



UNIBEN ENGLISH AND LITERATURE JOURNALS

Department of English and Literature  
BENIN JOURNAL OF LITERARY STUDIES (BJLS)



<https://unibenjournals.com>  
ISSN (print): 1118-5538

Vol. 3, pp. 27-39, 2025

A PRAGMA-STYLISTIC AND REGISTER VARIATION ANALYSIS OF SOCIETAL  
DYSFUNCTION IN WOLE SOYINKA'S *CHRONICLES* AND CHIMAMANDA  
NGOZI ADICHIE'S *DREAM COUNT*

Andrew Ikpomwosa Egba  
Ali Evbayiro

**Abstract**

This comparative study explores how Wole Soyinka's *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth* (2021) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Dream Count* (2025) deploy language to portray societal dysfunction in Nigeria. Drawing on theoretical frameworks of Leo Hickey's pragma-stylistics and Biber and Conrad's register variation, this paper applies a content analysis method to systematically investigate narrative episodes, dialogue, and descriptive passages, revealing the authors' stylistic choices. Key findings show how both authors reflect and critique issues of corruption, gender norms, and diaspora challenges through their linguistic choices. This study contributes to sociolinguistic stylistics by offering a comparative model for analysing postcolonial texts, and enriches postcolonial literature studies by highlighting how language is a fundamental tool for articulating and critiquing power structures and social disorder.

**Keywords:** Postcolonial literature, register variation, pragma-stylistics, social dysfunction, Nigerian diaspora, content analysis.

---

Andrew Ikpomwosa Egba  
Department of English and Literature, University of Benin.  
email: [ikpomwosa.egbah@uniben.edu](mailto:ikpomwosa.egbah@uniben.edu).

Ali Evbayiro  
Department of Linguistics Studies, University of Benin.  
email: [ali.evbayiro@uniben.edu](mailto:ali.evbayiro@uniben.edu).

<https://unibenjournals.com>

## Introduction

Societal dysfunction is a persistent theme in contemporary Nigerian literature, serving as a potent vehicle by which writers convey the complex realities of a postcolonial nation grappling with political instability, institutional decay, and cultural negotiation. These disorders (which include widespread corruption, gender inequality, and deep-seated governance failures) are woven into the public and private fabric of the Nigerian society. Nigerian authors often use the English language in various forms to articulate these conditions, actively intervening in public discourse, and providing a critical perspective on the national narratives of social malaise and systemic maladministration, rather than simply representing the reality on ground.

Wole Soyinka's satirical novel *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth* (2021) powerfully exposes corruption, political ambition, and the search for truth in a dysfunctional postcolonial Nigeria. The narrative follows a group of friends whose lives become tangled with influential political figures and significant events, revealing the depth of the nation's sociopolitical disillusionment (Anyokwu 369). In his extensive satire of Nigeria's political culture, Soyinka uses a hybrid form of English blended with local dialectal forms. This linguistic fusion assists the novelist in exposing the contradictions, hypocrisies, and moral compromises of those in power. Through this technique, Soyinka masterfully wields language as a potent weapon of political critique, a key aspect of literary stylistics.

In contrast, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Dream Count* (2025) offers a reflective narrative focusing on the struggles of four Nigerian women navigating life between Nigeria and the diaspora, with the COVID-19 pandemic as a backdrop. The novel intimately explores themes of love, loss, and identity through its characters' intertwined experiences. Adichie's writing uses pragmatic strategies like implicature, irony, and presupposition, along with intentional shifts between Nigerian English and Standard English, to capture the tensions of cultural hybridity (Aboh and Uduk 6). While Soyinka's critique is broad and systemic, Adichie's approach is more intimate and personal. Yet, both writers effectively interrogate power, identity, and the everyday human consequences of a fractured society.

Despite extensive scholarship on both Soyinka and Adichie, existing research often examines their thematic, stylistic, and postcolonial elements in isolation (Hickey 103). Studies on Soyinka frequently focus on political satire, while analyses of Adichie tend to prioritise gender and migration narratives. Consequently, limited comparative research employs an integrated framework of pragma-stylistics and register analysis to explore how these writers depict societal dysfunction. This gap in scholarship means that contemporary researchers overlook how pragmatic devices, such as speech acts, irony, and presupposition, interact with register shifts to create a more profound critique of corruption, inequality, and cultural hybridity (Kruger and Van Rooy 215).

