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Language, Polygamy and Motherhood in Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*: A Stylistic Critical Approach

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Abstract

This study aims at examining the relevance of Sociolinguistic Functional Stylistics (SFS) in supplying a methodical structure upon which Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* can be appreciated. Much of the critical attention on Emecheta has been centred on issues of gender and sexuality to the extent that ideological implications of language in her fiction have almost been ignored. This study applies as its theoretical framework Halliday's Social Semiotic Structure with special reference to the context

of situation discourse which not only interprets relevant linguistic data but also establishes a link between people and the linguistic items used to describe them. This study adopts a qualitative research methodology for its data analysis which entails interpretative and definitive data analysis techniques. The study observes the presence of linguistic items such as *verba sentiendi*, lexical, syntactic negation, contextual use of language and paralinguistic devices such as figures of speech and so on in the novel under review. These linguistic choices determine the relationship between characters as they interact and also depict the specific function of language in operation. This study, therefore, recommends that the eclectic approach of Sociolinguistic Functional Stylistics should be applied to other sub-genres of prose, and other literary genres in order to open up a new vista in the appreciation of Emecheta's works.

Introduction

In *The Joys of Motherhood*, polygamy and child-bearing are central to the discourse. The essence is to influence the other interlocutor's cognition and consciousness. This tussle to take charge of the discourse shows in the difference in social standing among individuals or characters. This means that in social interactions, there is almost always a predominance of one voice or consciousness over another. This can be seen in the hegemonic relationship between the character, Nnaife and the other members of his polygamous family. Udumukwu (2006, p.22) could not agree more. He has this to say: "...certain words do dominate over others in the same way as certain ideas are more influential than others are." This hegemonic arrangement influences the feature of discourse in the work under review which is also depicted in the interpersonal relationship between Agbadi and the members of the other Ibuza men and women, and also between the colonialists and the colonized in pre-independent Nigeria – Lagos.

The impact of linguistic choices in Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* on the reader is not in doubt. It is, in fact, made more manifest by the constant application in the work, of diction and other linguistic devices that smack of racial and gender domination, resistance and so on and their relevance in the fictional world that Emecheta creates. Agbadi's position of traditional authority in his interpersonal relationship with his household, Ona's and Adaku's resistance, and Nnaife's overriding attitude in his relationship with his wives, and so on, all serve to portray the role of linguistic features in the creation of characters.

At this juncture, we make some assumptions. The first is that in *The Joys of Motherhood*, the near-total patriarchal domination of females and children is vividly portrayed in the syntactic and lexical manipulation of language which ends up in the emphatic presentation of masculine ideology. In other words, the dominant patriarchal Igbo (Ibuza) traditional values are depicted in the linguistic social interaction between

Nnaife and the members of his polygamous household, on one hand, and on another, between the female characters like Ona, Adankwo and so on, and the different male-oriented African traditional and cultural bottlenecks that infringe upon their rights as humans. Lastly, linking the above two assumptions is the third which is that there is in existence, dissenting voices that refuse to accept impositions, restrictions and control. This can be seen in the dissenting consciousness and voice of Oshia that challenges Nnaife's viewpoint. Others include the likes of Adaku that pull out of marriage thereby questioning the patriarchal value system.

Theoretical Framework

This study is hinged on Sociolinguistic Functional Stylistics (SFS) which is a blend of Bakhtin's dialogic (cultural) structure, Fowler's ideological structure, and Halliday's social semiotic structure. Propounded in the 1980's, it considers language from the eclectic or flexible social, cultural, and ideological angles. SFS emphasizes the following:

- (i) Bahktin's (1981) dialogic structure which recognises the presence of divergent voices in a text – (assenting or dissenting); monologic when only the author's voice dominates in the text, and phonologic when it competes with the voices of the characters,
- (ii) the revelation, through linguistic features of the kind of social relationship among voices or characters in a text,
- (iii) Halliday's (1989) social semiotic context-bound structure comprising field, tenor, and mode of discourse (ideational, interpersonal, and textual) in which language reveals the attitude or worldview of characters,
- (iv) Fowler's (1981) ideological structure which is a combination of Bahktin's divergent voices and Haliday's social semiotic characteristics which is then linked to the writer's overall artistic vision, and
- (v) the revelation of meanings in a text at the lexical, syntactic and rhetorical levels of discourse.

Halliday's (1989) framework on language, context and text constitutes the specific structure upon which our analysis of data for this study shall depend. This is with a view to determining how the effects or meanings revealed by the various linguistic items cohere with Emecheta's vision of society in *The Joys of Motherhood*.

