break. In the section that follows the author moves on to give us another different episode. The episode based on the on goings in Nwibe's compound one morning show some of the tensions and conflicts in Nwibe's family. Nwibe settles them before setting out for the market. After this, there is another empty space. This is followed by another episode in which we find Nwibe taking a bath at a shallow stream. As the madman watches him he (the madman) remembers the pain attended upon him by men at the Afo market, remembers the men who descended on him from the lorry and beat him up, and also remembers the children who stoned him and attributes all those actions to Nwibe and then decides to take his clothes. Nwibe then follows the madman all the way to the market trying to retrieve his clothes. After this episode, space again marks a break. This is in turn followed by another episode in which Nwibe is escorted home by his relations and village mates. The break that comes after this is followed by yet another episode which focuses on the medicine man's attempt to concoct a cure for Nwibe.

Space again marks the break that follows. In the last episode, the author presents Nwibe's ftermath and his failed attempt to join the ozo men.

Space in the story is therefore used to mark a shift in the focus of the action and/or the episodic structure of the story. In fact, structurally using space as a break, the story could be analyzed as follows:

I   Focus on the madman.

II   Focus on Nwibe.

III   Focus on Nwibe and the madman.

IV   Focus on the action in the market place.

V   Focus on the medicine man.

VI   Focus on the ozo men.

Spacc is also used to mark transition of time. This function is overtly made use of in "Marriage is a Private Affair" by the use of transitional expressions after each break. For example, the first episode in the story ends with a letter after which the episode that follows begins with:

> *'On the second evening of his return from Lagos....' (p. 22) (Emphasis mine)*

In the episode, we get Nna£maka's conflict with his father as well as the solutions suggested by the elders to Nnaemaka's father. The break that follows shifts the action six months later. The following part begins:

'Six months later. .. '(P. 25)

In "Death Men's path", space also indicates the passage of time. The only space used in the story is followed by the expression:

'Three days later ... '(P. 73)

2.1.3 Use of Ellipsis (. . . . . .)

Achebe preponderantly uses ellipsis in his short stories. Ordinarily, ellipsis is used to mark pause, thought or a point of inteijection in a discourse situation. These ordinary uses of ellipsis will not be our concern. Instead, we shall focus on his creative use of this feature.

Achebe uses ellipsis to fill up a missing part of a conversation of a participating member. This is more evident in "Uncle Ben's Choice". When, for example, Uncle Ben describes his youthful exploits, the inteijection or responses from his audience are suggested through the use of ellipsis. In one instance he says:

> *'What was I saying? . . . . .Yes, I drank a bottle of white horse and put*
> *one roasted chicken on top of it,, ,,. Drunk? It   is not my dictionary'*
> *(P. 11) (Emphasis mine)*

In the first case of ellipsis above, the 'Yes', that follows it suggests that he has been reminded by his audience what he has been saying. The next ellipsis is followed by Uncle Ben/s question, 'Drunk?[1]. This suggests th$ apparent exclamation by his audience that he must

aot drunk after drinking a whole bottle of whisky. Later, when he tells his audience

₂ his house used to be, he asks them whether they know where G.B. Olivant is:

> *'You know where G. O. Olivant is today?*
> *Yes overlooking the river Niger.' (P 78)*

Asain, when he tells his audience about Dr J.M. Stuart-Young who took Mani Wota the day

he rejected her, he asks:

> *You have heard of him?.... Oh yes....' (P. 81)*

The elliptical elements, in both these instances, are used to indicate the responses of the

audience.

"The Voter" presents another unusual use of the ellipsis. This time it is used to substitute

characters' actions. In the story, the elders have been given four shillings each as bribes so

that they can vote Marcus back to parliament. However, they think that the amount is not

sufficient. So they do not take it straight away. On noticing this, Rufus cleverly feigns

defiance and dares them to vote for their enemy if they wished. This elicits an attempt by

the elders to calm him; each with a suitable speech. Achebe then says:

> *'By the time the last man had spoken it was possible, without*
> *great loss of dignity to pick up the things from the floor.... '(P*
> *15).*

In substituting the missing action or words of the character, ellipsis also serves as a cohesive

device.

•j 2 phonological Aspects

In this section we examine how the author creates and utilizes sound effects.

2j.l Rhythmic Effects

I \ Richards (Reprint-1993:103), states that 'rhythm and its specialized form, meter, depend upon repetition and expectancy. Equally where what is expected recurs and where it fails, all rhythmical and metrical effects spring from anticipation'. Burton (1973: 68), on the other hand, clarifies that the main element of prose rhythms are syntactical or structural elements, stress elements and pitch elements. It is with these concepts in mind that we analyze rhythm in the stories.

Achebe has exploited both structural elements as well as stress elements in order to realize rhythm in his stories. In "The Madman", rhythm is achieved through the author's use of antithetical structures. The quotation below illustrates this:

> *He was drawn to the market and straight roads. Not any neighbouring market where a handful of garrulous women might gather as sunset to gossip and buy ogili for the evening's soap, but a large, engulfing bazaar beckoning people familiar and strange from far and near,. And not any dusty, old footpaths beginning in this village, and ending in that stream, but broad, black mysterious highways without beginning or end (p. I)*

The antithetical elements here create a musical effect through the back and forth shift, from
ₐ positive attribute, on the one hand, to a negative attribute on the other. This regularity, and
the created   sense of anticipation of the parallel structure creates a rhythmic effect.
Indangasi (1988:68), noticing this says that this creates a pattern with a *'Not' this but that*
formula'.

Later in the same story, when the madman comes across Nwibe taking a bath at a shallow
stream, Achebe manipulates both the short and long sentences to achieve rhythm.   He
constantly shifts from the short sentences then to the long one and back to the short one
again. Structurally these sentences are of the form: short, long; long, short; long etc. the
sentence reads as follows:

> *The madman watched him for quite a while. Each time he*
> *bent down to carry water is cupped hands from the shallow*
> *stream to his head and body the madman smiled at his*
> *parted behind.   And then he remembered. This was the*
> *same hefty man who brought three others like him and*
> *whipped me out of my hut in the Afo Market. He nodded to*
> *himself.   And he remembered again: this was the same*
> *vagabond who descended on me from the lorry in the*
> *middle of the highway.   He nodded once more.   And then*
> *he remembered yet again: this was the same fellow who set*
> *his children to throw stones at me and make remarks about*
> *their mother's buttocks, not mine.,   then he laughed, (p. 5-*
> *6)*

. I^e two examples quoted above, rhythm is reinforced by repetition, at both structural and

lexical levels. In the first quotation above, identical Noun Phrases are repeated. The Noun

phrases are identical since they are both premodified and postmodified. In addition, we

have what Indangasi (1988) calls a formula i.e. *'Not only.... but....'* which is repeated twice.

In the second quotation, the repetition of the phrases 'he remembered' and 'he nodded' at

regular intervals enhances the musicality of the passage.

In "Civil Peace", Achebe's repeated use of the expression 'Nothing puzzles God' (p. 33) or

its variant creates a refrain of sorts and hence adds to the rhythmic quality of the story. The

expression recurs four times in the story.

Other than creating rhythm through the manipulation of structural elements, Achebe also

exploits stress elements. For example, In "Uncle Ben's Choice", while bragging to his

audience about his job and salary as a clerk, Uncle Ben says:

> *'My salary was <u>two pounds ten.</u> You may laugh but*
> <u>*two pounds ten*</u> *in those days is like forty pounds today*
> *(p. 75) (Emphasis mine).*

And then adds:

> My father used to say that the cure for drink is to say no.
> <u>When I want to drink I drink, when I want to stop I stop,</u> (p.77)

Here, the three successive stressed monosyllabic words 'two pounds ten', which are repeated

break the normal iambic rhythm of English speech. The rhythm is forceful stands out since

hard voiceless stops [t] and [p] and the [tj and [d] are repeated in the first and second

instance respectively. Elsewhere, this repetition of consonants creates alliteration, which in turn adds to the rhythmic quality of the sentences.   The alliteration of the voiced bilabial stop in:

> *'... and ending in that stream hut broad, black mysterious*
> *highways...' (p. 1) (Emphasis mine)*

has a musical quality about it.   Similarly, when, in the same story Nwibe settles a quarrel between his wives by asking whether one crazy woman was not enough in his compound, Udenkwo' answers:

> *Ihe great judge has spoken in a sneering sing-song... (P. 5) (Emphasis mine)*

But other than being used to create rhythm, the alliterated voiced bilabial stops and voiceless alveolar fricatives used above emphasize the mystery about roads as well as Udenkwo's sarcastic tone respectively.

