Review Article

Analysing Voice Devices in Helon Habila's *Oil on Water*: A Literary Pragmatic Perspective

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyse Helon Habila's *Oil on Water* through the framework of literary pragmatics which deals with the production and interpretation of texts. In order to highlight the inner thoughts and feelings of the writer through the utterances of his characters, the article focuses on the different types of voice in the novel. The corpus under study has been sampled purposively and studied through a qualitative approach. The analyses reveal that categories of voices such as voice mash, voice trash and voice crash are used to project the views of the author, including his perceptions, feelings and beliefs. The study concludes that these linguistic items have made it easy to understand Habila's perspectives in his literary artifact.

Keywords: Voice shift, voice crash, voice trash, voice mash, literary pragmatics.

INTRODUCTION

Literary pragmatics is based on the fact that no account of communication in general is complete without a particular reference to literature and its contextualization. According to Mey (2006, p.549), this subject concentrates on the user's role in the societal production and consumption of literary texts. Crystal (2008, p. 379) contends that this field seeks to apply linguistic notions to the production and reception of literary texts since literary writers often attempt to depict social issues. A potential reader, who wants to decipher the intended messages of fiction, should collaborate with the author in identifying the characters as they are entering the literary scene and voicing their parts.

This paper focuses on the pragmatic analysis of Helon Habila's *Oil On Water*. It aims to identify and analyze voice devices that are relevant to the understanding and interpretation of the novel under study. To reach the set objective, the paper is meant to answer the following questions:

- What are the types of voice used in the novel under study?
- How do the voices identified in Habila's fiction reveal the narrator's/author's views, beliefs, ideology and literary style?

For that purpose, through the examination of voice devices, this article derives support from samples of the excerpts from the targeted novel to unveil manifestations of Helon Habila's unsaid intentions.

1. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

1.1. Literature Review

Many scholars have analysed texts through the framework of literary pragmatics. In fact, Scott (2010) attempts to explore how Graham Green has used the voices of desire in *The end of the Affair* to reflect his socio-ideological position. The results of the analysis show that Graham Greene utilizes the social contexts of speech characterization, the voice of a writer, a public servant, a detective, and a wife, and their discourses to explore human desire. Greene poses characters with differing social values in opposing positions which allow for exploration of perceived social norms. He concludes that the use of Bakhtinian framework for exploring not only character voice but also authorial voice within a socio-ideological context adds an ability to examine a novel as a whole. Through character and authorial voice analysis, social norms are revealed, authorial biographical sources are considered and literary influences and authorial works are explored. This kind of investigation facilitates a combination of voices, whether social or political, in an effort to explore authorial voices. Moreover, the study reveals

consistency of voice amid the varying influences and environments that are present in his other works. The aspects not tackled in this work are the textual mechanisms that Greene has used in his novel to separate voices. These are the tools that readers of the novel need to decipher who is speaking in the narrative.

Anasiudu (2017) has scrutinized heteroglossia, double consciousness and multivoicedness in Chinua Achebe*'s Arrow of God* and *Things fall Apart*. The method of analysis is critical, hermeneutic and analytical while working within the tenets of dialogism as theorized by Bakhtin (1981) in his text Dialogic Imagination which stresses that the novel is a discourse and that there is a relationship between context, language and culture in interpreting the discursive features in the novel. This theory also stresses the link in discourse construction between the author, the text, the readers, and the socio-historical forces that surround them. The findings reveal that the novels are made of several equally balanced voices or multivoicedness as a feature, rather than taking them as a single point of expressed intentions by one omniscient author. It is concluded that for an artist like Achebe, hetereglossia, multivoicedness or double consciousness are foci signatures of his artistry and a dominant pattern of his discourse style. But what the researcher lacks to set into fore is how Achebe uses some textual mechanisms like references, tenses, pronouns to separate the voices or speeches of the narrator from the ones of the characters.

