

Full Length Research Paper

Semantic map and Ideology in select Nigerian poetic discourse

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Accepted 27 May, 2009

Since its acceptance within linguistic studies, the concept of ideology has generated an unimaginable array of interest within linguistics. Linguistic scholars are of the opinion that no linguistic construction is 'neutral' in its real sense. As well, numerous linguistic investigations have proved that ideology is woven in our everyday linguistic interaction but none of these have been able to work within the parameters of a semantically orientated grammatical concept such as semantic map or web to show that the ideological position of some poets is evident in their linguistic strategies. This paper attempts to do so by employing the procedures of semantic web and critical linguistics to investigate the ideological positions of socially situated texts. Is mechanical discourse such as poetic rendition ideally neutral, or politically free? Or is it woven in some positions between these two limits? The contention is that no socially situated text such as poetry is 'ideally free' of the ideological categories of its writers and time. This paper examines two 'new' Nigerian poets- Ademola Dasylva and Joe Ushie, and holds that the ideological orientations of some Nigerian poets are embedded in grammatical features.

Key words: Semantic map, ideology, CDA, poetic discourse.

INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the end

Ideology has generated significant interest in recent times within discourse analysis, most probably, because of its force in representing the life of a people. Ideologies are systems of representation that in strongly unconscious ways mediate individuals understanding of the world (Wodak (2007)). Language and ideology are seen as two inseparable concepts. The reason for such a claim is obvious: the way a writer communicates or uses language is determined by social structures. Such contention, perhaps, is the reason why Fowler (1981: 29) notes "Given the nature of the society we live in, much communication is concerned with establishing and maintaining unequal power relationship between individuals, and between institutions and individuals". Ideological meanings are often embedded in linguistic construction of its users (Aboh, 2008). This is of interest to this study, because it examines how poets use language to bring to light the constant in society. The paper is informed by the theoretical assumption that discourse is a building block of a peoples' socio-historical life. Leading scholars in Critical Discourse Analysis and interdisciplinary study of text

include Fairclough (1995, 2000, 2001), Wodak (1996, 2001, 2007), van Dijk (1991, 1989, 2002), Kehinde (2004) and Taiwo (2007) to them, language is the basic social institution and thus, even in the freest and most democratic societies it is intrinsically linked to power. However, none of these scholars have worked on a semantically oriented grammar in literary texts to make clear the ideological positions that they are imbued with. Therefore, the paper employs the methods of semantic map to study the ideological undertones of select Nigerian poetic texts. Wodak (2007:6) avers that "social processes are inherently and dialectically linked to language (text and discourse)". This implies that while working within the parameters of a semantically oriented apparatus such as semantic map, the paper situates the discourse event within its Nigerian socio-political context. The expectation is that paradigmatic relations would help in accessing the ideological positions of two selected Nigerian poets- Joe Ushie and Ademola Dasylva through their poetry collections. Institutional belief is not merely described by the language, but created and recreated by it. The fact is that language 'must' continue to articulate ideology. This is because ideology is a social product and

also a social practice, and the way we use language in some instances express theories of how the world is organized (Fowler *ibid*). Society is controlled by those able (and allowed) to determine the meaning of words. The truth is that to a large extent our linguistic choices are constrained by our belief. Words embellish power and our awareness on how to use these words appropriately gives us power over others.

It has been documented (Fairclough, 1995; Hunston, 1993) that the ideology or ideologies within which a text is written constrain choices in discourse organization, grammar and lexis. Hence language in poetry performs a mediatory function that reflects the experience, perspective, or idea about the world of the writer. This means that poetry is not a neutral value free representation of facts; rather it imposes structures of values, social or economic, which mark ideological distinctions.

Fowler (*ibid*) sees literature as a social discourse and every linguistic theory can be applied to its analysis. The poetry collections under study are located within post modernist Nigeria and are seen as a direct response to the socio-political quagmire of Nigeria which serves as a water shade from which the poets draw their art. This paper focuses on the linguistic production of poets who write from particular situational and socio-political context. While recent works have so far dwelled on the role of news report in ethnic relations (van Dijk, 1991), how news report serves the interest of dominant forces (McGregor, 2003), the representation of ideology and power relations in Nigerian newspaper headlines (Taiwo, 2007), this paper focuses on poetic discourse. It explores how poets represent the ideology of their time in their poetic works. The objective of this study therefore, is to closely examine poetry as a linguistic environment for the deconstruction of hegemonic norms.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND ANALYTICAL APPROACH

The way forward

This paper is based on the theoretical postulations of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 2001 and Wodak 2007). The analytical approach draws significantly from the concept of Semantic web (Han, 2004 and Odebunmi, 2006). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political contexts. With such nonconformist research, a critical discourse analyst takes explicit position, and thus wants to understand, expose, and eventually resist social inequality. The basic impression of CDA is that no human utterance is neutral rather it is imbued with the ideological position of the encoder. The position is that language is not just a tool of communica-

tion but an integral part of human life that is capable of constructing as well as reconstructing the social process of human existence (Aboh, 2008).