In "Uncle Ben's Choice", Achebe further creates rhythm through a more subtle manipulation.   It can be argued that through the constant digressions in Uncle Ben's narration, rhythm is created as we move into and out of the main story. Uncle Ben sets out to tell his audience the story of his encounter with Mami Wota but before doing that he digresses and narrates other stories; for example, about the women of Umuru, about Margaret, about his drinking habits and about the German doctor. So, as the story unfolds, we are led into and out of the story. The regularity with which this occurs can be considered rhythmic.   .^

fc similar argument could be raised with regard to "Marriage is a Private Affair". Although this matter was mentioned earlier, we would like to emphasize that the shift from narration then back to the letter and yet again to narration could also be considered rhythmic.

In two cases, Achebe exploits phonological aspects for the creation of humour and also to reflect the phonological disparity between the Ibo and Calabars. When, in "Marriage is a Private Affair", Nnaemeka is asked by his father whose daughter he has married he answers:

> 'She is Nene Atung', To this the old man asks,
> 'Didyou say **Neneataga**, what does that mean?
> (p. 23) (Emphasis mine)

Here Achebe chooses to play on the sounds in the names to create humour. The fact that he cannot pronounce the name correctly also emphasizes the linguistic differences between them (Ibos) and Calabars. In "The Voter", a similar play on the sounds of words is exploited. We are told that before the election, as Marcus waited in his car, an enlightened villager went up to the car and shook hands with him saying in advance, 'Congrats' (p. 18). This action is soon followed by other admirers who shake his hand saying *'corngrass* (p. 18) Here again, Achebe exploits the sounds for the creation of both humour and a reflection of the low level of education of the villagers.

In this chapter we have examined how Achebe has manipulated both graphological and phonological aspects. We have-also seen how he has expanded possibilities of the English language available to an ordinary user. Now, in the next chapter we shall discuss how Achebe manipulates the syntactic or structural elements in the short stories.

CHAPTER THREE

SYNTACTIC ASPECTS OF STYLE

3.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, we examined how Achebe manipulates graphological and phonological aspects of language in the short stories. In this chapter, we are going pay attention to the syntactic aspects. Our emphasis will, however, be on significant syntactic aspects only.

3.2 The Lexicon

One of the things that mark Achebe's lexicon is his use of indigenous words in the short stories. Many of these words are graphologically highlighted by the use of italics while others are not. We have already mentioned some of those italicized words such as *Amalile, osu, nwifulu* and *iyi.* Those not highlighted include *waw waw* in Uncle Ben's expression 'waw waw women', *craw craw* as in 'Abigail was now full of craw craw' among others. The meaning of these words is given either in the contexts or through elaboration. The meaning of these expressions will be discussed in the next chapter.

There are also longer stretches of these indigenous expressions. In "Chike's School Day's", we find lines like:

Onye nkuzi ewelu itali piagiibusie umuaka (p. 38)

And

Siza bu eze Rome

Onye nachi enu uwa dum. (p. 38)

These expressions give the stories a local flavour. In addition,they depict the traditional background of some of the characters in the stories. Another reason that may explain why Achebe uses these words and expressions is given by Arlotto (1972:85) who asserts that words are borrowed ' because they express an attitude or feeling not adequately expressed in any native words', the native words here being English as it is the literary standard that Achebe chooses to use.

Another distinguishing marker of Achebe's lexicon is his use of ordinary English words or what Indangasi (1988) calls 'small words' as opposed to 'big words'. These words make the reading of his stories easy. One unusual word that, however, stands out in the entire collection is *unhandsome* used in "Dead Men's Path". This word marks Achebe's ingenuity.

3.3 Sentence Types and Structures

3.3.1 Antithetical Structures

In our discussion of graphological effects, we mentioned that the author uses antithetical structures to create rhythm. We sjiall, in the following section, revisit some of the sentences in order to demonstrate how he manipulates them syntactically.

In "The Madman", the first three sentences provide us with the most striking example of antithetical structures:

> *He was drawn to markets and straight roads. Not any tiny neighbourhood market where a handful of garrulous women might gather at sunset to gossip and buy ogili for the evening's soup, but a huge, engulfing bazaar beckoning people familiar and strange from far and near. And not any dusty, old footpath beginning from this village, and ending in that stream, but broad, black mysterious highways without beginning or end.* *(p.l)*

Other than being used for a rhythmic function, these sentences expose the fact that the madman is a product of the apparent contradictions found in modern life. This is structurally enhanced in the contrasts found within the sentences for example **"...not** a tiny market **but** a large bazaar, **not** a dusty footpath **but** a broad black mysterious road." etc.

Lavin (1966: 38) argues that the structure of sentences can include whole sequences of sentences. So, in keeping with this, we find that at a much wider level, Achebe still exploits antithetical structures in the sentences that begin with 'But[?] ...

In "Marriage is a Private Affair", this is more evident. After telling his father that Nene Atang, a girl frojn Calabar, was the only girl he could marry, the author says:

> *This was a very harsh reply and Nnaemeka*
>
> *expected the storm to burst. But it did not. (p. 23)*

A day later, we are told that Nnaemeka's father tried to dissuade his son, 'but the young man's heart was hardened, and his father eventually gave him up as lost', (p. 24)

With regard to Nnaeneka's wife, it is said that the prejudice against her was not confined to the little village only. In Lagos it is said to have showed itself in a different way:

> *Their women, when they met at their village meeting,*
>
> *were not hostile to Nene. Rather, they paid her such*
>
> *excessive deference as to make her feel she was not*
>
> *one of them. But as time went on, Nene gradually*
>
> *broke through and even began to make friends among*
>
> *them. (p. 2 6)*

When the story of the couple's happiness reaches the village, it is said:

> *But his father was one of the few people in the village*
> *who knew nothing about this \ (p.27)*

Considered at a wider level, we still see the antithetical structures akin to the formulaic *not this. but...* In "The Madman", thi$ syntactic structure has been used to underscore the theme of cultunfl conflict that is developed in the story.

In "Akueke", we still find structurally similar sentences. At the beginning of the story, we are told:

> Akueke had been her mother's youngest child and only daughter. There
> were six brothers and their father had died when she was still a little girl
> But he had been a man of substance so that even after his death, his family
> did not know real want, especially as some of his sons already planted
> their own farms, (p. 29)

Here the emphasis is that in spite of the death of Akueke's father, the family did not suffer trom deprivation.

Akueke's rejection of her suitors is also emphasized structurally through an antithetical structure. We are told:

> From one market to another some man brought
> palm-wine to her brothers. But Akueke rejected them all. (p. 3 J)

Finally, that Akueke cannot be cured of her disease is also emphasized structurally when we are told:

> Medicine men were brought in from far and wide to minister
> to her. Bui all their herbs and roots had no effect, (p. 31)

Commenting on the people   that wanted to enjoy themselves, in spite of the turmoil in "Girls at War", the author notes:

> *It was a tight, blockaded and desperate world but nonetheless a world - with some goodness and some badness and heroism which, however, happened most times far, far below the eye level of the people in the story - in and out - of the way refugee camps, in the damp fatter, …'* ***(p. 106)***

The antithetical structure here emphasizes the turmoil and confusion of war. This pattern is used for similar reasons in "Civil Peace" and "Chike's School Days."

