
**PROBING THE FUNCTIONS OF NIGERIAN PIDGIN ENGLISH IN FPO
AKPOROBARO'S "THE PROSTITUTE": A STYLISTIC APPROACH**

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ABSTRACT: *Nigerian Pidgin English, which originally arises from the contact of the indigenous languages with the English language has nowadays become a lingua franca, a means of communication commonly used by people. Its place in Nigerian literary creativity is all the more important as patterns of this variety of English occur in various pieces of writings. The aim of this paper is to, through a stylistic approach, examine the functions of Nigerian Pidgin English used in the poem entitled "The Prostitute", published by FBO Akporobaro in his collection of poems The Lament of the Town Crier and other Poems. Through a descriptive research design based on the qualitative approach, the analyses of the poem, in its context of production, reveal that instances of phonology and cohesive features are used to provide aesthetic values to this text.*

KEYWORDS: Nigerian Pidgin English, lingua franca, the prostitute, phonology, cohesive features

INTRODUCTION

Language performs various roles in human life. It is a means through which human beings express their ideas, feelings, emotion, etc. Literary scholars use language to convey specific messages in various genres including poetry, plays and novels. In fact, poetry is a specific genre in which the poet uses the language the way it fits his/her imagination and intention. Leech (1991, p. 5) contends that the poet enjoys a unique freedom, amongst users of the language, to range over all its communicative resources, without respect to the social and historical context to which they belong. This accounts for the fact that poetic language contrasts with ordinary language.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the language of the poem titled "The Prostitute", through the framework of linguistic stylistics so as to highlight the functions of Nigerian Pidgin English in the poem. The study is motivated by the fact that this poem is written in Pidgin English, particularly Nigerian Pidgin English, a language that is even hardly welcome in the academic environment of Nigeria. To be more specific, the work aims to emphasize some stylistic features reflecting the aesthetic value of the poem. For that purpose, it attempts to answer the following questions:

- How does language function in "The Prostitute"?
- What are the stylistic features that realize some aspects of meanings made in this poem?
- How do these elements reflect the aesthetic import of the poem?

The paper revisits some points of views of scholars regarding the meaning of Pidgin English and Nigerian Pidgin, outlines the theoretical preliminaries before inquiring into the language of the poem.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Pidgin and Nigerian Pidgin English

Various scholars have shared similar view-points regarding the meaning of Pidgin. According to Yule (2007), a Pidgin is a variety of language which arose among people who do not share the same linguistic background but were frequently in contact for business transactions. Wardhaugh (2010) has also clarified the meaning of Pidgin. He says:

A pidgin is a language with no native speakers: it is no one's first language but is a contact language. That is, it is the product of a multilingual situation in which those who wish to communicate must find or improve a language system that will enable them to do so. Very often too, that situation is one in which there is an imbalance of power among the languages as the speakers of one language dominate the speaker of the other languages economically and socially (pp.57-58, original emphasis)

On his part, Hudson (2003) views pidgin languages as varieties used as means of communication among groups who have no language in common. These groups of people learn these varieties within their community as they are viewed as current medium of communication. Similarly, Wolfson (1989) contends that pidgins are contact languages which develop as vehicles of communication between people who have need to interact and who have no common language. She also adds that “as long as the need for communication across groups speaking different first language continues, the pidgin may continue” (p.269). In addition, Holmes (2008) also agrees with the fact that pidgins develop as a means of communication between people who do not have a common language and opines that “pidgins seem particularly likely to arise when two groups with different languages are communicating in a situation where there is also a third dominant language” (p.84). From the different definitions provided above, it appears that the issue of contact language is raised and proves to be the main topic when dealing with pidgin. Regarding its characteristics, Holmes (2008) argues that

*all language involved may contribute to the sounds, the vocabulary and the grammatical features, but to different extents, and some additional features may emerge which are unique to the new variety. In fact, it has been found that when one group speaks a prestigious world language and the other groups use local vernaculars, the prestige language tends to supply more of the vocabulary, while vernacular languages have more influence on the grammar of the developing pidgin...The language which supplies most of the vocabulary is known as the *lexifier* (or sometimes *superstrate*) language, while the languages which influence the grammatical structure are called the substrate. (p.85, original emphasis)*

