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Morphological Parallelism and Repetition in Contemporary African Poetry: A Structuralist Approach

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Abstract

This study uses structuralist language theory to examine how morphological parallelism and repetition function in modern African poetry. Based on the seminal writings of Roman Jakobson and Ferdinand de Saussure, the study investigates the ways in which recurring morphemic structures support poetic aesthetics, rhythm, and meaning. The study uses a qualitative analytical approach to look at a few chosen modern poems from online resources and published anthologies. The study finds patterns of derivational and compound morphology, coordinated morphemes, and affixal repetition through close reading and textual analysis, especially in recurrent structures like the anaphoric "Because..." clause. The results show that morphological repetition is not just ornamental but also serves as a structural and semantic tool, dividing the poem into sections that are thematically and rhythmically related. The study also shows how cross-cultural morphemic references and binary oppositions are used to create a worldwide poetic identity. This book provides a fresh framework for examining how morphemic recurrence enhances meaning-making in modern poetry and supports the poetic function of language by applying structuralist theory to the morphological level. By emphasising morphology as a crucial element of poetic structure and stylistic creativity, the research advances literary linguistics.

Keywords: Morphological Parallelism, Structuralism, Repetition, Contemporary Poetry, Jakobsonian Poetics

Introduction

The study of poetic structures has evolved over time, with structuralist theorists emphasising the importance of patterns and systems in language (Barthes, 1967; Jakobson, 1960). Morphological parallelism, as an element of poetic structure, has been observed in classical and modern literary traditions, yet its role in contemporary poetry

remains underexplored Given the increasing experimentation with form and linguistic structures in contemporary poetry. This study seeks to examine how poets use morphological repetition as a stylistic and thematic tool. By applying structuralist principles, we can better understand how language functions within poetic discourse and how repetition influences interpretation (Eagleton, 1983).

Repetition has long been recognised as a fundamental stylistic device in poetry, serving both structural and semantic purposes. In contemporary poetry, repetition occurs at multiple linguistic levels, including phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics (Wales, 2011). Among these, morphological parallelism, the systematic recurrence of morphological structures, plays a crucial role in constructing poetic meaning. This study employs a structuralist framework to analyse the impact of morphological repetition in contemporary poetry, demonstrating its role in reinforcing themes, enhancing rhythm, and shaping poetic aesthetics (Saussure, 1916; Culler, 1975).

The primary aim of this study is to analyse the function of morphological parallelism and repetition in contemporary poetry from a structuralist perspective. The specific objectives include,

- i. To identify the types of morphological parallelism present in contemporary poetry.
- ii. To examine the role of morphological repetition in reinforcing themes and poetic aesthetics.
- iii. To assess how structuralist theory explains the function of repetition in poetic composition.
- iv. To explore the implications of morphological parallelism for rhythm and meaning in poetry.

- v. To contribute to the broader discourse on structuralism and poetic form.

While repetition in poetry has been widely examined from phonological, syntactic, and semantic perspectives, the role of morphological parallelism remains underexplored in contemporary poetic forms using a structuralist approach. This study focuses on the structural patterns of morphological repetition and examines how they contribute to meaning-making and poetic aesthetics.

About the Poet

Aremu Adams Adebisi is a Nigerian writer known for his uniquely aesthetic literary style, characterised by distinct forms, structures, and elements. His works span various literary genres, each crafted to explore and provide insights into life's endless mysteries. He finds depth, peace, and tranquility in poetry, while his prose reflects the events and experiences surrounding him. A firm believer in the sensory power of literature, he once described it as a social science expressed through artistic application. He can be contacted on Facebook at Aremu Adams Adebisi and on Instagram @theantagonist.

Methodology

To examine morphological parallelism in contemporary poetry, this study employs a qualitative analytical approach. Data is collected from a selection of contemporary poems that exhibit clear patterns of morphological repetition. The sources for data collection include,

- **Published Poetry Collections:** Contemporary poetry anthologies and literary journals.
- **Online Poetry Platforms:** Digital archives, poetry blogs, and social media poetry content.