3.3.2-Parallel Structures

Lavin, L (1966:38) says that 'sentence elements are said to be parallel when they have similar form'. The best example of this type of sentences is in "The Madman". As Nwibe takes a bath, the madman sees him and then the author says:

> *The madman watched him for quite a while Each time*
>
> *he bent down to carry water in cupped hands from*
>
> *the shallow stream at his parted behind. And then he*
>
> *remembered. This was the same hefty man who brought*
>
> *three others like him and whipped me out of my hut in the*
>
> *Afo market, he nodded to himself. And he remembered*
>
> *again. This was the same vagabond who descended on*
>
> *through and even begun to make friends among them (p. 26).*

The similarity of form here is both at the level of sentence length as well as structure. There is a conscious shift from long to short sentences. Secondly, the forms of the shorter sentences are strikingly similar. For example:

And he   remembered.

Fie nodded to himself.

And he   remembered again:...

He nodded once   more.

And he   remembered yet   again:...

Then he laughed.

The author uses these parallel sentences for emphasis. He emphasizes the madman's recollection of the painful incidents, which give him a sense of thrill to revenge. This is why the last sentence states simply but aptly, "Then he laughed." Indeed. Lavin (1966:85) states clearly that 'parallelism is a means of forceful emphasis'.

3.3.3   Loose Sentence Structure

This is one of Achebe's most prominent syntactic techniques, which, as Leech and Short (1981:230) put it, 'is characteristic of a literacy style which aims at natural simplicity and directness, rather than rhetorical effect'.   Such sentences, Leech and Short (1981:228) assert, have 'structures in which trailing constituents predominate over anticipatory constituents'   shall highlight a number of these sentences from several stories.

In "The Voter", before suggesting that villagers wanted to be bribed before voting for IVlarcus in the forthcoming general elections, the author prepares the reader for this by usinu a loose sentence:

> 'The villagers had had Jive years in which to see how quickly
> and plentifully politics brought wealth chieftaincy titles, doctorate
> degrees and other honours some of which, like the last, had still to be
> explained satisfactorily to them; for in their naivete they still expected
> a doctor to be able to heal the sick (p. 12).

The trailing constituents of these sentences seem to build up the idea of many benefits that villagers expected to reap by electing Marcus. However, since in the long run, it is only Marcus they see enjoying these benefits, they realize that 'they had underrated the power of the ballot paper and should not do so again' , (p. 13) hence their desire not to give Marcus free votes this time round. The loose sentence here therefore prepares the reader for the villager's change of attitude towards voting.

Later, when Rufus is bribed by his enemy's counterpart, his fear is aptly captured in a loose paratactic structure. After the five pounds were placed on the floor before him, we are told, 'Roof got up from his chair, went to the outside door, closed it carefully and returned to his chair'. (p. 16)

In *'The Sacrificial Egg" , we are told about people bringing the produce of their lands to ^e market.   That their produce was a lot and varied is suggested in the many trailing constituents of the sentence:

> *And they came bringing the produce of their lands*
>
> *-palm oil kernels, Kola nuts, cassava, mats, baskets*
>
> *and earthenware plots and took coloured clothes,*
>
> *smoked fish iron pots and plates, (p. 42)*

In "Civil Peace", Achebe also uses the loose sentence structure to emphasize the ironic situation in the society depicted in the story and to bring out some comic relief. After the war, Jonathan Iwegbu is said to have:

> *got a destitute carpenter with one old hammer,*
>
> *a blunt plane and a few   bent and rusty nails in his tool*
>
> *bag to turn this assortment of wood, paper and metal*
>
> *into door and window shutters for five Nigerian shillings*
>
> *or fifty Biafran pounds, " (P 84).*

The irony here is that even after the war in which many people lost their valuables there is a carpenter who seems loaded with the necessary tools. The comical effect, however, obtains in the fact that all the tools in his possession are old and barely usable.
                    it

In addition to using the loose   structure to emphasize quantity, the author also ₙₛₑs the structure to mark change in a character. Of Abigail, for example, we are told:

> *'Now Abigail was a lady: she could sew and bake wear*
>
> *bra and clean pants put on powder and perfumes*
>
> *and stretch her hair; and she was ready to go. (p. 54).*

The change suggested here is that from a naive girl to an exposed one. The great extent of the change in Abigail, the house girl, is emphasized in the repeated conjunction ... *and.*

In "Girls at War", when Gladys finds out that her friend was not at her house, just as she had feared, Nwankwo exclaims:

> *'She will come back on an arms plane loaded with*
>
> *shoes, wigs, pants, bras, cosmetics and what have you,*
>
> *which she will then sell and make thousands of pounds.*
>
> *You girls are really at war aren 7you? '(p. 114)*

Again, as in the case of Abigail and the contributors the *New Age* publication in "Vengeful Creditor", the author uses the loose sentence structure here to emphasize the quantity of goods that Gladys' friend will bring home. But this also has an ironic tone in it. The fact that there is a war on and some people are using it for petty business shows the extent of their moral decadence. This structure, being foregrounded as it is, drives home this point more forcefully.

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£ **Fragmented sentences**

In some of the stories, Achebe breaks away from the structurally unmarked sentences in language to fragmented ones. As in many other cases, the change is always purposeful.

In "The Voter", Achebe captures the anxiety and excitement of an election day poignantly in his use of fragmented sentences. On the day of the election, the author says simply:

> *Election   Morning.   The great day every five years*
>
> *when the people exercise power.   Weather beaten*
>
> *posters on walls of houses, tree trunks and telegraphic*
>
> *poles, (p. 17).*

'Election Morning', being the first sentence in the section dealing with the on goings on the day of election strikes one as if the election day has suddenly arrived. It also shifts our focus on the election. All the sentences tend to suggest that things are moving too fast; hence the author's or the reader's inability to absorb everything at a go.

In "Uncle Ben's Choice", the author ends it with "God forbid". This apparently fragmented sentence emphasizes Uncle Ben's and his people's value for children rather than wealth because of what befalls Dr. J.M. Stuart Young - "All his wealth went to outsiders", (p.81)

In "Sugar Baby", the I-narrator uses "No" for a sentence to emphasize that what he saw did not mean symbolism but rather a deadly earnestness. The emphatic force in the fragmented 'No' lies in its being a one-word sentence in a background of longer ones.

3.3-5   Noun Phrase Structure

One of the most striking features of Achebe's Noun Phrases is his extensive use of premodiilers and post modifiers.   This structure gives Achebe the advantage of elaboration.

In describing the ordeal that the madman undergoes in "The Madman", the writer says:

> *At first he had put up a fight but the women had gone*
>
> *and brought their men folk four hefty beasts of the bush*
>
> *to whip him out of the hut. (p.l)*

In this case the modification of the Noun Phrase is further enhanced by a parenthetical element.   The fact that the men who assaulted the madman were hefty and only comparable to beast stresses how painful an experience it was that the madman faced.

In "The Voter", the Noun Phrase - 'hurricane lamp' that lights the room is both premodified and postmodified.   It is described thus:

> *An old hurricane lamp with a cracked, sooty*
>
> *glass chimney gave chit yellowish light in their*
>
> *midst, (i.e. Rufus' and the elders), (p. 14)*

Although there is a premodifieation of the nouns 'hurricane lamp' and 'chimney' in the quotation above, it is its postmodification that is of importance. Here, the adjectives give a vivid picture of the lamp as well as the light in the room.

In "Marriage is a Private Affair", when Okeke reads a letter from his daughter in-law about her sons, he becomes sad. This mood is captured in the description of the atmosphere that is made even stronger by the description the clouds. It is said:

> *'He leaned against a window and looked out. The*
>
> *sky was overcast with heavy black clouds. . . . .(p .27)*

In "Girls at War", when Nwakwo was on his way back to Owerri, he is said to have been stopped by an attractive girl. After stopping:

> *Scores of pedestrians, dusty and exhausted,*
>
> *some military some civil, swooped down*
>
> *on the car from all directions (p. 108).*

The postmodification of the noun phrase in the sentence above also helps to create a vivid picture of the pedestrians and their condition.

