

Exemplification And Enumeration as Ideological Tools in Chika Unigwe's Selected Short Stories

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Abstract

The study aims at uncovering stylistic devices such as exemplification and enumeration and the ideological functions they carry out in texts. Exemplification and Enumeration as CS tools serve to give more details to elements and characters in texts and ultimately uncover ideologies in texts, creating specific types of meaning in several different ways and manner. The study is anchored on Critical Stylistics, which serves as both a multidisciplinary field of study, as well as a theoretical framework. Excerpts for the study were selected from three short stories written by Chika Unigwe. They include: "Borrowed Smile", "The Secret" and "Hope". The findings show that exemplification and enumeration as Textual Conceptual functions (TCF) in Unigwe's Short Stories are not merely elements of stylistic choices/devices, but are integral to the ideological messages of the texts, as they contribute to the unraveling of ideologies in the construction of social realities, challenging or affirming power structures and ideologies within Unigwe's exploration of African women's experiences. They do more than structure the narrative as they help to navigate the pathways for the critic to engage with ideologies bordering on gender, sexual exploitation, power, and migration.

Keywords: Critical Stylistics, Exemplification and Enumeration, ideological function, feminist ideology,

Introduction

One of the vehicles through which ideologies are articulated is language. Adugbe (2021:2) holds that language "provides a finely articulated vehicle for differences in discourse, power and social structures". Creative writers have, therefore, continued to explore and deploy the power of language to accentuate social concerns and articulate ideologies. For, while Woodak (2002; cited in Adugbe, 2021:2) seems to advance that ideologies are manifested in a discourse through language, Thompson (1990; cited in Adugbe, 2021:2) views ideology as social

forms and processes within which, and by means of which symbolic forms circulate in the world. Central to critical stylistics, therefore, is ideology, which is interrogated through language. For Teo (2000:1), language can be viewed as “the primary instrument through which ideology is transmitted, enacted and reproduced.” In another instance, Hodges (2015:15) is of the view that ideology represents “systems of thoughts and ideas that represent the world from a particular perspective and provide a framework for organizing meaning, guiding actions and legitimating positions.”

Critical Stylistics, which could be viewed as both a multi-disciplinary study and a conceptual framework, draws from both the traditional Stylistics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Arguably, critical stylistics is a fairly new coined branch of stylistics proposed by Lesley Jeffries, who attempts to integrate critical stylistics from stylistics and critical discourse analysis. Adugbe (2021:4) argues that critical stylistics provides models which give insights into contextual features of ideological meanings in the text. That is, it draws out ideologies that underpin the ideational meaning of text. This seems to align with the position of Jeffries (2010, cited in Adugbe, 2021:4), who holds that Critical Stylistics analyses the contextual and technical use of linguistic features in texts; hence, her model for Critical Stylistics is to:

to provide tools to analyse the different ways in which texts allows/ask us conceptualise those topics they are addressing, and provide some means of accessing this representational practice through the linguistic features that are already well-described in very many semantic-grammatical theories and models (Jeffries, 2010:6).

The study explores a set of ten tools for analysing the ideological implications of language use in literary texts. These tools are: Naming and Describing, Representing Actions/State and Events, Equating and Contrasting, Exemplifying and Enumerating, Prioritising, Assuming and Implying, Negating, Hypothesising, Presenting the speech and thoughts of other participants, and Representing Time, Space and Society. Of these ten tools, five are selected for content analysis. These are: Naming and Describing, Representing Actions/States and Events, Equating and Contrasting, Exemplifying and Enumerating and finally, Assuming and Implying. These tools are called Textual Conceptual Framework and they are used to examine how textual features, including exemplification and enumeration, embed ideologies and power relations in texts. Through the lens of Critical Stylistics, therefore, the study investigates how Unigwe’s exemplification and enumeration strategies either reinforce or subvert dominant social narratives

about African women's experiences, especially in diaspora and within the context of sexual exploitation.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts the use of Critical Stylistics (CS) as postulated by Lesley Jeffries on the grounds that it provides a more robust set of analytical tools for uncovering language use and ideologies. Arguably, Critical Stylistics emerged as a response to the perceived limitations of Critical Discourse Analysis, which some scholars felt did not provide sufficient tools for a systematic and rigorous analysis of text. Jeffries, a key proponent of Critical Stylistics, developed ten tools for the analysis of text, which serve as a bridge between Stylistics and Discourse analysis.