The analysis involves identifying morphological patterns, categorising types of repetition, and interpreting their functions within the structuralist framework. The study

utilises close reading techniques and textual analysis to examine how repeated morphemic structures contribute to rhythm, meaning, and aesthetic cohesion.

Theoretical Framework

Recent researchers have contributed to the ongoing development of structuralist linguistic theory, which has its roots in the writings of Ferdinand de Saussure from the early 20th century and was developed by Roman Jakobson. Particularly, Terence Hawkes and Jonathan Culler have been instrumental in reiterating and improving structuralist concepts within the framework of literary and cultural analysis.

Jonathan Culler (2002, 2011) provides a thorough analysis of structuralist poetics, highlighting the idea that literature can be viewed as a system controlled by internal structures rather than only as a mirror of the outside world. In *Structuralist Poetics*, Culler uses a premise from Saussurean linguistics to contend that meaning in literary texts is produced by differential connections among signs rather than being inherent. He expands on this idea by proposing that literary norms themselves operate similarly to language systems, being regulated by recurring patterns, oppositions, and rules that influence the reader's perception. Culler summarises important structuralist concepts for a wider readership in his later work, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (2011), which shows how genres, codes, and narrative structures function across texts to create meaning. According to Culler, structuralism offers a way to pinpoint the "grammar" of literature, its fundamental thematic and formal regularities.

Saussure's idea of the linguistic sign and its implications for semiotic analysis across cultural domains are expanded upon by Terence Hawkes (2003) in his seminal work *Structuralism and Semiotics*. Hawkes highlights that the concepts of structuralism may be used to the interpretation of myths, media, fashion, ideology, and other symbolic systems in addition to language. Hawkes makes structuralism a potent multidisciplinary framework by reevaluating Saussure's theory in light of current cultural occurrences. According to him, the analyst must decipher the norms of difference and binary

opposition that organise cultural objects, much like language, in order to uncover their underlying meanings. This method reinforces the notion that meaning is created inside systems of signification rather than existing naturally or transparently.

Culler and Hawkes' combined works demonstrate how modern structuralist theory is still useful for analysis in literary and cultural studies today. Their contributions provide instruments for methodical interpretation by allowing researchers to follow the ways in which profound structural principles function inside texts and discourses. According to their viewpoints, structural regularities such as oppositional patterning, parallelism, and repetition are crucial meaning determinants for the current study, which examines the formal aspects of poetry and literary language.

Literature Review

The value of formal elements like parallelism in poetry structure has been emphasised more and more in recent literary studies. Parallelism, a key component of poetical diction in many languages and cultures, has recently been the focus of philological, stylistic, and empirical research. Recent studies have demonstrated that morphological and structural repetition, whether lexical, grammatical, or syntactic, greatly enhances poetry's expressiveness, coherence, and aesthetic appeal. Recent research that has examined these trends through a variety of approaches and theoretical frameworks are reviewed in this section.

Menninghaus et al. (2023) provide one of the most thorough and empirically supported explanations of parallelism to date. In order to assess how formal elements like repetition and variation (deviation) influence the reader's aesthetic experience, their research blends reader-response trials with quantitative computational analysis. They were able to show that parallel structures improve reader impressions of melodiousness, clarity, vividness, and overall poetic quality by creating algorithmic models for identifying parallelism in contemporary poetry. The study offers strong proof that recurring patterns evoke an instinctive response in readers and that they enhance their

understanding of poetry works. Importantly, their results provide quantifiable evidence in favor of the long-held claim by literary theorists that repetition is both artistically potent and cognitively stimulating.

Wendland (2023) investigates the use of syntactic and semantic parallelism in Hebrew poetry, especially in the Psalms, from a philological and theological standpoint. Wendland's analysis is grounded in close reading and rhetorical critique, in contrast to Menninghaus et al.'s empirical approach. He contends that parallelism in biblical verse is not merely ornamental but rather plays essential roles in structuring rhythm, meaning, and theological emphasis. Poets accomplish amplification, contrast, and structural balance through layered repetition, all of which support the text's spiritual lessons and emotional pleas. His research demonstrates how form and purpose are closely intertwined in ancient poetic traditions by placing parallelism as a culturally rooted mechanism with both spiritual and aesthetic value.