Fairclough (2001:21) states that there are three dimensions of CDA. Stage one, which examines the formal property of the text in question is referred to as description. The second stage is the interpretation. It delineates the relationship between the text and the social process of production and interpretation, while the third is the explanation stage that is concerned with the relationship between interactional properties and social context. Wodak (2007) sustains that a CDA analysis must examine two aspects, which she identifies as the micro and macro levels. According to her, the micro level deals with the linguistic property of a text and the macro level situates the text within a social context of production, which in turn influences the interpretation an analyst makes out of a text. Proponents of critical linguistics such as Fowler (1981, 1996) maintains that every text is a product of a social process and its interpretation must be critically examined within its social situation of production. This fundamental theoretical ground that lays the foundation of CDA, an interdisciplinary research language program within discourse analysis which explores the ideological values and assumptions that are integrated in texts, serves as the frame of reference for our analysis.

Semantic web (Han, 2004) or semantic mapping (Odebunmi, 2006) is a linguistic (in this study web and mapping will be used interchangeably) procedure that logically shows the relationship lexical features hold in a text. Everyone perceives semantic web in different ways. One view is that the semantic web is about semantics. Another view is that semantic web is about overcoming the syntax of data so that users can concentrate on the semantics of information of a given text. The implication of such positions seems to suggest that the use of language should tilt to its functional dimension and to solve practical semantic problems readers may encounter while studying a text. However, central to the concept of semantic map is the representation that is the sum total of the semantic possibilities of the category under investigation (Han, 2004). Semantic map could therefore be seen as a relation of certain lexico-semantic features in spider's web, which accounts for the coherence of a text (Odebunmi, 2006: 79). It logically shows the relationship lexical features hold in a text and their pragmatic relevance to the context in which they occur. It could be deduced from Odebunmi's definition that putting lexis in a spider's web, is an attempt to systematically or discursively trace in a relevant form the semantic relationship that holds amongst words in their context of use.

If Odebunmi (2006: 19) maintains that "the relations of meaning between a word and another assist a good deal in accounting for meaning in discourse" then, we can use semantic map to investigate the ideological concern of a poet. Our concern in this paper is to assess with the aid of semantic web the meaning words hold in selected

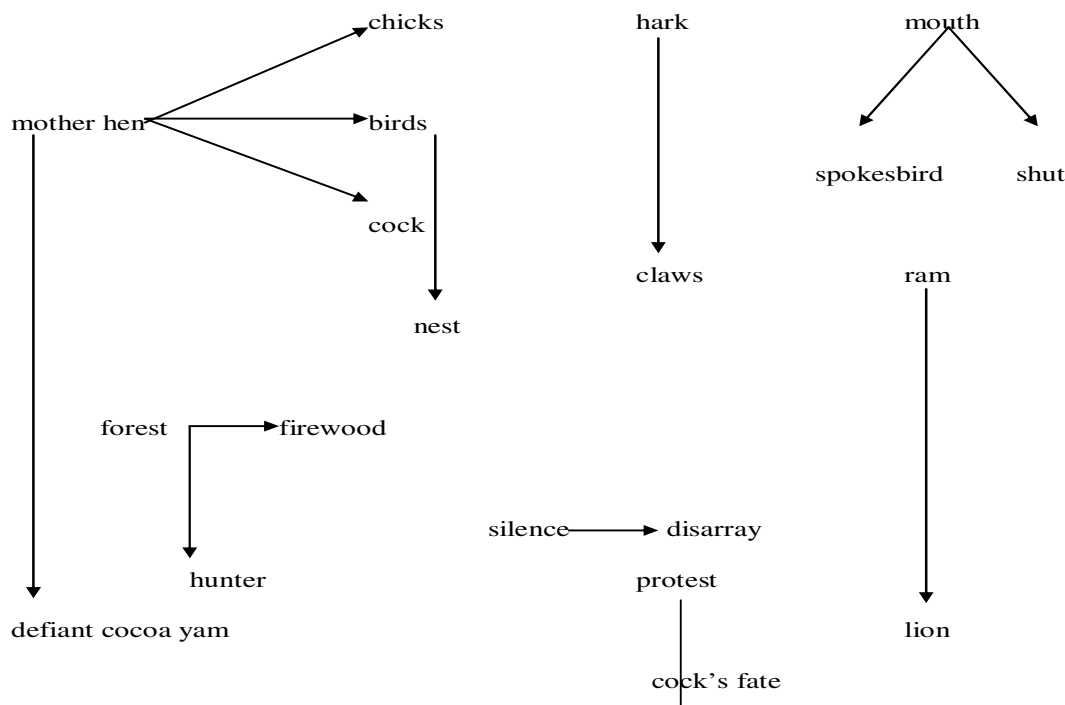


Figure 1. A semantic map of motherhen.
Semantic Mapping of Sampled Poems from Hill Songs
Text I: Mother hen.

poems from Dasylya's Songs of Odamolugbe and Ushie's Hill Songs in relation to the contextual meanings they generate, as well as the ideological positions that are hidden in those words. The use of semantic map as a grammatical tool, is to show how language is significant in the weaving of writers' and their time's ideological orientations. The meaning relation is based on the context of the poems analyzed.

