

**AN EXAMINATION OF SENTENCES AND THEIR APPROPRIATENESS IN
SELECTED NIGERIAN CHILDREN'S NOVELS**

BY

SHEKAMANG, GLORIA PHILIP

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**BEING A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES,
AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY ZARIA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN
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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES,
FACULTY OF ARTS,
AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY,
ZARIA**

APRIL, 2015

DECLARATION

This research work or any part has not been presented in any form to the university or any other body whether for the purpose of assessment, publication or for any other purpose. I confirm that the intellectual content of this work is the result of my own efforts and of no other person.

SHEKAMANG GLORIA PHILIP Sign..... Date.....

P13AREN8015

CERTIFICATION

This research titled “An Examination of Sentences and their appropriateness in selected Nigerian Children’s Novels” by Shekamang Gloria Philip meets the regulations governing the award of Master Degree of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and is approved for its contribution to knowledge.

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Chairman, Supervisory Committee

Sign.....

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Dean, School of Postgraduate Studies

Sign

Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty, my beloved husband Philip Shekamang and my lovely children Kaboshio, Nenadi, and Kachidi.

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I would like to acknowledge the immense contributions of the following towards the success of this work. First, I acknowledge the providence of God Almighty Who kept me safe as I plied the Kaduna – Zaria road throughout the duration of this programme.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis has examined sentences and their appropriateness in selected Nigerian children's novels. The novels include *An African Night Entertainment* by Cyprian Ekwensi, *Tales out of School* by Nkem Nwankwo, *Akpan and the Smugglers* by Rosemary Uwemedimo and *Adventures of Souza* by Kola Onadipe. Using the Traditional Grammar model, sentences from these texts were classified according to structure and according to function and then analysed. It was found that there is a preponderant use of simple, compound and complex sentences, while the use of the compound complex sentence is very minimal. It was also found that sentence fragments were only used in dialogue situations. Also in the course of the research, children between ages 9 to 11 selected from five public schools and five private schools in Kaduna metropolis were asked to read and interpret the various types of sentences elicited from the selected novels and it was found that while the simple, compound and complex sentences were easily read and understood, the longer compound complex sentences posed a problem to the children

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

Western Education was introduced into Nigeria by Christian missionaries around the middle of the nineteenth century. These missionaries remained in charge of dictating the direction and pace of language education from that period to the dawn of independence. They believed that the African child (and by implication, the Nigerian child) was best taught in his native language (Hair, 1967: 6) and that the interests of Christianity would be best served by actually propagating the religion in indigenous languages. As a result, language education began to focus more on the teaching and learning of indigenous languages.

From the early eighties, the Nigerian government gradually began to intervene in education with the view of according English language a lot more prominence in its policy. In 1996, the National Policy on Education (NPE) stipulated that introduction to literacy in Nigeria begins with pre-primary education. The language of instruction at that level is the child's mother tongue or language of the immediate environment. Exposure to English language as a school subject begins at the primary level while the language of instruction remains the child's mother tongue or language of the immediate environment.

This remains the status quo for the first three years or the lower primary level. From the fourth year, English language assumes the role of medium of instruction and continues throughout the formal school years. Through primary education, it is anticipated that children would become literate in English and perhaps a Nigerian language. It is expected that the Nigerian child should be proficient in English language, since it is obvious that English is "the

means by which the Nigerian child has access to the general pool of knowledge and the modern skills which are essential to development” (Okebukola, 2004:11).

The ability to read is critical to survival in the modern society and so should be cultivated early enough to become part of a child’s routine. Andzayi (2002) reports that children who learned to read early in life had been read to and had someone who answered their questions. Children who read along with parents or teachers from their earliest days through primary school years often have no difficulty with beginning reading.

The first three years of primary school are very crucial to the language development of the child. During this period, the child starts to learn to read independently. This is also the period that the child develops reading habits that will guide him or her through reading later in life. So, a good primary school language learning curriculum makes provision for both the development of reading skills in the classroom environment and encouragement of reading for pleasure. These days, reading as a form of relaxation is becoming less appealing to our young ones due to facilities like computer games, cartoons, the internet and cable network television.

Authors distinguish children’s literature from adult literature because each type of literature is targeted at different sets of readers with different intent. In terms of content, structure and language, adult literature is usually laden with complex sentence structure, plot, idiomatic expressions, proverbs, riddles and imagery. This is usually designed to task the imagination of an audience who is considered intellectually and mentally mature. On the other hand, children are considered to be less exposed and so cannot be expected to create the same meaning out of situations depicted in adult literature. Owing to the fact that the vocabulary of a child is on the whole quite limited in comparison to that of an average adult, the pieces of literature meant for

children must reflect the use of simple words and expressions which would be commensurate with their level of language development.

It should be pointed out, quickly, that on the surface, the term ‘children’s literature’ may appear decidedly unproblematic, but the imprecision of the word ‘children’ itself calls for caution and bids us pause, if only for a brief moment, to define it and the concepts of ‘literature’ and ‘language’ which this study tries to construct around it.

According to Haviland (1968), all potential or actual young literates, from the instant they can, with joy, leaf through a picture book or listen to a story read aloud, to the age of perhaps 14 or 15, may be called children. Thus “children” include “young people.” Two considerations blur the definition. Today’s young teenager is an anomaly: his environment pushes him toward a precocious maturity. Thus, though he may read children’s books, he also, and increasingly, reads adult books. Also, the child survives in many adults. As a result, some children’s books (e.g., Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, A. A. Milne’s *Winnie-the-Pooh*, and, at one time, Munro Leaf’s *Story of Ferdinand*) are also read widely by adults.

Thus, there is today, a fundamental imprecision when we talk about ‘children’ in relation to literature. In the term children’s literature, the more important word is literature. For the most part, the adjective imaginative is to be felt as preceding it. It comprises that vast, expanding territory recognisably staked out for a junior audience, which does not mean that it is not also intended for seniors (Pellowski, 1998). Adults admittedly, make up part of its population: children’s books are written, selected for publication, sold, bought, reviewed, and often read aloud by grown-ups. As White (1997) reminds us, sometimes they seem also to be written with adults in mind, as for example the popular French *Astérix* series of comics parodying history. Nevertheless, by and large there is a sovereign republic of children’s literature.

Cameron (1990) has added five colonies or dependencies to this category: first, “appropriated” adult books satisfying two conditions – they must generally be read by children and they must have sharply affected the course of children's literature (Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, the collection of folktales by the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, the folk-verse anthology *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (“The Boy's Magic Horn”), edited by Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano, and William Blake's *Songs of Innocence*); second, books the audiences of which seem not to have been clearly conceived by their creators (or their creators may have ignored, as irrelevant, such a consideration) but that are now fixed stars in the child's literary firmament (Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and Charles Perrault's fairy tales; third, picture books and easy-to-read stories commonly subsumed under the label of literature but qualifying as such only by relaxed standards (though Beatrix Potter and several other writers do nonetheless qualify); fourth, first quality children's versions of adult classics (Walter de la Mare's *Stories from the Bible*, perhaps Howard Pyle's retellings of the Robin Hood ballads and tales; finally, the domain of once oral “folk” material that children have kept alive – folktales and fairy tales; fables, sayings, riddles, charms, tongue twisters; folksongs, lullabies, hymns, carols, and other simple poetry; rhymes of the street, the playground, the nursery; and, supremely, *Mother Goose* and nonsense verse.

Also, there is a sizeable number of children's story books by Nigerian authors. A compilation of a bibliography of children's books published in Nigeria since 1960 and which was done by the Nigerian Book Development Council, shows that over three hundred books were published in a single year. The authors fall into two categories, namely, those who are established novelists but who also write children's prose fiction, like Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi and Onuorah Nzekwu, and those who write exclusively for children, like Kola Onadipe,

Christie Ade-Ajayi and Kemi Morgan. Some of the children's prose fiction are modern stories like Nzekwu's *Eze Goes to School* (1963) and Christie Ade-Ajayi's *Me, Our Naughty Little Brother*. They are stories about children's everyday experiences at home and at school put in contexts which they can easily empathise with. The majority of the stories are, however, folktales straight from traditional culture with slight modifications with modern setting and more contemporary characters. Examples include Kemi Morgan's *How Tortoise Captured the Elephant* (1966), Ekwensi's *The Boa* (1966), Iroaganachi's *The Sunbird Drum* (1977) and Kola Onadipe's *The Magic Land of the Shadows* (1970).

From the above, it is clear that children's literature can be categorised in the following ways:

According to genres: Genres are categories. It may be determined by technique of writing, tone content or length. It has the following genres:

Picture books including board books, concept books (for teaching alphabets and counting), pattern books and wordless books.

Traditional literature: it has many sub-genres such as myths, fables, ballads, folk music, legend, fairy tales and traditional stories.

Fiction: Fiction has fantasy tales and realistic fiction as its sub-genres. There is also the school story sub-genre, which is unique to children's literature. It has the boarding school as a setting. The data for this study are selected from children's novels, which actually fall under this sub-genre. The four novels are good examples of the realistic fiction sub-genre. It is common among young readers because of their intriguing story like nature.

With realistic fiction, children identify with real characters and cling to storyline from page to page. Here, 'what will happen next' or 'what will I do in this situation' keeps children

turning the pages. Also, the books selected are very common among Nigerian school children because they have been variously recommended as reader boosters by curriculum planners.

Non-fiction books provide information and serve as good supplements to textbooks in every subject.

According to Age: Children's literature is for listeners and readers up to about age 12. Here, it is used in a sense that excludes young adult fiction. The Lantern catalogue (2008) also grades children's literature as that meant for ages 0-13. This age range is further sub-divided according to the divergent interests of children.

This sub-division with the corresponding types of literatures appropriate for the age group is as follows:

0-5 years: picture books are considered appropriate for pre readers of this age.

5-7 years: these are beginning readers. Books for this category are designed to help the child develop his or her reading skills.

7-12 years: at this age, children are introduced to chapter books.

The short chapter books are appropriate for ages 8-9 while longer chapters are more suitable for ages 9-12. This age group is the focus of this study. In Nigeria, children within this age bracket (that is ages 9-11) are either in late primary classes or in the junior secondary classes.

13-18 years are classified as young adults and so young adult fiction is recommended as appropriate for this age group.

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

The increasingly growing prominence that the English language has assumed in Nigeria stresses the need for the average Nigerian child to acquire or learn and use the language. Nigeria as a multilingual nation depends on English language as one of the avenues to bridge communication gap among her multiple ethnic groups. In the mass media, at school, in shopping centres, internet cafes, sports stadia, in churches and other public places, English language serves as the medium of communication. Moreover, it is Nigeria's official language and a compulsory prerequisite to higher education in the country. Hence, the need to achieve proficiency in the use of English language is mandatory.

Literature is a subject that enables the learner to harness the power of correct language and in the case of this study, English language. Thus the need to teach children's literature to children. However, it is not anything that is labeled children's literature that performs this function. Some children's literature books are not appropriate in terms of the way language is used to express meaning and ideas. Therefore, there is the need to explore the way language is used in literature books written specifically for children. This is necessary in order to determine whether or not these books are suited to the needs of children particularly with reference to the types of sentences that are used in them.

Indeed, applying the concept of child language development in creating literatures meant for children has become paramount for writers of children's literature if such must remain in the category of "children's books". Unfortunately, however, investigating the detailed application of this concept in children's literature is an area that has not been adequately studied, although there are a good number of child language development studies now. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the structural composition of sentences used in selected children's story books.

1.2 Research Questions

The researcher has embarked on this study with the aim of seeking answers to the following questions.

1. What sentence types are predominantly used in story books meant for children in the upper primary school level (that is, ages 9-11)?
2. Are there sentence fragments such as phrases, clauses, interjections, interrogatives?
3. Is the sentence use commensurate to the stage of language development of the group it is meant for?
4. What implication(s) does the sentence use in such books have on the language learning process?

1.3 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to describe the structure of sentences in story books meant for beginning readers in the upper primary school (ages 9-11) using the traditional grammar approach. By so doing, the study hopes to show the underlying grammatical structure on which the language used is built.

The objectives of this study are:

1. examining the types of sentences used in children's story books;
2. analysing whether such sentence use is commensurate with the level of language development of the group for which it is meant; and
3. assessing the implications of the sentences used on the language learning process.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research work is entitled. “An Examination of Sentences and their Appropriateness in Selected Nigerian Children’s Novels”. The study is significant in a number of ways.

First of all, the choice of literature for study is informed by its importance in mastering language. It is therefore assumed that anybody who is good at literature should be able to communicate effectively and efficiently, and that, of course, is the ultimate goal of teaching language.

The research also targets, children because the training of an accomplished or mature citizen or person starts from childhood. Thus the central position of children’s books in this study. Moreover, the study focuses on the structure of sentences because of the undeniable place of sentences in the creation of meaning. In fact, in grammar, it is impossible to tell the part of speech a word is until you see it at work in a sentence, the sentence is therefore the scale for measuring the meaning of a word. The decision to undertake this study was borne out of the desire to highlight the importance of imbibing good reading culture in our young ones in order to improve their proficiency in the use of English language.

Again, it is envisaged that experts in developmental psycholinguistics will find the suggestions in this research very useful as they will help in resolving the challenges being experienced by adults in the learning and usage of English language. This is a situation which seems to be getting worse as the years go by, causing a lot of concern amongst scholars in the field of language teaching in Africa.

Also, the findings of this research will be applicable to primary school teachers, not only of English Language, but also of other subjects, as they will discover ways in which some authors of children’s books have been able to communicate effectively with children.

Subsequently, these teachers may emulate such techniques for the effective teaching of such subjects. With the realisation that an underlying relationship exists between the type of sentence used and the language learning speed of children, the findings of this study will help English teachers and administrators of primary schools in selecting and recommending reading texts to parents to buy for their children – both for school work and for leisure reading at home.

Third, it is hoped that the findings of this research would enable stakeholders in Nigerian education – language policy makers, educational administrators, teachers in schools, book writers and publishers – to have better understanding of the genesis of the problems of low reading ability, poor command of English language and, ultimately, poor academic performance in Nigerian schools. From such a perspective, they will be able to make adjustments to improve on the status quo so as to salvage the falling standard of education in the country.

Moreover, it is anticipated that the findings of this study would enable reading societies, journalists, authors, publishers, parents and the government in reviving the dying culture of reading amongst Nigerian youths of the present generation. If massive and qualitative education is being seen as a way out of Nigeria's economic problems, then, that revival must start from the grassroots where there could be the rekindling of good reading and study habits in primary and secondary school children through the use of simple and easy-to-understand story books for children of their age.

Furthermore, this study is expected to provide a veritable material for further research in the field of child language development. This will in turn be of benefit to scholars involved in child language studies in Nigerian universities.

Finally, anyone interested in reading and personal research, especially with the intention of improving proficiency in English Language amongst young people today will benefit from the findings of this research work.

1.5 Scope and Delimitation

This study is limited to the structural analysis of sentences used in children's novels. These books are selected from classics meant for young readers in the upper primary school and the junior secondary school levels. Also, these novels have at one time or the other been selected as reader boosters by curriculum planners in Nigeria. They include:

- *An African Night's Entertainment* by Cyprian Ekwensi
- *Tales Out of School* by Nkem Nwankwo
- *Adventures of Souza* by Kola Onadipe
- *Akpan and the Smugglers* by Rosemary Uwemedimo

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter seeks to review writings on a number of topics related to the topic of this research. These include Language, Child Language Development Process, Language Acquisition, Language Learning, the Language Learning Process, Grammar, Structure of the Sentence, Writing for Children and Children's Literature in Nigeria.