To address this research gap, this study situates Nigerian English literature within a postcolonial contact zone where global and local discourses merge (Bhabha 38). The analysis will address three key research questions:

- (i) What roles do pragmatic strategies play in depicting societal dysfunction?
- (ii) How are identities constructed through register shifts?
- (iii) In what ways do pragmatic strategies and register shifts interact to enhance the portrayal of social disorder?

Through distinct applications of pragma-stylistics and register variation, this paper argues that Soyinka and Adichie both use language as a powerful tool to expose societal dysfunction and corrupt power structures in their distinct novels.

### **Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

This section reviews previous scholarly research on pragma-stylistics, register variation, as well as Soyinka's and Adichie's works, in order to explore the nexus between language, style and socio-political commentary in the depiction of Nigeria's systemic decay.

### **Pragma-stylistics, Register Variation and the Pragmatics of Literary Texts**

This study deploys Leo Hickey's paradigm of pragma-stylistics as one of its theoretical frameworks. Hickey defines pragma-stylistics as the synthesis of pragmatics and stylistics. This multidisciplinary approach helps readers to understand how authors manipulate language to achieve specific communicative effects that go beyond the literal meaning of words (D'hondt et al. 179; Vandembroucke et al. 265). Hickey's model of pragma-stylistics expands on traditional stylistics by incorporating pragmatic concepts, such as speech acts, implicature, politeness strategies and irony, into literary analysis. His canonical work, *The Pragmatics of Style*, argues that stylistic choices are not just aesthetic; they are functionally driven by contextual factors to produce certain changes in the reader.

This article draws on key aspects of Hickey's model – specifically, indirect speech acts and implicature – which highlight the subtle ways characters navigate corrupt social hierarchies and exert influence. It also uses politeness and impoliteness strategies to reveal implicit and explicit language norms. By doing so, the study shows how linguistic choices reflect the institutional malaise in Nigerian society through the novels' dialogue and narrative strategies.

For a wholesome analysis of the linguistic diversity in these novels, a register variation analysis by Douglas Biber and Susan Conrad is also crucial. Their approach is hinged on M.A.K. Halliday's foundational concept of register within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), focusing on how language use varies with the context of a situation in line with the field, tenor and mode of discourse (Ndimele 181).

Extending Halliday's work, Biber and Conrad's multidimensional model offers a quantitative, corpus-based approach to register analysis, classifying texts by linguistic features. Their model distinguishes between registers, such as conversation, fiction and academic prose, by identifying common features like noun phrases, prepositions and adjectives that align with specific communicative purposes. This approach allows

for an examination of how writers shift between registers (formal, informal or nonstandard forms like pidgins) to evoke particular social settings, character types and narrative tones that point towards deeper societal issues.

### **Nigerian Literature, Language and Societal Dysfunction**

Scholarship on Nigerian literature has long explored how linguistic choices reflect and comment on the socio-political reality of systemic rot. Critics often note how Nigerian authors like Soyinka and Adichie masterfully incorporate localised linguistic features, including code-switching, pidgin and transliteration, to add authenticity and texture to their narratives.

A synthesis of recent literature on Soyinka's works shows a focus on themes such as the banality of power in the *Jero Plays* (Ferra 257), and the interplay of patriarchal dominance and violence in *Madmen and Specialists* (Lawal 398). However, few works specifically examine societal dysfunction and political clientelism in Soyinka's *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth*. One notable exception is David Attwell, who explores the failure of postcolonial reasoning in the text. He concludes that African narratives serve as testimonials to real-life issues of systemic corruption across various settings (76). Additionally, Hawzhen Ahmed and Syako Shekho analyse the use of composite heroism and multiple perspectives in the novel to expose the deep-seated rot in Nigerian society, arguing that the country's socio-cultural and political system "has led to corruption which in turn perpetrates political favoritism at the expense of the citizens" (1316).

