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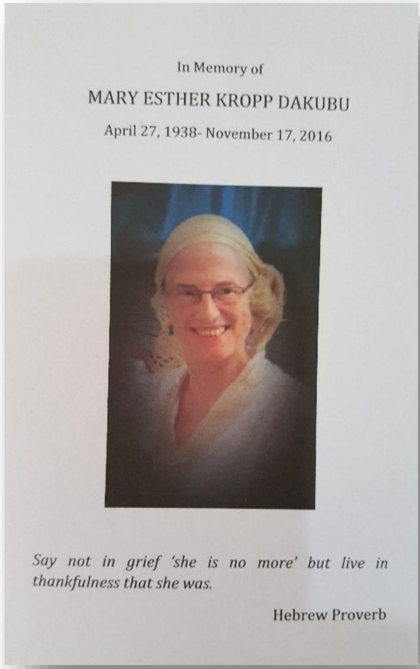
IN MEMORIAM:
EMERITA PROFESSOR MARY ESTHER KROPP DAKUBU



Emerita Professor Mary Esther Kropp Dabuku (1938—2016) earned her PhD in West African Languages from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, in 1968. In 1964 she was appointed a Research Fellow in the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana. She was promoted to the rank of Senior Research Fellow in 1972, Associate Professor in 1982, and Full Professor in 1987. In July 2010, the University of Ghana appointed her Emerita Professor in recognition of her continued scholarship even in retirement. Throughout her active working life she held visiting positions in many universities across the world.

In a career spanning nearly fifty years spent in the service of the University of Ghana, Prof. Dakubu was committed to the analytical study of Ghanaian languages, specifically Ga/Dangme and Gurene. Her contribution to the study of these languages, as reflected in her research publications, has been immense.

Prof. Dakubu dedicated her life to training younger linguists. Some of the people she trained as graduate students are currently holding academic positions in various universities in Ghana and elsewhere.

She was a very active member of the *West African Linguistics Society*, the then *Linguistics Circle of Accra*, and the *Linguistics Association of Ghana*.

In addition to her scholarship, she provided academic leadership in various contexts, especially during her tenure as the Director of the Language Centre at the University of Ghana. For many years, she served as the editor of the *Research Review* published by the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana. From 2011 to 2016, she was the Editor-In-Chief of the *Ghana Journal of Linguistics*. She also co-edited the six volume series *Studies in the Languages of the Volta Basin* published by the Department of Linguistics, University of Ghana.

Prof. Mary Esther Kropp Dakubu passed away on November 17, 2016, in Boston, MA, USA, after a short illness. The Linguistics communities in Ghana and West Africa generally have lost a brilliant academic and a dependable colleague. May she rest in peace.

Prof. E. Kweku Osam
Consulting Editor, GJL

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A LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTION OF THE LANGUAGE OF GHANAIAN NEWSPAPERS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE READABILITY, COMPREHENSIBILITY AND INFORMATION FUNCTION OF THE GHANAIAN PRESS

Modestus Fosu

Abstract

This paper investigates the readability and comprehensibility of English language newspapers in Ghana. It attempts a structural description of the language of the newspapers to explore implications thereof regarding the information function of the Ghanaian press. The study employed a research design that triangulated methods and findings from corpus linguistics and readability studies using front-page stories of four influential national newspapers of the country. The research established that the language used to communicate socio-political news to readers is complex and could be potentially difficult for many readers. The significant implication is that the newspapers may be largely ineffective in transmitting information directly to a wide spectrum of readers for socio-political benefits. This could mean, importantly, that the press may not be performing its information function well. Consequently, the paper makes a case for the press to use relatively readable and comprehensible language to broaden direct access to newspaper messages in the country.

Keywords: Ghanaian newspapers, language style, complexity, readability, information flow

Introduction

This study investigates language use in Ghanaian journalism. It attempts to provide a description of aspects of the writing style of quality Ghanaian newspapers to inform implications for the readability, comprehensibility and information function of the newspapers in Ghana's democracy. This study begins with the premise that the writing style or linguistic choices play a crucial role in the readability and comprehensibility of newspapers. In this study, readability refers to the ease of comprehending a text due to the style of writing (Klare 1963, cited in DuBay 2004: 3), while comprehensibility means the "potential for a text to be understood" (Rock 2007: 14). These two concepts are obviously related, and the use of one may imply or include the other. Writing style here implies the lexical and syntactic elements used to construct news reports.

The importance of this study lies in the remarkable fact that almost all the Ghanaian national quality newspapers continue to be published in English. This highlights the language of such publications for scrutiny within the second language context of its occurrence. This is because English occurs in Ghana as an official language among over sixty other (indigenous) languages (Obeng 1997; Guerini 2007), and the ability to write and read the language depends on formal educational attainment. Thus, the relative complexity or otherwise of the language determines who among the educated class (from primary to tertiary educational levels) could easily read and understand the newspapers' language.

The study begins with a position that the language of most Ghanaian newspapers is complex lexically and syntactically, and that this could hinder the readability and comprehensibility of the newspapers. Complexity in this study refers to the occurrence of vocabulary and sentence-structure elements in a text in a manner that could undermine information transmission and thereby cause comprehension difficulties for some readers (Just and Carpenter 1992; Hess and Biggam 2004; McNamara et al. 2010). In the context of Ghana, not just as a developing country but also as an emerging democracy, issues relating to the ability of the press to communicate with its audience are vitally important. The crucial point is that limitations on citizens' comprehension of news information are likely to affect informed political participation and thereby obstruct genuine democratic function in the country. Thus, important questions that cannot be ignored and which this study strives to address include the following: How may the language of Ghanaian newspapers be described structurally? To what extent can the writing style of the newspaper enhance or inhibit the readability and comprehensibility of stories? What could be the fallouts of the above questions to the information function of the press?

The press and its informative role in Ghana

The epistemological underpinnings of the study are in part normatively located in the responsibility of the press (real or imagined) in a democratic society (McQuail 2005; Christians et al. 2009). The expectation highlighted in this research is that the Ghanaian press ought to reach a broad section of Ghanaian readers with socio-political information. Thus, the study interrogates the extent to which the press could be effective in directly reaching and possibly influencing its readers. The argument is that the effectiveness of the press goes beyond merely producing and circulating news information. One way in which the effectiveness of the press may be meaningfully assessed is to discover the extent to which the newspapers' messages are readable and understandable to consumers. This study has therefore adopted an optimistic view regarding the role of the press in Ghana despite the fact that conditions in which the contemporary press operates predispose it to various interests and practices, some of which could harm democracy and/or society. Writing on the British press, Conboy (2007: 12), an expert in journalism studies and language of news, observes that:

> More than any other media form, the newspaper has an explicitly normative role in how we see the world. Our news is our world to the extent that it contributes enormously to our understanding of what happens beyond our everyday experiences.

News from newspapers in Ghana may not be as pervasive as it is in the UK, but the normative picture portrayed above is relevant to the Ghanaian situation. The optimistic view is based on an understanding of the history and role of the Ghanaian press and the various changes that have occurred in the Ghanaian society and (media) economy. The media environment in Ghana in recent times has radically transformed, following the return to constitutional democracy in 1992. The rigid state controls and repressive regulations against the media during the previous autocratic regimes that dominated a greater part of post-independence Ghana gave way to continuous liberalisation of the economy and democratic institutions, including the mass media. Thus, in the past sixteen years, especially with the repeal of the criminal libel law (see section 112 of the Criminal Code of Ghana 1960) in 2001, the media scene has been greatly enhanced and continues to experience improving levels of freedom leading to massive expansion in private participation and ownership within the mass media industry.

Historically and socio-politically, the Ghanaian press has been an important source of information and/or persuasion to mobilise people toward popular political actions (Gasu 2009). The printed press has been celebrated not only for rallying indigenous people for the independence struggles during colonialism, but also for leading the fight for freedom of expression and democracy during the dark days of dictatorship in Ghana (Bourgault 1995; Asante 1996; Anokwa 1997; Karikari 1998). In recent years, the press has been seen as publicising the different contending interests, ideas, parties, social groups, and persons involved in the country's periodic general multi-party elections (Dzisah 2008). The belief then is that the newspapers reach and considerably furnish people with socio-political information and knowledge.

However, this idea about the press's influence appears to come largely from a simplistic view of the relationship between the press and audiences. Most researchers and media watchers seem to share the belief that the press effectively transmits information to the people once issues are raised in publications and people are seen reading newspapers. Such a conclusion fails to consider the possible struggles, tensions and negotiations that could underpin the newspaper consumption process.

The problem

Indeed, the extent to which the Ghanaian press, through its use of language, is helping or inhibiting audiences to access information is yet to be empirically known. I consider this a serious research gap because language is central to the effective functioning of the press since the press makes information available to society through language. While non-literate Ghanaians are certainly proscribed from primary information in newspapers, most educated Ghanaians who are the notional targets of the press have been found to depend on the press for local and foreign information (Ansu-Kyeremeh and Gadzekpo 1996; Amankwah 2010). Up to 30% of Ghanaians are said to read newspapers (BBC World Trust 2006).

However, concerns have been raised over the years about the readability and comprehensibility of the press. Writing on the democratisation of the media in Africa and focusing on the Ghanaian media, Boafo (1987: 27) observed that:

> In terms of readability, the content of the newspapers is generally presented in style and language, which are much above the reading and comprehension levels of the average literate Ghanaian, the elementary school-educated reader. [The elementary school is equivalent and similar to the JHS of today.]

This observation was made almost three decades ago, but the belief persists even today. In a recent ethnographically-focused study, Hasty (2005: 58) re-echoes that the Ghanaian press uses “Big English”. The writer’s further description of the vocabulary of the press as *unwieldy, bulky, officious, authoritarian*, and so on, suggests that the language of the press could pose meaning problems, not only to people with low education, but also across the entire educational system of Ghana. However, without any specific empirical support, these observations have remained anecdotal opinions leaving many questions unanswered.

Research to date on the issue in Ghana has focused largely on error analyses and sensational use of language, except Denkabe and Gadzekpo (1996) and Denkabe *et al*. (1997), which perhaps offer some efforts, albeit based on intuition, at dealing with the issue of newspaper readability in Ghana. Therefore, this current study empirically interrogates some specific linguistic characteristics of Ghanaian newspapers to find out the extent to which they contribute to the complexity or otherwise of the language and how this could affect information acquisition. Findings from this research should help in assessing empirically the effectiveness of the press as far as readers' easy access to information is concerned. If critical issues concerning the readability of Ghanaian newspapers are not investigated, language-based issues such as ideology, hegemony, framing and representation, power, as well as notions of the role of the press in society would be largely assumed and uninformed.

The linguistic issues: Applied linguistics, readability studies and text complexity

The field of applied linguistics and readability studies have produced extensive studies on language or text complexity and readability. The majority of studies in applied linguistics have identified different lexical and syntactic elements as potential causes of text complexity (see Richards and Rogers 1986; Kletzien 1991; Just and Carpenter 1992; Nation and Coady 1998; Read 2000; Hudson 2007; McNamara et al. 2010; Lu 2011; Guo et al. 2011). The general suggestion from these studies is that limited vocabulary knowledge, the inability to understand words in the context of a sentence and text, is connected with difficulty in reading and comprehension. The writers identify abstract words, and specialised/technical vocabulary (jargon) as potential causes of text complexity and reading difficulties.

Writers argue that syntactic elements also blend with lexis in various ways to make a text difficult. Factors such as the occurrences and nature of clauses and subordination in a sentence and text, passive constructions, number of words before the main verb, embedded structures within clauses, and length of linguistic structures are potential causes of text complexity (McNamara et al. 2010; Norris and Ortega 2009). McNamara et al. (2010: 62) explain that, "if the syntax of a sentence is complex, higher demands are placed on working memory processing," thereby causing readability challenges.

Readability studies, which peaked in the late 1940s, have been generally concerned with linguistic factors affecting the ease or difficulty of reading and comprehending text (DuBay 2004; Hulden 2004; Pitler and Nenkova, n.d.). The motivation was initially to evolve readability formula tools in some Western countries to help educationists and textbook writers to objectively measure reading materials and precisely ascertain what language style would most benefit readers (Hulden 2004). The concern later extended to reading activities outside of the school environment such as the readability of news stories. Consequently, various studies eventually started producing readability formulae to help measure the readability level of texts (DuBay 2004).

These studies identify lexical (vocabulary) and syntactic (word formation and sentence structure) combinations as potentially predisposing text to complexity. But which specific linguistic elements are most likely to cause the challenge? Studies have identified nominalisations and Latinate expressions as vocabulary items whose overuse could challenge readability as they carry abstract ideas and are largely unfamiliar (Biber et al. 1999; Russell 2001). These scholars add that the use of an impersonal tone in the form of passive constructions and jargon, among others, could also make a text formal and relatively complex. Dagut and Laufer (1985), Laufer and Eliasson (1993), and Liao and Fukuya (2002) have identified phrasal verbs as a potential source of reading difficulty especially in L2 environments. They argue that the problem lies with the idiomatic tendencies of this type of lexical item.

Consequently, I propose and focus the linguistic inquiry in this instance on nominalisations, Latinate words, phrasal verbs (for lexical items), and sentence length, subordination and passive constructions (for syntactic items) as the variables of investigation.

Methodology

Concerning methodology, the study combines approaches and research tools in applied linguistics, corpus linguistics and readability studies. Computer-aided linguistic analyses of front-page newspaper stories were carried out to obtain evidence supporting or refuting the assumption that Ghanaian newspapers employ complex language to construct their message. The newspapers used were *The Chronicle* (*Chronicle*), *Daily Graphic* (*Graphic*), *Daily Guide* (*Guide*), and *Ghanaian Times* (*Times*). The stories were drawn from the August to November 2008 editions. This data period marked the last quarter of the run-up to a critical general multiparty election in Ghana in 2008.

These four newspapers were the most dominant, credible and influential quality publications in Ghana at the time of the research. In terms of spread, Temin and Smith (2002), Kafewo (2006), Yankson et al. (2010), among others have identified the *Daily Graphic, Daily Guide*, *Ghanaian Times* and *The Chronicle* notionally as the most circulated (in that order) and popular daily newspapers in Ghana. Collectively, the four newspapers comprise about 70% of the national daily newspapers in circulation in Ghana. Thus, these newspapers were well placed to affect the majority of readers in the country.

Two main specific methods were used within a quantitative-led research design to collect and analyse the data. These are the corpus-based approach (Biber et al. 1998; McEnery et al. 2006) and readability formula tests (see DuBay 2004). These methods provide a framework to computationally investigate the linguistic structure of "the language of a text of a group of speakers/writers" (Biber et al. 1998: 2).

The corpus-based approach

The corpus-based approach (and corpus linguistics as a whole) is based on the notion of 'corpus', which according to McEnery and Wilson (2001: 29), is any collection of more than one text. Biber et al. (1998: 4) provide the following essential characteristics of this approach:

- it is empirical, analysing the actual patterns of use in natural texts;
- it utilizes a … collection of natural texts, known as "corpus," as the basis of analysis;
- it makes extensive use of computers for analysis, using both automatic and interactive techniques;
- it depends on both quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques.

These characteristics enhance the reliability of the analysis and the Wordsmith Tools 6.0 software developed by Mike Scott[1] was used. Being computer or software-driven, this method engendered an efficient way of collecting, organising, and enhancing fast, reliable, accurate and diverse manipulations of the data during analysis. In addition to the computational methods designed to yield mainly quantitative analysis, I also applied a manual qualitative-inclined grammatical analysis to support the computational findings. Biber et al. (1998) have suggested the usefulness of applying qualitative analysis to quantitative outputs in corpus-based studies. The linguistic elements specifically targeted and analysed in the corpus included the following in **Table 1**:

Table 1: The lexical and syntactic units of inquiry

Lexical	Syntactic
• nominalisations • Latinate expressions • phrasal verbs	• sentences • clauses • passives forms

Readability formula tools

Readability formulae are mathematical equations whose results provide interpretations for the description of a text from 'very easy' to 'very difficult'. They are meant to help predict or indicate reading ability (in terms of school grade level) required to read and comprehend a particular written text (Redish 2000; DuBay 2004). The formulae are based on research findings that identify vocabulary difficulty (which is

[1] See Wordsmith Tools at: http://www.lexically.net/wordsmith/index.html

measured in word familiarity or difficulty, or word length) and sentence structure (measured in sentence length) as two reliable variables in the study of text complexity and difficulty (DuBay 2004; Hulden 2004). These features are equally prominent in measuring or assessing text complexity in (applied) linguistics and legal studies (see McNamara et al., 2010; Lu, 2011). The most frequently cited and used formulae to date are Flesch Reading Ease (1948), Dale-Chall (1946), Gunning Fog Index (1952), The SMOG, and The Bormuth Mean Cloze formulae (DuBay 2004; Anagnostou and Weir 2006). The first three formulae have been the most popular, reliable, tested, and most influential in the field (Du Bay 2004; Hulden 2004). Consequently, these three formula tools were used in the analysis.