2.1. Language

Language is characterised by a set of vocal sounds which can be decoded. These are produced by speech organs such as tongue, larynx. The vocal sounds produced by the vocal organs are used in various systematic and rule-governed combinations. Language is thus a human phenomenon that has form which can be described in terms of the units of sound (phonemes), words, morphemes, phrases, sentences and paragraph or discourse. Form refers to the means by which sounds are connected with meaning in language. Language is unique in the sense that it has its own structure, its own system of organising its component units into meaningful patterns. In other words, there are rules governing the organisation of sentences such as rules of tense and concord. These are also the rules for organising discourse.

Language does not exist in a vacuum. It is always contextualised. That is, it is situated within a socio-cultural setting or community. Thus, there is a necessary connection between language and society. It is a means of expressing a society's tradition and culture; so language exists as an aspect of a culture (Bloomfield 1933, Crystal 1971, Jespersen 1922).

Language is the object of linguistics as well as literature. As a medium of literary expression, language is ‘an enabling factor, indeed the main pillar of the literary edifice, a vital affective tool which aids the status of literature as a transitive enterprise’ (Osundare 2003:11). Thus the study of literary language can be quite rewarding as it is capable of illuminating a given literary text. As Fowler (1977:13) has most persuasively put it:

A writer’s technique is, immediately and ultimately, a craft in language: as Lodge says: whatever he does, qua novelist, he does in and through language. The structure of the novel and whatever it communicates are under the direct control of the novelist’s manipulation of language, and concomitantly, his desire and ability to realise and release the technique from verbal clues deposited by the author.

An adequate knowledge of how language works is likely to lead to a more rewarding understanding of literature, including children’s literature. The study of how language works is the domain of the linguist, while the appreciation of language in literature – that is, the imaginative or creative use of language – is the concern of literary aesthetes. In this study, our concern is with language from the perspective of the literary aesthete.

However, the view of linguists as regarding language will also be incorporated into our analysis. This is because both literary and linguistic scholarships have a lot to contribute to the apprehension of the language of children’s literature. As Osundare (2003) maintains, there can be no literature, talk less of criticism, ‘the meta-language in which it is analysed and assessed’, without language. As we said above, an adequate knowledge of how language works is likely to lead to a more rewarding understanding of literature just as some knowledge about the mechanical behaviour of engines may make one more confident, more perceptive driver.

In its own turn, literature enriches language ideationally, lexically, and structurally, extends its expressive and cognitive frontiers, and creates new possibilities where there was none before. According to Osundare (2003):

For the most remarkable writers are those who have shaken themselves loose of the conventional bondage of language, broken the existing linguistic rules, thereby creating a need for ones. Some writers, in short, have met language crawling and forced it to march (8).

And it is the business of the linguistic critic, as much as it is the concern of the literary critic, to investigate, analyse, and understand that vital “alchemy by which the artist transmutes the base metal of everyday language into the gold of art” (Spencer 1964: xii).

2.2 Child Language Development Process

Language development, according to Galpo (2006), is the process by which children come to understand and communicate language during early childhood. From birth up to the age of five, children develop language at a very rapid pace. The stages of language development are universal among humans. Yule (2001:176) states that “All normal children, regardless of culture, develop language at roughly the same time, along much the same schedule”. He further suggests that language acquisition schedule (for children) has the same basis as the biologically determined development of motor skills like sitting, standing, walking and using of hands. However, in general, girls develop language at a faster rate than boys (de Villiers, 1978:125).

More than any other aspect of development, language development reflects the growth and maturation of the brain. Through daily interaction with other language users, children learn how to use language to convey messages, to express feelings, and to achieve intentions which enable them to function in a society. Muspratt et al (1997) argue that the language which the members of a specific community use reflects the values and beliefs that are embedded in their culture and ideologies. In the same way, the culture and dominant ideologies within learning contexts also have a strong impact on the learners' perceptions of the language learning process. In other words, language is a cultural tool which provides the means for members of a group to

retain their shared identity and to relate with one another. Through the process of language learning, parents socialise their children into socially and culturally appropriate ways of behaving, speaking, and thinking. This social interaction helps build intimacy between adults and infants, enhances infants' interests in their environment, and provides them with stimulation for later language development (Burkato and Daehler, 1995).

Language development is of two kinds. There is the receptive language development on the one hand and the expressive language development on the other. The receptive, which is the ability to comprehend language, usually develops faster than the expressive, that is, the ability to communicate. Also, two different stages of language development are recognised in children when it comes to vocalisation. These are the pre-linguistic and the linguistic stage.

2.2.1 The Pre-linguistic Stage

This is the stage that comes before the development of speech. It is also called the pre-word or pre-speech stage. This stage spans from birth to about 8-10 months when the first words appear. The pre-linguistic stage of language development begins with the birth-cry which is an impulsive noise let out by the infant immediately after delivery (Surakat, 2001:34). There are other forms of cries by infants which are used or intended for communication as identified by Wolff (1966). They include “hunger cry, pain cry and the mad or rage cry”. There is also the fake cry which appears from the third week.

The next stage is the babbling stage which starts at about the age of three months to about ten months and is usually characterised by three stages of sound production which begins with cooing, followed by lalling and then echolalia (Surakat, 2001:35). On the contrary, according to Hoff (2001:101), infants start cooing at around the sixth to the eighth week of age. Babies coo when they are happy and contented. Cooing is characterised by back, lip rounding vowels while

lalling features mostly lateral sounds. Echolalia begins at about the eighth month and here the child mimics the speech sounds around him. At this stage, he is getting set for true speech or the linguistic stage.

2.2.2 The Linguistic Stage

At the beginning of this stage, children's first words emerge. The exact period this occurs varies from child to child depending on “socio-cultural, psychological, neurological and other factors” (Surakat, 2001:36, Steinberg, 1987:5). However, studies have shown that the emergence of true speech starts between 10-12 months of age and may last up to the eighteenth month. (Yule, 2001:179; Hoff, 2001:124). The first words are also called “holophrase” because children's productive vocabulary usually contains only one or two very simple words at a time, and they seem to utter single words to represent the whole meaning of an entire sentence (Shaffer, 1999). Children's first words are usually very different from adults' speech in terms of the pronunciation, and these first words are most frequently nominals, that is, labels for objects, people, or events (Bukatko and Daehler, 1995). In addition, children's first words are quite contextual. They may use a single word to identify something or somebody under different conditions (such as saying “ma” when seeing mother entering the room), to label objects linked to someone (saying “ma” when seeing mother's lipstick), or to express needs (saying “ma” and extending arms to receive a hug from the mother). In the initial stage of the first-word utterance, children produce words slowly. However, once they have achieved a productive vocabulary of ten words, children begin to add new words at a faster rate, called “vocabulary spurt” (Barrett, 1985).

By their second birthday, children begin to combine words and to generate simple sentences (Bukatko and Daehler, 1995). Initially, the first sentences are often two-word

sentences, gradually evolving into longer ones. Children's first sentences have been called "telegraphic speech" because these sentences resemble the abbreviated language of a telegram. Like the telegram, children's first sentences contain mainly the essential content words, such as verbs and nouns. However, they may omit the function words, such as articles, prepositions, pronouns and auxiliary verbs (Berk, 2000).

Although children's first sentences seem to be ungrammatical in terms of adult standards, they are far more than strings of random words combined. Instead, they have a structure of their own. A characteristic of the structure is that some words, called "pivot words," are used in a mostly fixed position, and are combined with other less frequently used words referred to as "open words," which can be easily replaced by other words (Braine, 1976). For example, a child may use "more" as a pivot word, and create sentences such as, "more cookie, "more car," and "more doggie."

Creativity also plays an important role in this first sentence stage. Research has revealed that many of children's early sentences, such as "allgone cookie," and "more read" are creative statements which do not appear in adult speech (Shaffer, 1999). Like the first-word creation, context plays an important role in understanding children's first sentences because both require context so that understanding can occur. As children's use of simple sentences increases, the amount of single-word use declines, and their sentences become increasingly elaborate and sophisticated (Glover and Bruning, 1987).

By the time children are three-and-a-half to four years of age, they have already acquired many important skills in language learning. They have a fairly large working vocabulary and an understanding of the function of words in referring to things and actions. They also have a command of basic conversational skills, such as talking about a variety of topics with different

audiences. Nevertheless, language development, especially vocabulary growth and conversational skills, continues (Glover and Bruning, 1987). It is generally agreed that vocabulary learning is not accomplished through formal instruction. Instead, the meaning of new words is usually acquired when children interact with more skilled language users during such natural situations as riding, eating, and playing (Beals and Tabors, 1995). From these activities, children are able to construct hypotheses when hearing unfamiliar verbal strings. They then test these hypotheses by further observation or by making up new sentences themselves. Finally, through feedback and further exposure, children revise and confirm their hypotheses (Bukatko and Daehler, 1995).

The development of conversational skills also requires children's active interaction with other people. To communicate with others effectively, children need to learn how to negotiate, take turns, and make relevant as well as intelligible contributions (Schickedanz et al, 1998). Through interacting with more experienced language users, children modify and elaborate their sentences in response to requests for more information (Peterson and McCabe, 1992). As children interact with their playmates, their conversations usually include a series of turn-taking dialogues (Glover and Bruning, 1987). In addition, young children learn to adjust their messages to their listeners' level of understanding (Shatz and Gelman, 1973).

By the time children get enrolled into the elementary school, their oral language is very similar to that of adults (Shaffer, 1999). They have acquired the basic syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic elements of their native language. Hoff (2001:254) says that "...at this point, they have essentially mastered the grammar of their language". However some syntactic constructions have been discovered to cause difficulty even for older children. The result of Chomsky's (1969) study on understanding of co-reference relations in complex sentences in older children (ages 5-

10) shows that children find it difficult interpreting correctly sentences with such complex structures. For instance:

- (i) John promised Bill to go (children have difficulty figuring out who does the going);
- (ii) John is easy to see (who is easy to see and who does the seeing);
- (iii) The zebra touched the deer after jumping the fence (who did the jumping, the zebra or the deer).

Chomsky also discovered that children often interpret the noun phrase that is closest to the verb as the subject of that verb. This works at times but definitely not for all sentences as is the case in “John promised Bill to go”, whereby it is “John who will go and not “Bill”. To explain this, Chomsky (1969) argues that children of this age bracket “...rely, as young children do, on strategies that look to meaning, context, or surface properties of the sentence for clues to sentence interpretation”.

Children do not possess the adult syntactic system and so would not interpret sentences based on purely linguistic principles rather their interpretation of texts is based on the meaning of the surface features of the sentences. Contrary to this view, Sherman and Lust (1993) argue that children have full adult knowledge but due to performance limitations are unable to display this knowledge. Either way, it is clear that child language has special features that make it different from that of the adult. These special features ought to be observed while writing for children.

2.3 Language Acquisition versus Language Learning

Language acquisition, according to Garnham (1985), refers to the natural process through which language is learnt. In other words, it refers to “the natural process of internalising linguistic

codes”. Chomsky (1975) declares that it is “The process of natural assimilation; a product of real interactions between people where the learner is an active participant”. Yule (2007:191) also states that: “the term ‘acquisition’, when used of language, refers to the gradual development of ability in a language by using it naturally in communicative situations”.

The process of language acquisition for young children is built upon a variety of experiences. From birth, parents and caregivers involve infants in communicative exchanges. These exchanges accompany activities shared by adults and infants, such as bathing, feeding, and dressing. During these activities, parents and caregivers comment on the infants' actions and often repeat and exaggerate their vocalisations (Fernald and Mazzie, 1991). Such communicative exchanges between adults and infants function as a form of social interaction.

Language learning, on the other hand, is not communicative. It is the result of direct instruction in the rules of language. Yule (2007:191) says language learning applies to a conscious process of accumulating knowledge of the vocabulary and grammar of a language. It certainly is not an age-appropriate activity for very young children. Mathematics, for instance is learned, not acquired. In language learning, students have conscious knowledge of the new language and can talk about that knowledge. They can fill in the blanks on a grammar page. Research has shown, however, that knowing grammar rules does not necessarily result in good speaking or writing. A student who has memorised the rules of the language may be able to succeed on a standardised test of English language but may not be able to speak or write correctly.

There is an important distinction made by linguists between language acquisition and language learning. Children acquire language through a subconscious process during which they are unaware of grammatical rules. This is the way they acquire their first language. They get a

feel for what is and what is not correct. In order to acquire language, the child needs a source of natural communication. The emphasis is on the text of the communication and not on the form. In contrast, language learning usually involves some form of formal instruction (Haynes, 2005).

2.4 Grammar - Sentence Structure

In linguistics, grammar is the set of structural rules that govern the composition of sentences, phrases and words in any natural language. Every language has rules that govern what is acceptable or permissible and what is not in terms of usage. The grammar of a language is concerned with all the various things that make up the rules of a language. McGregor (1971) states that:

Grammar is nothing else but the rules and observations drawn from the common speech of mankind which teach us to speak and pronounce, to spell and write with propriety and exactness according to the custom of the native speakers.

Every native speaker of a particular language unconsciously acquires the rules of using that language. This means that the vast majority of information regarding usage is not learnt by conscious study or instruction but by observing other speakers and participating in the act of using the language. However, a second language learner requires a greater degree of explicit instruction for a better understanding, proficiency and effective use.

Aliyu (2006:179) points out that the term ‘grammar’ is often used in both broad and narrow senses. In the broad sense, he states that grammar covers “the features of sounds, words, formation and arrangement of words and idiomatic expressions considered systematically as a whole.... in the narrow sense, grammar refers to syntax which is concerned essentially with the study of the order of words in sentences and the manner through which such relations among words are shown.” The narrow sense captures the sense in which grammar is used in this study.

This is because some of the other aspects of grammar included in the broad sense is outside the scope of this study. The focus of this research is on sentence structure and this is subsumed under syntax. What then is a sentence?

2.4.1 The Sentence

There have been varying definitions of the sentence. Traditional grammarians characterise it as “the expression of a complete thought. The Bloomfieldians point to the structural autonomy of the notion of the sentence and see it as a unit not included by virtue of any grammatical construction in any larger linguistic form (Crystal, 2007:414).

Recent definitions of the sentence incline more to the Bloomfieldians’ notion. Crystal (1982:200) sees the sentence as the “largest unit recognised by the linguist as being capable of accounting for the range of grammatical classes and structures which turn up in a language”. Aliyu (2006:180) states that the English sentence is a “grammatical form which can be analysed into constituents such as the noun and verb phrases but the sentence itself is not a constituent of any larger unit”. In addition, Crystal (2007:414) succinctly puts it as “the largest structural unit in terms of which the grammar of a language is organised”.

