

Lexical Borrowing as a Stylistic Device in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's Trilogy

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Abstract

Diction is a level of language that reveals the quality of a literary work and the dexterity of a literary artiste; this is the reason for careful selection of lexical entries by literary artistes. This study examines lexical borrowing in the trilogy of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo with a view to unravelling the import of the borrowed lexemes and expressions from other languages. The diction of the three novels – *The Last of the Strong Ones*, *House of Symbols* and *Children of the Eagle* – serves as the data base for the study. Utilizing Systemic Functional Grammar for analysis, findings show that the novelist, while using English as her language of literary expression, employs borrowed words and expressions from both Nigerian and foreign languages to give her works national and international outlook. While the preponderance of Igbo lexemes over other languages in the texts is employed to portray the rich Igbo culture and the setting of the novels, loan words from other Nigerian languages are used to depict linguistic borrowing that helps to facilitate effective communication among Nigerians. The findings also reveal that nouns are the commonest borrowed items from the donor languages; and that these words are used by the narrators and during conversations of the characters at the informal contexts. The use of these items is apt as many of them lack direct English equivalents. The paper concludes that lexical borrowing is an index of Adimora-Ezeigbo's idiolect and the same thing identifies her with other writers.

Introduction

Diction is pivotal to a literary piece. The understanding, aesthetics and appraisal of a literary work is largely dependent on the choice and the use of its lexical category. If the choice and use of the diction is effective and efficient, the understanding of a text and its message is facilitated; its aesthetic values are appreciated so easily. However, if the choice and use of the lexical entries is inappropriate, ineffective and inefficient, the understanding of the text and the message therein is not only lost, but the mind behind the work also "loses its face." This accounts for the sensitivity and carefulness deployed by literary artistes in the choice of lexical units and the use of language in constructing their ideas and passing across their messages. By diction, we mean the vocabulary used in a text. The elements that constitute the diction of a text are, but are not limited to register(s), idioms, language arts (such as proverbs, wits, adages, aphorisms), folksongs, anecdotes, jokes, figurative expressions and borrowed lexical items and expressions. The appropriate choice and use of these or some of these elements adds to the quality of a literary presentation and reveals the prowess of a literary artiste. They are part of what defines a good writing or presentation. This paper is set to consider lexical borrowing as a stylistic device in the trilogy of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo - *The Last of the Strong Ones* (1996), *House of Symbols* (2001) and *Children of the Eagle* (2002).

Stylistics and Style Theories: A Synopsis

In the view of Simpson (2004, p.3), “to do stylistics is to explore language, and more specifically, to explore creativity in language use.” A stylistic analysis of any text aims at analyzing the “language habits with the main purpose of identifying from general mass of linguistic features ... those features which are restricted to certain kinds of social contexts: to explain, where possible, why such features have been used, as opposed to other alternatives, and to classify these features into categories based upon a view of their function in social context” (Crystal & Davy 1969, p.10). Studying the style of an author implies isolating, defining and discussing the linguistic features which are peculiar to him/her and which differentiate him/her from other authors (Crystal & Davy 1969, p.77), and or establishing the linguistic characteristics that identify him/her with others. Hence, a stylistic analysis of a text examines the distinctive features of language use of an author/speaker in constructing a text and how these features have been employed to cement the signification of a text (Joseph 2016, p.858). As noted above by Crystal and Davy, stylistic analysis also takes into cognizance the choices made by a language user from the linguistic resources at all the domains of language and the impact of the choices in understanding and interpreting the text (Crystal & Davy 1969, p.77; Crystal 1999, p.323; Simpson 2004, p.422). Choices, therefore, are the linguistic variants from which selection is made for communicative purposes. To this end, the preference of a language user for some linguistic resources above others defines his/her style or idiolect. Lending credence to this stance, Simpson (2004, p.22) posits that “choices in style are motivated, even if unconsciously, and these choices have a profound impact on the way texts are structured and interpreted.” Thus, stylistic analysis, among others, focuses on the various forms and patterns of linguistic tools at all levels of language description from which a language user selects to create intended meanings, effects and aesthetics. The levels of language description from which a writer/speaker can select from include phonology, graphology, morphology, lexis, syntax and discourse.

