

Language, Power and the Reconstruction of Experience in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*

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Abstract: The paper explores the theme of domination and autocratic use of power and their implications in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*. The focus of the paper is on how power and domination fluctuates in social relationships in the novel. The general aim of the essay is to examine how linguistic sets in the text are sundered by different hegemonic practices and ideologies, with a view to showing how the novel is the site of boiling cauldron of unresolved issues of power and hegemony. This approach is significant because it examines the issues of authoritarian discourse in the novel and how this generates conflicting ideologies. The major finding is that autocratic power and hegemonic practices are resisted by folkloric and parabolic discourse narrative strategies. The theoretical framework adopted in this paper is eclectic. It follows studies in Halliday and Fowler on how lexical and syntactic frames reveal plurality of ideologies, particularly on Fowler's analyses of linguistic items from their ideological perspectives. The paper further draws insights from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and from Michel Foucault's theory of power. This is because language is the channel through which power relations are revealed. The interpersonal relationship between characters in the novel reveals various dimensions of power and hegemonic practices. Therefore, the paper concludes that despite the constraining principles of authoritarian power, there is a resistant consciousness which reconstructs experience which reveals the dyadic structure of power and shows language and power relations in diverse forms in the novel.

Keywords: Achebe, Language, power, discourse, autocratic, ideologies.

INTRODUCTION

In *Anthills of the Savannah*, the relationship between language and power, as well as their implications undercuts the social landscape of the Kangan society. This paper goes beyond establishing the implications of power in social relations and goes further to examine how language has become the medium through which power and human experiences are constructed, maintained and reconstructed in Achebe's novel, as well as the medium through which power is resisted and social experiences reconstructed. These implications language in discourse situations recalls Fowler's assertion that language is "a social practice (61). This means that all levels of interpersonal relation operate through the resources of language. This sustains Faireclough's position that power is built through the use of linguistic structures.

In this novel, Achebe analyses the "burning" issues that have ravaged the continent as a result of military engagement in politics after independence. Udumukwu underscores the importance of power in the structure of the novel when he writes: "Yet what separates Achebe's work from other works before it is that it interrogates the delicate role of power in the desire for change" (*The Novel and Change in Africa* 193). This interrogation is visible in the battle to control discourse. Discourse in the novel takes two ambient sides: authoritarian or autocratic discourse which manifests hegemonic practices,

and rhetorical or folkloric discourse that intervenes in the delicate balance of power.

This supports the view that the authoritarian world can be transformed to order by adding a moral dimension to it. It is the moral dimension to autocratic discourse that necessarily amounts to its resistance and reconstruction of social experience. Indeed, superimposed on the basic structure of language in Achebe's novel are the linguistic resources of imposing, ordering and resisting the inherent practices in the various interpersonal social relations by the characters: Sam (His Excellency) on the one hand, and Chris Oriko, Ikem Osodi, and the Elder from Abazon—articulate in their awareness of the dangers of authoritarian power to the social fabric of the nation, vigorously resist Sam's misuse of power. This dialectical framework is what constitutes discourse practices in *Anthills of the Savannah*.

George Steiner affirms the above fact when he states that "To question truly is to enter into harmonious concordance with that which is being questioned" (69). However, being the initiator of discourse and its absolute "wielder" in the novel, Sam (His Excellency) assumes the arrogant sole controller of discourse. Therefore Chris Oriko's dialogic exchange in the opening stages of the novel props up Sam's authoritarian ideology and the use of language to dominate others. Thus, *Anthills of the Savannah* is a text that reveals the way language is continually constructed in practice

to reflect ideology (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 4). Eckert and McConnell-Ginet argue that “As a result, there has been increased attention to what people do with language and how linguistic and other social resources can be transformed in the process” (4).

In a moment of reflection, Barthes draws attention to the classificatory power of language when he opines that “We fail to see the power in language because we forget that language is a classification and each classification is oppressive” (qtd in Ekpo 225).. The implication of Barthes’s statement is that language is used to construct social experiences. Autocratic discourse, indeed, is most oppressive in its classificatory system. This is because the language user is compelled to speak in a way that is already predetermined by constituted system of beliefs. It is therefore quite possible to locate Sam’s use of language in his interaction with Chris and other members of his cabinet within Barthes’s theory of linguistic fascism which can be properly framed into the context of authoritarian discourse.. Where the critique in Achebe’s *A Man of the People* centres on the corruption, misguided leadership and hypocrisy of the political elite, *Anthills of the Savannah* deals with power ruthlessness and the suppression of discourse.