However, describing the sentence as the largest unit of grammatical analysis does not imply that there are no units larger than the sentence. Research has also attempted to discover larger grammatical units like the paragraph, discourse or text but so far not much has been uncovered when compared to the sentence whose constituent parts are “stateable in formal distributional terms” (Crystal, 2007:414). For the purpose of this study, a sentence is regarded as a group of words that expresses a complete unit of thought through a logically related subject and predicate. It must also be introduced by a capital letter and should end with any of the end marks (. ?!).

2.4.2 Parts of a Sentence

According to Corder and Ruszkiwicz (1985: 30), a written sentence could be defined as one or more words, punctuated as an independent unit, that say something. It is made complete either by its grammatical form and meaning or in a special circumstance by the context in which it appears. For example:

- Chinua Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart* (complete grammatical form).
- Frogs and toads are reptiles (complete grammatical form)
- Crazy! (Complete in context).

Every sentence has two essential parts: the subject and the predicate. The subject of a sentence is the part about which something is being said. (Capital Community College, 2008). It is the starting or focal point of a sentence, the noun or noun equivalent that states what the sentence is about. Here are some examples:

- The flower bloomed.
- Birds fly.
- The girls in the team were all good students.

The underlined parts of the examples above indicate the subject of each of the sentences. The predicate of a sentence is the part, which says something about the subject. Consider the examples below.

- Mary sobbed.
- Joe plays the piano well.
- Joan told everyone about the wreck.

The predicates are the underlined.

The subject and predicate both have two kinds: simple and complete. The simple subject is the main word in the complete subject. The simple predicate, or verb, is the main word or group of words in the complete predicate. The complete subject is the main word and all its modifiers. The complete predicate is the verb and all its modifiers. (Capital Community College, 2008).

Consider the sentences below:

- The four new students arrived early.

Complete subject: The four new students

Simple subject: Students

- Sara's sister took us bowling yesterday.

Simple predicate: Took

Complete predicate: Took us bowling

2.4.3 Classification of Sentences

Sentences are classified according their forms (i.e. their structure) and according to their functions. For types according to form, there are four types namely: simple sentence, compound sentence, complex sentence and the compound-complex sentence. For types according to function, there are four types also and they include the declarative sentence, the interrogative, the imperative and the exclamatory sentence.

2.4.4 Sentence Types According to Form or Structure

Every clause is, in a sense, a miniature sentence. A simple sentence contains only a single clause, while a compound sentence, a complex sentence, or a compound-complex sentence contains at least two clauses (Corder et al, 1985:31).

i. The Simple Sentence

The most basic type of sentence is the simple sentence, which contains only one clause. A simple sentence can be as short as one word:

Run!

However, the sentence usual has a subject as well as a predicate and both the subject and the predicate may have modifiers. All of the following are simple sentences, because each contains only one clause:

Melt!

Ice melts.

The ice melts quickly.

“The ice on the river melts quickly in the warm March sun. Lying exposed without its blanket of snow, the ice on the river melts quickly in the warm March sun”. From the examples above, a simple sentence can be quite long – it will be erroneous to think that the difference between a simple sentence and a compound sentence or a complex sentence simply lies in their lengths.

The most natural sentence structure is the simple sentence: it is the first kind, which children learn to speak, and it remains by far the most common sentence in the spoken language of people of all ages. In written work, simple sentences can be very effective for grabbing a reader's attention or for summing up an argument. When simple sentences are used, transitional phrases should be added to connect them to the surrounding sentences (Megginson, 2007).

ii. The Compound Sentence

A compound sentence consists of two or more independent clauses (or simple sentences) joined by coordinating conjunctions like "and," "but," and "or". Example:

“Canada is a rich country” is a simple sentence.

“Still, it has many poor people” is a simple too.

These two sentences can be joined by means of conjunction to get a compound sentence:

“Canada is a rich country, but it still has many poor people”.

Compound sentences are very natural for English speakers – children learn to use them early to connect their ideas and to avoid pausing (and allowing an adult to interrupt). “Today at school, Mr. Adams brought in his pet rabbit, and he showed it to the class, and I got to pet it, and Kate held it, and we coloured pictures of it, and it ate part of my carrot at lunch, and”

Of course, this is an extreme example, but when compound sentences are over-used in written work, the writing might seem immature. A compound sentence is most effective when used to create a sense of balance or contrast between two (or more) equally important pieces of information. Example:

Kano has better clubs, but Kaduna has better cinemas.

(Here the fact that Kano has clubs that are better than the one in question is balanced by the fact that Kaduna has better cinemas).

2.4.5 Special Cases of Compound Sentences

There are two special types of compound sentences, which you might want to note. First, rather than joining two simple sentences together, a conjunction sometimes joins two complex sentences, or one simple sentence and one complex sentence. In this case, the sentence is called a compound-complex sentence (Megginson, 2007). Coordinating.

iii. Compound-complex:

The package arrived in the morning, but the courier left before I could check the contents.

The second special case involves punctuation. It is possible to join two originally separate sentences into a compound sentence using a semicolon instead of a coordinating conjunction:

Sir John A. Macdonald had a serious drinking problem; when sober, however, he could be a formidable foe in the House of Commons. Usually, a conjunctive adverb like "however" or "consequently" will appear near the beginning of the second part, but it is not required:

The sun rises in the east; it sets in the west.

iv. The Complex Sentence

A complex sentence contains one independent clause and at least one dependent clause. Unlike a compound sentence, however, a complex sentence contains clauses, which are not equal. Consider the following examples:

Simple sentence:

My friend invited me to a party. I do not want to go.

Compound sentence:

My friend invited me to a party but I do not want to go.

Complex sentence.

Although my friend invited me to a party, I do not want to go.

In the first example, there are two separate simple sentences: "My friend invited me to a party" and "I do not want to go." The second example joins them together into a single sentence with the coordinating conjunction "but" which joins words or clauses of equal grammatical weight. However, both parts could still stand as independent sentences – they are entirely equal, and the reader cannot tell which is most important. In the third example, however, the sentence has changed quite a bit.

The first clause, “Although my friend invited me to a party,” has become incomplete, or a dependent clause. According to Megginson (2007), a complex sentence is very different from a simple sentence or a compound sentence because it makes clear which ideas are most important.

Consider the example below:

My friend invited me to a party. I do not want to go *Or* even

My friend invited me to a party, but I do not want to go.

Here the reader will have trouble knowing which piece of information is most important to the writer. When the subordinating conjunction "although" is used at the beginning of the first clause, however, it becomes clear that the fact that “My friend invited me” is less important than, or subordinate to the fact that “I do not want to go”.

Although my friend invited me to a party, I do not want to go.

2.4.6 Sentence Fragments

Majority of written sentences contain both subject and verbs, some do not. In speech, one could express a thought or an idea by using a single word (example, ‘yes’, ‘never’), a phrase (‘in a minute’) or a clause (‘as you wish’). In written or even published material, one finds single words, phrases and subordinating clauses used as sentences. In such circumstance, the audience do not have to supply the missing word before arriving at the author’s meaning.

Sentence fragments are complete and meaningful and are deliberately used for special purposes. Such purposes may be to imitate, dialogue, to create emphasis or to avoid colourless, repetitious verbs. (Corder, 1985:35). Such constructions are used only when it is obvious that it would make sense to the reader. They have the following forms:

- Subjectless sentences as in requests and commands: ‘please try’ (‘you’ is the implied subject), ‘help’ (‘you’ meaning anyone is implied)

- Verbless: ‘the exceptional individual’
- Exclamations: ‘ouch!’, ‘oh!’
- Answers to questions: ‘not if I can help it’.

It is sometimes the case that these sentence structures are manipulated to suit writings or texts meant for children. This is part of the focus of this study.

2.4.7 Sentence Types According to Function

David Clay (1987) informs that there are four sentence types in English. Also Okwuegbu et al (2002) states that ‘traditionally, sentences have been grouped into four according to their functions, namely, declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamatory’. The first sentence type is the most common:

The Declarative Sentence

A declarative sentence, says Barker (1998), "declares" or states a fact, arrangement or opinion.

Declarative sentences can be either positive or negative. A declarative sentence ends with a period (.). eg

The girls held their party in the house.

Our team will play its first match tomorrow.

The Imperative Sentence

The imperative commands or sometimes requests. The imperative takes no subject. 'You' is the implied subject. The imperative form ends with either a period (.) or an exclamation point (!).

Examples include directives such as:

Commands: eg Shut up!

Invites: eg Have a seat.

Requests: eg Shut the door, please

The Interrogative Sentence

The interrogative asks a question. In the interrogative form the auxiliary verb precedes the subject which is then followed by the main verb (i.e., Are you coming...?). The interrogative form ends with a question mark (?). eg

When did Ada arrive?

Do you enjoy listening to classical music?

Exclamatory Sentence

The exclamatory sentence expresses strong emotion. As a result it usually ends with an exclamation mark (!) eg

What a way to go!

Oh no!

2.5 Writing for Children

Before an examination of the issue of how writing for children might profitably proceed in the light of language development, it is helpful to begin with a discussion of elements of children's literature. It is certainly not a large claim to make that children's literature is a sub-genre of literature in its broadest usage. If it comes in the form of a drama, it is also known as 'creative dramatics' (Umukoro, 2002).

In its simplest form, children's literature can be defined as the body of written works and accompanying illustrations produced in order to entertain or instruct young people (Cohen, 1998). The genre encompasses a wide range of works, including acknowledged classics of world literature, picture books and easy-to-read stories written exclusively for children, and fairy tales, lullabies, fables, folk songs, and other primarily orally transmitted materials. It is educationally

or instructionally oriented. Umukoro (2002) defines it as the application of literature in formal educational communication. It is synonymous with educational drama (where it takes the form of a play), as distinct from educational theatre, and it is child-centered. If, as Phillip Coggins (1956:191) suggests, ‘the real reason for literature in schools has been the realisation...of its value as pure literature, as a means of fertilising the spirit’, then language, as we shall demonstrate later in the study, helps this fertilisation process by energising the child’s creativity and, in the words of Morrison (1973:43), getting the mental juices flowing and revealing him to himself’.

Writing specifically about children’s drama, a sub-category of children’s literature, Phillip Coggins states that: ‘creative drama or children’s drama is ‘the doing life’...it helps the personality of self-realisation by educating the emotions, stimulating the intellect, and coordinating movement and gesture to the wishes of the mind and spirit.’ Writing in the same vein, Self (1975:1) has pointed out that: ‘the first thing to be said about drama (or children’s drama) is what it is not. It is a different concept from the school play. Theatre, including the school play, exists to entertain or instruct an audience. Its value to those who take part is subsidiary to its main purpose. Drama exists for the sake of the participant and not for an audience, even if, on occasion, there may be an uninvited audience’.

Umukoro (2002:13) identifies 10 (ten) basic objectives of children’s literature:

- To encourage self-expression (whether as drama, poetry or prose) which leads to self-discovery
- To promote self-awareness and diminish negative self-consciousness
- To develop the listening powers (as different from the natural hearing faculty) in the child

- To sharpen the child's perception and capacity to observe minute details (as different from the natural use of the eyes)
- To develop the other human senses to the full for maximum effectiveness
- To sharpen the child's powers of imagination and concentration, resulting in specific forms of creativity based on individual talent
- To promote and refine the powers of speech, writing, and effective communication
- To facilitate social integration through group interaction and a sense of mutual understanding
- To cultivate the reading habit in the child thus enhancing his or her capacity to source for knowledge and information
- To assist the child to develop into a full and rounded personality.

Mark Woolgar (cited in Dodd and Hickson, 2003:90), postulates that literature for children is child-centered because whatever form it takes, it is basically concerned with the development of the children's imagination, sensitivity, all the other usual words, but the essential point is that it is basically concerned with children. It falls on Bolton (in Dodd and Hickson, 2003:12), finally, to spell out the general aim of children's literature in the following lucid terms: 'our aims are helping children to understand, so that...they are helped to face facts and to interpret them without prejudice; so that they develop a set of principles, a set of consistent principles, by which they are going to live. And all these are best achieved through appropriate language....'

In the light of the foregoing, it is appropriate, then, to say that writing for children is an enterprise that is very delicate taking into consideration that reading is just one of the many activities among children. It is just one of the many ways children obtain information, grasp new

concepts, or derive pleasure from. A child who is not reading a book may soon be watching television or fiddling with the computer. So many alternatives are available to today's child, which makes reading just one option out of many.

In addition, the fact that child language differs from adult language is not in doubt, so are texts meant for children different from those of adults. Therefore, the writer of children's texts has to choose the kind of language that is peculiar to children. Thus, Brain (2009) advocates that: "when writing fiction for children, it is important to choose the kind of (language) that children speak... if it is many years since a writer last read a book for children and particularly if he/she does not have daily contacts with children, their writing may be difficult for children to read. The right level of language can make or break a book for children. A writer needs to learn what kind of words or sentence structures to avoid when writing for children.

To successfully write for children, Brain (2009) advises the writer to observe the following:

- Avoid being overformal, using more Latinate words than Anglo-Saxon words. This makes the writing stiff and colourless. For example, 'mother purchased a number of items and proceeded to prepare supper' is better stated than 'mother bought a few things and started making supper.
- Be specific. Choose colourful, detailed words that paint pictures in the reader's mind. For example, instead of using the word 'flower', state which kind of flower, that is, whether it is a rose, a hibiscus or a daffodil.
- Keep description to a minimum, leave most visual description to the illustrator. Do use the five senses. Avoid wordiness. Keep your paragraphs short and keep your writing active by using lots of verbs.

- Weed out lifeless words such as but, well, then very and, so, that, now and the like. If many of these words are cropping up in your story, weed out as many as you can. The sentence, ‘he saw that there was a very big dragon in the cave’, is better simplified for children as say ‘he saw a big dragon in the cave’ or ‘a big dragon was in the cave’.
- Avoid old-fashioned words like disquietude, bid farewell, transpired and so on unless they are used to reflect how a character speaks.
- Too much poetic writing could be irritating and difficult for a young reader to appreciate. However, poetic language is encouraged in picture books since the illustrations help the reader work out what is happening in the story. This form of writing should be kept to the minimum when writing for older children.

According to Brunel (2009), the writer of children’s books should avoid constructions too complicated for the age group in focus. Children’s ability to ‘negotiate’ sentences with complications like subordinate clauses, multiple ideas or which use passive voices develop over time. Therefore, when such constructions are introduced to children, the reader will struggle to work out what you are trying to say.

On the other hand, the sentence structure should not be too simple for the age group it is meant for. Children are quick to feel patronised and if a writer is speaking down to them and the level too simple and easy, they may be bored and discard the book. To successfully write a book that is readable to children, it is important to listen to how children really speak and not rely on memory or what can be remembered regarding the nature of children’s speech. Notice their speech patterns the kinds of words they use, and the way they respond to one another in their conversations.

2.6 Children's Literature in Africa and Nigeria

What should be regarded as "Children's literature in Africa/Nigeria"? A quick definition is "literature written for African children by African authors either in the vernacular or in a foreign language" (Meniru 1992:43). This simple definition becomes inadequate if one takes cognisance of the wide array of books often selected by educationists and curriculum planners as suitable for African children. Some of these books (e.g. *Who's in Rabbit's House? A Maasai tale retold*; *Why Mosquitoes buzz in peoples ears: A West African tale retold*; *Tales of Temba*; and *Kyekyekulee, Grandmothers tales*) were written by non-African authors. Verna Aardema, Peggy Appiah, and Kathleen Arnott are not Africans, but does the ethnic origin of an author disqualify his or her books as culturally African?