Accordingly, the study explores the use of one of the ten tools; specifically, exemplification and enumeration. According to Jeffries (2013:409), CS tools are known as Textual Conceptual Functions (TCF). This suggests a combination of textual features (triggers) and ideational functions. They are so named because they can create specific types of meaning in several different ways and manner. Jeffries (2013:409) argues that,

The idea of textual-conceptual functions in general is that they try to capture what a text is doing conceptually in presenting the world (or a fictional world in the case of literature) in a particular way. In doing so, they also explain how resources of the linguistic system are being used to produce this conceptual meaning – this is the textual part of the process and is what defines this approach as essentially stylistic. Thus, for example, linguistic features of texts ‘name’ items in the text world in certain ways or ‘hypothesise’ about the world being presented, and they do so through a variety of naming mechanisms in the first case (including, for example, the use of nominalisation) and through a variety of modal and other structures in the second case.

As the terms exemplification and enumeration suggest, these tools refer to two related or overlapping functions TCF. That is, exemplification and enumeration in textual practices. Jeffries (2015:164) notes exemplifying for example to be; a situation where not all cases of a list are mentioned and enumerating; where they are all listed. To determine any of the two textual functions, pragmatic inferencing is usually required to establish which is which and which of the functions is relevant. These terms, however, overlap structurally and semantically, thereby making it difficult to have clear cut boundaries. Whereas exemplification is made explicit by phrases like ‘for example’, ‘for instance’, and to ‘exemplify’,

enumeration in English usually involves listing, a reasonably straightforward structure being made up of a set of similar structures which are separated by commas, colons or semi-colons in the written language or identified by intonation in the spoken language (Jeffries 2010:69). It is interesting to note that, this tool may also deploy the use of conjunctions to separate the linguistic items. Jeffries (2010:71) observes that although, the analysis of exemplification and enumeration is more structurally defined and easier to identify, there are possibilities of structural ambiguities which make the textual practice of enumerating (listing) difficult to identify from the construction of equivalence via *apposition*. *Apposition* here is the textual practice of putting two or more elements (words), usually noun phrases or clauses side by side where one further explains the other. They are grammatically parallel and points to the same referent. Again, Jeffries (2010:71) gave the following as examples.

- (i) My aunt, the Countess of Buckinghamshire, is coming to tea.
- (ii) The music is sublime, heavenly.
- (iii) They wanted to sleep all day, to refresh their tired bodies

Therefore, CS as a theoretical framework looks at how language embodies the world and the way the author depicts what he/she views in a linguistic form. To Jeffries, all kinds of texts have ideological basis. Thus, it is not impossible to spell out the ideologies a text constructs as an acceptance or a disproof by its readers using the provisions of the CS analytical tools.

The Study thus applies this approach in the textual analysis of selected excerpts using one of the ten analytic tools provided by this theoretical framework. The application of the exemplification and enumeration tool allows the paper to make out meanings and uncover hidden ideologies and their functions in the selected texts. This framework also helps to bring to the fore, some of the thematic concerns of the texts, as captured in selected excerpts; aligning them with the critical stylistic approach to expose ideological dimensions of exemplification and enumeration in the selected short stories.

Literature Review and Texts Analysis

Describing Unigwe's writings, Bekers (2015:27) holds that her "novels deal with universal issues such as love, illness and death, loneliness and belonging, but also with the concrete circumstances of her African characters: migration, prostitution, single motherhood, and slavery. Thematically, Africa takes an increasingly centre place in her first three novels". In another instance, as cited in Eze (2014:89) Chika Unigwe belongs to what has been identified as the third generation of Nigerian writers (Adesanmi & Dunton). Arguing further, Eze (2014:89) affirms that "Unlike the generation before them, they embrace feminism without apologies. They are also historically informed about their place in their struggle to right the wrongs done to women's bodies in their culture". Accordingly,

Ladele and Omotayo (2017:53-54) affirm that “she has used her novels not merely for the purpose of entertainment; but through them, she engages constructively with the social conditions of women of her race in the diaspora”. This highlights Eze’s (2014:91) position that she is “interested in African women’s human rights”, and also confirmed by Ladele and Omotayo (2017: 53-54), who opine that “Unigwe is also interested in the conditions occasioned by physical, social and psychological relocation from the continent of Africa to other spaces”.