Analysis of Applied Linguistic Choices

This section seeks to reveal to what extent Emecheta depicts diverse worldviews within the fictional structure of *The Joys of Motherhood* through the proper

application of relevant linguistic choices. For this purpose, we shall adopt the three features of context of situation as recommended by Halliday (1989). This working paradigm shall be applied to selected relevant social interactions between characters. The essence is to find out how their use of language tries to reveal the relationship built from such interaction and the message or meaning that emerges. Finally, an attempt would be made, in each case, to see how all these coher with Buchi Emecheta's ideology or worldview in the work under review.

The connection between male perception of the womenfolk and other cultural beliefs and the predicament of the women – both young and old – inform Buchi Emecheta's narrative structure. In this regard, under review is the dilemma of the young and beautiful Ona whom the father, the renowned Chief Obi Umunna restricts from fulfilling the traditional necessity of tying the nuptial knots with any man, the least of all, the great Nwokocha Agbadi, Ona's lover. In the following excerpt (23-24), we shall try to examine how Emecheta's linguistic choices represent this meaning or effect and, by extension, the author's ideology:

1. Her baby daughter was very merciful to her. **2.** 'She simply glided into the world,' the women around told her. **3.** Ona was dazed with happiness. **4.** Agbadi had won, she thought to herself, at the same time feeling pity for her poor father. **5.** Agbadi came the very second day and was visibly overjoyed. **6.** 'Well, you have done well, Ona, a daughter, eh?' **7.** He bent down and peeped at the day-old child wrapped and kept warm by the fireside and remarked: This child is priceless, more than twenty bags of cowries. **8.** I think that should really be her name, because she is a beauty and she is mine. **9.** Yes, "Nnu Ego": twenty bags of cowries.' **10.** He called in the men who came with him and brought enough yams and drinks to last Ona a long time, for custom did not allow him to go near her again until after twenty-five days. **11.** Obi Umunna came in and for a while the two men toasted and prayed for the happiness of the new child. **12.** Did Ona tell you of our compromise? **13.** She agreed that if she bore a baby girl, she would be mine, if a boy, he would be yours,' Agbadi said coolly. **14.** 'That may be true, my friend. I am not a man who can take seriously talks lovers have on their love mat. **15.** She was your guest, and you were a sick man then.' **16.** What are you trying to say, Umunna? **17.** That your daughter should go back on her promise?' **18.** 'She is a woman so I don't see why not. **19.** However, because she is my daughter, I am not asking her to violate her word. **20.** Yes, the baby is yours, but my daughter remains here. **21.** I have not accepted any money from you.' **22.** 'How much do you want for her? **23.** What else

do you expect? **24.** ‘Is it her fault that you have no son?’ Agbadi was beginning to roar like the wild animals he was wont to hunt and kill. **25.** ‘Please, please, aren’t you two happy that I have survived the birth. It seems nobody is interested in that part of it... **26.** I am still my father’s daughter. **27.** Since he has not taken a bride price from you, do you think it would be right for me to stay with you permanently? **28.** You know our customs does not permit it. **29.** I am still my father’s daughter, Ona intoned sadly... (p. 23, ch. 2)

The above excerpt acquires meaning by the linguistic choices of discourse. This is based on Halliday’s context of situation. Sentence 1 belongs to the domain of possessive assertiveness. Note the emphasis placed on the possessive adjective “Her” as in “Her baby”. There is also the repetition of the word “her” to mark the end of the sentence thereby giving the sentence a musical note. This language usage implicates the great significance attached to child-bearing in the African patriarchal arrangement. The use of the lexical item “merciful” in line 1 and the fact that Ona was “dazed with happiness” suggest that labour for women is an excruciating experience for which reason one was “dazed” at having had relatively normal child delivery of “gliding” in the metaphorical sense. This further enhances the view held about the indispensable value this society attaches to child-bearing. In line 4, the dilemma of a female caught up in the titanic struggle between father and lover occasioned by a patriarchal system that leaves the female with no choice crops up. Note that the lexical juxtaposition of the verb item “won” for Agbadi, and a combination of the *verba sentiendi* “feeling” and the nominal “pity” for Obi Umunna. At the semantic level, this signifies one of the evils of patriarchy which is setting two traditional juggernauts of African – Ibuza extraction, on a collision course.

