
**GRAPHOLOGY AS STYLE IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI
ADICHIE'S *THE THING AROUND YOUR NECK***

Yusuf Tsojon ISHAYA

Department of English and Literary Studies
Federal University, Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria.

Ishayayusuf234@gmail.com

+2347031811700

and

Michael GUNN

Department of English, University of Uyo, Uyo
Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

gunnmichael99@gmail.com

+2348066095327

Abstract

This paper “Graphology as Style in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *The Thing Around Your Neck*”, critically examines of the language of Adichie with the aim of exploring the stylistic devices through graphology assembled by the author in the encoding of the message of the text. Based on the Systemic Functional Grammar of M. A. K. Halliday, as well as on the general principles of stylistics, the study is undertaken at the level of graphology, to account for certain features in the author’s language and why they have been utilised. The study discovers that the author makes choices of graphological variables such as italicisation, capitalisation, text incorporation, paragraphing and breakage of points and punctuations from the vast resources of language in order to relay her message in the most appropriate manner and to create an impression on her readers. The major thrust and finding is that the author makes some deliberate deviations from the conventions of language in order to vividly portray the experiences of her characters who are mainly Africans. Also, the author utilises her language configuration to give prominence to the cultural and linguistic background of the Igbo people and Africa in general.

Keywords: Language, Stylistics, Graphology, Italicisation and capitalisation

Introduction

Language avails itself generously to the service of the user in spoken and written discourse to be manipulated, applied and configured to suit the taste of the user in a situation of usage. It is interesting indeed that each user of language makes peculiar linguistic choices to befit personal desires, contextual requirements, purpose of usage, etc. That notwithstanding, it is important to note that the competence or creative facility of the user of a language matters a great deal. It distinguishes one user from another, and this can be seen in the varying degrees of effects created on readers and listeners by the language of a spoken or written text, as the case may be. In other words, one particular idea is capable of being communicated in numerous ways, depending on the speaker or writer.

It is from the foregoing that the concept of style comes to play. Style would ordinarily mean a distinctive manner in which something is done usually to introduce an innovative, thrilling and renewed approach to doing it. In life generally, we all, if given an opportunity to each do a particular thing, will unarguably handle the (same) task differently. The various approaches will be determined by ability, convenience, geographical and ecological variations, personal and collective ethics, and an array of other conditions. This also applies to our individual approach to language use and the assemblage of words in expressing meaning. In the arena of written language (which constitutes the angle of focus here), it can rightly be put that the writer, to a considerable extent, depends on style to mark him out, to magnify him from an ocean of other writers. In a simpler sense, the distinctive manner in which language is put to use by a writer makes him better appreciated by readers or the public. This is derivable especially in situations where the writer in question has an excellent knowledge of the choices to be made to satisfy certain (contextual or situational) needs. Language is the medium of communication by the writer. All he/she does is “in and through language...whatever [he/she] does can be by the analysis of the language” (Fowler, 1975; p. 2). Thus, it is imperative that the most adequate linguistic choices be made by the writer. The consideration of

Adetugbo (1977) comes to play here. He examines style to be the homage that “what” pays to “how.” We see apparently that in writing for instance, the “what” constitutes the issue of discourse, that is, the subject matter being explored or addressed, the “how” invariably refers to the manner in which the subject matter is communicated, the technical application of diction (linguistic choices assembled to make sentences) to create the effect(s) that the writer in question is desirous of.