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The major thrust of this paper is therefore this: power uses language to dominate and manipulate, which manifest in the linguistic mechanism of control. It is this linguistic mechanism inherent in language that reconstructs experiences and shapes the ideological structure of the novel. Ngonebu stresses the dialogical use of language to construct experiences in the novel when he states:

In *Anthills*, Achebe manipulates language to achieve distinct effects: to reflect the modern, sophisticated, chirographic society of Kangan, to express the discouraging disillusionment in the land, and to underline the pitiable state of affairs in this hopelessly governed state. (29)

The theme of power in the *Anthills of the Savannah* manifests in the abuse of it. How the does language manifest in the reconstruction and critique of ambivalent power?

Two dimensions of power are co-existent in *Anthills of the Savannah*: the political power which uses authoritarian discourse and the rhetorical,

folkloric or parabolic and philosophical which manifest in the Abazon Elder’s parabolic discourse, as well as Ikem’s Socratic dialogue—through which autocratic discourse is questioned and resisted. Each dimension reveals discursive practices that crystallize different ideologies. In the examination of these issues in the language of the novel, the central point is the enthronement of attitudes or perceptions about human experiences.

Then, what is important for us in this text is the way ideological slants are summed up in language—the way the language of the characters embody inherent diversity in beliefs. Louis Althusser conceptualizes this view of perception when he argues for the ideological analyses of linguistic sets in narrative fiction: “What art makes us *see* and therefore gives us in a form of *seeing*, *perceiving* and *feeling* [...] is the ideology from which it is born, in which it battles, from which it detaches itself and to which it alludes” (222). The argument in this paper therefore is that language provides different modes of perception and reconstruction of human experiences.

In *Anthills of the Savannah* power provides the tenor of discourse, politics is the source domain. The vehicle for this political power is authoritarian discourse as Sam’s (His Excellency’s) discourse with Chris Oriko illustrates:

Sentence 1: ‘You’re wasting everybody’s time, Mr. Commissioner for Information. S2: I will not go to Abazon. S3: Finish’ S4: Kabis! S5: Any other business?’ S6: ‘As Your Excellency wishes, S7: But...’ S8: ‘But me no buts, Mr. Oriko! S9: The matter is closed, I said. S10: How many times for God’s sake am I expected to repeat it? S11: Why do you find it so difficult to swallow my ruling. S12: On anything? S13: ‘I am sorry Your Excellency. S14: But I have no difficulty swallowing and digesting your rulings.’ S15: For a full minute or so the fury of his eyes lay on me. S16: Briefly our eyes had been locked in combat. S17: Then I lowered mine to the shiny table-top in ceremonial capitulation. S18: Long silence...’ (1, ch. 1)

Here, there is the presence of a subject who controls and distributes discourse slots. Besides, discourse is caged, lacking in duality.. Besides it is visibly monolithic, and there is an underlying struggle within the orbit of discourse. In sentence 1, Sam seems to suggest that Chris has taken a frivolous position on the Abazon matter while sentence 2 implicate Chris Oriko’s naivety on the

dictates of power. It is largely Mr. Oriko's apparent failure to discern that Sam's language projects power that leads to Sam's forceful assertion: "I will not go to Abazon." The choice of the auxiliary "will" conveys Sam's insistence on the finality of his decision (Leech and Svartvik 142). Maduka has also stated that the choice of the auxiliary in sentence 2 when combined with the first person singular or plural pronoun "indicates volition or intentionality" (67). The fact of the matter is that Sam had made up his mind not to go to Abazon in apparent misuse of power. His tone of voice clearly projects him as the only wielder of power and the sole initiator and regulator of discourse. The finality of Sam's decision is conveyed by the double exclamation marks in sentences 3 and 4. The Kiswahili word shows that Sam's descent into authoritarian power is fast spreading among African countries. Apart from revealing his ideology about power, Sam uses language to manipulate his cabinet. Sam's language manifests authoritarian use of power and linguistic tricks which project his monolithic worldview. Normally, sentence 3 is a question that initiates dialogue, but in this case, Sam's tone of voice does not encourage a response.

It is however Chris Oriko's feigned intention to interpret and widen discourse that provokes His Excellency's sharp retorts in sentence 8 " 'But me no buts, Mr. Oriko!...' ". Thus, sentences 6 and 7 are Mr. Oriko's way of refuting and resisting Sam's concept of power and discourse. The dialogue shows that domination is complex in this novel. Then the interpersonal relationship between the two characters is characterized by face threatening acts. In sentence 1, the vocative "Mr. Commissioner for Information and Your Excellency" are employed to suggest the social distance between them. Sam uses either title or last name to designate Chris, whereas Chris uses vocative only. In terms of power and social distance, for Chris, he is familiar and in some sense equal to Sam having been classmates in Secondary School. His Excellency however seeks to contradict him: "' But me no buts....,'" while for Sam, Chris is not only distant but also his subordinate and therefore rudely interrupts him. In sentence 1, Sam speaks first and also closes conversational exchanges (Coulthard 95-96). Chris's attempt to reopen it in sentences 6 and 7 leads to face threatening acts and liquidation from discourse.