Likewise, employing literary pragmatic theory, Adeniji and Olagunju (2018) have undertaken a study of textual mechanisms in Femi Osofisan's *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*. Given the important roles textual mechanisms play in designing culture-influenced texts, the study probes how to determine voice ownership as pointed by textual mechanisms such as references, deixis, pronouns, tenses and related authorial views in the play, in consideration of the fact that it is fertile in data. The analyses reveal that textual mechanisms identified mark the issues of social power, moral and religious deviances, as well as religious beliefs, in the literary work. Through their analyses Adeniji and Olagunju have come to the conclusion that a scrutiny of pragmatic markers of voices improves an apprehension of voice proprietorship in literary texts in the direction of finding out authorial perspectives in post-colonial African envisaged textual universes.

In the same vein, Maha Bakir Mohammed (2020) has carried out a literary pragmatic analysis of William Faulkner's *A Rose for Emily*. In his study he draws upon Mey's model of literary pragmatics to analyse such pragmatic features as the mechanisms of the text and voice and point of view in his corpus. The findings show that pragmatics plays a significant role in emphasizing the intended messages that the narrator (mostly the author) wants his audience to convey. It also finds out that the universe of a literary discourse can be created by both writer and reader. So, understanding any discourse becomes easier when readers have a good awareness of the social conditions of the author's context. It also reveals that social deixis plays an undeniable role in grasping the social relations in the literary text. The occurrence of a linguistic anomaly (just as a verbal past tense combined with a future time adverbial) can only be made comprehensible by reference to a larger frame of narration in which such a combination makes sense. This is the pragmatic explanation of the difficulty.

This brief review indicates that the field of literary pragmatics proves to be an area of scientific exploration by scholars. In order to grasp the meaning of this concept, a brief theoretical framework is provided in the next section.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

1.2.1 Defining Literary pragmatics
According to Adeniyi (2009), literary pragmatics has to do with the way texts are produced and interpreted. It focuses on such linguistic concepts as voice, characterization, point of view, reference personal pronouns, tense, deixis anaphora and readership. In the view of Chapman (2011, p.142), pragmatics has been employed in the discussion of what composes a literary text. According to Sell (1985), the first goal of a literary pragmaticist is to 'demythologise the concept of literature' as an agentless conveyor of truths and ideas and to reveal the processes of discourse between writer and recipient. The second goal is more oriented towards the context or reader-reception (Wanner, 2012).

As stated by Mey (1999), literary pragmatics signifies a domain of study which studies those sorts of controls that writers seek to put in vigorous action on their audience in quest of instituting a working cooperation by using as a source the abstract qualities of language. According to Mey (2000, p.12), this concept is the sort of effects that authors, as text producers, set out to achieve, using the resources of language in their effort to establish a "working co-operation" with their audiences who are the consumers of the texts. Actually, literary pragmatics takes cognizance of the author, textual mechanisms and the audience, based on context (Proust,1980; Banfield,1982; Ehrlich, 1990; Fludernik,1993; Fowler, 1996).

Two aspects of literary pragmatics are considered very relevant to this study. They are context and perspectivation. Mey (2001) reveals that context is the totality of the environment in which a word is used. Adegbite (2000) considers context as an abstract category employed by language scholars to provide a link between linguistic items and the social and situational factors of communication.

Another significant aspect of literary pragmatics is perspectivation. Mey (2000) examines communication in literary texts through dialogic and pragmatic perspectives which are realized through vocalization and textual mechanisms. The dialogic perspective concerns the voices in a text. It takes into account the voice of the author, the voice of the character and the voice of the reader. The pragmatic perspective shows the author's point of view and the means he/she uses in projecting the perspectives. For an author to be heard in a literary text accordingly, he/she creates a world in which characters act out their parts and speak with the voice that reflects the views of the author. It is through this process that the thematic preoccupations and visions of the author are projected.

Voice has been described as a vocalized perspective (ibid.). This invariably suggests that voice gives expression to the inner thoughts and the feelings of an author as expressed by the character. Voice, therefore, is considered central to the understanding of texts. It can be determined in texts through linguistic and extract linguistic means. In this paper, we are interested in the linguistic aspect.

1.2.2 Voice Clash and Voice Shift
Two voice devices have been identified in the respect of linguistic means, namely, voice clash and voice shift.