Flesch Reading Ease Formula (1948)

This formula by Rudolph Flesch (1948) depends on two variables: average number of syllables per word (calculated by number of syllables divided by number of words) and average sentence length (i.e. number of words divided by number of sentences). The formula produces a score on a scale of 0-100. The interpretation is that the higher the score, the easier it is to understand the material. Thus, a score of 30 is very difficult, while 70 is very easy. The equation that generates the Flesch Reading Ease score is as follows:

$$RE = 206.835 – (1.015\ ASL) - (84.6\ ASW)$$

Where: RE = reading grade of a reader
ASL = average sentence length
ASW = average number of syllables per word

The prominence and reliability of this formula is suggested by its incorporation and installation in Microsoft Office Word where it is used to check readability levels of texts.

Dale-Chall Formula (1948, 1995)

This formula was developed by Edgar Dale and Jeanne Chall in 1948 for adults and children above the 4th grade level. It has been an influential formula and designed to improve on the Flesch Reading Ease Formula. This formula employs a sentence-length variable and a percentage of "hard words." The hard words are those not included in the Dale-Chall (n.d.) list of 763 easy words, 80% of which are supposed to be known to fourth grade readers (see DuBay 2004).

The original Dale-Chall Formula was revised by the authors and re-published (Dale and Chall 1995). The new formula is an improved version as it accounted for many readability research findings during the 47 years after the publication of the original formula. The new formula expanded the list of familiar words to 3,000 and was validated against a variety of criteria and correlated highly with other assessment criteria making it one of the most valid of the popular formulae (see DuBay 2004: 52). The score is obtained from the equation (DuBay 2004: 24):

Score = .1579 * PDW + .0496 * ASL + 3.6365

Score = reading grade of a reader who can comprehend a text at 4th grade or below.
PDW = Percentage of Difficult Words (words not on the Dale-Chall word list)
ASL = Average Sentence Length in words.

Concerning interpretation, scores from 8.0 upward imply that the text concerned is difficult and suitable for university students (Dale and Chall 1949).

Gunning Fog Index (1952)

Robert Gunning's (1952) Fog Index is also a commonly used readability measure developed for adults and based on two variables: average sentence length and the number of words with more than two syllables for each 100 words (Heydari 2012). The formula produces an output that is a grade level score, the equation being:

Grade Level = .4 (Average Sentence Length + hard words)

where, *hard words* refer to the number of words with more than two syllables. This formula indicates that a score of 13 is the upper limit of an easy text meaning a score above 13 is difficult.

The data

As indicated at the onset, the *Graphic and Times*, which were (and still are) state-owned, and the *Chronicle* and *Guide*, both privately owned provided the textual data for the study. The corpus-based method helped to systematically collect and organise all the individual news stories reported on the front pages of the selected newspapers over the research period for the overall linguistic analyses. This specialised corpus of front-page news stories represented a language of press reportage of front-page Ghanaian newspaper genre. According to Adolphs (2006: 30), this type of corpus captures "the language of a particular domain rather than the language in general." Data were collected from August to November 2008 for the *Chronicle*, the *Graphic*, and the *Guide*. But the four-month data for the *Times* were so comparatively low that it became necessary to add one more month's data (July) to its (the *Times*) collection. Thus, care was taken to acquire a near equivalent size in words across the newspapers as much as possible, although there are still some negligible differences in size between the collections. The entire corpus amounted to 896 individual text files or stories with an overall size at 543,698 words. It has to be stated that care was taken to maintain the originality of the stories. **Table 2** presents details of the monthly data of the four newspapers.

Table 2: Monthly textual data and size of corpus

	Chronicle		*Graphic*		*Guide*		*Times*	
Month	**No. of Words**	**No. of Files**	**No. of Words**	**No. of Files**	**No. of Words**	**No. of Files**	**No. of Words**	**No. of Files**
JULY							**27485**	**57**
Aug	**39348**	**57**	**45847**	**68**	**30049**	**47**	**26775**	**55**
Sept	**35315**	**57**	**30456**	**51**	**32767**	**48**	**19926**	**44**
Oct	**36446**	**50**	**36534**	**60**	**39530**	**54**	**21559**	**50**
Nov	**36006**	**51**	**25940**	**42**	**37701**	**58**	**22014**	**47**
TOTALS	**147115**	**215**	**138777**	**221**	**140047**	**207**	**117759**	**253**

Additionally, a stratified random sampling procedure (Babbie 2005) yielded 20 per cent of text from each newspaper. This produced 160 texts (ten from each month and, therefore, forty from each newspaper). These texts were used for readability text analysis using the three formula tools indicated earlier.

Analyses, findings and discussion

The corpus analysis concerned general vocabulary and sentence elements. The vocabulary aspect involves the three categories of words that were investigated (nominalisations, Latinate expressions and phrasal verbs). The sentence aspect includes sentence length, clauses and passive form occurrences.

Initial results, as seen in **Table 3**, show no significant differences in tokens or words and their dynamics across the four newspaper sub-corpora. The results indicate near homogeneity of linguistic features in terms of number of sentences and their averages, and average text or story length. Importantly, the results show that the *Graphic*, the most widely circulated newspaper in Ghana, had an average sentence and word length of 31 and 5 respectively, and about 27% of its tokens are between 7 and 18-letter words. I have benchmarked word length on seven-letter words upwards because the focus is on words with more than one syllable as potentially complex, and a minimum of seven-letter words provides a reliable indicator of such words. For instance, a six-letter word such as *months* is one syllable. This finding about the near homogeneity of the linguistic features analysed seems to suggest that the newspapers share similar linguistic characteristics and targeted readership.

Table 3: Statistical details of the corpus data

ITEMS	*CHRONICLE*	*GRAPHIC*	*GUIDE*	*TIMES*
Tokens or Running Words	148350	140761	141338	119413
Tokens Used for wordlist	**147115**	**138777**	**140047**	**117759**
Types (distinct Words)	11279	10945	11450	10702
Type/token Ratio (TTR)	8	8	8	9
Standardised TTR	40.33	40.06	43.06	43.38
Mean Word Length	5	5	5	5
Total No. of Sentences	4585	4403	4661	4108
Mean Sentence Length	32	32	30	29
Std. Dev., Av. Sent. Length	15.41	13.36	13.53	12.68
No. of texts	215	221	207	253
Mean Length of Text (Words	684	628	677	465
7-letter Words and above	37699	37407	34674	31069

The general information presented above provides initial cues about the nature of the language of the corpus. The next section begins a detailed discussion toward an informed description of the language.

Lexical complexity

Results concerning word frequency and length provide an initial indicator towards an assessment of the language of the corpus. The statistical analysis involving the wordlist indicates that 64% of the lexical items of the corpus occurred four times or less over the four-month data period. This implies that the corpus exhibits very low frequency of such words, suggesting that the words may be unfamiliar. This measure has been an important and long-standing measure of readability. Lexical items may have low occurrence in a text, especially in short texts (Sinclair 1991; Adolphs 2006), but scholars have argued that less frequent words are less common to most readers and since such words are less frequently encountered, they draw longer eye fixation time and thus pose comprehension challenges (Just and Carpenter 1980, 1992; McNamara et al. 2010). The importance of this finding is emphasised by the fact that the majority of these low frequency words are Latinate and/or nominalised expressions, which have characteristics that make texts in which they occur complex.

Additionally, the analysis indicates that the average word length of the corpus is 5 letters and that 26% of the words in the corpus (N=543698) are 7 to 18 letters as shown in **Figure 1**. These findings imply that over a quarter of the words in this study's corpus were long words, which could exert a relative burden on mental processing during reading. Examples of some of the words are captured below:

Letter word	**Examples**
7	*comment, tension, faction*
8	*impunity, capacity, dynamism*
9	*augmented, dimension, rationale*
10	*precaution, commitment, sentiments*
11	*devastation, tranquillity, impediments*
12	*dispensation, intervention, surveillance*
13	*documentation, collaboration, eventualities*
14	*discrimination, accountability, disenchantment*
15	*competitiveness, professionalism, familiarisation*
16	*decentralization, inter-ministerial, intercontinental*
17	*maladministration, industrialisation, misrepresentation*
18	*telecommunications, characteristically*

A normalised[2] comparison of the frequency of long words (7 to 18-letter words) with the British National Corpus (BNC)[3] indicated that the 140,849 words of our corpus map to 25,351,583 words of the BNC's 23% (22,349,769) proportion of such words.[4] This means that there could be more of such long words in our corpus than in the about 100 million–word BNC. Although the BNC contains 10% spoken language, the 90% written component contains technical and academic texts that may contain long words.

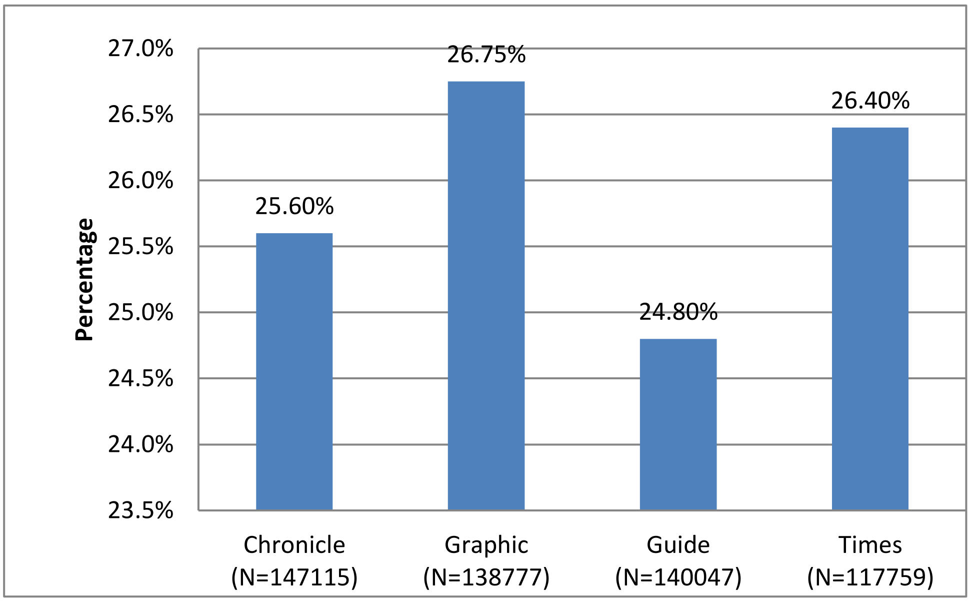
[2] According to Biber *et al*. (1998: 263), "*[n]ormalization* is a way to adjust raw frequency counts from texts of different lengths so that they can be compared accurately."

[3] The BNC is a 100 million balanced and representative corpus of British English. It is made up of 90% written and 10% spoken texts and has been used for many corpus-related studies (Davies, 2009).

[4] Scott, M. 2012. *BNC Wordlist*. Available from: http://www.lexically.net/downloads/version4/downloading%20BNC.htm.

This possibility makes the results of this study significant, especially as the corpus is a newspaper genre and not a technical publication.

Figure 1: Percentage of long words (7 to 18 letters) in the corpus



The Lexical items

From the general description of the corpus, attention is now focused on the specific lexical items under investigation. **Table 4** presents overall results of the three categories of lexical items investigated in terms of proportions in each newspaper. The results indicate that Latinate expressions consistently occurred the most in the sub-corpora at an average of almost 10%. A detailed discussion of how these findings individually and collectively influence the text is presented shortly.

Table 4: General occurrence of the lexical items under study

LEXICAL ITEM	*CHRONICLE*	*GRAPHIC*	*GUIDE*	*TIMES*	TOTAL
Nominalisations	7236	7250	5780	6142	**26408**
Latinate Expr.	13491	13278	10711	11283	**48763**
Phrasal Verbs	1443	1062	1056	865	**4426**

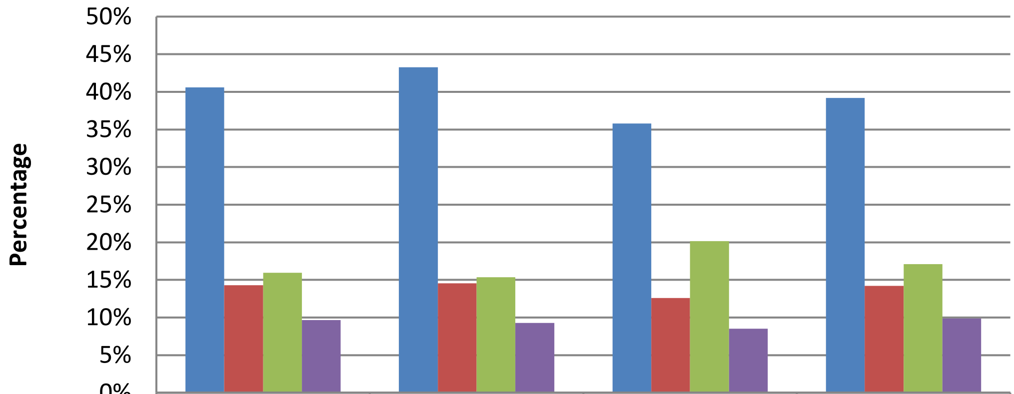
Figure 2 presents a clearer picture in percentages of the various proportions of the lexical items. In the next subsections, I present a detailed discussion of the analytical procedures and results of the individual elements.

Figure 2: Percentage of lexical items in the corpus

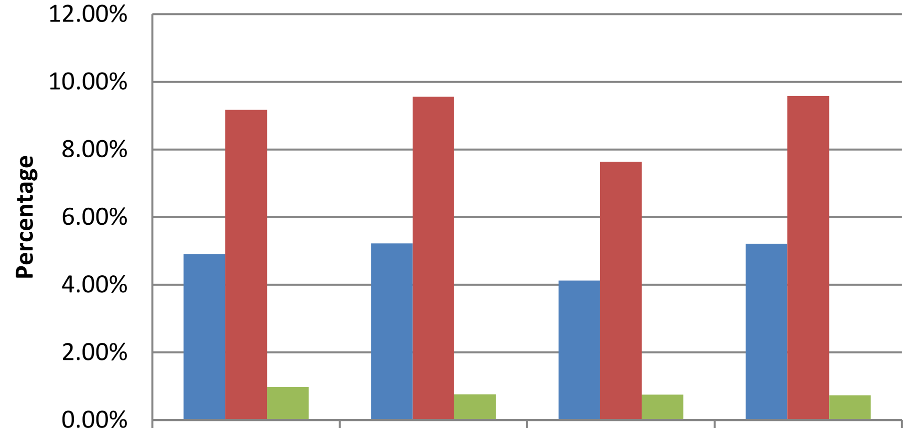
Nominalisations

The results indicate that of the 26,408 nominalisations in the corpus, those produced by <*-tion/sion*>, <*-ment*>, <*-er*>, and <*-ity*> occurred most in that order with <*-tion/sion*> constituting between 35% and 43% across the sub-corpora see (**Figure 3**).

Figure 3: Four highest occurring nominalisations in the corpus



	Chronicle	Graphic	Guide	Times
-tion/sion	40.60%	43.25%	35.80%	39.18%
-ment	14.30%	14.52%	12.60%	14.21%
-er	15.93%	15.35%	20.15%	17.11%
-ity	9.67%	9.28%	8.50%	9.86%



	Chronicle	Graphic	Guide	Times
Nominalisations	4.91%	5.22%	4.12%	5.21%
Latinate Expr.	9.17%	9.56%	7.64%	9.58%
Phrasal Verbs	0.98%	0.76%	0.75%	0.73%

These types of nominalisations and the proportion of their occurrences across the newspapers[5] are in line with trends in academic writing (Biber *et al*. 1998; Biber *et al*. 1999). Using nominalisations formed from <-*tion/sion*, -*men*t, *–ity* and *–ness*> across three registers (academic prose, fiction and speech), Biber et al. 1998 discovered that nominalisations occurred most in academic prose and explained that the abstract quality of the nominalised words suits the nature of academic writing. Therefore, the occurrences of these nominalisations in this current corpus suggest that the language of the newspapers is similar, in respect of nominalisations, to that of academic prose.

In terms of how nominalisations contribute to text complexity and difficulty, Biber *et al.* (1998: 61), explain that the nominalisation process converts actions, processes and descriptive qualities into abstract objects that are separate from human participants. The writers use the nominalised word *movement* in "*if **movement** has occurred recently, the effect on topography drainage patterns, vegetation … recognised*" to explain that *movement,* as a process, has been nominalised (as the subject in the sentence) implying that the text now discusses the "generalized action of

[5] The exception is -*er,* which most studies appear to ignore but which was productive in this study. Similarly, the suffix -ness did not yield significant occurrences because it converts an adjective into a noun to express personal feelings and qualities, which newspapers do not often report.

moving, rather than a particular person moving." The example below from our corpus illustrates the argument further.