In fact, Sam uses speech acts of commanding and questioning which correlate with presupposition

that he is socially superior to Chris Oriko and by extension to the entire cabinet (Short 159). Besides, he formally addresses Chris: "But me no buts, Mr. Oriko!" In other words, sentence 8 is a serious threat that seeks to silence Chris and define their social distance. The exclamation mark reveals Sam's shock at Chris's act of rebellion by trying to widen conversation exchanges. Chris on his part is not cowed by Sam's attempt to liquidate him out of discourse. In sentence 3 Chris Oriko adopts modesty maxim: "'I am sorry Your Excellency,'" and hides under that to initiate a conversational exchange. In other words, Chris's modesty maxim is a pretext through which he challenges Sam's autocratic values, mocks his monolithic discourse and reconstructs experience, especially for believing that he could have members of his cabinet "swallow and digest all his rulings" (1, ch. 1).

Sam's autocratic language is warranted by the Abazon drought and the need to pay them a solidarity visit. It forms the background of discourse and the use of power in one context. Sam's discourse is defined by what Udumukwu has identified as the "I--You" relationship (*The Novel and Change in Africa* 199). It is within this context that Sam seems to encircle others-- bracketing them within the orbit of his perception, and within this experience he struggles to freeze discourse within his experiential orbit. But Chris's discourse skills provide the first concrete step for the reconstitution of experience.

Chris Oriko's attempt to liberalize discourse threatens Sam, His Excellency and he therefore exhibits his mark of power: "For a full minute or so the fury of his eyes lay on me." The transitive structure of the utterance conveys Sam as a subject: "the fury of his eyes." Whereas in this context Chris is the object to be emasculated—and as the object victim and the recipient of Sam's misuse of power. Where Chris appears to measure up to Sam as in sentence 16, there is a sense of passivity in the action: "Briefly our eyes had been locked in combat." But as sentence 16 indicates Chris mounts a serious resistance to Sam's autocratic use of power. It is however the relentlessness behind authoritarian use of power that leads to further loss of face for Chris. Chris then uses the modesty maxim: "I am sorry, Your Excellency" as a survival strategy. In this instance, language is used not only as a means of control, but as a tool of manipulating perceptions.

What Chris has been doing is pushing back Sam's discourse frontiers and, in effect, his power

frontiers, thereby creating “alternative universe,” in Ryan’s phraseology (730). This is quite illuminating in Chris’s moment of reflection:

Sentence1: I have thought of all this as a game that began innocently enough and then suddenly strange and poisonous. Sentence2: But I may prove to be too sanguine even in that. Sentence3: For, if I am right, then looking back on the last two years it should be possible to point to a specific and decisive event and say: it was at such and such a point that everything went wrong and the rules were suspended. Sentence4: But I have not found such a moment or such a cause although I have sought hard and long for it. Sentence5: And so it begins to seem to me that this thing probably never was a game that the present was there from the very beginning only I was too blind or too busy to notice. Sentence 6: But the real question which I have often asked myself is why then do I go on with it now that I can see. Sentence7: I don’t know.... (1-2, ch. 1)

The proposition which Chris advances in Sam’s use of power and language centres on good governance, freedom of speech—and in this, he painfully reflects on Sam’s degeneration into an absolute power wilder and indicts the cabinet for being passive while Sam uses language as a tool of oppression.

The modal adverbs, “perhaps,” “maybe,” and “suppose” signal his limited cognition and his speculative interpretation of events. He uses the linguistic tools of repetition to stress the language of his reflection:

“I have thought of this...”
 “But I have not found such a moment”
 “Although I have sought hard and long”
 “I have often asked myself.”

The construction of the adverb of contrast ‘But’ and the concession adverb ‘Although’ signals his various efforts to comprehend. Sam’s degeneration is a mystery that has escaped Chris’s speculative mind. Besides, the repetition of “I have” presents his own moment of self cognition. But invariably, his choice of language voices criticism on the actions of the elite.