Peter Stockwell (2020) integrated cognitive stylistics with structuralist linguistic principles to examine how poetic language is processed and interpreted. His research investigates the cognitive mechanisms that enable readers to recognise and respond to repeated linguistic structures in poetry. Stockwell's study suggests that repetition, particularly at the morphological level, significantly contributes to phonological rhythm and thematic reinforcement, making structuralist analysis essential in poetry studies. Stockwell's approach combines structuralist insights with cognitive perspectives, emphasising that language operates as a system of interrelated elements that shape comprehension. In poetry, morphological parallelism facilitates pattern recognition, allowing readers to process and predict repeated forms more efficiently. This cognitive aspect of repetition is particularly relevant to contemporary poetry, where experimental forms often rely on recurring morphemic patterns to create meaning. His findings suggest that readers engage with repetition on both a linguistic and cognitive level, where familiar morphological structures enhance textual coherence and interpretability.

The importance of morphological and structural parallelism in the creation and reception of poetry is demonstrated by these studies taken together. The results all agree that formal repetition is essential to poetic form and function, regardless of whether they are approached through morphosyntactic analysis (Stockwell2020), cognitive stylistic (Iliesku, 2022), philological interpretation (Wendland, 2023), or empirical measurement (Menninghaus et al., 2023). The present study relies on their findings to investigate the ways in which parallel morphological patterns influence poetic meaning, rhythm, and reader reaction. These discoveries serve as a crucial basis for this investigation. These studies' multidisciplinary character also supports a multi-method approach that combines aesthetic theory and language study to comprehend how poetry writings acquire their expressive force.

Data Presentation and Analysis

In this section, the selected poems are first presented, followed by a detailed analysis guided by Saussurean structuralism and Jakobsonian poetics. The analysis explores how morphological parallelism and repetition operate as stylistic and thematic devices in contemporary African poetry.

Data Presentation

Poem Excerpt (Selected for Analysis):

Because my body is a country, a water confluence,
and a country is me and I am me with flesh and bones.
Because when we trace the marks on our faces and palms,
we find dust and ash in a rule of tussle between humans and jinns.
Because when I wear the Sari either the Ghagra or the Pavada,
I let the Pallu drape over my shoulder freely, carelessly,
or tuck into my waist, stretching towns from Nepal to Tamil.
Because, 2, the Hanfu explores curves, tied with a Sash around the waist,
and the Kimono finds straight lines appealing, influenced by the Hanfu,

sharing an origin of drawings and designs two hands that applaud.
Because when I put on the Sherwani, with the Sarong patterned
around my waist and the Tembel Hat almost covering my face,
I find a wedding in Rajasthan, moving my feet to the Khmer dance,
with delicious Hummus and Falafel dancing down my throat.
...

Because clothes do not betray the thread, the yarn and the spindle
and do not negate the body when they cover its nakedness.
Because either good or worn-out, white or black, loose or fitting,
an apparel or a homespun, they are all made from animal skin.

Data Analysis

1. Identification of Morphological Parallelism

The poem exhibits parallel morphological structures based on a recurring introductory clause “**Because...**” This anaphoric repetition is not merely syntactic but morphological, as the word “*Because*” primes the syntactic unit that follows, and sets up a pattern of purpose or justification.

Examples of morphological repetition include,

- **Compounds and nominal formations:** *water confluence, flesh and bones, thread and spindle, black and white.*
- **Derivational forms:** *carelessly, knowledge-able, worn-out.*
- **Repetition of affixal structures:** *negate, purity, nakedness, unity, humanity.*

2. Role of Morphological Repetition in Reinforcing Themes and Aesthetics

The repeated “**Because...**” clause structures lend the poem a liturgical or chant-like rhythm, enhancing its poetic function as proposed by Roman Jakobson. This structure:

- Reinforces the central theme of identity through clothing and cultural embodiment.

- Produces semantic symmetry by pairing morphemes that reflect contrast (*black/white, good/worn-out*) and continuity (*thread/yarn/spindle*).

Each stanza becomes a **morphological unit** that contributes to the overarching thematic cohesion, identity as a composite of global traditions.

