A SOCIO-STYLISTIC INVESTIGATION OF SUNSET AT DAWN

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Abstract

As one of the Nigerian civil war memoirs which discuss and mirror, poignantly, issues and events associated with the war, Chukwuemeka Ike’s Sunset at Dawn has not been much explored most especially from the perspective of socio-stylistics. Motivated by the paucity of works on the text in linguistic scholarship, this study therefore explores the socio-stylistic features of the text with particular attention to the influence of the socio-context of the war on the use of language in the text.All the instances and contexts of war in the text were sampled and subjected to content analysis using insights from the ethnographic theories and approaches to style. The study revealed that the socio-context of war in which the author found himself exerts a considerable influence on the use of language in the text. This study therefore argues that analysing Nigerian Civil War Memoirs (NCWM) using a socio-stylistic approach enhances a better understanding of the memoirs. It equally illuminates the discourse value of socio-stylistics and provides additional useful material for civil war discourse, most especially in Nigeria.

Introduction

Writers on the Nigerian civil war using different perspectives, most especially from the literary perspectives namely, prose, poetry and drama, have examined the different facets, phases, implications and prospects of this war. The underlying lesson in all, as noted by Etiowo(2014:130), is that the liberative undertone of every/any war must never be abused and/or compromised for selfish purposes or unattainable goals. The Nigerian war literature is collectively created out of the Nigerian civil war experience between the Nigerian side headed by the then Gen. Yakubu Gowon and the Biafran side headed by Col. Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. Studies on Nigerian Civil war memoirs (literary and non-literary) have, in the literature, adopted variants of approaches namely; historical (e.g. Salawu 2010; Doron 2011;Akingbe 2012, Orji and N-ue 2013 etc.); sociological (e.g. Nwanne 2014); literary analytical (e.g. Johnson 1980;Amuta1988;Oriaku 2005;Okuyade2010;Adejumo 2013;Onyia 2014;Ayodabo 2014;Etiowo 2014; Obi and Okunrobo, 2015; Nwachukwu and Nwachukwu 2017 etc.); and linguistic analytical perspective (e.g. Isidore 2010, 2012; Robert 2014 etc.).

Considering the extant literature on the linguistic study of civil war memoirs most especially in Nigeria, Chukwuemeka Ike’s Sunset at Dawn has not been much explored most especially from the perspective of socio-stylistics. The few works that we are aware of in this area have only explored the linguistic – stylistic features of the text (Isidore 2010, 2012). Apart from these, other linguistic studies of civil war literature most especially prose fiction have focused on works of other writers (e.g. see Laurea 2013;Osunbade 2013; Robert 2014;Morve 2014; Szuba(forthcoming) etc.). While Isidore (2010) explores the linguistic-stylistic features of Chukwuemeka Ike’s selected novels including Sunset at Dawn, Isidore (2012) focuses on lexical choices and expressions that coalesce to achieve the intended message of the text. Besides, other studies on Sunset at Dawn have largely adopteda literary analytical approach.

Motivated by the dearth of works on Sunset at Dawn in linguistic scholarship, the present study therefore explores the socio-stylistic features of the text with particular attention to the influence of socio-context of the war on the use of language in the text. With this, the study intends to fill the existing void in civil war discourse and,simultaneously, complements existing studies on literary discourse in general and civil war literature (memoirs) in particular in linguistic research. This studycontends that certain socio-contextual variables that characterise a particular speech community exert tremendous influence on the style of a particular speakerand/or writer. Style is “manner of expression which differs according to the various contexts” (Oloruntoba-Oju, 1999: 127)). Oloruntoba-Oju (op.cit.) states further that stylistic variation may be reckoned in terms of the sociolinguistic contexts producing the variation. According to him, style may differ according to place, time, individuality and modality. This apparent meeting point between stylistics and sociolinguistics has therefore informed the socio-stylistic approach adopted in the present study. For data, all the instances and contexts of war in Sunset at Dawn were sampled and subjected to content analysis using insights from the ethnographic theories and approach to style, most especially, the eclectic approach that considers style as a matter of choice, individuality and situation.

This study is significant for complementing existing studies on literary discourse, most especially civil war memoirs. It also provides additional insights on socio-stylistic features that characterise Chukwuemeka Ike’s Sunset at Dawn. Besides, a study of Sunset at Dawn using socio-stylistic lenses is significant in throwing additional insight into the link between stylistics and sociolinguistics as well as complementing the argument that the style of a particular language user does not arise out of a vacuum but that its production, purpose and effect are deeply embedded in the particular context in which he/she plays his/her distinctive roles (cf. Verdonk, 2002: 6). The present study equally promises a better understanding of prose fiction as a genre of literary discourse in general, and civil war memoirs in particular.

Summary of Text

Sunset at Dawn is a tale of war, hardship and wanton destruction of high magnitude. The text creatively chronicles the fratricidal thirty-month war between Nigeria and Biafra, in which the latter made a desperate effort to secede from the former. The novel is set mainly in the carved out Biafran republic, with flashes of actions and events told about some mid-western parts of Nigeria. The first major cause of the war is attributed to the death of two prominent politicians of Northern Nigeria origin in the 1966 military incursion into the Nigerian political landscape. The demise of the two Northern Nigeria politicians was believed to be ethnically orchestrated as no prominent Igbo was murdered in the coup. The

Northernerstherefore launched a reprisal attack on Eastern Nigerians (especially the Igbos) living in the North. This resulted in what was tagged ‘the pogrom’. On 29th May and 29th September 1966, some thirty thousand Igbo people were mercilessly murdered, their property looted and/or destroyed.