Chris’s perception of power in the hand of Sam is defined by *verba sentiendi*: “suddenly strange” and “poisonous.” Thus it is a process that started “innocently” as “a game” and then went berserk. In sentence2, though Chris indicates that his perception of this may be speculative. The verb “seem” in sentence 5 announces a consciousness

that is external (Fowler, *Literature as Social Discourse* 117). For Chris, the phrase: “that the present was there from the very beginning” (2, ch. 1), declares a judgment that comprehends Sam’s characteristic use of power. However, his intense and moral interpretation of events find constant expression in the first person pronoun: “I have thought,” “I have often asked,” “I can see,” “I don’t know,” “I am not thinking,” and “I suppose.” The first person pronouns are usually used in combination with perception verbs or with cognition verbs. Chris’s observations capture the various problems inflicting modern African society, and satirize the role of the elite in the game of power. In Chris’s reflection, Sam is tenaciously clinging on to power and confusing sycophancy with loyalty. So, like a doctor treating an ailment Chris must diagnose the problem in order to lead his colleagues to the alternative vision which his reflection embodies. It is in the light of these self-reflections that Maduka describes Chris as a “non-conformist who feels alienated...” (76). In other words, Chris embodies those values opposed to those of authoritarian discourse.

There appears the theme very central to *Anthills of the Savannah*: the theme of absolute control of language. This is evident in the scene where Sam summons Chris and requests him to issue a suspension letter to Ikem, the editor of the *National Gazette*. But what is of significant interest is the way the narrator indicates judgment and beliefs, by the use of modal structures: Sam’s use of language to establish the relationship between power and powerlessness in the dialogue:

Sentence 1: ‘Listen. Sentence2: The way I see it this matter is not likely to end with mere suspension for conspiring with thugs to invade the Presidential Palace. Sentence3: That may be only the merest tip of the iceberg. S4: There is some indication that Ikem might have colluded with these same people to sabotage the presidency referendum two years ago. S5: I don’t mind telling you that your own role in the fiasco was never cleared up satisfactorily either may well come up for further investigation.’ S6: ‘What on earth are you talking about...?’ S7: ‘So I sincerely hope—and pray—that you will not make your own position...you...more difficult at this stage. S8: It would be most unwise I can assure you. S9: If I were in your shoes I would go and issue the letter as instructed and await further developments.’ S10: ‘And if I refuse?’ S11: ‘I shouldn’t if I were you.’ S12: ‘Well, Your Excellency, for once I am

turning you down. S13: I will not carry out this instruction and I hereby tender my resignation.’ S14: ‘Resignation! S15: Ha hahahaha. S16: Where do you think you are? S17: Westminster or Washington DC? S18: Come on! S19: This is a military government in a backward West African state called Kangan.’ S20: ‘We wouldn’t be so backward if we weren’t so bent on remaining so...’ (144, ch. 11)

The above illustrates Sam’s growing alienation and his use of language to dominate members of his cabinet. While Sam projects a vision of power that destroys, and is unaffected by its injurious manifestations on others Chris resists the use of brutal power through the use of language. In other words resists Sam’s power using language. In sentences 1 and 2, Sam’s words are dominated by commands, threats and warnings.

Sentence 11 negates the position likely to be taken by both Chris and indicates Sam’s desire to use power to its limit. In effect, Sam’s language undercuts a negative attitude to power. This is deepened by the exclamation in sentence 14. It has an emphatic effect and expresses the speaker’s attitude about the subject of discourse. The repetition of the word “Resignation” also marks Sam’s use of language for aggression. Sam’s negative perception of language for the exercise of power becomes strong due to the use of modal and negative forms: “not likely to end,” “conspiring with thugs to invade,” “might have colluded,” “to sabotage,” “never cleared up,” and “most unwise.” Then from sentence 13, Chris linguistically confronts Sam: “I will not carry out this instruction.” As Maduka has noted the choice of the auxiliary “will” indicates Chris’s “violation or intention” (67), -- meaning that Chris has made up his mind to resist Sam’s power and refuse to issue suspension letter to Ikem. The forcefulness of the assertion broadens the conflict and in fact implicates the use of language to reconstruct social relationships. Again, their uses of language resources reveal a conflict in worldviews. While showing Sam’s brutal use of power and authoritarian discourse, there is an emphasis on the strength of Chris’s character and his alternative ideology for the use of power for the benefit of society.

The speech acts of Sam are mostly threats and warnings. The speech act status of an utterance is negative when the action of the utterance is not beneficial to the hearer (Short, “Discourse analysis” 162). This allows us to deduce that Sam and Chris are unequal in power relations. Chris

adopts the speech acts of questioning in sentences 6, 10 and 12 to alter social relationships and reconstruct experience.