METHODOLOGY AND ANALYTICAL PROCEDURES

How we did it

The corpus of this work consists of a total of four poems (the selection is limited by the analytical procedure employed in this work), which are presented in semantic maps or web. The mapped poems were selected through a purposive random sampling technique. The poems are 'Urban blues' and 'Motherhen' taken from Joe Ushie's Hill Songs and two poems 'Refuge E' and 'Victims of Hope' were also drawn from Ademola Dasylya's Songs of Odamolugbe. Hill Songs was published in 2002 and Songs of Odamolugbe in 2006 so, we consider them to be a fair representation of new Nigerian poetry. In the process of analysis, references are made to other poems in both collections.

The truth is that one can hardly present the entire poems in the collections in a web. So, what we have done here is to select those poems that are considered to be ideologically contested, and present them in their respective maps.

The paper starts with a linguistic process of semantic maps and then moves on to the explanation of sense relations such as synonyms, antonyms, collocations and hyponyms. The paradigmatic

items are further situated in the socio-political history of Nigeria. Locating these semantic items within social construction necessitates the employment of the interdisciplinary methods of CDA. The analytical procedure works on an inductive frame, which includes two levels: formal features such as those listed above and the functional perspective i.e. what the linguistic items are detailed to do, taking into consideration their sociolinguistic background. This is done by placing the linguistic items in their context of occurrence, rather than looking at them strictly from the formal social attitude (van Dijk, 1995). The formal linguistic properties (such as synonyms, antonyms, etc) are classified as communicative strategies, which help to work out the poets' ideological positions. The convergence of linguistic procedures is aimed at providing meaningful insights into the intricate relationship between language and ideology. Semantic mapping as a linguistic concept works on the encyclopedic knowledge of the user of a language. If an analyst lacks concrete knowledge of the discourse situation, misapplication of the concept is imminent. In order to access the poets' ideological orientation, one is left with no option but to employ a method that can map their ideology to the surface structure.

The semantic mappings in Figures 1 and 2 represent two poems from *Hill Songs*. Those in Figures 3 and 4 represent two poems selected from *Songs of Odamolugbe*. They show the sense relation that holds amongst words base on the ideas projected by the poet and the environment of occurrence. Basically, the maps show the relationship words hold because of the ideas and linguistic environment they share. For instance, the lexeme chick is a daughter – node of the hyponymy Mother hen, at the same time an antonym of hawk. The sense relations are mapped in tune with the social issue discussed by the poets.

Moreover, Figures 3 and 4 indicate that some words branch off to two or more words. The reason is that in line with the meaning the poet wants his readers to achieve, a lexical item can function both as collocation and synonymy. For instance, moved, walking and

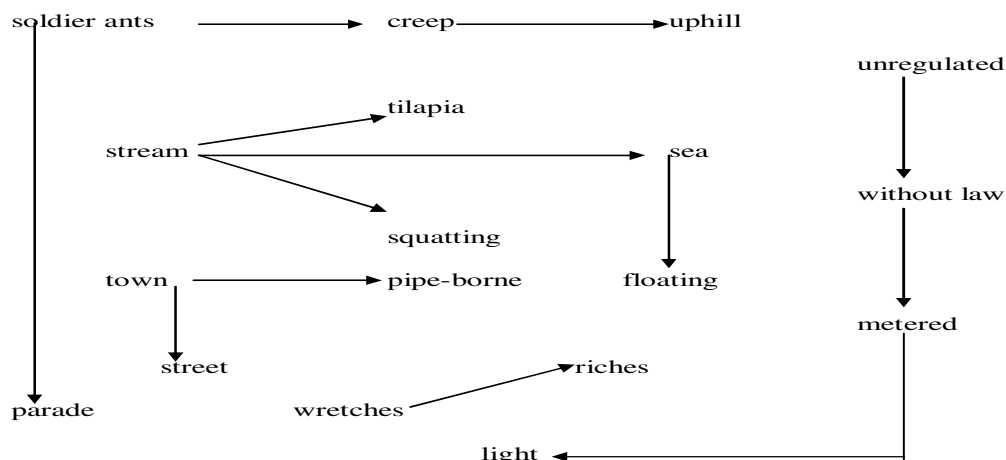


Figure 2. A semantic map of urban blues
Semantic mapping of sampled poems from hill songs
Text 2: Urban blues.