A recent upsurge of interest in the study of style has led to the evolvement of some approaches and theories to study the concept. Among them are the following: style as choice from variants, style as situation, style as deviation from the norm, style as individuality/personality, and style as iteration. Style as choice affords language users to make those linguistic choices (from a myriad of variants) that match their messages and situations, and which will produce the intended meanings and effects (Azuike 1992, p.118; Lawal 2003, p.27-28; Osundare 2003, p.14). Style as situation is the style determined by the subject matter, context or situation of communication. Hence, a user’s compliance with the linguistic norms of the field, context and situation is expected when operating in that domain. Style as deviation from the norm is when a writer or speaker does not limit himself/herself to the structural limits of the language but extends “the frontiers of current usage” (Lawal 2003, p.30) via flouting the norms. In a nutshell, style as deviation from the norm is “a departure or deflection from the accepted norm” (Azuike 1992, p.111). Style as iteration, in the opinion of Schapiro (2003, p.287), refers to the elements, qualities and expressions that are constant in the art of an individual or a group of individuals. It can be used to mean the literary style of whole regions such as the “chatty” language of American literature or the “proverbial” language of African writing (Osundare 2003, p.30).

Style as individuality is an offshoot of Buffon's famous apothegm, "*Les style C'est l'homme meme*" meaning "style is the man." This theory of style, as Azuike (1992, p.113) observes, "seeks to establish a symmetry between a person's expressive capacity and his other characteristics. Style in this sense is the individual's 'signature' – his 'identity', those idiosyncrasies – which marks a piece of writing as his and only his. It is therefore his idiolect." This approach refers to the linguistic features that are peculiar or unique to or habitual of an author or a language user. In other words, style as individuality relates to the way a writer or a language user manipulates linguistic resources to effectively communicate his/her thoughts and ideas, and which differentiates him/her from other writers or language users. Azuike (2006, pp.79-90) further argues that style as the individual is the regularity of patterns and features which rivets in the consciousness of the writer and which "constitutes a habit for him." He observes that "this pattern inexorably dots the landscape of his discourse. Like a habit, the pattern is familiar, identifiable, stubborn and comfortably sheltered in his verbal thickets ... it always beckons on the writer, "here I am, use me." And always, naturally, helplessly and dutifully, he obeys" (pp.79-80). Hence, it is obvious that style as individuality is rooted in the mental make-up of the language user (Herdan 1981, p.12; Azuike 2006, p.80). Therefore, the recurring linguistic indices which cannot be divorced from the speech or writing of a language user reiterate and establish his/her style as an individual, hence his/her idiolect.

A common denominator that cuts across the diction of the novels of Adimora-Ezeigbo is lexical borrowing. The novelist seems to be inseparable with borrowing, not as a result of non-proficiency in the English language but as a habit, in order to achieve some stylistic ends. Thus, lexical borrowing is an index of her diction; a decimal of her idiolect. This study examines borrowing in *The Last of the Strong Ones*, *House of Symbols* and *Children of the Eagle* which the novelist conceives as trilogy. The stylistic import of lexical borrowing in the studied texts is pointed out in the analysis.

Lexis and Lexical Borrowing

Lexis, in a general sense, signifies vocabulary or diction. It "is the most important means we possess for expressing or encoding our ideas and experiences" (Wales 1989, p.275). Alo's (1995, p.18) opinion on the concept is that "lexis is the level of linguistic analysis and description concerned with the way in which the vocabulary of a language is organized." Diction, the "raw material" for a linguistic "edifice" therefore, is a paramount decimal that shapes and defines the style of a writer/speaker. As such, the choices made at this level are crucial in understanding and interpreting the message, and the meaning conceived and encoded by the writer/speaker.

Literary artistes are usually careful and determinate in the choice of the lexical items they use to construct their literary "edifice." This is so because the meaning, aesthetics and the force of their message are determined by their diction, among several others, hence, the tact deployed in determining their lexical entries.