However, the notion of Pidgin goes beyond the contact language as it has become a lingua franca and is used even by people who have a common mother tongue. In the Nigerian situation, the type of pidgin which arose as a result of language contact is known as Nigerian Pidgin English. Mafeni's (1971) contends that it consists of several varieties depending upon the influence of various substrates, and also contains a variety of registers, whose formal characteristics and functional determinants cannot, without research, be clearly distinguished. He (Mafeni) also adds that Nigerian Pidgin displays features of complexity and exhibits variety in form and in function from region to region and from community to community. In addition, Elugbe and Omamor (1991) account for the development of this language. They say that Nigerian Pidgin “arose from the urgent communication needs of the contact between the

visiting Europeans ... and their multilingual Nigerian hosts. Stabilization of this contact led to the stabilization and expansion of NP” (p. 21).

The place of Pidgin in the Nigerian linguistic and sociolinguistic arena is all the more important as its use is widespread in all area of everyday life. It has become a means of communication used willingly or unwillingly in various segments of the Nigerian society. Jolayemi (2004) has also revealed the advantages of this language saying that “Nigerian pidgin is a social leveler i.e. spoken by both educated people and illiterates. It is apparently neutral. It is easy to acquire. It is used by a large Nigerian population. It has a large geographical spread in the country (p.53). This is what has prompted Elugbe and Omamor (1991) to argue that “if Nigeria were in need of a national language that would not be associated with any linguistic or tribal group, Nigerian Pidgin would be a choice” (p. 148).

Nevertheless, for a long time, Nigerian Pidgin has suffered a number of stereotypes and misunderstandings thus leading to negative opinions regarding its value and importance. In Wardhaugh (2011)’s opinion, “Nigeria Pidgin English, is that it is some kind of ‘bad’ English, that is, English imperfectly learned and therefore of no possible interest. Consequently, those who speak a pidgin are likely to be regarded as deficient in some way, almost certainly and socially and culturally, and sometimes even cognitively. *Such a view is quite untenable.* (pp. 58-59, my emphasis). In the same vein, Banjo (1996) thinks that it is less valued as many Nigerian elites consider it as the language either of familiarity or of comic discourse. In spite of these negative prejudices against this language, it appears that in some informal registers, a great number of Nigerians, be they from lower or upper classes, use it deliberately as a means of communication in many interactions.

In addition, the role of Pidgin English in Nigeria creative writing cannot be denied as for a long time, Pidgin has been used in literature and as reported by Elugbe and Omamor (1991) it is categorized as “the language of the illiterate or marginalized literate, the language of informal, relaxed situations in (mostly multilingual) westernized gathering; and a means, par excellence, of achieving specific literary effects” (p.133). From the above arguments, an inquiry into the language of the poem written in Nigerian Pidgin English proves to be important.

Theoretical framework

This research paper is hinged upon Eggins (2004)’s approach of language functions and Simpson’s (2004) theory of Stylistics. In fact, there are commonly shared definitions of stylistics suggested by scholars (Leech, 1991; Leech and short (2007), Simpson, 2004). Leech (1991) advocates “that stylistics is the study of literary style or, to make matters even more explicit, the study of the use of language in literature” (p.1).

In Leech and short (2007)’s opinion, stylistics is the linguistic study of style, and literary stylistics has “implicitly and explicitly, the goal of explaining the relation between language and artistic function” (p.11). Simpson (2004) accounts for the purpose of Stylistics by claiming “to do stylistics is to explore language, and, more specifically, to explore creativity in language use. Doing stylistics thereby enriches our ways of thinking about language and, as observed, exploring language offers a substantial purchase on our understanding of (literary) texts” (p.3). Regarding the concept of style, Leech and short (2007) contend that it is the way in which

language is used. It consists in choices made for the repertoire of language and it is defined in terms of a domain of language used. The choices include the linguistic features that are relevant for the stylistic analysis of texts. Some of these linguistic features which serve as the theoretical preliminary for the present study are the following:

-Phonology and graphology: Graphology has to do with the whole writing system including punctuation, paragraphing and spelling (Leech, 1991). Osakwe (1995), quoted by Akogbeto and Koutchade (2015) says: “in written discourse, the manner of space organization creates meaning: what the writer does with white space, line breaks or indentation relates to the overall meaning and effect inherent in the encoded form. It is, therefore, in this sense an aspect of the linguistic system” (p.16). Regarding phonology, it refers to the sound patterns of language. As observed by Leech (1991), “English graphology imitates phonology- that is, the written version of the language is the visual coding of its spoken version” (p.39). In the study of poem, phonological features seem to be easily noticeable. This is the reason why Leech and Short (2007) contend that when we read a poem silently, we are still aware of its phonological structure of rhythm, rhyme, etc. Therefore, phonological features play a very important part in the stylistic analysis of poetry.

-Texture

Texture has to do with the way in which some linguistic resources create cohesive and coherent texts. Eggins (2004) opines that texture is the property that distinguishes text from non-text. She (Eggins) further clarifies the meaning of texture saying that it “involves the interaction of two components: coherence, or the text’s relationship to its extra-textual context (the social and cultural context of occurrence) and cohesion, the way the elements within a text bind it together as a ‘unified whole’. The result of the interaction of these two dimensions is a piece of language which is using linguistic resources in a meaningful way within a situational or cultural context. (p.24)

Cohesion is simply viewed by Yule (2007) as the ties and connections which exist within texts. Put another way, it deals with the formal link between clauses, how an item in one clause may refer backwards or forwards to another clause (Flowerdew, 2010). Halliday and Mathiessen (2014) argue that there are four linguistic elements that create cohesion in the text. These include reference, conjunction, ellipsis and lexical organization. Partridge (2012) has summarized their characteristics by saying that:

Cohesion refers to the relationship between items in a text such as words, phrases and clauses and other items such as pronouns, nouns and conjunctions. This includes the relationship between words and pronouns that refer to that word (*reference* items). It also includes words that commonly co-occur in texts (*collocation*) and the relationship between words with similar, related and different meanings (*lexical cohesion*). Cohesion also considers semantic relationships between clauses and the way this is expressed through the use of *conjunctions*. .. All of these contributes to the unity of texture of a text and helps to make the text cohesive. (p.115, emphasis in original).

In fact, the texture of the poem is studied through the cohesive features of reference and lexical organization.

Regarding the functions of language, one can say that the functional-semantic approach to language focuses on how language is used in context and how it is structured for use. In fact,

understanding any language implies unravelling the context in which it is used. Paltridge (2012) contends that “an understanding of how language functions in context is central to an understanding of the relationship between what is said and what is understood in spoken and written discourse” (p.39). Language, thus, functions in a given context.

Two main contexts are identified by Halliday and Mathiessen (2014): Context of culture and context of situation. The context of culture is “what the member of the community can mean in cultural terms, that is, we interpret culture as a system of higher-level meanings ...as an environment of meanings in which various semiotic systems operate including language, paralanguage ...and other human systems of meanings” (p.33). Actually, the context of culture plays a very important role in the understanding of texts of particular genres. The context of situation refers to “what people know about what they can see around them” (Paltridge, 2012, p.39). It is also referred to as register. According to Flowerdew (2010), register is a set of linguistic choices associated with a particular situation. Halliday & Hasan (1985/1989) defines it as “a configuration of meanings that are typically associated with a particular configuration of field, tenor and mode which are known as register variables.

In Halliday and Mathiessen (2014)’s opinion, field refers to an ongoing situation, that is what is be at a given point which involves the use of language. Tenor focuses on the relationship that exists between the participants of an interaction. It involves who is taking part in the situation, the role played by the participants or the protagonist of an event. Mode is “what is being played by language and other semiotic systems in the situation.” (p.33).