In a similar vein, Ibhawaegbele and Edokpayi (2011) consider language (which is the tool for literary productivity) to be reflective, having the ability to show the writer a lot of things about himself and his (immediate) environment. They conclude that “A writer’s language is a mirror held up to his personality and his particular circumstances. It is through the use of language that he reflects his individual awareness of a given situation”. (p. 170). The second sentence quoted here hints that the language user puts linguistic choices into use depending greatly on his personal capability, desire and subject matter. The first sentence shows that a writer’s style reflects who he/she is and determines the extent to which he/she will be recognized and celebrated globally. Their view re-echoes a similar standpoint earlier expressed by Banjo (1996) that “a writer’s style is obviously partly an expression of his personality as well as a reflection of the complexity of his subject matter” (p. 129). Therefore, to be able to reflect his/her background, experiences and the intricateness of their subject matter, a writer is bound to make certain linguistic decisions that may defy the generally accepted norms or conventions of language use. This brings defiance as a stylistic aptitude to the fore. Enkvist (1964), for instance, considers style to be determined by a writer’s linguistic departure from what is generally used or accepted. Other linguists such as Leech (1969), Todorov (1975), Widdowson (1975), Yankson (1987) and Enkvist (1977) have supported and advanced the concept of deviation as a stylistic strategy. Leech (1969), for instance, notes that the poet enjoys some “unique freedom” to flout the norms of language use (p. 5).

The above constitutes the background of this research which sets out to stylistically evaluate graphology with textual analysis and illustrations from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s (2009) *The thing around your neck*.

This author, who is of Nigerian descent and is globally renowned for literary excellence, employs an approach to style that is deserving of stylistic evaluation. In her texts, Adichie makes some interesting graphological choices that attest to the fact that language offers limitless possibilities with regard to its utility in the avenue of literary creativity. Emphasis will, however, be placed on reviewing the stylistic feature of the language in Adichie's collection of short stories—*The Thing Around Your Neck*— focusing on one basic level of stylistic analysis: Graphology.

Statement of the problem

Writers make an array of stylistic choices to effectively communicate their ideas, feelings, ideologies and opinions on certain issues or to convey certain experiences to a wider audience. As a way of carrying this out effectively, the writer chooses an approach to style that is deemed perfect in literary communication. As such, the writer is set to be bound by some common cores of language use, certain linguistic norms, and so on. On the contrary also, the writer will have to deviate from a number of these norms, although consciously (and stylistically) to create intended effects. Africans who write in English language as a second language approach language in a style that is very interesting. If the writer is African, with an African worldview, he/she may most likely think in his/her indigenous language but have to translate these thoughts into the English language while writing. All of these impel the writer to make certain stylistic choices that are unique and quite enticing to a stylistician. This therefore constitutes the problem of this research as it sets out to evaluate the manner in which the writer of African origin uses graphology to meet certain stylistic needs. Precisely, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The thing around your neck* has been singled out from the fold, to review the stylistic choices she makes via graphology and see how these choices conform to or deviate from the generally accepted conventions of language. In any case, whether or not she deviates, the analysis will centre on the stylistic choices of the author and the motivations behind these choices. Analytical data for appraisal will be drawn from her collection of stories, *The thing around your neck*, which constitutes the case study for this endeavour. The study will be carried

out stylistically and anchored on Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar for a more systematic and effective analysis.

Review of Existing studies on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and on *The thing around your neck*

Critical responsiveness has been bestowed on Adichie and her style of writing. Some of this attention has focused on her thematic preoccupations, her literary ideologies, narrative capabilities and of course, her style of language deployment. But one thing beyond debate is that all of these afore-mentioned elements are derivable from the linguistic choices made by the author. Put in a simpler way, Adichie's language embodies her themes, ideologies, narrative structure and countless more. Consequently, this facet of the research will focus on those studies made on the creativity of the author that are of relevance to this academic engagement.

To begin this, we shall review the observations of Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (2010) who have extensively worked on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's writings, thus drawing a lot of significant conclusions to her style or approach to language use. First, they observe that in Adichie's language, she attempts "to bridge the culture-linguistic gap between her Igbo background and her education and orientation in the Western language and culture in her narrative" (p. 267). Therefore, we see that the author is one who has taken a conscious awareness of the fact that she is bi-lingual (as every Nigerian is, at the very least); and decides in her writings to place the two languages she is knowledgeable of side by side. Onukaogu and Onyerionwu further highlight the influence of Adichie's background on this procedure of language experimentation with the lucid declaration that:

The linguistic complexion of Adichie's creative writing benefits from a combination of factors that are both personal and social. Adichie is an Igbo from the Southeastern part of Nigeria. But like many other young Nigerian people of middle-class backgrounds of her generation, she has been exposed to the English language from the earliest stages of her life. Her proficiency in the English language may have been further enhanced by her

upbringing in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. (p. 267).