1.2.2.1 Voice Clash
Voice clash occurs:

> whenever voices do not match, either the character and a voice that is attributed to that character does not correlate or two or more of the voices heard in the story are perceived as disharmonious (Mey, 2000, p. 189)

In novels, the narrator too has a voice; hence, he is also considered as a character. If, in the course of the narration, the narrator gives counter-information, his voice is disharmonious and, consequently, clashes. Voice clash can also occur if a character speaks out of turn. Moreover clash occurs when voices trash, mash or crash.

Voice Trash
Voice trashing is not the exclusive privilege of dilettante writers: professional respectable authors, too, indulge in it, albeit on a lesser scale, and probably unwittingly (Mey 1999, p.194).

In the view of Adeniji (2009), voice trash is an instance of overlaying of voice, that is, when the author's voice totally eclipses that of the character such that the character's world is expressed through the author's voice. In other words, lexical choices such as meta-languages, metaphorical allusions and description of events and locations beyond the scope and experiences of the character betray an overlaying voice of the voice of the author, which trashes that of the character.

Voice Mash
A voice mashing is a voice device in which the author is believed to irrupt into the course of narration. Usually, the author intrudes into the narration to reveal important information about characters, their experiences, reactions, etc. So the identification and analysis of this voice device can help any reader to understand and interpret the novel under study.

Moreover, a special type of voice mashing occurs whenever the narrative description engulfs a given character entirely, even to the point of partially or wholly identifying with the character's speech, yet without allowing the narrative voice to shift into character-oriented free indirect discourse (Mey (1999, p.208). the occurrence of this voice device has been known for a long time. Fludernik (1993) attributes its discovery in English to a 1978 article by Hugh Kenner, who named it the 'Uncle Charles Principle', after a character in Joyce's 'Portrait of the artist as a young man'. Additionally, Adeniji (2009, p.409) contends that voices are mashed when they are not clearly distinguished. In this instance, voices are presumed to continue when actually they have ended at appoint, only for the author's voice to continue as if still the character's voice that we are hearing. Confusion arises here because the point of 'voice change' is not explicitly marked. Such devices as free direct discourse (FDD), free indirect discourse (FID), and reported speech and thought (RST), are pragmatic markers of voice mash in literary texts.

What happens in this 'engulfing' of voices is, to quote Morson and Emerson (1990, p. 168), that "a story's narrator may so admire a character that his speech becomes saturated with the character's way of speaking".

Voice Crash
While authors and narrators usually harmonize their input in the symphony of the narrative, or even speak with the same voice, there are numerous cases where this relationship ends in dissonance, sometimes even disruption. Such 'clashes' may then affect the other characters (including the readers) and the parts they play in the story; one result of this is that the readership may be manipulated into positions that not always reflect their own best narrative interests (Mey (1999, p.217). Likewise, Adeniji (ibid) asserts that when voice crashes, the author is believed to intrude into the course of the narration. More often than not, the author intrudes into the narration to reveal important information about characters, their experiences,

reactions, etc. With the flow of narration being derailed, readers may be confused by the change of voices and altogether fail to identify the speaking voice. In the person category, especially the first person and the second person narrative techniques, Free Direct Discourse (FDD), and Free Indirect Discourse (FID) are mostly employed here.

Voice Shift

Voice shift occurs when the author tells readers that the character whose voice they are listening to has finished his contribution and another character is taking over. This change of voice is achieved through the system of roles, which is characterized by adjacency pairs. Also, Mey (2000) notes that voice shift can be occasioned by a shift in voice from narrative perspective to a character's reported speech and thought, the use of deixis, introductory and parenthetical verbs, and Free Indirect Discourse (FID). The exploration of voice shift is very important as it can help any potential reader to identify the author or the narrator's views, beliefs, ideologies and literary style.

2. Material and Methods of Analysis

The materials employed in this work consist of a collection of selected extracts from Oil *on Water* at the rate of three examples of voice trash, voice mash and voice crash from the novel under consideration. All the examples used in the analyses are culled from the selected novel. The whole novel has been read so as to identify the different voice devices therein. The researchers have also observed, while reader the novel under consideration, the way the writer has employed some textual mechanisms to tag the voice shifts and voice clashes. The study has adopted a qualitative methodology.