3. Structuralist Explanation of Repetition

From a structuralist perspective, meaning is generated through binary oppositions and paradigmatic contrasts:

- *Country/me, humans/jinns, Nepal/Tamil, Kimono/Hanfu.*
- These oppositions highlight the function of repetition as a device for differential meaning construction.

Saussure's idea that “**in language there are only differences without positive terms**” applies here. the poem's morphology builds semantic depth through the network of signs (clothing, places, identities).

4. Implications for Rhythm and Meaning

- **Metrical Rhythm:** The morphological structure supports enjambed parallelism, where the repetition of inflectional and derivational morphemes (e.g., *-ness, -ly, -ed*) creates a cadence tied to emotional and thematic progress.
- **Semantic Cohesion:** The structure of morphological parallelism acts as grammatical glue, linking diverse cultural elements into a coherent poetic statement on humanity and diversity.

5. Contribution to Structuralist-Poetic Discourse

This analysis demonstrates that morphological parallelism is not an incidental feature but an intentional aesthetic device rooted in language structure. The study extends Jakobson's (1960) concept of the poetic function of language to the morphological level, arguing that,

- Morphemes (not just phonemes or lexemes) can serve aesthetic, thematic, and rhythmic functions in poetry.
- Morphological repetition functions structurally to unify multilingual and multicultural references into a global poetic grammar.

Findings

According to the study's findings, morphological parallelism is a purposeful and effective stylistic strategy that improves the form and meaning of poetic expression in modern poetry. The following significant conclusions were drawn from a thorough textual analysis:

1. Morphological Repetition Prevalence: The poem is arranged into rhythmic units by the frequent usage of the clause-initial "Because" structures, which serve as a morphological and syntactic anchor. The structured linguistic structure produced by these recurrent morphemes strengthens theme coherence.

2. Function of Derivational and Compound Morphology: Words with complex morphology, like thread-and-spindle, worn-out, heedless, and nakedness, have both semantic and aesthetic functions. Coordinated compounds and derivativeal suffixes (such as -ness, -ly, and -ity) improve the poem's emotional rhythm and symbolic richness.

3. Cross-Cultural Morphemic Referents: A cross-linguistic morphological network is created when culturally specific clothing terminology, such Hanfu, Kimono, Boubou, Ghagra, and Sherwani, are used repeatedly. This blending of various cultural morphemes creates a poetic voice that is more universal and demonstrates how clothing serves as a universal identity marker.

4. Aesthetic Rhythm and Structural Cohesion: In keeping with Jakobson's theory of the poetic use of language, the morphological repetition creates a chant-like rhythm. Every stanza is a morphological echo of the others, and the planned repetition produces both musicality and a coherent interpretive structure.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study significantly contributes to linguistic, literary, and stylistic scholarship in the following ways,

1. Extension of Structuralist Theory to Morphological Poetics: The study expands the structuralist framework to include morphological patterning as a fundamental poetic device by applying Saussurean and Jakobsonian theories to the analysis of morphemes rather than just phonemes or syntactic forms.

2. Creative Examination of Multicultural Lexical Structures: The study demonstrates how poets employ morphological recurrence across a variety of worldwide cultural lexicons, not simply within a single language. By presenting morphology as a medium for international poetic expression, this adds a fresh perspective to conversations about multiculturalism in poetry.

3. Theory of Morphological Parallelism as a Structural Mechanism: This work shows that morphological recurrence is structurally essential to the poem's internal logic, in contrast to works that view repetition as just rhetorical or artistic. In addition to giving the poetry syntagmatic and paradigmatic structure, it integrates theme aspects.

4. Pedagogical and Analytical Utility: This study's discoveries can be applied to teaching linguistic stylistics and current poetry in addition to academic research. It provides a framework for investigating the ways in which surface poetic qualities are shaped by deep linguistic patterns.

Conclusion

This study confirms that morphological repetition in contemporary poetry serves more than decorative or rhetorical purposes. It is a fundamental structural mechanism that generates aesthetic pattern, rhythmic cohesion, and semantic depth. By anchoring analysis in Saussurean structuralism and Jakobsonian poetics, the research offers new insights into how morphemic elements participate in poetic composition, thereby enriching the formal and interpretive possibilities of modern poetry.