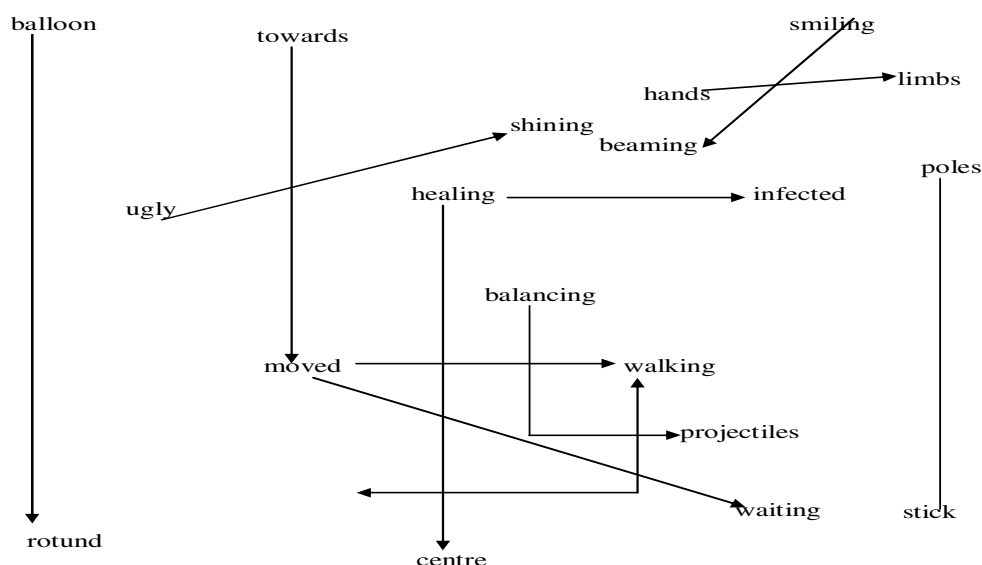


Figure 3. A semantic web.
Semantic mapping of select poems from songs of Odamolugbe
Text 3: Refuge E.

waiting (Figure 4) are semantically connected.

While moved is antonymous to waiting, it is also synonymous to walking. It is on this ground that the application of semantic map- ing to the study of ideology in the sampled texts will be appreciated. Moreover, it is important to show such a relationship in the web. The semantic maps are done in a way that such a complex rela- tionship is presented at once, rather than have a duplicated seman- tic map that may hinder understanding of the concept as well as the purpose of its application to this study. Han (2004) asserts that there is no agreed procedure for semantic maps yet. But one com- mon feature that is central to the concept is an adaptation of con- cept definition mapping, which builds on analyst's prior knowledge. While it builds on prior knowledge, it recognizes important com- ponents and shows the relationship among the components. The semantic relations in both collections are linguistic point of view.

The fact is that ideologies are linked up with discussed below to enable us uncover how they facilitate in expressing the poets' ideo- logy.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The crust of the matter

Hyponymy: Hyponymy shows the relation of meaning inclusion that holds between words (Cruse, 1989). He presents hyponyms in Figure 5. He stresses that there must be a relation of inclusion "...it seems fairly clear intuitively that two sense relations are essential to this

