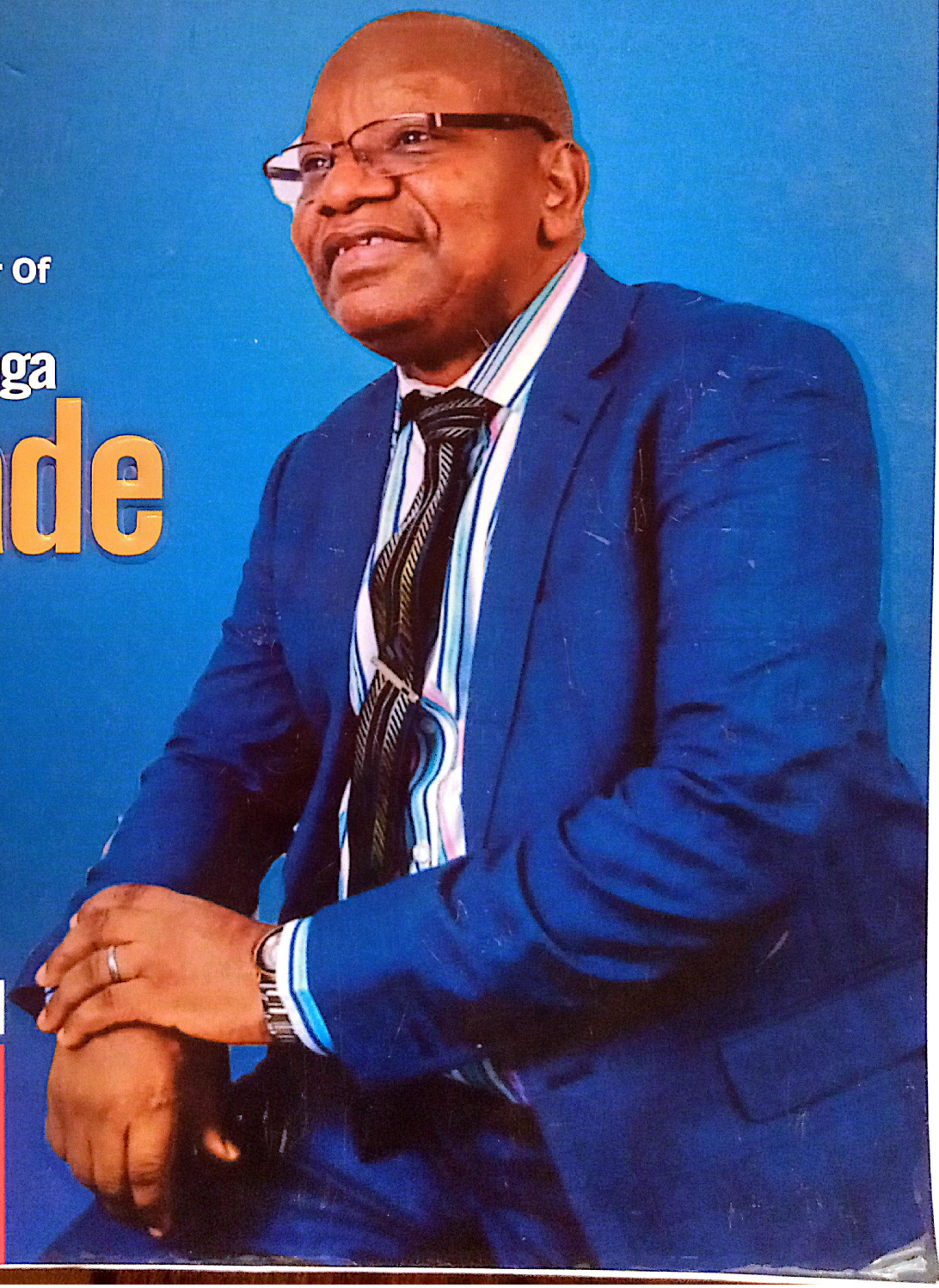
LANGUAGE USE AND PRESERVATION

A Festschrift in Honour Of

Prof. Abel Gbenga Fakuade



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DARE OWOLABI
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DARE OWOLABI
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Reviewer: Prof. S. Oluwole Oyetade