They also emphasise the author's desire to project her native identity and culture to the world, as they proceed to note:

Adichie's linguistic attitude also appears from all indications an attempt to foreground her Igbo identity, an offshoot of her well-rooted Africanist patriotism. Adichie celebrates not just the Igbo language but everything Igbo and African in her stories. This significant cultural sensitivity produces a heavy leaning of her essentially English language prose on the nuances and patterns of the Igbo. It can be argued that Adichie engages this enterprise in order to achieve contextual realism. For Adichie, even if Igbo characters are given English for obvious reasons, there has to be a way of establishing their Igboness. Allowing Igbo expressions to sit beside English ones is an effective way of achieving this" (p. 269).

So, there are some forms of patriotism to the Igbo ethnic group, to the Nigerian nation and to Africa (all of which are a common denominator in Adichie's background) in the methodology of her language adoption for literature. She feels the need to let her language cast a reflection of her root and of the cultural endowments of this root, she cannot help but cling affectionately and inseparably to. They take their discourse a step further to make commentary on how Adichie's literary commitment has made her comment on the language debate which has been a constant spark of controversy among African literary critics and writers alike. They succinctly draw up the statement that:

... Adichie... has made her own contribution to the conversation about whether the African writer should write in the colonial/foreign language or the indigenous African tongue in definite terms. And in characteristic manner, her position is decisive, pragmatic and functional. Through her impressive fiction, she argues for

a subtle harmony between the foreign language and the indigenous ones.... She insists that the African creative writer, even in the 21st century when the ‘global’ culture and language appear so dominant, can speak to both African people and the global audience (p.301).

This notion above clearly indicates that in the reading of Adichie’s works, it should be borne in mind that she allows her language configuration to cater for her African audience as well as the foreign ones, but giving them an admixture of both languages and speech patterns as used by her narrative voices and characters. Onukaogu and Onyerionwu’s observations therefore account for the many Igbo language expressions, phrases, words, proverbs and nuances that will be confronted in the course of carrying out the analysis.

Anusiem-Dick (2009) comes up with some assessments that share some resemblance with those expressed by Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (2010). They consider Adichie in the light of a nationalist who will not shy away from showing concern for, and pride in her nation, and the adorable cultures that it is blessed with, of which language is included. Commenting on this approach to language use by Adichie, they contend that the author “uses language to propagate unquestionable, uncompromised love for one’s nation... Adichie’s love for her place of birth is extolled, especially in an era where some educated parents are shy to acknowledge their native homes, preferring English...at home” (p.107). This statement betrays the image of writers who, against whatever social or global odds, will cling to their identity and shine the light of writing upon it. Adichie is thus placed side by side with the likes of Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston who would not let the American society and its idiosyncratic or stereotypical view and treatment of blacks cut the cord that binds them to their root.

At this point, the study shall streamline its interest to focus on studies made on Adichie’s language use in *The thing around your neck* and how this reflects a writer who has fully stamped her ground in global literature.

The view of Abati (2009) in this regard is one of interesting value. In his review of *The thing around your neck* which he entitled “The thing

around our necks,” Abati compares Adichie’s language craft to that of a sculptor, noted in his exact words, thus:

Adichie takes full command of her material, molding the stuff as a sculptor does. Many of her stories appear so well-chiseled, the reader is tempted to think he or she could have written exactly the same thing. Adichie makes complex narratives and conflicted characters look so simple, through the symbolic power of language and its varieties (p. 1).