African children's literature may be categorised as pre-colonial, colonial or post-colonial. Pre-colonial literature was basically oral. It was valued as "one of the major means by which societies educated, instructed, and socialised their younger members" (Odaga 1985:1). With the introduction of formal education, most of that which previously would have been considered oral literature--proverbs, riddles, tales, taboos, legends--is now available in print. Despite this, oral literature is not a thing of the past. In many African societies, it is still alive and active. Much of it is still created daily. It is constantly being adjusted to new developments and continues to take on new dimensions.

During the colonial period, African children in government and missionary schools were introduced to children's literature that was alien to their experience. Books like *Black Beauty*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* are a few examples. These books have a western background and are based on western values. While some of them present moral teachings, one can argue that African children

would have benefited more if they had read these books alongside books that had an African background with African cultural values. Those who regard oral and written literature as having equal values might argue that this was achieved because the African child despite being introduced to western literature was at the same time still listening to stories and proverbs at home. This was not the case. The introduction of formal education emphasised written literature as mature, civilised, and conscious of its art, and considered oral literature as primitive and lacking in technique.

The books by the authors that have been selected for study represent the literature produced by and for African children after colonialism. These materials are available to children in African schools and around the world. Despite having an African background they can be read by children from many different backgrounds. The genesis of this kind of literature in Nigeria dates as far back as 1960 which is the year Cyprian Ekwensi's 'The Drummer Boy' and 'Passport of Mallam Illia' were published. Adebisi (2010) defines Nigerian children's literature as the literature for children from pre-school years to the mid-teens, written by Nigerians with a Nigerian setting and in most cases published in Nigeria. Going by this definition, the four books selected for this study are typical Nigerian children's literature books. They include Cyprian Ekwensi's *An African Night's Entertainment*, Nkem Nwankwo's *Tales Out of School*, Rosemary Uwemedimo's *Akpan and the Smugglers*, and Kola Onadipe's *Adventures of Souza*. They are written for children by Nigerians, published in Nigeria and have Nigerian settings.

Having considered the nature and language of writings for children, it could be inferred that sentence structures affect the ability of children to comprehend, enjoy and learn language through literature. This study is concerned with analysing the types of sentences used in novels meant for children.

2.7 Integrating Literature in English Language Learning Situations

Literature is a body of written works. According to Rexroth (2014), it implies ‘those imaginative works of poetry and prose distinguished by the intentions of their authors and the perceived aesthetic excellence of their execution’. They are imaginative and artistic creations. Therefore, the importance of integrating such expressive recollections by seasoned writers into language learning situations cannot be over-emphasised.

When literature is considered an integral part of language learning or an extension of language usage, it only goes a long way in reinforcing, sensitising and meaningfully enriching the language (Gathumbi et al, 2005). Collie and Slater (1987) support the inclusion of literature in the language classroom as it provides valuable authentic material, develops personal involvement and help contribute to readers’ cultural as well as language enrichment. These advantages, they move on to assert, can be achieved provided teachers use relevant and appealing material to learners through the use of activities that promote involvement, reader response and a solid integration between language and literature.

According to Akyel et al (1998), integrating literature in English language teaching practices has the following benefits. First, it broadens students’ horizons by giving them a knowledge of the classics of literature. ‘Literature provides valuable authentic material’ (Gathumbi, 2005). It presents a rich and immensely valuable body of written material. This is so because it hammers and dwells on vital human issues which is somewhat permanent rather than transient. Secondly, incorporating literature in language lessons helps to improve students’ general cultural awareness. Literature is a veritable source of cultural enrichment for language learners because it deepens their understanding of the way of life of the native speakers of the target language. Wiley (1986) attests to the fact that a reader can discover characters’ feelings,

customs, thoughts, possessions; what they buy, believe in, fear, enjoy; how they speak and behave behind closed doors.

Again, it stimulates students' creative and literary imagination and to develop their appreciation of literature. Experiencing language in action through literatures propels the learner into becoming creative and desiring to explore the richness and variety of his/her target language. Besides, marrying literature into a language learning situation introduces the learner to masterpieces in different genres. It exposes the learner to many functions of the written language. When a student reads a substantial and contextualised body of text, they become familiar with the many features and uses of the written language. He experiences firsthand how different sentence formations and different sentence structures are put to use and their accompanying effect.

Following this trend, Carter et al (1991) propose three models to justify the use of literature. The first is the CULTURAL MODEL which represents the possibility literature brings into the picture as regards the understanding and appreciation of different cultures and ideologies together with developing one's perception of feelings and artistic forms. The second model is the LANGUAGE MODEL. This model dwells on the fact that language is the literary medium and that literature could be seen as an instrument to teach specific vocabulary and structures. Lastly, the PERSONAL GROWTH MODEL entails students engaging with reading of literary texts and appreciating and evaluating cultural artifacts and in broad terms, the understanding of our society, culture and ourselves as we function within that social matrix. This model seem to be one aspect which covers the previous two i.e. the cultural and the language models since cultural understanding presupposes some cultural knowledge and in order to engage with a text and evaluate it, one must resort to language.

Lazar (1993) asserts that literature should be seen as an invaluable resource of motivating material and as a bridge to provide access to cultural background. She also states that ‘literature encourages language acquisition, expands students’ awareness and interpretation abilities’. In fact, it educates the whole person.

Parkinson et al (2000) add that teaching literature in a language learning situation provides a good model for good writing, makes learning memorable, non trivial and challenging. It aids the learner in assimilating the rhythms of a language there facilitating intelligence and sensibility training. Students see language in action, the practicability and its application in different situations.

Again, Hall (2005) claims that literature helps to enhance the psycholinguistic aspect of language learning as it focuses on form and discourse processing skills and improves vocabulary expansion and reading skills generally. Besides, literature has experienced a revival with the advent of communicative approach in language teaching as it provides learners with authentic, pleasurable and cultural material.

The points enumerated above also justify the inclusion of novels as reader boosters in our language curriculum in Nigeria. According to Lazar (1990), ‘when using a novel, teachers should look at both possible drawbacks and educational as well as linguistic opportunities’. This is because, first, a novel provides a more involving motivational source for pedagogic activities and it also engages the learner intellectually, emotionally and linguistically. It gives a picture of one’s culture and lastly, the act of reading a novel enhances meaning making processes and the learner’s language capacity (Widdowson, 1984).

Therefore, incorporating the act of reading novels especially, and literatures as a whole promotes the feeling of enthusiasm and pleasure towards reading as a language learning skill.

Secondly, it helps improve the learners' communicative competence, and as is the case with Nigeria, it could help a learner build bridges between their differing ethnic and cultural background especially when they read literary works set in cultures different from theirs.

2.8 Schools of Grammar

Every grammatical description is based on an underlying theory although some descriptions do not clearly state their theoretical basis. Some others draw from more than one theory (Greenbaum, 1996). These varieties of analyses stem from the fact that human language has a grammar that is complex. So, grammatical theories present goals for describing natural languages and developing the method of argumentation, formulation and explanation (Alobo 2008:4).

In this study, in order to effectively determine the sentence types in children's novels, a theoretical model has to be adopted. Here is a rundown of selected theories of grammar.

2.8.1 Traditional Grammar

The term 'traditional' refers to many periods such as the Roman and Greek grammarians, Renaissance grammars and especially the 18th and 19th century school grammars, in Europe and America. It is usually used with critical implication, despite the fact that many antecedents of modern linguistics can be found in these early grammars.

Traditional grammar is not a unified theory that attempts to explain the structure of all languages with a unique set of concepts as is the aim of linguistics. There are different traditions for different languages, each with its own traditional vocabulary and analysis. In the case of European languages, each of them represents an adaptation of Latin grammar to a particular language. Traditional grammar distinguishes between the grammar of the elements that

constitute a sentence (i.e. inter-elemental) and the grammar within sentence elements (i.e. intra-elemental). Concepts of inter-elemental grammar for the English language include subject, predicate, object, predicative (or complement), adverbial and adjunct, sentence, clause, and phrase. Concepts of intra-elemental grammar for the English language include noun, adjective, determiner, verb, adverb, preposition, conjunction and pronoun.

Controversies exist as to the use of the term – traditional grammar. The term is mainly used to distinguish these ideas from those of contemporary linguistics, which are intended to apply to a much broader range of languages, and to correct a number of errors in traditional grammar. Although modern linguistics has exposed the limitations of traditional grammar, it is still the backbone of the grammar instruction given to the general population in most English speaking countries. As such, while very few people have encountered linguistics, nearly everybody in a modern English speaking community encounters traditional grammar. This is one of the big difficulties that linguists face when they try to explain their ideas to the general public.

Modern linguistics owes a very large debt to traditional grammar, but it departs from it quite a lot, in the following ways (among others); firstly, linguistics aims to be general, and to provide an appropriate way of analysing all languages, and comparing them to each other. Traditional grammar is usually concerned with one language, and when it has been applied to non-European languages, it has very often proved very inappropriate.

Secondly, linguistics has broader influences than traditional grammar has. For example, modern linguistics owes as much of a debt to Panini's grammar of Sanskrit as it does to Latin and Greek grammar. Thirdly, linguistics is in many ways more descriptively rigorous, because it goes after accurate description as its own end. Traditional grammar is essentially a word grammar.

The smallest and largest units of grammatical analysis in its theory are the word and the sentence respectively.

Woods (1995:6) states that “in teaching the syntactic organisation of the sentence, traditional grammarians look at the different classes of words that make up the sentence, such as noun, verb, adjective, preposition, adverbs etc. They focus on the sentence and consider the role and relationships of words in the sentence such as subject, object etc.

This organisation of language helps to show the different clause types”. Traditional grammar analysis is carried out as a single stage though performed as two processes. In the first process, the sentence is divided into its basic categories, that is, subject and predicate. The second entails identifying and labelling the individual words by their word classes. Quirk et al (1985), identify seven clause types, each associated with a set of verbs thus: SV; SVO; SVC; SVA; SVOO; SVOC and SVOA.

Much of traditional grammar is prescriptive because it sets rules on how English language should be spoken and written and these are most times based on logic and comparison with Latin grammar. For instance, such rules prescribe that the infinitive should never be split and that ‘it is me’ is wrong while the correct usage is ‘it is I’. Does this imply that the grammarian should only be primarily preoccupied with prescribing rules and constructing examples to illustrate them notwithstanding the complex and dynamic nature of English grammar today? It seems so. Although it is necessary that every theoretical model of grammar should make extensive use of rules, these rules, according to Palmer (1985:15) should be rules that are descriptive, that is, rules that state what we actually say, not rules stating what we ought to say.

We are, however, adopting this theory of grammar as a model for this analysis because in Nigerian schools, children are taught rules of correct usage of English language, that is, rules of grammar; what is correct and acceptable and what is not as far as English grammar is concerned. Also, to the average Nigerian pupil/student, the terms used in sentence analysis by traditional grammar is very familiar and is still being taught him/her today. The English grammar course in the Nigerian school curriculum begins with its traditional eight parts of speech.

2.8.2 Structural Grammar

Structural grammar is also referred to as descriptive or behavioural grammar. It was developed around the 20th century by linguists who are opposed to traditional grammar as a form of revolution. The chief proponent of this grammar, according to Fowler (1974:25) is Leonard Bloomfield, an American linguist, who, in his book, 'Language' (1933), argues the need for a science of linguistics with its own rigorous methodology and properly defined terminology. Other prominent structuralists worthy of note between the mid 1930s and the 1950s include E. Sapir, B. Block, C. C. Fries, and G. Trager (Britannica 2010-08-11).

The major criticisms levelled against traditional grammar by these linguists were that it relied so heavily on subjective evaluation and classification, and that its definition of terms were impossible to verify except intuitively. As a way out, they believe that language can be studied scientifically, hence "they employed the scientific method in studying language". Their approach was devoid of prescribing rules of what is acceptable or formulating universals rather they restricted their ambition to codifying what is already there, analysing the actual utterances of the native speakers. They believe strongly that speech supersedes writing in the learning of grammar because writing is considered a special dialect of a language.

For the structuralist, the grammatical analysis of a sentence begins with dividing the sentence into its immediate constituents (IC). The principle of immediate constituents according to Palmer (1984:121), is to cut a sentence into two and then continue with the segmentation until the smallest units, morphemes or ultimate constituents are reached.

Wiredu (1991) observes that the structuralists did not pay attention to meaning because they viewed meaning as a poor guide to analysing linguistic structures. Hence, they developed an approach that sought to make language study as objective as that of the physical sciences. Meaning was replaced by structure. For instance, a noun is not identified because it refers to a person, place or object rather it is so identified because it has a plural ending 's', or it follows a determiner 'the', or it follows a verb. Consider this sentence:

‘The boy has a map’

The two words, ‘boy’ and ‘map’ are nouns because they meet, at least, one of the above-mentioned structural conditions. They believe that form is one way of arriving at meaning in language. Just like the traditional grammar, structuralism was also criticised by linguist like Chomsky. They note that, for instance, structural approach could only be useful in studying phonemes and morphemes but may not be suitable sentence analysis. Chomsky (1957) argues that structuralist methodology fail to capture the concept of recursion in natural languages. The fact that children are able to produce sentences they have never heard before lends credence to Chomsky’s argument and given the complexity of written literature, the aspect of recursion cannot be overlooked.

Also, the structuralist methodology of immediate constituent analysis was capable of demonstrating some relationships in English sentence patterns, it provides no basis for analysis

of the differences in cases where the sentence structure is the same but the relationships of the constituent elements are different. Consider the following:

Aliyu is difficult to read

Aliyu is anxious to read.

In the same vein, structural grammar does adequately explain concepts such as syntactic ambiguity. Yule (2007:103) illustrates this with these examples:

Annie whacked a man with an umbrella (who has the umbrella, Annie or the man?)

One morning, I shot an elephant in my pyjamas (where was the elephant?)

The sentences above obviously have two interpretations. These two interpretations cannot be brought out if one were to rely on the structuralist methodology. A proper analysis of sentences in children's literatures has to cover disambiguation of sentences. No doubt, this research work will benefit in some ways from this grammar model especially in the concept of phoneme and morpheme, immediate constituents and a host of others but the fact remains that written literature language and representations are complex. So, the analysis requires a more dynamic model that takes care of concepts like embedding, recursion and sentence variation to capture the syntactic demands of written literature.

2.8.3 Transformational Generative Grammar

This theory was developed in reaction to the inadequacies observed in structural linguistics. The theory came into being with the publication of *Syntactic Structures* by the American linguist Noam Chomsky (1957). What Chomsky (1957) postulates involved many formulas or rules for describing declarative English sentences and demonstrating relationships holding between the parts of the sentences. Chomsky's formulations are based on the idea that each sentence in a

language has two levels of representation – a deep structure and a surface structure (Chomsky, 1965 and 1995). The deep structure represents the core semantic relations of a sentence, and was mapped on to the surface structure (which followed the phonological form of the sentence very closely) via transformations. Chomsky believes there are considerable similarities between languages' deep structures, and that these structures reveal properties, common to all languages that surface structures conceal.