This Igbo people massacre led to the declaration of the sovereign state of Biafra on May 30, 1967. War broke out on 6 July 1967, with the Biafra sun as a distinguishing emblem. The whole story revolves around Dr.AmiloKanu, his family and relations and Duke Bassey from Anang Province, Professor Emeka Ezenwa from Onitsha, Barrister ChikeIfeji and Dr.Osita. The Biafran military forces do not measure up to the Nigerian forces in terms of military might. Some victory later recorded by the Biafran forces led to the declaration of full scale war on Biafra by the Nigerian Federal Military Government. Within a short period of time, some key towns and cities in Biafra such as Enugu, Calabar, and Onitsha etc. are captured by the Nigerian forces.

As some of these cities are falling to Nigerian forces, it becomes increasingly difficult for Fatima and her surviving son to stay in Obodo village where Dr.Kanu does not even own a hut. Then arrives Halima Uche, who narrates how brutally her husband was murdered in the North. By January 29, 1968, as the Nigerian government changes its currency in order to break the Biafran’s backbone, Biafra leaders also change their currency notes and postage stamps. The change of currency is particularly painful to Obodo people in many ways. In March 1968, the famous Abagana battle is fought. Afterwards, Port Harcourt, the main economic base of Biafra falls into the hand of the Nigerian side. This implies that Nigerian forces have practically captured Biafra thereby cutting off its sources of petroleum and electricity. The fall of Port Harcourt has far reaching socioeconomic implication for Biafra as the newly declared republic begins to experience what the author describes as ‘moneyokor’ and ‘kwashiokor’(page 160) in the story. Halima and her son are killed in the Obodo air-raid. There is also the great Umuahia air-raid closely followed by the fall of Obodo. Dr Kanu sends his orderly to evacuate his old parents from home. Despite the advice given to him by his associates, Dr Kanu later joins the Biafran army. Dr Kanu goes to the war front and is badly wounded. He is later killed in one of the air raids. Meanwhile, Biafra is practically exhausted. But in Nigeria, life has been normal. On January 14, 1970, the sovereign state of Biafra ceases to exist as the Biafran army commanders surrender and pledge to embrace the territorial integrity and the indivisible geographical entity called Nigeria.

Literary Texts as Civil War Memoirs

Memoirs have been described as self-narratives that are concerned with public life. They have references that transcend the author-as-primary-subject. As noted by Oriaku (2005: 96), memoirs present the collective ‘life’ or experiences of a group, class, or community of which the narrator-protagonist is only a significant member. Our conception of civil war memoirs in this study encompasses literary texts most especially the novels written by authors who had personal experiences of the war and afterwards used their works to recount their experiences during the war. Literature in the contemporary world is seen as both the mirror of the society and a means of projecting what is happening in the society(cf. Onyia 2014:1).Writers of civil war memoirs have employed their texts to project, though with some embellishment, what actually happened in what some writers have described as fratricidal conflict. Literature, as noted by Nwadike (1992), is artistic creation which is used to x-ray and portray the world as it is. Sharing the same view with Nwadike (op.cit.), Abonyi (2012) equally attests to the fact that literature paints a picture of real and imaginary life and by so doing x-rays the happenings in the society. Against this background therefore, literature on the Nigerian Civil War could be said to have been employed by their writers to portray the dehumanizing effects of the war.

War has been described as an action that results from a perceived wrong. It is a manifestation of an inability of parties to agree on terms that could be of mutual benefit to all parties involved. Wars could also involve the use of arms, especially when the conflict or disagreement or argument degenerates, and this could lead to destruction of both lives and property (cf. Etiowo 2014: 130). He corroborates this with the example of the Nigerian-Biafran war or the crisis in the Nigerian Niger Delta. War could also be ideological (fought through writing or verbally) as in gender or political positioning paper, is in both cases – as involving armed conflict and as in ideological differences, among others (Etiowo 2014: 130).The major predominant idea projected in most of the prose works written on the Nigerian civil war is that the war was an avoidable war that did no one any good.

Given the nature of war, writers of literary works most especially in Nigeria have found crisis or wars (of different magnitudes) as veritable tools employed for displaying their creative ingenuity. Besides, Nigerian writers on the civil war have exploited the features of memoir to articulate views held by their ethnic groups though they assumed to be narrating their experiences only(Oriaku 2005: 96). Little wonder then that renowned Nigerian literary writers most especially the novelists such as Chinua Achebe, Elechi Amadi, Chukwuemeka Ike, Isidore Okpewho, Festus Iyayi, Femi Osofisan, Flora Nwapa, BuchiEmecheta, etc. have focused on different dimensions of the Nigerian Civil War. In their writings, these writers, among others, have focused on major causes of the civil war such as social, cultural, political and economic tensions engendered by ethnic discord, suspicion and distrust, inept leadership, gender positioning and configurations as well as ethnic/economic/ecological crisis in the Niger Delta. Other factors identified as responsible for the Nigerian civil war include: sectional bias and structural imbalance of the pre-1966 Nigerian federation; the coup d’etat of 15th January and the counter coup of 29th July, 1966; the massacres of Igbo people in the North in May-October 1966; the creation of new states by the federal government in May 1967 and finally, the declaration of Biafran secession. All these have been at the centre of literary creativity. Corroborating this position, Amuta (1988:86) remarks that war “puts the greatest pressure on human nature, relationships and institutions, it becomes also a fertile ground for the literary imagination.”While commenting on the literature of the Nigerian civil war, Johnson (1980:149) also remarks that,

because of the proximity of the experience, the deep passions engendered by events and the personal involvement of the individual do have a direct bearing on the artistic creation.