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The study focuses on the analysis of “The Prostitute”. It is drawn from FPO Akporobaro’s poetry book entitled *The Lament of the Town Crier and other Poems*. The stylistic study of this poem requires a careful reading and the analysis is based on patterns of linguistics discussed previously. The study is descriptive and based on content analysis. To facilitate this exploration, the lines of the poems are numbered and referred to in the analysis. The peculiarity of this poem lies in the fact it is written in Nigeria Pidgin English. This means that its real meaning can be decoded only by readers who are familiar with this form of English. In order to make its readings and import easier, the translation of this poem is provided in the next section. Then, the qualitative analysis is carried out on the basis of the theoretical preliminary accounted for in the previous section.

RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS

The poem and its related translation

As mentioned previously, the poem under study is presented with its related translation in Standard English in table 1 below:

Table 1: the poem and its related translation

N°	Pidgin Poem	Gloss
1	How country come hard so kakaraka	How did this country get so hard
2	Wey woman go dey put toto for sale?	That a woman will sell her body for money?
3	And no man fit say	And men can no longer say
4	Ha! Sisi make you come here,	Wow! Pretty lady can you come closer
5	Or ask wetin girl	Or ask how she's doing
6	Your pancake fine o	Your make-up looks good
7	Your gele de shine shine	Your head tie looks bright
8	And your ikebe na obe di wind?	And your back side is mesmerizing
9	Dis country na wa o. Na wetin I dey see so?	What a country. What am I seeing?
10	So hunger don kill ev'ryman finish?	So, has hunger killed everyone?
11	Now midnight don come	Now, it is midnight already
12	My pancake don finish patapata	I have totally run out of make-up
13	And my mirror don crack	And my mirror is broken
14	Lipsticks sef don dry so tey e be like stone	My lipstick is so dry that it's as hard as stone.
15	Dis country na wa sef.	What a country indeed
16	Abi hunger don kill	Has hunger made
17	Ev'ryman blocus?	Everyman impotent?
18	No man wan come!	No man wants to come
19	Even to prize small e no dey	Even at an affordable price
20	To fuck for credit sef	Or to have sex for free
21	And tomorrow mo'ring pay, e no dey.	And pay the following morning.
22	Now pickin dey cry for house	My child is at home crying
23	My mama dey stand for dormot.	My mother is at the door post
24	God, God wetin bi dis?	God, God what is this
25	How I fit go home now?	How can I go home now?
26	Midnight don come	It is now midnight
27	Everywhere dey cold	Everywhere is cold
28	So tey na only owls dey cry	So that only owls are out crying
29	Transport money no dey-	There is no transport fare
30	Dis country na w-e-t-in?	What kind of country is this?
31	Since I dey shout say	I have been calling out
32	Make una come,	Saying come
33	Shack dey for here small,	There is alcohol here
34	No man dey come.	No man is coming.
35	So God dey dis country	So there is God in this country
36	As we dey suffer so?	And we are suffering like this?
37	Wetin dey happen to man picking	What is happening to man kind
38	Abi na hunger don	Or has hunger
39	Kill everyman blocus?	Made men impotent?
40	<i>E kinde Oghenebiko!</i>	Oh God please help me
41	God you dey so?	God, are you there?
42	As we de suffer so	And we are suffering like this
43	Even though I dey look	Even though I hustle
44	For money horizontally	For money in despicable way
45	No be say I be sinner	I am not a sinner
46	Or I wan' be sinner	Nor do I wish to be one
47	But na as condition dey so	But it is the way the condition is
48	Na 'im make crayfish bend.	That makes crayfish bend.
	Source: <i>The Lament of the Town Crier and Other Poems</i> , p. 12	

Register Analysis of the poem

As suggested by Halliday and Mathiessen (2014, p.35), field, tenor and mode are the basis for any attempt to develop a taxonomy of situations. The situational configuration of this text is categorized in terms of the register variables. In fact, dealing with the field analysis, it can be said that the poem is about the prostitute who is narrating her experience. She is complaining of the period of hardship that everybody is going through in her area and her country. This results to the fact that nobody comes to seduce and compliment her even though she is ready to sell her body at any price. She then adds judgment about the economic situation of her country. She is aware of the fact that she has not chosen the job willingly. The field here is characterized by the use of a common language (Pidgin) in the Nigerian context.