> *Such support, he said, should manifest itself in the timely release of resources for critical programmes in the shared plans, since delays in the* ***implementation*** *of programmes had led to* ***frustrations*** *and tended to cause political* ***disenchantment****, which has rendered some* ***governments*** *in democratic countries vulnerable* (*Graphic* Sept. 5 2008 story 2).

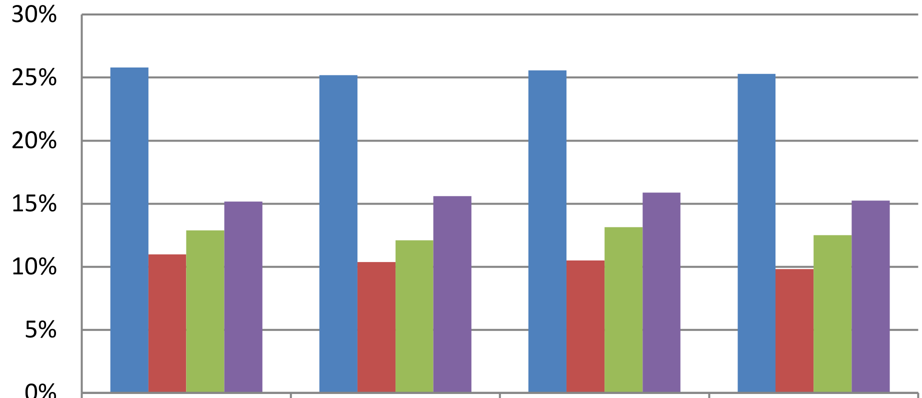
From the above, "implementation" and "frustrations" are *-tion/sion* nominalisations from the verbs *implement* and *frustrate*. Their use has converted the action and state represented in them respectively to abstract objects in a way that eliminates the human agent. In other words, it is not clear who is 'implementing' or 'feeling frustrated.'

Critical discourse analysts such as Fowler (1991) and others have used systemic functional grammar to demonstrate how nominalisation is used, especially in the press, as a metaphor to deliberately conceal issues or mislead readers (Fowler 1991, Stenvall 2011). This conclusion is because nominalised words are abstract and vague as explained earlier. However, it is difficult to sustain the argument that any time a nominalisation occurs in the press, it implies a deliberate act of concealment. The use of nominalisations could also be a matter of the writer's writing style and may not always occur intentionally to confuse or hide something (Stenvall 2011). Nevertheless, there seems to be consensus that the occurrence of many nominalisations in a text, whether intentionally to hide an idea or not, has the potential of making the language complex and difficult, especially due to their abstract nature.

Latinate expressions

As indicated earlier, about 10% of the lexical items in the corpus are Latinate expressions. Four of the results that occurred most were produced by the affixes *<co->*, *<pr->*, *<in->*, and *<de->* across the newspapers as presented in **Figure 4**. The results indicate that the majority of Latinate words in Ghanaian newspaper front-page stories are prefixed by *<co->*, which occurred between 25% and 26% among the Latinate words identified across the various newspapers. Instances of such words include *collaborate, commemorate, commitment, conjecture, consent, corroborate, counsel, covetous*, among others.

Figure 4: Four highest occurring affixes and their Latinate items



	Chronicle	Graphic	Guide	Times
co-	25.79%	25.18%	25.57%	25.29%
de-	10.99%	10.37%	10.49%	9.82%
in-	12.89%	12.11%	13.14%	12.50%
pr-	15.18%	15.60%	15.88%	15.25%

In addition to the above systematically generated output, the following are some instances of Latinate vocabulary in the corpus, which did not fall neatly into any of the above groups:

> *aptitude, legacy, elated, vicinity, attitude, sanction, faction, volition, jurisdiction, rationale, authority, dimension, legacy, envisage, legal, monument, assessment, criteria, admonish, metropolitan, logistics, immigration, manifesto, remand, critical, implementation, motion*

The findings and analysis suggest a widespread use of Latinate words across the newspapers most of which are long and polysyllabic. It is clear from the results that the language of the newspapers compares with academic or legal writing. Concerning complexity, the usually long or polysyllabic and abstract nature of Latinate expressions makes the language of the text in which they occur formal and specialised, as in academic and legal texts (Russell 2001). I argue that a text with such a characteristic is suitable for a specialised, and not general, audience. Thus, the **over 10%** of such lexis in this corpus has a significant implication for the complexity of the language. The example below qualitatively illustrates this point.

> *The court said it took into* ***consideration*** *the* ***prevalence*** *of armed robbery in the country, the overwhelming evidence* ***adduced*** *against the convicts by the* ***prosecution****, the* ***character*** *and* ***antecedents*** *of the convicts, among others, before imposing the* ***sentence*** (*Daily Graphic* September 17 Story 2).

The extract, taken from one of the newspapers under discussion, is part of a report on a court case, and it contains Latinate words such as *consideration, prevalence, adduced, prosecution, character, antecedents,* and *sentence.* The use of legalese such as *prosecution* and *sentence* occur alongside other Latinate words to make the extract formal and technical. These words are usually associated with the kind of formal writing found in technical reports, academic and scientific documents that may not be for public consumption.

Phrasal verbs (PVs)

The analysis yielded PVs in the corpus including *work out, put up with, spew out, turned up, speed up, setting up, get along with, fashion out,* among others. The quantity of PVs in the corpus is 4,426, which comes to less than 1% of tokens in the corpus. The relatively few PVs across the sub-corpora seem to confirm studies that they are rare features in second language (L2) writing (Dagut and Laufer 1985; Laufer and Eliasson 1993). This notwithstanding, a normalised comparison with PVs in the Corpus of Contemporary American English's (COCA) [6] 76 million-word newspaper component (4,720 per million words) (Davies 2009: 183) seems to suggest that the occurrence in this study's corpus is considerable and hence significant. The normalised results (with 1000 as the denominator) indicate that the occurrence of PVs in our corpus (8.14) is almost twice as much as what occurs in the COCA (4.72).

The results indicate that the PVs used in Ghanaian front-page stories reflect three types of PVs. *Spew out* and *sped off*, meaning *say unpalatable things* and *move away in haste* respectively, belong to the literal type. *Stay over* (sleep overnight at a place) and *speed up* (increase the pace) are instances of completive PVs, while *turn up* (arrive), *set up* (establish) are figurative. Any reader who does not know the collective meaning could miss the import of these lexical items, and this may affect the overall understanding of the sentence in which the lexis appeared as well as the language of the text as a whole.

[6] COCA refers to the Corpus of contemporary American English that keeps growing because new texts and words are added each year. Thus, it is one of the most current useful corpora available. The corpus is over 450 million words. By 2008, it was over 350 million (Davies, 2009). In terms of research application, the COCA is comparable to the BNC.

Concerning the complex aspect of PVs, Sinclair (1991: 68) notes that PVs have been of interest to language teaching since they offer "exquisite problems to learners." Particularly relevant has been the finding suggesting that the use of PVs is generally uncommon among L2 users mainly because the PV structure does not exist in the users' L1 (Dagut and Laufer 1985; Liao and Fukuya 2002). The consequence is the hypothesis that L2 users avoid PVs and therefore find them difficult to understand (Dagut and Laufer 1985; Liao and Fukuya 2002).

Overall significance of findings concerning lexical items

The significance of the results involving word length and these three categories of lexical elements relative to text complexity lies in their collective occurrences in the corpus. The proportion of such words, particularly nominalisations and Latinate, has significant text complexity implications for the language of the corpus as a whole. Research has established that grammatical or function words such as *on, in, upon, a, the*, etc., constitute about half of the tokens of any text or corpus (Nation 2001; Adolphs 2006). Yet such words do not carry content or information. This means that the lexical items investigated form part of the remaining words that carry information in the corpus. Thus, since **almost 10%** of the information-laden words of the corpus are Latinate and potentially unfamiliar, there is a strong case for the complexity of the language. as the following examples, which easily popped up in the analysis suggest:

> *motion, commended, challenges, constituencies, electioneering, entourage, investigations, aspirants, cautioned, perpetrators, assurance, reiterate, municipal, metropolis, multi, millennium, dialysis, transparent, adjudication incumbent, indigenes, circumspection, dispensation, entrenchment, mandatory, prosecution, intimated, inauguration, interact, communiqué, characterised, candidature, interlocutory,* etc.

Syntactic complexity

Studies in syntactic complexity have often relied on the relationships between sentence length, clauses and other internal linguistic units of a sentence using the number of occurrences and averages as measures (Norris and Ortega 2009; Lu 2011). In this study, four specific syntactic variables were used: sentence length, types of sentence, clause embedding and passive constructions. These are first discussed individually and then their collective impact on the language of the corpus is summed up.

Sentence length, clause embedding, and sentence types

I discuss here the above three variables because of their close association. Concerning sentence length, the corpus analysis indicates that the average sentence length is 31 words with the *Chronicle* and the *Graphic* scoring 32. This finding is far above existing journalistic standards or research recommendations. The news reportage component of the corpus that was used to produce Biber et al.'s (1999) *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* has a mean sentence length of 20 words. Most researchers and experts (in readability and plain English studies) agree that written information for public communication is best presented in sentences of between 15 to 25 words (Flesch 1949; Russell 2001; DuBay 2004). For example, *Essential Reporting: NCTJ Guide for Trainee Journalists* (Smith 2007) advises journalists to use an average sentence length of 20 words.

The occurrence of relatively long sentences in the corpus has implications for readability, no matter the accompanying number of short sentences. Although the standard deviation of the average sentence length was 13.75, which indicates relatively dispersed sentence lengths, the study showed that the corpus contains many long sentences. For instance, a sentence such as the one below from the *Guide* is so long (75 words) that at the end, the sentence shifts focus from a comparison of the strengths of *Mahama* and *Bawumia*[7] to introduce another issue on some voters' belief.

> While Mr. Mahama is perceived to be more expressive with a richer experience on the political soapbox, Dr. Bawumia's understanding of Ghana's current economic challenges and his direct involvement in stabilizing the country's financial sector has earned him the reverence of the business community and that class of voters who do not vote on party lines but on the belief that the country needs a leader who can transform the economy into a first-class one (*Guide* August 21, story 1).

Thus, by the time the reader gets to the issue of the belief, he/she could have forgotten how the sentence began. The argument, in relative terms, is that the longer a sentence the more clauses it may contain and therefore the more complex it becomes. As I discuss further below, long sentences usually contain clauses with various linking processes that reveal other patterns of complexity.

[7] Mr. John Mahama and Dr. Mahamadu Bawumia were the running mates of the presidential candidates of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), respectively, during the national elections in Ghana in 2008. These two parties were the frontrunners of that election.

The sentences of the corpus display other internal structure characteristics that point to complexity. **Table 5** indicates that each sentence of the corpus is a complex sentence.

Table 5: Syntactic profile of the corpus

	Total No. of Clauses	% of Sub- clauses	% of Relative Clauses	% of Passive Forms
Chronicle	13030	51.81	12.29	18.19
Graphic	11674	53.79	11.89	13.20
Guide	12717	51.45	12.55	13.47
Times	11279	51.19	12.04	14.00

The complex sentences are further complicated by the way the clauses relate to one another. Studies on clause grammar argue that the clause serves as a unit of thought (Biber 1999), so it is reasonable to assume that a complex sentence contains more than one idea. In relative terms, the processes involved in creating a complex sentence (that is, subordination) are grammatically intricate, and may relate to efforts needed to decode such sentences (Just and Carpenter 1992; Russell 2001). It is argued further that the ideas in a complex sentence interact in an embedded or firmer relationship (depending on the number of clauses) and this and other linguistic (and non-linguistic) factors may combine to make that sentence potentially difficult to deal with semantically, as explained further in the example below:

a. Mr. Aggrey-Mensah said **when** Telekom Malaysia's agreement was abrogated, it was the poor GT, **which** did not benefit from the sale **that** was made to pay the $52 2 million as settlement fee (*Graphic* 2 August 2008).

Example (**a)** above has five clauses with a more intricate structure. The various clauses, each presenting an idea, are as follows:

- Mr. Aggrey-Mensah said (it);
- **(that**) it was the poor GT (which did not benefit from the sale);
- **When** Telekom Malaysia's agreement was abrogated;
- **Which** did not benefit from the sale; and

- **That** was made to pay the $52 2 million as settlement fee

The independent or main clause is *Mr Aggrey-Mensah said (it),* where ***it*** refers to *it was the poor GT,* ***which did not benefit from the sale***. This clause is itself a complex one because it has an implied or obligatory relative clause (in bold italics) that describes ***the poor GT***. The four conjunctions in bold, that is, omitted *that*, *when, which* and *that*, signal the dependent clauses in that order. The first dependent clause is the direct object of ***said*** and so it is nominal. The second, indicated by *when,* is adverbial adding time to the idea it contributes to the sentence. The other two dependent clauses are relative or adjectival, describing *the poor GT* and *the sale* respectively. If a reader fails to connect the conjunctions or relative pronouns, that is, *which* and *that*, to their correct noun as explained above, meaning could be lost. Additionally, if all these clause structures are not properly related and understood in the context explained above, there could be meaning challenges.

Passive forms

The study acknowledges three types of passives as illustrated below:

- He **was released** by the prison authorities. (full or long: *BE* + *Past Participle*)
- The evidence **given** by the witness solved the case. (Partial: minus *BE*)
- The evidence by a witness solved the case. (fully ellipted: but implied)

The results indicate about 15% long passives in the corpus (see **Table 5**). The focus on passive forms was based on the notion that they make sentences formal, impersonal and 'weighty' (Biber et al. ibid.). The passive voice has been identified in discussions concerning plain English and applied linguistics as a key contributor to text complexity and reading difficulty (Loughran and McDonald 2009; Amdur et al. 2010; Ferreira et al. 2002), although few of these studies have discussed specifically how the construction interferes with meaning making. There is, therefore, the need for more research on this. Amdur et al. (2010) recommend that there should not be too many passives in articles published in medical journals since they make reading and understanding difficult. This suggests, importantly, that passive constructions could affect reading and understanding, especially in public documents such as newspapers. Ferreira *et al.* (2002) also examined the issue of misinterpretation of passive sentences and discovered that while their participants identified the improbability of the statement, *The man bit the dog,* about 20% of the participants found the statement, *The dog was bitten by the man,* plausible. The writers, consequently, argued that readers sometimes are unable to apply the meaning implication in the passive verb form. The example below should help to further clarify the issue.

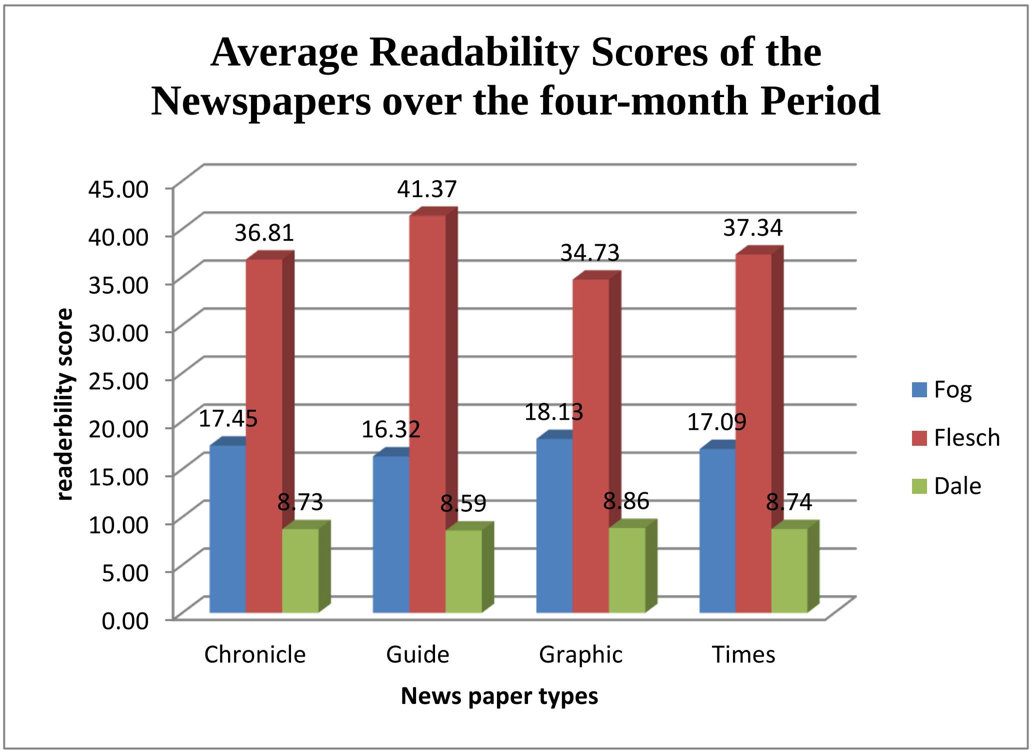
b. Led in evidence by a State Attorney, T. Amponsah, the first prosecution witness, Musah Hassan, told the court that he is a businessman operating at the Central Business District of Accra (*Guide* August 27 2008).