From another perspective, Okuyade (2010: 201) points out that the story of the Nigerian civil war in the mediated context of literature could be seen as a documentation of hope for a wounded society because of the substantive way it dealt with the traditional themes of the integrity of the individual or the viability of the nation’s collective destiny during and after the war. Okuyade (op.cit.) argues further that since the testimony of the Nigerian Civil War has translated into an historical reality, the war story will continue to be of strategic importance for Nigerians.

Theoretical Framework

In this section, the theory of ethnography of communication and stylistic approaches of choice, individuality and situation are reviewed. These are discussed in turn.

Ethnography of Communication

The Ethnography of Communication otherwise known as Hyme’s SPEAKING (Hymes 1992) was introduced into sociolinguistic studies when the need for the analysis of language in its social context became imperative among linguists. The introduction of the theory into sociolinguistic studies marked a radical departure from Chomsky’s (1966) emphasis on linguistic competence and performance, a theory that deals with ideal situations which do not really exist (Mbisike 2005:187). For Chomsky (1966) cited in Williams (1992:172), “linguistic competence was a matter of the mastery of grammatical rules”. The proponents of the ethnography of communication have, however, forcibly maintained that there is much more than this to linguistic competence. For Hymes (1972), “the competency of users of language entails abilities and judgments relative to and interdependent with socio-cultural features”. Therefore, sociolinguists have variously argued for the expansion of the object of linguistic enquiry from linguistic competence to communicative competence (e.g. see Hymes 1972; Gumperz 1984; Gumperz and Hymes 1986; Williams 1992 etc.).

Communicative competence enables a child to acquire knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate (Hymes 1972). He notes further that

the child acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner. In short, a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events and to evaluate their accomplishment by others.

Therefore, communicative competence entails the mastery of grammatical rules as well as the ability to infer (generally) what the interaction is about, what is expected of us and general knowledge of the social norms of the society or social context in which the communicative encounter takes place (cf. Gumperz 1984:1; Williams 1992:172; Adegbite 2000:65; Mbisike 2005:188). For Adegbite (2000:65), “communicative competence implies the ability of participants in an interaction to relate linguistic forms with the social norms and situational features in order to interprete utterance correctly.”

Effective communication between interlocutors in a speech event requires that they both have the knowledge of all of the grammatical sentences of the language of communication as well as the awareness of certain cultural norms of the society in which they find themselves. Every society’s culture specifies the conventional or socio-cultural rules of behaviour which participants must share before they can communicate successfully or meaningfully with each other (Adegbite 2000:65, 2005:54). Participants’ knowledge of conventional or sociocultural rules or norms are essential for meaningful communicative interaction. This position corroborates Hymes’ (1966) cited in Williams (1992: 179) earlier contention that “the cultural and social knowledge of any society is an essential feature of successful communication.”

Besides, every language event takes place at a particular place with some people in attendance. This is called “context of situation” (Malinowski, 1923). The context of situation is based on the idea that the meaning of an utterance, word or an expression is provided only in the context in which it is uttered. Therefore, the analysis of language within the social context in which it is used was first described by Hymes (1964) as “ethnography of speaking” and later called ethnography of communication (Hymes 1972). This theory underscores the role of social context in the interpretation of utterances or speech events. In fact, for effective and meaningful interpretation of an utterance or speech event to be realized, the language user’s knowledge of the social context of such a speech event is important. Our utterances or speech events are more meaningful and effective when they are uttered in the appropriate social contexts (cf. Adeyanju 1998: 52).

Other factors that also determine language variation include the subject matter(s) or topic(s) being discussed; medium of communication (written/spoken), the physical setting and occasion of the language activity, the ‘context’ of the person spoken to and in particular, the role relationships and relative statuses of the participants in a discourse or speech event. All these have been recognized as features of social context (see Trudgill 1985: 100 – 102). Hymes (1972, 1992) has identified a number of features considered to be components or features of social context. For mnemonic convenience, Hymes (op. cit.) has therefore, suggested the acronym, SPEAKING to encapsulate all the features. Hymes’ components of SPEAKING, as reviewed by Adegbite (2005:53-71), are presented as follow:

Situation: This is composed of both the setting and scene. These refer to the general physical circumstances in which the communicative event takes place, including the time, period, place, weather conditions and cultural view of the setting.

Participants: This describes the status, roles and relationship between sender/addresser, on the one hand, and hearer/ receiver/ addressee, on the other hand. The speaker – hearer denotes participants in a speech event; sender – receiver denotes participants in both speech and non-fictional writing (i.e. real author and real reader); addresser-addressee denotes the implied author and implied reader of fictional texts.

Ends: This refers to outcomes of speech act, which can be classified into (i) results – intended and/or unintended, and (ii) goals – individual and/or general.

Act Sequence: This refers to the form and content of the message of text: how and what is said; ‘words’ and the ‘topic’.

Key: This describes the manner in which a textual message is conveyed, e.g. the lecture might be delivered in a precise way or perhaps in a light-hearted way.

Instrumentalities: These are the channels employed in communication and the forms of speech, e.g. telephone, telegram, face-to-face, E-mail,writing etc.

Norms: This refers to conventions or rules of social and speech behaviour: linguistic, paralinguistic and non-linguistic. Conventions may be universal or may be specific to cultures of participants.

Genres: Genres are categories which can be fairly identified through the linguistic forms they typically employ, e.g. poem, letter, story, etc.

The presentation above integrates components of both context of culture and context of situation. Adegbite (ibid:60) notes further that contextual meaning generates the concept of ‘stylistic’ meaning, which describes relations between linguistic forms and features of situational contexts; while it also includes ‘cotextual’ meaning which relates particular linguistic features to one another in the linguistic environment. Thus far, we have discussed ethnography of communication. We now discuss style and stylistics with particular attention to approaches to style adopted in this study.