Lexical borrowing, an outcome of language contact, has been said to be "the most widespread type of linguistic transfer" (Rendon 2008, p.65). Lexical borrowing along with coinages, compounding, blending, clipping, backformation, conversion, acronyms, reduplication and affixation, has been identified as the major word formation processes in

English, and the major tools for the development and growth of the vocabulary of the English language (Wright & Hope 1996, p.160; Odebunmi 2006, pp.44-54; Jowitt 2009, pp.30-37; Yule 2010, pp.53-59). Interaction of the English language with other languages such as French, Latin, Greek, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Japanese, Bantu, Arabic, Swedish, and Dutch (to mention just a few) has led to the adoption of several lexical items from these languages into the lexicon of English, which, in turn, has led to the growth and development of the English lexicon. Tarev (2012, p.945), lending credence to this stance, succinctly submits that lexical borrowing is a way of enriching a language. He categorizes reasons for borrowing into two - extralinguistic and linguistic. However, Rendon (2008, pp.65-66) outlines three reasons for the prominence of loan words/terms thus:

- (1) Lexical borrowing accomplishes the extension of the denotational capacity of the recipient language ...
- (2) The perceptual saliency of content words on the basis of their phonetic shape
- (3) The semantic transparency of content items

Some efforts have been made to define or explain lexical borrowing; however, only two of such are mentioned here for time and space. Thomason and Kaufman (1988, p.37) conceive borrowing as “the incorporation of foreign features into a group’s native language by speakers of that language: the native language is maintained but is changed by the addition of the incorporated feature.” The definition of Thomason and Kaufman implies loaning from the superstrate, the prestigious language, into the substrate. Akindele and Adegbite (2005, p.40) view the concept “as the occasional use of items from one language in the utterances of another language.” The definition of Akindele and Adegbite does not restrict borrowing from only the superstrate; it can also be from a substrate to the superstrate (as the case in this study). Borrowing, within the purview of this paper, therefore, is the introduction, use and adoption of lexical stock of a language or languages in the communication of another different language. Bloomfield (1933, p.444), in an earlier study, classifies borrowing into two major types – dialect borrowing and cultural borrowing. While cultural borrowing is a situation “where the borrowed features come from a different language,” dialect borrowing implies that “the borrowed features come from within the same speech-area.” Studies have also established that any linguistic feature can be borrowed so far there is a greater intensity of contact between language speakers (Haugen 1951; Muysken 1981; Thomason & Kaufman 1988; Rendon 2008). To this end, borrowing is a linguistic feature that is characteristic of monolingualism, bilingualism and multilingualism (Akindele & Adegbite 2005, p.40).

Language users do engage in lexical borrowing to achieve certain ends – writers inclusive. For a wider readership and the promotion of their culture and worldview, majority of African/Nigerian writers employ the English language as their channel of communication. In recent times, however, it is observed that African writers are introducing lexical borrowing (especially lexical items from their mother tongues and national languages) into their works expressed in the English language, not as a result of lack of proficiency in English but a way of couching and accentuating their culture and contextualizing their works; this is a way of reiterating, disseminating and preserving their cultural heritage and values. Among renowned

Nigerian literary artistes noted and notable for this are Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Niyi Osundare, Femi Osofisan and Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo. This present study is in consonance with the submission of lexical importation in that the paper examines lexical borrowing as an element of the diction of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo in her trilogy - *The Last of the Strong Ones* (1996), *House of Symbols* (2001) and *Children of the Eagle* (2002).

Statement of the Problem

The researcher is aware that there are a few studies on the novels of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo. Nwaiwu (2011) studied “Facts and Fiction in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo’s *Children of the Eagle* and *The Last of the Strong Ones*.” Oba (2011) examined gender issues in Adimora-Ezeigbo’s *Trafficked*. Nwaiwu’s and Oba’s studies are undergraduate long essays; they considered the texts from a literary perspective. Alabi (2009) did a study on the syntactic and lexico-semantic structures of proverbs in Achebe’s and Adimora-Ezeigbo’s trilogies. Alabi’s study of proverbs covered *The Last of the Strong Ones*, *House of Symbols* and *Children of the Eagle* (2002). Alagbe (2013) has considered a stylistic study of war discourse in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo’s *Roses and Bullets*. Besides, Awa (2016) did a literary stylistic assessment of language and culture in *The Last of the Strong Ones*. Mahmud’s (2023) study dwelt on culture in Adimora-Ezeigbo’s *Trafficked*. The present study examines lexical borrowing as an index of Adimora-Ezeigbo’s idiolect in her trilogy – *The Last of the Strong Ones*, *House of Symbols* and *Children of the Eagle* – which, to the best of the knowledge of the researcher, is an area that is yet to be adequately explored by scholars. Hence, the paper considers the sources and forms of lexical borrowing in the trilogy of the novelist as well as their context of usage.