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF THE CULTURE OF VIOLENCE IN ADEOYE'S *THE KILLERS (A SOCIAL DRAMA)*

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Abstract
The society is replete with the flux of turbulences, complexities and encumbrances generated by violence. It is then significant to study the language used by a playwright to reflect the orgy of violence pervading the society, while the quagmire is strongly appealed against by the author. Such usage of language by Adeoye in The Killers (A social Drama) (2009), has been explored in this paper from the sociolinguistics standpoint of style or variation. Applying the qualitative method of analysis, it is shown that the author of the 65-page text, deploys language to portray the orgy of violence, and seriously denounce it through the scene of "Those who have ears", "Unionism as gangsterism", "Cant reason prevail" ,"Killing to sell God" and " Money the root of all evils". Furthermore, the interactions in the part two of the play, among the Messenger, Diviner, General Manager, Major-General, Director and Deputy Director reveal that there exist high versus low solidarity scale, superior versus subordinate status, formal versus semi formal settings, as well as the functional scale of greeting, informing, instructing, appreciating, declaring, determining, complaining, among others. The paper concludes that, apart from underlining the reality of violence in Nigeria, the play is a food for thought, urging all to desist from violence.
Keywords: Language, Culture, Violence, The Killers, Sociolinguistics.

Introduction

This paper focuses on the sociolinguistic features of the culture of violence in the Adeoye's *The Killers (A Social Drama)* (2009); it then warrants the taking of a look at "language", "culture" and "violence" as the background. Language, culture and violence are a triadic phenomenon interconnected in several ways, but such interrelationship depends on language underpinning. More so, cultural expression via language may manifest through the expression of habitual violence in a turbulent, depressed and troubled society, where inequality and injustice prevail. According to Searty and Carter (2004), languages are emergent products of engagement of the human practice with the material world, while Adegbite (2009) opines that the connections between language and social actions which culminate in cultural practices cannot be controverted.

A general view on language points in the direction of three dimensions (Adegbite, 2009). Firstly, language is perceived as a universal phenomenon which is acquired genetically. Secondly, language is depicted or referred to as an individual code, such as Bokyi, Nupe, Igala, Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa e t c. The third conception borders on the general context of language in social use which is our area of focus in Adeoye's *The Killer, A Social Drama* (2009). On the view of language as a genetically acquired substance, the description of human language as a species-specific human possession is given. This, according to Essien (1999:12), is "predicated on the relationship between language and mind or brain" hinging on "the quintessence of humanity". He stresses further that "language is specific to human being; but unavailable to any non-human animal, including the most intelligent chimpanzee ever found on the face of the earth". Essien (2006:3) further describes the attributes of language, stating that, "language differs in time, space and social structure. According to him, "language follows the people who speak it, grows and develops, or even die with them". He goes on:

> "... every human being, big or small, great or ordinary, complex or simple, intelligent or unintelligent, need language for sole purpose of communication in all its ramifications, for man uses language not only positively to teach or to express things and values, to explain, inform, direct, enlighten, praise, pray, please, e.t c. but also negatively to cheat, deceive, lie, mistreat, misinform, misdirect, deride, insult, annoy, antagonise, confuse, e t c." (p.4).