Regarding the tenor of discourse, it is quite informal. There is frequent contact between the prostitute and her client. There is also a frequent contact between the prostitute, her mother and her child on the one hand, but infrequent contact exists between the poet (the prostitute) and the reader on the other. The power between the prostitute and her client is equal. This is expressed through the vocatives *sisi, girl*; so is the one existing between the desperate woman and her mother. A high affective involvement is expressed between the prostitute and her clients and between the prostitute and her mother.

As far as the mode is concerned, it can be pointed out that the poem is written-to-be-read. It is a monologue but there is moderate interpersonal distance in the first stanza but high interpersonal distance in the others. The use of everyday lexis also characterizes the poem.

Phonological analysis

Although they are not so predominant, features of phonology that occur in the poem are alliteration and sound repetition.

a-Alliteration

The text displays some patterns of alliteration as shown below:

- (1) How **country come hard so kakaraka**
- (7) Your gele de **shine shine**
- (14) Lipsticks sef **don dry** so tey e be like **stone**
- (20) To **fuck for credit sef**

In the above passage, alliterative patterns are created through the repetition of the voiceless velar and plosive /k/ in the first line (1), the voiceless palato-alveolar fricative /ʃ/ in (7). Similarly in (14), there is a repetition of voiced alveolar plosive /d/ and that of voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ whereas in (20), the repetition of voiceless labiodental fricative /f/ is noticed. Apart from alliteration, one can notice that there are instances of word reduplication in this poem. They are illustrated in the next sub-section.

b-Sound repetition

Examples of sound repetition are illustrated below:

- (7) Your gele de **shine shine**
- (12) My pancake don finish **patapata**

Lines (7) and (12) display cases of words reduplication which is one characteristics of word formation in Nigerian Pidgin (Elugbe and Omamor, 1991). They are used to denote the idea of intensity.

Analysis of texture in the poem

In this section, the linguistic features used for the analysis of texture are reference and lexical cohesion.

Analysis of Reference

Basing on Eggins (2004), the reference ties and the other types of reference identified in the poem are listed below:

---(2)-**woman** (4) sisi- you- (5) girl- (6) your – (7) your (8) your ikebe- (9) I- (12) my pancake- (13) my mirror- (14) (my) lipstick- (22) (my) picking- (23) my mama- (25) I – (31) I –(36) we – (42) we –(43) I- (45) I- (46).

--- (3) **man** – (10) ev’ryman (17) ev’ryman –(34) man (37) man picking – (39) everyman

--- (24) **God** (H) – (35) God- (41) God- you.

--- (47) condition- (48) im

--- (1) country (H)

--- (38) Hunger (H)

--- (14) Like (C)

Actually, the reference chains informs about the nature of the major participants of the text. As can be observed from the identified ones above, there are four main chains of anaphoric reference. The most important chain is centered on the item *woman* i.e., the prostitute. All the other reference items in this chain are anaphoric and they refer back to her. It is the longest chain and this confirms the fact that the related reference items span the whole text. In the second chain, the head item is *man* which is related to the prostitute’s customers who are nowhere to be found and stand for the reason of her complaint. In the third chain, the pronoun *you* in (47) refers to the head item *God*, firstly mentioned in line (24). Lastly, the anaphoric reference ‘*im* in (48) refers back to the item *condition* in (47). In addition to the anaphoric reference types, there are patterns of retrieval reference type including homophoric reference such as *country* in (1), *God* in (47), *hunger* in (38). Finally, there is only one case of comparative reference which is *like* in (14).

Lexico-semantic analysis

In this section, more attention emphasis is put on some prominent lexical cohesive elements including the following:

Repetition

Features of repetition that occur in this poem are italicised in some lines of the poem.