3. Practical Analysis

The analysis is provided through the three voice devices (voice trash, voice mash and voice crash) mentioned in the theoretical framework.

3.1 Voice Devices

Instances of voice devices found in *Oil On Water* are voice mash, voice crash and voice trash.

3.1.1 Voice Mash in *Oil on Water*

Here, voices are presumed to continue when actually they have ended at a point, only for the author's voice to continue as if it is still the character's voice that we are hearing. Confusion arises here because the point of 'voice change' is not explicitly marked. Such devices as Free Direct Discourse (FDD), Free Indirect Discourse (FID), and Reported speech and Thought (RST), are pragmatic markers of voice mash in literary texts. Moreover, voice mash occurs when "a story's narrator may so admire a character that his speech becomes saturated with the character's way of speaking" (Morson and Emerson 1990, p.168). This is illustrated in example 1 below:

Example1

> I drank.
> I drank to make myself insensitive to the accusing ghost eyes in the light's fringes, eyes whose glow seemed to pierce through my body to my very soul, and with every mouthful, every shovelful, I grew as excited as Zaq, and in my mind I repeated his: Our job is to find out the truth, even if it is buried deep in the earth. I giggled. Already I could see the inch-high headlines: KIDNAPPED BRITON DISCOVERED IN SHALON GRAVE (p.144).

Rufus, in the extract above, is speaking about what he has learned from Zaq as a reporter. There is an unannounced voice shift as we can hear Rufus's voice from the beginning of the extract to 'as Zaq'. From 'and in my mind' to 'GRAVE'…' there is a change from the character's voice to the narrator's, an instance of voice mash.

A close observation unfolds that Habila tactically utilizes personal pronouns to mash the reflection of the objective approach of journalism. In the utterance identified as reflecting objective approach of journalism, there is the prevalence of the first person singular personal pronoun "I". This is seen in "I (repeated)", "I(giggled)", "I (could see)", projecting the voice of author narrating what can help an objective journalist find the hidden information. Traditional grammar associates the first person personal pronoun with the speaker, in which case, the speaker in the extract above attempts to tell us about things associated with the objective approach of journalism. He, who always complains about Zaq's drunkenness, could this now be the same Rufus that becomes inclined to drinking as revealed in expression of excitement after drinking.

The definite references "the truth" and the place deixis "in the earth" express Rufus' control over what he wants and anywhere he is on the earth.

The verbs, "repeated", "could" are indicators that the acts achieved by Rufus and Zaq took place in the past.

Another voice mash is instantiated in example 2 below:

<div align="center">Example 2</div>

> Slowly I stood up, my arms raised. An image of the boy proudly scrawling his name in the sand came to my mind, and it seemed like just yesterday. The old man had served us diligently in the hope that we'd take his son to pot Harcourt and a better future, and instead we had led him to incarceration and being doused in petrol.(p.208)

Obviously, Rufus, in the extract above, is telling the reader what prompts Tamuno to serve him and Zaq in search of the Kidnapped British white woman. There is an unannounced voice shift as we can hear Rufus's voice from the beginning to 'the hope that'. From 'we'd take his son' to 'a better future', there is a shift from the character's voice to the narrator's, an instance of voice mash. Habila's voice can be heard as he revealed, through the Reported Speech and Thought, the inner thought of Tamuno and most of his village inhabitants. In fact, voices are mashed when they are not clearly distinguished. In this instance, voices are presumed to continue when actually they have ended at point, only for the author's voice to continue as if it is still the character's voice that we are hearing. The devices that mark voice mash are FDD, FID and Reorted Speech and Thought (RST).

3.1.2 Voice Crash in *Oil on Water*

Voices are crashed when the author is believed to intrude into the course of the narration. Usually, the author intrudes into the narration to reveal important information about characters, their experiences, reactions, etc. With the flow of narration being deviated from the previous course, readers may be confused by the change of voices and altogether fail to identify the speaking voice. In the person category, especially the first person and the second person narrative modes, FDDs and FIDs, are mostly employed here.