Arguably, therefore, Unigwe, in her short stories could be said to have delved into interrogating the social issues that characterise the daily living of young girls, especially those whose poor socio-economic backgrounds have exposed them to the option of trading their bodies for a living. For instance, “Borrowed Smile”, reveals the plight of the main protagonist who subsequently finds herself at *the red light district* of Antwerp, Belgium, the city with the cathedral. It describes how young girls from poor backgrounds become easy preys of pimps, who promise them the good life in exchange for the vending of their bodies. In another instance, “The Secret” highlights themes conflict of culture, loneliness, neglect of cultural heritages, among others, as well as how women neglect their babies, who in turn grow up to become detached from their roots and social values, thereby exposing them to a lifestyle of lose moral value. Accordingly, in the story titled, “Hope”, Unigwe brings to light, the adverse effects of migration on Africans, and questions Africans for opting to migrate without proper investigation. The story, thus, subtly challenges the mindset of some Africans, who hold that traveling abroad is the key to prosperity.

“Borrowed Smile”

i. *He tells you of places close to the sky. Way beyond this environment riddled with the smell of dead and decaying things: rats. Mice. Cockroaches. Dogs. Cats. Pungent smells rolling into each other (p.31)*

The interlocutor here refers to a referent named Bob, who is renowned for being a sex trafficker, who recruits young girls and sends them to Europe. The CS exemplification tool helps to give more details to the excerpt above and this can be seen in the picture of sophisticated and highly developed places painted, which is a stark opposite to the environment the interlocutor is accustomed to. The enumerating tool is used also to list *dead and decaying things* that characterise the ghetto where the narrator/protagonist lives. These are: *rats; mice; cockroaches; dogs and cats*. These dead and decaying animals are described as oozing *pungent smells rolling into each other (p.31)*. In view of this, one could infer that Bob is projected as one who takes advantage of the poverty of his victims, especially young girls, to lure and ‘sweet-talk’ them into prostitution. By this, therefore, one could argue that text uses this situation to advance the feminist ideology, where the female character is projected as being oppressed and

viewed as an object of sexual exploitation. Similarly, through the same avenue, the issue of transnational sex trafficking, for which the female child is the victim, is subtly uncovered.

- ii. *He kisses your ears and tells you to choose. Antwerp. Brussels. Milan. Madrid. Barcelona. Amsterdam. Berlin. Frankfurt. The world is your oyster (p.31)*

Again, from the excerpt above, one could further argue that the enumerating tool is used by the narrator/protagonist to point to the referent, Bob, a pimp, as he lists a number of countries in Europe where he claims he can get the young naïve narrator/protagonist into; provided she can make a choice of one. His enumeration of different countries in Europe could be seen as a subtle way to expose the issue of international sex trafficking; for which girls are major victims. He caps this list by telling the narrator that “the world is your oyster”. There is an underlying deception in Bob’s expression, as he pretends to be concern with the wellbeing and success of the narrator; whereas, he truly does not mean what he is saying. What matters to Bob, deductively, is how to take every advantage at his disposal to commercialise and commoditise the body of his victim. Conversely, he uses the power of words to deceive her into thinking she will make a success of her life by commoditising her body in Europe. Enumeration, therefore, as a CS tool could be said to have been deployed in the listing of places in Europe such as, Antwerp, Brussels, Milan, Madrid, Barcelona, and Amsterdam, as places where sex trade thrives and where young unsuspecting African female migrants are deceived to. Accordingly, while one could argue that there is a subtle indictment on men like Bob, whose stock-in-trade is to deceive gullible young girls into commercialising their bodies, one can also observe that the indictment is couched in the feminist ideology.