However, this may not have been the central motivation for introducing deep structure. Transformations had been proposed prior to the development of deep structure as a means of increasing the mathematical and descriptive power of context-free grammar. Similarly, deep structure was devised largely for technical reasons relating to early semantic theory. Chomsky emphasises the importance of modern formal mathematical devices in the development of grammatical theory.

But the fundamental reason for (the) inadequacy of traditional grammar is a more technical one. Although it was well understood that linguistic processes are in some sense "creative," the technical devices for expressing a system of recursive processes were simply not available until much more recently. In fact, a real understanding of how a language can (in Humboldt's words) "make infinite use of finite means" has developed only within the last thirty years, in the course of studies in the foundations of mathematics.

Though transformations continue to be important in Chomsky's current theories, he has now abandoned the original notion of Deep Structure and Surface Structure. Initially, two additional levels of representation were introduced (LF – Logical Form, and PF – Phonetic Form), and then in the 1990s Chomsky sketched out a new programme of research known as

Minimalism, in which Deep Structure and Surface Structure no longer featured and PF and LF remained as the only levels of representation.

To complicate the understanding of the development of Noam Chomsky's theories, the precise meanings of Deep Structure and Surface Structure have changed over time – by the 1970s, the two were normally referred to simply as D-Structure and S-Structure by Chomskyan linguists. In particular, the idea that the meaning of a sentence was determined by its Deep Structure (taken to its logical conclusions by the generative semanticists during the same period) was dropped for good by Chomskyan linguists when LF took over this role (previously, Chomsky and Ray Jackendoff had begun to argue that meaning was determined by both Deep and Surface Structure) (Ray, 1974; Robert, 1977).

Terms such as "transformation" can give the impression that theories of transformational generative grammar are intended as a model for the processes through which the human mind constructs and understands sentences. Chomsky is clear that this is not in fact the case: a generative grammar models only the knowledge that underlies the human ability to speak and understand. One of the most important of Chomsky's ideas is that most of this knowledge is innate, with the result that a baby can have a large body of prior knowledge about the structure of language in general, and need only actually learn the idiosyncratic features of the language(s) it is exposed to. Chomsky was not the first person to suggest that all languages had certain fundamental things in common (he quotes philosophers writing several centuries ago who had the same basic idea), but he helped to make the innateness theory respectable after a period dominated by more behaviourist attitudes towards language. Perhaps more significantly, he made concrete and technically sophisticated proposals about the structure of language, and made important proposals regarding how the success of grammatical theories should be evaluated.

In the 1960s, Chomsky introduced two central ideas relevant to the construction and evaluation of grammatical theories. The first was the distinction between competence and performance. Chomsky noted the obvious fact that people, when speaking in the real world, often make linguistic errors (e.g., starting a sentence and then abandoning it midway through). He argued that these errors in linguistic performance were irrelevant to the study of linguistic competence (the knowledge that allows people to construct and understand grammatical sentences). Consequently, the linguist can study an idealised version of language, greatly simplifying linguistic analysis (see the "Grammaticality" section below). The second idea related directly to the evaluation of theories of grammar. Chomsky distinguished between grammars that achieve descriptive adequacy and those that go further and achieved explanatory adequacy. A descriptively adequate grammar for a particular language defines the (infinite) set of grammatical sentences in that language; that is, it describes the language in its entirety.

A grammar that achieves explanatory adequacy has the additional property that it gives an insight into the underlying linguistic structures in the human mind; that is, it does not merely describe the grammar of a language, but makes predictions about how linguistic knowledge is mentally represented. For Chomsky, the nature of such mental representations is largely innate, so if a grammatical theory has explanatory adequacy it must be able to explain the various grammatical nuances of the languages of the world as relatively minor variations in the universal pattern of human language. Chomsky argued that, even though linguists were still a long way from constructing descriptively adequate grammars, progress in terms of descriptive adequacy will only come if linguists hold explanatory adequacy as their goal. In other words, real insight into the structure of individual languages can only be gained through comparative study of a wide range of languages, on the assumption that they are all cut from the same cloth.

In 1986, Chomsky proposed a distinction between I-Language and E-Language, similar but not identical to the competence/performance distinction (Chomsky, 1986). I-language refers to Internal language and is contrasted with External Language (or E-language). I-Language is taken to be the object of study in linguistic theory; it is the mentally represented linguistic knowledge that a native speaker of a language has, and is therefore a mental object – from this perspective, most of theoretical linguistics is a branch of psychology. E-Language encompasses all other notions of what a language is, for example that it is a body of knowledge or behavioural habits shared by a community.

Thus, E-Language is not itself a coherent concept, and Chomsky (2001) argues that such notions of language are not useful in the study of innate linguistic knowledge, i.e., competence, even though they may seem sensible and intuitive, and useful in other areas of study. Competence, he argues, can only be studied if languages are treated as mental objects.

Chomsky argues that the notions "grammatical" and "ungrammatical" could be defined in a meaningful and useful way. In contrast, an extreme behaviourist linguist would argue that language can only be studied through recordings or transcriptions of actual speech, the role of the linguist being to look for patterns in such observed speech, but not to hypothesise about why such patterns might occur, nor to label particular utterances as either "grammatical" or "ungrammatical." Although few linguists in the 1950s actually took such an extreme position, Chomsky was at an opposite extreme, defining grammaticality in an unusually mentalistic way (for the time) (Frederick, 1986). He argued that the intuition of a native speaker is enough to define the grammaticalness of a sentence; that is, if a particular string of English words elicits a double take, or feeling of wrongness in a native English speaker, and when various extraneous factors affecting intuitions are controlled for, it can be said that the string of words is

ungrammatical. This, according to Chomsky, is entirely distinct from the question of whether a sentence is meaningful, or can be understood. It is possible for a sentence to be both grammatical and meaningless, as in Chomsky's famous example "colourless green ideas sleep furiously."

But such sentences manifest a linguistic problem distinct from that posed by meaningful but ungrammatical (non)-sentences such as "man the bit sandwich the," the meaning of which is fairly clear, but no native speaker would accept as well formed. The use of such intuitive judgments permitted generative syntacticians to base their research on a methodology in which studying language through a corpus of observed speech became downplayed, since the grammatical properties of constructed sentences were considered to be appropriate data to build a grammatical model on.

2.8.4 Systemic Functional Grammar

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is a major linguistic theory, which has received special attention from researchers working in natural language generation. It was developed at the University of London by Michael Halliday, as a continuation of the work of his predecessors there, in particular that of J.R. Firth. This approach is therefore sometimes called "Neo-Firthian linguistics", or the "London school of linguistics" (Sampson, 1980) (though both Firth and Halliday came from Leeds). Steiner, 1983 gives an excellent survey of the development of the theory. Here only a few key points in the growth of SFG will be mentioned.

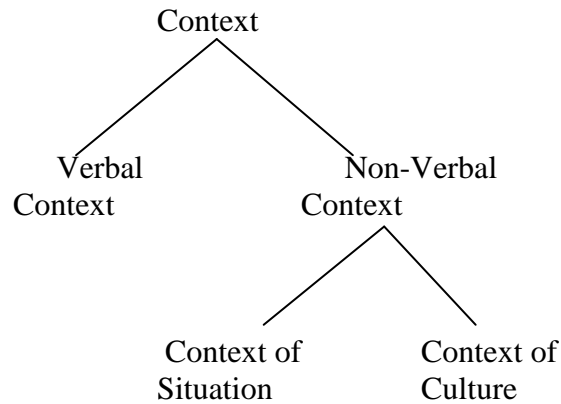


Figure 1.1: Malinowski's Analysis of Context

Firth's predecessor at London, the anthropologist B.K. Malinowski made important contributions to early modern linguistics from an anthropological perspective. His view of “meaning as function in context” was inherited by Firth and Halliday. His analysis of different types of context, summarised in Figure 1.1 (from Steiner 1983), was the forerunner of Halliday's division of the functional areas of language into three general metafunctions.

J.R. Firth, the founder of modern British linguistics and the first Professor of General Linguistics in the UK, continued Malinowski's emphasis on a social and functional approach to language, while establishing linguistics as an independent discipline. It was Firth who began to use the word “system” in a new sense as a technical term, from which the name “systemic grammar” originated. “The first principle of analysis is to distinguish between STRUCTURE and SYSTEM. Structure consists of elements in interior syntagmatic relation and these elements have their places in an order of mutual expectancy.... Systems of commutable terms or units are set up to state the paradigmatic values of the elements” (Firth, 1957).

Firth emphasised the need for linguistics to give equal importance to both the “anatomy” and “physiology” of language. These two aspects of language can be summarised in the list of contrasting pairs of Firthian linguistic terms in Figure 1.2.

“Anatomy”	“Physiology”
Chain Syntagmatic structural formal logical	Choice paradigmatic systemic functional rhetorical

Figure 1.2: The “Anatomy” and “Physiology” of Language

Firth disagreed with the American structuralists of his time (led by Bloomfield), because they were concerned only with the “anatomy” of language. For the same reason Michael Halliday, Firth's pupil and successor at London, disagreed with the American formalists (led by Chomsky). Halliday is closer to the European functionalists, such as the Prague school, from whose theory of Functional Sentence Perspective he adopted the theme/rhyme structure for his textual metafunction. In reaction to the dominant American schools, the Neo-Firthians stressed the “physiology” of language, not because the “anatomy” is unimportant, but in an attempt to redress the balance.

Whereas Firth's theory was often expressed in general terms, and his concrete examples were often fragmentary, Halliday developed a systematic and comprehensive theory of language, with a new terminology of its own. This theory, expounded in Halliday's many publications, became known as Systemic Functional Grammar. It was called “systemic” because of his development of detailed system networks for many areas of English grammar, and for interesting areas of other languages. It was called “functional” because of his development of the theory of the ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions.

One unusual aspect of Halliday's theory is his non-acceptance of morphology as a separate level of language. He showed how inflections could be handled by systems and realisations in exactly the same way as clause structures. His approach here may have been

influenced by the relatively restricted morphology in the two languages – English and Chinese – in which he specialised.

2.9 Theoretical Framework

The preferred theory selected for this study is traditional grammar model. This is because it is believed that this school laid the foundation of English grammar that the subsequent schools built upon. This is a theory of the structure of language based on ideas western societies inherited from ancient Greek and Roman source. Crystal (1971) points out that “in traditional grammar, syntactic categories are described using features which have been identified in classical language, that is Greek and Latin”. Also, Allerton (1979:2) notes that it “grew out of works by ancient writers on philosophy and language but more particularly out of works devoted to the study of Greek and Latin.

According to Crystal (2007:208), traditional grammar is an attempt to summarise a range of attitudes and methods found in the pre-linguistic era of grammatical study. It is the earliest approach to the study of language and essentially deals with ideas about sentence structure deriving Aristotle and Plato. Traditional grammar is also concerned with ideas about parts of speech originating from the stoic grammarians and ideas about correctness in language use deriving from the 18th century grammars of English. Lyons (1981) states that “the traditional grammarian tended to assume not only that the written language was more fundamental than the spoken, but also that a particular form of the written, namely, the literary language, written and spoken; and that it was his task as a grammarian to preserve this form from corruption.”

This kind of grammars include prescriptive rules that are to be followed and proscriptive rules of usage to be avoided. Although it is viewed as an unscientific way to study language and

grammar, traditional grammar prescriptions are still found in all levels of the classroom teaching and in textbooks and usage guides available to educators, learners and the public. These books and guides usually provide lists of grammatical terms, definitions of those terms and rules of using 'standard' grammar including suggested correct usage of punctuation, spelling and word choice. These rules are usually based on the prescriptions of prestige varieties of English.

In Nigeria, grammar books and English readers for pupils in primary and post primary schools are produced based on the prescriptions of traditional grammar. Students are examined and scored accordingly based on strict adherence to these rules. A look at the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examinations Council (NECO) marking scheme for English language exam papers leaves one in no doubt about how vital it is for the average Nigerian learner of English to be conversant with the prescribed rules of grammar.

Traditional grammar attempts, usually within a single language, to analyse and elucidate the constituents of any given well-formed sentence. The focus of attention is on surface structure not meaning. It recognises the division of the sentence into structures such as declarative, imperative, interrogative and exclamatory. In the English-speaking world at least, traditional grammar is still widely taught in elementary schools. In Nigeria, it forms the basis of grammar instruction from primary through secondary school education.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The study consisted of analysing the sentence use in selected children's literature books. Since this involves reading the texts and subjecting them to rules of sentence construction on the one hand, and ascribing meanings to a body of texts on the other hand, an interpretive epistemological stance was adopted. The methodology employed is, therefore, both qualitative and quantitative in nature. It also adopted an interpretive stance and hence concerned with meaning.

The focus is on how these meanings are formed from the types of sentences used and the suitability of these sentences to the target readers, that is, children. This kind of research aims to show how different versions of sentences can either aid language development in children or obfuscate meaning thereby frustrating the effort aimed at language teaching and development. It is also aimed to show how socially constructed realities of the world are produced in discourse, and how language is used to manufacture meanings and other social facts (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

Content analysis was adopted to analyse the dominant sentence types and sentence fragments in the selected texts. With this method, the study focused on the suitability of the sentence types used in the selected texts for children in upper primary and junior secondary schools. For the quantitative approach, 30 pupils were polled from 10 schools in Kaduna metropolis. The pupils, whose ages range from 9-11, were given 8 sentences to read and interpret. Also to determine the kind of sentence structure predominantly used by authors in creating these novels, the total number of each type of sentence and sentence fragments in each

novel was counted and recorded. The corresponding percentage of each type was calculated and inferences were drawn.

Unlike the quantitative approach in which one might have clients' rate attitude statements on a scale or wherein one might count the number of times a certain thing was mentioned, the qualitative approach as employed in this study required a definition of occurrences and their social applications in real life situations. These enabled extraction of themes. The validity of the results of content analysis depends mainly on materials analysed (Bordens and Abbott, 2002). As such, children's literatures that have become canonical in Nigerian literary firmament were systematically selected for analysis.

3.1 Target Texts

A total of four texts written for children in the upper primary and junior secondary schools were selected for analysis. The four books are:

An African Night's Entertainment by Cyprian Ekwensi.

Tales Out of School by Nkem Nwankwo.

Adventures of Souza by Kola Onadipe.

Akpan and the Smugglers by Rosemary Uwemedimo.

3.2 Research Design

A combination of a descriptive research and survey research have been adopted as design for this study. While a content analysis of sentence types has been done to examine their suitability for children in upper primary and junior secondary schools, a qualitative approach and survey of similar texts have been used to elicit further relevant information.

3.3 Sampling Techniques

The study utilised purposive sampling and simple random sampling techniques to determine which texts to include in the study. For instance through purposive sampling, texts which have been written purposely for children in upper primary and junior secondary schools have been selected. The same technique has been used to select texts that have achieved canonicity in the realm of children's literature in Nigeria. A random sampling of the texts has been further used to select four texts for content analysis. Four texts have been selected for analysis. Only four texts have been selected due to the constraints of time.