Many definitions of the concept of style have been given in the literature. (e.g. see Crystal and Davy 1969; Hunston 1993; Babajide, 2000; Olujide,2002; Malmkjar and Carter, 2002, Verdonk,2002 etc.). For example, style is “the effectiveness of a mode of expression” which is achieved by “saying the right thing in the most effective way.”(Crystal and Davy, 1969:9). Devito (reviewed in Babajide, 2000:123) considers style as “the selection and arrangement of linguistic features which are open to choice.” To Malmkjar and Carter (2002:510), style is “a consistent occurrence in the text of certain items and structures, or types of items and structure among those offered by the language as a whole.” For Olujide (2002:344), style refers to “the particular way language is used by an individual writer in a particular context.” This definition emphasizes the fact that style is concerned with the idiosyncratic use of language and choices made by individual writers in respect of particular situations or contexts. Every language user possesses a linguistic peculiarity or lexical predilection – ‘a linguistic thumbprint’ (Olujide, op.cit.) which is a set of linguistic features characteristic of that language user. For effective negotiation of meaning to take place therefore, such a language user (writer or speaker) now chooses certain linguistic features to suite a particular communicative context. Context exerts tremendous influence on style. Writing on style in language, Verdonk (2002:6) argues that style does not arise out of a vacuum but that its production, purpose, and effects are deeply embedded in the particular context in which both the writer and the reader play their distinctive roles.

Thus far, we have examined the concept of style from different perspectives. Now, we would discuss “stylistics.” Malmkjar and Carter (2002:510) consider stylistics as “the study of style in written and spoken texts.” This definition seems to be too general as it fails to emphasise the mode of operation in stylistics. Widdowson (1977) gives a more focused definition of the concept by describing it as “the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation.” Towing the line of Widdowson (op.cit.), Oladosu (2003:217) defines stylistics as “the art of using linguistic rules and regulations to characterize a literary output.” For Verdonk (2002:4), stylistics is “the analysis of distinctive expression in language and the description of its purpose and effect.” Implicit in this definition is the fact that in stylistics, language occupies a prime place and that stylistic analysis is not done without a purpose because every language user adopts a particular style with a view to achieving particular communicative intention. No wonder that Verdonk (ibid:5) sees style as “a distinctive way of using language for some purpose and to some effect.” Given the objective of the present study, Verdonk’s definition of stylistics is hereby adopted as our operational definition. This is because this study is out to investigate the recurrence of certain linguistic features in Chukwuemeka Ike’s Sunset at Dawn, the socio-stylistic features employed by the writer and the situational or contextual factors responsible for the recurrence of the features.

Quite a number of approaches to the study of style have been proposed in the literature. These are: style as deviation from the norm; style as choice from variant forms; style as a temporal phenomenon; style as situation and style as individuality etc. The question now is that: Is style really a matter of choice, a deviation from a norm, a temporal affair or a matter of situation and individuality etc.? Given our present engagement, we argue that for a language user (speaker or writer) to be effective, he needs to adopt an eclectic approach to style. Therefore, style could be seen as essentially a matter of choice, individuality, and situation. Every language user has his own peculiar way(s) of using language and the situational category of discourse determines, to a greater extent, the linguistic resources that an individual writer can choose to describe situations as they present themselves in the actual physical context of occurrence (cf.Odebunmi, Aladeyomi and Olaniyan, 2004:106). The present study contends that the prevailing social situation or context in which a language user (writer or speaker) finds himself determines, to a considerable extent, the style he chooses or adopts in communicating his ideas. This corroborates Verdonk’s (2002:6) argument that “style does not arise out of a vacuum but that its production, purpose and effect are deeply embedded in the particular context in which both the writer and the reader play their distinctive roles.

Findings and Discussion

Our findings in respect of the socio-stylistic features that characterise civil war memoirs in Nigeria are discussed in this section. In analysing the data, we are proposing a socio-stylistic model. The model has benefited from the stylistic approaches and sociolinguistic theories reviewed in this study. The most important elements of the theories relevant to this study have been captured by the model as shown below. The heart of our discussion is presented in Figure 1 – a sociostylistic model packaged to show the pattern and features of stylistics and sociolinguistics in civil war memoirs in Nigeria and it thus reveals the meeting point between stylistics and sociolinguistics yet to be explored using

Chukwuemeka Ike’s Sunset at Dawn as an example of civil war memoirs in Nigeria.

Figure 1: A Proposed Socio-stylistic Model for Analyzing Nigerian Civil

The W

Audience

Idea

S

peech

Variation

Language

Style

Society

Context of

NCWM

Individuality

Choice

Situation

War Memoirs (NCWM)

Figure 1. reveals that the projection of the Nigerian civil war issues, events and incidents through the medium of literary texts such as Sunset at Dawn among others requires that there must be the writer (W) and the Audience (A). In other words, Nigerian Civil War Memoirs (NCWM) is a communicative event that necessarily requires both the encoder and decoder of information. In the context of the present study, Ike, the author of the text and the readers constitute the discourse participants in the civil war discourse. As a civil war memoir, Sunset at Dawn could be described as a unidirectional discourse which does not avail the audience (readers) the opportunity of giving immediate response or feedback to the writer’s message being projected through the mediated context of literature.