> **Professor**: Journalist, it is a pity about your friend.
>
> **Professor**: The white woman's driver. Didn't they tell you? Didn't anyone tell him? He tried to run away early this morning. He had done it once, and he thought it was going to be as easy as before, but you can't fool the people all the time. My men saw him and gave chase and he lost his head. He jumped off the cliff and fell on the rocks below. He died instantly. His body was taken away by the river. A tragedy don't you think?
> **Rufus**: I find it hard to believe …(p.230)

A close observation of Professor's contribution reveals that Habila makes him his mouthpiece in the novel. He acts like a homodiegetic narrator by informing Rufus of the death of Salomon. He is the one that tells us the unknown jumping off the cliff of Salomon who is trying to escape for the second time. One could not distinguish between Habila's and Professor's voices, as Habila, the author , intrudes into the narration through Professor's contribution to comment on his death. The passage above instantiates voice crash and it is only through the notion of voice clash that one can appropriately determine the voice of the character and that of the narrator in the excerpt above.

Habila, the author , employs past tense forms such as 'tried', ' had done', 'thought ', 'saw', 'lost', 'jumped', 'fell', 'died' to indicate that the information being revealed has already taken place. We are only been informed so as to be carried along and, specially, to locate Professor's viewpoint on Isabel Floode's driver, Solomon.

The personal pronouns "him", "he" dialogically indicate that Professor is talking about someone. The referent in this instance is Isabel Floode's driver. Through the third person personal pronouns, Habila displays the dimensions of kidnapping in the novel: the kidnapping of James Floode's wife and the kidnapping of the Nurse Gloria. As the extract reveals, Professor feels sad about the loss of Isabel's driver. In addition, the extract emphasizes the calamity the kidnappings result in. We could here identify Habila's voice from 'He jumped off', to 'by the river'. Professor's voice takes over from there. The use of the third person personal pronoun "they" dialogically indicates that Rufus has knowledge of whom the Professor is referring to. The referent in this instance is the militants. In addition, he notes that these presupposing items include the pronouns 'he', 'she', 'it', 'they'. In the extract above, Professor assumes that Rufus knows whom he is referring to, and as such, he utilizes the presupposing item "they" , to make reference to the militants, his men. We now consider the fourth example below:

Example 4

—Well, I did my duty as their doctor. I told them of the dangers that accompany that quenchless flare, but they wouldn't listen. And then a year later, when the livestock began to die and the plants began to wither on their stalks, I took samples of the drinking water and in my lab I measured the level of toxins in it: it was rising, steadily. In one year it had grown to almost twice the safe level. Of course, the people didn't listen; they were still in thrall of the orange glare. When I confronted the oil workers, they offered me money and a job. The manager, an Italian guy, wrote me a check and said I was now on their payroll. He told me to continue doing what I was doing, but this time I was to come only to him with my results, I thought they'd do something with my results, but they didn't. So, when people started dying, I took blood samples and recorded the toxins in them, and this time I sent my results to the government. They thanked me and dumped the results in some filing cabinet. More people died and I sent my results to NGOs and international organizations, which published them in international journals and urged the government to do something about the flares, but nothing happened. More people fell sick, a lot died.(p.153)

Example 4 is Dr. Mark's statement. This is an exposition of the apathy which is a disappointing common denominator most post-colonial governments have shown towards their own citizens' afflictions and predicaments. When Dr. Mark takes samples to the government for analysis, this is what he encounters: "They thanked me and dumped the results in some filing cabinet". The excerpt above portrayed how attached the medical doctor is to his patients but without support and funding to health sector by the stakeholders, people are bound to contract fatal diseases.

Habila successfully carries out this crash through the use of personal, place deixis and past form of the tense. We could notice Habila's voice from 'I told them of the dangers that accompany that quenchless flare,'. Habila employs the personal pronoun 'I' to show the speaker's self-experience. He employs past tense form such as 'told' to indicate that the information being revealed has already taken place.