In the example, *(was) Led* is the passive verb, while *a state attorney, T. Amponsah*, is the agent. The act of *leading* 'affects' *Musah Hassan*, but the passive form seems to portray the *state attorney* as the one who was led in evidence. The sentence was particularly made confusing by the inversion in which the subject of the passive verb (*Musah Hassan*) is removed from the verb. Thus, it would seem as if *Musah Hassan* is not affected by the action of *state attorney*, and this is a possible source of complexity.

Readability formula tests

The results for the three formula tools indicate a high level of consistent correlations in terms of the relative ease or difficulty of the texts even across the individual text scores. As indicated in **Figure 6**, the overall average scores obtained across the four newspapers for Fog were between 16.32 and 18.13. Scores for Flesch were between 41.37 and 34.73 and Dale, between 8.59 and 8.86. The standard deviation for most of the scores was below 0, showing how clustered the results were over the period. By interpretation, the scores indicated largely that the language of the four newspapers is *difficult* and suitable for *college/university level* readers.

Figure 6: Results of readability tests



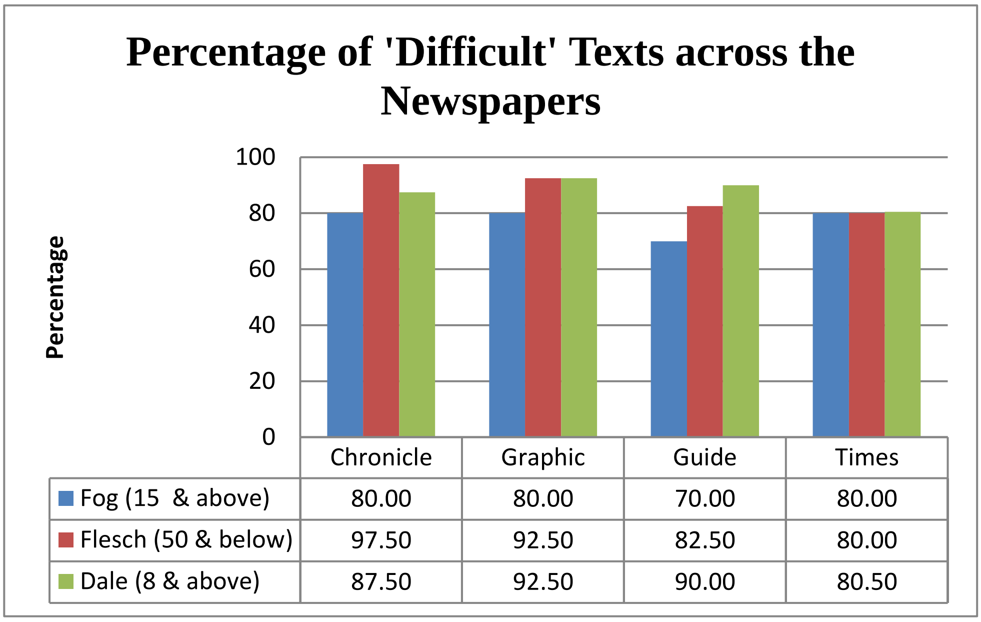
Key to the Interpretation of the above Scores (from DuBay 2004: 25):

- **Fog Index:** 5 is readable; 10 is hard; 13 is difficult; and 20 is very difficult. (Note that, college or university level has a score of 10 or less)
- **Flesch Reading Ease:** the higher the score the easier to read; 70 – 100 indicates from easy to very easy to read; 0 – 30, very difficult to read (post university or college graduate); 30 – 50, difficult to read (university/college graduate); 60-70, standard.
- **New Dale-Chall:** 4.9 and below, for grade 4 and below; 5.0 – 6.9, for grades 5 – 6; 7.0 – 7.9, for grades 9 – 10; 8.0 – 8.9, for grades 11 – 12; 9.0 – 9.9, for grades 13 – 15 (college level); 10 and above for grade 16 and up.

The monthly averages for each formula reflected almost the same pattern. Thus, I narrow the analysis to results produced by Fog. The Fog formula measures difficulty based on word syllable count (word length) and sentence length, which suits the major orientation and argument of this study regarding the sources of newspaper language complexity. For the monthly results, the August scores for Fog for the four newspapers were between 16.00 and 18.46 where the *Guide* had the least difficult score and *Graphic* the most difficult score. For September, the range was 16.62 and 18.19 with the *Guide* and the *Chronicle* having the least and most difficult scores, respectively. October averages for Fog were between 16.38 and 18.37 and the least difficult was the *Times* while the *Graphic* was the most difficult. Similarly, the scores for November ranged between 16.03 and 18.54 with the *Guide* and the *Graphic* having the least and most difficult scores, respectively. The same pattern is reflected in the scores of the other readability tools. The monthly results over the period indicate the consistency of the writing style of the newspapers within a score range interpreted as *difficult*, and this strengthens the assumption of the study that Ghanaian newspapers employ a similar writing style or language.

Concerning interpretation, the individual text scores of the three formulae indicate clusters within the same interpretation ranges. The majority of scores for Fog were between 15 and 19.9, when the danger line for readability is 13 (Gunning 1952; Heydary 2012). In fact, according to the Fog formula, news is expected to read at a score of 10 (see DuBay 2004:25). The interpretation for all the tools is that the Ghanaian newspapers read at the *difficult* level, and this indicates that the material is largely suitable for university or tertiary level readers. In terms of percentages, results of texts for each newspaper that scored *difficult* and above are presented in **Figure 7**. A remarkably high 80%-93% of the 40 news stories of each of the newspapers are difficult and readable largely by university level readers.

Figure 7: Readability test results showing percentage of difficult news texts



Results of the corpus linguistics analysis clearly correlate strongly with findings of the readability formula tools. The strong representation of long words and sentences in the corpus seem to be reflected in the readability scores. Therefore, results of these two perspectives triangulate to suggest that the complexity level of the newspapers' language could largely challenge readability.

Further discussion: Ghanaian newspapers, text complexity and comprehensibility

The analyses, results and discussion above provide adequate evidence that the language of the corpus is structurally highly complex. This is based on the proportions and blend of the linguistic features investigated and other tendencies generated by them. Vocabulary provided the most reliable evidence about the complexity of the language. The results indicated that the newspapers contain many long words, nominalisations, Latinate expressions and phrasal verbs in proportions that individually and collectively predispose the language to complexity.

The relationship between syntax and text complexity was established through sentence length, complex sentence and clauses, and passive forms. The study found on average that the newspapers employ long sentences while scholars and media industry experts have suggested the use of short sentences of between 15 and 25 as the readable length. The analysis also shows that each sentence of the corpus is complex with intricate clause embedding. Going by the notion that a clause is a unit of thought, the implication is that each sentence of the corpus contains a number of ideas. Thus, when these ideas occur in intricate sentence structures as demonstrated manually in the analysis, readers' memory and recall are challenged.

The notional complexity of the text was corroborated by results of the readability formula analysis, which indicate that on average, **85%** of the texts of the various newspapers were difficult and readable by readers with university educational attainment. Although readability formulae have been criticised, especially in their use to guide the writing and revision of documents (Redish and Selzer 1985; Redish 2000), they remain reliable tools in determining levels of language complexity (DuBay 2004). Their relevance in this instance is the fact that this study was not meant to revise or guide the writing of newspaper stories but just to indicate readability levels.

From the near similarity of the results across the four newspapers as seen from the different analyses, it is reasonable to apply a homogeneous description to the language of the front-page stories of the national daily newspapers in Ghana and describe it collectively as complex. The findings, therefore, suggest strongly that the language of Ghanaian newspapers could hinder the readability and comprehensibility of the front-page stories, particularly for many pre-university readers.

This discussion so far raises questions about the target of the newspapers, newspaper-based information flow, information access and knowledge acquisition. These issues are best understood within the framework of the educational culture of the country. The point has been made that formal English in which Ghanaian newspapers construct news reports is acquired in school. Ghana's education structure covers basic (Primary and Junior High), secondary (Senior High) and Higher Education (polytechnic, university, etc.) levels, and the higher one goes up this ladder, the more one is able to use and understand a relatively complex form of the language. That is why the complex language of the newspapers as discovered in this study could largely suit tertiary level readers. The fact that only a few educated Ghanaians access Higher Education (about 4%)[8] leaving the overwhelming majority of such people at basic and secondary levels implies that many readers or potential readers of newspapers could find it difficult reading and understanding news stories on account of the language. It could even be possible that some tertiary level readers also find it hard to read and understand such language.

Education in Ghana has faced challenges since the post-independence period in line with the country's developing status. These challenges provide some reasons for the relatively low education quality, standards, abilities and attainments in the country (Awedoba 2001; Owu-Ewie 2006, 2014; Akyeampong et al. 2007; Ampiah 2010).

[8] See Ghana Statistical Service (2013). *2010 population & housing Census*. From: http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/docfiles/2010phc/National_Analytical_Report.pdf

Consequently, it is not surprising that issues concerning competence in English are often topical in Ghana. Owu-Ewie (2006) and Fosu (2009), for example, express concern that many students finish school but lack competence in English contrary to society's expectations. Indeed, examination results at all levels of the country's educational structure have shown over the years that students perform poorly in English, far more than they do in other subjects (from Chief Examiner's reports, West African Examinations Council). Relating the discussion to the press, this state of affairs raises critical questions about the relationship between education, language of newspapers, and readers' ability to read the newspapers.

The above scenario has implications for information flow and readers' direct access to socio-political information and knowledge. Specifically, the argument is that many educated Ghanaians, alongside the many who cannot read and write, could be alienated from directly accessing the news, thereby creating gaps in newspaper-based knowledge in the society with dire political consequences (Kleinnijenhuis 1991; Eveland Jr. and Scheufele 2000). Thus, while Nisbet (2008: 474) has discovered that education is a leading pointer to communication gaps in some transitional democratic societies, this current study has discovered that language challenges could be an additional education-related cause of the gaps in Ghana. The implication is that a few elites may continue to have dominion over political information and knowledge, which grants them power to represent their version of reality and interests as the society's.

The above suggestion raises critical questions about readership. As Douglas (2009:50) observes, newspapers survive on the active patronage of their "core loyal readership", that is, the regular buyers of newspapers. Logically, this implies that newspapers also adopt political and ideological viewpoints, as well as language, that sit well with their readers. Thus, newspapers consciously construct their "ideal or implied" readers by writing with the readers in mind and seeking their comfort (Fowler, 1991:232).

Yet, while the Ghanaian press has been known to champion different ideologies and political positions, readership has not exactly reflected segmentation or the 'ideal or implied reader' around newspapers and their positions. For instance, about 80% of Ghanaian readers consume the *Graphic*, which is state-funded and perceived to be pro-government, although it is clear from national election results that many of the readers might not be sympathetic to the political ideology of the government of the day. The same situation applies to many of the national newspapers. Thus, it is not surprising, considering the findings of this study, that the national newspapers target every possible reader. If so, it is expected that the readers of each Ghanaian newspaper are likely to be a heterogeneous collection with different characteristics, especially educationally. Consequently, I argue that one of the ways in which Ghanaian newspapers can construct their readers and ensure their comfort is in the use of language, in addition to political and ideological positioning. It is hence reasonable to hypothesise that newspapers will employ language that their readers are familiar with and can relate to. Such language should at least be readable and comprehensible to the targeted readers. In the context of Ghana, this may be an important way of ensuring the comfort of readers.

Conclusion: A case for the use of simple English in Ghanaian newspapers:

It is important to end this paper with a caveat. The conclusions of this study are based on only a number of lexical and syntactic features and does not include some other text features or all the linguistic elements of text. Indeed, other linguistic features such as cohesion, collocation, coherence, noun phrases, among others, are alternative and complementary items that could serve as variables of inquiry for further research. Additionally, apart from Fosu (2014), few large-scale studies have attempted to discover empirically whether and to what extent (some) readers are challenged by the language of the press or otherwise. Therefore, this study should better be viewed as a contribution toward a holistic understanding of the problem in Ghana, for which reason further studies are required on the topic.

Nevertheless, the caveat does not in any way undermine or negate the findings of this study. Thus, results concerning the complex nature of the newspapers' language provide a reason to advocate the use of simple or plain language in Ghanaian journalism. It is normatively expected that news producers must use language consciously to connect with their audiences and through that demonstrate their knowledge and awareness of their audiences. Conboy (2007: 41) cogently expresses this linguistic dimension of journalistic practice thus:

> Vocabulary of news attempts to appeal to a particular audience in terms of the register used. Register refers to the use of a particular type of language in a particular context. Register can reveal as much about the media institution as it can about its perceived audience because it circulates a version of the language of its targeted social grouping.

This perspective bears testimony to the positive appeal that using a language style that suits audiences has on readership. Drawing on Brian McNair, Conboy (2011: 119-120) observes that a shift in the language style of the elite press from pompous and erudite forms to a more user-friendly style (of the tabloid) illustrated a step "towards a more inclusive, even democratic journalism culture."

The practical usefulness of using simple language in news as indicated above is supported by the fact that journalism textbooks and news writing guidebooks (see for example, Harcup (2009) and Smith (2007)) promote simple writing styles. These studies on journalism devote chapters or sections to linguistic issues concerning lexical and syntactic usage to emphasise the importance and role of these linguistic elements in news comprehension. For example, Smith (2007: 120) provides the following caution:

- Use short words rather than long ones if they do the job just as well – *fire* not *conflagration, dead* not *deceased*. People tell you *what they saw, not inform you what they witnessed.*
- Be active, not passive. Say people *did something*, not *something happened to them*.
- Be user-friendly. Don't say *a sewage regeneration schemes planned* when you mean *families are going to get better drains*.

This means that news writing is a kind of negotiation at both the writing and reading phases of the communication process. However, this study puts the responsibility more at the writing phase. Journalists ought to use simple and clear language to make otherwise complex topics, such as legal and governance issues, readable and easily comprehensible to audiences.

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"I AM SPEAKING FRENCH BUT I AM THINKING IN ENGLISH": AN ANALYSIS OF ERRORS BY STUDENTS OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

Sewoenam Chachu

Abstract

This paper is in the domain of language acquisition and more particularly foreign language learning using the theoretical framework of Error Analysis but also taking into account the concept of the development of Interlanguage during the learning of a foreign language. We consider how learners of French as a Foreign Language in the University of Ghana seem to fall, either consciously or unconsciously, on the English Language during their oral and written productions. For this study, first and second year students of French from the University of Ghana were given a series of images and asked either to describe what they saw and/or to use the images to tell a story or form a dialogue. It was observed that there was evidence of English structures, transpositions, transliterations, etc. in their productions. We consider that these interferences are part of the development of the Interlanguage of the learners and we examine some of the types of errors identified in the production of the students. We conclude that this is a natural process for the learner of a foreign language in a multilingual context and we consider how the teacher of a foreign language class can take advantage of these productions to improve his teaching and also improve learning by his/her students.

Key Words**:** Error analysis, transference, Foreign Language Learning, Interlanguage, English, French

L'article appartient au domaine de l'acquisition linguistique et plus particulièrement l'apprentissage de langue étrangère en se basant sur le cadre théorique de l'Analyse des Erreurs mais prenant aussi en compte le concept du développement de l'Interlangue pendant l'apprentissage d'une langue étrangère. Nous examinons de comment les apprenants du Français Langue Étrangère à l'Université du Ghana semblent avoir recours, soit consciemment soit inconsciemment, à la langue anglaise pendant leur production orale et écrite. Pour cette étude, on a donné aux apprenants en première et deuxième années de licence des images et on leur a demandé de raconteur une histoire ou de former des dialogues à partir des images. On a observé qu'il y'avait des éléments structuraux de l'anglais, des transpositions, des translitérations, etc. dans leurs productions. Nous estimons que ces interférences font partie du développement de l'Interlangue des apprenants et nous examinons quelques uns des types d'erreurs identifiées dans la production des apprenants. Nous concluons que l'Interlangue et les erreurs font partie du processus d'apprentissage d'une langue étrangère et nous considérons comment l'enseignant dans une classe de langue étrangère pourrait profiter de ces productions pour améliorer son enseignement et l'apprentissage de la langue par ces étudiants.