Figure 1 reveals further that the writer, Chukwuemeka Ike has an idea or ideas to pass across to his audience. These ideas are informed by the prevailing social events or social realities of the civil war period (1967-1970) and its attendant effects on the Nigerian populace especially the war torn areas in the eastern part of the country. Prominent among the ideas being projected to readers through the voices of fictive and (non-fictive) characters and sometimes, through authorial intrusion are : (i) the bitter and the fratricidal conflict between the breakaway Biafran republic and the Nigerian sides, (ii) the wanton destruction of lives and property by the Nigerian soldiers in many towns, cities and villages of Eastern Nigeria; (iii) the dehumanising effects of the war and (iv) efforts made by the Biafran government to mitigate or ameliorate the effects of the war on the civilian populace and the entire citizens of Biafra among others. As our findings reveal, the central message of the author to readers (i.e audience in this context) is that the civil war was an avoidable one that did no one any good. According to Etiowo (2014: 130), it was a war of looting, plundering, betrayal, deceit, lies and lies and lies. This is corroborated by Okuyade (2010: 201) as he expresses the view that “the war ought not to have come most especially that the war was fought shortly after Independence, when the newly weaned nation should be experiencing indigenous economic bliss and beauty of self-governance.” In the text, language remains a significant tool that the writer (W) draws upon to project his ideas. Figure 1shows further that language and ideas, therefore, meetin the society to produce speech variation. The writer’s idea(s), language and society have a kind of symbiotic interaction which constitutes the sociolinguistic context of Nigerian Civil War Memoirs(NCWM). Variation in the writer’s use of language to suit the social context of use therefore culminates in style.

Figure 1also reveals that the writer (W) is an individual language user who by virtue of his personality as a language user and other factors, makes choice from the variants of available pool of language resources to project the civil war situation. The stylistic resources harnessed are often manifested through the different forms of expressions used and the forms of language used by the writer in projecting his ideas are influenced by the prevailing context of war situation mirrored in the text. We therefore discuss and analyse our findings in respect of the proposed model.

As we have noted earlier, the writer (W) is the author of the text. He has a central idea topresent to the audience, i.e. Nigerians and non-Nigerians who have interest in the fratricidal conflict. The author naturally draws from society, which interacts through ideas and language. Context of the Civil War Memoirs (CWM) is constituted by ideas and language which interact in the society to produce speech variation. These determine, to a considerable extent, what the author presents to the audience (readers), and, to some extent, the way he presents it.For instance, Chukwuemeka Ike’s Sunset at Dawn(henceforth SD) features about four major themes such as : (i) Pandemonium, confusion, and waton destruction of lives and property; (ii) deprivation, starvation, hunger and movement restriction and its attendant consequences on socio-economic life of the indigenes of the war ravaged area; (iii) large scale looting of people’s property most especially the personal property of non-indigenes; and (iv) ethnic segregation and tribalism which culminate in sectional bias. All these discuss the issue of ideas. As our findings reveal, these are informed by the prevailing socio-circumstances that pervaded the civil war period (July 1967- January 1970) and other related incidents projected by the author in Sunset at Dawn. All these themes are projected to readers through variants of linguistic expressions and stylistic strategies dictated by the sociocontext of the war situation mirrored in the text.

For example, in projecting the theme of pandemonium, confusion and wanton destruction of lives and property, the author discusses issues such as ‘scampering for safety’, ‘air raid alarm’, ‘selling’ in ‘bomb shell’, ‘stampede’, ‘dropped a number of bombs’, etc. which portray the image of confusion. The author recounts one of the pandemonic situations in the early period of the war as we have in the extract below.

Ex. 1:

Background:(. A warning signal of an enemy plane preparing to launch an air raid on the training camp of the newly recruited Biafran volunteer soldiers is given by one of the drivers in the hall where the training is ongoing. The author therefore recounts the scenario thus.)

Everyone in the hall reacted as if he had a split second to escape from the vicinity of the examination hall before Kill-We(the Biafran Superman) smashed the building roof, wall and all. Chairs, and volunteers were jostled and trampled upon in the stampede to take cover outside. One volunteer made for one of the glass panels on the foldingdoorwith the speed of a ram and the blindness of a millipede. He did not notice that he had any cuts until he was at a safe distance from the building, squatting inside a cassava farm whose leaves offered him the protection he badly needed from the

enemy plane. (Pg. 5)

In the above extract, Ike vividly portrays the scenario of pandemonium and confusion that is characteristic of the war situation. Closely related to this is the theme of large scale looting of people’s property which becomes the order of the day during any war. The writer’s aversion to property looting is depicted through the voices of some of the characters in the novel as we have in the interaction below.

Ex. 2:

Mr. Onukaegbe: I wouldn’t be too optimistic about recovering what you left behind at Nsukka.

Prof. Ezenwa: What do you mean?

Mr. Onukaegbe:One Nsukka man who had been cut off by the enemy

managed to escape alive. He told the D.H.Q. that the vandals are looting even toilet floats and cement blocks, let alone suitcases and television sets.

Prof. Ezenwa: But how can they?

Mr. Onukaegbe: From what he said, their fighting men are followed at a

safe distance by a looting squad. The squad is equipped with trailers and lorries, and their looting is systematic and thorough. (Pg. 25)

The image of looting is further portrayed by the author through the voice of another character, Halima as she narrates her ordeal in the hand of some northern youths shortly before the commencement of the civil war in 1967. As she reminisces the incidents that culminated in the death of her husband, she says:

Ex. 3:

…My sister, that was how I became a widow in my youth. We could not take my husband’s body away for burial. Our property was looted, leaving me and the children with only the clothing we had on … (Pg. 128) (Our Emphasis)

No wonder that throughout the text, Nigerian soldiers and their leaders are referred to as ‘vandals’ in the author’s description of their heinous activities. (e.g. see pages 8, 16, 201 etc.).