Furthermore, a close inspection of Dr. Mark contribution unfolds that Habila makes him his spokesman in the novel. He acts like a homodiegetic narrator by revealing information about the government and the oil companies' indifference towards the intoxication and death of the people of Irikefe Island. He is the one that tells us the unknown story of samples of the drinking water, the measure of the level of toxins in it, the offer of money and a job to him by an oil company, the taking of blood samples and the record of the toxins in them, the sending of his results to the government. Dr. Mark's contribution in the excerpt above is a comment and disappointment. Let's now consider the fifth example.

Ex.5

—No. You don't know anything. Listen. Did he tell you we were rookies together at the *Daily times*? Oh, he didn't? Then did he tell you that we shared a flat in Surulere for one year? I was twenty-two, he was twenty-two. Ah, I can see us now. Green, wet behind the ears. Of course, there was nothing like journalism school then, you just finessed your way into things. I bet you went to a journalism school, didn't you? They are useless. You learn nothing there. All you need is to open your eyes, make the right contacts, and be bold. Well, nothing like journalism school for us. (p.118)

The personal pronoun "he" dialogically indicates that Mr.Johnson is talking about a person Rufus has knowledge of. We could here notice Habila's voice from 'Of course, there was nothing like journalism school then, you just finessed your way into things'. Habila' voice took over from there. We notice that Habila employs the demonstrative reference 'then', 'there' to show Mr. Johnson's intentions, the purpose of showing the uselessness of going to journalism schools. Moreover, Habila uses the second person personal pronouns narrative techniques to mark the voice crash device.

3.1.3 Voice Trash in *Oil on Water*

Voice trash is an instance of overlaying of voice, that is, when the author's voice totally eclipses that of the character such that the character's world is expressed through the author's voice. Explicitly, lexical choices such as meta-languages, metaphorical allusions and description of events and locations beyond the scope and experience of the character betray an overlaying voice of the author, which trashes that of the character. The following examples are used as illustration.

Ex.6

> The editor looked even more undistinguished in his rumpled, oversized suit and tie; he could be an apparatchik in some gray concrete ministry building .(p.116)

Lexical choice like 'apparatchik' is a technical term that is beyond the scope and experiences of the young Rufus. This suggests the presence of a voice that knows more than Rufus does. The voice of the author (Habila) here trashes that of the young Rufus to denounce the excessive routine in Nigeria administration. Habila's uses this device to show his point of view on some intellectual acculturation.

Ex.7

> —And what of the sculptures?
> —The sculptures came later. As the priesthood grew, some became specialists in mud and wooden figures. These figures represent the ancestors watching over us. They face the east, to acknowledge the beauty of the sun rising, for without the sun there would be no life. And some face the west, to show the dying sun the way home, and to welcome the moon. And each day the worshippers go in procession to the river, to bathe in it, and to promise never to abominate it ever again.(p128)

Lexical choices like "mud", "wooden figures", "ancestors", "east", "west" and "moon" are are beyond the scope of the nurse Gloria. These terms figuratively signify 'nature' and 'world'. This suggests the presence of a voice that knows more than the nurse Gloria does.

A careful consideration of the utterance shows that Gloria, who has told Rufus she is a worshipper cannot have such a point of view about sculptures. Her utterance betrays the voice of the author/narrator, someone with an authority beyond that of the nurse. This shows an instance of the trashing of voice.

On Irikefe Island, worshippers fear for the death of their ancestral religion. Later, after the war, they are shown as being fearful of reconstructing their shrine and reestablished the sculptures that had been damaged. The above extract shows Habila' use of the device of voice trash to show that African society subscribes to the concept of environment conservation long before the advent of colonialism. (Salihu, 2014, p. 88)

Ex.8

> —These islands used to be a big habitat for bats; now only a few dozen remain here and there.
> —'Why?'
> She wordlessly turned and pointed at the faraway sky, toward the oil fields.—Gas flares. They kill them. Not only the bats, other flying creatures as well.(p.127)

What Gloria has told Rufus is beyond her experience. She has just spent two months on the island and knows the number of the bats that remain after the gas flares killed some. Her voice betrays that of Habila's voice. This shows an instance of the trashing of voice. The use of the words "habitat", "flying creatures" is for making reference to the environment. In her disappointment, Gloria makes reference to destruction of the fauna which a real habitant of Irikefe island, because of his experience, can do.