There is the use of anti-thesis in line 7. The child is described by Agbadi as “priceless”, that is, of unquantifiable value, and yet, with a price tag of “over twenty bags of cowries”. This points to the view held by feminists to the effect that, in male-dominated African cultural arrangement, a woman or female is not worth more than the price that is paid on her head. Nnu Ego, the joy-seeking mother of many even concurs with this belief by saying, “But I wouldn’t mind sending the girls somewhere to learn a trade if I would be given some money for their services” (196). The author embarks on a repetitive structure by repeating “twenty bags of cowries in line 9, perhaps, for emphasis. This issue of judging daughters in terms of their monetary value is re-echoed in lines 21 and 22. Obi Umunna stresses his claim over his daughter, Ona through the application of the first person negation syntactic construction, “I have not taken any money from you”. Note the use of the generic, “any”, suggesting none at all in the same line 21. This emphasis on the generic pronoun “any” suggests the huge financial expectation that trails the birth and maturity of a girl child. In the succeeding

line, Agbadi embarks on interrogative function of the sentence as he demands, “How much do you want for her?” Caught in the cross-fire of male domination, Ona’s response in line 26 is symptomatic of that of other females in her world, “I am still my father’s daughter”. This is repeated in line 29 for emphasis. Note that the injection of the first person pronoun “I” makes that grammatical construction expressive while the addition of the lexical intensifier “still” adds to the emphasis on Ona’s total ownership by her father.

In another instance, as the plot unfolds, Emecheta displays her awareness of the hurdles that crops up in the course of the transfer of the age-long cultural practices, such as polygamy via the inheritance of the wives of dead relatives, from their natural rural setting into the urban one in Lagos. In the same vein, Nnu Ego’s complacent disposition is juxtaposed with the radical approach of her co-wife, Adaku who desires self-freedom and economic independence in a patriarchal society. Initially, Nnu Ego, having become used to the monogamic arrangement of not sharing a husband in Nnaife’s household finds it an uphill task to adjust to the intrusion – as it were, of Adaku, the inherited second wife who, by cultural imposition, becomes a part of Nnaife’s one-room apartment polygamous family. Their personal animosity, jealousy and unfounded suspicion over each other’s supposed diabolical tendency towards the other’s children, especially the male ones, begins to intensify as the plot unfolds. These issues are part of the discourse between Adaku, Oshia and Nnu Ego:

1. ‘Oshia! Dumbi! You two go and fetch some water from the tap for the evening meal.’ **2.** Dumbi came obediently to take her bucket, but Oshia ignored Adaku. **3.** ‘Oshia, did you not hear me call you?’ **4.** Go and fetch some water,’ Adaku repeated. ‘Dumbi is already on her way.’ **5.** I’m not going! I am a boy. **6.** Why should I help in the cooking? **7.** That’s a woman’s job,’ Oshia yelled back, and went on playing with his friends. **8.** All the people sitting around the compound laughed. ‘Just like a boy, they murmured amusedly. **9.** But that childish remark set Adaku off. **10.** She started to cry afresh for her dead baby, certain that people were mocking her because she had no son. **11.** ‘Oshia, come in at once!’ Nnu Ego called. **12.** ‘Why are you so rude to your father’s wife? **13.** Don’t you know that she is like a mother to you?’ **14.** She hit her eight-year-old son, who shouted back in anger: ‘I don’t like her! She gives me frightful headaches. **15.** I saw her in my dream last night. **16.** She was trying to push me into a ditch. **17.** I don’t like her!’ **18.** ‘What dream are you talking about?’ Nnu Ego asked, fear creeping into her voice. **19.** She had long sensed that Adaku’s grievances were not just that she had lost her own son but that Nnu Ego had two sons already; stories of younger wives

harming the sons of senior wives were common. **20.** ‘Why did you not tell me then? **21.** Why mention it now, just when you’re being told off?’ Nnu Ego persisted in a low voice so that Adaku would not hear. **22.** ‘You would not have believed me,’ Oshia complained. **23.** ‘You always support her and you ignore me, all the time worrying about Adim and the twins. **24.** You wouldn’t have believed me.’ (pp142-143, ch.11)

In the above passage, we are exposed to the field of discourse which involves a dialogue or social interaction that takes place, first, between Adaku, the inherited wife of the late elder Owulum who, by cultural imposition, moves from Ibuza with her daughter, Dumbi to become Nnaife’s second wife, and Oshia, Nnu Ego’s first male child, and second, between Nnu Ego and Oshia. In the above, excerpt, Emecheta creates what looks like a real and natural verbal exchange. The passage appears believable considering the backgrounds of the participants. Based on the linguistic choices which Emecheta ascribes to each of them, we are in a position to form impressions regarding their social standings, tendencies, habits, and then, the relationships that exist among them. In the excerpt, the author, through the narrator, lays emphasis on sentiments and personal perception, action and values.