In projecting the issues of confusion and pandemonium in Example 1, the author paints a gory and unpalatable picture of the incidence through the forms of expression he uses. The form of language he draws upon to project his ideas here shows the author as an omniscient narrator who knows and sees every incidence of the war and presents the story from the standpoint of an omniscient author and Biafran lenses. This is markedly different from the form of language the author employs in projecting the issue or theme of large scale looting of people’s property as we have in Examples 2 and 3. Apart from telling the story through the voices of some characters such as Mr. Onukaegbe, Prof. Ezenwa, and Halima etc., the author deploys the form oflanguage that is suitable to the subject being handled. This confirms Lyons’ (1977: 510) argument that “the subject matter a speaker, (and by extension a writer), is handling determines very largely his choices of vocabulary.”

Besides, in projecting the theme of deprivation, starvation, hunger and movement restriction and its attendant consequences on socio-economic life of people in Biafra, the author employs other forms of expressions that are different from what we have in the earlier issues discussed.The extract below instantiates this.

Ex. 4:

Background: (In a bid to crush the Biafran rebellion, the Nigerian government introduced a number of stringent measures calculated at making life difficult for Biafrans. Among these are currency change and the introduction of economic blockade. The effect of these measures is projected by the author in the extract below.)

…You were required to open a bank account, deposit your money, and go home emptyhanded. All you could retain were the coins which remained legal tender in Nigeria and Biafra. Before long, another war disease, ‘moneyokor’, joined forces with kwashiorkor; the new disease afflicted several Biafrans who paid all the money they had into a bank and had nothing except a few coins with which to buy food…. It was no more than part of Nigeria’s effort to exterminate the peace-loving, godfearing people of Biafra for no cause. (Our

Emphasis) (Pg. 160)

In the above extract, words and expressions such as ‘empty-handed’, ‘…had nothing except a few coins’, ‘moneyokor’, ‘kwashiokor’ etc. portray the image of starvation which is, within the socio- context of the novel and the larger context of war, a by-product of deprivation. Considering the socio-context of the civil war, the Nigerian government’s intention then was to deprive the Biafrans all means of survival with a view to forcing the Biafran warlords to surrender and embrace the territorial integrity of one indivisible geographical entity called Nigeria. The words ‘moneyokor’ and ‘kwashiokor’, for example, have been linguistically, creatively and artistically employed by the author to vividly portray the sense of insufficiency of money and food respectively which characterised the civil war period in the Biafran enclave. As our findings reveal, all these variants of linguistic expressions used by the author to project his ideas have been influenced by the socio- communicative context of war situation the author, Chukwuemeka Ike projects in the text .No wonder that Stockwell (2002:1) argues that “every different social context determines that particular form of language to be used.” In his own view, Adejumo (2013: 98) points out that “the mood, temper and tone of war literature is always dictated by the authors’ attitude and the prevailing cultural milieu in which the theatre of war plays out.”

Besides, the variation in expression used by Ike in discussing the themes is now determined by time, the resources of language available for the description and socio-context of war situation he projects in the novel. This is corroborated by the sociolinguistic theory of variability concept propounded by Dittmar (1976). For Dittmar (ibid: 104), the variability concept is concerned with “the description of speech variation and factors responsible for such variation in a particular social system.” All these and others now culminate in the concept of style in the civil war memoir. For the author to creatively express his idea, he now chose the relevant expressions that vividly capture his communicative intentions in projecting the three themes (issues) discussed above. This corroborates the argument that style is “the effectiveness of a mode expression” which is achieved by “saying the right thing in the most effective way” (Crystal and Davy 1969:9). The stylistic variation probes into such stylistic issues as individuality, choice and situation. These stylistic issues shall be discussed in turn using the above identified three themes.

Style in Sunset at Dawn

Our discussion of style in the text shall be hinged on the ideas of style as individuality, choice and situation. Considering the forms of expressions the author employed in discussing the three major themes in the text, our findings reveal a display of linguistically creative ingenuity by the author at different levels of style namely; graphology, morphology, word formation, syntax and rhetoric. These are discussed in turn.

Graphological Features

Graphological features are nonlinguistic devices that have the effect of enhancing the message content of the language used by the speaker, author or language user in any discourse. The predominant graphological feature found to characterise the text is the writing pattern which manifests in unusual capitalization and bold prints. These are found to have been dictated by the socio-context of war being projected by the author. Unusual capitalization, for example, has been employed in the novel to project: (i) the major cause of the war, i.e. marginalization, a bye-product of ethnic segregation and tribalism and its attendant sectional bias and (ii) the readiness of the volunteered newly recruited Biafran Army to wage and prosecute the war to the last atom of their energy. An instance of this is resident in the author’s narration below.

Ex. 5:

The vest carried the picture of Biafra’s Head of State, below which was boldly inscribed the popular slogan: ON ABURI WE STAND. Each volunteer carried his dummy gun, carved out of

any available piece of wood… (Pg. 2)

Considering the background information to the above extract, the issue of marginalisation of the eastern part of Nigeria was ironed out at Aburi in Ghana between the Biafran war lord and the head of Nigerian Military government. Issues discussed and the agreements reached were later dishonoured by the Nigerian government. This, among others, later led to the declaration of secession bid by Biafran leader on May 30th, 1967. In a bid by the author to emphasise the importance of the Aburi agreement and the Biafran government’s displeasure with the failure of the Nigerian government to abide by it, it is capitalized to achieve the stylistic effect of foregrounding in the above extract. The readiness of the volunteered newly recruited Biafran Army is also foregrounded in the lexicon, ‘vigilance’ used by the author to convey the description. This is evident in Example 6.