Abati’s view above foregrounds the fact that style of language use varies depending on the writer. By drawing comparison with a sculptor, the message is clear: just as all sculptors have varying levels of expertise and prowess in the art, so also do writers. Abati progresses to emphasise the effect the author creates on her readers through the language she employs in *The thing around your neck*. He opines:

Adichie’s writing is evocative, transporting us to known and unknown distances, described in such intimate and personal detail we seem to have been part of their creation, their sounds and smell. She deals with more intimate lived realities that compel reflection about the meaning of being and relationships. The stories in *The thing around your neck* bear the true marks of originality. This book is a further confirmation of Chimamanda’s superb literary skills (p. 1).

It is Adichie’s language in this collection that draws such a laudatory remark as this from Abati.

Methodology

This research adopts the approach of content analysis to critically study textual features and data. It thrives on data from a primary text Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *The thing around your neck* (2009) which is analysed under the guiding light of earlier existing studies from scholars on related issues. The Systemic Functional Grammar of M. A.K. Halliday provides the framework that sustains the analysis made.

Theoretical framework

This paper is hinged on the framework of M. A. K. Halliday's theory of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). The SFG model is appropriate for a stylistic study of literature as it gives room for the study of a writer's language (in the case of written language) as a personal choice made from several alternatives of language patterns and features. The choices are also explained to be guided by the function(s) which they are out to play or by what effect the writer is out to play. As a result, the writer settles for what medium best encodes his/her message to create a desired effect. By doing this, there is a possibility of flouting some rules of grammar or language use. By applying this theory in this manner, the stylistic study of the language use in Adichie's *The thing around your neck* will be effectively carried out.

Data presentation and analysis

One major reason for attempting a practical exploration of a text is to illustrate the formal features of a text which on the utilitarian point of view helps to reveal the intention of the writer and also gives insight on his/her pattern of writing with regard to recurrent choices.

Graphological level of analysis

Graphology considers the layout of a text, exploring items of foregrounding. Foregrounding places emphasis on projected items which a writer intends to make visible in their work. It accounts generally for written features of a text which in turn convey literary meaning, Cummings and Simons (1983). These items could be punctuations, style of font, or physical structure of the text (most often in poetry). Foregrounding considers creative deviation from norms or conformity to norms both in the use of symbols and icons. The analysis at the level of graphology will be broken down into the sub-categories that follow.

- Italicisation

Italicisation is the rightward slanting of letters, words or full sentences in a text. The major aim of italicisation is to place linguistic highlight on the structure or unit to which it is applied. It marks out the unit for easy notice in order to make it more prominent. Adichie has used italics in

The thing around your neck to lay emphasis on certain items. This emphasis may be to mention proper nouns and exclusive names, as can be seen in the story “Jumping monkey hill” where the following are italicised since they are exclusive names of newspapers and dailies: “The guardian” (p. 100); “Joy and city people” (p. 105); “The economist” (p. 109); and “Oratory” (p. 109).

The same style of italicising dailies and titles is sustained in “The American embassy” where the emphasis on them is in a bid to remove them from the surreal into the real or physically expressive. The following suggest such: “The Guardian” (p. 128, 136); “The News” (p. 128); “The Vanguard” (p. 128); “The New Nigerian” (p. 134, 135); and “Evening News” (p. 136).

Titles of movies and their signatures are also rendered in italics which is applicable to the norm of literary writing. Adichie has conformed to this, seemingly to relay her work as close to reality as possible. Movie titles like “The Lion King” and “Jeopardy” (p. 120/121) are rendered in italics, relating them to the non-fictional life where these titles exist.

More expressively, Adichie uses italics to express non-English words, thus imputing the cultural relevance of setting into her stories. In “The thing around your neck”, the following words are indigenous words rendered in italics: “dawadawa” (p. 123); “onugbu” (p. 168); “nsi” (p. 122); “nwanne” (p. 116); “abeg” (p. 128); “abi” (p. 138); “uziza” (p. 168); and so on.