Language performs all these functions largely because it is a way of people's life with its bearings grimly rooted in culture. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) defines culture as the manifestation of people's being and consciousness about nature and their living with other human beings in a collective group. In fact, a dimension of culture theory was posited by Keesing (1974) in the light of Chomsky's (1965) distinction between "competence" and "performance". In Keesing's (1974) view, in adapting the view of Chomsky, a distinction is made between cultural competence and cultural performance. Cultural competence is the model of the knowledge of the culture of an individual that he/she draws on, in participating in the cultural practice of the society (cultural performance). In other words, culture entails the totality of the way people speak, dress eat, sleep, celebrate, mourn, wed, etc. It also refers to the way people engage in education, in politics, in worship and art, including the way people go into violence (Barth 1967). In fact, some countries, such as Syria, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Egypt, and so on, are known as troubled zones due to their frequent, habitual and turbulent involvement in violence. According to American psychological Association (2017:3), "violence is an extreme form of aggression, such as assault, rape, or murder". But a far-reacting definition is given by Violence Prevention Alliance (2018), which refers to violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threaten or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group of community, that either results in, or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.

As mentioned earlier, language, culture and violence are intertwined. While violence can take place against oneself, against another person, or against a group or community in a society, the frequency of such occurrence in a society would qualify it as a society of violent culture. However, language is the medium through which both culture and violence are expressed. In this paper, the sociolinguistic study of how Adeoye uses language to capture the build-up and spread of the life-

threatening and violent engagement of deadly conflagrations engulfing Wazobia is brought to the fore. The writer deploys language to describe the deadly spate of violence engulfing the educational sector, the Niger Delta area, the religious circle and the civil society in Wazobia (Nigeria in replica). In resolving the conflict, the playwright reaches unto language to drum in the antidote of violence by advocating peace, fairness, egalitarianism, equality and social justice in the society.

Sociolinguistics and the Study of Culture and Violence

An appeal to an ordinary sense will wonder and doubt about any correlation or connection among sociolinguistics, culture and violence. Yet, they are key features, or elements of measuring the indices characterising the societal pendulum of co-existence. A society marred with violent culture boils often and often. However, sociolinguistics is apt at analysing the linguistic variations reflecting the discourse bankrolling such turbulent and breath- taking culture.

A sociolinguist studies the relationship between language and society. "He/She is interested in explaining why we speak differently, in different social contexts and sociolinguistics is concerned with identifying the social function of language and the ways it is used to convey social meaning" (Holmes 1992:1). Differently put, "it investigates how structure influences the way people talk, and how language variation and pattern of use correlate with social attributes such as class, sex, age, and ethnicity" (Coulmas 2003:562). A sociolinguist is empowered to examine the way people use language in diverse social contexts with the aim of providing a wealth of information about the way language work, (dynamics of language), as well as about the social relationship in a community (Holmes 1992:.5). Several sociolinguistic theories explicate the study of how language functions, and how certain social factors underscoring them are accounted for. Variations of language in speech or writing relate to the users of language, technically referred to as participants in relation to the social setting and the interactions facilitating them. Hence, studying the language of a writer is facilitated via sociolinguistics by beaming a searchlight on the language variation of the writer.

A sociolinguistics theory of variation as applied in this paper, explores the style of language used by the writer to convey his message. In the Adeoye's *The killers (A social Drama)* (2009), language is varied in style to portray the features of culture and violence with the aim of deterring the violence in the society. According to Holmes (1999:245), "language varies (in style) according to its use, its user, and according to where it is used, and who is using it". The concept of language variation relates code choice to style, context and register. In the case of the text we are considering in this study, the features of culture and violence (and the antidote of violence) are vividly painted in the usage of the writer's language. As earlier said, language is the expression of culture, and by extension of violence, and violence becomes a culture when it assumes a frequent or habitual dimension in a society.

Culture has been defined as the aims, customs, lifestyles, backgrounds and habits that characterise the practices and tradition of a society or nation; or the beliefs, values behavior and material objects that constitute a people's way of life (*Collin's Gem Online Dictionary* (2018). Culture has been "conceptualised from the adaptive or evolutionary, ideational and socio-cultural perspectives" (Keesing, 1974:73). The adaptive or evolutionary theory relates ecological or biological and cultural components to human behaviors, while the ideational model relates cognitive structure and symbolic systems to culture as a system of human behavior. Furthermore, a socio- cultural school of thought refers to the link between the society and culture (Barth, 1967: Baterson, 1972; and Boom, 1972. As earlier said, Keesing, 1974:88) unfolds the diversity of views

on culture by positing a distinction between cultural competence and cultural performance. In the light of this distinction, this paper will explore the features of the culture of violence (including the appeal against it) in Adeoye's *The Killers (A Social Drama)*. Violence, at any rate, is a personal or societal vice, not a virtue. "All hands must then be on deck to checkmate it", the text concludes.