Ex. 6:

As the Port Harcourt contingent disappeared into the all engulfing examination hall of the Enugu campus of the University of Biafra, the Aba contingent followed close behind, in their white VIGILANCE vests, each vest carrying the symbol of vigilance- an eye as large as a kolanut pod. (Pg. 2)

Given the socio-context of the war, the word vigilance foregrounded above implicates the state of combat readiness of the Biafran soldiers.

Morphological Features/ Word Formation Processes

Our discussion of morphological features and/or word formation processes found to characterise the war memoir shall be made in respect of compounding, blending, code-mixing, and the deployment of loan words and their stylistic effects in the text. These are taken in turn. The form of compounding that stands out in the text is, in the context of this study, described as irregular hyphenation of words to create compounding and this characterises Chukwuemeka Ike’s choice of words. Examples of this word pattern are : ‘So-lidarity’, ‘wa-ter’, ‘kill-we’, ‘survi-val’, ‘van-quish’, ‘yellow-on-black’ etc. as we have on pages 2,3, 4, 5, 15, and 82 of the text. In the normal sense, the words ‘vanquish’, ‘solidarity’, ‘water’ survival, and vanquish are not supposed to be hyphenated. This is a deliberate deviation from the convention, and it is employed by Ike to achieve the stylistic effect of foregrounding designed to achieve a particular communicative intention. This is supported by Leech’s (1985:40) argument that “to be stylistically distinctive, a feature of language must deviate from some norm”. An example of this irregular hyphenation of words is resident in the example below.

Ex. 7:

… We are fighting what people who speak theEnglish Language call a war of survi-val!

…War of survi-val.

… As the Big Man says, by the grace of God, we shall van-quish, We shall van-quish. (Pg.

82)(Our Emphasis)

In a bid to emphasise the marginalisation of the easterners by the Nigerian side and the determination of the Biafran forces to win the war and stand as an independent republic, the author has foregrounded the word ‘survival’ and ‘vanquish’ through the voice of one of the characters in the text as shown in the example above.

Few instances of blending are found to characterise the author’s choice of words to express his ideas. An instance of this is found in the word, ‘moneyokor’(page 160) which is a blend of two free morphemes or words such as ‘money’ and ‘kwashiokor’. ‘Moneyokor’ used in the context of kwashiokor as we have in Example 4 above, is employed by the author to depict the social context of war characterised by insufficiency, deprivation, starvation and hunger. Given the socio-context of Sunset at Dawn, ‘moneyokor’ depicts fund or money deficiency disease or affliction while ‘kwashiokor’ is a protein deficiency disease and its symptom is malnutrition occasioned by balanced diet insufficiency most especially in children.All these are inherent features of the civil war situation.

Instances of code-mixing are also found in the memoir. Code-mixing instances are found in the expressions such as:

Ex. 8:

… ‘Allah so ka!...could this really have happened in Zaria?’

(Pg. 128)

…. All I can say to my husband’s parents and many other around me is “Kedu” or “Odinma”.

(Pg. 114)

It’s all gone, my brother! Gone patapata, as the

Yorubas say. (Pg.144)(Our Emphasis)

These features are used by the author to facilitate his projection of war issues. As our findings reveal, code-mixing in the text manifests in the author’s injection of words and expressions from the three major Nigerian languages (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) into English sentences and expressions. Considering the socio-context of war projected in the text, this could be described as a stylistic strategy by the author to implicate the sense of national integration which depicts the senselessness of the civil war otherwise known in some quarters as fratricidal conflict. This is premised on the fact that Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba tribes have been so integrated that Igbo people in the name of Biafra fighting Hausa/Yoruba people (i.e. Nigerians in the context of the text) is unnecessary and unreasonable.After all, the war, as pointed out by Etiowo (2014: 130) did no one any good because it was “a war of looting, plundering, betrayal, deceit, lies and lies and lies.”

Another morphological creative ingenuity of the author observed in the novel is the deployment of war weapon imagery by the author, Ike in the context of domestic interaction among the characters.The extract below instantiates this.

Ex.9:

Background: (Dr.AmiloKanu’s wife, Fatima pays her husband an unscheduled visit at Umuahia from Obodo. The woman catches her husband sleeping with his girl friend, Love. The girl has to escape through the louvre window.

While discussing with his friend, Mr. Ndubuisi Akwaelumo, Dr Amilo expresses guilty conscience that he has given his wife, Fatima cause to doubt him. In an effort by Mr Akwaelumo to justify his friend’s action,he says:

…With so so girls milling around you from

morning till night here, with all the frustrations of war time, and without a wife to

Ease the tension. I don’t think anybody can blame

us for “shelling”

once in a while. (Our emphasis)Pg. 233

Given the influence of the social context of the war on the author’s use of language, ‘shelling’ in the above extract depicts war weapon imagery that connotes war incidence. The use of ‘shelling’ in the above context is an anomalous choice of word because the word is ordinarily unexpected in the context of domestic interaction such as the above. However, its choice is permitted given the fact that the characters find themselves in a war-torn situation where military-cum war weapons such as mortal, ferrets, jet bombers etc are used. As our data revealed, the war situation being projected has impacted tremendously on the psycholinguistics of the characters; hence, their choice of the word ‘shelling’ to describe the sexual relationship in the Ex. 9.

Syntactic Patterns

The syntactic classification of the forms of speech employed by Chukwuemeka Ike in presenting the themes such as:(i) Pandemonium, confusion, and wanton destruction of lives and property; (ii) deprivation, starvation, hunger and movement restriction and its attendant consequences on the socio-economic life of the indigenes of the war ravaged area; (iii) large scale looting of people’s property most especially the personal property of non-indigenes ; and (iv) ethnic segregation and tribalism which culminate in sectional bias etc.shall be made following Greenbaum (1991:15) who identifies four major types of sentences in English to include: (i) Declaratives (or declarative sentences) i.e statements that are mainly used to convey information, (ii) Interrogative sentence (Questions), (iii) Imperative sentence (Commands) and (iv) Exclamative (These are used to express strong feelings.)