Similarly, scholarly analyses of Adichie's stylistic choices, particularly in works like *Americanah*, have highlighted her use of language to explore themes of cultural identity, gender and migration (Koukposi and Guezohouezon 69; Onunkwo and Chigbu 45). For *Dream Count*, Daria Tunca notes the novel's exploration of the complexities of love through a multifaceted female experience. Chimezie Chika supports this, highlighting how Adichie's plainspoken style contrasts with a profound emotional treatment of key issues that women "are placed from birth, such as marrying before thirty, bearing their husband's name after marriage, performing subordination at their own expense, etc."

While substantial research exists on Nigerian English and the thematic concerns of Soyinka and Adichie, there remains a notable gap in studies that systematically combine pragma-stylistics and register variation to analyse societal dysfunction. Many analyses either focus on thematic interpretations or use a single linguistic framework. Yet, combining both models offers a more holistic understanding. Pragma-stylistics reveals why characters use specific speech acts or implicatures for subtle linguistic manipulation, while register analysis accounts for the socio-functional context and social layering of language varieties in the texts. This work is also justified by the scarcity of dedicated scholarship on Soyinka's *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth* and Adichie's *Dream Count*. This paper, therefore, aims to fill that void, offering critical insight into these novels and presenting a fresh perspective on two of Nigeria's most significant contemporary literary voices.

### **Methodology**

This study adopts the content analysis method of qualitative research, which Paul Leedy et. al define as a research process where a body of narrative data is systematically encoded and analysed to identify patterns, themes, or biases (352). The researchers selected Soyinka's *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth* and Adichie's *Dream Country* for the study due to their treatment of societal disorders at multifaceted levels, ranging from individual to communal. After careful reading, specific dialogues, narrative excerpts, and speech genres illustrating societal dysfunction themes were purposively sampled and extracted for analysis. These qualitative textual elements are linguistically tagged "*Chronicles*" and "*Dream*" for Soyinka's and Adichie's novels respectively, with their correlative pages for easier identification and discussion following the recommendations on coding data by Leedy et al. (99). The analytic framework focuses on the examination and interpretation of pragma-stylistic indicators (such as speech acts, implicature and irony); and register shifts (formal/informal, standard/local, code-switching) in the relevant excerpts. The discussion segment focuses on how these pragmatic techniques and register shifts interact to depict the portrayal of social disorder in the Nigerian sociocultural contexts.

## Analysis and Discussion

### Corruption and Institutional Dysfunction

Both Soyinka and Adichie deploy linguistic elements to expose corruption and institutional dysfunction, though they focus on different scales: Soyinka delivers a broad, systemic critique, while Adichie uses a more intimate narrative to reveal corruption's personal and emotional toll on the populace. At the pragma-stylistic level, Soyinka employs indirect speech to expose political hypocrisy, for instance where a political defector declares,

I listened to the yearnings of my people as befits a true leader, obeyed their call, and have now moved into my true political family. (*Chronicles* 94)

The defector indirectly communicates his abandonment of principles while framing his action as that of democratic responsiveness. The quote mirrors how political actors sometimes cloak their self-serving actions via the language of public service.

Similarly, in *Dream*, Aunt Jane's words to the protagonist, "Don't pretend that you like the life you are living" (247), is an indirect critique that implies complicity in accepting corrupt systems. The clause appears four times in the novel, implying a subtle reminder of what the character needs to do in order to change the current state of affairs.

Soyinka makes use of irony when describing political leaders in this way:

It therefore came as a rude shock to the executive, legislators, and nationals when news broke that the nation had earned an unexpected – and unmerited – honorific from a former colonial civil servant as the Most Extraordinarily Corrupt Nation in the World! (*Chronicles* 21)

The irony lies in their shock at being called "the Most Extraordinarily Corrupt Nation in the World," while these same politicians openly (and privately) executed corrupt acts in the novel. Consequently, corruption is perceived as a "cultural norm" by

several leaders in the novel while individuals like Menka are being persecuted for their nonconformist stance.