Research Procedure

Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo has five novels to her credit namely *The Last of the Strong Ones*, *House of Symbols*, *Children of the Eagle*, *Trafficked* and *Roses and Bullets*. She conceives the first three novels as a trilogy. The corpora for this study, therefore, are the three novels of Adimora-Ezeigbo - *The Last of the Strong Ones*, *House of Symbols* and *Children of the Eagle*. The diction of the texts was carefully examined while some borrowed lexemes and expressions were identified for consideration.

Theoretical Framework

This investigation adopts Systemic Functional Grammar, propounded by Halliday, for analysis. Functional Grammar is a functional language theory developed as a response to Generative Grammar in particular (Rendon 2008, p.46). The grammar specifically stresses a functional view of language “as an instrument of social communication” (Rendon: *ibid*). Corroborating this submission, Dik (1997, p.3) notes that: “in the functional paradigm a language is in the first place conceptualized as an instrument of social interaction among human beings, used with the intention of establishing communicative relationships.” Reiterating the functional use of language, Nuyts (2003, p.60) posits that communicative function of language is not in isolation, rather it goes along with the other functions such as information, intention, socialization and contextualization. The position of Nuyts above lends credence to the view of Rendon (2008, p.47) that “any theory of grammar that boasts a truly functional approach should therefore

prioritize pragmatics, semantics and discourse as the interface between language use and language structure ...” Thus, Systemic Functional Grammar relates the function of language to a particular context and situation. The grammatical model is found relevant to identify the structural units of the borrowed items in the texts under study.

Data Presentation and Discussion

The data presented below is culled from the three novels (trilogy) of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo - *The Last of the Strong Ones*, *House of Symbols*, and *Children of the Eagles*.

Borrowing in *The Last of the Strong Ones*

In building the vocabulary of *The Last of the Strong Ones*, Adimora-Ezeigbo utilizes lexical items from various domains of human endeavour such as religion, health, military, trade and commerce, culinary science, linguistics, geography, education, psychology, politics and kinship terms. Besides, another linguistic input noticeable in the diction of *The Last of the Strong Ones* is Igbo lexical items and expressions. In an attempt to reiterate the setting of the novel, and give the work a local colouration, Adimora-Ezeigbo generously employs lexical items and expressions from her mother tongue, Igbo, to develop the narrative. She blends Igbo lexemes and expressions with English to flavour the narrative. Examples of Igbo words and expressions in the novel are presented below with their semantic fields.

- (i) Health: *omandide* (p.71), *dibia* (p.76), *ibi* (p.100), *o-no-n'ala-ahu-egbe* (p.121)
- (ii) Food: *uziza*, *utazi* (p.32), *oha* (p.58), *foofoo* (p.115), *ogbara_oti* (4p.2)
- (iii) Tree/Plant: *utu* (p.14), *iroko*, *ube*, *ukpaka*, *uri*, *uhie* (p.37), *ogbu* (p.86), *icheku* (p.102)
- (iv) Tradition: *nkushi* (p.32), *nluikwa* (p.37), *ogbodu* (p.56), *nmu-oku*, *ime-chi* (p.57)
- (v) Religion: *Ndemmiri* (p.50), *Ogwugwu* (p.65), *Isigwu* (p.66)

Other lexemes include: *umuada* (p.1), *aluada* (p.2), *obuofo* (p.3), *kosiri* (p.5), *apiti* (p.22), *obejiri* (p.25), *egedege* (p.31), *umunna* (p.100), *ozo* (p.119), *Ezeagha* (p.150), *Ewo!* (p.162), *Ewuu!* (p.174), *Ihiem!* (p.174), to mention but a few.

A close observation of these loan words, in their various contexts, shows that all of them (except “Ewo!, Ewuu!” and “Ihiem!”) are nouns, hence confirming literature that nouns are the most borrowed items in language contact situations (McColl-Millar 2007, p.27; Rendon 2008, p.66). “Ewo!, Ewuu!” and “Ihiem!” mentioned above are interjections. All these lexemes are colloquial in that they are used at the informal contexts during conversations of the characters in the novel. Note the following examples.

- (i) “I took an *obejiri* along to stave off possible attacks” (p.25).
Obejiri (noun) means “a short knife.” While narrating her autobiography to Umuga historians and custodians, Ejimnaka makes the above statement.
- (ii) The coming of *kosiri* to Umuga was an entirely different threat. They were strangers who acted as if they owned the land. (p.37).
Kosiri (noun) means “white people” (singular or plural).