In many other instances, the author premodifies his Noun Phrases. A few of these are discussed below: •S

^^m   j_n "Uncle Ben's Choice", Uncle Ben gives a vivid description of Margaret, the girl who spotted him at his house. This same Margaret was also said to be the only exception to the women he would show his house. He says:

> *I can say that the only exception was one tall,*
>
> *yellow, salt-water girl like this called Margaret, (p. 76)*

Gladys, on the other hand, in "Girls at War" , is also vividly described:

> *She wore a high-tinted wig and a very expensive skirt*
>
> *and a low-cut blouse (p. 108)*

We can therefore conclude that Achebe exploits the Noun Phrase structure in his sentences to paint vivid images so as to communicate more effectively as well as to involve his reader in a creative reconstruction of the stories. Most of his Noun Phrases are of the structure:

```
•  •  •  •  •                    N P
```

```
                              Det    Adj.l    Adj.2  Adj…n    N
```
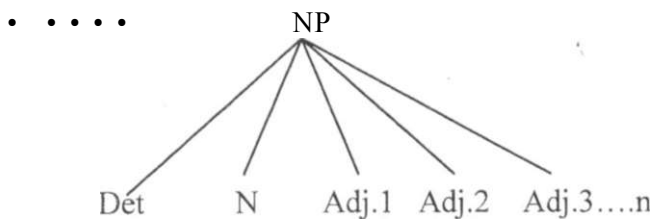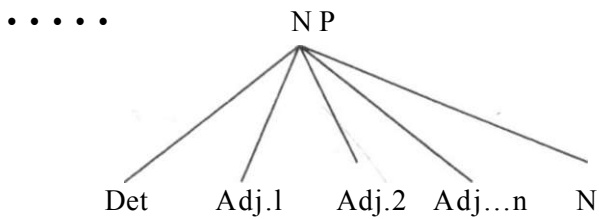
NP   = Noun Phrase

pet   = Determiner

Adj: 1 = first adjective

Adj.'2   = second adjective

Adj:3   = third adjective

Adj…n = any number of adjectives.

3.4 Cohesion

In this section we examine the strategies that Achebe employs to make his work cohere.

3.4.1 Anaphoric Reference

Horrocks (1987:109) defines anaphors 'as NPs [Noun Phrases] whose reference is necessai^y determined sentence internally and which cannot have independent reference'. An anaphoric reference in this study is therefore a pronoun that is preceded by the noun that it refers to. This is the more ordinary cohesive device that the author uses in all his stories. We shall consequently discuss only one case of this strategy, as it will largely serve to explain how the same strategy has been used throughout the anthology.

1   In "The Sacrificial Egg" we find the following passage:

> *Janet walked a short way with Julius and stopped; so he*
> *stopped too. They seemed to have nothing to say to each*
> *other yet they lingered on. Then she said goodnight and*
> *he said goodnight, (p. 45) (Emphasis mine)*

What makes this passage to cohere is the fact that in the main clause of the first sentence, the characters in question are identified by name, i.e. Janet and Julius. So, when in the following clause reference is made by use of the pronouns 'he', 'she' and 'they', we know

that they refer to Julius, Janet and both of them respectively. This makes the text to 'cohere' because cohesion, as Halliday and Hassan (1976:4) observe, occurs:

> *....where the INTERPRETATION of some element in the discourse*
> *is dependent on that of another. The one PRESSUPOSES the*
> *other, in the sense that it cannot he effectively decoded except*
> *by recourse to it.*

The interpretation of 'he', 'she' and 'they' therefore can only be interpreted by recourse to both Janet and Julius.

◁

3.4.2 The use of fc/lipsis

In our discussion of the author's use of ellipsis in chapter two, we discussed extensively, how the author makes use of ellipsis.

This is actually a cohesive device as Wright(1996:170) confirms by stating that 'ellipsis is a cohesive device involving the absence of an item which the reader or listener has to supply. The cohesive link is set up by the process of referring back to recover the missing item'.

However discussing it as graphological aspect is still valid in view of the fact that by using the elliptical dots, the author does foreground the aspect graphologically. So at this point, it is our view that the points already discussed under the author's use of ellipsis would still be considered valid in the discussion of the author's cohesive strategy.

3.4.3. The use of Cataphora

Unlike anaphoric reference, cataphoric reference makes use of pronouns which do not have antecedents.

Probably the most unique cohesive strategy that Achebe employs in the stories is the use of cataphora. At the very beginning of the "The Madman", we find a rather odd sentence:

He was drawn to markets and straight roads. . . . (p. I)

ty'e do not know whom 'he' refers to since there is no antecedent for it. The confusion is sustained through the first part of the story which ends with the claim that after nearly being ran over by a lorry 'he avoided those noisy lorries too with the vagabonds inside them', (p.2) It is only later that we know that the 'he' referred to all this while is the madman. Given that we are then in the third major episode of the story the identification of 'he' to helps to 'hold' the text together.

The same strategy is employed in " Sugar Baby". The Story again begins with the pronoun T but then makes references to 'his face' without, as expected, first identifying the person whose face is referred to. It is only later that we learn that 'his' actually refers to Cletus.

A final example of the author's use of this strategy is in "Girls at War". The author, in the first paragraph, and before identifying the characters in question simply says:

The first time their paths crossed nothing happened, (p. 103)

The mystery of the identity of the persons referred to is further deepened in the second paragraph when the author still refers to the people he talks about as 'they'. When he shifts to 'He' in$_v$

He was driving from Onitsha to Enugu and

was in a hurry, (p. 103)

We can only identify that one of the persons referred to is male. This mystery is resolved when the man introduces himself as Nwankwo. The author, however, does not specify who the other person is. He only identifies her as a woman when he observes that she was beautiful. It is only after meeting her for the third time, eighteen months later, that we finally learn that she is Gladys.

As already stated, the author's use of cataphora here also helps to hold the story together. In addition, however, Achebe uses cataphora to create suspense and therefore to capture the reader's interest. This is akin to what Leech and Short (1981:226) say of the periodic sentence; that the periodic sentence leads to the growth of 'syntactic suspense'. In addition, the use of cataphora can be compared to using 'the' at the beginning of a sentence, which Turner (1973:85) says '....immediately establishes intimacy'.

3.4.4 Reiteration

Achebe also uses reiteration as a cohesive device. A good example is found in "Civil Peace". In that story, the author repeats the phrase, 'Nothing puzzles God', or its variants, 'Indeed nothing puzzles God!', and 'But nothing puzzles God'. Every time the phrase is repeated, we have to seek recourse to what it presupposes and it therefore makes the story to cohere. In the same vein, when, in "Vengeful Creditor", Vero repeats her songs:

> *Little   noisy   motor-car*
> *If you are going to school*
> *Please   carry   me*
> *Pee-pee-pee! -poh-poh-poh   (p. 62)*

And:

> *Carry   you!   Carry   you!*
> *Every   time   I carry you!*
> *If you   no   wan   grow again*
> *I mus   leave you and go to school*
> *Because   Vero   e don tire!*
> *Tire, tire e don tire! (p. 64)*

'all morning', they bring to mind the reasons given by Nwankwo when he persuaded her mother that she allows him to employ her. The full meaning of these songs is only realized by seeking recourse to what they presuppose. They also, therefore, make the story to cohere. This strategy is also used in "Marriage is a Private Affair". The letters written by Nnaemeka, his wife and his father reiterate the conflict between father and son that dominates the story and it could therefore be argued that the letters hold the story together.

 The reiteration of ideas, statements and letters enhance the meaning of the stories. Indangasi (1988:151) confirms this when he says that such repetition emphasizes ' something of the meaning of the stories'.

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Semantic aspects are discussed in the chapter that follows.