Let us take a closer look at violence. Violence has earlier been defined in this paper as the intentional use of physical force or power, threaten or actual, against oneself, another or person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likehood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation (Violence Prevention Alliance, 2018:1). Barack (2003) explains a full range of interpersonal, institutional and structural violence. The origin of interpersonal violence, according to Barak, is located within the person or within the social environment. Aggression and violence are generated through loops involving interactions of individuals, families and societal spheres (Strains, 1978). According to Iadicola and shape (1998:8) inequalities, hierarchies, disseminations, oppression, frustration, etc motivate people, groups, sectors, students, youths, etc, to go violently against individuals, people, authorities, communities, institutions, etc. Structural violence grows and develops in reaction to negative social structure of class distinction, deprivations, oppression, corruption, ethnic or racial domination, hardship, inequality, unaffordable cost of living, etc. Kessing (1974:16) stresses that "violence acts are found in families, neighborhoods, classrooms, bedrooms, workplaces, country club, or in a variety of setting involving other groups of people or institutions such as military, law enforcement, judiciary, mass media, places of worship etc."

All these aptly describe the Nigerian situation which 'Wazobia' in the play symbolises. The country is undergoing a terrible heat as she is unable to curb or stop the causes of violence, aggression, insecurity, and so on. Grieves, pains, hardship, hunger, lack and want, in the face of the increasing tribe of treasury looters and corrupt individuals are on the increase, in spite of the anti-corruption slogan of the current administration. These scenarios were captured in *The Killers (A social Drama)* (2009). The writer does not see the attitude of 'fire for fire' or 'violence for violence' as a way of solving the tensed Nigerian situation. Rather, he sees act of violence as a means of overheating the polity and subjecting the innocent ones into untold hardship.

Conceptual Construct

The sociolinguistics theory of language variation is favored in this study. As already discussed, the theory is capable of facilitating the description of participants (speakers and hearers) the social contexts (setting and other features), topic or subject matter, as well as the language functions being accomplished by the actors in the play. In other words, the social factors, dimensions and explanations that are needed to analyse the linguistic variations in *The killers (A social Drama)* (2009), constitute the main thrust of this paper.

For the purpose of this study, the play is divided into two parts. The sociolinguistic style of the writer in creating the fiction of culture and violence, as well as the style he employed to decry, condemn and counter the violence fictionally created in 'Wazobia', will be explored in Part One. Part Two will be approached through the investigation of social factors and social dimensions, characterising the participants of the play. In this part (Two), four sociolinguistic scales of social dimensions will be put into consideration. They are social distance scale (high solidarity versus low solidarity), the status scale (superior versus subordinate status) the formality scale (formal versus informal), and the functional scale (functions of utterances in context).

Methodology

As mentioned earlier, the book, *The Killers (A social Drama)* (2009), as the text for our analysis bifurcates into two parts. The first part came after the prologue: "Those who have ears", "Unionism as gangsterism" , "Can't reason prevail ?" and Killing to Sell God". The writer of the play sets up four scenes that play out violence for the purpose of decrying the violence, while the second part consists of nine movements, where the author creates the setting of the Wazobian nation and the Wazobian National Corporation, managed by categories of workers who are corrupt, diabolical, dubious and mischievous. All these depict the typical Nigerian situation of the year 2009 and beyond, till now. The method adopted for both parts are qualitative and descriptive.