Habila skillfully intrudes into Gloria' s voice by the fact that a nurse who has just spent two months on the island could not be so experienced in knowing the number of the bats and the killing of them and other flying creatures. She further delves into the details of the destruction of the fauna. Through the past tense form, these islands , "used to be" (a big habitat for bats), Habila reveals the greatest loss represented by the species that cannot be seen. Indeed, some are close to extinction and this tragedy is underlined by the author through Gloria' voice (a nurse working in the Delta).

4. Discussion of the findings from the analysis of Voice devices and Issues Projected by Habila in *Oil on Water*

The analyses of the voice devices have revealed that voices give expressions to the inner thoughts and feelings of authors as expressed by characters in literary texts.

In example 1 which instantiates a voice mash device, Habila is projecting his view of journalism. Through the vocalization of Rufus, he is telling us the nature of journalism. *Oil on Water* illustrates two kinds of journalism, namely the press that employs a

sensationalist approach and the one that tries to be more objective. These two approaches correspond to the changes in Rufus' attitude throughout the novel and "emphasize the need for journalists to refuse to reproduce hegemonic [...] discourses and to serve as witnesses who record what such discourses suppress" (Caminero-Santangelo, 2015,p. 229). He (Habila) is telling the readers, including journalists, to prefer writing the truth to reproducing hegemonic discourses. In other words, he projects the issues of objective journalism which tries to find the truth even though it is hidden somewhere. Habila is urging journalists to concentrate on the authentic aspects of journalism and gets strength from the realization that they must be "a witness for posterity" (Habila, 2011,p. 60), an observer waiting for "a transcendental moment, a great story only the true journalist can do justice to" (Habila, 2011, p. 79). In addition, Habila is drawing the reader's attention to the fact that "journalists can [actually] contribute to the process of detoxifying the Delta through a witnessing that challenges the world-making discourses of the powerful" (Caminero-Santangelo, 2015, p. 233).

In example 2, Habila is projecting the issues of preoccupations of Delta inhabitants. They are giving limited opportunities which results in the scarcity of food due to unemployment. To earn some money, they resort to few activities like kidnapping and oil theft (Feldner, p.2018). Habila has projected the inner thoughts of Delta inhabitants who think that there is decent life in Port Harcourt. Most of them do not want their children to grow up in Niger Delta for fear that they may join the militants. By extension, Tamuno's preoccupations recall Rufus' father's worries because being himself involved in the oil illegal market, he does not want this life for Rufus and he urged him to find work elsewhere (Habila, 2011,p. 69). On this matter, Feldner suggests that Rufus "might have ended up a militant or a soldier, had he not gone to journalism school [as] many young men like him joined the militants, having been disillusioned and angered by the government, the lack of prospects and the general situation in the country" (2018,p. 522).

The third example of Voice crash device projects the issues of militancy kidnapping in *Oil On water*. In this voice device, Habila is relating how the kidnapped people , who escape, are killed by the militants. Their activities have caused hardship, death, violence, psychological trauma and insecurity to communities.

In *Oil On Water*, the central ideal is the kidnap of Mrs. Isabel Floode, the expatriate wife of a British oil worker Habila links the prominence of militancy kidnapping to lack of good jobs, poverty, disillusionment, corruption among others.

In example 4, through the voice crash device, Habila projects the issue of environmental degradation and pollution. Environmental degradation and pollution have caused untold harm and hardship to the Niger Delta region. In fact, The Flora and Fauna of the ecosystem are damaged, creating dirt and discomfort. Through the voice crash device, he portrays threat and danger caused by the degradation and pollution to the wellbeing of individual and society.