Mots clés: Analyse des Erreurs, transfert linguistique, Apprentissage d'une langue étrangère, Interlangue, Anglais, Français

Introduction

It is generally agreed that a foreign language learner does not enter the language classroom one day and come out the next as a near-native speaker. There is a developmental process which takes place over a long period of time and during this process, the learner may write or speak the language in a manner that is not considered 'authentic' by the native speaker. As time goes on and as the learner progresses in learning the language, the errors gradually reduce until the learner acquires near-native perfection. This transition between starting to learn the language and acquiring native-speaker proficiency is what is termed the Interlanguage. According to Saville-Troike (2006), Interlanguage demonstrates intermediate stages of L2 development. This interlanguage may be viewed either positively or negatively especially as there is usually the question of language transfer from the L1 with positive transfer being considered to aid language learning and negative transfer being considered a bane to acquiring the second language.

Research into learner errors in foreign language learning and into language transfer by foreign language learners has greatly developed since the 1970s with the works of Corder (1967, 1973) and Selinker (1972) who focused on the notion of interlanguage and who pointed out that L2 learners do not produce random mistakes and that their errors seem to be governed by certain rules linked to the underlying grammars of the learners. Their conclusion that language transfer is an integral part of L2 learning has been corroborated in more recent times by Dörnyei & Scott (1997), White (2003), and Saville-Troike (2006). Indeed, past research also indicates that in a given situation, there are differences between the production of a learner and that of a native speaker when they attempt to convey the same meaning in the target language (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997).

The purpose of this paper is to present some errors discovered in the oral and written production of students of some first and second year students of French as a Foreign Language at the University of Ghana, Legon; discuss what these errors reveal about transference and the development of Interlanguage; and find out how the Foreign Language teacher can take into account these errors in the classroom to make learning the foreign language more productive.

However, we will first consider the unique context of studying French in Ghana and the role of the English language and other languages spoken in Ghana.

The status of the French language in Ghana

The Ministry of Education, together with the French Embassy, has been supporting the teaching of French in Ghana since the 1980s (AFC, 2010). The French language has the status of being a Foreign language which is taught as a subject in schools from the Junior High School Level even though some private schools introduce it earlier – sometimes as early as crèche. The Government acknowledges the importance of learning the French language and the Government White Paper of the Education Reform Review Committee (Oct 2004) emphasized the Government's intention to ensure that French became a compulsory subject at the Senior High School (SHS) level and the efforts being made to ensure that the Junior High School (JHS) curriculum prepares students to meet this benchmark. Indeed, the Paper states that:

> It is the decision of government that apart from assuring primary tongue proficiency in English by the end of Primary school, the study of French to working standard --- will also become **compulsory** in second cycle education …. and the Junior High School curriculum should accordingly work up to that policy (GOG, 2004, p. 30).

As of now, in practice, the French language can be chosen as an elective subject in the Senior High School after which the students can further their study of the language either in the university, training college, or some other institution of higher learning. In the wake of the desire for regional integration on an economic, political and social level, and, considering the fact that Ghana is surrounded by francophone countries, successive governments have expressed the desire for promoting and developing the teaching or learning of French in the basic and secondary schools as evidenced from the documents cited above.

The Role of the English Language in Ghana

Ghana, like other African countries, is a multilingual society with a majority of the people speaking at least two languages. Especially in the urban areas, most people may speak a local language which may be considered a Primary Language or L1 as well as a vernacular language which is widely spoken in that area. Due to intermarriages between couples of different ethnic groups, some children, born into mixed linguistic families are either exposed to both the language of the father and mother (if both parents speak each other’s languages), to one of the ‘parental’ languages (if one partner understands the language of the other but it is not reciprocal), or to a third ‘neutral’ language which serves as a point of communication between the two parents. In some cases, especially in urban Ghana, this neutral language tends to be the English language which has a particular status in the Ghanaian society. English serves as a mediator language and children born into these families end up being exposed to English as a first language (even if it is not a mother tongue per se).

In Ghana, the English language has the status of being the official language. It is the language of education, media, the judiciary and the legislature. The language policy in Ghana has been changed from having the first three years of basic education to be carried out in the local languages to using English only right from Primary 1 (Ameyaw-Akumfi, 2002). In the urban areas, children are taught in English sometimes right from crèche. For this reason, some children whose parents speak English to them in the house and who are also exposed to English right from an early age may be considered as having English as their L1 or their Primary Language as they speak this more fluently than the local language of the tribe or ethnic group of their parents. The English language also has the status, in Ghana, of being the main medium of official communication in a multilingual society.

The importance of English in the foreign language classroom in Ghana

Considering the fact that the foreign language classroom is a place of languages in contact and in context, it is not surprising that we often find more than one language at play – the language(s) the learner already speaks and the language that is being acquired. In this paper, we posit that learners of French in the University of Ghana draw a lot from their competence in the English language rather than from the local languages they speak. This may be due to several factors including the fact that they develop a meta-language for English that they may not necessarily have for their local languages. The basic structures of language are typically learnt in English more than in the local languages. Thus, while a pupil or student may be able to easily identify a noun, verb, adjective, etc. in English, he or she may not be able to do the same for his or her indigenous language. Also, some teachers of the French language rely on the English language to teach or explain certain points to the learners. Lastly, most of the available bilingual material for teaching and learning French are in English and French rather than in an indigenous language and French. For example, we have access to English-French dictionaries, manuals in English and French, audio materials in English and French etc. For this reason, the learner is also most likely to draw from English when there is a challenge with expressing himself/herself in French. This notion seems to be supported by our data since the instances of interference and transfers observed are from the English language rather than from the indigenous languages. For these reasons, we will systematically refer to the English language in this paper as the Source Language (SL) and French as the Target Language (TL). Where we refer to or quote an author, L1 should be understood as being the SL and L2 as being the TL.

Interlanguage theory

Developed by Selinker in the 1970s, Interlanguage theory is a branch of applied linguistics, and more particularly, language learning. In a nutshell, the theory posits that imperfect foreign language production by a learner gives rise to an intermediate language system which is a sort of ‘third language’ placed on a gradient between the two ‘true’ languages, i.e. the source language and the target language. According to Ellis (1997), Interlanguage refers to a systematic development of learner language reflecting a mental system of L2 knowledge. It involves the construction of a system of abstract linguistic rules by the learner. Such interlingual transfer is demonstrated in the types of errors committed by learners at either a phonological, morphological, grammatical, lexical or semantic level with the learner transferring such elements from the source language into the target language. When it comes to adult foreign language learning, which is the focus of this study, it has been suggested that an adult foreign language learner encounters competition between the new concepts with which he is confronted and the existing concepts from the L1. This can lead to restructurings in the L1 and in the L2 (Dewaele, 2002; Kecskes & Papp, 2000). These restructurings are considered to be errors. It is important to draw the distinction between a mistake and an error when it comes to foreign language teaching and learning because the two are not interchangeable. The *Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (1992) describes mistakes in writing or speaking as being due to lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness, or some other aspects of performance. These can be self-corrected when the speaker becomes aware of them.

On the other hand, an error implies using a linguistic item in a way that a fluent or native speaker regards as demonstrating faulty or incomplete learning. In other words, an error occurs because the learner does not know what is correct, and therefore there can be no self-correction in this case, whereas there can be self-correction in the case of a mistake. In error analysis, these errors are not regarded as the result of persistent old habits. They should rather be seen as signs that the learner is going through a process of internalization and investigation of the new language's system. Interlingual errors may occur at different levels such as transfer of phonological, morphological, grammatical and lexico-semantic elements of the native language into the target language.

Unfortunately, it has been observed that errors in the foreign language classroom, especially in our socio-cultural context, are frowned upon and sanctioned without taking into consideration the fact that it is a natural process of the language learning process and that the errors made by students could actually guide the teacher to prepare students to adequately cope with their difficulties. According to Dörnyei and Scott (1997, p.202) "L2 speakers spend a lot of time and effort struggling with language difficulties yet L2 courses do not generally prepare students to cope with performance problems". For this reason, it is necessary to study the errors made by students which can serve in (i) identifying strategies used by language learners (ii) identifying the causes of learners' errors (iii) obtaining information on common difficulties in language learning to aid in teaching or in developing teaching materials (Richards et al, 1992). We posit that it is only when a foreign language teacher understands the causes and reasons for the errors made by the learner that he or she can effectively teach the students to avoid such errors or remedy their linguistic inadequacies. It is for this reason that it is necessary to undertake error analysis as it enables researchers to focus on the errors made by a foreign language learner with emphasis on the significance of these errors for teaching and learning.

Learning French in a multilingual African context

Most of the research available in the field considered situations of bilingualism in which a learner is learning a foreign language in a western context in which there is just one source language and one target language. Even in cases where there is mention of multilingualism, the learner is still dealing with languages for which the learner has developed metalanguage. However, when it comes to learning English or French which may either have the status of a second language or a foreign language taught in school, the approach is different. Usually, the language is learnt in an exoglotic context and usually, the learner does not get exposed to the language outside the classroom. As Amuzu (2008) explains, French is not used as a means of communication once the students get outside the classroom. Also, a majority of students learning French in the Ghanaian context have not acquired the linguistic fundamentals, either in the indigenous languages or in English before they begin to learn French.

Amuzu (2008) hypothesizes that difficulties in learning the French language in a multilingual, non-francophone community may be due to three main reasons:

i. Mixing up internalized structures, especially as the students usually turn to their first language or the English language to conceptualize grammatical and lexical structures in French.
ii. The languages already acquired become a source of blockage for the students, mainly because the students have not mastered these languages especially when it comes to the written aspect.
iii. The third hypothesis is that one of the causes of transfer errors discovered in the production of students is due to the differences in structure at the level of phonetic/phonology, morphosyntax and lexis and semantics.

We tend to lean towards his third hypothesis for this paper, based on the observation that the students we observed had a mastery over the English language and also that the transfers we observed all seemed to be based on the structure of the English language.

Methodology

The sample for our study belongs to a class of students who have had their training in the English language and who are very comfortable using this language as a means of communication. Considering the fact that only the best get to enter the University, these students can be considered part of the elite for whom English plays a more important role than any indigenous language they may speak as far as their academic life is concerned.

A total of 100 first and second year students (18 to 20 years on the average) of the French department were recorded with their permission during an oral examination session in which they were asked to describe an image or form a dialogue (in pairs) from the image(s). Their productions were then transcribed. It is these errors that we analyze grouping them into various types of errors and discussing possible ways in which the foreign language teacher can use these errors to his advantage. In this article, we do not use phonetic transcriptions as our focus is more on structural observations. We transcribe the individual words as close to the sound as possible. We then analyze these productions using the classifications of student errors developed by Corder (1973).

He groups the errors produced by learners into four categories namely:

i. *omission* of some required element;
ii. *addition* of some unnecessary or incorrect element;
iii. *selection* of an incorrect element; and
iv. *misordering* of the elements.

Subsequently, Corder (1973) includes the morphology, syntax and lexicon as sub-areas of his four categories of errors linguistically speaking. In our paper, we combine the four categories and sub-categories in our description of the errors observed in the production of our students.

Syntactic interference

This type of error is demonstrated by the learner on the syntactic structure of the Source Language and thus the learner repeats this structure in the Target Language. The two main types observed in the production of the students were syntactic errors denoting the addition or omission of an element.

1. **Deux femmes différentes qui *sont parler* au téléphone (Deux femmes différentes qui parlent au téléphone)**
   'Two different women who *are speaking* on the telephone'

In example 1, the student adds *sont* to *parler* probably because in English the auxiliary *to be* is included in the conjugation of the verb in the present continuous tense. In French, the auxiliary is not used for this tense, which shares the same form as the simple present tense. *Parlent* could be translated *speak* or *are speaking*, meaning that there is no need to introduce the auxiliary in French.

2. **La première femme est contente parce qu'elle *est rit* (La première femme est contente parce qu'elle *Ø* rit)**
   'The first woman is happy because she *is laughing*.'

Example 2 demonstrates addition and misordering. It can also be considered a case of transliteration since the learner seems to have done a word-for-word translation from English. As in the case of example one, the conjugated form ***rit*** means is laughing. There is therefore no need to introduce the conjugated auxiliary ***est*** as this will mean **she is laughing*.

3. **Elle *n'est* pas rit (Elle ne *Ø* rit pas).**
   'She *is not* laughing.'

In example 3, we observe the addition of the auxiliary ***être*** as well as a probable case of transliteration since the verb in French has been placed at the end of the sentence as is the case in English during negation. Normally in French, the verb is surrounded by the negation markers ***ne*** and ***pas***. While in English, there is just one marker *not* and it precedes the verb.

4. **…parce que les femmes *sont* toujours *travaillent* (parce que les femmes Ø travaillent toujours).**
   '… because women *are* always *working*.'

Example 4 presents a double scenario of the introduction of the auxiliary verb ***être*** as well as transliteration. This is because in French, the adverb ***toujours*** will be in final position but in English it precedes the verb. It is observed that the learner places it before the verb just as it occurs in English.

5. **Il y a une réunion *sur* lundi (Il y a une réunion *Ø* lundi)**
   There is a meeting *on* Monday

Example 5 demonstrates the introduction of the French preposition ***sur*** which is the translation of the English preposition '*on*'. Most likely because in English the preposition appears before the day of the week, the learner has transposed this to the French language where there is no preposition before the day of the week. In certain contexts, there will be the definite article ***le/les***.

Most of the errors observed for addition concern the auxiliary verb ***être***. This is because in English, this auxiliary appears in constructions of the present continuous tense even though it does not appear in French. Moreover, the errors that are linked to the prepositions is also because in English 'on' appears before mentioning the day of the week in similar constructions.

ii) Omission

These involve the absence of certain items in the construction that should normally be present. The omission errors observed were basically the absence of prepositions or some verbs in French where these are supposed to be present as can be observed from the sentences in brackets. It is to be noted that in the English equivalents, these lexical items would normally be absent.

6. **On demande *Ø* l’homme le prix (On demande *à* l’homme le prix).**
   ‘They ask the man the price.’

In example six, the student omits the preposition ***à***. In French, the verb ***demander*** is accompanied by the preposition ***à*** if it means to ‘*ask somebody*’. However, in English, there is no preposition.

7. **Il *Ø* besoin des stylos et des cahiers (Il *a* besion des stylos et des cahiers).**
   ‘He needs pens and exercise books.’

There is an omission of the auxiliary verb ***avoir*** in the example 7 since in English it is possible to conjugate need without using an auxiliary. However, there is the less-used equivalent ‘*He has need of*,’ which includes the auxiliary ***avoir,*** and which is syntactically closer to the French equivalent.

8. **Un homme entre *Ø* le bus (Un homme entre *dans* le bus).**
   ‘A man enters the bus.’

In example (8), the learner omits the preposition ***dans*** which usually follows the verb ***entrer***. It is to be observed that in English, the equivalent verb ‘*enter*’ does not need to be followed by the preposition ‘*in/into*.’

The general observation from the examples of the omission errors is that the learners borrowed from the English structure and did not include words that are expected to be present in French, basically because they are not present in English.

Misordering

In the error of misordering, the elements are structurally misarranged. These errors also demonstrate a dependence on the English language since the words are misordered based on the English structure. The following are some examples.

3. **Elle *n’est pas rit* (Elle ne Ø *rit pas*).**
   ‘She *is not laughing*.’

Even though we have already seen example 3 as a case of addition of the auxiliary ***être***, this example also presents an example of misordering. This is because the structural arrangement of the negation particles is patterned after the English structure of negation making it awkward and quite clumsy in French. The verb is in the final position as is the case in English.

4. **…parce que les femmes *sont toujours travaillent***
   (…parce que les femmes *travaillent toujours*).
   '… because the women are always working.'

In example 4, we observed a misordering of the adverb and the verb. In the correct form in French, ***travaillent*** comes before ***toujours*** (**…parce que les femmes *travaillent toujours***). However, in the correct form in English, it is the reverse with '*always*' coming before '*working*' (… because the women are always working).

9. **Elle veut savoir ce *qu'ils ont besoin de* (Elle veut savoir ce *dont ils ont besoin*).**
   'She wants to know what *they need/have need of*.'

Example (9) could be interpreted in three ways: The learner knows the expression ***avoir besoin de*** and therefore kept this form in the sentence without undertaking the necessary transformations using ***dont***. It is also possible that the learner does not know how to use ***dont*** in such a case. Thirdly, the student could be relying on the English expression '*have need of*' and transposing that structure onto the French sentence – (**Elle veut savoir ce *qu'ils ont besoin de***).

10. **Je vais pour un *romantique dîner* (Je vais pour un *dîner romantique*).**
    'I am going for a *romantic dinner*.'

Example 10 is a classic example of the challenges English language learners face with the position of adjectives in French. Whereas in English the adjective always precedes the noun, in French, it can either precede or follow it. And so, '*romantic dinner*' has been transposed into French to produce ***romantique dîner***.

For the cases of misordering, it is once again based on the structure of the English language and is expressed usually by transliteration where the learner does a word-for-word substitution from the English language to the French language.