Sentence 1 ushers in imperative directness. It is an expression that foregrounds to us the widening cracks in the polygamous landscape of Nnaife’s family in Lagos. This syntactic structure, with the accompanying force of compulsion exposes the reader to the faint hint of the conflict of value. In other words, sentences 1 and 2 open up for the reader a road map that leads in the direction of a rift that may swallow the relative peace that once existed between the co-wives of Nnaife. The conative (second person pronouns) ‘you’ and the emphazier ‘two’ are used by Adaku not only to denote urgency of purpose but also to maintain a sort of neutrality in the polygamous scale of Nnaife’s home. Given the existence of two wives, each with her own set of children, an apparent justice or stability has to be seen to be in operation each time there is a task to be performed. The essence is to maintain a situation of apparent equity by sending the ‘two’ (a child from each mother) on the errand in question. In sentences 3 and 4, there is the introduction of a rhetorical question: ‘Oshia, did you not hear me call you?’ This construction, with the repetitive application of the conative second person pronoun ‘you’ is more for emphasis rather than for confirmation, which is why sentence 4 follows with yet another imperative syntactic construction; a repetition of sentence 1: ‘Go and fetch some water’. The addition of ‘Dumbi is already on her way’ re-echoes the sense of equity and fair play that must be seen to be in operation in a polygamous setting.

Sentence 5 introduces the exclamatory sentence constructions: 'I'm not going! I am a boy!' The essence is to express indignation which, instead of pursuing the theme of the ills of polygamy, branches into the issue of gender. To underscore this, Oshia, in sentence 6, follows up with a rhetorical syntactic construction led by a 'wh-'interrogative word 'why'. This is more of a rhetorical question that constitutes a statement in itself rather than demanding a response. Sentence 7 is a declarative construction. 'That's a woman's job.' Note that both sentences 6 and 7 appear self-elliptical in the sense that the answer that is sought in sentence 6 is offered in sentence 7. These two sentences implicate universal knowledge or traditional truism that even children of tender age are aware of. It may be a childish and innocent remark but what lends it its meaning is its context which is located in sentence 8 which expresses the confirmation of its truth value – as it were. In sentences 9 and 10, the truth value of sentence 7 is further emphasized by Adaku's non-verbal response. Note the use of the lexical expressions like 'cry afresh' suggesting a sort of continuity in an act already in existence; 'mocking' and 'no son'. Through linguistic choices, Emecheta uses this social interaction like a multi-barrel gun to embody various thematic concerns interchangeably from polygamy to gender roles, and now to African patriarchal premium on male children.

Sentence 11 is an imperative construction signalling a command and, at the same time, demanding immediate obedience. In sentence 12, the reader comes face to face with a rhetorical construction led by a 'wh-'interrogative word 'Why'. This is followed by another rhetorical question in sentence 13. Both expressions 'Why are you so rude to your father's wife?' in sentence 12 and 'Don't you know that she is like a mother to you?' embody obvious implications. The expressions: 'Why are you...?' and 'Don't you know' introduce the conative construction which is an utterance with emphasis on the listener 'you'. It also implies shared knowledge. In other words, the addressee as well as the speaker should know or are supposed to have common knowledge of the fact in question. In the context of the utterances which is polygamy, it is necessary to maintain apparent equity, peace and mutual respect. Nnu Ego's response is, therefore, reciprocal. It corresponds to Adaku's statements in lines 1 and 4.

Sentences 14, 15, 16 and 17 come in quick succession with the expressive first person pronoun 'I' taking the lead except in sentence 15 which is an accusation in both the active voice, with the third person pronoun 'she' taking the lead. According to Halliday and Hasan (1989, p.5), context "...goes beyond what is said and written: it includes other non-verbal goings-on, the total environment in which a text unfolds." If we agree with the above assertion, we then begin to appreciate the patriarchal environment that informs Oshia's audacity in accusing Nnaife's inherited wife, Adaku of trying to use diabolical spiritual means to harm him. Recall that earlier on, Adaku

had said to Oshia, “You are worth more than ten Dumbis” (142), and the narrative voice had observed that “Oshia had heard enough to make him feel that he and his brother Adim were rare commodities, and that he being the oldest was rarer still” (142). It was this context or environment that also elicited the gender consciousness that he expresses in lines 5 and 6.