Italicisation also features at the sentence level where the writer has rendered Igbo utterances in italics, such as the following in “The arrangers of marriage”: “Ike agwum” (p. 168); “Eziokwu?” (pp. 169, 171); “Ezigbo di!” (p. 170); “O di mma” (p. 172), and so on. It is important to observe that the Igbo expressions are translated alongside, such that their English equivalents are provided just next to them. Therefore, one observes that the essence of the rendered Igbo expressions is to infuse the writing with elements of originality seen in the live and physical conversational situations. Through this graphological device, the author succeeds in creating a make-believe world that shares great semblance with the experience of reality. This is realism in conversation, the writer’s “ability to render in writing the

characteristics of spoken conversational language” (Leech and Short, 1981; p. 160). The author attempts to render in written form the exact manner in which the Igbo characters would speak in real life. Onumajuru (2015) describes this communicative mannerism where he posits that:

An Igbo native speaker is so used to code-mixing that he does not always know when he mixes both English and Igbo...in the same utterance. This mixture has become so natural to Igbo speakers that they can hardly make a sentence in Igbo without one or two words of the English language (p. 61).

There is also the illustration of what Adeniran (2015) calls the “other-endowed” characteristic of the English language, which makes it accommodate words and expressions from the indigenous language.

In “A private experience”, italicisation is used to emphasise concealed thoughts or hidden conversations. The Hausa woman who shares the same danger of ethno-religious chaos with Chika is said to scream in her subconscious, “Hold me, and comfort me because I cannot deal with this alone” (p. 51). This thought is put in italics because it is neither considered a part of their interaction nor the normal discourse. This calls the author’s attention to foreground it from the general write-up. There is a recurrent use of this style in “The American embassy” where Adichie employs italicisation to foreground the thoughts of the protagonist who is simply referred to as “she”. More specific is the fact that only the utterances of others, who in one way or another have contributed to her trauma, are rendered in italics. When recounting the episodes that lead to the cold-blooded murder of her son (and only child), Ugonna, the utterances of the assailants are depicted in italics, thus:

- (a) “*Where is your husband? Where is he?*” (p. 131)
- (b) “*You know about the story your husband wrote in the newspaper? You know he is a liar? You know people like him should be in jail because they cause trouble, because they don’t want Nigeria to move forward?*” (p. 132)
- (c) “*Fine woman, why you marry trouble maker?*” (p.132)

- (d) *“Let’s go”* (p. 132)
- (e) *“You think she will tell people it was an accident? Is this what Oga asked us to do? A small child! We have to hit the mother. No, that’s double trouble. Yes. No, let’s go my friend!”* (p. 133)

In the extract (e), it is ideal to observe that the italicised utterances are not made by one person, but by several. Nonetheless, the writer chooses to put them all together as a way of presenting a single thought.

As revealed, the author employs italicisation to emphasise or foreground features which she chooses to take out of the background. Adichie has used italics to reveal titles of dailies, books and other non-print items; to express non-English words and sentences; as well as to reveal the thoughts or inner contemplations of characters, especially when quoting other characters the readers may not have had encounters with.

- Capitalisation

Another element of foregrounding is capitalisation, which is the adoption of uppercase lettering for stylistic relevance. As a norm, sentences are begun with capital letters and Adichie adopts this convention meticulously. However, to begin every story in the collection, the first letter is superscripted, running into the succeeding line. This is aesthetic in concept as it adds beauty to the script. Also, it draws attention to the beginnings of the stories, more or less announcing that the opening sentences constitute the core of each story. This is truer when one considers the fact that the initial letters of each story are not just capitalized, but also bolded.