Adichie makes use of metaphor and irony in her description of sexual assault cases "upholstered in power," involving Nafissatou Diallo's pre-MeToo activity (*Dream* 402), where the metaphor of upholstery (something soft, decorative, and concealing) ironically describes how power protects the perpetrators. Thus the term metaphorically compares the immunity granted by the society to powerful crime perpetrators to that of furniture cushioning.

Soyinka's metaphorical language cuts deep in, "The infant head remained in a special category of its own, worth a thousand mea culpas in its restoration of innocence invoked and conferred through the cyclic route of infanticide" (*Chronicles* 274). This grotesque metaphor equating body parts with spiritual redemption reveals how corruption has penetrated even sacred domains, transforming horrific acts into instruments of purification.

Implicature is also a key feature in *Chronicles* and *Dream*. Implicature is a pragmatic concept connoting what a speaker suggests or implies with an utterance, beyond what is literally said. When some legislators were embroiled in a contest (*Chronicles* 21), it could be implied that corruption is so normalised it is considered a standard practice rather than a deviance from morality. By deliberately engaging the audience with the competition, Soyinka offers a potent satire of a corrupt system where honesty is a valuable asset. Adichie, conversely, uses implicature to highlight the subtle, psychological impacts of corruption at an individual level. After leaving the CEO's office, Adichie's character gave this admonition to Chijioke:

Look, you have to understand that lying and deceiving are not moral issues in everyday life here, they are just tools, survival tools. Compunction is not even an option." (*Dream* 278)

In this sense, Chijioke is subtly advised to engage in falsification of the truth (by telling lies and deploying deceit) as a way of survival. The implicature here is that morality itself has been reconfigured within corrupt systems, where ethical considerations become luxuries rather than necessities. Thus, in both novels, implicature allows for efficient communication, politeness, and indirectness, allowing the speakers to convey more information than they explicitly express.

Furthermore, Soyinka demonstrates stark register shifts from formal to informal varieties that highlight institutional contradictions. The juxtaposition of the formal title "SPECIAL ADVISER ON ALTERNATIVE ENERGY, as luridly emblazoned on his calling card" in the Villa Potencia' chapter (*Chronicles* 73-74), creates a satirical contrast between official pretension and institutional absurdity. Other instances of register variation involve the abrupt shift to "Gong of Four and POMP!" (*Chronicles* 251) in Duloye's political dialogue with Menka, denoting how formal governance language dissolves into coded slang, as well as Papa Davina's fraternity with "the yahoo-yahoo and cultic assassins" (*Chronicles* 45), suggesting the corrupt merger of governance, religious, and criminal enterprise ((Kruger and Van Rooy 215).

Adichie's text reveals similar register shifts, though in a different context. The protagonist explains: "When Nigerians talk of moral issues they really mean sex, and some of the more high-minded mean corruption" (*Dream* 278), showing how formal moral discourse gets reduced to specific narrow concerns in practice, where institutional dysfunction becomes the new operating norm.

### **Gendered Experiences and Diasporic Identity**

Both Soyinka and Adichie expose gendered experiences and constraints, yet their linguistic approaches reflect their differing narrative scales. In terms of Face-Threatening Acts and Politeness Strategies, gendered power dynamics are revealed through pragmatic speech acts that either threaten a woman's "face" (her public self-image) or use politeness strategies to navigate patriarchal expectations. Soyinka reveals such gendered resistance through pragmatic speech acts that challenge institutional tokenism. When women reject the proposed "Yeowomen of the Year" contest, their pragmatic defiance is interpreted as a sophisticated face-threatening act against patriarchal condescension:

An attempt to pander to gender equality and establish a rival Yeowomen of the Year ended in predictable collapse—the women informed such proponents that YoY was gender-inclusive, demanded a straightforward contest on a level playing ground, not a token concession that only degraded the female sex even further. (*Chronicles* 13)

The speech act 'informed' functions as both resistance and reclamation of linguistic agency on the part of the women despite pressures from their masculine counterparts.