The interrogative syntactic construction in line 18 “What dream are you talking about?” only serves as a prelude to the fear that envelops Nnu Ego and, subsequently, serves as a confirmation of the faint suspicion that she has always harboured about co-wives’ rivalry creeping into their polygamous home. This is a sad commentary on polygamy and its corrupting influence even on innocent children. Note the application of the repetitive syntactic structure in lines 14 and 17, “I don’t like her!” The repetitive and exclamatory nature of the linguistic choice here smack of emphatic desperation. Lines 20 and 21 belong to the interrogative mood: “Why did you not tell me then?” and “Why mention it now, just when you’re being told off?” The two constructions also reflect a mixture of worry, fear, anxiety and, then, doubt, especially line 21. This is so for two reasons: first, the space of time between the point of the dream and its reporting, and second, Oshia waiting until he was in trouble before reporting.

It is pertinent to note that there is repetitive structure of “You would not have believed me...” in lines 22 and 24. This has the effect of laying emphasis on the fact that, in spite of his significant position as the oldest male child in a polygamous arrangement, Oshia was not getting what he considers due attention. His assertion in line 23 supports this opinion. He accuses Nnu Ego thus: “You always support her and you ignore me, all the time worrying about Adim and the twins.” The above situation opens up two implications on the issue of polygamy in a male-dominated cultural system: First, is that the setting does not make room for equity in sharing of attention to all concerned, that is, some suffer neglect. The second is that in desperation, participants in polygamous settings can go to any length if only to win attention.

Summary of Findings

Holding the passage on the interaction between Agbadi, Obi Umunna and Ona to the paradigm of Hallidayan context of situation, we feature its field, tenor and rhetorical mode of discourse in the following order: In view of the field of discourse, that is, what is going on or the subject matter of the discourse, there are lexical items describing the dilemma of a female caught in between the two fires of contradicting male chauvinistic tendencies to restrict the female from having a say in her fate and future as regards the choice of a lover or husband, on one hand, and the choice of single parenthood or marriage, on the other. This is occasioned by very oppressive male-directed African cultural practices. This is depicted in a scene in the western Ibo village

in pre-colonial Ibuza in Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*. Note that the linguistic choices by the author reflecting the above field have already been identified and discussed.

The tenor of discourse is concerned with the personal relationships built from the above social interaction. The various interpersonal relationships involved include those of father and daughter, that is, between Agbadi and the new-born baby girl, Nnu Ego, and also between Ona and her father, Obi Umunna. Note the use of the expressive first person pronoun and *verba sentiendi*, 'think' in line 8 when Agbadi says "I think that should really be her name". This implicates absolute possessiveness of a daughter by a father. Note also the use of the conative second person pronoun in line 6 when he addresses Ona, "...you have done well, Ona". In congratulating the mother, Ona, and by suggesting a name which he emphasizes through the repetitive syntactic structure in lines 7 and 9, he lays his claim as the father of the child, thereby establishing a father-to-child relationship. This relationship is further enhanced in line 10 when he calls in the men that came with him to start a celebration. In line 10, we see the use of the active voice: "He called in the men..." This syntactic structure borders on the imperative mood style which denotes command, thereby exercising control or the authority of a father, Agbadi over the affairs of the child, Nnu Ego.

Another relationship that can be identified in that social interaction is the type existing between Agbadi and Obi Umunna. In line 14, Obi Umunna simply refers to the affair between Ona and Agbadi as that existing between mere "lovers", not formally married, thereby trivializing the relationship. In the same line, he employs the use of the 'no/not' lexical device of negation and syntactic repetitive structure as a way of showing his disapproval when he says "I am not a man who..." This is repeated in line 19: "I am not asking...", and then in line 21: "I have not accepted any..." The participants in this discourse are Agbadi and Obi Umunna and each is trying to establish supremacy over the other, by trying to lay permanent claim on Ona. In line 22, Agbadi resorts to the use of the interrogative mood syntactic construction: "How much do you want for her?" This is repeated in line 23: "What else do you expect?" In line 20, Obi Umunna insists: "Yes, the baby is yours, but my daughter remains here." The relationship turns into that of business negotiators; a sort of enthusiastic buyer and a reluctant seller.

Ona, on her own part, underscores her relationship with Obi Umunna as a daughter and, to Agbadi, as a mere lover by insisting in a repetitive syntactic declarative structure. Note the repetition of the expression, "I am still my father's daughter" in lines 26 and 29. Note also the use of the lexical intensifier, "still" and the possessive, "father's daughter" to hammer home her insistence.