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7.

Linguistic Practices in the Nigerian Army: An Analysis of Command Codes and Military Communication

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Abstract

This study investigates the linguistic practices within the Nigerian Army, with emphasis on the use of command codes and multilingual communication. While English is the official language of command, informal interactions often involve Nigerian Pidgin and indigenous languages. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews and non-participant observation with serving personnel. Findings reveal that military language is shaped by both institutional hierarchy and Nigeria's multilingual setting. Features such as code-switching, euphemism, and compressed directives, which reflect the pragmatic and functional nature of military interaction, will be taken into consideration by the researchers. It concludes that language policy in military training should reflect Nigeria's linguistic reality to enhance operational efficiency.

Keywords: Command Language, Code-switching, Nigerian Pidgin, Military Communication, Pragmatics, Multilingualism

Introduction

Language within military establishment performs key roles such as issuing commands, maintaining discipline, and facilitating coordination. In a linguistically diverse country like Nigeria, language use in the Defense Forces reflects not only formality and authority but also adaptability and social bonding.

This study investigates how language is used in formal and informal military contexts, focusing on command language and code-switching within the Nigerian Army. It addresses the gap in linguistic research on Nigerian military communication and contributes to our understanding of how multilingualism operates in institutional settings.

Literature Review

Language of the Military

According to Asher and Simpson (1994), anyone who has served in the military of any nation can attest to the fact that military communication functions as a distinct language. The military, as an organised institution, operates with clearly defined goals. To ensure the successful execution of these goals, strict adherence to rules, procedures and regulations is emphasised

As (Keyence 1999), observes, for an institution like the army to function effectively, there must be shared responsibility, unwavering loyalty, and clear communication among its members

The military language is distinct, possessing its own specific linguistic traits and features. As Murray(1986: 126) observes, such linguistic forms are not mere stylistic choices but are deliberate communicative tools essential for tactical operations, strategic planning, and in-group cohesion. Most military personnel speeches deal with issues of authority, dominance, etc. Another notable characteristic of the language is its dependence on signals as the primary means of transmitting messages. According to

Kyenge (1999), a signal message must be an action or a product of an action demanding response or correspondence. The way in which a message flows within the military hierarchy is dictated by the tone of the message, which is formal. It must be clear and brief. It must also depend on who is sending and to whom. For example, if it is from a captain to a major then it must be polite and frank giving the most detailed information and inferring that the final decision is with the superior officer. According to Kyenge (1999), regardless of the direction within the military hierarchy, a signal message typically has two main features: it is detailed and reflects an awareness of rank and authority; at the same time, it is concise and exact, often utilising abbreviations, coded language and symbols. In military communication, careful attention is given to the fact that these codes convey both semantic and pragmatic meanings, which may differ based on the situation and context. Internally, military language is marked by precision. A high level of caution is exercised, particularly in the use of first- and second person singular pronouns, to avoid assigning direct personal responsibility for actions taken in official capacities.

Military language is often distinct from civilian communication, marked by brevity, directness, and coded expressions (Kirkpatrick, 1991; Enkvist, 1986). In Nigeria, the military draws on multiple languages—primarily English for official command and Nigerian Pidgin or indigenous languages for informal interaction.

Studies by Bamgbose (1991) and Igboanusi (2006) have shown how multilingualism shapes institutional communication. Sociolinguists such as Gumperz (1982) and Myers-Scotton (1993) note that code-switching reflects social roles, group identity, and communicative efficiency.

However, few studies have examined how these phenomena manifest in the Nigerian Army. Military status etiquette, according to Brown (1963:74), illustrates the interrelatedness of norms. According to O'Brien et al (1957:211):

When individuals live in close communications, they often establish common patterns of behaviour. They tend to adopt a shared language, similar styles of dress, and consistent beliefs and attitudes on various issues. These shared practices and traditions function as social guidelines, directing how members of the group are expected to behave in different contexts. Frequently such standards and prescriptions are social norms.

He went further to say that some norms are established by religious authority or legislative decrees. Others may be pronounced by powerful persons backed by force and violence if necessary. We find norms wherever we find an organised society, primitive or complicated. These norms serve as focal points in the experiences of the individual and guide for his actions.