In a similar vein, Adichie exposes how some women use pragmatic implicatures to withstand slander in professional circles:

"Her gossipy tone surprises me and makes my irritation flare. The stories about me are the same stories that trail all the single young or youngish women with money in Abuja. They say I was a runs girl in university and started sleeping with governors then, and I got my promotions from sleeping with CEO and I got contracts from ministers I slept with..." (*Dream* 272)

The pragmatic effect transforms professional achievement into sexualised suspicion through insinuation rather than direct accusation, demonstrating how Nigerian society employs indirect speech to police women's autonomy. To add to this, the CEO's disrespect towards Omelogor stems from his tribal disposition as well as his misogynistic view towards women (*Dream* 329), and their discussion, coupled with Omelogor's descent into pornography, is a stark reminder of what women undergo in a patriarchal society.

Register dynamics in Adichie's text further showcase the linguistic dexterity required of diasporic women. The protagonist's code-switching between American English and Nigerian linguistic contexts reveals the performative labour of belonging and identity for a woman (*Dream* 193).

Soyinka, meanwhile, depicts gendered register constraints through institutional and interpersonal exclusion. Using a character's standpoint, Soyinka notes how women navigate spaces where their voices are marginalised or where they are blamed over issues of childlessness or widowhood,

...in a society plagued by rabbit envy, childlessness, a condition that stigmatized women, very often without just cause. Slowly, and with enduring skepticism, scientific explanations were permitted to percolate through, including the blasphemous theory that the cause of this condition could possibly emanate from male deficiency. (*Chronicles* 175)

The phrase "blasphemous theory" reveals how medical discourse becomes gendered speech act, with male-centered explanations initially framed as heretical.

Regarding the interplay of diasporic challenges and societal structures, Adichie's diasporic women confront dual constraints—Nigerian gender expectations abroad and American racialised sexism. The protagonist articulates the transnational gendered surveillance:

Black Woman in Transit was stronger, because 'African' was limiting and 'Black' opened it up more. I thought 'Black' too wide-ranging; 'Black' didn't explain the humiliations of my Nigerian passport, the rejected visas, the embassies leery of a Nigerian traveling just to explore. (*Dream* 272)

This contrasts with Soyinka's depiction of Nigerian women navigating deeply entrenched local gender structures where childbearing defines female worth. Thus, whereas Soyinka's *Chronicles* is primarily set within Nigeria, its characters are connected to the diaspora through professional networks and familial ties, revealing a fractured sense of belonging tied to a corrupt homeland.

Soyinka also exposes the pragmatic dimensions of diasporic return through speech acts that negotiate belonging in Menka's situation, "Unsmiling, and in a flat register, he responded that he came from a culture that could not bear to witness abominations" (*Chronicles* 354). The speech act 'responded' functions as both a cultural assertion and defensive positioning, signalling the speaker's awareness of occupying a contested space between two cultural environments (Ezeoha et al. 1).

Register shifts equally reflect the struggle for identity for Nigerians in the diaspora. One of Adichie's protagonists exemplifies the linguistic adaptation required of African subjects in foreign lands through dramatic register shifts that mirror identity fragmentation, especially in her use of American English (*Dream* 193). The shift from Standard English narrative voice to the character's internal monologue about language acquisition reveals the psychological toll of code-switching. This contrasts markedly with the protagonist's pragmatic acquisition of Hausa for professional and personal advancement in Nigeria after securing a bank job in Abuja (*Dream* 292).

Inversely, Soyinka's text reveals how diasporic returnees navigate between registers as they re-enter Nigerian society. The character, Teribogo, embodies this linguistic instability following his evangelical duties in different parts of Yoruba-speaking West African nations such as Ivory Coast (*Chronicles* 174). To adapt, he picks up the alias of Papa Davina, seemingly working as a harvester of souls.

In *Dream*, the tension between a character's internal monologue and their external dialogue reveals a fragmented identity. This is because Adichie creates protagonists embodying her narrative voice in order to convey the psychological consequences of diasporic experiences. Take Kadiatou's case as an example in the crowded streets of Queens while being disoriented by "the closeness of strangers, the graffiti scrawled on buildings, the long lurching buses" (*Dream* 193). This excerpt illustrates how physical disorientation showcases social dislocation, with the narrative voice capturing the liminal space between unrelated cultures.