The mode of discourse is verbal text which gives status to an oral transaction involving three participants notably, Agbadi, Obi Umunna and Ona. The text is not formulaic in that it is not general. It has potentials for what Halliday (1989, p.13) refers to as "...relating to specific instances". In the text, we see a sort of verbal horse-trading between Obi Umunna who, because he has no male children insists on his beautiful daughter not getting officially married but being free to raise children in the hope that he adopts the male offspring as sons. The rhetorical mode of the transaction is as verbal as it is spontaneous and persuasive. In line 20, Obi Umunna insists: "Yes, the baby is yours but my daughter remains here." In line 22, Agbadi persuades: "How much do you want for her?" The implication that emerges from the above social interaction is that Ona is treated as an article of trade that goes to the higher bidder. Secondly, Ona's status has been transformed into that similar to a son's who must remain to ensure continuation of the family line.

The field of discourse is a social interaction in which Adaku instructs Oshia and Dumbi to go and fetch some water for the evening meal for the entire Nnaife's urban polygamous family. Oshia, the boy vehemently refuses to obey on the grounds that water-fetching is an errand not for a boy. In the tenor of discourse, the participants are Adaku, Nnaife's inherited second wife, Oshia and Dumbi, Nnaife's niece or, in this case, 'surrogate' or 'adopted' daughter. Both the speaker and the audience are very familiar with each other. Adaku tells Oshia and Dumbi to go and fetch water for the evening meal. In a polygamous family, food is prepared in turns by the co-wives. Therefore, every member of the family eats from the same pot. For this reason, each of the co-wives occupy the status of a mother. Therefore, the social interaction between Adaku is one between a person in authority, albeit within the home and the son, that is, mother and son. They share a mother and son relationship. Even Nnu Ego confirms this in line 13 when she asks Oshia, "Don't you know that she is like a mother to you?" Note the use of the simile 'like' and the rhetorical tone of that sentence. Note also, however, that this relationship does not quite click because of Oshia's protest based on gender awareness and personal animosity. The second interaction is between Nnu Ego and Oshia. The relationship is between a mother (one in genuine home authority) and an obedient son.

The mode of discourse is verbal exchange with irrational argument carried out in a face-to-face manner. It is not formulaic; it is spontaneous leading to chains of reactions. First, Oshia reacts negatively to being asked to perform a role which, to his understanding, is meant for the other gender. This triggers off a bout of crying by Adaku because Oshia's reaction exhumes the hitherto buried issues of the loss of her son and the fact that as a woman without a son, she is being mocked. Next is the tentative disciplinary action meted out to Oshia by Nnu Ego which, in turn, triggers off the issue of unhealthy rivalry between the two co-wives.

Conclusion

All the linguistic choices in this social interaction involving Obi Umunna, Agbadi and Ona created by Emecheta in this novel point to the dilemma of the female child without a life of her own because of male social beliefs that are endorsed by patriarchy. All this coher with Emecheta's worldview which calls for gender parity. It also throws up the issue of Emecheta's rejection of child-bearing and motherhood as a central issue for both the survival and happiness of the female in a patriarchal society. Note the use of the hyperbolic metaphor in line 3 of the excerpt: "Ona was dazed with happiness". This shows the magnitude to which the selfish interest of the males can stand in the way of female self-fulfilment.

In this social interaction involving Adaku, Dumbi, Oshia and Nnu Ego, Emecheta's linguistic choices at the lexical, syntactic and rhetorical levels bring to the fore the issue of preference for sons or male children. Recall the scene when Adaku tells Oshia, "...you are worth ten Dumbis" (142). Note also that what would have passed for a childish remark of "I am a boy" (143) sets off Adaku. Emecheta, through careful linguistic choices also highlights the issues of bitter rivalries between co-wives in most polygamous settings to the extent that Nnu Ego seeks spiritual protection for her male children, Oshia and Adim. All the above coher with Emecheta's vision of society or feminist ideology in *The Joys of Motherhood*. She, perhaps, emphasizes, through the various linguistic devices in this work, the fact that there should be a shift for the better in males' or husbands' attitudes towards their wives and children. The point is that the issue of institutionalized polygamy should be modified or scrapped in view of its numerous evils. There should be parity in the preferences for both genders when it comes to child bearing. There is significant impact on Emecheta's ideology via numerous linguistic devices in the novel in question.

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