In the Part Two, the social variation and the dimension of interlocutors' participation, including the settings (social contexts), the sociolinguistic scales of distance, status, formality, as well as the utterance functions of the actors are crucial. The description in this part will cover selected samples from the play's movements. In other words, a balanced representation of all the movements are done by a random selection of excerpts are done in such a way that, an excerpt each is drawn for analysis from movements 2, 4, 6 and 8.

Language and the Culture of Violence in *The Killers (A Social Drama)*

Section A

Section A deals with Part One of the play, while Section B centres on Part Two. From the prologue, Adeoye uses language to introduce the Wazobian nation with an Annual Independence Competition, marked by rolling the drum with songs and dances. The rich culture of Wazobia is in high display as drummers and nine dancers mark the scene *ab initio*. Serving as a background to the play, the author kicked off the event with two Yorùbá songs, showing the determining spirit of Wazobia people as a nation, as well as the expression of shame to their detractors.

Adeoye in his use of language paints the three major ethnic groups of Wazobia in the dance competition. Ahmed, Emeka, and Lanwa are characters representing the three major ethnic groups of Nigeria: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. In a dexterity style devoid of sentiment the writer of *The Killers (A social Drama)* alphabetised the ordering of the three major ethnic stocks, i.e, Hausa, before Igbo, and Igbo before Yoruba. The three actors were dancing to undo one another, a symbolic representation of the unhealthy rivalry and competition prevalent among the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria.

However, the heat, confusion and violence rocking the boat of Wazobia nation began to play out as the Efik, Nupe and Edo lead dancers mounted the stage to challenge the supremacy of the dancing major groups. The violence here is at two levels: (i) the level of the majority versus the majority, and (ii) the level of the minority versus the majority. On the first hand, imminent confusion of violent unhealthy rivalry engulfed the three majority groups as each of them rushed to pick up the Golden Trophy. On the other hand, the minority, in apparent reaction to their marginalised status, came up to struggle with the majority, thus, generating more heat. By this, the author uses language to create a background for all the events bedeviling the characters of the play, thereby depicting a nation riddled with violence. Significantly too, the play stands out to condemn violence in all its ramifications.

This is further demonstrated in the next four scenes that represent the first part of the play. The scenes of "Those who have ears...." with which part one begins, is a stern warning against violence. Narrator one laments: "Why? Why must you dance in the face of agonies and crises? Yet you are already bleating like castrated animal. Why must you laugh and hiss when the nation is on

fire? Are you not aware that the avengers are on the loose?" (P.4). Supporting the cry and lamentation of the Narrator One, Narrator Two burst out : "... but let me help you to talk part of your talk, to help you to open the seated ears of the complacent with the scathing words, and to sound a note of warning to the agents of violence". Still perturbed and bothered about the cancer called violence, Narrator One punctuated the speech of Narrator Two, thus: " Talk to my people about evil called violence. Let them know that peace radiates progress and prosperity, while violence is a noxious stench of destruction, the last call to death"

In obeisance to the directive of Narrator One, Narrator Two faced the audience, urging them and saying, "Mothers of my father's country, put on your thinking caps. Those stale news sonorously delivered before by newscasters about killing and kidnapping, bombing and burning, which we fictional watched as films are now a reality in our country ..." The condemnation of violence by the two narrators continued until another scene took its toll.

Adeoye continued his use of language to create the scene of students union's gangsterism that saw "students carrying various dangerous weapons to the stage, singing solidarity songs and discussing their catalogue of woes. Some university staff are dragged to the stage by some students, beating them, giving them raw yam to eat and urine to drink, which author describes as 'a celebration of confusion' " (p.6). The chaos, confusion and violence continue until Narrator One surfaces again. In the narrator's strong-worded terms, condemning the attitude of the students, he faces the orchestra thus: "Are these university students or bandits?" (P.8). He asked, "How do these notorious gangsters gain admission into the university in the first place?" He wondered helplessly, but the Orchestra replied to his/her chagrin saying, "We don't know! But the last child of your mother is one of them" (p.8).