CHAPTER FOUR

SEMANTIC ASPECTS OF STYLE

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1 we identified semantic aspects of style.   We said that semantic deviations obtain in semantic redundancy, semantic absurdity and semantic ambiguity. Fodor (1977:10) quotes Katz (1972) who identifies semantic anomaly, redundancy a semantic ambiguity among others as being semantic phenomena.   In this chapter we examine a number of these phenomena in the short stories in the anthology *Girls at War and Other Stories.*

4.2 Broadening and Shifts

Terry Crowley (1992:152) says that broadening 'is used to refer to a change in meaning that results in a word acquiring additional meanings to those that it originally had, while still retaining those original meanings as part of the new meaning'.   She, on the other hand, defines a semantic shift as one 'where a word completely loses its original meaning and acquires a new meaning.'   These two aspects of semantic change are evident in some of the short stories in the anthology.

In "The Madman" we get the first instance of a semantic shift. Nwibe's blind rage, following the madman's seizure of his clothes, leads him to the market place, naked, in pursuit of the madman. However, upon his entry to ye market a man in the crowd says:

> *'They've got his cloth he says.'*
> *'That's a new one I'm sure.   He*
> *hardly looks mad yet.   Doesn't he*
> *have **people**, **I** wonder.' (p. 7) (Emphasis mine)*

The meaning *of people* in this context has shifted.   Instead of referring to persons or human

beings in its basic sense, Achebe uses it here with the reading of'relatives/

A similar shift is also found in "The Voter", "Uncle Ben's Choice" and "Civil Peace".   In

"The Voter," Ezenwa, one of the old men that Rufus tries to bribe rejects the two shillings

given to them as being shameful then says:

> *'But today is our day, we have climbed the iron tree today and*
> *would be foolish not to take down all the **firewood** we need,*
> *(p. 14) (Emphasis mine)*

Rufus himself is said to have been taking a lot of 'firewood' recently'.   'Firewood' in this

context exemplifies a semantic shift.   In the ordinary use of the lexeme, its meaning would

be 'wood cut for burning on fires' Longman Dictionary of English(1978:384) but here it

refers to benefits that the voters expect from their representatives.   In "Uncle Ben's Choice",

after Uncle Ben's rejection of Mami Wota, she is said to have been taken by a German

doctor, Dr. J.M. Stuart Young, who, by becoming her lover, acquired wealth and not

children.   So when he dies, Uncle Ben says:

>*'All his wealth went to **outsiders',** (p.81) (Emphasis mine)*

'Outsider' here has shifted from 'a person who is not accepted as a member of a social 'group' Longman Dictionary of English (1978:732) to one who is not a relatives'. In "Civil Peace" also, the sense of bury has been broadened to include that of putting one's hand into a pocket.   When Jonathan Iwegbu finally gets his 'egg-rasher', we are told:

>*'As soon as the pound notes were placed in his palm Jonathan simply closed it tight over them and **buried** fist and money inside his trouser pocket, (p. 85) (Emphasis mine)*

Broadening here has, however, been used to emphasize the depth of Iwegbu's pocket as well as to create humour.

4.3 Neologism

In a number of instances, Achebe creates new concepts using already existing words and also expands semantic possibilities through direct translation. In "Dead Men's Path" we are told that Michael Obi 'was only twenty-six, but looked thirty or more' and that on the whole, 'he was not unhandsome.' (p.71) Here Achebe exploits the negative morpheme marker (un) to emphasize that Michael Obi was not particularly attractive.

In "Uncle Ben's Choice," such semantic neologisms are utilized for the creation of humour. In one instance, Uncle Ben says:

> *It was one New Year's Eve like this.   You know how New Year can pass*
> *Christmas for jollity, for **we end-of-month people,** (p. 76) (Emphasis mine)*

Then he adds that by Christmas Day the month has reached *twenty-hungry*.   Both 'end-of-month people,' and 'twenty-hungry' are creations of new words for 'employed people' and 'towards the end of the month' respectively.

4.4 Direct Translation

In "Akueke", after Akueke has been left in the bush to die and is found missing the following day, her brothers assume that she has been eaten by wild animals.   The author then says:

> ***Two or three moons passed** and their grandfather sent a*
> *messenger to Umuofia to ascertain whether it was true that*
> *Akueke was dead. (p.32) (Emphasis mine)*

Rather than use 'two or three months' passed, Achebe opts for 'two or three moons' so as to give the story a local flavour.   Elsewhere, the same effect is achieved when, in "Chike's School Days", we are told of Chike's father's voluntary enlistment into the *osu* community. Chike's father had married an *osu* (an outcast) in the name of Christianity.   The author then comments:

> *It was unheard of for a man to make himself an osu in that way, **with***
> ***his eyes wide open.** But then Amos was nothing if not mad.   The new*
> *religion **had gone to b)s head.** (p. 36) (Emphasis mine)*

The emphasized phrases 'with his eyes wide open' 'had gone to his head' are direct translations of African expressions. Their actual readings are 'knowingly' or 'willingly' and 'intoxicated' or 'overwhelmed' respectively.

In "Girls at War", Gladys tells Nwankwo that if she does not find her friend at her house it will be serious and when Nwankwo asks her why that would be the case, she answers:

> *'Because if she is not at home*
> *I will sleep on the road today' (p. 109) (Emphasis mine)*

The phrase 'sleep on the road today' does not express the idea of physically sleeping on the road but rather that she will spend a night in an unfamiliar place.

Reduplicated forms provide other examples of direct translation. For example, Mrs. Emenike says that when her baby nurse, Abigail, got employed by her, she was full of *craw-craw* while Uncle Ben, in telling us about people who were going to church says:

> *'People were passing in their fine-fine dresses to one church*
> *nearby.' (p. 76) (Emphasis mine)*

These reduplicated forms are used for emphasis. 'Fine-fine emphasizes how attractive the dresses worn by those going to church were. This is in keeping with what Julia Van Dvken and Constance Lojanga in 'Word Boundaries: Key factors in Orthography Development', cited in *Alphabets of Africa,* say when they give a Hausa example. They

Thus although the repetition serves a grammatical function and
adds another dimension to meaning. (p. 8)

The other dimension of meaning is made clear in the Hausa example given below:

kadan   *'little'*

kadan   kacfan   ' very little' (p.8)

4.5 Idiomatic Deviations

In 'Uncle Ben's Choice' Achebe makes use of idiomatic deviations to satirize Uncle Ben. The satire, which is brought out through the exposure of Uncle Ben's ignorance, is meant to add to the humor in the story. Indangasi (1995:33) confirms this function in *A Guide to Nikolai Gogol's The Government Inspector* when he says of Hlestakov, whose ignorance is also exposed:

Gogol then uses Hlestakov's pretence to expose his ignorance' and because of this 'the audience laughs uproariously both at the ignorance and pretence at   sophistication.

In "Uncle Ben's Choice", Uncle Ben attempts to impress his audience by saying that since Umuru women were very sharp he never showed any of them the road to his house and that he also '...never ate the food they cooked for fear of love *medicines'* (p.76) (Emphasis mine) He also says that he had a Raleigh bicycle which was brand new and for that 'everybody' called him Jolly Ben. Then he adds:

I was selling like hot *bread'*, (p.75) (Emphasis mine)

The day Margaret, an Umuru woman who was an exception to those women whom he did not wish to show his house, saw him outside his house and decided to go to his house that very day, Uncle Ben exclaims:

*'Wonders will never **end!** (p. 76) (Emphasis mine)*

The italicized expressions in the quotations above are deviant. They should be 'fear of love potions', 'selling like hot cakes' and 'wonders will never cease' respectively. His failure to use those expressions correctly clearly portrays his ignorance of them and therefore serves to satirize his boastfulness.