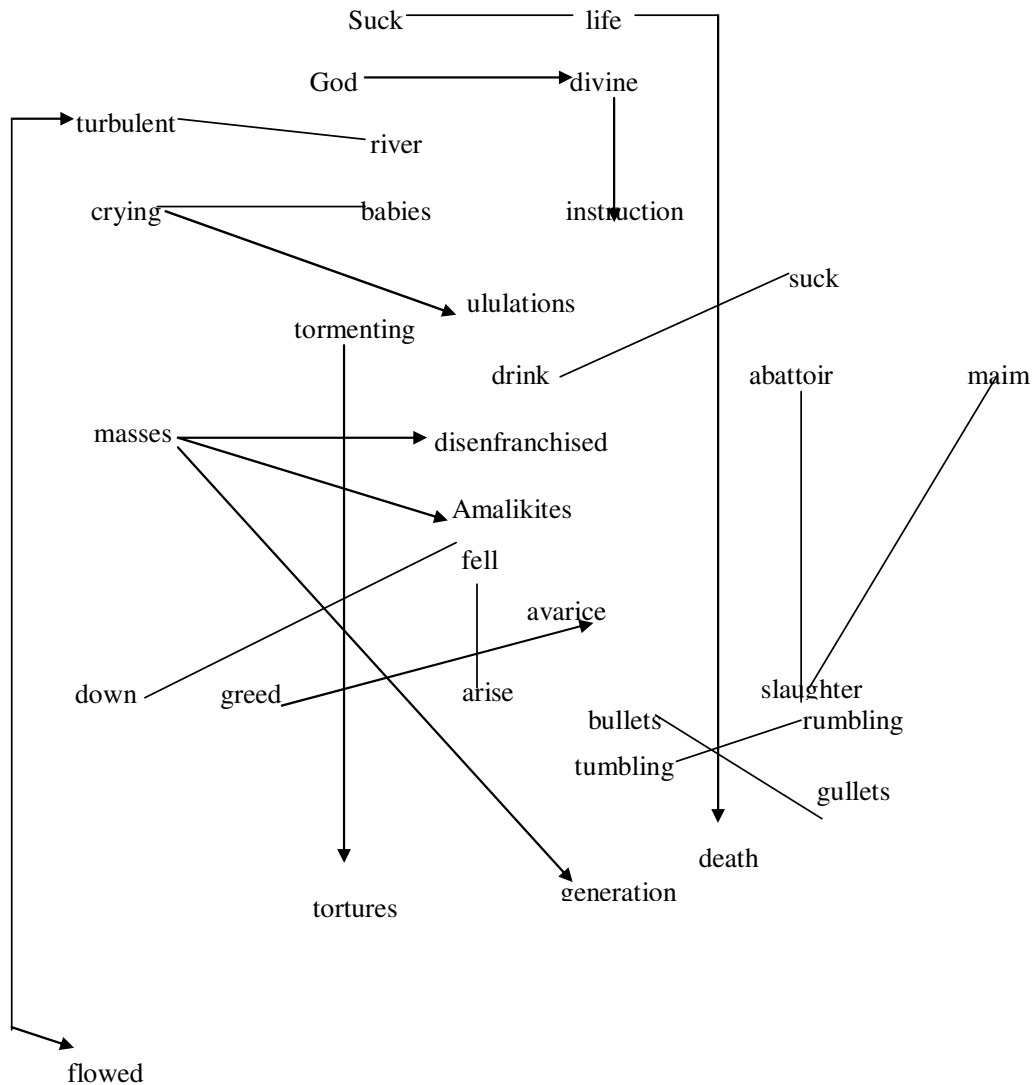


Figure 4. A spider's web of 'Victims of Hope'.
Semantic mapping of select poems from songs of Odamugbe.
Text 4: 'Victims of hope'.

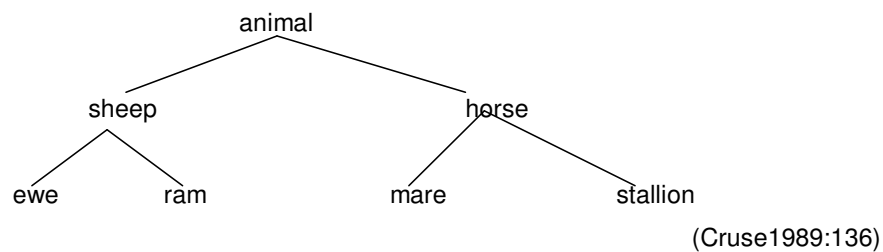


Figure 5. An example of hyponyms.

configuration: daughter-nodes must be hyponyms of their respective mother-nodes..."(Cruse1898:136). In this light, we present the hyponyms in the poems below:
Stream – squatting, tilapia, floating

Town – pipe borne, street
Urban blues (P. 30)
Mother hen – cock, chicks, bird
Forest – firewood, hunter

Mother hen (P. 24)

Limbs – hands, legs

Refugee E (P.59)

The use of the hyponyms in the poem 'Refugee E' is to emphasize that Nigeria has all it takes to change her situation. Whereas, the strategic use of hyponyms in Mother hen refers to the killing of Kudirat Abiola, the assassinated wife of MKO Abiola. Abiola, the purported winner of the annulled June 12, 1993 presidential election in Nigeria was imprisoned for treasonable felony by the then military junta headed by General Sani Abacha. He later died in detention in 1998. While in prison, his wife, Kudirat fought tirelessly for his release. It was in the course of fighting for the release of her husband that unknown gunmen assassinated her. However, that seems to be the historical situation in the country. The poet transcends merely recounting the events that led to Kudirat's assassination to recasting and deconstructing the tensed socio-political situation of Nigeria at that time. The discourse describes a struggle for the institutionalization of democracy, a popular will and the desire of those who held power against popular will to perpetuate in power. The lexical items chicks does not specifically refer to Abiola's children, as one would ordinarily think but to all those who drummed up support for the release of Abiola and the institutionalization of democracy in the country. The idea is to deconstruct military hegemony. The poet is radically opposed to the political heat in the country that led to the illegal killing of Nigerians, who criticized the then General Sani Abacha regime. The discourse strategy is to activate a frame of background knowledge that the poet presupposes is shared with Nigerians. This frame reminds one of the life threats from the military junta against those with different ideology during the recent dictatorship in Nigeria.