From the student union's scene, Adeoye through his use of language graduates into another scene of Niger-Delta militancy, tagged, "Can't reason prevail?" He created the scene of a commando-like actors, where "four heavily-armed, but neatly dress kidnappers fired indiscriminately to secure themselves". He writes further: "Frantic plea of 'Don't kill us' 'We will pay the reason demanded' and 'Niger-Delta will be better' in sorrowful American English echo came from the back stage". The contention, pandemonium and turbulence of the kidnap continued until Narrator One and Narrator Two appeared again. In utmost condemnation of the tragedy, Narrator Two queried, "Can't reason prevail?" (P.11). The two narrators pleaded for reasons to prevail. While Narrator Two continued to wonder if the killing of the white innocent workers in the Niger-Delta would solve the Niger-Delta's problem, he concluded that two wrongs would never make a right. In aligning with Narrator Two, Narrator One wondered if any war had ever been fought and won on the battle field, without resorting to conference table for peace to be brokered. With finality, Narrator One said: "My message is clear, violence begets violence, and we say no to violence".

In his further deployment of language, Adeoye took a swipe at the Imams and Pastors who were at daggers-drawn on petty issues, mocking and fighting each other, while a cult leader and his members came in and threaten to kill the Muslim and Christian worshipers. The orchestra in their usual peace missions, again, sang to douse the tension generated by the culture of violence pervading the Wazobian nation.

With language as his tool, Adeoye brought Part One to a close with the scene of "Money, the root of all evils". The scene opened with the tango of two drummers over the money given to them during their drumming ventures. The culture of greed manifested itself in Drummer One, who wanted to take all the money given to them. Narrator One emerged to again to quench the fire of

greed burning in Drummer One. "Human greed is a stigma that has selfishness as it's brother." reacted Narrator One (p.13). All the characters in this part later agreed and came to condemn the culture of violence bedevilling the Wazobian nation. The culture of violence was triggered by the cry of marginalization, economic exploitation, educational domination, fear of minority, extreme struggle for political power, settlement syndrome or corruption, etc. As already said, all these factors were directly or indirectly influencing violence in Wazobia.

Though written in 2009, the play speaks volume of today's Nigeria. In spite of the anti-corruption and change slogans of the present administration, the woes of economic exploitation, fear of educational domination, fear of the majority domination, the factor of *Boko Haram* attacks, the menace of the herds men, ethnic militancy in terms of protests by Niger Delta Avengers, Movement for the Freedom of Biafra, Oduduwa People's Congress, etc, culminating in untold culture of violence, such as bombing, kidnapping, assassinations, abducting, etc, are starving us in the face. In short, the acts and scenes underlying the theme or message of *The killers (A social Drama)* 2009 is real in today's Nigeria. The bottom-line of the author's use of language strongly lies in his ability to condemn violence and plead for peace. Narrator Two round off Part One by pleading: "...we need to be culturally, socially, and educationally engineered about the joy of peace", "... on my knees I beg you to turn away from that part (path) of violence" (p.16).

Part Two of the text opens with Movement One that comprise the narrative of the activities of the Wazobian Government Corporation which operates through the employees that are full of intrigues, diabolical moves, unhealthy rivalry, and other vices. However, this part, depicting official and Diviner's settings, is highly interactional, displaying conversations among the Director, General Manager, Deputy Director, Major General, Diviner and others. As we have reiterated, the focus here shall be the analysis of their conversation through sociolinguistic variation concept.

SECTION B

This section consists of explanations on the sociolinguistic factors influencing the contexts of the characters' conversations. To ensure an even representation of analysis reflecting the movements of the play, the even number selection of excerpts is used. In other words, an excerpt shall be taken per movement, as in, movements 2, 4, 6 and 8.

Movement Two

Excerpt 1

Messenger: Good evening, *Baba* (**Greeting**)
Diviner: Good evening, my son (**Greeting**)
Messenger: I am here because I want to succeed in life...(**i. Declaring ii. Informing**)
Diviner: Just like that? (**Questioning**) Then do the right thing and your success will know no bound (**(i) Instructing (ii) Assuring**)
Messenger: (The messenger hums to a Two -hundred Naira note and gives it to the diviner, who places it in the Oracle tray). I must succeed. (**Determining**) (p.22).