In every society, social norms play a role in shaping and guiding people's daily routines. The military like any situation has its rules and norms. The soldiers' concepts, purpose and actions are defined. This view is supported by Arnold (1957: p.320), cited in O'Brien et al., (1957), who opines that,

In any social organisation, there is a theoretical structure consisting of formal rules and regulations designed to control the activities of the members and manifest structure consisting of the observable behaviour of members. These are verbal precepts that indicate how things are supposed to be done, while the latter consist of overt activities that indicate how things actually are done.

Deviation from institutional norm is severally punished especially in the military. This is because a norm embodies values most highly cherished by the members of that organisation.

To the sociologists, the military implies acceptance of organised violence as a legitimate means for attaining social objectives. In most countries of the world, the

military structures are permanent organisations maintained even in peacetime, for the eventuality of armed conflict. These establishments are managed by military men. That is, the military professionals, those who pursue occupational career of service in the armed forces. For one to qualify as professional soldier, he must acquire the expertise necessary to manage the military structures.

According to Broom and Seiznick (1963:75), “Career commitment and expertise constitute qualities of military pursuits which distinguish the professional soldier from others who are not professional in the art of war”. Dornbusch in O’Brien (1957:219), states: “Effective fulfilment of the role of an officer entails the acquisition of certain skills and technical information and perhaps even more important the development of a proper philosophy toward government, military force and defence and public service”. Military plans need to be adaptable to accommodate unexpected situation, seize any available opportunities, or adjust to change by transitioning effectively between strategies. Achieving this requires solid training, efficient organisation, clear communication, and the availability of a reserve force. It also requires a high level of physical mobility to allow for quick and efficient repositioning and regrouping. Most importantly, it calls for mental flexibility and swift decision-making from commanders at every level. It also calls for physical mobility of a high order so that new dispositions and grouping can be adopted rapidly and economically. Above all, it demands flexibility of mind and rapidity of decision on the part of the commandant right down to the lowest level.

Military operations require coordination among all branches and units within the army, collaboration between combat forces, the military and civilian authorities and in allied forces between allies. It relies on a strong sense of teamwork and involves harmonising all efforts to ensure effective execution to achieve greatest possible collective effort. Successful cooperation is only possible when there is sincere goodwill and a shared commitment to collaboration at every level. In joint operation, this requires setting

aside narrow service loyalties that prioritise uniform distinctions or demand a strictly single- service command structure below the task force commander. Under certain circumstances and for a specific task, a service personnel must be willing to operate under the command of another, even at relatively low levels of authority. For the military to carry out their functions effectively, there has to be an organised communication network for the dissemination of information and effective execution of policies, hence the importance of the military language.

Theoretical Framework

The two theoretical frameworks chosen for the analysis of data in this study are,

Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), and sociolinguistic Theory. **Speech Act** Theory explains how utterances including commands perform actions. Austin(1962), Speech Act Theory is premised on the belief that “there is more to language than the meaning of its words and phrases”. In the act of producing a sentence, a speaker simultaneously performs three separate types of speech acts. This is consistent with the framework originally proposed by Austin and later developed by Searle, which are: locutionary act, the act of producing an utterance with a specific linguistic form. Locutionary act is summed up as the act of speaking itself. That is, the production of a meaningful utterance while illocutionary act is the act of uttering a sentence with a certain intention (praise, criticism, etcetera), it is the underlying message in the locutionary act. The perlocutionary act is therefore the effect of both the locutionaryacts and illocutional acts. Thus, we can say that perlocutionary act is the action that comes as a result of a speaker having spoken. It is the act expressing a sentence with a specific communicative function or pragmatic intent, for example, to frighten, to command or get one to do something.