### Language as a Site of Resistance and Resilience

Language use, in Soyinka's *Chronicles* and Adichie's *Dream*, is not merely a tool for depicting societal dysfunction; it is actively wielded by characters as a site of resistance and resilience. Language serves as a tool for deception in several ways, especially Papa Davina's blending of spiritual references of Islamic, Zoroastrian and Christian origins:

To you the Almighty God Allah, known in other climes as Ahura Mazda...Let Asha the Good prevail over Druj, the Slave of Evil" (*Chronicles* 440). The preacher uses different cultural and religious bricolage to create neologisms, which conforms with Bhabha's hybridity." (12)

Additionally, the term "Ekumenika Healing Ministry" (a blend of "ecumenical" and "mania") serves as a parody of religious institutions and the ministry, thereby deceiving gullible citizens; just as the fictional 'Codex Seraphinianus' (*Chronicles* 270) illustrates fake bureaucracy in the text.

In the same manner, the awards "Yeoman of the Year" (YoY) and "People's Award for the Common Touch" (PACT) (*Chronicles* 30) satirise the hollow nature of meritocratic honors. Moreover, the framing of politics as spectacle is evident in festivals like "Night of Nights" and titles such as "The Gospel According to Happiness" and "Clash of the Titans," which underline the shallow performative nature of postcolonial leaderships.

Again, Soyinka skillfully weaves Yoruba linguistic elements into his narrative fabric to create layers of meaning inaccessible to outsiders, while simultaneously critiquing power structures in the Nigerian context. The Yoruba proverb embedded within the English narrative,

Ti a ba ri erin igbo k'a gba wipe a ri ajanaku, ka ye so wipe a ri nka nto lo firi" (When we encounter an elephant, let us admit that we have seen the lord of the forest, not offhandedly remark that we saw something flash across our sight)" (*Chronicles* 7)

functions as an implicature that challenges superficial engagement with complex realities. This technique helps in critiquing political acts where the leaders pretend to address societal problems while avoiding substantive engagement with the people.

Contrastively, in the area of dialectal choice, Adichie similarly demonstrates strategic linguistic adaptation through her protagonist's reflection:

In final year, a girl I hardly talked to whose room was on my hostel floor said another girl in my department had said the only reason boys kept chasing me was because I used jazz. (*Dream* 295)

Her conscious adoption of “jazz” instead of ‘ogwu’ (a slang for charm or voodoo) represents linguistic innovation that both acknowledges traditional practices while creating space for modern reinterpretation, representing a pragmatic navigation between cultural authenticity and contemporary relevance (Bamigboye et al.).

Soyinka's deployment of hyperbolic discourse reaches its zenith in Chief Pitan-Payne's visceral rejection of repatriating his son's body:

You want to bring his body home – why? To serve him up for my dinner? Yes, Sir Patriarch Pitan-Payne the Otunba, dearly respected Pop-of-Ages...you had better start setting that table, bring out your best silverware, and spruce up for dinner in your lodge outfit." (*Chronicles* 362)

Soyinka made use of grotesque hyperbole as a form of weaponised absurdity to expose the cannibalistic nature of Nigeria's political system, where citizens are metaphorically consumed by the very institutions meant to protect them. Adichie complements this with her character's stance when being branded as 'rotten' as a woman:

“Rotten,” that word, “rotten.” In primary school they said you were rotten if you talked to boys. “Rotten” was a word smeared in dirtiness and sex and unmentionables all related to sex. Girls were rotten. I never in primary school heard a boy called rotten. (*Dream* 333)

The excerpt echoes the inhumane, chauvinistic treatment of the feminine gender in postcolonial societies, especially where a woman tries to reassert herself and reclaim what is morally and legally hers.