The speech slots which Sam, His Excellency occupy presupposes that he is in a position to order and command Chris (Short, “Discourse analysis” 165).. It also implicates a breakdown in their social relationships. Another factor which indicates the domination of people in social relationships can be seen in the way discourse slots is distributed and who takes the most slots. It is interesting to note that in the entire passage Chris appropriates only six slots in contrast to Sam’s fourteen slots. In them, Chris’s speech is curtailed. He is interrupted twice, but the tone of voice in which he questions Sam shows his resistance and indicates outright rejection of Sam’s worldview.

Sam’s sense of superiority and power comes out clearly in his repeated attempts to debar Chris from talking for too long. The purpose of his discourse is to order, direct, to warn and to threaten. He positions himself in a position of a power wielder where it is possible for him to demonstrate the magnitude of his power, direct his anger at Chris for his refusal to issue Ikem with a letter of suspension. Often Sam speaks first and initiates conversational exchanges (Coulthard 95-96). He further uses the speech commanding, warning, threatening and questioning—which correlate with the pragmatic presupposition that he is a social superior (Short, “Discourse analysis” 175).. In other words, the passage falls under what Pratt calls “hierarchical speech situations” (188). The purpose is to define Sam’s worldview as the most powerful—and it is based on this that he seemed determined to control discourse according to the dictates of his worldview. His thoughts are therefore formulated in negative evaluation of others: “Ikem might have colluded...to sabotage the presidency referendum,” and “conspiring with thugs....” In other words, power is directed against “you and others.” But Chris reconstructs an alternative worldview using language, especially in moments in which he interrupts His Excellency, but Sam, without delay silences Chris by interrupting him yet again. From this moment discourse becomes frozen until when Sam aggressively dismisses Chris. In essence, Sam is reformulating their relationship from that of equals to one of domination and social superiority. It is within the interplay of this power dialectic that Udumukwu in *The Novel and Change in Africa* argues;

Within the realm of power, discourse functions this way to present the views of the power wielder as absolute. But at the same time discourse is imbued with a free play whereby it can undermine and escape anything which threatens to become a rigid code... Sam serves to freeze discourse within his own framework, but there are other forces which struggle to liberate discourse in order to reconstitute it within a specific parameter. (200)

Similarly there is even a greater play of domination and hegemony in the exercise of power that emits in discourse between the soldier and a young man at a section of the Gelegele market. It is an incident in which the soldier furiously drives up and nearly crashed into the young trader. The action and the alarm it provoked is fiercely fought with language. It leads to the linguistic exchange below:

S1: 'Oga, you want kill me?'

S2: 'If I kill you I Kill dog,' said the soldier... S3: But then the one who had had the brush with the car suddenly laughed and asked. S4: 'Does he mean that after killing me he will go and kill a dog?' S5: And others joined in the laughter. S6: 'No, he means that to kill you is like to kill a dog.' S7: 'So therefore you na dog... Na dog born you.' S8: But the victim stuck to his far more imaginative interpretation, 'No,' he said again. S9: 'If I kill you I kill dog means that after he kill me he will go home and kill his dog.' (48, ch.4)

The exchange brings to the fore the issues of domination, power and powerlessness in the novel. The soldier's speech in sentence 2 is in direct form, blunt and plain, appropriate for the speech of a man totally in the possession of power and all its instruments of coercion. It is also a declarative utterance. In contrast, the young man's speech in sentence 1, though in the interrogative form is deferential, which indicates his marginal position in the orbit of power. The conditional syntactic indicator "If" in the soldier's language in sentence 2 underlines the possibility of the illocutionary force of the utterance. The interrogative force of sentence 1 is therefore rendered ineffectual by the honorific "oga."

In sentence 2 the soldier's reply is un-emotive and reconstructs the young man's identity. The emphatic tone is further emphasized by the interpolation of the object "dog." The question is therefore this: What worldview is encoded in the clause structure? The soldier's view of power that finds expression in language is one that constructs people as objects—and he in line with this

reconstructs the young man's identity. His aim is rather to arrive at possible logic that could support his domination of the young man and others as objects. We can therefore infer the soldier's attitude towards the value of human life. It is also one in which the young man's life is equated with that of a 'dog.' So there is a reconstruction of experience and language according to the views of power which power confers in the state of Kangan.

However, there is a contrasting worldview which emits from the young man's use of language. Strategic in his discourse is the use of humour. Using the power in humour, he assumes a particular power through which he reveals the absurdity of the worldview encoded in the verb "kill." Again sentence 4 is an attempt to reconstruct experience. And how does the young man use language to constitute his identity? One, he reinvents sentence 2 as humour and then the soldier's word comes up as absurd. In the first instance, the soldier reconstructs the young man as object—"a dog" (Udumukwu, *The Novel and Change in Africa* 215) that can be dominated and oppressed by a more powerful subject. The young man however seems it necessary to reconstruct his identity as "-dog" and +human by using interrogative structures in sentences 1 and 4, and in the process denies his designation and construction as object.