Sociolinguistic Theory, particularly the concept of **code-switching** and **language choice** as advanced by Gumperz (1982) and Myers-Scotton (1993), explains how speakers adapt to cross-linguistic contexts to reinforce identity, hierarchy, or precision. The first is Gumperz's (1982) theory of interactional sociolinguistics, which emphasises how speakers use language choices to communicate social meaning within specific contexts. In a multilingual institution like the Nigerian military, switching from English, Nigerian pidgin, and indigenous languages is more than a linguistic practice. It serves as interactional technique for expressing control, managing interpersonal relationships, or facilitating clarity. Code-switching in this context acts as a communicative device, helping listeners interpret not only what is said, but how it should be understood based on the social setting. The second theoretical framework examines code-switching from the perspective of identity, is provided by Myers-Scotton's (1993), Markedness Model. This theory, offers insight into the reasons behind language choice. This model, suggests that speakers select a language based on whether they want to adjust with societal conventions or constraint or redefine those values. For example, English often represents the formal or official code in military discourse, especially during training, orders, and ceremonial events. However, personnel may switch to pidgin English or indigenous languages during informal interactions or field operations to reinforce solidarity, signal ethnic identity, or ensure clarity. These switches are deliberate and meaningful, reflecting the speaker's awareness of their social environment and desired outcomes. The frameworks provide an in-depth knowledge of code-switching in the military. Gumperz focuses on the interactional functions of language, showing how switching helps structure conversation and convey implicit meanings. Myers-Scotton, in a different approach, explains the underlying reasons and sociolinguistic outcomes of those preferences. In the Nigerian military- which personnel come from different language repertoires, code switching becomes a crucial linguistic resource that reflects not just linguistic choice, but also identity, hierarchy of authority, and contextual suitability. It reflects the tactical use of language to adapt identity, convey urgency, and reinforce group solidarity in mission- critical

settings. Code-switching in the Nigerian military is not a result of language inadequacy, but rather a strategic means of adapting to a diverse linguistic environment.

Methodology

Sources of Data

In conducting this study, information was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were obtained through oral interview with selected cadre of military men and officers of various ranks within the Infantry Division of the Nigerian Army. Secondary sources consisted of both published and unpublished materials, including relevant textbooks.

Method of Data Collection

Multiple techniques were utilised to collect data for this research. These included oral interviews and non-participant observation method.

Oral Interview

Oral interviews were employed as one of the techniques for gathering data from the respondents. These interviews were guided by a structured set of questions designed to facilitate data analysis. The interviews were conducted in an informal and relaxed setting, which encouraged the respondents to provide meaningful, reliable, and valid information regarding military registers. Such depth of response might have been difficult to obtain in a more formal environment.

Non participant observation

This is one of the most commonly used descriptive linguistic methods in gathering data in field linguistic research. The researcher employed this technique because it is very important in obtaining firsthand information.

A qualitative case study design was employed. Twenty Nigerian Army personnel from different ranks were interviewed. The breakdown is as follows: five senior ranking officers, five from intermediate ranks and ten from the non-commissioned ranks. Data were transcribed and coded using thematic analysis, with particular attention to command structure, informal language use, and power dynamics.

Discussion and Findings

Command Language

Command expressions such as “Attention” “At ease,” “Left face/Right face”, “*Fall in!*”, “*Advance!*”, and “*Present arms*”, “*Order arms, Halt!*” are brief and directive. These utterances function as illocutionary acts, where meaning lies in the action performed, not just the words spoken.

Multilingual Interaction and Code-Switching

English remains supreme in formal situations, but Pidgin and indigenous languages are commonly used in barracks and during informal situations such as relaxation time.

For example: “Fall in sharp-sharp! Makeuna no dull!” blends English and Pidgin, increasing urgency and familiarity. Another example, Pidgin+Igbo: “If you no tighten am well, o gaebelata” (If you don’t tie it well, it will loosen).

Euphemism and Tactical Terms

“Collateral damage”, “friendly fire” “kinetic action”, “Boots on the Ground”, Enhanced Interrogation” “Extraction”, Force projection”, “*neutralise*”, “*handle the situation*”, or “*clear the zone*” are terms that reflect institutionalised euphemisms that soften the

harshness of military action and aid psychological distancing. They use these terms to ease tension.

Language and Military Hierarchy

Those in senior military positions are more inclined to strict to official English usage, while junior personnel code-switch frequently. This pattern reflects both institutional discipline and sociolinguistic adaptation.