They include *country* in the following lines:

- (1) How **country** come hard so kakaraka
- (9) Dis **country** na wa o
- (15) Dis **country** na wa sef.
- (30) Dis **country** na w-e-t-in?
- (35) So God dey dis **country**

Similarly, the lexical item *God* is repeated in the following:

- (24) **God, God** wetin bi dis?
- (25) So **God** dey dis country
- (41) **God** you dey so?

In this poem, there are cases of repetition. In the first line of the poem, the item *country* is used in (1) and reiterated in lines (9, 15, 30, 35). Similarly, the word *God*, firstly used in (24) is reiterated in (25) and (41). Another important lexical chain is shown below:

---(2) woman-(3) man- (4) sisi- (5) girl – (17) ev'ryman (18) man- (22) picking- (23) mama- (34) man- (37) man- (39) everyman

From this chain, one can notice that the lexical item *man* used in (3) and repeated in (23), (34), (37). This item is synonymous with *ev'ryman* in (17) and (39). At the same time, this item *man* contrasts with *woman* in (2) and *woman* is synonymous with *sisi* in (4) and *girl* in (5). Then, in the context of this poem, the items *girl*, *sisi* and *picking* are all hyponyms of the superordinate *mama* in (23). Furthermore, another feature of repetition is exemplified through syntactic parallelism which is the repetition of lexical items as indicated in the example below:

- (9) Dis **country** na wa o
- (15) Dis **country** na wa sef.
- (30) Dis **country** na w-e-t-in?

Other uncommon items that realize cohesion in this poem are the use of loan-words, code-switching and figurative expression.

- **Loan-words:** In fact the use of loan-word as lexical items is shown in the following lines:
 - (7) Your **gele** de shine shine
 - (8) And your **ikebe** na obe di wind?
 - (12) My pancake don finish **patapata**

Actually, the item '**gele**' is of Yoruba origin which means 'Head Tie' Similarly, the item '**ikebe**' loan-word from Urhobo (a region of Niger Delta) word for 'buttocks' (Yusuff, 2010). Another item is the Yoruba word 'patapata' which means 'completely' in English.

- **Code-switching:** There is one case of code-switching in the poem:
E kinde Oghenebiko! Which is translated as "Oh God please help me"

- **Figurative language:** There is one case use of idiomatic expression in the poem:

(47) *But na as condition dey so*

(48) *Na 'im make crayfish bend*

This expression is a common saying in everyday parlance in Nigerian Pidgin which means:
It is the ongoing situation that makes things abnormal

Analysis of conjunction

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), conjunctions are categorized in temporal, adversative, addition, causal and temporal conjunctions. The types of conjunctions used in this poem are summarized in table 2 below:

Table 2: conjunctions in the poem

Types of conjunction	Cases identified in the poem
Addition	and (3, 8, 13,21); or (5)
Comparative	like (14), even (19), but (47), even though (43)
Time	Now (11, 22)
Consequence	So (10, 35), so...wey (1/2), so tey (28), as (36, 42).

It becomes necessary to mention that this poem display various instances of conjunctive devices. They play a very important role in the internal organization of this poem. In fact, the conjunction *and*, used in lines (3,8, 13, 21) and *or in* (5) exemplify the relationship of addition by which one line adds to the meanings made in another. In the context of the poem, the prostitute is accounting for the difficulties she goes through in hard times. Similarly, comparative conjunctions used in the text are *like* in (14), *even* in (19), *but* in (47), *even though* in (43). Here, they are used to emphasize the comparative link related to similarity or contrast. Likewise, the conjunctive elements that focus on the logical relation of consequence include *so* in (10, 35), *so...wey* in (1/2), *so tey* in (28), *as* in (36, 42). As for the logical relation of time, it only includes *now* in (11, 12). Having dealt with texture, the next section focuses on the discussion of findings.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

As said earlier, the purpose of this study has been to carry out a stylistic analysis of the poem entitled "The Prostitute". The findings reveal that features of phonology and cohesive elements are used in the text. These phonological items are sound alliteration, sound repetition and parallel structure. Their use not only provides rhythmical patterns and auditory effects but they also foreground the sound effects in some lines of the poem. They also provide aesthetic value to this text.