4.6 Figurative Language

Achebe has exploited a number of figures of speech in his stories some of which are discussed below:

4.6.1 Hyperbole

According to Myers & Simms (1989:136), hyperbole is 'a rhetorical form of comparison using exaggeration or obvious overstatement for comic or dramatic effect'. There are a few examples of hyperbole in the anthology. In "The Madman", following a disagreement between Nwibe's wives, Udenkwo, his younger wife, accuses Mgoboye 'of
◁
spite and of wickedness on account of a little dog and then she asks:

> *What has a little dog done to you?' she screamed **loud enough for***
>
> ***half the village to hear** (p. 4) (Emphasis mine)*

Earlier we are told the Nwibe would have changed Mgoboye's thatch to a zinc one had it not been for the fear of Udenkwo setting 'the entire compound on fire.' (p.3) That she is said to scream loud enough for half the village to hear and that Udenkwo would set the entire compound on fire are hyperbolic. They emphasize how loud she would scream and how she would agitate everybody in the compound. In "Civil Peace" , Jonathan Iwegbu tells us of one of the ex workers who lost his ex gratia money to some pickpocket. The man, he says, had collapsed into near-madness but many in the queues blamed him quietly on his carelessness. He adds that when the man pulled out the innards of his pockets they revealed 'a hole big enough to pass a thief's head', (p.85) All these hyperbolic statements are used for the creation of humor.

In "Uncle Ben's Choice", Achebe uses hyperbole for satire. In the course of narrating his exploits. Uncle Ben tells his audience that he never mixed drinks, and then goes on to say:

> *'That night 1 was on White Horse.*
>
> *I had one roasted chicken and a*
>
> *tin of Guinea Gold.' (p. 7 7)*

That Uncle Ben claims to have had one roasted chicken alone and was on White Horse (whiskey) highlights his boastful nature.

4.6.2. Imagery

We will examine imagery in view of Myers and Simmers (1989:139) definition. According to them imagery ' is the use of pictures figures of speech, or description to evoke action, ideas, objects or characters'. In this study therefore imagery will entail similes metaphors and personification.

In several instances Achebe uses similes. In "Vengeful Creditor", during a cabinet meeting, we are told that Mr. Emenike admires the Finance Minister for his debating skills. So when the Finance Minister engages the Education Minister in a debate, Mr. Emenike is said to have 'been nodding like a lizard through his speech.' (p.55) This simile emphasizes Emenike's absorption in the minister's arguments.

Other similes are humorous. For example, the description of Mary, Veronica's younger sister in "Vengeful Creditor". She is said not to have been satisfied with whatever amount of food she ate. The author says:

> *'But even after the food and the kernels and grasshoppers and the bowls*
> *of water Mary was rarely satisfied, even though her belly would be big*
> *and tight like a drum and shihe like a mirror (p. 58)*

In "Uncle Ben's Choice", after finding out that the unknown woman in his bed has soft hair like that of a European, he says that he shouted and asked her who she was then adds:

> *My head swelled up like a barrel and I was shaking: (p. 79)*

This simile emphasizes the extent of Uncle Ben's fear.

In "Girls at War", the simile:

> *'He (Nwankwo) hated parties and frivolities to which his friends*
> *clung like drowning men.' (p. Ill)*

reveals the desperation for peace among the people as well as the population's attempts to psychologically withdraw from the harsh reality attended upon them by the on going war.

The only case of personification is found in " The Sacrificial Egg". Kitipka (smallpox) that visits people is referred to as if it were human. The author says:

> *'But such was the strength of Kitipka, the incarnated power of small pox.*
> *Only he could drive away those people and leave the market to flies.' (p. 43)*

This personification of Kitipka underscores how dreadful the disease was regarded.

4.6.3 Euphemism, Redundancies, Absurdities and Puns

In "The Voter", following the apparent rejection of the three shillings bribe by the elders, Roof Feigns annoyance and tells them to go and cast their vote for the enemy upon which they quickly calm him down each with a suitable speech. The author then concludes:

> *'By the time the last mthi had spoken it was possible, without*
> *great loss of dignity, to pick up the things from the floor...' (p. 15)*

Money is here euphemistically referred to as 'things' so as to help retain the dignity of the elders who in spite of their stubbornness still take the money.

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In "The Sacrificial Egg", people refer to the ravages ot Kitipka (smallpox) euphemistically since it was believed that it forbade any noise or boisterousness. Whenever a member of a family died from it he or she was said to be decorated by it. Julius' mother, in talking about one such family says:

> *He has **decorated** one of them already and the rest were moved*
> *away today in a big government lorry, (p. 45) (Emphasis mine)*

This euphemistic reference to smallpox highlights the superstitious nature of the people depicted in the story.

In "Akueke" and "The Sacrificial Egg", we get examples of semantically absurd sentences. Akueke's grandfather rebukes her brothers for carrying out purification rites over Akueke's while she was still alive. After this he advises them to continue with their purification rites 'because, Akueke is ***truly*** dead in Umuofia,' (p.34) Later, in "The Sacrificial Egg", commenting on the growth and influx of foreigners into Umuru, the third person narrator says:

> *'But there is good growth and there is bad growth. The belly*
> *does not bulge out only with food an drink; it might be the*
> *abominable disease which would end by sending its sufferer*
>
> *out of the house even before he was **fully dead.** ' (p. 44)*
> *(Emphasis mine)*

The notions created by 'truly dead' and 'fully dead' are absurd as they imply that there is a possibility of one being dead and not dead at the same time. In the contexts in which these phrases are used the notion they create is that of a person being incapacitated to the point that he or she is not capable of any useful work, hence metaphorically being 'dead.' In "Uncle Ben's Choice'", a humorous case is given when Uncle Ben's father tells him that a true son of their land 'must know how to sleep and keep one eye open. (p.76) This semantic deviation gives a traditional way of saying that one has to be cautious.

In "Vengeful Creditor", John, a shop attendant is absurdly described as a 'fourty year old boy' (p.49). The collocational incongruity of 'forty year old' and 'boy' brings to the fore the scorn with which people of John's likes are viewed.

A redundant expression is given to us by Uncle Ben, whose ignorance is made fun of when he says that when he reached Matthew Obi's house,

> *'He fell down on the floor,...'* (p. 80)

Again, as in the cases already referred to, the redundancy of *falling down on the floor* reveals Obi's ignorance of the English language that he uses to impress his audience.

The graphological deviation of ex-gratia as 'egg-rasher,' already discussed in Chapter 2, also does provide an example of semantic ambiguity in a pun. Achebe plays with 'ex-gratia, at a phonological level to achieve humour. A similar exploitation of a word at the phonological level is found in "The Voter" and in "Marriage is a Private Affair." The villagers in "The Voter" imitate an enlightened villager who tells Marcus 'Congrats'.

They in turn shake his hand telling him '*Comgrass*.' (p. 18) In "Marriage is a Private Affair" also, Nnaemeka's father, as earlier stated, instead of pronouncing his daughter in law's name as Nene Atang pronounces it as *'Neneatagci.* Finally, in "Vengeful Creditor," when villagers call 'free primary' 'free primadu,' (p.54) Achebe is still playing with the words. These puns are used for the creation of humour.

4.6.4 Irony

We have already pointed out some of Achebe's ironic uses in the stories. For example, the use of 'Modern' in the "Dead Man's Path". In addition to those cases of verbal irony, Achebe has written most of his stories in the ironic mode. In our discussion below, we make reference to four stories to illustrate this point.

In "The Madman", Nwibe is presented as a successful man. We are told:

> *Nwibe was a man of high standing in Obi and was rising higher;*
> *a man of wealth and integrity. He had just given notice to all ozo*
> *man of town that he proposed to seek admission in their honoured*
> *hierarchy in the coming initiation season, (p. 3)*

In addition, he had changed his thatch-roof to zinc and would do the same for his wives. So from the onset, our expectations are that Nwibe is destined for greater things. However, things turn out differently. Following his encounter with the madman, an encounter that leads him naked to the market place.^Mwibe becomes a marked man and all his ambitions take a nosedive. As a consequence of being perceived a madman, we are told:

> *Nwibe became a quiet, withdrawn man avoiding whenever he*
> *could the boisterous side of life of his people, (p. 10)*

When he later makes an inquiry 'about joining the community of titled men in his town' (p. 10), those ozo men deftly steer the conversation away to other matters. At this point all the earlier expectation of his further success are totally fall apart; hence the irony.