However, the exploration of hyponymy in urban blues is to criticize the mad quest for riches that has characterized every facet of Nigerian life and the abandonment of a communal system typical of Africans. The lexical items squatting, floating and tilapia are daughter nodes of the mother-node - sea. The hyponymous construction in Town – pipe borne, street is a metaphor of capitalist domination that has of late overwhelmed the economic framework of Nigeria, and this the poet vigorously opposes. The poet employs these words to advocate a communal existence, which has been devoured by the influx of globalization on one hand and greedy politicians on the other. The poet discursively takes us back to the robust rustic life of most Nigerian villages before the advent of Europeanism, and seems to suggest that the adoption of western values has aided the balkanization of African family system of oneness.

Antonyms

Antonyms are the relationship that holds between a pro-

position and its negation (Babatunde, 1995: cited in Odebunmi, 2006). Antonyms could be true or exact for example, the opposite of 'white' is 'black' (Odebunmi, 2006). However, this oppositeness becomes less exact when other linguistic markers such as the negator 'not' are introduced. Therefore, the antonyms presented in this work may not be exact or direct opposites; but on the bases of incompatibility in ideas. This implies that this paper looks at how antonyms are used to explore oppositeness in ideology. The lexemes below are instances of antonyms in the poems mapped above:

Waiting – moved
Healing – infected
Shining – ugly
Life – death
Turbulent – flowed
Masses – fell

(P. 57-88).

Unregulated – metered
Billed – rate-free
Pipe borne – stream

Wretches – riches

Urban blues (P. 38)

Ram – lion
Chicks – hawk
Silence – disarray

(Mother hen p.24)

The antonymous relations in Songs of Odamolugbe illustrate that the poet frowns at the docile position taken by Nigerians over their predicament. It seems the poet is of the opinion that Nigerians have been 'waiting' for years and their waiting has not yielded any result. Therefore, the need to 'move' from 'waiting' to taking action becomes expedient. The situation in Nigeria is so 'ugly' that it hinders the 'shine' God has endowed her with. It implies that change for better is contingent upon a people taking a move. The poet therefore, sees the need for an ideological reorientation.

Moreover, the lexeme death is antonymous to life. Death is used to represent the psychological death of institutions like NEPA and the dearth of manpower in the country. During military rule, most Nigerians had to leave the country in search of greener pasture abroad. This is because at a point the political atmosphere of Nigeria was so overwrought with assassinations and attempted assassinations. The antonyms explored in the poems are context specific. For instance, the antonym of "unregulated" should have been "regulated", but the appropriate antonym is 'metered'. It is in this light that the antonyms are discussed in both poems and what they portend. In the poem urban blues, the antonymous lexical items support the development of Ushie's argumentative paradigm and the rejection of capitalism, which he thinks has only helped to impoverish Nigerians. The discourse strategy is to activate a frame of background knowledge that the

poet presupposes is shared with the masses. This discursive frame brings to mind the life threat -“metered” on the people by the ruling class. The antonyms fulfill the pragmatic function of establishing an implicit comparison and building a contrast between two apparently incompatible ideologies: capitalism on one hand and communalism on the other, which the poet advocates.

While in urban blues, the poet uses antonyms to narrate the freedom enjoyed by those in the villages, in *Mother hen*, the poet employs antonymous expressions to depict his antagonism against the mad quest for power, corruption in power and the trenchant abuse of power during the recently ousted military dictatorship in Nigeria. For instance, *ram – lion* represents the power structure and power tussle amongst the political class, a bane of political instability that has characterized Nigerian political system. The poet employs these items to distance himself from such practices. The lion is a metaphor for the powerful ruling class, whose primary objective is the impoverishment of the masses represented by the lexeme *ram*, through its harsh economic programmes and policies. Similarly, the hawk, is a more powerful bird than the chick, feeds on the chicks. The underlying meaning exposed by such antonymous selection is that government policies and programmes are often at the expense of the masses represented as chicks. It also metaphorically refers to the age long battle between the rich and the poor; a hegemonic struggle by the rich to perpetuate in affluence on one hand and the conscientious effort of the poor to turn the table around.

The antonymous selection is deliberate. The language is deconstructionist and resistant as well as inciting. The activation of linguistic markers such as those discussed above have their pragmatic effects, they are used to enable the world feel the adverse effects of the political tension in their country. This is buttressed by the strategic positioning of the exclamation marker in:

O hear that shrill sneer
From the hissing hills
From the hissing brooks
From the hissing birds
From every passing company
of terror – rising hurry – Cain

(Mother hen P. 24).

The recurrent use of the ‘-ing’ verb patterns in each line of the poem does not just aptly capture the intensity and the sound of a suffering nation, but also adds personalization to the text and this linguistic strategy allows the poet to generate meanings with emotional involvement in the linguistic resources and to show involvement to the text.

Collocation

Collocation refers to how a word relates with another to bring out the meaning of a text in a discourse situation.