Also, both authors employ narrative techniques that affirm resilience through linguistic creativity. Soyinka's use of fantasy reveals migrants enduring hope amid despair:

comb the desert, sweep the Mediterranean, bring back the migrating hordes, load them into capsules and fire them into space to discover and settle new habitations where, just maybe, redemption awaited. (*Chronicles* 118)

The phrase "just maybe" functions as linguistic testament to persistent hope on the part of the narrator despite systemic dysfunction. Adichie's protagonist similarly navigates identity through language, "How can he now claim I am targeting him because he is a Yoruba man? If I was Yoruba like him, he would not dare disrespect me" (*Dream* 316), revealing how linguistic and ethnic identity becomes both an aspect of vulnerability and a potential source of power (Umar et al.).

In the hands of these authors, language becomes the last uncolonised territory where hope can still take root. Each strategic utterance, each code-switch, each ironic turn represents not just an act of survival but the persistent assertion of humanity against systemic rot. The novels evince instances where institutions pervert language by

oppression, and some individuals reclaim the status quo by resistance (Anyokwu 371; Aboh and Uduk 7).

### Conclusion

This paper has examined how Soyinka and Adichie utilise language as a powerful tool to expose societal dysfunction and corrupt power structures through distinct applications of pragma-stylistics and register variation. Across *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth* and *Dream Count*, these linguistic features collaboratively represent societal decay by capturing institutional corruption, gendered constraints, diasporic issues, and the complexities of linguistic usages. The findings of this study reinforce the theoretical insight that language is a dynamic tool of social action and a powerful marker of identity in postcolonial contexts.

In response to the first objective, pragmatic strategies were shown to play a crucial role in depicting societal dysfunction by allowing the characters to critique or navigate corrupt systems covertly. Second, register variation served as a key mechanism for constructing identities, reflecting the performative labour of belonging for women overseas in *Dream Count*. Register variation also highlights the systemic marginalisation of nonconformists in the political sphere (like Menka) as well as the perception of women within Nigerian patriarchal structures in *Chronicles*. Third, this study found that pragma-stylistic strategies and register variation interact to enhance the portrayal of social disorder by creating a multi-layered linguistic portrait of dysfunction, where register shifts serve as markers of societal rot.

The comparative analysis of *Chronicles* and *Dream Count* reveals both cross-textual similarities and divergences in how these authors linguistically negotiate socio-political realities. While Soyinka's broader, satirical approach uses linguistic mechanisms to lampoon institutional corruption on a grand scale, Adichie's more intimate, character-driven focus reveals the subtle ways in which corruption and social constraints erode individual morality and agency. Despite these differences, both authors use language as a means of resistance, whether through overt challenges to authority or through subtle acts of linguistic resilience.

This study contributes to knowledge by its integrated application of pragma-stylistics and register analysis to contemporary Nigerian literature, offering a more intricate understanding of how stylistic choices reveal ideological and socio-political realities in these texts. Future research could expand upon this framework by exploring other linguistic features, such as metaphor and narrative voice, in a wider range of postcolonial Nigerian texts.

### Works Cited

Aboh, Romanus, and Happiness Uduk. "The Pragmatics of Nigerian English in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Novels." *Journal of Language and Education*, vol. 2, no. 3, Sept. 2016, pp. 6-13, doi:10.17323/2411-7390-2016-2-3-6-13.

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *Dream Count: A Novel*. Random House, 2025.