In "Dead Men's Path", it is Michael Obi's turn to see his dreams thwarted. At the beginning of the story we are told that he was a man whose hopes had been fulfilled much earlier than he had expected by being appointed headmaster of Ndume Central School. This is a responsibility that he accepts with enthusiasm because he had many ideas which he hoped to put into practice. In fact, together with his wife, they had intended to make 'a good job of it'. His wife is more specific. She says:

> *'we shall have such beautiful garden and everything will be*
> *just modern and delightful (p. 70)*

However, despite their efforts to improve the place, they do not finally get the recognition they have all along longed for. Michael Obi gets entangled in a controversy with the village priest of Ani over a path by which the villagers 'dead relatives depart' (p.73) and visit them. When a woman dies in childbirth, the diviners attribute her death to an insult on their ancestors occasioned by the fence erected by Obi to block the villager's path.   As a consequence, the villagers destroy the 'beautiful garden. We are told:

The beautiful hedges were torn up not just near the path but
right round the school, the flowers trampled to death and one
of the school buildings pulled down...' (p. 74)

This, ironically, happens on the day that the white supervisor arrives to inspect the school. He consequently writes a nasty report on the state of the premises and blames Obi for the 'tribal-war situation' developing between the school and the village.' (p.74) The initial success that he had on enjoyed does not !eave him happy but frustrated.

Similar ironic situations obtain in "Civil Peace" and "Girls at War." While everybody expects pcace in "Civil Peace" following the secession of war, Iwegbu falls victim to a gang of thieves in spite of coming out of the war apparently unscathed. So, the so-called 'civil peace' instead of portending security it results in insecurity. In "Girls at War," on the other hand, Nwankwo attempts to rescue Gladys from the abyss of immorality and hunger by giving her half the food he had received at the relief center. However, his effort is dashed when his car is bombed as he is driving her back to her village leaving her and a lame passenger dead.

It is this level of irony that dominates in the short stories. By using the ironic mode, Achebe emphasizes the futility of man's quest to better his life in his society.

In this chapter we have examined a number of semantic phenomena. In the next chapter we will turn our attention on the use of registers and dialect as we discuss ancillary matters in the stories.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANCILLARY ASPECTS OF STYLE

5.1 Register

Leech (1969:39) defines register as 'a variation in language according to use' . Fowler (1996:189, 191) also defines register as 'varieties which differ according to how you use language.' However, he recognizes that register in a text cannot be hegemonic and therefore redefines it as 'a distinctive use of language to fulfill a particular communicative function in a particular kind of situation.' (p. 191) Achebe^in *Girls at War and other Stories,* makes use of a variety of registers which help to illuminate important aspects of the stories.

In both "The Voter" and "Vengeful Creditor", Achebe makes use of a political register. This is evident in his choice of lexical items. In "The Voter", for example, the Umuofian villager's political affiliations are reflected in the author's use of *en masse* to describe their total subscription to the People's Alliance Party (PAP). Other lexemes like 'party', 'campaign', 'voters' and ' our sign is the motor car' all attest to this. In 'Vengeful Creditor', when politicians speak, their choice of words underscore their 'profession.' For example, in talking about the dangers of imposing new taxes in order to cater for the free primary education programme that the government has embarked on, the Minister of Education says tauntingly:

> *... if anyone is so foolish as to impose new taxes now on our long stiffering* **masses** *... (p.56) (Emphasis mine)*

'Masses' here reflects the socialistic tendencies of the Minister of Education for the Minister for Finance apologizes for crossing into his honourable friend's territory. He, however, blames it on the infectious nature of communist slogans. The Minister of Education is in fact, said to have been 'notorious for his leftist tendencies' (p55). The register here is clearly political.

What may be called a romantic register is employed in "Marriage is a Private Affair". This is marked in Nnaemeka's and Nene's language. After their marriage, Nene asks Nnaemeka whether he has written to his dad and in response, Nnaemeka explains why he cannot write father to break to him the news of their marriage. Nene answers this by saying:

> *'All right **honey**, suit yourself. You know your father. '*
> *(p. 21) (Emphasis mine)*

Later, when Nene cries after Nnaemeka reads her his father's letter in which is enclosed their mutilated picture, Nnaemeka tells her:

> *'Don 7 cry my **darling.**' (Emphasis mine)*

In these examples, the emphasized words reflect the extent of love and intimacy between the couple and could therefore be termed romantic. The register also reveals the couple's elitist background and serves to explain their cultural alienation. Register, here as in other places, reveals one of the themes in the short story.

The diction in "Chike's School Days" provides a case of what may be termed an elitist register. Achebe suggests this through Chike's teacher's fondness for long words such as 'procrastination' and other 'jaw-breaking words' from his *Chambers Etymological*

Dictionary. Achebe emphasizes this through his careful choice of words such as 'periwinkle', 'arithmetic' and 'erudition'. In addition, these words show Chike's fascination with the world of knowledge and the fascination of a young mind with new knowledge. However, by attributing this register to the teacher, Achebe is, in a subtle way, being satirical and ironic. Instead of enabling the children to learn, the teacher, by his use of 'jaw-breaking words', inhibits their acquisition of knowledge. His incompetence is therefore satirized.

In line with what Fowler (1996:204) says, Achebe uses a military register in "Girls at War", to defamiliarize a sexual scene. We are told that after returning from a party, Gladys shocks Nwankwo by her readiness to be taken to bed by him as well as by her language. She says:

> *'You want to shell? ' she asked. And without waiting for an answer said,*
> *'Go ahead hut don 7 pour in the troops!' (p. 118)*

'Shell' and 'troop', in this description, mark a military register. These switch of register, other than foregrounding the act, reveals the level of moral decadence occasioned by war in the society depicted in the story. This defamiliarizing role of registers has also been attested to by Fowler (1996:204). He says:

> *Literary texts tend to mix registers to produce a defamiliarizing effect,*
> *restoring the multiaacentual nature of crucial words by confronting*
> *differences of meaning which exists in different styles of language.*

This military register reflects one of the writer's thematic concerns i.e. moral decadence.

The different registers in the stories therefore, show the writer's thematic concerns, reveal character, foreground certain actions and satirize characters.

5.2 Pidgin English

Achcbe employs the use of Pidgin English in a number of his short stories in addition to the literary standard for a variety of reasons. In both "Girls at War" and "Vengeful Creditor", Pidgin English is used to reflect the characters' different social classes. In "Vengeful Creditor" for example, it is the shop attendants, John, and the wigged-girl, Mrs. Emenike's 'Small Boy' and the gardener who preponderantly speak in it. For example, the 'Small Boy' claims to have been called home to sec his ailing father so as to be allowed to go home. So when he is asked how he knew about his father's condition, he answers:

> *'My brodder come tell me.'*
> *'When did your brother come?'*
> *'Yesterday for   evening-time.'*
> *'Why didn 'tyou bring him to see me?*
> *7 no no say Madame go wan see am. ' (p. 52)*

The short conversation between John and the wigged-girl is also in Pidgin English:

> *7 don 7 talk say make una tell Manager make e go fin'*
> *more people for dis m&nkey work. '*

> *'You never hear say everybody don go to free primary?'*
> *asked the wigged-girl, jovially.*
> *'Awright-o. But I no kill myself for sake of free primary. '*
> *(P- 49)*

In this conversation, the subject of free primary education that is raised explains the speakers' lack of education as the reason for using Pidgin English.

In "Girls at War", after a false air raid alarm, Gladys and Nwankwo, from their bunker, overhear their house boy and another one recount their ordeal in pidgin English. They say:

> *7 see dem well well, ' said the other with equal excitement,*
> *'If no to say de thing de kill porson e for sweet for eye, To God. ' (p. 113)*

This is in contrast with what all the other characters speak. Mrs. Emenike, Mr. Emenike, Gladys, and Nwankwo all speak what Samner Ives [See Allen, H.P. (1964)] calls the Titerary standard'. Given their different social status, i.e. that of employer/servant or educated/uneducated, Pidgin English here reflects the differences in their social statuses. This is in keeping with Sumner Ive's assertion in 'Dialect Differentiation in 'The Stories of Joel Chandler Harris' (See Allen H.P. (1964;524). She says:

> *When all characters of a story are residents of the same*
> *locality, dialect or non standard speech forms, serve*
> *chiefly to identify the characters, as members of different*
> *social groups.*

A similar view is upheld by Hallfday who, in 'Register, Power and Socio-semantic Change' [See Birch,D. & O'Toole M.(ed.) (1988: 1 14), argues that dialect variation

expresses and maintains social order which is an essentially hierarchic one. He further observes that 'members of particular social groups may have access to particular registers or be denied it. Brown and Stevenson in Schreger & Howard (1979 : 301), on the other hand, also argue that dialects are markers of group membership.