The young man diverts attention from his own experience by relocating another object—"dog." By interpolating "dog" as object, he linguistically denies the presuppositions in sentence 2 that he is a "dog" that could be inconsequentially killed. But ironically in sentences 6 and 7, his friends refocus attention on him as object: "Na dog born you." But interestingly, the young man continues in the reconstruction of his identity by strongly denying the assertive classification of him as object. Through this vigorous denial he reconstructs experience. Whereas power is the engaging principle behind the soldier's utterance and ideology, the young man's reconstituted image of himself as a human being provides the alternative vision of human relationship. It is the choice of his language that allows him to cast an ironic and satiric glance at the vision of power represented by the military and how interpersonal relationships have been ruptured by authoritarian power. Halliday's remark is quite instructive when he states that the "... angle of vision is a function of the social structure. It reflects, in our society, the pattern of social hierarchy and the resulting tensions..." (*Language as Social Semiotic* 123).

Another form of discourse that challenges Sam's use of power to dominate is Ikem's astringent criticism of the misuse of power. It is this critique that subverts Sam's authoritarian discourse styles and power. Thus, Ikem initiates an action through reasoning and this invariably is geared towards initiating understanding. In the midst of a devastating power modulation, Ikem, like Chris articulates a political alternative rooted in Socratic inquiry:

S1: At some point he had assumed, quite naively, that public affairs so-called might provide the handle he needed. S2: But his participation in these affairs had yielded him nothing but disenchantment and a final realization of the incongruity of the very term 'public' as applied to those affairs shrouded as they are in the mist of unreality and floating above and away from the lives concerns of ninety-nine percent of the population. S3: Public affairs! S4: They are nothing but the closed transactions of soldiers-turned-politicians, with their cohorts in business bureaucracy... S5: His most poignant editorials such as his condemnation of human blood sport called public execution, his general dissatisfaction with government policies... everything now began to take on the vaporous haze of a mirage... (141, ch. 11)

In this passage, Ikem mockingly attacks the values fashionable with military governments in Africa (Kangan). Therefore Ikem's language encodes social judgments. The phrases and words: "assumed," "quite naively," and "nothing" emit values that are critical. These words are paradigms that reveal feelings of disgust. In sentence 1, the expression "At some point" shows a time sequence—a specific moment in the past which is relevant to Ikem's perception and change of attitude. In sentence 4 "they" refers to "public affairs" in sentence 3. Therefore Ikem is conducting a self-dialogue on the dissatisfying misuse of power in Kangan.

In sentence 7, the phrase "he admitted bitterly" is a *verba sentiendi* that encodes his feelings about public policies. He leaves us in no doubt by putting "public" in quotation mark. This is used to cast doubt on the sincerity of such public policies the military say are in public interest, but Ikem does not believe they are in the public interest at all. He is furious about the level of hypocrisy and abuse exhibited by those who control authoritarian power.

The sense of narrative continuity in the passage derives mainly from the syntax. The syntactic structure of the discourse develops the idea of Ikem's critical evolution of power. There is a continuous reference to Ikem's action. In sentence 5 these actions are linked by the repetition of "His"—which add emphasis to his view point. There is a metrical pattern in the repetition.

1. His most poignant editorials
2. His condemnation of human blood sport.
3. His general dissatisfaction with government policies
4. His quarrels and arguments with Chris

These syntactic constructions highlight Ikem's struggles and speculate on his future action—his alternative visions that resists Sam's autocratic worldview. It is these words that endow him with a certain ideological position—that is, "populism—" "a belief in the welfare of the people and also a faith in their good qualities" (Udumukwu "(Ideology and Dialectics of Action" 40).

Thus the impression gleaned from this discourse is the clash of worldviews. Even though Sam authorizes discourse as a power wielder, his view of that world is not the single dominating worldview. It in this sense that Roger Fowler's comment becomes instructive: "There is not one overall worldview subordinating every philosophy to a single point of view, but a range of alternative and interacting views of life" (*Linguistic Criticism* 131). An important manifestation of Ikem's belief is his critical thinking on the issue of capital punishment:

S1: Those who mismanage our affairs would silence our criticism by pretending they have facts not available to the rest of us. S2: And I know it is fatal to engage them on their own ground. S3: Our best weapon against them is not to marshal facts... but passion. S4: Passion is our hope and strength, a very present help in trouble...(38-9, ch. 4)

The ideals of freedom that emits in Ikem's language cannot be achieved without struggle, without resistance. As the plot structure of the novel progresses, what Ikem sees and the way he articulates the cause of action is crucial. Ikem therefore reveals the semantic features which constitutes Sam's exercise of power:

"They have facts..."