- Ahmed, Hawzhen Rashadaddin, and Syako Sulaiman Shekho. "Nigerian Nationalism and Institutional Corruption in Wole Soyinka's *Chronicles From the Land of the Happiest People on Earth*." *Twejer*, vol. 7, no. 3, Dec. 2024, pp. 1316-55, doi:10.31918/twejer.2473.48.
- Akabuike, Ifeoma. "The Features of Nigerian English in Nigerian Novels: A Linguistic Appraisal." *SSRN Electronic Journal*, Jan. 2022, doi:10.2139/ssrn.4099811.
- Anyokwu, Christopher. "Unravelling the Nigeria Conundrum in Wole Soyinka's *Chronicles From the Land of the Happiest People on Earth*." *Anyokwu | Ansu Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, 16 Apr. 2025, www.journals.ezenwaohaetorc.org/index.php/AJLLS/article/view/3185/3322
- Attwell, David. "'Just What Gods Do You Serve, if Any?': Wole Soyinka's *Chronicles* and the Destruction of Postcolonial Reason." *English Academy Review*, vol. 39, no. 1, Jan. 2022, pp. 96-104, doi:10.1080/10131752.2022.2111067.
- Bamigboye, Omolade, et al. "How Soyinka Stylises Satiric Humour in *Alápàtá Àpáta*." *European Journal of Literature Language and Linguistics Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1, June 2022, doi:10.46827/ejll.v6i1.339.
- Bhabha, Homi Kharshedji. *The Location of Culture*. Taylor and Francis Group, 2012.
- Biber, Douglas, and Susan Conrad. *Register, Genre, and Style*. Cambridge UP, 2019.
- Chimezie Chika. "'Dream Count' Review: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Novel Psychoanalyses the Intangibility of Dreams - Afrocritik." *Afrocritik - Official Website*, 17 Apr. 2025, afrocritik.com/chimamanda-ngozi-adichie-dream-count-review.
- D'hondt, Sigurd, et al. *Handbook of Pragmatics: 26th Annual Installment*. John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2023.
- Ezeoha, Abel E., et al. "Nigeria and the Practice of Whistleblowing - How Not to Mobilize Citizens' Participation in Anti-Corruption Programme." *Public Integrity*, May 2025, pp. 1-21, doi:10.1080/10999922.2025.2491254.
- Ferrara, Mark S. "The Banality of Power in the Postcolony: Grifters, Tricksters, and Charlatans in Wole Soyinka's *Jero Plays*." *Partial Answers Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, vol. 21, no. 2, June 2023, pp. 257-77, doi:10.1353/pan.2023.a899743.
- Halliday, MAK., et al. *Lexicology and Corpus Linguistics*. Continuum, 2004.
- Hickey, Leo. *The Pragmatics of Style (RLE Linguistics B: Grammar)*. Routledge, 2014.
- Koukposi, Albert Omolegbé, and Moustafa Guezohouezon. "A Corpus Linguistic Analysis of Characterisation in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*." *International Journal of English Linguistics*, vol. 13, no. 6, Nov. 2023, p. 69, doi:10.5539/ijel.v13n6p69.
- Kruger, Haidee, and Bertus Van Rooy. "Register Variation in Written Contact Varieties of English." *English World-Wide: A Journal of Varieties of English*, vol. 39, no. 2, May 2018, pp. 214-42, doi:10.1075/eww.00011.kru.

- Lawal, Nurudeen Adeshina, et al. "War, Cannibalistic Atrocity, and the Illusion of Patriarchal Absolutism in Wole Soyinka's *Madmen and Specialists*." *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3, Sept. 2024, pp. 398–431, doi:10.5325/intelitestud.26.3.0398.
- Leedy, Paul D., et al. *Practical research. Planning and Design*. 11th ed., Bolton: Pearson, 2018, doi:10.37074/jalt.2018.1.2.15.
- Ndimele, Ozo-Mekuri. *Studies in Nigerian Linguistics*. M and J Grand Orbit Communications, 2016.
- Onunkwo, Chibuzo, and Chigbu Andrew Chigbu. "Lacan's Perspective on American Dream in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*." *Journal of Language and Cultural Education*, vol. 12, no. 1, Oct. 2024, pp. 45–51, doi:10.2478/jolace-2024-0005.
- Soyinka, Wole. *Chronicles From the Land of the Happiest People on Earth: A Novel*. Vintage, 2021.
- Tunca, Daria. "Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's New Book *Dream Count* Explores Love in All Its Complicated Messiness." *The Conversation*, theconversation.com/chimamanda-ngozi-adichies-new-book-dream-count-explores-love-in-all-its-complicated-messiness- 251822.
- Umar, Mohammed Abdullahi, et al. "Rethinking Financial Incentive for Whistleblowing in High Corruption Contexts: Lessons from Nigeria." *Journal of Financial Crime*, June 2025, doi:10.1108/jfc-06-2024-0171.
- Vandenbroucke, Mieke, et al. *Handbook of Pragmatics: 27th Annual Installment*. John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2024.