(iii) The little boy was the son of Abuodinma, who was married to an Agbaja man. He was visiting his grandmother and receiving the special treatment reserved for *nwadiala* (p.41).

Nwadiala (noun) signifies “a kinsman.”

(iv) *Egberebere bia nje were o-o-o-o!*

Egberebere bia nje were o-o-o-o! (p.56)

Meaning

The kite has landed, let us go and collect/get o-o-o-o!

The kite has landed, let us go and collect/get o-o-o-o!

This is a cult song that Obiatu chants for Onyekozuru’s daughter to lull her to sleep, the evening he visits her (Onyekozuru). Through the folksong, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo portrays rich Igbo culture and thus transfers her cultural identity into English.

(v) Success came in other ways to double the fullness of our joy. Obiatu took the *ozo* title and I became a *lolo*. (p.36)

Ozo is the name of a title in Igbo land, though a noun, it can also be used as an adjective as seen in extract (v) above. *Lolo* (noun) means “a queen.”

The use of Igbo lexemes such as *Obufofo* (inner council committee), *Oluada* (top women representatives), *ozo*, *lolo* and *alutaradi* (association of wives) is to account for and reiterate an organized political and communal system that existed in Igbo land prior to the advent of colonial administration.

The use of these Igbo lexemes are not only apt, the English equivalents for some of them (if they exist) do not capture the weight of their sense. For example, only Igbo natives will appreciate the signification, importance and the weight of *obufofo*, *ozo*, *lolo* in Igbo socio-cultural milieu. Some of these borrowed lexemes, terms and concepts do not exist in English culture. How could the novelist have captured them without borrowing them? Other words include *uhie* (a substance from a plant, reddish in colour and usually mixed with water, the mixture is rubbed all over the body to smoothen and beautify it), *ogbodu* (an uninitiated into the masquerade cult), *fofofo* (a type of food made from cassava), *ogwugwu* (god of vengeance). Preponderance of Igbo lexemes and expressions, among others, is to showcase Igbo language and its rich culture to the readers.

Borrowing in *House of Symbols*

In *House of Symbols*, Adimora-Ezeigbo borrows lexical items from four Nigerian languages namely Nigerian Pidgin English, Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa to further entrench the local colour of the text and to show her linguistic versatility. Nigerian Pidgin English has been gaining more ground in recent times in Nigeria so much so that its utility has been extended to literary works (Egbokhare 2001, pp.112-119). Some Nigerian literary artistes use Pidgin English for certain effects, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo inclusive. Note the following examples of borrowed items in Nigerian Pidgin extracted from *House of Symbols*.

- (i) Congregation, look at my *nyash*
 And see if *Krokro* dey
 No *krokro* dey, Father (p.277)

The above extract is uttered by a boy while making fun of the Roman Catholic priests and congregation. The second one below is a dialogue between Osai and one of the herders, the night the County Headquarters is robbed. The conversation goes thus:

- (ii) *Where you dey come from?* Osai asks one of the men.
Me, I dey come from Awka, I dey go Orlu,” he replies with a smile that reveals two rows of
 teeth stained by kola nuts. (p.340)

Since most herders are uneducated and, consequently, are not proficient in the Standard English, Osai, who does not understand their language, has no option than to communicate with the man in Pidgin, the linguistic “middle ground” in Nigerian linguistic ecology. Osai, through Pidgin English, accommodates and shows solidarity with the herder for effective communication. Thus, via Pidgin English, Adimora-Ezeigbo proves and reiterates that Nigerian Pidgin is a linguistic middle ground for communication among Nigerians.

Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa languages are the most prominent (and regional) Nigerian indigenous languages, hence, drawing lexical items from them gives the work a national outlook. Of course, Igbo lexemes are more preponderant in the work than those of Yoruba and Hausa in order to reiterate the setting of the work and the mother tongue of the novelist. Cases of words and expressions in these codes are demonstrated below. Igbo Lexemes and Expressions:

- (a) Not even the sight of the specially constructed *okpore* – baby walker – could coax her to stand to her feet. (p.9)
 (b) ... she reclined on a raised wooden chair covered with expensive *Akwete* cloth. (p.29)
 (c) ... Aziagba had given him some coconuts and had also loaded the truck with gifts of palm oil, a bunch of bananas, a basket of *akidi* and a raffia bag crammed with snails for Eaglewoman (p.78)
 (d) Three tasks in particular elbow their way to the front: to fetch Aziagba for *omugwo* so that she can assist in taking care of Eaglewoman and the baby ... (p.225)
 (e) She has the type of clean and flawless skin Atagu people describe as ‘*oma uma awu ahu*’, ‘one for whom bathing is superfluous.’ (p.130)
 (f) ... the parrot hails her, enquiring about the children: “*Missis-o, umuazi ha putakwara? – did the children sleep well and are they up? Missis-o, umuazi ha putakwara? – did the children sleep well and are they up?*” and he will not stop his singsong until Eaglewoman replies: *Ha putara – they are fine.*” (p.138)
 (g) What she has is *ego oyinbo*, white man’s money. (p.165)
 (h) “*Missis ekeneem, I thank you.*” (p.188)

The italicized are cases of loan units in excerpts (a) to (h) above. Apart from examples (f) and (h) that are sentential, other examples above are nouns. Not only that; the borrowed words and expressions are used at the informal domains. While the gloss of a few lexical items are captured in English for the reader to understand (such as examples (a), (e), (f), (g), and (h)), others are not since such terms do not exist in English culture (like *akwete* (a type of fabric material), *omugwo* (a practice where an older woman goes to take care of a woman who has just delivered of a baby and the baby), *akidi* (a variety of beans grown in stalks)). To this end, the use of Igbo lexemes and expressions are apt: they are suitable in their various contexts of use, they project Igbo culture; some of them do not have English equivalents.

Yoruba Lexemes and Expressions

In building the work, the novelist utilizes a few Yoruba words and expressions as exemplified below.

- (i) With a sweeping movement, she hoists the child on her back and ties her as comfortably as she can with her wide *oja*. (p.104)
- (j) The pastor's wife had shuddered like someone suffering from *iba*. (p.132)
- (k) All they think about therefore is the food ... *moinmoin*, and yam porridge. (p.242)
- (l) Osai wears an *agbada* with voluminous folds gathered on each shoulder. (p.243)
Oja (a swaddling cloth used to strap a baby to the back), *iba* (malaria/fever), *moinmoin* (a type of paste made from beans in Yoruba cuisine) and *agbada* (a type of flowing gown worn by men in Yoruba/Nigerian culture) are nouns. Their use is apt as they are non-existent in English culture.

All the Yoruba expressions in *House of Symbols* are uttered by Titi Odeyemi, a friend of Eaglewoman, the wife of the Resident Surveyor. Some of the expressions are presented thus:

- (m) "*Ekuru aro, Teasher*," she greeted Osai in her Yoruba language. (p.112)
- (n) "Eaglewoman, *kilode* ... where are you going with all these?" (p.112)
- (o) "*Olorun maje*, God forbid," exclaimed Titi, horrified. (p.112)
- (p) She turned to Osai: "*Teasher, mokie*, what is this I hear?" *E ma binu*, please, do not be offended. (p.112)

Ekuru aro, Teasher is "good morning teacher", *Kilode?* simply means "what is it?" while *Teasher, mokie* signifies "teacher, I greet you." *E ma binu*, on the other hand, means "don't be angry/offended."

Providing the gloss of "*Olorun maje*" and "*e ma binu*" is for emphasis and for the reader to understand what the character says. Code-mixing/code-switching which marks the speech of Titi Odeyemi depicts what is obtainable in the discourse of Nigerians at the informal contexts.

Hausa Lexemes and Expressions.

Cases of Hausa lexemes and expressions in the novel are *iyanga*, *jara* and *Kai! Wallahi!*; they are presented as follows:

- (q) Yes, a worker can make *iyanga* for traders and tantalize them with the shiny coins ... (p.156)
- (r) Laughing, she had said to them: This is *jara*, you do not have to pay for it ... (p.312)
- (s) “*Kai! Wallahi!*” shouts one of the cattle men, swinging his whip. (p.340)

Iyanga in this context means “tantalize” while *jara* means “tilly.” The two words are nouns. *Kai!* is an interjection while *Wallahi!* is an exclamatory sentence meaning “I swear!” Like those of Igbo and Yoruba, these Hausa words and expression are used at the informal contexts.