Morphological errors

These are errors that are linked to the form of a word or expression

iii) Lack of contraction

11. ***À le*** **restaurant (*Au* restaurant).**
    '*At the* restaurant.'

12. ***À le*** **client (*Au* client).**
    '*To the* client.'

We did not observe much by way of morphological errors in the productions of the students. The main challenge observed was the lack of contraction of the preposition + article in French and it is written out just like in English. This could also be due to trying to give a literal translation or just ignorance of the syntactic system of dealing with preposition + article in French.

Lexical errors

Errors based on the lexicon are usually either due to the fact that the learner does not know the right word to use and therefore fills the 'gap' with a word from L1 or uses a similar sounding word in L1 in a way that it is usually not used in L2. Some examples are presented below with the correct French rendition in parenthesis:

False cognates

13. **Je n'ai pas l'intention de *célébrer* mon anniversaire. (Je n'ai pas l'intention de *fêter* mon anniversaire).**
    'I don't intend to *celebrate* my birthday.'

14. **Une vielle femme achète les *végétales.* (Une vielle femme achète les *légumes*).**
    'An old woman is buying the *vegetables.*'

15. **Le professeur *introduit elle* pour la classe. (Le professeur la présente à la classe).**
    'The teacher *introduces her* to the class.'

The examples (13), (14) and (15) demonstrate what is called ***faux amis*** in French (false cognates). The learner uses ***célébrer, végétales*** and ***introduire*** because they sound like '*celebrate*' and '*vegetables*' and '*introduce*' even though they do not mean the same thing in French.

16. **Mais Tom *est* peur (Mais Tom *a* peur).**
    But Tom *is* afraid.

Example (16) is another example of the wrong use of vocabulary based on a direct translation from English to French. The learner uses the verb '*to be*' instead of the verb '*to have*' because that is what is used in English. Indeed, in English, the expression is '*to be afraid*,' while in French, the expression used means *to* '*have fear*.'

Insertion of L1

17. **La maîtresse *l'introduce* à les enfants dans la classe (La maîtresse la *présente* aux enfants dans la classe).**
    'The mistress *introduces* her to the children in the class.'

In the example above, the student inserts the English word '*introduce*' possibly because he or she does not know the alternative in French. Even in the case where there is a similar sounding word in French ***introduire***, it does not mean '*to introduce someone to someone else*.' It is used in contexts where it means '*to make enter*,' for example '*He introduced the key into the door*.' In French, the right word to use for introducing someone is ***présenter***.

18. **Elles *checkent* les heures que les enfants vont de la maison (Elles *vérifient* l'heure que les enfants quittent la maison).**

'They *check* the time that the children leave (from) the house.'

Example 18 seems to be a clear case of lack of vocabulary as the student reproduces an English word to fill a lexical gap.

19. **Son chef est son mari et les *customers*, ses enfants. (Son chef est son mari et les *clients* ses enfants).**
    'Her chief is her husband and her *customers* her children.'

Transliteration

20. **J'espere que tu vas *venir encore* (J'espère que tu vas *revenir* / J'espère que tu r*eviendras*).**
    'I hope that you will *come again*.'

21. **Et *parce que de* ce problème... (Et *à cause de* ce problème…).**
    'And *because of* this problem...'

(20) and (21) demonstrate another structural error where a direct translation seems to be made on a word-for-word basis from English to French. However, unlike the case of simple misordering, these errors are not only grammatical but also lexical as some words are used in the wrong context like ***parce que*** in 21. In such situations, the teacher needs to explain the different contexts in which words from similar semantic fields can be used. For example, ***à cause de/parce que***. Learners may be taught for example that ***parce que*** cannot be followed by de while ***à cause de*** is a fixed expression. Secondly, in the example of (20), the teacher can explain how the French express doing something again by affixation (***re + venir = revenir***) while the English choose to use '*again*.'

We observe that with the errors that have to do with the insertion of the L1, the learner fills a lexical gap with a word from English to make their sentence complete. These words are not introduced by a speaker who is bilingually competent but by a learner who clearly lacks vocabulary in the target language and is introducing vocabulary from the Source Language as a stop-gap measure. They are actually errors that are due to lack of vocabulary/expressions and in this case, the learner falls, once again, on the English language to fill in the gap. What is noteworthy is that in all the scripts that we analyzed, we did not find evidence of the learners using a local language where they had a gap. All the stop-gap vocabulary was from the English language.

The relevance of the errors and Perspectives for teaching

For the language teacher, especially one who speaks the source language of the learners, the errors described above are very instructive. They give some insight into the cognitive processes underlying the learning process and in most cases the teacher, if he speaks the same source language, will perfectly understand what the learner wants to communicate and this in spite of the errors.

What can the language teacher and the developer of language course content derive from these errors? It is obvious that students do not commit these errors because they want to. Seeing that these errors seem to occur on a large scale and are usually of the types discussed above, it is suggested that provision is made for such errors in developing course content and also in course delivery. Language teachers should take time out to sensitize their learners to these possible errors and provide strategies for helping learners to cope with potentially difficult-to-master elements that are due mainly to L1 interference.

With the error of addition, we infer from the production of the learners that they have copied the structure from the English language, where the verb “to be” is used as an auxiliary in the present continuous tense. It is therefore quite difficult for the learner to imagine, without being taught, that this is not the case in the French language. It is important to note that in the French language, the same sentence structure can either have a habitual meaning or a present continuous interpretation without the use of an auxiliary verb.

Therefore, an example such as:

22.	a.	Pro		V
		Je	**Ø**	**mange**

Can mean

b.	Pro	V	
	‘I	eat’	

Or

c.	Pro	Aux	V

‘I am eating.’

The learner, who is not aware of this difference and who usually thinks of what he or she wants to say in English before translating into French, will therefore borrow the *Pro Aux V* structure from the English language to construct his or her sentences in French. In the second example of addition, we see that the learner adds a preposition like in English although no preposition occurs in French.

We propose that the teacher who observes such errors (wrongful addition of an auxiliary) should be able to undertake a contrastive analysis with the students to enable them understand the differences in conjugation in the present tense and the present continuous tense in English and the equivalent expressions in French. The learners should be able to undertake lots of structural exercises in French to enable them to grasp the fact that the equivalent of the present continuous tense in English is expressed without an auxiliary in French.

When it comes to lexical errors, especially errors with false cognates, the teacher can produce a list of words in English that sound like words in French and assign the students in groups or as individuals to go and search for the differences in meaning between the English and French equivalents. This will help the students also take ownership of their learning process and is likely to have a longer-lasting impact than just repeatedly marking them wrong without making any effort to remedy the situation.

A suggestion for dealing with the insertion of the L1 by the learner is to give the students more exercises in translation or to involve them in conscious vocabulary building where students are taught to make use of dictionaries (both hard and soft copies), expression and vocabulary books, etc. to build a solid vocabulary base in various thematic areas for example the home, shopping, cooking, introducing oneself, etc.

The teacher can remedy morphological error of lack of contraction (e.***g. à le restaurant*** instead of ***au restaurant***) not just by having a grammar lesson to explain the contraction process but also by providing communication scenarios or exercises in which the learners will have to use these forms to such an extent that the learners get used to these forms and assimilate them till it becomes an unconscious gesture.

When it comes to errors of omission, the French language teacher has to help the students learn expressions in the language instead of individual words so that the learner understands that certain words go together even if that is not the case in the English language. For example, in the case of (6), the learner has to learn that ***demander*** is usually followed by the preposition ***à***, thus giving us the expression ***demander à quelqu’un*** as opposed to ‘*ask* ***Ø*** *somebody*.’ The teacher can also teach the students, in the case of the error in (7), that in French the expression ***avoir besoin de*** is more or less equivalent to the English '*have need of*' since in French you cannot just '*need something*' but you '*have need of something*.'

Lastly, the teacher needs to explain to the learner that in an example like (8), *entrer*, as a verb movement is always followed by the directional preposition *dans*. This will enable him explain to the students. It is important for the teacher to explain not just grammatical rules but the concepts behind the rules to make learning easier for the learners, especially where there is a conflict with the concept from the source language.

When tackling the error of misordering, especially for a foreign language teacher who speaks the same Source Language as the learners, the teacher can undertake a contrastive analysis with the students and also expose them to the language in use by discussing the perceived differences in the structure of French and English such as the position of adjectives, etc.

Conclusion

What do these findings mean for the foreign language teacher? Firstly, we will say that it calls for another look at student errors knowing that they are not always due to negligence on the part of the student. Many times, these so-called errors actually point to creativity on the part of the learner – be it morphological, syntactic, or even discursive. They actually point to the learner making an effort to manage language problems and difficulties which Dörnyei and Scott (1997) describe as a salient part in L2 communication. It is also important for a teacher to make an effort to incorporate these communication strategies into their teaching and learning objectives. These findings are also a useful tool for devising or designing more adequate methodologies for the classroom and new and improved teaching materials.

An understanding of these errors, based on the Source Language, can also help the teacher offer remedial teaching, explaining the source of these errors so that students are aware of them and pay particular attention to them. Indeed, interference and transfers are a normal part of second or foreign language learning. It does not need to be a source of frustration for the teacher but rather a window through which the teacher can observe the gaps that need to be filled. Learners will master the target language as they gradually internalize the syntactic structures of the target language and learn to think in that language. If such errors are well handled, they can actually lead to rapid progress by the learners as they master the intricacies of the target language and learn to distinguish the differences and/or similarities between the Source language and the Target Language.

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A PRAGMA-STYLO-SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF PROVERBS 26, VERSES 4 AND 5

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Abstract

Although, the majority view of scholars supports the position that the Proverbs of Solomon are influenced by the Instructions of Amenemope of ancient Egypt, the book of Proverbs is believed by Christians to be one of the poetic books of the Bible known for words of wisdom. The first twelve verses of chapter twenty-six are devoted to the fool. With the possibility of being drawn into conversation with the fool, verses four and five become instructive to the wise. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that a pragma-stylo-semantic interpretation of these verses cancels out the overt contradiction. The semantic and pragmatic presuppositions, as well as the stylistic features of the verses are unravelled to arrive at the underlying connections that unify their interpretations. Also, time-lapse or gap is considered fundamental and analysed using the concept of "appropriateness" in terms of possible compliance with the instructions in the two verses by a single agent. The paper proposes a schematic diagram supportive of the concept of "appropriateness". The various levels of linguistic, situational, psychological, sociological and cosmological contexts of the text have been examined with the illocutionary forces of the text investigated. These are done with the purpose of arriving at a "global" or "total" meaning. At the end, the analysis indicates a non-contradictory, context-determined phenomenon.

Key words: Pragmatics, Stylistics, Semantics, The book of Proverbs, Amenemope, Contexts

Introduction

Proverbs, Chapter Twenty-Six:
V.4: Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like him.
V.5: Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.
-King James Authorised Version

It is a general assumption that verses four and five of proverbs twenty-six, are overtly contradictory. Moreover, the verses are structured sequentially in that chapter with the negative verse (verse 4) preceding the affirmative one (verse 5). Our aim in this paper is to explicate the various contexts through which the verses can be interpreted with the purpose of resolving the assumed contradiction from the pragmatic, semantic and stylistic viewpoints. Bible scholars and users need not be in a dilemma on what meaning to assign, while tackling the verses in totality. The verses in their order represent two counsels handed down by the same author with "four" negating "five" directly. House and Durham (1992) refer to the two verses as an example of a "more confusing combination of oppositions" when taken superficially.

Our text, though an extraction from chapter 26, is significant because the counsels thereby are of relevance to human beings at large, regardless of religion, culture, colour and status. Aside from personal moral enrichment to be gained from a study of this type, more intellectual insights will accrue, thus enhancing the frontiers of pragmatic, semantic and stylistic theories.

Almost at a glance, the semantic inadequacy posed by an attempt at resolving the contradiction in those verses becomes obvious. Yet, whenever facts about meaning are to be described, the tendency is to reach for semantics. The scope of structural semantics had set a ceiling for it. For instance, semantic theories such as meaning postulates and componential analysis are word-based (Adegbija 1985), implying a sentence-level interpretation, which though relevant to this study, proves to be grossly inadequate for the full interpretation of the text.

To capture the totality of the dimensions of meaning that will form our focus in this work, pragmatics, which according to Levin (1997: 48), “is an aspect to which are reckoned all those mechanisms that relate the language to its context of use, its audience, and the non-linguistic setting”, is crucial. Also of importance to the study is stylistics, which aims at analysing language habits with the purpose of identifying those features which are restricted to certain individuals' use of language in certain kind of contexts. Furthermore, the “appropriateness” concept, which relates the suitability of an individual or group of persons to complying with instructions, pieces of advice and warnings in certain contexts, is significant; and the speech acts classification theory, that taxonomises the language functions in a given speech or a text, is essential (Allan 1986; Adegbija 1988; Van Djik 1992; Ajileye and Ajileye 1997; Lawal 2012; Adeniji and Osunbade 2014).

Linguistics, Pragmatics, Stylistics and the Bible

The Bible is the Christian Holy Book containing 66 sacred Books with 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. The Bible may be used for both spiritual and literary purposes. As the written text for divine instructions– warnings, admonitions, commands, etc., it is rendered in chapters and verses. As a sacred literature, it is written in human language with impetus generated for its linguistic and literary studies (Adeyanju 1998). The Bible, because of its spiritual, moral and socio-cultural relevance, has undergone translations into more languages than any other known sacred book, with the English translation having several versions. The Authorised King James Version is the choice for this research because it is referred to as the most faithful to the original Greek or Aramaic text (Babatunde 1988). The Bible can be examined linguistically, e.g., on the levels of phonology, morphology, semantics and syntax, while its literary and sociolinguistic values make it a fertile ground for studies in pragmatics, stylistics and discourse analysis. However, only the pragmatic, semantic and stylistic features of the text are of relevance to this study.

Pragmatics

Leech and Thomas (1990) describe linguistic pragmatics by differentiating it from semantics, and define pragmatics as accounting for the meaning which utterances have for their users and interpreters. Semantics, according to them, has to do with meaning as a dyadic relation – the relation between a form and its meaning, whereas pragmatics has to do with meaning as a triadic relation – the relation that holds among the form, meaning and context. In his own opinion, Van Dijk (1992) states pointedly that the actual context is defined by the period of time and the place where the common activities of speaker and hearer are realised, and which satisfy the properties of 'here' and 'now' logically, physically and cognitively. Pragmaticians agree that pragmatic study is context - provoked. Contextual exploration is therefore successful if the contextual factors of any utterance or text are well explicated.

Linguists in pragmatics have postulated theories aimed at accounting for all possible interpretations of meanings in context. Concepts such as speech acts, presupposition, implicature, mutual contextual belief (MCBs), co-operative principle (CP), face maintenance (FM), etc., emerged to explore some possible constraints in allocating meanings to utterances.

Early speech act theories were first traced to philosophers of language (e.g. J.L. Austin, I.R. Searle and H.P. Grice) who were non-linguists, but whose works have been sources of inspiration to linguists. According to Austin (1962), an utterance could constitute three kinds of act. The first act – locutionary act or locution – is the act of making some utterances, which may be referred to as a linguistic act. The second act – illocutionary act – is the act performed by virtue of the locution, such as urging, requesting, ordering, greetings, etc. The last act identified by Austin, called perlocutionary act, is the effect that a particular utterance has on the speaker or listener. He further opines that the middle ground act – illocutionary – can be accomplished through a performative sentence. He classifies illocutionary acts into five classes, thus: Verdictives, Exercitives, Commissives, Behabitives and Expositives. Searle (1974) also comes up with five groupings in his bid to correct what he refers to as overlapping in Austin's classifications. His own classes are Assertives, Directives, Commissives, Expressives and Declaratives. He postulates that two rules, regulative and constitutive, govern conversation in the use of a language.

Grice's (1975) major contribution to speech acts is the popular cooperative principle (CP) theory which refers to unconscious interactional agreement that subsists during conversations. He assumes that four maxims are constituted during conversation. They are the maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner. He also proposes the concept of implicature which centres on context, the purview of pragmatics. This concept distinguishes what is implied from what is overt. For instance, “She finished the food but was still hungry” implies that she was not expected to be hungry after finishing the food.

In the 1980s, the study of presupposition assumed a popular dimension. This concept concerns the factors, whose truth a speaker assumes as part of the background issues germane to the conversation. For example, “I know that, University of Ilorin has a crop of young professors” presupposes that University of Ilorin as an institution exists.

The concept of mutual contextual beliefs (MCBs) postulated by Bach and Harnish (1979), makes the speaker's intention and listener's inference its main focus. For a speech act to be performed, the inference drawn from the speaker's intention is paramount. In other words, certain words are put together by the listener before he/she can understand the speaker's intention (Lawal, Ajayi and Raji 1997).