Adichie also uses full capitalisation in several cases worth mentioning. One of such is to recast names of definite places where the captions are physically inscribed. For instance, in “The arrangers of marriage”, the restaurant the couple visit has a lopsided print “BEST CARIBBEAN AND AMERICAN FOOD”, (p. 173) which implies that that is the insignia which brings to bare the physical attribution to the author’s writing. It is worthy of note that the Caribbean share a great historical similarity with the United States of America with regards to the exportation of African slaves and the rise of black diasporas. The full capitalization of the name of this restaurant, therefore, draws attention to

blackness and the black experience of racism, rather than to food. The fact that the print is described as being lopsided further adumbrates the historical displacement of blacks, which is the hidden preoccupation of the author here. This is truer when one considers the general preoccupation of the story: a sham marriage between a US citizen and an illegal immigrant.

The author also features capitalisation not just for the inscription of places, but also for the characters' own inscriptions. An example is when Ofodile fills out his wife's name into the social security number application form; the name he entered is capitalised for emphasis: "AGATHA BELL". As is the norm in writing acronyms, Adichie maintains the capitalisation in "Ghosts" where she puts television stations in their shortened forms: NTA, BBC, CNN — for Nigerian Television Authority, British Broadcasting Corporation and Cable Network News, respectively (p. 72). Other places where she puts acronyms to use are TV (for television—p. 72), and NITEL, for Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (p. 69).

- **Text incorporation**

Text incorporation considers the introduction of another sub-text within the primary text. In the case of *The thing around your neck*, text incorporation features only in the story "Jumping Monkey Hill". There is a story within the central story, told by Ujunwa who has to attend a writers' conference at Jumping Monkey Hill, outside Cape Town. The African Writers' Workshop is attended by writers from various African nations who share a common writing heritage. In Ujunwa's immediate group are a South African from Durban, another from Johannesburg, a Tanzanian, a Ugandan, a Zimbabwean, a Kenyan, and a Senegalese. Ujunwa is the only one from Nigeria. Members of the group take turns to read their stories to the hearing of others. Ujunwa's story is the text incorporated into the story, which is about her experience in securing a job with Merchant Trust Bank. Ujunwa's story is finally revealed to be her life experience in the closing episode of the narration where the credibility of the story is questioned by Edward, a co-participant.

Graphologically, the text is centralised and indented from the main text. It also appears in a smaller font, suggesting that it is simply slipped in,

and not the main text of emphasis. The author shuttles between the two stories (that of Ujunwa in Cape Town and that of Chioma (a pseudonym for the same Ujunwa back in Nigeria) as she occasionally breaks one to attend to the other and then returns to it. The in-text is broken into three parts. The first, recounting her family experiences and her mother's first encounter of molestation, appears between pages 100 and 101. The second script takes off from her interview at Merchant Trust Bank and the task of winning customers and clients. Alhaji is the client she and her friend and co-worker go to see. This appears between pages 103 and 105. The last sub-text runs from page 110 through 111 and captures Chioma's resolve not to give in to Alhaji's erotic desires.

Through the technique of text incorporation, Adichie gives a multi-faceted portrayal of the woman in an African setting where the web of patriarchy entangles her existence. This is represented by Edward Campbell, the South African and Alhaji in Nigeria, both of whom are desirous of sexually exploiting the protagonist.

- **Paragraphing and breakage of points**

Paragraphing in the text is achieved through a two-space indentation, such that a new paragraph is laid below the final lines of the former with a skipping on only two letter spaces. The same is seen in cases where the author introduces spoken discourses. Quoted discourses, mostly rendered in inverted commas, have two spaces indentation as well. However, for breakage of points, Adichie leaves about two lines tabulation and introduces the new breakage on the third line. New episodes and acts are introduced without an indentation, but flushed to the margin.

- **Punctuations**

Punctuations and their frequency of occurrence determine foregrounding, which is reflective of the writer's style. Prominent in the consideration is the use of dashes, parentheses, and word borders (hyphens and inverted commas).