The use of Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa lexemes and expressions in the text does not only give the text a Nigerian colouration, it also portrays lexical borrowing which characterizes the speech of most Nigerians while communicating with one another at the informal domains. This is made possible via language contact situation among Nigerian peoples. Besides, these loan units also reveal the linguistic versatility of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo; she is not only proficient in English and Igbo, she is aware of some lexemes in other codes.

Borrowing in *Children of the Eagle*

Lexical borrowing as part of the building blocks in *Children of the Eagle* transcends Nigerian linguistic environment. Adimora-Ezeigbo utilizes lexical items and expressions from three foreign languages – Latin, Zulu and Hebrew. The Nigerian indigenous languages from which the novelist borrows lexical stock are Nigerian Pidgin, Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa and Ibibio. Lexical borrowing in *Children of the Eagle* does not just give the work a local outlook; it also gives it an international face. In Nigerian linguistic domain, Pidgin is employed for communication mostly at the informal contexts. The code is used for three prominent purposes in *Children of the Eagle* – to express feelings, to quote someone and to indicate the social status of some characters. Examples of extracts in the code are presented below.

Nigerian Pidgin Expressions

- (i) “*Na waa! Mama, na waa* for you! How can you prove this claim?” – from Amara, with a tone laced with astonishment. (p.26)

In the above excerpt, Amara - a proficient user of the English language - code-mixes in Pidgin and English to express surprise and disapproval concerning what their mother says. She (Amara) also uses the code to indicate solidarity with her mother and her siblings who are also proficient users of the English language.

- (ii) “Mama, they don come at last?” he asks Eaglewoman, in pidgin English, though he understands and speaks the local language reasonably well. (p.34)

In extract (ii), Okon, who likes the English language but lacks proficiency in the code due to his inadequate exposure to formal education and standard English, communicates with Eaglewoman in Pidgin. Hence, he belongs to the (linguistic) lower class; for the code was primarily associated with the people who belonged to this group – people without formal education. Okon chooses to speak with Eaglewoman in Pidgin as a way of accommodating her and her daughters who belong to the linguistic upper class.

- (iii) If I asked him, he would claim some buyers refused to pay him. ‘One man chop, come run away, anodder man chop make *wahala*, refuse to bring money,’ he would say. (p.121)

In excerpt (iii), Eaglewoman, in the exact words of Okon, narrates the excuses he gives in the early days of selling buns for her.

Igbo Lexemes and Expressions

It is noteworthy to state that Igbo lexemes and expressions preponderate in *Children of the Eagle* more than other borrowed codes. The following are among the instances in the novel.

- (i) “Children are, as our people say, *ngaa jiderem* – yours to hold only for a while ...” (p.17).
(ii) “*Agunwayi* – Leopardess,” he calls her fondly. “Have you landed with your cubs?” (p.28)
(iii) *Awo kporo ibe ya wokom* – a toad calling its mate toadie – as our people say. (p.151)
(iv) A few of her customers sit outside on wooden benches feasting on plates of pepper soup and *ngwongwo*. (p.175)
(v) Mama’s tearful voice asked again and again, “*Onye gbachuru mwam?* – Who has blighted my child?” (p.206)

Apart from *Awo kporo ibe ya wokom* and *Onye gbachuru mwam* that are sentences, other Igbo lexemes above are nominals. The use of these words and expressions are apt in that they add to the aesthetics of the diction and the local colouration of the text; they also serve as an embellishment to the narrative (especially i and ii - metaphor, iii (proverb) and v (rhetorical question)). Besides, proverbial expressions (like iii above) mark the text as an African writing (Osundare 2003, p.30). The contexts of the usage of these loan items and expressions are informal.

Yoruba Lexemes and Expressions

- (i) Mama Yoruba kept repeating certain words in her native language punctuated with laughter – *Kabo*, Eaglewoman ... *Beni* ... *Adupe* ... *Eseo* ... *Oma se o* ... *Oti o* ... *Olorun maje* ... *Amin, amin, amin*. All this made me laugh in spite of my great discomfort. (p.210)
(ii) Ogonna is bedecked in *iro* and *buba* made from an immaculately white lace material. (p.254)
(iii) When it has to do with an election into a key position such as the vice-chancellorship of a university, some of the candidates engage the services of *babalawos*, native doctors and witches. (p.272)