Adegbija (1982) also proposes the notion of pragmasociolinguistics in analysing the context of an utterance. He argues that the global context of an utterance is constituted by both pragmatic and sociolinguistic contexts. Adegbija postulates that pragmasociolinguistic competence ca1ls for the historical, personal, environmental, sociocultural, and linguistic features of all factors that relate to the contexts in which a particular conversation occurred. While decoding the meaning of the utterance, "My friend, where is Anini?" uttered by a former Nigerian President, General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, to his then Inspector General of Police, Adegbija describes three layers of meaning - primary, secondary and tertiary. At the primary level, according to him, meaning is assigned to linguistic elements through the device of semantic presupposition. At the secondary layer, meaning, occasioned by metaphors, insinuations, idioms, to mention a few, yield indirect speech acts. The third level, referred to as the master speech act, is where a total or global meaning is postulated using pragmatic presupposition. At the level of the indirect speech act, interpretation of meaning goes beyond assigning meaning to linguistic elements alone. For example, *He beats a hell out of him* is an utterance whose interpretation can be sought at the higher level of decoding the meaning of the metaphor "hell" and relating it to "out of him" to yield the meaning *He beats him mercilessly.* Adegbija further submits that, at the tertiary level, interpretation is based on the totality of the contextually relevant pragmatic elements including the speaker, hearer and his/her relationship to speaker, the history and context of the utterance, the socio-cultural and political context of the society and other assumptions of the utterance (Adegbija 1982, 1985, 1988).

Furthermore, Lawal (2012) introduces the notions of “contexts” and “competences” while stressing the importance of speech acts in a pragmatic approach of stylistic analysis. According to him, a description of the background structure of contexts and competencies which language users reactivate to interpret speech acts along with presupposition and implicature, is core in pragmatic analysis. His model has four major aspects or columns, vertically represented as contexts, competencies, background information and speech acts. The first two columns, which are symmetrically related, have behind them the one-layer surface structure, (Linguistic), and the five-layer background structure (Situational, Psychological, Social, Sociological and Cosmological) contexts and competencies. According to the model, the background information of an utterance (the third aspect, or column in the diagram) determines the presuppositions, implicature and the MCBs through which inferences are drawn by the listeners to produce speech acts. The mappings of the model are presented on the next page:

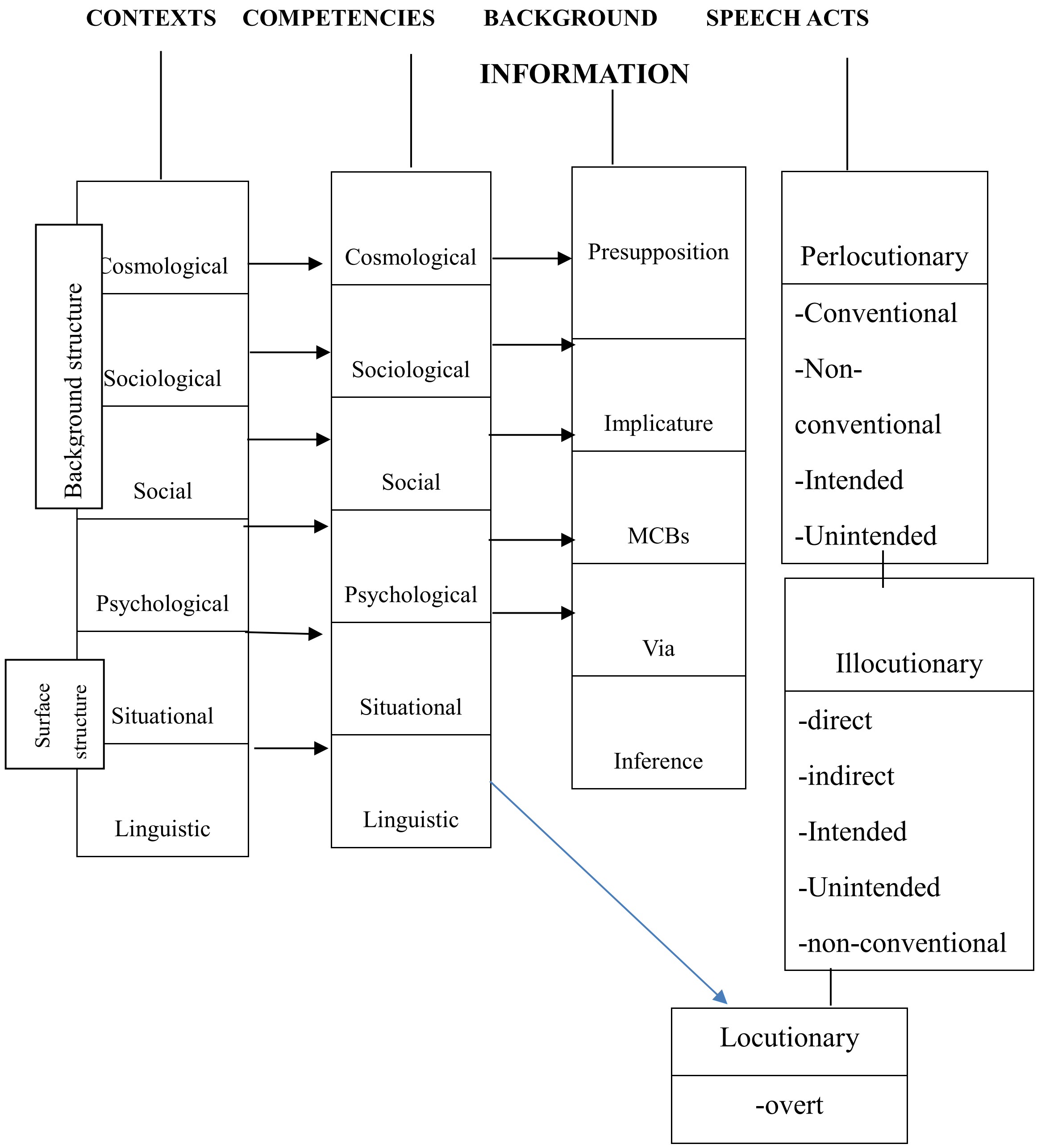

Fig 1: Lawal's Aspect of a Pragmatic Theory

From the above model, two underlying structures – "Surface Structure" and "Background Structure" which are made of six levels are identified. The first level (linguistic), on the first hand, constitute the surface structure, under whose domain we have the phonological, lexical, semantic and syntactic features, as the basic linguistic level at which utterances are produced and perceived. On the other hand, the background structure consists of five layers which are situational, psychological, social, sociological and cosmological. All the levels (six of them) further bifurcate into "contexts" and "competences" symmetrically. In other words, each layer under "contexts" (the first column) corresponds to that of "competencies" (the second column).

The level after the linguistic layer, the situational context and competence, refers to the topic of discourse and the factors of the physical events including, concrete objects, persons and location. In this model, the psychological context and competence, the third layer, is described as the background of the mood, attitudes, and personal beliefs of the language user. The fourth level, "social", indicates the interpersonal relations among interlocutors. The next level, "sociological", relates to the socio-cultural, and historical settings that characterise the use of an utterance, while the sixth and the highest level, "cosmological", depicts the user's world-view, implying references to the world or aspects of it, and to certain universally established facts.

As earlier said, the background information (the third column), according to this theory, involves the imports of presupposition, implicature, politeness formula, MCBs and CP, which determine the inference that a listener can draw from the speaker's intention. In addition, the model postulates that the contexts, competencies and the background information constrain the functions that utterances (or texts when written) perform. Here, the fourth aspect or the fourth column "speech acts", constitutes three layers of functions performed by speeches - locution, illocution and perlocution.

On the classification of illocutions, Allan (1986), submits that every utterance possesses both "Direct" and "Indirect" speech acts simultaneously. According to her, the sentence type identified in the utterance represents the "Direct" speech act, while the functions performed by the utterance such as, greetings, promising, informing and so on, are the "Indirect" speech acts. For instance, the statement *I'm hungry* which is a Direct act of "stating" can also perform an Indirect act of requesting the food vendor to serve the speaker. Allan's speech act approach is important to this study because the model is very useful in describing a short text such as the datum of this paper.

Van Dijk (1992), in his own postulation, sees context as a sequence of world-states which do not remain identical in time but change. He describes context as a course of events which has initial state, intermediary state and a final state. Referring to actual context as a sub-set of possible contexts, Van Dijk opines that the actual context is defined by the period of time and the place where the common activities of speaker and hearer are realised, and which satisfy the properties of "here" and "now" logically, physically and cognitively. In relation to change, he postulates the concept of *appropriateness* and stresses that pragmatics must formulate the conditions determining when certain realisations are appropriate and when they are not. According to him, the actual context subsists within the act of communication and yields to the condition of appropriateness, while possible contexts are realisable possibilities within the act of language.

Van Dijk's notion of appropriateness in contextual analysis is also crucial to this study because the distinction between actual and possible contexts will enhance and unify the interpretations of several utterances that may appear contradictory. For instance, an utterance which is appropriate in context A may be irrelevant in context B. Yet, contexts A and B are possible contexts in the act of language. This brings us to the intrinsic elasticity or multiplicity in the interpretation of utterance meaning.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the goal of reconciling the overtly contradictory verses cannot be achieved through a single approach, but by a combination of several approaches. Hence, the stylistic approach of Halliday (1966); the speech acts classification of Allan (1986); the notions of semantic and pragmatic presuppositions of Adegbija (1988); the appropriateness concept of Van Dijk (1992); and the "Aspects of a Pragmatic Theory" of Lawal (2012), will all be deployed as found appropriate.

Textual Analysis

Proverbs 26: 4-5 (Authorised King James Version)

Verse 4a. Answer not a fool according to his folly,
b. lest thou also be like him
Verse 5a. Answer a fool according to his folly,
b. lest he be wise in his own conceit.

The Linguistic Contexts of the Text

The linguistic context here refers to the lexical, semantic and grammatical features of the text. The author relies on the discretion of the readers to discern the two different ways of heeding the advice. The pattern of language employed in the text reflects a type of diction structured to move the reader from an advisory imperative structure of restraint to that of persuasion without blotting out the goals of communication.

At the grammatical level, our text is made up of two sentences with each performing an imperative function. The Negation phrase of the first part of Verse 4, “Answer not” reflects a Middle English (ME) usage. The Current English (CE) version has it as “Do not answer”. Verse 4 has undergone a syntactic process of “NOT” insertion, typical of the kind allowed in poetry.

At this juncture, some semantic presuppositions can be postulated for the text. According to Strawson in Adegbija (1988: 28), semantic presupposition refers to the logical relations that hold between sentences. For our text, the following interpretations are possible postulations for verse 4:

i. A fool exists
ii. A fool will talk foolishly
iii. The statement of a fool, may draw a foolish response.
iv. If the hearer responded accordingly by giving a foolish response, he/she will be like the fool.
v. Therefore, no response should be given to the fool.
vi. For Verse 5, i-iii interpretations above hold. The following is however peculiar to V5.
vii. You must respond accordingly
viii. If you don't, the fool will think he/she is wise.
ix. Your response will then dispel the fool's delusion.

The postulations above focus on Adegbija's (1988: 28) primary or semantic layer of meaning "concerning the meaning being borne by, or assigned to linguistic elements in intra-linguistic rather than extra-linguistic manner".

Pragmatic Presupposition of the Text

As earlier stated, a number of pragmatic presuppositions will be postulated in analysing our text using the approach of Adegbija (1988: 58-59). Referring to the works of Stalnaker (1974), and Lakoff (1990), respectively, Adegbija describes pragmatic presupposition as “assumptions and beliefs about the context", or "shared beliefs of background information of an utterance", or "the proposition whose truth a speaker takes for granted as part of the background of the conversation” (58). In this study, both immediate linguistic and extra-linguistic contexts, the socio-cultural milieu and the entire pragmatic background of the contexts of the utterance, are of importance. All these are deployed to reconcile verse 4 with verse 5 as follows:

(1) Solomon in Verse 4a instructs his son not to “answer a fool according to his folly" whereas, he, in Verse 5a instructs his son to “answer a fool according to his folly”.

(2) Verse 4b expresses the reason why Solomon's son should not reply to a fool according to his folly: "lest thou also be like him". In 5b, Solomon states the reason for replying to a fool according to his folly: "lest he be wise in his own conceit".

(3) Though 4a and 5a appear contradictory, 4b and 5b respectively give separate reasons for the apparent contradiction.

(4) It is semantically and pragmatically logical that 4b and 5b imply different contexts of compliance.

(5) The pragmatic competence or knowledge of the participants, as well as the understanding of the appropriateness context of the text enable the participants to discern between the time Solomon's son may look like a fool if he replies a fool, and when he should reply to a fool, so that the fool would not be wise in his/her own eyes.

(6) The text which primarily involves Solomon and his son, now stretches from Solomon, or God (when taken as God's message from Solomon) to all Bible users or believers.

(7) With different contexts established for complying with Verses 4 and 5, respectively, as in (4) above, the time-setting for heeding verse 4 is different from that of 5. It is then possible for Solomon’s son, or affected participants to comply with both instructions without any confusion or conflict.

(8) The appropriateness of the responses (in either replying to a fool or not) depends on the linguistic, extra linguistic and pragmatic competence of Solomon's son or Bible believers.

(9) The addressee(s) discretions are highly challenged for a 'deep understanding of "a fool" in Bible contexts and proper discernment and appropriation of the two different reasons, i.e. verses 4b and 5b, respectively.

(10) The summary of the whole postulations is supportive of the maxim of relevance, that "there is a time for everything under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 3:3). This includes a time to answer a fool and a time not to answer him.

The Speech Act Structure of the Text

A pragmatic exploration of an utterance, or text when written, must attempt a speech act analysis of the discourse (Van Dijk 1992; Lawal 2012; Adeniji and Osunbade 2014). As earlier said, utterances perform three acts - locution, illocution and perlocution. A locutionary act performed in order to communicate carries along with it some non-linguistic acts like warning, greetings, advising, informing, etc. These acts in turn produce effects on both the speaker and listener known as perlocutionary effects. The text has sequences of two sentences, thus:

V4-	**Clause a.**	**Answer not a fool according to his folly,**
	Clause b.	**lest thou also be like him**
V5-	**Clause a.**	**Answer a fool according to his folly,**
	Clause b.	**lest he be wise in his conceit.**

Each of the verses or sentences has two parts – (a) and (b), "lest", the inter-clausal discourse connector, conjoins both parts in each verse. As earlier said, this work adopts the speech act framework of Allan (1986), who classifies illocutions into "Direct" and "Indirect" speech acts. She describes a "Direct" function as the sentence form of an utterance or text, and the "Indirect" act as the illocutions expressing the speaker's intentions. In other words, the "Indirect" speech act is the illocutions like greeting, advising, informing etc., performed through the sentence types used in the expression. The sentence forms (Direct Act) are mainly declarative (statement), interrogative and imperative. Illocutionary acts of this text can be classified into "Direct" and "Indirect" acts. Each verse or sentence has two parts or clauses with each part performing a different act. Clauses 4a and 5a, respectively, perform similar "Direct" acts (sentence form) of "imperative" and similar "Indirect" acts of "advisory" functions. Clauses 4b and 5b) perform "Direct" and "Indirect" acts different from those of 4a and 5a. While 4b and 5b perform the "Direct" act of "declarative", respectively, they, at the same time perform the "Indirect" act of "warning" individually,

A total of eight instances of speech act are found in the text:

4a - 1 Direct (Imperative) + 1 Indirect (Advisory)	=	2
4b - 1 Direct (Declarative) + 1 Indirect (Warning)	=	2
5a - 1 Direct (Imperative) + I Indirect (Advisory)	=	2
5b - 1 Direct (Declarative) + 1 Indirect (Warning)	=	2
Total	=	8

The speech acts or illocutions above are characterised by the "Direct" acts of Imperative and Declarative functions, as well as the “Indirect” illocutions of Advisory and Warning acts. Hence, Solomon employed the Direct declarative act to accomplish the "Indirect" illocutions of advising and warning his son, and subsequently Bible believers. In other words, Solomon advised and warned his son in imperative statements of two sequences with each sequence representing two different contexts of possible compliance.

Stylistic Features of the Text

In stylistics, the error of classics in linguistics lingers as it was studied during its early period from the prescriptive point of view. A shift towards descriptive stylistics emerged perhaps due to the influence the similar shift from prescriptive to descriptive linguistics had on it (Ducrot and Todorov 1972). Widowson (1975) views stylistics as the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation. Levin (1964) sees it as the study of the elements of semantics, phonetics, phonology and syntax that a writer uses in the production of his text. Literary stylisticians have restricted stylistics to the study of linguistic elements or variables or nuances and their degree of occurrences in literary works of art. This, according to Olajide (l997), reflects in literary texts where the writer can afford the use of flowery and seductive language to appeal to his reader's imagination. While stressing that the significance of literary texts as displaying the greatest stylistic challenges should not be missed out, Lawal (2012: 26) sees stylistics "as a branch of linguistics deriving largely from a sociolinguistic interest in the treatment of variables in entire texts, viewed as communicative events. He argues further that “language variation and the distinctiveness of features within and across texts, as occasioned by situational factors are major purview of stylistics, as an emergent field in the study of language" (Lawal 1997: 26).