3.4 Methods of Data Analysis

The aim of analysis is to treat the evidence fairly so as to produce compelling analytical conclusions (Creswell, 1997). When data appear in words rather than in numbers, the analysis will involve systematic examination in order to determine its parts, the relationship amongst these parts and their relation to the whole. The analysis process adopted in this study consists of a movement around an analytical circle rather than a linear progression. In which case, data analysis is not reduced to particular stages or set techniques, but framed in a dynamic process. Just like Bryman and Burgess (1994) put it, the process involves a constant interplay between data gathering and analysis, or in the words of Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999), a backward movement between description and interpretation, foreground and background, part and whole. Although no consensus exists for the analysis of qualitative data, the following steps are considered appropriate:

1. Familiarisation and immersion: the information was extracted from the selected texts and written down. These information formed the basis for the analysis. The process of data analysis involved the development of ideas and theories about the phenomenon.

2. Introducing themes. This process is inductive in that general rules are to be inferred from specific instances. The organising principles that naturally underlie the material would be identified. The themes chosen must reflect the interest and focus of the study (Rubin & Rubin, 1995), such as the pragmatic analysis of sentences.
3. Coding. This phase occurs concurrently with introducing themes. Different sections of the data are expected to be marked off as relating to one or more of the themes (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). In this way, information extracted from the selected texts will be sorted into the different themes bringing together ideas and concepts that had been discovered. The coded material will then be analysed as a cluster.
4. Evaluation. At this stage, the material will be examined and re-examined until a very clear picture emerges. This process may be continued in light of the themes that emerged until some other sub-issues came to light (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999).
5. The researcher, when through with the entire process comes up with the written thesis. The analysis is related using the different themes (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999).

The data process occurs at one level. This involves a purely descriptive analysis.

3.5 Content Analysis

Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts. Researchers qualify and analyse the presence, meaning and relationships of such words and concepts, then make inferences about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of which these are a part. Texts can be defined broadly as books chapters, essays, interviews, discussions, newspaper headlines and articles, historical documents, speeches, conversations, advertising, theatre, informal

conversation, or really any occurrence of communicative language. To conduct a content analysis on any such text, the text is coded or broken down, into manageable categories on a variety of levels – words, word sense, phrase, sentence or theme – and then examined using one of content analysis’ basic methods: conceptual analysis or relational analysis.

The content analysis method adopted for this study is conceptual analysis. This can be thought of as establishing the existence and frequency of concepts – most often represented by words or phrases – in a text. With conceptual analysis you can determine how many times words such as “hunger,” “hungry,” “famished,” or “starving” appear in a volume of poems. Also, known as thematic analysis, the focus here is on looking at the occurrence of selected terms within a text or texts, although the terms may be implicit as well as explicit. While explicit terms are obviously easy to identify, coding for implicit terms and deciding their level of implication is complicated by the need to base judgments on a somewhat subjective system.

3.6 Limitations of the Methodology

The crucial problem with content analysis lies in the process of transforming unquantifiable material into quantitative data (Carney, 1972). For instance, there is always the basic question of what counts as an item of content and how it is connected to the designed scheme of variables. What is considered a strength of content analysis – the provision of a method for the textual analysis of media content without examining audience reaction – can also be perceived as its main theoretical weak point, because it leaves the definition and identification of content, its classification and validation in theoretical terms, wide open to speculative or subjective interpretation. However, the analysis of context in this work and the collection of qualitative/quantitative data in respect of the sentence types, in a way, have greatly reduced this setback having offset the notion of content as something fixed, uncontested and unmediated.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with a detailed analysis of the four children's books selected for this study. The four books are:

An African Night's Entertainment by Cyprian Ekwensi

Tales Out of School by Nkem Nwankwo

Adventures of Souza by Kola Onadipe

Akpan and the Smugglers by Rosemary Uwemedimo

The analysis begins with the plot summary of each of the texts and thereafter attempts at examining sentences elicited from the novels using systemic functional grammar approach. The analysis will endeavour to achieve the following objectives:

- Examine the types of sentences used in the selected texts.
- Find out whether the sentences are fragmented.
- Investigate whether such sentence use is commensurate with the level of language development of the group for which it is meant.

4.1 Analysis

An African Night's Entertainment:

Written and published in 1962 by Cyprian Ekwensi under African Reader's Library, *An African Night's Entertainment* is a book purposely designed for children in upper primary and junior secondary school. The African Reader's Library, under which it was published, is a series of books, purposely prepared for young people who take great pride in their African culture

heritage and enjoy reading genuine African culture literature by African authors. As the editor of the series notes, reading fluency and comprehension can only be achieved with practice, and the books in the series ensure that this practice will be a great pleasure. This is what Cyprian Ekwensi has tried to achieve in *An African Night's Entertainment* (henceforth Entertainment).

The plot of the story revolves around the life of a wealthy Hausa trader called Mallam Shehu. Mallam Shehu marries three wives but none of them could bear him a child. This leaves him very sad indeed. One day, he had a dream in which he finds himself in a market where a man is selling a horse. He takes an instant likeness for the horse and he immediately show his interest by offering to buy it. He is informed that someone else has already paid three pounds for the horse, but Mallam Shehu offers the man three pounds ten shillings. The initial buyer is angry but Mallam Shehu does not mind. Later, he dreams that the horse gives birth to a lovely foal which he loves as he has loved its mother. As soon as it is rideable, Mallam Shehu asks his servants to prepare it for him so that he will have the honour of being the first person to ride it. He rides out into the fields where he spurs the horse into a gallop. The horse stumbles; Shehu falls, breaking an arm and a leg.

When he wakes up, disturbed, he sends for Mallam Sambo, a herbalist and his spiritual consultant. Mallam Sambo tells him that the dream is about what will happen to him if he decides to take another wife. He tells him that a very beautiful young woman, who has been betrothed to another man, will soon arrive but that Mallam Shehu should not try to woo or marry her. If he does, Mallam Sambo warns, though the young woman will bear him a child, that child will be Mallam Shehu's ruins. Mallam Shehu is excited by the information, and not long after, the young woman appears. As predicted, she is already betrothed to another man, Abu Bakir, but Mallam Shehu will have none of it. With the help of a charm prepared for him by a herbalist and

by lavishing the girl with gifts and money, he wins the hand of the girl and within a short time, they are married. Abu Bakri, to whom the girl has been betrothed from childhood, is devastated and promises to seek vengeance. He leaves the community and travels to a faraway land to seek vengeance.

After enduring very terrible hardship – during which he loses an eye and an ear – Abu Bakir returns with a terrible charm that he is instructed to rub on the child born to Mallam Shehu by his erstwhile betrothed. With the aid of another charm that allows him to be invisible, he manages to reach Mallam Shehu's son, Kyauta, and rubs the charm on him. The usually quiet and very well-behaved boy suddenly becomes unruly and a thief.

He is so notorious for his bad behaviour and philandering that Mallam Shehu and his young wife are forced to run away from the town in order to escape the shame that has begun to pile up on their heads. But she and Mallam are not able to escape the fate that awaits him. Soon, Kyauta, who has become a notorious armed robber and a murderer, unwittingly invades his father's house in the new place he runs to with his wife. After robbing his father, he also kills him, but before he escapes with a fellow armed robber, his identity is revealed to his mother who weeps uncontrollably. At that moment the spell that is cast on him disappears and he comes back to his senses. Later he and his mother return to their original home town and there he finds Abu Bakir whom he beheads for making his life miserable. That is how the story ends.

Tales Out of School

Tales Out of School (henceforth *Tales*) was first published in 1963, and like *Entertainment*, it was published under the African Reader's Library 2 series. The book narrates the exciting experience of Bayo's first year as a junior secondary school student in Abule Grammar School, somewhere in Western Nigeria during the colonial period.

Bayo, who hails from Idi-Esu, a small village some kilometres from Abule Grammar School, is the first son of a cocoa-farmer and a trader mother. In his first day in school, Bayo thinks of running away when he finds his environment boring but he quickly decides against it after coming in contact with other junior students with whom he immediately chums up. The rest of the book narrates some significant episodes in his first year in the school, including the story of his rise to the class prefect, his selection as a member of the school football team, the class rebellion that is planned and later abandoned, the memorable football match between Abule and Alele Grammar School, and his return home for the holidays. Each of these stories and episodes is told in the third person narrative point of view, and spiced up with a lot of jokes and anecdotes. The stories are about the typical things boys do in school. The book, on the whole, can be read as a deliberate invocation of college life and how junior students are socialised into it. It is also about the values of hard work and honesty. Finally, it is about the heterogeneity of Nigeria as a nation as the students in the book all come from different social and cultural backgrounds.

The Adventures of Souza

The Adventures of Souza (henceforth *Adventures*) is a different book from the other three books selected for this study. The difference has to do with the narrative point of view. Unlike the other three books, the ‘Introduction’ of *Adventures* is written in the third person narrative point of view while the body of the story is written in the first person narrative. Writing the Introduction in the third person point of view is strategic as it helps the author to make a claim for its credibility and authenticity, as though it is not a fiction after all. The omniscient narrator in the ‘Introduction’ locates the story in ‘Makele village in West Africa’ and claims that the narrative is a true story and is told by Souza himself, the eponymous hero of the book. Thus the body of the

book, the story, is narrated in the first person point of view, by Souza. By claiming that the story was true and by making Souza the narrator, the author seeks to lend verisimilitude to the story.

The book was first published in 1963 and published under the African Reader's Library 5. It is a childhood story, a sort of bildungsroman. It is the story of Souza's adventures told in an episodic narrative style. It begins with the story of how Souza and his friends are stung by bees while attempting to remove a beehive from which they hoped to extract honey. Other episodes include the hunting expedition that ends in the death of one greedy hunter, the secret cult accident where one boy dies while on a makeshift swing, the raiding of a pastor's orange tree in the night by Souza and his cousins, Souza's flight from home after a misadventure, Souza's encounter and experience with a dubious magician, and Souza's school's memorable visit to town on Empire Day. Each of these episodes is very funny, spiced up with jokes and anecdotes, and clearly intended for the delectation of young people. The book is ponderously explanatory in large part though, as the author attempts to create a social and cultural backdrop to the stories. In the end, one cannot fail to see how the story mirrors the everyday life and experiences of a child, any child, growing up in any colonial or immediate postcolonial sub-Saharan African society.

Akpan and the Smugglers

Like the other three books whose plot we have provided, *Akpan and the Smugglers* (henceforth Akpan) too was published under the African Readers Library in 1965. It is the story of Akpan, the eldest son of a poor village fisherman, Bassey, who becomes the victim of a frame-up and consequently remanded in custody for refusing a request to work for a notorious smuggler called the Master. The book narrates Akpan's adventure as he goes in search of the truth. He discovers that his Uncle, who is also a fisherman, is responsible for framing his father and that he is one of the Master's go-betweens in the business of smuggling. He goes further to unearth the truth

about how the business of smuggling is organised, and at the end, he comes out with the truth about how his father became a victim of frame-up. The police are eventually involved and the so-called Master – who is actually a well-known member of the community whom many people think is an honest man – is arrested together with his cohorts. Akpan's father is released from custody and Akpan is given a handsome reward of 1,000 pounds for helping to uncover a terrible crime.

Structural and Stylistic Features of *Entertainment, Tales, Adventures and Akpan* Before examining the types of sentences used in the books and their suitability for children, it is helpful to make a few observations regarding the structural and stylistic features of the books as children's literature. Firstly, it is fitting that the book announces itself as *An African Night's Entertainment*, meaning that it is a sort of tale narrated to children by moonlight. In pre-colonial African societies, stories meant for children were usually told in the evening, after the day's chores must have been completed and supper eaten. Such stories, often told by elders of the community or some old men or old women in the community, were usually narrated under the illumination of the moon. In addition, they were usually stories that were laced with moral lessons. They may come in the form of fables, with human and animal characters, or in some cases with only animal characters. Sometimes, they take the form of fairy tales, with improbable events made to appear plausible. Sometimes, too, they are completely realistic and contemporary in their invocation of thematic concerns and in their articulation of events.

In the specific instance of the book under consideration, the story is told in the form of a tale by moonlight. The narrator is an old man, obviously a professional story teller, who tells his listeners to put their money on his sheepskin, "and if, by the time I finish my tale, there is one of you awake, that man shall claim everything we have collected". To indicate that the story is

indeed a sort of tale by moonlight, the narrator says “it is a long tale of vengeance, adventure and love. We shall sit here until the moon pales and still it will not have been told. It is enough entertainment for a whole night” (emphasis added).

So, it is clear that the story is intended as a tale by moonlight as we have it in African oral culture. And it is fitting that when the story ends, “the moon was still shining” but “there was not even a glow in the fire”. It is a tale, no doubt, for children.

It is also significant that the story is set in the ancient times, although towards the end, the story shifts to the modern era with the mentioning of Lagos, Accra, and “a clerk working for an English firm” (p. 77). This is typical of oral narratives, especially of the fable stock, where the events narrated are usually situated in the past. Stylistically, the story follows the typical narrative sequence that is often associated with oral narratives; the plot structure proceeds along the line of a time-sequence that begins with a crisis and ends with the resolution.

Finally, it is quite telling that the book is used to invoke Hausa cultural landscape; as we read, we are continually reminded that the story is set in a specifically Hausa cultural milieu. If part of the author’s aims in writing the book is to promote cultural literacy, there is no doubt that the young ones will find the book a useful source of information on aspects of Hausa culture that the book has highlighted. Thus, the function of literature as a source of information is fulfilled.

Structurally, *Tales* is not markedly different from *Entertainment*. Like *Entertainment*, it is a prose fiction written obviously with children in mind. The plot is also episodic, in keeping with the tradition of storytelling for young people. But unlike *Entertainment*, it does not have a prologue and there is no attempt to convince the reader that it is anything but a fiction. In thematic preoccupation and articulation of events, the book is completely realistic; no one reading it and who has had the experience of living in the village and attended a boarding school

in the 1960s will fail to identify with the story. The narrative is essentially about what young people in boarding schools do, particularly when it is their first year in school. This is the feature which the book shares with both *Adventures* and *Akpan*. Both books are completely realistic in their portraiture of events and characters and in their thematic concerns. *Adventures* is, though, more detailed in the way it attempts to provide a social backdrop to the story of Souza; it is a book that is clearly interested in cultural literacy judging from the lengthy explanations which often precede the narration of any event.

Akpan, on its own part, appears to be more contemporary than any of the other three books as it is concerned with an issue – i.e. smuggling – that is very much a part of contemporary social reality in Nigeria.

All the four texts are, in our opinion, clearly suited to the educational needs of children in upper primary school and junior secondary schools. As we shall attempt to demonstrate in the next three sections, the sentence types employed in the texts are varied according to specific purposes, but there is no attempt, in any of the four books, to burden the narrative with convoluted sentences; if anything, there seems to be a deliberate effort on the part of the writers to teach the readers how the English language might be used properly.

4.2 Types of Sentences Used in the Selected Texts

It is important to reiterate that the primary reason for examining the dominant types of sentences used in the books is to determine the story's suitability for children in upper primary school and junior secondary school. As we observed elsewhere in the dissertation, books meant for children or learners of language in the age group of 8-12 years old are usually characterised by simple sentences, simple diction, and familiar phraseology and expressions (idiomatic and phrasal).

4.2.1 Types Based on Function

Declarative

A declarative sentence is a regular feature of storytelling, particularly in the construction of dialogues. It is particularly effective in children's stories perhaps because of its ability to draw attention to itself or express ideas in a simple, uncomplicated manner. It is also suitable for a story told in the oral narrative tradition, as we have in *Entertainment*. Thus, it is not surprising that there is a preponderance of declarative sentences in all the texts selected for this study.