Kabo (you are welcome), *Beni* (yes), *Adupe/Eseo* (thank you), *Oma se o* (it is unfortunate), *Oti o* (No), *Olorun maje* (God forbid), *Amin, amin, amin* (Amen, amen, amen), *iro* and *buba* (a local apparel for Yoruba women meaning wrapping attire and a type of traditional blouse) while

babalawo means a medicine-man. Addition of suffix “s” to form the plural of *babalawo* is Adimora-Ezeigbo’s morphological creativity to conform to other plural nouns in that clause (native doctors, witches). *Kabo, Adupe, Oma se o, Olorun maje* are sentences while “*iro, buba, babalawos*” are nouns. All the words and expressions are utilized at the informal contexts. The use of these Yoruba lexical items and expressions portrays the linguistic background of the character which the novelist wants to project to the reader. It also shows the linguistic versatility of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo; she is not only proficient in her mother tongue and English; she is also familiar with some terms, concepts and expressions in other languages.

Hausa Lexemes and Expressions

- (i) ‘*Aye ye ye*
Kauna
Kauna
Itace Baba
Kauna na Yesu
Kauna ta hada mu’ (p.161)
- (ii) “Too much cloth goes into the making of our clothes. It’s the same for our men, you know. Think of the *babariga* and the *agbada*.” (p.255)

Extract (i) is a song in Hausa language while *babariga* is the Hausa word for Yoruba *agbada*.

Ibibio

Obot hovers in the background, in indescribable distress. “*Mma mi-o, Mma mi-o*,” she sobs, wringing her hands. (p.329)

Mma mi-o, Mma mi-o simply denotes “my mother o, my mother o.”

Latin

My Latin teacher in secondary school used to say that any form of work is praying. His favourite Latin proverb is ‘*Laborare est orare*’ – to work is to pray.’ (p.105)

Obioma, while reflecting on the significance of praying (as a preacher), remembers the proverb conversant with her former teacher. Borrowing this Latin proverb is employed to cement the need for prayer in that context, and to establish the universal truth and wisdom embedded in proverbs.

Zulu

That was God’s *izibongo* we listened to, Nnenna says. (p.260)

Hebrew

Alpha and *Omega* the beginning and the end – please, accept our praise and our prayer, today and everyday. (p.259)

Mma mi-o, izibongo, Alpha and *Omega* (meaning “the beginning and the end”) from Ibibio, Zulu and Hebrew respectively are nouns; they are used at the informal domain of interaction.

The use of the lexemes and expressions of other languages exposes the reader to some terms and concepts in those codes. Not only that, they are a reflection of the rich linguistic repertoire of the novelist.

Conclusion

Diction plays a major role in understanding a text and in revealing its aesthetics; hence the carefulness always exercised by literary artistes in selecting their lexical entries. The choice made, with the utility of such lexical entries, therefore, is one of the parameters that define a literary artiste and his/her idiolect. This paper has succinctly demonstrated that lexical borrowing is one of the indices that define the style of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and shape her idiolect in that the phenomenon preponderates in the diction of her novels especially – *The Last of the Strong Ones*, *House of Symbols* and *Children of the Eagle* considered in this study. Utilizing Systemic Functional Grammar for analysis, especially to identify the word class and the sentence types of the loan units, findings show that Adimora-Ezeigbo borrows lexical items and expressions from Nigerian indigenous languages (Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, Ibibio and Nigerian Pidgin) and a few other foreign languages – Zulu, Hebrew, and Latin to give her texts a local, national and international outlook. Loan words from foreign codes enable her readers to acquire some terms in such languages. Besides, borrowed lexemes from her mother tongue – Igbo – enables her to portray and showcase her rich culture while using English as her medium of communication. Furthermore, loan words and expressions from Yoruba, Hausa, and Ibibio are used, among others, to depict lexical borrowing that characterizes and facilitates effective communication among Nigerian peoples. Some of the words lack immediate or direct English equivalents with the same cultural sense, hence the aptness of their use in the novels. On the other hand, Pidgin is employed for solidarity, quotation and for indicating the linguistic class of some characters. A vast majority of these borrowed lexemes are nouns while a few cases are interjections and simple sentences. The utility of the loan words and expressions is at various informal contexts during conversations of the interlocutors. Lexical borrowing, therefore, is an index of Adimora-Ezeigbo's idiolect; the same thing identifies her with other writers in contact literature.

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