Conventionally, dashes are used as a form of sentence breakage where clauses are broken and referenced in newly created ones. The use of

dashes is consistent in the text. The author has been able to use them on three levels of operation.

The first level is as an asyndetic element which enables it feature in place of a comma. Below are extracts in this regard.

- (1) “Wait—” I said (a comma is used conventionally to separate the speech from the ascription clause, but not in this case) (p.169).
- (2) I sat before my limp pancakes—they were so much thinner than the chewy slabs I made at home—and bland tea.... (p. 171)
- (3) I did not know if three dollars an hour was very good or very bad—I was leaning towards very good—until he added that... (p. 174).
- (4) Aunty Ada would base her prostitute judgement on Nia’s lipstick, a shimmery orange, and the eye shadow—similar to the shade of the lipstick—that clung to her heavy lids.

In (2) and (3) above, the asyndetic nature describes items; in (2) “pancakes” and in (4) “Nia’s lipsticks”.

- (5) ...into this narrow one, which she feared felt was dangerous until she saw the woman.

Note: Here, the conjunction “and” would have sufficed, but Adichie stylistically avoids using the conjunction, but uses a dash in order not to pause or alter the thoughts.

- (6) “...that the vandals as we called the federal soldiers would be defeated ...”

The use of dashes here is as a description marker, where the adjectival clause is introduced to describe vandals, just like can be derived in (7), below:

- (7) When we heard of saboteurs we called them “sabos” who betrayed our soldiers, our just cause....

Dashes are also used as apposition markers, when an already mentioned item is mentioned again or recast, like in the illustrations below:

(8) Our piano Ebere’s piano was gone.

“Ebere’s piano” is an apposition to “our piano” but is separated with dashes, instead of the conventional commas.

Discussion of findings

Primarily, it has been realised that the author feels the need to effectively represent the cultures and linguistic background of the Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria on the one hand, and that of the Nigerian environment on the other. As a result of this, she settles for an approach to style that most readily portrays the linguistic complexities of the Nigerian scene. This is obvious, as derived from the analysis, in the proliferation of words and expressions borrowed from the indigenous Nigerian languages (particularly the Igbo language), the adoption of the Nigerian Pidgin English variety, the representation of the linguistic idiolects and idiosyncrasies of certain characters from various ethnic groups (as seen in exclamations like “ewo o!”, “Chim o!”, and so on), etc. These elements bring about originality in her stories, making her characters and their experiences as close to real life characters and events as possible.

The analysis revealed that graphological elements of style are put to use by the author, owing to the fact that these are expected to feature mostly in poetry. However, those identified through the analysis had to illustrate the writer’s representation of sound patterns, idiolect, accentuation, all of which recast the linguistic complexities of the African continent.

Conclusion

The study has critically examined the way in which Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie explores graphology as style in her writings, with particular emphasis on her short story collection, *The thing around your neck*. It has also taken a close look at the various ways in which stylistic elements can be employed by writers in a general sense to enhance the communication of literary messages to their readers in the most befitting manner.

The analysis has revealed the graphology as one of linguistic strategies employed by the writer who appreciates and continually asserts her

Africanness in her writings. She feels the urge to always have a reflection of the linguistic, cultural and behavioural complexities of Africa and its people. Resulting from this, she makes language choices that reflect these in her writings. One way of achieving this is by borrowing a lot of expressions from the indigenous Igbo language and allowing them to feature in their original forms in her writings.

It can be summed up here that the stylistic (graphology) strategies employed by the author as identified here, is a seal of her literary excellence, singling her out as a master of words, one who tells stories, bearing in mind the need to communicate in the most effective way to her audience.

Recommendations

It is recommended that more stylistic studies be carried out on the area of stylistics as it applies to African writing. This would be of great benefit to scholars of literature and language, as well as readers of literature in general.

Finally, the studied text can also be examined using other linguistic parameters (like syntactic {or grammatical},lexico-semantic and phonological) of analysis aside the one adopted in this study for further and broader understanding.

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