Regarding the functions of Nigerian Pidgin and the linguistic elements that realize them, the study has shown that the three aspects of metafunction are expressed in the poem. First, regarding the use of anaphoric reference chains, the analysis reveals that the three main chains are built around three main participants. The major chain is centered on the prostitute referred to as *Sisi* or *girl* a terminology of pidgin which means pretty lady in English or *girl* to refer to the prostitute. These items are used by those men to address her. The anaphoric reference *your* (6, 7, 8) reveals the way clients address her before concluding the bargain. Both the terms of

address and the pronouns mentioned are the expression of the interpersonal meaning patterns (Eggins, 2004) in the poem. Second, the anaphoric reference *I* (25, 31, 45, 46) with its variants *my* (13, 14, 22, 23) denote the complaint of the prostitute in search of clients that are nowhere to be found. As for the pronoun *we*, it evokes the challenge of poverty that the citizens of the country are facing. The use of various types of conjunction reveals the way the text realizes its internal organization. In addition, as most of these conjunctions are used as the point of departure of clauses before the above-mentioned pronouns (anaphoric reference types), they play a very important role in the thematic organization of the clauses which accounts for the expression of textual meaning in the poem.

Third, regarding the lexical cohesion, the repetition of the items *country*, *God* denotes the atmosphere of suffering which is prevailing in the country. In addition, the prostitute, like many Nigerians who strongly appeal to God for intervention during hard times is calling the Almighty for help and Mercy. Her desire is to find customers very regularly. The lexical items *man*, *evry'man* are repeated to emphasize her complaint about poverty and sufferings. Regarding the loan words and *gele* and *ikebe* which are drawn from the local languages to supply the lexis of the poem their combination with the other lexical items are meant to highlight the field variable of the poem which is associated with the experiential meaning.

The analysis of register variables in terms of field, tenor and mode makes it easy to unravel the situational context of the poem. In the West African context, prostitutes are found in certain streets of urban areas. They are sex workers who, most of the time, indulge into prostitution willingly or unwillingly. Actually, the economic situation of these West African countries often brings them to be part of sex traders. Most of the youths, who graduate from universities and higher institutions are jobless. Consequently, they are victims of poverty. Apart from prostitution, most of them turn to illegal activities such as internet frauds, burglary, kidnapping, etc. The governments of those countries are powerless regarding the issue of employment. Poverty has then become really contentious and many youths voice out their complaint. In the last stanza of the poem, the woman (prostitute) laments her condition by regretting her actions:

- (45) No be say I be sinner
- (46) Or I wan' be sinner
- (47) But na as condition dey so
- (48) Na 'im make crayfish bend

The first two lines of this poem show that the woman has chosen sex trade as occupation unwillingly. She decides to “sell her body” because in (47) and (48), she uses the figurative language to show that the economic condition of the country which accounts for the unemployment crisis and it is the ongoing situation that makes things abnormal. This is the reason why in the introductory passage of the book, it is mentioned that “throughout the poems, the poet evokes the tragedy of poverty in very comprehensive terms. The economic poverty of the masses is just one of the several dimensions. There is also a vivid vision of moral decay, expressed in sharp satirical images and characters” (p. ix). Therefore, the poem “The Prostitute” really depicts the situation of economic and social unrest of the modern times.

CONCLUSION

This paper has surveyed the language of “The Prostitute”, a poem written in Pidgin English. In order to reach the set objective which has consisted in highlighting the functions of Nigerian Pidgin English, the paper has, through a brief literature review, outlined the link between Pidgin and Nigerian Pidgin. The theoretical framework which is based on the linguistic/stylistic framework of sound patterns and cohesive features has been revisited. These are the elements that have been studied in the analysis to emphasize the use of language in the poem. From this linguistic exploration, it appears that language functions to express the three kinds of meanings viz. experiential interpersonal and textual. The cultural and situational has made it easy to find out that this poem, although written in an uncommon form of English is devised to portray some socio-economic problems of Africa in general and Nigeria in particular.

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