On the social distance scale, it is observed above that the social solidarity between the Diviner and the Messenger is low and distant. This informs the style of the interaction. Although, the Diviner replied the messenger in a familiar way with "Good evening my son", such is interactional and cultural. The scale of formality in the excerpt above reveals a semi-formal settings, where the relationship or formality scale between the Diviner and the Messenger is neither high nor low; it

is mid. The functionality scale of the above conversation is as shown in front of each utterance in bold print and in parentheses in the sample above. They are greeting, declaring, informing, instructing

Movement 4
Excerpt 2
Messenger: Good evening, sir (**Greeting**)
General Manager: Evening (**Greeting**)
Major general: you look worried! (**Observing**)
General Manager: Thank you officer(**Appreciating**). It is a Wazobia Merit International that defeated me, and I am psychological disturbed (**i. Conceding ii Informing**)
Major general: How? (**Questioning**)
General Manager: Those boys there are growing wings (**Complaining**)
Major general: How their wings will be clipped is the reason why we are here (**Informing**) (P.35)

On the social distance scale, the Messenger, by the way of his greeting the General Manager, shows distance and low intimacy. But in the conversation between the General Manager and Major General, normal intimacy and solidarity are reflected. The status scale among the interlocutors reveal high versus low status between the General Manager and the Messenger, while high versus high status exists between the General Manager and Major General. The setting of the conversation is characterised by the normal formality, while the functional scale depicts greeting, observing, appreciating, conceding, informing, questioning and complaining as indicated in bold print and parenthesis in the excerpt

Movement 6
Excerpt 3
Deputy Director: (the Deputy Director nods as he walks to the apron). If the director can be killed just like that, then what is my fate? (**i.Lamenting ii. Fearing**)
Messenger: (Rude) Oga it is my time to ask questions. Where are you going? (i. **Disdaining** ii. **Questioning**)
Deputy Director: What kind of stupid question is that? (**Reacting**)
Messenger: Okay, where are you coming from? (**i. Disdaining ii.Questioning**)
Deputy Director: Are you insane? (**i.Reacting ii.Insulting**)
Messenger: Oga Why is it that we normally meet on this road? (**i.Disrespecting**

ii. Probing)
Deputy Director: Perhaps I should ask you that! (**i. Resenting ii. Distancing**)
Messenger: Maybe I am trailing you (**i. Declaring ii. Informing**)
Deputy Director: Why should you? (**Questioning**)
Messenger: (Laughing) Blame Major General Handy, not me! (Pours the liquid substance on the Deputy Director and shoot at him, exist) (**i. Revealing ii.Informing**). **P.44**

The dialogue above shows an informal and a brutal situation where the normal boss-servant relationship has been thrown into the winds by the messenger because he was out to assassinate his boss–Deputy Director. The solidarity here is distant (non-intimate) and low. The status scale, in the

dialogue, reveals a superior (high status), and subordinate (low status), i.e, Deputy Director versus Messenger. The formality scale is low and informal, while the functional scale indicates lamenting, fearing, disdaining, questioning, reacting, resenting, distancing, insulting, declaring, revealing and informing.

Movement 8
Excerpt 4
Messenger: Sorry, Baba.(**i.Apologising ii. Excusing**) I am here because of three important things (**Informing**) First when are going to start the rituals? (**Questioning**) Secondly I want a charm to send off a visiting ghost (**Requesting**) Lastly, I am here to give you this tape.... (**i. Informing ii. Declaring**).
Diviner: when I went to my mother's forest yesterday to make enquiry about the Deputy Director's death, I was informed that your hand is filled with blood. That is why we cannot begin the rituals. ((**i) Advancing a reason (ii)Informing**). You are responsible for the death of ... (**Alleging**)
Messenger: Nobody (**Denying**)
Diviner: confess (**Commanding**)
Messenger: Confess about what I don't know? (**Denying**)
Diviner: Until you confess, the ghost will continue to hunt you till you die (**Warning**)
Confess and shame the devil (**Advising**)
Messenger: Help me, Baba (**Pleading**)
Diviner: Not at all (**Refusing**) I can't help (**Refusing**)
Messenger: Why? (**Questioning**)
Diviner: You trade in violence (**Stating**), do say the Oracle (**Quoting**)
Pp54-55