In the course of analysis, the researcher discovered that the features of military language are, comparatively, quite distinct from those of other professional varieties. This distinction arises from the unique nature of military terminologies, which are rarely shared with registers. These registers are specifically designed to perform particular communicative functions.

Military language is characterised by a distinctive style, particularly in its use of abbreviations and acronyms that convey specialised or technical meaning. Military language also involves a distinctive method of combining words to form new terms with specific meanings. For example, expressions like *scar face* or *papa-alpha-yankee* carry meanings that may be unclear to those unfamiliar with the context.

Below is a reflection of the categories of interviewees tabulated in table showing their cadre, number and percentage respectively and the result of the oral interview.

Does style affect the language used in the military?

Responses	Senior	Intermediate cadre	Junior Cadre	Total	Percentage
Yes	5	5	10	20	100
No	-	-	-	-	-
Undecided	-	-	-	-	-

From the table, we can see that all the respondents agreed that style affects the language used in the military profession. This is because the language is codified and peculiar to the profession alone. That is the language has a form that is different from other varieties outside the military profession. The form cannot be understood unless by formal learning or by individuals who belong to the profession. The respondents also said that the choice of words that are used in the military language is different from the choice of words used in other occupational varieties.

What are the concrete characteristics that differentiate the language of the military from other varieties of English Language?

Responses	Senior Cadre	Intermediate Cadre	Junior Cadre	Total
Abbreviation	5	5	10	20
Acronyms	5	5	10	20
Style	5	5	10	20

All of the respondents revealed that abbreviations, acronyms, style of writing and speaking are all features that differentiate military language from other varieties of English Language. The respondents also said that the language of the military is formally learnt and this is why it is difficult for a layman to understand it. Some respondents added that abbreviations and acronyms are used to save time in cases of emergency and also for confidential purposes.

Are there specific lexical items used in the military language?

Responses	Senior Cadre	Intermediate Cadre	Junior Cadre	Total	Percentage
Yes	5	5	10	20	100
No	-	-	-	-	-
Undecided	-	-	-	-	-

All the respondents agreed that there are specific lexical items in the military language because they have their own form of combination and coinage, which are limited only to the military.

Are these lexical items easy to understand by a layman and do they have a general meaning?

Responses	Senior Cadre	Intermediate Cadre	Junior Cadre	Total	Percentage
Yes	-	-	-	-	-
No	5	5	10	20	100
Undecided	-	-	-	-	-

The respondents all said that these lexical items are not easily understood by a layman because the language is codified. Some of the words are formed from combining other words together. As for having a general meaning, they do not. They all have various meanings, which is only understandable to one who has knowledge of the military language.

Is there any concrete relationship between military lexicons and other occupational lexicons?

Responses	Senior Cadre	Intermediate Cadre	Junior cadre	Total	Percentage
Yes	8	4	2	14	70
No	-	-	2	2	10
Undecided	-	2	2	4	20

From the table above, 75% out of 100% believe that the relationship between the lexicons depends on the term or word used at a particular time. Sometimes a particular word or lexicon can be shared between the language of the military and other

occupational languages, but the meaning would be different. It is because of this situation that we say they are related

Are there specific differences between the way words are formed in the military profession and other occupational fields?’

Responses	Senior Cadre	Intermediate Cadre	Junior Cadre	Total	Percentage
Yes	8	4	2	14	70
No	-	-	2	2	10
Undecided	-	2	2	4	20

From the table above 70% out of 100% respondents said that there are quite some differences between the way words are formed in the military language and other fields or professions. This is so because most lexical items in the military language are slangs or coined from the general English language.

Conclusion

Language use in the Nigerian Army combines formal codes with informal multilingual practices. While command codes promote discipline and structure, code-switching and Pidgin use help foster solidarity and comprehension among troops. The study recommends that military communication training should integrate pragmatic awareness of Nigeria’s linguistic diversity. Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that military language is both unique and essential within the armed forces. Its technical nature is evidence in the frequent use of abbreviations, codes and numerical references that are often incomprehensible to those outside the military context. There are certain words used in the military, which are peculiar only to the military profession. This helps to make operations easier and more effective. These various peculiarities account for the uniqueness of the military profession.

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