In social encounters, language users deploy language to express their thoughts, beliefs, habits, experiences, moods, etc. meaningfully in diverse styles. These expressions underline the language habits allocated or assigned to certain individuals. Halliday (1966) supports the view of Widowson (1975), but adds that stylistics studies both literary and non-literary texts from a linguistic point of view. The view of Halliday (1966) is relevant to this study because stylistics can be constructed in literature, as well as in other discourses across disciplines such as religion, law, journalism, medicine, etc.

The stylistic aspect of our study involves the linguistic and literary styles the author employed to couch the text. Style is conceived here as some or all of the language variations that our datum reflects. Doubtlessly, our datum contains variations which are crucial to its holistic analysis. For instance, the paradigmatic sequencing style of our text is a clear deviation from the norm, in that, V4 contains a negative structure followed by an affirmative type in V5. Ordinarily, it should be the other way around, because affirmative structures should generate negative forms through a process known in syntax as NEGATIVE insertion. However, stylistics has an answer to this because the author should have chosen to deviate using a paradigm of an alternative variant that suits his purpose.

The theme of our text is situated within the background of Solomon's desire to teach his sons, even as his father, David, taught him life ethics or morals which later became generalised words of wisdom that touch on finance, marriage, family, religion, education, politics, vocation, etc. (House and Durham 1992). Furthermore, figures of classical rhetoric like scheme of balance, repetition and alliteration are employed by the author to reflect his flow of thoughts. A scheme is an artful deviation from the ordinary arrangement of words (Adeyanju 1998).

In chapter 26,

4a. Answer not a fool according to his folly, and

5a. Answer a fool according to his folly

reflect a scheme of balance in oppositeness. Both parts should have passed for an absolute scheme of repetition but for "not" which is in 4a. The second parts: "lest thou also be like him" and "lest he be wise in his conceit" are schemes of parallelism. The scheme of alliteration, e.g. "f’ of "fool", repeated in "f" of "folly" is used in both sentences. Inter-sentential repetition is also common to both verses e.g. "Answer" is used at the beginning of each verse and "according to his folly" is repeated in both sentences, "lest" is repeated at the beginning of "b" part of each verse. The repetitions in our text, perhaps, occur for the sake of emphasis. It can be safely said that the author deployed literary and linguistic devices to vividly and emphatically convey his messages without missing out the aesthetics associated with great philosophers and orators.

The Appropriateness/Possible Contexts of the Text

The need for us to bring to the fore the underlying connections between the two verses are essential. The theory of appropriateness or context change of Van Dijk (1992), facilitates the understanding of sentence sequence that appears contradictory. The change in the contexts of realisation between verses 4 and 5 is a factor of appropriateness. Each of verses 4 and 5 represents different contexts of compliance. In other words, verse 4 is realised independently of verse 5 and vice versa. But both of them relate within appropriate or possible contexts in the act of language. We can assume that when it may be appropriate to heed V4, heeding V5 will be inappropriate.

However, we need to explore the possibilities of the simultaneous realisations of both verses, where it is taken for granted that Solomon's hearers may be many in different locations, the two verses can be arbitrarily and concurrently complied with. The possibility of each realisation subsists within several possibilities in different places at the same time. In other words, the realisation of each context is a factor of appropriateness on the bases of time and place.

We can propose a schematic diagram to illustrate this further:

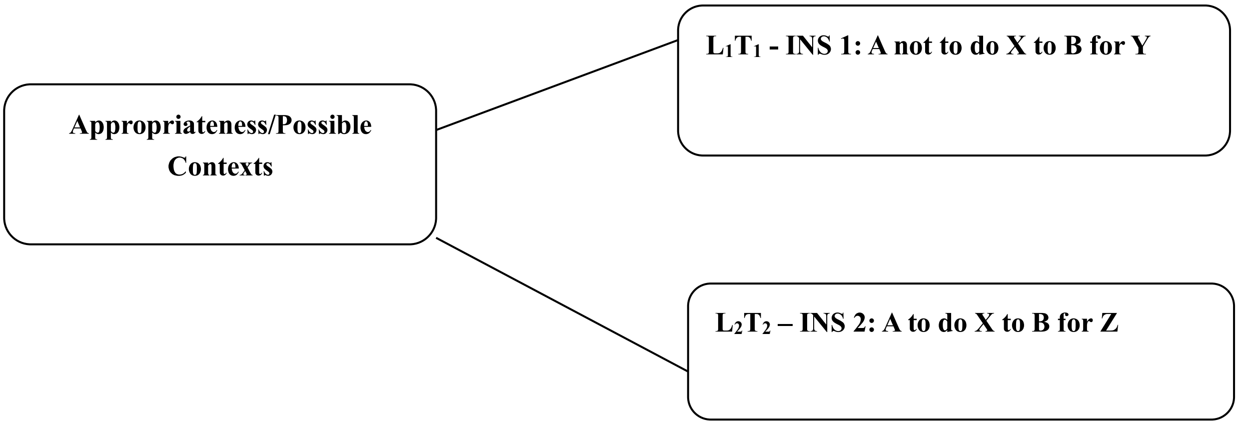

Figure 2: Friday-Otun's (2016) Model, Showing Appropriate and Possible Contexts of Heeding Contradictory Instructions.

The diagram above shows two horizontal or parallel boxes linked to another horizontal box of "Appropriateness/Possible Contexts". Each horizontal box signifies each verse of our text. At $\mathbf{L_1T_1}$ (Location I, Time I) INS 1 (Instruction one: V4) is realisable. At $\mathbf{L_2T_2}$ (Location 2, Time 2), INS 2 (Instruction 2: V5) is complied with. The "Appropriateness" is the link between the two boxes − the pragmatic force that unifies the two verses. INS I enjoins A (Subject Agent) not to do X (answer) B (object agent - a fool) because of Z (lest he be wise in his own conceit).

The object agent (B) can be the same or different person in both cases. The horizontal boxes are parallel because Vs 4 and 5 cannot at the same time be complied with by a single agent at the same time. However, with the appropriateness or possible contexts linking them, certain variables are possible:

(1) When INS 1 and 2 are complied with simultaneously, the complying agents and locations will be two or more.

Or, Where complying agents and locations are more than one, INS 1 and 2 can be complied with, simultaneously:

(2) Where INS 1 and INS 2 are complied with by a single agent, times or periods of compliance will differ.

Or, When times or periods of compliance to INS 1 and 2 differ, an agent can comply with both instructions without conflict.

(3) Compliance, whether by a single or multiple agents, at the same or different times and locations, depends on the appropriateness or possible times, locations and agents. At this point, the resolution or reconciliation of the two verses is underscored.

Contexts and Competencies of the Participants

There is the need to discuss the authorship of the book of Proverbs, particularly, that of our text, before describing the contexts and competencies of the participants. The majority position of scholars contends that Proverbs are lifted from Kemetic (Egyptian) wisdom texts, and then attributed to king Solomon. However, Christians believe that the book of Proverbs is one of the poetic books of the Bible written by king Solomon and known for words of wisdom (Babatunde 1988; Adeyanju 1998; Zavada 2016). According to Pang (2014), the authorship of the book has come under academic and theological contentions by many scholars since the discovery of the Instruction of Amenemope in ancient Egypt about eighty years ago. The Instruction of Amenemope, is a literary work composed in Ancient Egypt, containing thirty chapters of advice for successful living. It was written by the scribe Amenemope, as a legacy to his son, reflecting on inner qualities, attitudes and behaviours required for a successful life in the face of ever mounting complex political, social and economic conditions (Wikipedia, 2016). Budge (1922) publishes an excerpt of the script, in a French academic work, observing that the Amenemope resembles and influences the biblical wisdom books, while adducing specific parallels between Amenemope and some texts in Proverbs, Psalms and Deuteronomy.

Capitalising on the parallels between Amenemope and Bible wisdom texts, scholars such as Erman (1924), Wilson (1951), Emerton (2001), Shupak (2005), as well as many studies of the Bible and commentaries share the view of Budge (1922) that the Amenemope collections not only resemble, but influence the biblical wisdom texts. They hinge their claims on the dating of Amenemope which is generally taken to be during Ramesside period, which predated the Solomonic period.

However, Ruffle (1995), Whybray (1995) and Pang (2014) doubt the relationship between Amenemope and Proverbs. For instance, Ruffle (1975) claims that the connection so casually assumed between the parallel texts are superficial, and mere coincidences that cannot survive detailed examination, while Whybray (1995) argues that only a few of the topics in the Egyptian texts can be found in Proverbs 22: 17-24:22, with their sequences differing. Furthermore, Pang (2014) compares the theologies of Proverbs 22:17 – 24:22 to Amenemope and concludes that theologically, Amenemope is fully compatible with other Egyptian Wisdom Literatures, but not with Bible book of Proverbs.

From the foregoing discussion on the Egyptian Wisdom Texts and Proverbs, two points stand clear: the dating of Amenemope and the biblical parallels. However, the relevance of dating thrives on the account of the biblical parallels. This then takes us to the question of the relevance of the parallels between the Amenemope and Proverbs to our own study. This is against the backdrop that the basis for any comparison between the book of Proverbs and the Amenemope rests on the biblical parallels found in Proverbs 22:17 to Proverbs 24:22 (Ruffle 1995). Our own area of focus lies outside the texts consisting the parallels above. In other words, our text (Proverbs 26:4 and 5) does not fall within the area of contention. Hence, the aspects of the Proverbs under contention with Kemetic collections do not extend to the parts under our area of study, implying that the authorship of the text we are considering in this work could not have been influenced by Amenemope.

More significantly, the account of the Bible itself on the authorship of the Proverbs shows enough evidence of its origin. For instance, in Proverbs 1:1, "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel" unequivocally states the source of the book. Furthermore, the introduction to the book of Proverbs written by the author of the *Amplified Bible* (1987) asserts that the Hebrew title, "The proverbs of Solomon" credits the book to Solomon, who succeeded his father on the throne about 970 B.C. According to this introduction, two additional references, Proverbs 10:1, "The Proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father; but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother," and Proverbs 25:1, "These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out," identify Solomon as the author of our text in particular, and of most of the proverbs in the Bible. Hence, in this paper, Solomon is regarded as the author, particularly of our data, as well as of the book of Proverbs, generally. Therefore, Solomon, his son and all Bible users are the "participants" in the contextual analysis of the text under investigation.

So far, a little has been said "pragmatically" about the participants of our texts, especially Solomon (the author). The participants' "contexts" and "competences" including the "speech acts" they performed deserve our attention. The various levels of the participants' "contexts", "competencies" and "speech acts" as seen in Lawal (1997) are relevant to this study. The levels are linguistic, situational, psychological, social, sociological and cosmological contexts.

At the surface (linguistic) layer, Solomon reactivates his graphological, morphological, semantic and syntactic competences to write verses 4 and 5. Similarly, Solomon's son or Bible readers must reactivate appropriate competencies to decode the meanings in both verses. The writer's graphological style (of using negative structure to precede affirmative one) is an issue of choice among alternatives. It is assumed that he writes to his son according to his flow of thoughts and perhaps, his presumed order of emphasis.

The situational context reflects the "topic of discourse, factors of the physical events, including concrete objects, persons and locations" (Lawal 2012: 155). Solomon understood the possibility of being drawn into a dialogue with a fool. He gave two conditions or reasons that should form the basis for responding to a fool according to his folly in any given circumstances (V4b and 5b). But the whole text centres on instructions and conditions for conversing with a fool. The first instruction is not to reply to a fool for the possibility of playing the second fool (V4), while the other is to reply where and when a fool may be "wise in his own conceit" (V5). Solomon's son has the responsibility of studying the two contexts and complying appropriately. To do this, his son should possess the background information of the two situations to discover his (Solomon's) intentions, and that of the fool, to draw inferences that will assist in responding to a fool appropriately.

Also relevant in this aspect is the application of one of the four maxims of Grice (1975) known as the Co-operative Principle (CP). The "manner" (fourth maxim) in which an utterance is made is important if participants must avoid ambiguity, must be brief and orderly; anything to the contrary should be seen as lacking "manner". Where a fool displays a lack of "manner", making a contribution in similar manner may amount to playing the second fool. But if a reply in the "manner" a fool speaks is appropriate to counter self-deceit, it should be given (V5). The maxim can assist in establishing the appropriate realisations of Vs 4 and 5 in separate contexts, thereby ruling out possible contradictions.

At the psychological context, the writer of our text resents and hates foolishness and wants his son to handle a fool accordingly. In V4, the author detests a response to a fool that will make his son replicate the ranting of the fool. But as shown in V5, the writer abhors a situation where the fool will go without being replied to if he (the fool) feels "fulfilled".

Father-son-fool relationship on the one hand, and author-Bible user-fool relationship on the other, characterise the social contexts of the text. The instructions in Vs 4 and 5 were primarily directed to Solomon's son; they are now for the benefit of all

Bible users.

Sociologically, the historical and socio-cultural settings of the text are embedded in the history of the life and times of Solomon. He had a track record of wisdom (1 Kings 29-34). He observed the universe and wrote on several issues of life. As a wise man, he observed the fool and knew his boastings, railings and arrogance. Solomon was well acquainted with the attitude, moods and beliefs of a fool. It would be unrealistic to snub the fool always. Solomon then instructed his son to shun a fool when necessary, and reply to him when appropriate, leaving to his son the responsibility for deciding the time and location to determine the appropriateness of the actions.

The world-view of Solomon, his son, the fool and subsequently all Bible users constitute the context upon which the cosmological factor is built. All over the world, people speak either wisely or foolishly. When people express themselves wisely, precepts are laid and such are models for emulation.

In contrast, a foolish expression receives condemnation, especially by the wise or those who can discern appropriately. Vs 4b and 5b are two possible effects of life encounters. These effects inform the instructions in 4a and 5a respectively. In other words, the world-view of Solomon, his son and Bible users about "the fool" goes a long way to determine the appropriateness of complying with the instructions in our text.

Conclusion

Resolving an overt contradiction of this sort involves a complex interrelatedness and somewhat intrinsic interplay of language at stylistic, semantic and pragmatic levels. The puzzle that confronts an effort at proffering resolution to the two contradictory verses emerges partly from their paradigmatic sequencing. Hence reconciling the verses goes beyond linguistic and semantic postulations. Pragmatic clues which provide useful background information on the speaker, hearer, topic, place and time of discourse including other contextual factors have simultaneously facilitated the inferences or presuppositions that have been drawn from the intentions of the text writer. Since ordinary sense reveals that it is impossible for a single agent to comply with opposing instructions at the same time, the pragmatic challenges posed by our text have been tackled decisively.

If there was any justification for the flow of thought the author of our text displayed in sequencing his statements or sentences in deviant with regard to grammatical rules, it was the stylistic premise. As revealed in the text, the author couched his utterances by leaning on the good anchor offered by language variation. While leaving his addressees to the task of deciphering his speech through semantic and pragmatic presuppositions, his stylistic competence gave him the leverage of engaging the features of sentence variation, scheme of balance, negative insertion, alliteration, repetition, etc. to perform the illocutionary functions of advising and warning his son, and subsequently, to all the users of the Bible.

Importantly too, the issue of "appropriateness" rang throughout the framework of our analysis suggesting the crucial nature of the concept in the study. It avails us a great advantage of situating verses 4 and 5 in terms of their appropriate realisations per time, location and person. In other words, the theory allows the explication of where and when to reply to a fool or to restrain oneself. Herein lays the crux of the needed reconciliation of the two verses that make up our text.

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Contributors to this Issue

A LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTION OF THE LANGUAGE OF GHANAIAN NEWSPAPERS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE READABILITY, COMPREHENSIBILITY AND INFORMATION FUNCTION OF THE GHANAIAN PRESS

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"I AM SPEAKING FRENCH BUT I AM THINKING IN ENGLISH": AN ANALYSIS OF ERRORS BY STUDENTS OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA.

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A PRAGMA-STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF PROVERBS 26, VERSES 4 AND 5

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Under the auspices of the West African Linguistic Society (WALS), the University of Education, Winneba in association with the Linguistics Association of Ghana (LAG) announces that the joint 30th West African Languages Congress (WALC 2017) and 10th Linguistics Association of Ghana (LAG) Conference will be held from 31st July-5th August 2017 at the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana. The conference will focus on all aspects of West African linguistics (descriptive, theoretical and applied) and Literature.

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Abstracts should be sent to walcuew2017@gmail.com

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