At times, characters who are conversant with the literary standard switch to Pidgin English in order to emphasize a thematic concern, or to make an ominous threat.   In "Girls at War", for example, when Nwankwo tells Gladys that he would like her to be focused and the morally upright 'girl in Khaki jeans' that she once was; without make up, wigs or earrings, she laughs and then in pidgin says:

> -   *Ah, no lie-o. I had earring. '*
>   *'All right.   But you know what I mean. '*
>   *'That time done pass.   Now everybody want survival.   They*
>   *call it number six.   You put your number six; I put my*
>   *number six.   Everything all right?   (pp. 114-115)*

This switch to pidgin, foregrounded as it is, underscores Gladys' moral decadence occasioned by the perils of war. This therefore emphasizes the theme of moral decay. In another instance, Gladys' use of pidgin highlights the theme of hypocrisy.   When Nwankwo tells Gladys that he cannot indulge in luxury when he knows that they have soldiers who drink gari and water once in three days, Gladys responds rather satirically:

> *It is true. ' She said sijhply.*
> *'Monkey de work, baboon de chop? (p. 112)*

Here the hypocrisy of the leaders' 'concern' for their soldiers is brought out.

Pidgin English is also used to create a sense of realism. In "Vengeful Creditor", while talking to his house help, 'Small Boy', Mr. Emenike switches from the literary standard to Pidgin English. This creates a natural shift in speech. Usually, when a person speaks to another, his or her co-participant in the conversation will determine whether or not he uses the standard or non-standard form. So it is only natural that Mr. Emenike speaks in Pidgin English when conversing with his houseboy. This makes their conversation closer to natural conversation and hence enhances realism in speech.

At another level, the use of pidgin English conforms to Sumner Ive's view that an author's use of dialect (pidgin English in this case) 'tends to suggest the actual flow of speech as closely it can.' (Allen 1964: 529)

This is certainly the case in the several excerpts of the thieves' conversation in "Civil Peace". For example, when the thieves knock on Jonathan Iwegbu's door and are asked who they are, the gang leader replies:

> *'Na tief-man and him people' come the cool reply.   'Make*
> *you hopen de door. ' (p. 86)*

Later when the same gang leader tells a frightened Iwegbu:

'My frien,' Said he at long last, 'we don try our best for call dem but I tink say dem all done sleep... so vsetin we go do now? Sometaim you wan call Soja? Or you wan make we call dem for you? Soja better pass police. No be so?' (p.87)

Reading these extracts and other similar ones elsewhere in the text gives one a feeling of the actual speech used by the concerned character.

In "The Voter," Maduka's chief campaigner emphasizes his subtle, but ominous threat to Rufus by switching to pidgin in a simple of *"Das all..."* (p. 17) after administering to him the *iyi* oath.

Viewed against a backdrop of the 'literary standard' employed in the stories, Pidgin English serves as a source of humor. This is intensified in some humorous descriptions like the gardener's in "Vengeful Creditor". The gardener, who is certainly more than fifteen years old, says that he will claim to be fifteen so as to be enrolled into a primary school. When Mrs. Emenike suggests that he may not be admitted due to his age and that she may not take him back, he says:

7 no go fail, oga,' said the gardener. 'One man for our village my old pass my fader sef done register everything finish. He just go for Magistrate court and pay dem five shilling and dey swear am for court juju wey no de kill person; e no jit kill rat sef' (p. 53)

The humour here is realized through syntactic and phonological deviations that Pidgin English entails. For example in "Civil Peace", the gang leader's speech, given below, reveals some of those syntactic and phonological deviations.

> *Awrighto, now make we talk business. We no be bad tief. We no like for make trouble. Trouble done finish. War done finish and all the katakata wey de for inside. No civil war again. This time be civil peace. No be so?'p. 87 (Emphasis mine)*

'Awrighto, and 'tief are phonological equivalents for 'all right' and 'thief respectively. Syntactically, Pidgin English here shows striking differences with the 'literary standard' adopted. For example, while in the literary standard negation comes after the auxiliary verb, in pidgin English, it is the negative that comes before the auxiliary verb. Secondly, while the morpheme {s} marks plural in the literary standard, there is no plural marker in Pidgin English. The following sentences are therefore typical:

> *We no be bad tief* (We are not bad thieves)
> *We no like for make trouble.* (We do not like to cause trouble)

Thirdly, instead of the infinitive 'to' pidgin English uses 'for'. The past tense is also marked, not by the suffixation of the morpheme {ed} on the verb, but rather, by the use of the participle form of the modal auxiliary 'do* giving sentences like these below:

> *Trouble done finish.* (The trouble is over (finished.)
> *War done finish...* (War is over (finished)

These deviations provide humorous twists to the stories.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Summary

In this study we set out to investigate the strategies that Achebe employs to manipulate the English language in his shot stories in *Girls at War and Other Stories.*

In the first Chapter, we discussed a number of issues including the differences between stylistics and literary criticism. We found out that the differences between these two areas lie in aims, goals, approaches and scope. We also reviewed literature of three different types, i.e. literature on stylistics in general, relevant literature on Achebe's works and finally literature on matters'of style. As for our methodology, we indicated that it was going to be library based. The library method entailed intensive reading as well as in depth analysis of the stories.

In Chapter two, our discussions centered on graphological and phonological aspects of the stories. Under graphological aspects, we discussed the author's use of italics and space. Our examination revealed that Achebe has used italics for emphasis, for the creation of mood, humour and as a means to highlight indigenous concepts. Italics are also used to bring out verbal irony. Space, on the other hand, has been used as a device to mark transition of time. At the phonological level we found out that Achebe has created rhythmic effects through repetition, syntactic structures, variation in sentence length and other subtle means such as digressions.

Syntactic aspects were discussed in Chapter three. Our focus was the author's lexicon, his use of different sentence types and the cohesive strategies. Noun Phrases were also examined.

In Chapter four, we dealt with semantic aspects. Under this section, broadening, shifts, neologism, direct translation, idiomatic deviations and figurative language were examined. Through these strategies we have seen how Achebe has expanded semantic possibilities available to the ordinary user of the English language. For example, through idiomatic deviations, we have seen the author develop character. We also found out that figures of speech such as hyperbole have been employed for the creation of humour.

Chapter five highlighted ancillary branches. We found out that the author uses different registers and dialectal variation to mark the social class of a character and for the creation of humour.

6.2 Conclusions

When we set out to carry out this study, we made it clear that we would focus mainly on the purely linguistic aspects and that we would try to avoid the purely literary matters such as theme and characterization. In the course of our study, however, we discovered the futility of separating language from content. It is our conclusion, therefore, that linguistic studies cannot be divorced from literary aspects of the texts. Language and content are in a symbiotic relationship.

In our justification of the study, we examined some of Achebe's views on language use in literature. We found out, for example, that he claims to be one of the few writers who were interested in 'creating language'. With this view in mind, we expected that Achebe's language would be largely different from normal language usage. However, after examining various aspects of the author's language, it is our conclusion that his claim is too strong. Achebe has utilized strategies that are available to any other creative writer. His uniqueness, however, lies in the extent to which he is able to manipulate the strategies discussed in this study.

In line with our first hypothesis, we have found that Achebe actually manipulates the English language through graphological, philological, syntactic, semantic and ancillary deviations to realize aesthetic effects.

Finally, it is our conclusion also that Achebe uses simple language devoid of 'big words'. Simplicity, therefore is one of the hallmarks of his writing.

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