This describes the relationship words hold by virtue of the fact that they co-occur in a text. The following pair of words collocates in the poems:

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Cock’s fate – Protesting | |
| Mouth – Spokes bird | |
| Shut – mouth | Mother hen (p. 30) |
| Soldier ants – parade | |
| Creep – uphill | Urban blues (p. 24) |
| Round – balloon | |
| Healing – centre | |
| Moved – towards | |
| Broken – sticks | Refugee – E (p.88) |
| Crying – babies | |
| Suck – life | |
| Divine – instruction | |
| Turbulent – river | |
| Tormenting – tortures | Victims of hope (p.89) |

The collocating items help in fusing the poet’s ideology with the events in the society. It predefines the existing inequality in the society and communicates to the reader what one should expect in the discourse. The poet contends that the centre of healing after years of military dominance lies in democracy. Moved collocates with towards. In the poet’s opinion, until we move nothing happens.

The emergence of hope relies upon proactiveness. The fact remains that the turbulent, decadent dehumanization and bastardization of the Nigerian people collocates with the decadent use of language by the poet. By employing such linguistic strategies, the poet enters the mental construct of those who held power against ‘ordinary Nigerians’ for them to see reason why the common man must survive.

Similarly, the collocating items in *Mothenhen* do not only portray the political heat generated by the assassination of Kudirat Abiola and other pro – democrats, but also expose seemingly opposing ideas about the political situation in post modernist Nigeria. The collocating items *cock’s fate – protest /mouth – spokes bird/shut- mouth* are used to reveal the height of political tension in the country in the mid 90s and the intractable conflict between the oppressors and the pro democrats, represented as *cocks* protesting the fate of their *chicks*. The pro democrats are the spokesbird who have refused to *shut* their *mouth*, as they must not keep quiet in the face of oppression. They are also explored to depict the deceitful activities of Late Sani Abacha and his cronies, who truncated democracy in 1993 and opened up a tense political atmosphere in 1995 by the imprisonment of MKO Abiola and the assassination of several other pro democrats. The poet’s exploration of linguistic items exemplify a poet that is lost in the socio-political quagmire of his society,

as his linguistic strategy is marked by chronic rage directed at the oppressors.

As committed writers with a cause, the poets' tireless exploration of collocating items correspond with their tireless effort to transform the Nigerian society through mobilization of the citizenry and preparing them for a confrontation with the oppressive system. The poet urges the pro democrats to continue in the struggle of instituting democracy in the country. This is seen in Ushies Fela Anikulapo Kuti.

You who sang at the market place
What others feared to whisper
Owner of armory of tunes
Blasting germed scepter,
Their echoes, an anthem
For the love of our layered land.

(Fela Anikulapo Kuti p. 74).

The lexical selection of some committed writers seems to emanate from the effort to help the masses come out of perpetual poverty and the need to promote human cause. The collocations in urban blues are activated to show the communal system of existence in rural areas, where there is togetherness, as opposed to self-centeredness of life in the city, a brain child of Europeanism. The collocating items: solder ants – parade/uphill – creep, capture in natural language the oneness experienced in rural areas. They are also used to lampoon capitalist ideas and rail against the excesses of town's life. It seems the poet advocates a return to communalism. This populist ideology is also evident in the poem 'Refugee E' where the humanly gesture of some Nigerians saved the child Bose, who had a six inch nail driven through her skull at Ibadan in 1995 by an unknown person.

Synonyms

According to Odebunmi (2006) "synonyms are possible through collocative differences. This is common with free collocations". A word that collocates with another word is able to carry the meaning of another independent word, this has to do with a word that can substitute for it in a context in which it occurs "such words are collocatively synonymous" (Odebunmi, 2006). However in this context Synonyms are seen as words that cannot be used interchangeably, but by virtue of the linguistic environment they share and the idea expressed, they hold similar meanings. Most times synonyms result from emotive or evaluative differences. This means that synonyms in this category derive their sources from the user's impression or feeling. The following examples validate our claim:

Hawk – claws
Mother hen – defiant cocoyam
Birds – nest

Mother hen (p. 24)

Beaming – smile
Poles – legs
Stomach – balloon
Refuge –E (p.88)

Avarice - greed God – divine
Down – fell
Bullets – gullets
Tormenting – tortures
Masses – generation
Crying – ululations

Victims of hope (p. 89)

The synonymous expressions in the poems, for instance "smile" and its synonym, "beaming," reveals the humanist ideal characteristic of the poet. "Beaming" is associated with the sun. Sun brings hope and it connotes good things. This is why the action of the poet brought smile on the victim. In other words, if the poet's ideas and those of his likes are taken seriously, there will be restoration for the bartered nation. This can be seen in the poet's 'assuring smile', which brings about:

40 watts came on, beaming
his lips anxious to tell his tale.