Examples from Entertainment:

There was once a man called Mallam Shehu. (p. 7)

The spell was broken. (p. 89)

They did not speak to each other for many days. (p. 74)

The three excerpts from *Entertainment* above are declarative sentences that give a sense of storytelling. The first excerpt is actually the very first statement in the book and it is remarkable that it immediately indicates the context of the story and style. The lexical item 'once' is intended to draw attention to the fact that the book is based on a tale, that is, moonlight stories. There is no doubt that this is appropriate in a book meant for children.

Here are further examples from the other texts:

'In those days of childhood, honey did not form any part of our diet'. (*Adventure*, p. 7)

'A large number of friends and relatives came up to the lorry park to see Bayo off to school' (*Tales*, p. 5).

'But Sunday was evil in reputation as well as in appearance' (*Akpan*, p. 13).

Imperative

In the specific case of a storybook, an imperative sentence is commonly employed either in the context of a dialogue or where the story is told in the first person narrative. One expects to see a preponderant of it where an instruction or a command is being handed down from one person to the other (usually from an adult to a younger person).

Following excerpts from Entertainment are imperative sentences:

‘Go and tell him I shall not come.’ (p. 12)

‘Don’t say that again.’ (p. 24)

‘Listen, little boy.’ (p. 71)

The imperativeness of the above excerpts can only be appreciated in the contexts in which they have been used. This can be illustrated this with the first excerpt. The first example is what Zainobe, Abu Bakri’s betrothed, tells Mallam Shehu’s emissaries when he sends for her to ask her hand in marriage. The imperative tone clearly shows Zainobe as an adamant person who is determined to stick to her guns. It is no surprise that Mallam Shehu has to enlist the services of a herbalist in order to make her change her mind.

Other imperative statements from the other texts:

‘Get off my compound before I set the dog on you’. (Akpan, p. 19)

‘Get out of the classroom, please’. (Tales. p. 36)

‘Get away’. (Adventures, p. 20)

Interrogative

Like the imperative, the interrogative is ideally suited to a dialogic construction, except perhaps where the story is written in a first person narrative point of view. In many of the dialogues (and

even monologues and soliloquy) in Entertainment and the other selected texts, interrogative sentences are widely employed. Consider the excerpts below from Entertainment:

‘How did you get into this forest?’ (p. 41)

‘If not, why does he say he’s on his way to Kurmin Rukiki?’ (p. 49)

‘Did you remove this money from the market stall?’ (p. 70)

The first example above is the question the band of robbers which attack Abu Bakri asks him when he first begins to make his way towards Kurmin Rukiki. The crispness and peremptoriness of the questions is achieved through its short phrasing, and this is particularly suitable for the context of the situation. It clearly indicates that the robbers that attack Abu Bakri are in no mood for social niceties.

Examples from the other texts:

‘Oh! Oh! Jackal, I leave you, but you don’t leave me; leave me; leave me, I beg, jackal’.
(Adventure, p. 20)

‘No fish again?’ (Akpan, p. 11)

‘What’s that? Who are you talking to?’ (Tales, p. 7).

Exclamatory

The exclamatory form emphasises a statement (either declarative or imperative) with an exclamation point (!). It is used to achieve heightened effects in the course of a dialogue, a duologue, a monologue, a soliloquy, or even in a first person narrative situation. In Entertainment, Tales, and Akpan, it is widely used in all these instances as indicated in the excerpts below:

Examples

‘Go away!’ he said. (Entertainment p. 8)

‘This cold food for me! Am I a dog!’ (Entertainment, p. 66)

‘Come in and sit down! This is a great honour. Mallam Shehu’s son visiting my market stall!’ (Entertainment, p. 68)

‘No! Ike jumped up, waving his hands in triumph. ‘No! Wrong!’ (Tales, p. 20).

‘Come on you two!’ he shouted roughly. ‘You know I’m here all right. Get up now and call your father...or else, well, you know what I can do!’ (Akpan, p. 14)

4.2.2 Sentence Types (Based on structure)

All of these sentence types that we have considered above further fall into four basic sentence type categories in English. This category is based on structure rather than function. In this regard, we have:

- Simple
- Compound
- Complex
- Compound – Complex

Simple Sentence:

A simple sentence contains no conjunction (i.e., and, but, or, etc.) and often makes only one sense or contains only one unit of idea. It is usually the dominant sentence type in books written for children. The simplicity of the sentences is made to facilitate the understanding of the story by children. Indeed, most of the sentences in Entertainment are simple, in keeping with the view

that "Simple words, clear ideas and short sentences are vital in all storytelling for children."
(Brad, 2003: 12). Below are examples of simple sentences from Entertainment:

Examples

The Old man had no alternative. (p. 94)

They went there. (p. 33)

The boy grew fast. (p. 29)

What proverb have you in mind? (p. 24)

All the above excerpts are simple, short sentences that contain a unit of thought or idea each. Children in upper primary and junior secondary school should have no difficulty in understanding them and following the meaning intended.

Examples from the other texts:

He shook his head. (Akpan, p. 7)

Bayo remembered. (Tales, p. 7)

They did not sting. (Adventures, p. 9)

Compound Sentences

Compound sentences contain two statements that are connected by a conjunction (i.e., and, but, or, etc.). The compound sentence is a variation of what is sometimes referred to as the complex sentence. In a general sense, the compound sentence contains an independent clause and one dependent clause. According to Robert Young and Ann Strauch (2006:45):

Dependent clauses cannot be sentences on their own. They depend on an independent clause` to support them. The independent clause in a complex sentence carries the main meaning, but either clause may come first. When the dependent clause comes first, it is always followed by a comma.

It should be stated that there are perhaps two crucial reasons for having compound sentences in storytelling, even in books intended for children. First is the need to have sentence variety, to make reading an enjoyable exercise. The other is stated quite tellingly by Walter Nash (1986: 23):

Most of the sentences we use in writing or in continuous speech are complex. Earlier in this chapter we tried to compose a piece of narrative in simple sentences. It would be difficult to do this at any great length, and in some types of discourse, e.g. the conduct of argument, it would be virtually impossible. There is a recurrent need to expound facts or concepts in greater elaboration than the structure of the simple sentence permits.

Thus, as one goes through all the three texts selected for this study, one comes across a variety of simple and compound sentences which allow the authors to expound facts and concepts in greater elaboration and to build up arguments and ideas. Let's consider the following excerpts from Entertainment:

Examples

1. The servants made enquiries. They found that Mallam Audu was indeed the father, and that the girl's name was Zainobe. They came back and told Mallam Shehu. Shehu sent a message to the girl, asking her to come and see him. The servants went to the girl and gave her the message. (p. 12).

In the excerpt above, there is a deft combination of simple and compound sentences which allow the writer to elaborate on the idea and narrative. The first sentence is decidedly simple. The second one is a compound sentence made up of a dependent clause (and that the girl's name was Zainobe.) and an independent clause (They found that Mallam Audu was indeed the father) held

together by the conjunction “and”. The third and fifth sentences are also compound sentences, while the fourth is a compound sentence with “and” deletion.

2. He pushed her away from him so that he might swing his cane at her and Zainobe at the same time. Abu intervened. In the above excerpt, we have a simple sentence and a compound sentence. The second sentence is the simple sentence, while the first sentence, which comprises two clauses held together by the conjunctive phrase “so that”, is the compound sentence. These sentences and several others in Entertainment and the other texts selected for analysis are clearly not above the comprehension of children in upper primary and junior secondary school. Consider other excerpts below:
3. Soon Dara gave a shrill whistle and that was the signal for us to set out’ (Adventure, p. 8).
4. They would have to hurry because the driver would, sometimes without announcing his intention, start the lorry and race away leaving the buyer of the palm wine and the seller shrieking. (Tales, p. 10)
5. He was not used to his younger brother producing ideas that he himself had not thought of first, and he was reluctant to admit that there might be some sense in Udoh’s latest suggestion. (Akpan, p. 31)

Complex Sentences

Complex sentences contain a dependent clause and at least one independent clause. The two clauses are connected by a subordinator (i.e., which, who, although, despite, if, since, etc.). In other words, a complex sentence is one containing one main or independent clause (also called the principal proposition or clause), and one or more subordinate or dependent clauses. The complex sentence is sometimes a combination of simple sentences, made merely for convenience and smoothness, to avoid the tiresome repetition of short ones of monotonous similarity. The

basis of it is two or more simple sentences, which are so united that one member is the main one,-the backbone,-the other members subordinate to it, or dependent on it; as in this excerpt:

1. Mallam Shehu distributed money among the relatives of the girl, and sent a good portion to the king of the land. The king at once sent to Mallam Audu, the father of Zainobe, telling him not to be angry, that the girl could not be happy if she married a man she did not like. (Entertainment, p. 27)
2. In the above excerpt, there is one compound sentence and one complex sentence. The complex sentence is made up of one independent clause and two dependent clauses. The relation of the parts is as follows:-

The king at once sent to Mallam Audu the father of Zainobe, Telling him not to be angry and that the girl could not be happy if she married a man she did not like.

This arrangement casts a kind of picture on the mind's eye- how the first clause is held in suspense by the mind till the second, telling him not to be angry...that the girl could not be happy if she married a man she did not like, is taken in; then we recognise this as the main statement; and the next one, The king at once sent to Mallam Audu, drops into its place as subordinate to the father of Zainobe; and the last, telling him not to be angry... and that the girl could not be happy if she married a man she did not like, logically depends on The king at once sent to Mallam Audu.

In all the four texts selected for the study, there is an abundance of complex sentences. Tales and Adventures are particularly notable for the large number of complex sentences they contained. But rather than obfuscate meaning and make reading tedious, these complex sentences are suited to the need and general grammar level of children in upper primary school and junior secondary school. Consider again the following excerpt from Adventures:

Compound-Complex Sentences

Compound - complex sentences contain at least one dependent clause and more than one independent clause. The clauses are connected by both conjunctions (i.e., but, so, and, etc.) and subordinators (i.e., who, because, although, etc.). In all the four texts, there are quite a few compound-complex sentences. This is justifiably so because a book meant for children between the ages of 8-11 should not be encumbered with long-winding or convoluted sentences as that is capable of not only obfuscating meaning but also affecting their comprehension. In Entertainment and Akpan in particular, it is difficult to come across more than five instances where the authors make use of compound-complex sentences. However, in Adventures, there are quite a few instances, and this is possibly so because of the narrative strategy employed by the author. For, indeed, narrating a story in the first person point of view often allows for the use of compound-complex sentences.

But these compound-complex sentences hardly impede comprehension or make reading a difficult exercise. We may consider a few instances:

1. The cousin outside the fence turned to run away and found himself running into the outstretched arms of the pastor, who was returning home from his night visits. (Adventures, p. 37)
2. Balogun swerved, glided past defenders and, the way now clear, flipped the ball to his own centre forward who scored. (Tales, p. 74)
3. Nobody, except his closest associates, knew his real identity, but it was said that from his secret headquarters he controlled more than two hundred men, and that three quarters of the huge canoes that gilded silently through the dark waters between Fernando Po and the mainland were owned by him. (Akpan, p. 18)

4. He asked Abu whether he had any feats of daring to recount, and Abu maintained time and time again that he was not a thief; that he had been sentenced to jail for a crime he had not committed. (Entertainment, p. 45)

All the above extracts are complex-compound sentences by virtue of having one dependent clause and several independent clauses. We can also analyse each of them by first identifying and placing their parts in the natural order of subject, predicate, object, and modifiers. Thus, for instance, the excerpt from Entertainment can be separated into one dependent clause (He asked Abu whether he had any feats of daring to recount,) and two independent clauses (Abu maintained time and time again that he was not a thief; that he had been sentenced to jail for a crime he had not committed). Using the second strategy of analysis, the excerpt from Adventure can be separated as follows:

- The cousin: is the principal subject turned to run away and found himself running into the outstretched arms: is the principal predicate for the principal subject The cousin.
- The pastor: another principal subject who was returning home from his night visits: the principal predicate for the second principal subject the pastor.

It is sometimes of great advantage to map out a sentence after analysing it, so as to picture the parts and their relations. In this regard, the excerpt from Akpan can be represented diagrammatically as follows:

“Nobody, except his closest associates, knew his real identity, but it was said that from his secret headquarters he controlled more than two hundred men, and that three quarters of the huge canoes that gilded silently through the dark waters between Fernando Po and the mainland were owned by him.”

- (a) NOBODY, EXCEPT HIS CLOSEST ASSOCIATES, KNEW HIS REAL IDENTITY

- (b) BUT IT WAS SAID THAT FROM HIS SECRET HEADQUARTERS HE CONTROLLED MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED MEN, AND
- (c) [THAT] THREE QUARTERS OF THE HUGE CANOES THAT GILDED SILENTLY THROUGH THE DARK WATERS BETWEEN FERNANDO PO AND THE MAINLAND WERE OWNED BY HIM.

But as we said earlier, compound-complex sentences like the above do not recur with any predictable degree of frequency in the four texts selected for this study. This is just as well because their preponderant usage, especially in close succession, may serve to obfuscate rather than aid comprehension and meaning.

Sentence Fragments

In pursuing further the analysis of sentences used in the texts selected for this study, attempt was made to answer the question of whether sentence fragments are used by the authors of these texts. The purpose is also to determine their suitability for the target readers (i.e. children in upper primary and junior secondary schools).

Sentence fragments is defined as an incomplete sentence. Some fragments are incomplete because they lack either a subject or a verb, or both. The fragments that most readers have trouble with, however, are dependent clauses – they have a subject and a verb, so they look like complete sentences, but they do not express a complete thought. They are called "dependent" because they cannot stand on their own. The following are examples of dependent clauses. They are just begging for more information to make the thoughts complete:

Because his horse was in the stable (What did he do?) (Entertainment, p. 14)

After the rain stops (What then?) (Akpan, p. 13)

When you finally take the test (What will happen?) (Tales, p. 23)

Since you asked (Will you get the answer?) (Tales, p. 12)

If you want to go with me (What should you do?) (Tales, p. 19)

Does each of these examples have a subject? Yes. Does each have a verb? Yes. So what makes the thought incomplete? It is the first word (Because, After, When, Since, If). These words belong to a special class of words called subordinators or subordinating conjunctions. First, it is important to know that subordinating conjunctions do three things:

1. join two sentences together
2. make one of the sentences dependent on the other for a complete thought (make one a dependent clause)
3. indicate a logical relationship

Second, one needs to recognise the subordinators when one sees them. Here is a list of common subordinating conjunctions and the relationships they indicate:

Cause /Effect: because, since, so that

Comparison/Contrast: although, even though, though, whereas, while

Place & Manner: how, however, where, wherever

Possibility/Conditions: if, whether, unless

Relation: that, which, who

Time: after, as, before, since, when, whenever, while, until

Third, one needs to know that the subordinator (and the whole dependent clause) does not have to be at the beginning of the sentence. The dependent clause and the independent clause can switch places, but the whole clause moves as one big chunk. Consider how these clauses switch places in the sentence:

Because his car was in the shop, John took the bus.