- iii. *To be different things to different men. A slave. A mistress. A dog. To listen to those who want to talk (p.31)*

Although, the excerpt does not use the colon to list, but from the knowledge of pragmatic inferencing, it is clear that the enumerating tool is deployed. The list includes the narrator/protagonist taking on the roles of: *a slave; a mistress; a dog;* and *to listen to those who want to talk* respectively. The textual choice of the use of unusual capitalisations to signify enumerating can be seen in the excerpt. This may be considered a stylistic deviation from the expected norm of using colon and semi-colon or commas to separate the items in the list. The phrases *a slave; a mistress; a dog* can be seen as apposition, referring to the same referent in the text, whose job descriptions includes all of that and more. Enumeration as a tool serves the ideological function of giving more details to the kind of life and or job description the referent is engaged in. It can be inferred that while the CS tool is deployed to illustrate the feminist ideology, where the female character is

projected as a victim of sexual exploitation and manipulation, it uses the metaphors of “a slave”, “a mistress” and “a dog” to describe the job schedule of trafficked victims of transnational sex trade. In fact, all these metaphors enumerated are reflective of the fact that the victim is not only being introduced into international prostitution; she equally does not have an opinion or a mind of her own, as she becomes “different things to different men”.

“The Secret”

- i. *He marveled at the list of presents he was expected to give out: Bales of cloth for Eby’s mother. A live goat for Eby’s father. Two cartons of maltina for Eby’s paternal aunties. Three cartons of beer for her paternal uncles... (p.79-80)*

Employing the enumerating tool, one observes the writer’s use of the colon in itemising or introducing the items in the list. Again, Unigwe, in her characteristic display of idiolectal peculiarities or linguistic finger print, uses capitalisation to separate these items instead of a semi-colon or a comma. This, probably, is in order to emphasise the importance of each of the item as compulsory requirements in meeting marriage in Eby’s culture. In another light, one may argue that while the CS tool is used to periscope the writer’s viewpoints and ideology, the excerpt depicts the writer’s observation on inter-marriage, especially along intercontinental and cross-cultural lines. As observed, Gunter could not hide his surprise at the list of items he is required and requested to provide as part of his marriage proposal to Eby. He does not seem to have experienced such as a requirement for marriage; hence, the writer’s description that “He marveled at the list of presents he was expected to give out”. Gunter’s expression seems to subtly indict the traditional practices in Africa, especially during marriage ceremonies, which some assume have become avenues to extort potential suitors. In fact, this is heightened by his expression as captured, thus, “He said it was robbery but he laughed and presented the gifts with a smile that did not waver” (p. 80). The list, one may argue, could be seen as a metaphor used in depicting two different cultural ideologies across two different continents, as represented by Gunter, a Belgian and Eby, a Nigerian.

- ii. *You wish life were like that: predictable with a sweet smell (p.81)*

The above excerpt could be said to be a demonstration of the use of enumerating tool. The interlocutor, Eby wishes that life was predictable with a sweet smell like the perfume she was given as a gift on Christmas day by Tante Miet instead of the unpredictability life throws up sometimes. Her expression underscores the philosophy that life does not go exactly as planned all the time. One minute, things are going well, another minute, one’s world can just come crashing for instance, the protagonist’s cancer diagnosis. Accordingly, one may also argue that the expression underscores the writer’s feminist ideology, where she

probably projects her female character, Eby, as being somewhat unsatisfied with her expectation and experience in marriage, as well as her experience in the West, where she now realises the loneliness that characterises it; the detachment one feels from one's cultural environment, as well as the detachment of women from their children, especially at child-birth, under an anonymous arrangement termed X, among others.

iii. *He no longer noticed her lingerie, her hair, her eyes* (p.82)

As observed, the writer deploys the CS tool to illustrate the somewhat sour relationship that now exists between Gunter and his wife, Eby. Also, through this angle, one could observe the comparison between the past and present state of things in their relationship. In other words, while their relationship seemed to have been cordial in the past, the present state of things does not seem to show any iota of cordiality. This could be gleaned from the writer's observation, as captured: "he no longer noticed her..." The statement shows that Gunter has suddenly changed, to the extent that he no longer shows/showers affection to/on his wife. In another fashion, one can observe how, using the CS tool, the writer uses metaphors, such as, "her lingerie, her hair, her eyes" to not only heighten the level of neglect that Eby now suffers in the hand of her husband, but to also register her feminist ideology.