(Victims of hope p. 89)

The significance of synonymous expression such as down and fell is that it brings out the intractable struggle between the academics and other opposing ideas. It (synonymous expression) negates the poet's idea of leadership that a leader should rather build than destroy. The poem, 'Refuge E' portrays a country that is suffering from Kwashiorkor as a result of starvation. It has grown emaciated and is about to die, before a rescue comes from the poet. The linguistic mechanism is to dislodge existing ideology and to construct an ideology that is tune with suppressed popular view about developmental programmes of the country. That is the meaning we will derive, if we transcend the 'actual text, to critically investigate the 'social process of production' of the poem. In this light, the poet likens Nigeria to a dying man, who has been starved in spite of its abundant natural resources. In other words, the country is in a terrible situation. This is heightened in the poem, 'Victims of hope'. So, the nation is in dire need of healing. Since the ideas of those who held power can not help to liberate the people from the shackles of poverty, the need to replace them becomes inevitable. The poet tries to inspire his likes to rise to the occasion of rescuing the dying nation. The poet portrays the ideas of his class as appropriate for the building and rebuilding of society. This is informed by the fact that intellectualism has a lot to offer for the development of Nigerian politics as well as economic. The overriding idea of intellectualism is to pitch tent with the masses. This is seen in:

Smiles of liberated masses from age – long
 Shackled minds, bleeding palms and sourced souls
 That our Rome might be room enough for a few?
 (When God 'established obai p. 48).

The poet persona puts his hope in Nigeria. Rome is used to allude to Nigeria. It seems the poet is of the view that after years of struggles and suffering Nigeria should be a place for everyone, rather than a country for a few. The rhetorical device does not function as a question but as a linguistic tool that states a necessity. The poet calls for the replacement of the idea that his country is made for a selected few. The poet totally disagrees with the notion where a selected few have access to power and economy at the peril of the masses. This populist orientation is a recurrent issue in Dasylyva's poetry.

In spite of the grim situation the poet describes, he still hopes that if the right thing is done, Nigeria can be a better place for all to dwell. He is worried about the situation of his country, Nigeria; and to curb the situation from getting worse everyone must take positive action:

I beckoned (L1)
 I carried (L2)
 I moved (L18)
 (Refuge E p. 88)

In Urban blues, Ushie captures an explicit illustrative image of the suffering masses in his society. He narrates how water is free from the stream. In the village, it is possible to draw water from a neighbor's well free – of - charge (unregulated) as opposed to the high cost of getting water in most Nigerian towns. The poet uses water to express the excruciating economic situation in his country. Water, that is supposed to be common, is difficult to come by. The poet gives the impression that his Nigerian economy is so terrible that the citizens have to buy water. Unfortunately, it is the masses that always bear the brunt of such cost. The poet attributes the social malady of Nigerians to the insensitivity of government. The poet laments the fact that even in the 21st century most Nigerian towns can not provide water for their inhabitants. The masses are always at the receiving end of government's inaction:

On every street
 I am a leaf
 Floating
 on a sea of tears.
 Here, wretches sit on riches.
 (Back to Kugbudu p. 32).

The poet tilts his concern toward a communal society. The grassroots images drawn are activated through antonyms, synonyms, hyponyms and collocations. The lexical features, adequately explored by the poet bring to light the poet's resolve to always cry out against the alarming growth of government's insensitivity and its attendant negative effects on Nigerians:

And from the lakes of sweat
 On their foreheads flowing
 Into my heart, I fished these
 Words, as tool to carve their moods.
 (Back to Kugbudu p.29)

It is apparent that the poet is grieved by the anguish of the people. Therefore, his explorations of linguistic items discussed in the poems are forceful. The semantic mapping of the poems, which has helped to bring out the relation words hold in the context of the poems are deliberately explored by the poets to reveal injustice, meanness and wickedness with which the powerful, impede the means of livelihood of the masses, so as to impoverish them. Both Dasylyva and Ushie prefigure a revolution, which can cleanse the society of its social problems.

The poets' meanings are inferred by supplying contextual assumptions to the explication of utterances in the discourse situation. That is, the interpretation done here is made possible, because of the awareness of the context in which the texts are located. The poets associate with the pain and misery of the people, inflicted on them by the 'gods' in power. Thus, the lexical items, through semantic mapping have assisted in locating the populist ideology of the poets.

The end of the beginning

This paper shows that semantic mapping as a linguistic procedure could be employed in investigating the ideological concern of some poets. It also reveals that beyond media discourse, other discourse types (such as poetry) can be a medium for the presentation of ideological positions on both personal and national issues. The paper has been able to sustain Fowler's (1981) position that any linguistic concept can be used in a critical linguistic study of literary text. However, having done a reduced analysis such as this, it will be misleading to generalize the findings to other poems. It is therefore suggested that a broader analysis could be done to either refute or sustain the claim that ideological categories are imbued in lexical items.

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