"It is fatal to engage them..."

"Our best weapon against them is not to marshal facts..."

“They are truly managers...”

In sentence 2 “I know” asserts a privileged knowledge after moments of deep reflection. Therefore Ikem’s political resistance to Sam’s use of power is the outcome of individual reasoning founded on logic. It is at this point that the third-person narrator’s views begin to colligate towards Ikem’s worldviews.

Therefore is the interaction of both the narrator’s worldview and Ikem’s. In cases where these conveyances of worldview occur as in this situation, Uspensky describes it as a “subsystem of point of view on the psychological plane.” (60) According to him “The author may assume the point of view of one of his characters in all possible aspects...” (101). Thus authorial position may merge with that of one or more of the characters. And most often in *Anthills of the Savannah*, Ikem’s logical discourses and the ideologies that emit from Chris’s rhetorical exchanges and the authorial worldviews merge.

As it turns out in line with his ideology of populism, Ikem highlights Sam’s failures in his lectures: the failure to embrace the “populist ideology and the failure “to re- establish vital inner links with the poor” (141, ch. 11). Ikem’s ideological stance insists on the imperatives of hard work—which in itself provide resistance to Sam’s monolithic discourse. This is prefaced in his lecture: “The Tortoise and the Leopard—a Political Mediation on the Imperative of Struggle” (153). The title of the lecture is derived from the folkloric discourse of the Abazon Elder. Two key issues are relevant in this lecture: one, Ikem disagrees that foreigners are entirely to be blamed for our problems; and two, he admits that they have played dangerous roles in retarding development. However, through his radical discourse, Ikem points out that a critical re-examination is crucial to dealing with problems. Where Sam strives to imprison discourse, Ikem struggles to liberalize it. So the essence of Ikem’s ideology is reasoning. Hence he declared to his large audiences at the University of Bassa: “Go home and think! I want to excite general enlightenment by forcing all the people to examine the condition of their lives...” (158). This is a speech act of command—a command that implicates and recognizes the humanity and capacity of the people to reason. Ikem is aware of the dangers which Sam’s monolithic ideology represents to human enlightenment and seeks to

resist it through reasoning and forcing all the people to examine their conditions.

This discourse as a product of reason—which is embodied in every individual. This is the similarity between Ikem and Chris’s worldviews because both recognize that the people must constantly struggle to retain the capacity for discourse. This unites their worldviews with the leader of Abazon delegation. Theirs is a worldview founded on critical discourse. It is a discourse that values freedom of human liberty. And Udumukwu concludes on the basic ingredient of Ikem’s philosophy about life in Kangan: “The success of Ikem’s political activism...lies in its objective but excoriating critique of his setting” (“Ideology and Dialectics of Action” 43). The critique of his setting is an outcome of his reflective and logical reasoning. In this vein, reasoning is his tool of power. The discourse of logic comes to fill the gap that His Excellency, Sam had imposed on the state of Kangan.

Important as a source of power in Achebe’s novel is the sage-like parabolic discourse of the Abazon Elder.

While Sam’s discourse invokes an authoritarian power, the Abazon Elder’s discourse invokes the power of proverbial wisdom, which explores the communal tribal setting and the power of the tribe to maintain a unified vision of struggle:

S1: ‘Whether our coming to the Big Chief’s compound will do any good or not we cannot say. S2: We did not see him face to face because he was talking to another Big Chief like himself who is visiting from another country. S3: But we can go back to our people and tell them that we have struggled for them with what remaining strength we have... . S4: ‘My people that is all we are doing now’. S5: ‘Struggling’ S6: ‘Perhaps to no purpose except that those who come after us will be able to say: *True our fathers were defeated but they tried.*’ (127-8, ch. 9)

The old man’s folkloric discourse re-echoes a vision of good governance and strategic tools to achieve it-- to struggle. The Big Chief’s (Sam, His Excellency) hegemony is concretized in the imagery of the sun—in his actions and words, in the insistence on a monolithic discourse and worldview. But this vision of society is resisted by the metaphor of “struggle” in the Abazon leader’s discourse. The choice of words in the Elder’s language upholds the belief in communal ideology while satirizing the Big Chief’s use of power to

dominate others. His speech is one that encourages dialogue that seeks to establish “vital link” between the community and its leaders. The Elder’s discourse is apprehended within the matrix of movement verb: “go back.” is a criticism of Sam’s abuse of power.