"Hope"

i. *You live here, she thought, and you get used to a lot of things: eating cornflakes in cold milk; missing your family; being followed around in shops. But the flip side of getting used to things is forgetting things you used to know* (SE, p.19)

Jeffries (2010:72) suggests that the biggest ideological issue with enumeration is that it overlaps structurally and semantically with exemplification, making the boundaries somewhat ambiguous. However, pragmatic referencing helps the linguist to determine which of the tool functions in the selected text. Thus, the excerpt from "Hope" demonstrates enumerating as seen with this list: *eating cornflakes in cold milk; missing your family; and being followed around in shops.*

As seen in the above excerpt, one could say that the writer, using the CS tool, shows how migrants quickly abandon their former way of life to embrace an entirely new way of life. While the CS tool as used here subtly projects two different cultural environments (Africa and Europe), it also reveals how African migrants, being far away from their families, are lonely and nostalgic; hence, the expression: "...eating cornflakes in cold milk; missing your family". Arguably also, the writer, through this angle seems to be projecting the communal value

Africans attach to the family system, as against the individualistic tendencies that characterise the Western socio-cultural milieu.

- ii. *His voice was gentle. It had lost the gruffness it had acquired from living here in Belgium, working in a bread factory all night, getting in only in the early hours of the morning to sleep, building up a new life on the ruins of the one that they had lost in Jos: their home, their careers blown up in the three days of religious riots that sent southerners scuttling back to the south of the country, and this new life constantly being reflected against the old and always, naturally, falling short (p.22)*

The excerpt can be argued to contain both textual conceptual functions of exemplifying and enumerating. In the case of exemplifying, it can be deduced that Agu's gentle voice, as compared to the initial gruffness (harshness) it had when they first came into Belgium is an example of the change he is been through. The other textual function is enumerating, as seen in the lists which are accentuated with the use of commas. The following from the list buttresses the use of enumerating. These are: *working in a bread factory all night, getting in only in the early hours of the morning to sleep, building up a new life on the ruins of the one that they had lost in Jos: their home, their careers blown up in the three days of religious riots that sent southerners scuttling back to the south of the country.*

Using the CS tools of exemplification and enumerating, therefore, one may contend that the writer draws a comparison between the struggles and challenges encountered by the protagonist while in Africa (Jos, Nigeria) and the struggles he is going through as a migrant in Belgium. One central point that this seems to have unveiled in her comparison is that, life is a tissue of struggles.

Similarly, through the use of the CS tool, one could further advance that the writer traces the present difficulty faced by Agu to the incessant religious crisis that constantly ravage his home-state in Jos, as he is now struggling to build "...a new life on the ruins of the one that they had lost in Jos". Accordingly, life in Belgium, for the migrant is not all bed of roses, as Agu is depicted to be "*working in a bread factory all night, getting in only in the early hours of the morning to sleep...*" The writer, through this comparison, evokes a sense of caution to would-be African migrants to know that life in the West may not be as rosy as they perceive.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates how exemplification and enumeration as Textual Conceptual functions (TCF) in Unigwe's Short Stories are not merely elements of stylistic choices/devices, but are integral to the ideological messages of the texts. By applying the methods of CS, the analysis shows how these devices contribute to the unraveling of ideologies in the construction of social realities, challenging

or affirming power structures and ideologies within Unigwe's exploration of African women's experiences. Interrogating these stories through this lens illuminates the complex interplay between language, ideology, and power in Chika Unigwe's Short Stories.

Exemplification and enumeration, as Critical Stylistic analytical tools, do more than structure the narrative; they also perform crucial ideological functions as can be seen in selected excerpts from "Borrowed Smile", "The Secret", and "Hope". These CS tools known also as Textual Conceptual Function (TCF) help the linguist to engage with ideologies bordering on gender, power, and migration in the selected Short Stories. This TCF tool demonstrates specific acts of sexual manipulation and exploitation of African women in "Borrowed Smile" as can be seen from the excerpts. In "The Secret", the protagonist's internal struggle especially as it relates to her cancer is enumerated to emphasise the overwhelming nature of her hidden burdens as she would have wished otherwise. She would have wished that life was *predictable with a sweet smell* like the perfume she was given as gift for Christmas (Unigwe 81). In the last selected short story, "Hope", the enumerating TCF lists a myriad of challenges faced by migrants, which include hardship as a result of relocation, racism, culture shock, and longing for stability. It also details the protagonist's struggles as a migrant in a foreign land, highlighting the systemic barriers and personal sacrifices faced by Africans in Europe, challenging the notion of migration as a path to freedom or success. Finally, in "The Secret" and "Hope", enumeration often highlights the emotional and psychological states of the protagonists.

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