John took the bus because his car was in the shop.

Finally, every dependent clause needs to be attached to an independent clause (one should remember that the independent clause can stand on its own). All the texts contain a measure of sentence fragments, but these are used in conversations between two characters or among more than two characters. Consider the extracts below from Akpan:

1. 'Yes, from someone very important. It's about look...here, it's private, very private. Can't go shouting it in the streets. Why don't you ask me in?' (P. 16)

The underlined parts of the excerpts above are fragments because they do not convey complete thoughts and would need a second part to make them complete. Sentences like these are used in all the texts in the course of conversations or soliloquy. There are also, though, very few instances where such sentences occur in the course of a narrative. In *Adventures* there is not a single instance of sentence fragment, and this is understandably so because the story is written in the first person narrative. In *Tales and Entertainment*, the sentence fragments occurred in the conversational instances. Here are two examples from the two texts:

2. 'Eh...suppose...mind. I haven't started guessing yet. I am only supposing, see.
Well, then suppose I say that you went to Bornu."
'No. Wrong again...wonger than wrong! And your three guesses are up. Delicious egg! Heepee!' (Tales, p. 19)
3. 'Women are like water, because you cross a stream in the dry season and when and when you return in the rains the same stream will drown you. If you love a horse very much and you feed her, when you come to ride her, she'll throw you down and break your

backbone. So is a woman's love. Dry today like the ebb tide; high tomorrow like a flood.'

(Entertainment, p. 14)

4. 'Nothing else?' 'Nothing else. When I go home, send your boys, and I'll give a secret and alluring preparation to them' (Entertainment, p. 16).

Each of the sentences underlined in the excerpts above is a fragment which does not convey a complete thought and needs a second part to complete it. As we said above, sentences like these are found mostly in the of course conversations between or among characters.

4.3 Statistical Frequencies of Occurrence

To examine the type of sentences predominantly used by authors of the selected novels, the total number of each type was counted and recorded. Their corresponding percentages were then calculated and inferences were drawn. Here are the outcomes:

For Akpan:

Total number of sentences: 901

Simple sentence:	82	=	9.1%
Compound sentence:	302	=	33.5%
Complex sentence:	295	=	32.7%
Compound complex:	208	=	23.1%
Fragments:	14	=	1.6%

For Tales:

Total number of sentences: 908

Simple sentence:	322	=	35.5%
Compound sentence:	283	=	31.2%

Complex sentence:	207	=	22.8%
Compound complex:	81	=	8.9%
Fragments:	15	=	1.7%

For Entertainment:

Total number of sentences:	743		
Simple sentence:	291	=	39.1%
Compound sentence:	202	=	27.1%
Complex sentence:	181	=	24.4%
Compound complex:	57	=	7.7%
Fragments:	12	=	1.6%

For Adventures:

Total number of sentences:	881		
Simple sentence:	261	=	29.6%
Compound sentence:	203	=	23.0%
Complex sentence:	239	=	27.1%
Compound complex:	178	=	20.6%
Fragments:	00	=	0.0%

Implications of the Outcomes

From the statistical outcomes, it could be seen that three out of the four authors of the selected novels made use of simple sentences more ie Tales is made up of 35.5% simple sentences, Entertainment 39.1%, and Adventures 29.6%. Simple sentences are well-suited for learners within the age range under review i.e. ages 9-11. Simple sentences usually express single and

uncomplicated ideas, so, this class of learners have no difficulty comprehending and interpreting them.

The next dominant type of sentence used in the selected novels is the compound sentence. In fact, it is the most dominant sentence used in *Akpan and the Smugglers*. The compound sentence creates balance and is used by the writer to present an ‘endless variety of information in a written piece’ (Writing Center, Texas A&M). This sentence type is well suited for children’s books.

The frequency of the longer sentences like the complex and the compound complex sentences are considerably low. This simply implies that the authors of these books took into consideration the comprehension and retention capacity of their target readers.

Fragmented sentences were sparingly used in the selected texts. They were mostly employed in dialogue situations because it is in such contexts that their intended meanings could be deciphered.

4.4 Pedagogical Outcomes

Eight sentences drawn from the selected texts and examined as part of our data were administered on 30 pupils by asking them to read and interpret the given sentences. The pupils were drawn from 10 different schools in Kaduna metropolis. They are primary 5 and 6 pupils and also Junior secondary 1 students. Their ages range between 9 and 11 years.

15 pupils were drawn from 5 government owned schools while the remaining 15 were drawn from privately owned schools. The government schools include:

1. LEA Ungwan Rimi, Kaduna.
2. LEA Barnawa Low Cost, Kaduna.
3. Rimi College, Kaduna.

4. Kaduna Capital School, Kaduna.
5. Government Secondary School Narayi, Kaduna.

The privately owned schools include:

1. Sacred Heart Primary School, Kaduna.
2. Ematha schools Ungwan Sunday, Kaduna.
3. Queensfield Nursery /Primary School Barnawa, Kaduna.
4. Chapherm Schools Kurmi Mashi, Kaduna.
5. Medi Schools, Kaduna.

The children were asked to read the given sentences and give an interpretation of what they had read. Here is the outcome of the exercise: 26 out of the 30 pupils read and interpreted sentence 1 in appendix (1) accurately. 2 students were not fluent in reading but interpreted fairly well while 2 were barely able to read and interpret the text.

For sentence 2 which is a compound sentence, 25 pupils were fluent and interpreted correctly. 3 pupils were not fluent but were able to give a fair interpretation of the given text while 2 pupils were neither able to read nor interpret the text.

For sentence 3 which is a complex sentence, the result tallied with that of sentence 2. 25 pupils read and interpreted well, 3 were not fluent but interpreted fairly well while 2 could neither read nor interpret the given text.

Sentence 4 is a compound-complex sentence; 25 out of the 30 pupils read the given text fluently. 12 pupils out of these 25 interpreted correctly while 13 mumbled up the interpretation of the given sentence. 3 pupils were not fluent and could not give an accurate interpretation while 2 could neither read nor interpret the given text.

Sentences under the functional classification, which range from sentence 5 to sentence 8, did not pose much of problem to the pupils. The outcome was the same for the four sentences. 28 out of the 30 pupils were able to read and interpret well, 2 could neither read nor interpret the sentences. It was, however, observed that pupils and students from the privately-owned schools performed better in this exercise than those from the government-owned schools but this is beyond the scope of this study.

Implications of the Outcomes

We could infer from the outcome stated above that simple, compound and to a considerable extent, complex sentences are well-suited for texts meant for children of this age range, ie ages 9-11 and who are either in the upper primary class or the lower secondary class in their academic development. This is because the longer sentences tend to string together too many ideas in one instance and this tends to obfuscate meaning and correct interpretation for learners of this age range.

However, compound-complex sentences posed a bit of a challenge to the pupils. Although a good number of the pupils were able to read this sentence type, the interpretation was not fluid. Therefore, authors of literatures meant for this class of learners should take care and use sparingly compound-complex sentences.

4.5 Suitability of Sentences used for Children Literature

The point has been made, throughout this chapter, that the four authors whose books we have explored obviously wrote with young people at the back of their minds. We can justify this assertion with three related observations.

First, the books were published under the African Reader's Library series. The African Reader's Library is a series of well-written books, purposely prepared for young people who take pride in their African heritage and enjoy reading genuine African literature by African authors. From the 1960s to early 1990s when production plunged, the series made a leading contribution to literature for young Africans, and all the books published under the series have gone on to achieve the status of canons in the annals of African literature. Reading fluency and comprehension can only be achieved with practice, and the books in this series ensured that this practice has been a great pleasure. Indeed leading educationists all over Africa have found these books especially useful at SENIOR PRIMARY and JUNIOR SECONDARY levels and of great relevance in Teacher Training Colleges.

Secondly, as shown in the sentence analysis attempted so far, there is a preponderant use of simple and compound sentences in all the texts we have selected for the study, while complex and compound-complex sentences are used only sparingly. This is certainly suited to the linguistic requirements of young people in senior primary and junior secondary schools. It is significant indeed that each of the authors has deliberately avoided sentence fragments and highly elevated or stylised poetic constructions. In the main, the sentences are carefully crafted and made to conform to the rules of correct language use in English.

The third and final point to be made pertains to the stylistic and lexical features of the selected texts. It is certainly important to the authors that the books are realistic in their invocation of settings, in their thematic preoccupations, and in the plotting of the stories. All the books are written in episodic style, which is often the dominant stylistic feature of children's books. It is also significant that all the four books are well illustrated.

Finally, it is to the credit of the authors that the choice of lexical items is both appropriate and suited to the comprehension level of young readers. All the texts contain lexical items that are essentially simple and formal in their application. The writers' choice of lexical items is no doubt influenced by the belief that writers of children's literature "should have a stock of simple words...and should be able to paint vivid pictures with words" (Meniru, 1992:49). Consider a few excerpts from each of the texts:

1. Abu wheeled his horse and cantered away (Entertainment, p. 47)

2. Quietly he swam along the line of moored vessels and came to the Surveyor.

Fortune favoured him, for on the riverward side of the ship a rope ladder had been left dangling in the water. Agile as a monkey he pulled himself up on to it and was soon climbing slowly upwards, ears pricked to catch the slightest sound of anyone on the deck above. All seemed quite, and with a final effort he heaved himself over the rail, dangerously silhouetted for a moment against the sky. (Akpan, p. 38)

3. Bayo evaded both blows and before the third came the referee intervened, advised the fighting player to keep calm, and then proceeded to do injustice. First he sent Bayo off the field to the great delight of the spectators. Then, taking the ball in his hand, he walked all the way back to the Abule goal mouth, placed it on the penalty spot, and ordered the St Peter's team to shoot. (Tale, p. 62)

4. Dara got out of his bag a small bundle of tinder, and wedged it tightly between the split end of a long stick. He struck a match and lit the tinder. He moved up quickly and we followed him. Then he stopped dead and became still. He stretched forth the stick and the fire scattered the bees. They hummed angrily around looking for the culprits. But by this

time we were all standing very still, holding our breath and not winking an eye. We had been very well taught. (Adventure, p. 8)

The three excerpts above contained no lexical item that should be strange to any child with good knowledge of the English language. The choices of words are also appropriate for the various situations and environments they seek to portray. In the first excerpt, the word wheeled and cantered are used in relation to a horse, and this is particularly fitting because in the social milieu invoked in the book, horses were the standard means of transportation. In the excerpt from Akpan, the expression moored vessels invokes the image of a riverside or seaside community. Indeed, throughout Akpan, most of the words used were those relating to the river, the sea, or fishing. None of the words in the four excerpts should pose much difficulty for children in upper primary and junior secondary schools, but even if such a word were to exist in the books, the essence of writing is also to introduce the children readers to new words, the meaning of which they can always look up in the dictionary. One cannot fail to see from the excerpts that the authors must have taken great care to paint vivid pictures of scenarios and locales in order to make themselves well understood to the readers.

The fact that the authors use things that belong to the social milieu of the children captures the Realist as well as the Representational theories in literature which maintained that literature is a representation or second hand version of society.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Summary

In this study, a grammatical analysis of the types of sentences used in some selected literature books for children has been attempted. The books selected for study are:

An African Night's Entertainment by Cyprian Ekwensi.

Tales Out of School by Nkem Nwankwo.

Adventures of Souza by Kola Onadipe.

Akpan and the Smugglers by Rosemary Uwemedimo.

All the four books were published under the Africa Reader's Library Series and have achieved canonical status in modern African Children's literature corpus. The books were written for young people in upper primary and junior secondary schools, and this is evident not only in the illustrations found within them but also in the language. In order to demonstrate whether or not the books are accessible to the target readers in terms of language use, the study has been undergirded by four primary objectives, viz:

- Examine the types of sentences used in the selected texts.
- Find out whether the sentences are fragmented.
- Investigate whether such sentence use is commensurate with the level of language development of the group for which it is meant.

In pursuing the above objectives, each book was analysed in line with what the study sets out to do. In a nutshell, the study's major findings include the following:

1. There is, in all the four books, a preponderant use of simple sentences, which we considered to be particularly suitable for children still grappling with the elementary aspects of the English language. As we have argued, simple sentences can express uncomplicated ideas in uncomplicated ways; as such, children often find it easier to memorise them and understand what an author is trying to express with or through them.
2. There are also a good number of compound sentences in the four books.

However, complex and compound-complex sentences are not aplenty. We consider this paucity of complex and compound-complex sentences in the four books to be quite appropriate. This is because such sentence types often lead to obfuscation which young people may not be able to enjoy. They also have a way of presenting ideas in a long-winding way that can easily affect the learning comprehension of a young person.

3. In addition, we have observed that sentence fragments are quite few in the books (in fact, in *Adventures*, there is not a single instance of sentence fragment). This, too, we consider to be appropriate since sentence fragments often do not express complete thoughts and are capable of hindering rapid reading and comprehension.
4. Finally, we have noted that, on the whole, all the four books are not complicated with difficult or specialised dictions; it is doubtful if there is a single word in the four books that is beyond the comprehension of a child in upper primary or junior secondary school. And, as we said, even if such a word exists, a child can look it up in the dictionary since, after all, part of the purpose of writing the books is to aid vocabulary development in young children.

5.1 Conclusion

The question of what appropriate language to use in writing literature for children has not spurred controversies. Unlike, for instance, the language question in African literature which has engaged the attention of scholars from diverse disciplinary fields in arts and the humanities generally. There appears to be a consensus among writers that works meant for children ought to be written in simple, accessible English. The aim is to use such works as part of a tool for teaching the young ones English language. Hence, in the African literary environment, works written specifically for children are always simple, with simple and accessible diction and well-constructed sentences. Such works are also usually illustrated in order to help the imaginative capacity of the young readers. The works are also realistic in nature, and the realism is, perhaps, to convince children that literature is a representation of the society.

5.2 Suggestion for Further Studies

This thesis has attempted to analyse aspects of grammar (from a traditional perspective) in four children's novels. This study cannot pretend to have exhausted all the issues connected to language use in children's literature, or even in any of the four books selected for this study. The effort here has been mainly to show the salient aspects of this subject. It may be more rewarding if future works in this area attempt – to suggest one direction – a stylistic analysis in addition to the grammatical analysis that has been attempted here. It may also be rewarding to attempt, say, the analysis of the books from a sociolinguistic angle in order to display the intimate connection between social processes and language use.

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APPENDIX

1. The Old man had no alternative. (p. 94)
2. Soon Dara gave a shrill whistle and that was the signal for us to set out'. (Adventure, p. 8)
3. The king at once sent to Mallam Audu, the father of Zainobe, telling him not to be angry, that the girl could not be happy if she married a man she did not like. (Entertainment, p. 27)
4. Nobody, except his closest associates, knew his real identity, but it was said that from his secret headquarters he controlled more than two hundred men, and that three quarters of the huge canoes that gilded silently through the dark waters between Fernando Po and the mainland were owned by him. (Akpan, p. 18)
5. The spell was broken. (p. 89)
6. 'Go and tell him I shall not come'. (p. 12)
7. 'Oh! Oh! Jackal, I leave you, but you don't leave me; leave me; leave me, I beg, jackal'.
8. 'No! Ike jumped up, waving his hands in triumph. 'No! Wrong!' (Tales, p. 20)