The functional scale shows apologising, excusing, informing, declaring, alleging, denying, commanding, warning, advising, pleading, refusing, questioning and quoting.
There is no intimacy in the interaction above. The setting is cultural and less formal. T

Discussion of Sociolinguistic Variation in *The Killer's (A Social Drama)* (2009)
So far, the sociolinguistic variation in the style of the author in section B depicts low and distant scales of social solidarity between: the Diviner and the Messenger in Excerpt 1; the Messenger and the General Manager in Excerpt 2; and the Messenger and the Deputy Director in Excerpt 3. But the social solidarity between the Messenger and the Diviner in Excerpt 4 is cultural, situational and hostile. This corroborates the claim of Holmes (1992) that social solidarity levels among interlocutors largely depend on the situational, cultural, and psychological contexts of interactions.

The sociolinguistic variation in the interactions further reflected certain degree of formal setting as between the: Messenger and General manager (Excerpt 1); Major-General and General Manager (Except 2); and Messenger and Deputy Director (Except 3). Informal or semi-formal variations were also observed between the: Messenger and Deputy Director outside the office and official hour (Excerpt 3); and Messenger and Diviner (Excerpt 3). By implication, the setting, participants and the topic of discourse determine the level of formality in an interaction (Denharm and Lobeck, 2013).

The status scale of the interactants showed high versus low, as between the: Messenger and Diviner (Excerpt 1 and Except 4); Messenger and General Manager (Except 2); and Messenger and

Deputy Director (Except 3). High versus high social status was observed in the conversation between the General Manager and Major-General (Excerpt 2). According to Syal and Jindal (2013), social situation, social status, occupation, age, gender, etc., largely influence the choice or use of language among interlocutors.

Finally, on the functional scale of the sociolinguistic variation in *The Killers (A Social Drama)*, (2009), the participants or interlocutors in the play used their speech to perform the following:

- greeting one another;
- declaring to the Diviner
- informing interlocutors on several issues;
- instructing and assuring the Messenger;
- making an observation on the look of the General Manager;
- appreciating an officer;
- conceding psychological defeat;
- complaining badly about a situation;
- grieving and fearing over a sad situation;
- (ix) questioning one another over unexpected developments;
- reacting against an unpleasant situation;
- treating an officer with disdain;
- excusing and exonerating oneself from an allegation;
- denying an allegation;
- pleading for help from hunting ghost;
- refusing to help;
- warning the culprit;
- (xvi) making statements; and
- (xvii) quoting an oracle.

Conclusion

This paper has x-rayed the features of language, culture and violence in the Adeoye's *The Killers (A Social Drama)* (2009) through a sociolinguistic mirror. The 65-page play takes a look at the wazobian nation through the ideology of sociology of literature. In the words of Adeoye (2009. p.iv), "this play unlocks the hidden secrets of (the) Wazobians in their dangerous quest for money making, a destruction of our cultural ethics and ethos." He went further, "--- *The Killers* is a manifesto for peace, fairness and social justice within the credo and dramaturgy of politics" (p.v).

The foregoing analysis, not only reinforces the goal of the author, but also situates the play's ambit of relevance in the sociolinguistic theory of language variation. The text diagnoses the problems confronting the Wazobian nation as a picturesque of the Nigerian situation, which forms the didactic shoot from which the play sprouts. As the author appeals, "Everybody must fight and wage war against all forms of violence, so as to avoid being consumed by (the) violence".

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