Generally speaking, the four themes mentioned above are projected predominantly through declarative sentences. Examples of these are:

Ex. 10:

1. …the vandals are looting even toilet floats and cement blocks,let alone suitcases and

television sets. (Pg. 25)

1. Before long, another war disease, ‘moneyokor’, joined forces with kwashiorkor; the new disease afflicted several Biafrans who paid all the money they had into a bank and had nothing except a few coins withwhich to buy

food. (Pg. 160)

1. ...Our property was looted, leaving me and the children

with only the clothing we had on… (Pg. 128)

Other instances of these can be found in the data.

Rhetorical Features

Our rhetorical analysis in this study is intended not only to grasp the subject matters (themes) of the civil war memoir but also to determine their effective relation to the structure and style employed in delivering the message (cf. Pratt 1969:35). Generally speaking and as our data reveal, the author’s communicative intention of writing the text is to share with his fellow Nigerians and non-Nigerians the civil war situation, its effects on the populace and to project the senselessness and the absurdity of the war. In presenting the message, this study contends that the author, Chukwuemeka Ike employs quite a number of rhetorical strategies in persuading and/or convincing his audience of the senselessness and absurdity of the civil war. After all, rhetoric, as noted by Aristotle (1959:15) is “a practical discipline aiming at “exerting a persuasive action”. Aristotle ( quoted in Roberts, 2010:8) notes further that persuasion can be achieved by the personal character of the speaker, by putting the audience into a certain frame of mind and by the proof provided by the words of the speech itself. All these manifest in certain linguistic devices.Those rhetorical devices that are found to characterise the data manifest in the use of proverbs, imageries and structural parallelism. These are discussed in turn.

Quite a number of proverbs and/or wise saying are found to characterise the author’s use of language in the text. Given the context of usage, these proverbs as we have on pages 22, 31, 79, 117, 118, 167 etc. assist in the author’s projection of the themes (issues) and incidences of the war. They have been used in different contexts of the novel to strengthen the projection of the author’s ideas. After all, Achebe in Things Fall Apart notes that “proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten.” An example of the proverbial usages in the text is resident in the examples below.

Ex. 11:

1. I know how difficult it is to bear, but what has happened has happened. Our one consolation is that the pitcher is not broken; it is only the water that has spilt. Pg. 31

(Our emphasis)

1. The jaw cannot go to rest when there are palm kernels yet uneaten. The vandals think they can conquer us by bombing our old men, women and

children…. Pg. 201 (Our emphasis)

Considering their context of use and the general socio-context of the civil war projected in the text, the proverb in 10(a) above is performing the speech function of sympathizing with and consoling the victims of the war who suffer various degrees of misfortune, most especially during one of the several air raids orchestrated by the Nigerian forces. Conversely, the proverb in 10(b) serves as an encouragement for the Biafran indigenes, leaders and soldiers to be steadfast and unrelenting in prosecuting the war to the point of victory. When the proverbs are considered in relation to their context of use, we grasp their semantic import. On the role of context in meaning explication, Odebunmi (2001; 2006) points out that “context is the spine of meaning.”

Quite a number of imageries which manifest in figures of speech are also found to have been used as rhetorical-stylistic strategies by the author to project his thematic concerns in the text. The preponderant one among these figures of speech is simile and this is found to have been largely employed to convey messages of victory and hope in the survival of the Biafran republic. Examples of these can be found on pages 15, 17, etc. of the text.

Several instances of parallel syntactic structural repetitions are also found in the author’s projection of the civil war issues and incidents discussed in the text. While recounting the losses and casualties suffered by Biafra towards the end of the war, the author employs parallel structure thus.

Ex. 12:

Port Harcourt, the Garden City, was suddenly snatched from Biafra. With it went Biafra’s only remaining seaport and all the hopes of importing tons of ammunition and essential requirements by sea. With it went the only petroleum refinery in the country. With it went important oil installations which had strengthened Biafra’s bargaining power with potential foreign backers. And with it went Biafra’s last international

airport…. Pg. 235(Our Italics)

It is observed therefore, that several statements with parallel structures employed by Ike in the text such as we have in the above cited example have stylistic effect(s) of arousing the readers’ (audience) emotion and gaining special attention. No wonder that art has been described as essentially propaganda.

Conclusion

Thus far, we have examined Chukwuemeka Ike’s Sunset at Dawn from the perspective of socio-stylistics. Using the proposed socio-stylistic model of the civil war memoirs, our analysis revealed that the prevailing socio-context of war in which the author found himself while writing the memoir exerts tremendous influence on the style he chooses or adopts in communicating his ideas vis-à-vis the civil war issues he projects in the text. Besides, our analysis has further established the link between stylistics and sociolinguistics by introducing a sociostylistic model of analysis which shows the rapport between social variables and their contextual values, as projected in Ike’s use of language in Sunset at Dawn. This therefore helps to corroborate Oloruntoba-Oju’s (1999: 127) argument that stylistic variation may be reckoned in terms of the sociolinguistic context producing the variation. This study argues therefore that analysing Nigerian Civil War Memoirs (NCWM) using a socio-stylistic approach enhances a better understanding of the memoirs. It equally illuminates the discourse value of sociostylistics and provides additional useful material for civil war discourse most especially in Nigeria. The study equally serves as useful material for literary discourse pedagogy.

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