Therefore, unlike Sam, the Abazon Elder appreciates the essential goodness of the audience. In line with his liberal ideology, his speech constitutes his acceptance of power for the benefit of the people “*our fathers were defeated but they tried*” (128). His domination is a product of intellectual wisdom, conferred on him by age and knowledge of cultural values, which is appreciated by the audience. Consequently there is a free subjection of oneself to his power –wisdom: “the power of his utterance held everyone captive from his very first words” (122)—largely because of the desire of the people to drink from the fountain of the old man’s wisdom.

Autocratic power features in the final scene of the confrontation between Chris and the authoritarian forces represented by the sergeant who killed him: ” S1: You go report me for where? S2: You de craze! S3: No be you de ask about President just now? S4: If you no commot for my front now I go blow your head to Jericho, craze- man...” (215, ch. 17).

This incident marks the brutal use of power to destroy. As Obilade has remarked pidgin is now a discursive strategy that serves as a vehicle for portraying power (437). Indeed Chris’s death reveals the defining context of Africa’s contemporary situation in the 1970s and 1980s, desolate in its power abuse by the military regimes across the continent. It is this power that is metaphorically invoked in the text: “In the beginning Power rampaged through our world, naked (102). The visit of the Abazon delegation to Bassa is metaphorically framed to scorn “the anger of the sun” (127, ch. 9)—since “the sun,” represents nothing else but selfishness and destruction.

The imperative of the Abazon Elder’s speech is reinforced in Elewa’s uncle’s folkloric discourse which underscores the imperative of good governance. Unlike Sam’s monolithic worldview which brackets others within his ideology, this “strange man,” (Elewa’s Uncle) includes in his language the acceptance and participation of young people in a new vision of society. Elewa’s uncle’s speech is manifested through a number of

assertions which hinges on the imperatives of change, tolerance and good governance: “ ‘We have seen too much trouble in Kangan since the white man left because those who make plans make plans for themselves and their families’ “ (228, ch. 9). This discourse acquires significance in the overall desire for a vision that embodies public interest. The values which are encoded in the discourse during the naming ceremony of Elewa’s daughter, AMAECHINA, meaning may Ikem’s path “never close, never overgrow” (222, ch. 18) embody communal growth.. While Elewa’s uncle and her mother were yet on the way, the young people—Emmanuel, Abdul, Agatha and others gathered in Beatrice’s flat and named the girl child As Beatrice tells Elewa’s Uncle: “ ‘This baby has already received its name. She is called Amaechina’ ” (225, ch. 18). Instead of being angry that the young people have performed the duty he has been called to do, Elewa’s uncle affirms the name the young people gave Elewa’s daughter and : “Everybody applauded this strange man’s sudden decision” (227, ch. 18).This discourse throws up significant ideological issues. One, it rejects a monolithic culture about naming. Two, it touches on the imperatives of dialogue and change, and three, it reconstructs patriarchal assumptions about naming, hence a new experience is reconstructed. The old man’s ideology of tolerance and human growth finds echo in Ikem’s lectures. Emmanuel tells us such impact on his vision of the world and growth: “‘One idea in particular: that we may accept a limitation on our actions but never under any circumstances, must we accept restriction on our thinking’ (223, ch. 18).. Therefore Ikem’s lectures are imbued with the power that shares common features with Abazon Elder’s discourse and Elewa’s uncle’s discourse on tolerance and good governance. Elewa’s uncle and the Abazon Elder use the “magic” of their voices to entrap their audiences. There is a similar reaction to the power of this “strange man’s” voice.This worldview attacks the belief that certain names are exclusively meant for the male. Elewa’s Uncle endorses the broadening of worldview: “And while she (Elewa’s mother) is cracking her head you people gather in this white man house and give the girl a boy’s name... That is how to handle this world...” (227, ch. 18). This is at the core of Ikem’s ideology of thinking for the growth of human culture.

CONCLUSION

The major exploration of the essay can now be restated. The study examines how linguistic

structures configure worldviews in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*. It further points out how power interacts with the language of the characters in the novel.

The key finding in this essay is that discourses at key moments acquire significance in the overall desire for a vision that embodies reconstruction of experiences. This imperative is represented at different moments in Chris's defiant consciousness, in Ikem's ideology of populism, in the Abzon Elder's folkloric wisdom, in Beatrice's vision of a new gendered world, and finally in Elewa's Uncle's consciousness that embodies the imperatives of change and the use of power for the benefit of society. These imperatives permeate in the paradigm of language and interpersonal relationships in the novel. It is observed that authoritarian power holds sway through its constraining principles. Though this is the dominant power in *Anthills of the Savannah*, however this is resisted using the linguistic rhetoric of parabolic and folkloric wisdom.

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