As regards, example 5 of voice crash device, Habila has projected the issues of journalism practice in the 1980s. In those years, particularly during the military era, young people opposed and fought gallantly against the profligacy and high-handedness of the military regimes of Yacubu Gowon and Olusegun Obasanjo, and during the brutal and inglorious regimes of Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha .In those days young people in Nigeria do not attend any journalism school before embracing the career of journalism. Habila through the vocalization of the editor Johnson is showing the readers of *Oil On water* that one does not become an experienced journalism by relying only on the education we get at journalism school but the experience is acquired through the practice. This means that the old generation of Nigerian journalists did not attend any journalism school before being skillful journalists.

In example 6 of the voice trash device, Habila through the vocalization of Rufus is denouncing some intellectual acculturation in Nigeria society. Generally, Nigerian consumers tend to prefer foreign brands and products (Lysonski &Durvasula,2013, p.495). Nigerian-made products are viewed as unreliable and backwards, so many consumers opt for goods imported from Europe and further afield. The fact this belief is held by Nigerian themselves has been described as 'reverse ethnocentrism', a kind of shame in what is produced locally. This is bad attitude which Nigerians are now internalizing and reproducing in their consumption preferences. The following sentence is an illustrative case: 'I found Beke Johnson eating from a lunch box on his desk; the box gave up a strong smell of burned palm oil and onions. A red stain shone brightly in the center of his **blue tie**… The editor looked even more undistinguished in his numpled, **oversized suit and tie**…'(p.116). This demonstrates that what is African dressing is considered backwards, and what is foreign dressing is seen as sophisticated. So local African culture is considered inferior, and this is communicated by consuming foreign goods.

In example 7, Habila reveals the need for journalists to refuse to reproduce hegemonic [...] discourses and to serve as witnesses who record what such discourses suppress" (Caminero-Santangelo, 2015, p. 229). The truth, here, is to find information about Isabel Floode, a kidnapped English woman, who is the wife of an oil businessman. Also, Habila by irrupting

into the descriptive voice of the character, unveils the objective journalism contrary to sensationalist approach of journalism.

Through example 8, Habila, by intruding into Gloria's vocalization, is promoting African culture. He demonstrates how Irikefe Island holds a particular spiritual connection with its inhabitants, who have tried to protect this island from oil prospecting and other activities that intoxicate the water result in greed and violence. Even though this attitude does not make this community totally immune from the violence increase in the Delta region, still, their mindset helps them to be resilient so as to "bring a healing, to restore and conserve" (Habila, 2011, p. 137). On top of that, people of Irikefe have their own view and representation of the earth. Their shrine is full of sculptures believed to be over a hundred years old and despite the advent of colonialism and the introduction of Christianity, their status as a community of adherents of a traditional religion remains intact and inviolate. In their opinion, they (worshippers of Irikefe Island) deem the earth to be a mother; a mother who looks after their children and their welfare. She protects and feeds them. Through this voice device, Habila is projecting his views about how African religions can be a way to protect the environment. This means that he is proposing that old-age African values and attachment to the environment can be means to promote a return to a situation of healthy and balanced ecosystems. Besides, through the voice of Gloria, Habila is projecting the issues of the bad impact of petroleum exploitation on the fauna. In his description of the destruction of the environment, he demonstrates how the atmosphere devastated by the refineries' chemical toxins and the burning of crude oil flowing out from needless destruction of pipelines that is no longer viable for the support of nature. It has turned mortal, harmful to living things. This is an image of the destruction of the environment, the source of fresh air; oxygen and nitrogen, elements vital to the survival of all living organisms.

CONCLUSION

The above analyses have unveiled that voice gives expression to the author's inner thoughts and feelings as expressed by characters in literary texts. This justifies Mey's (2000) submission that voice is central to the understanding of literary texts. A fascinating finding is the significance of context in locating the pragmatic values of voices in the data. This paper, therefore, shows that since contexts, as revealed by Firth (1962), Hymes (1962), Halliday (1978), Levinson (1979), Brown and Yule (1996), Mey (2001), Adegbite (2005), etc. reflect the totality of the environment in which a word occurs, the preoccupation of authors in literary texts can be effectively determined on the basis of the examination of the voices of the characters. Voices of characters in literary texts, as revealed in *Oil On Water*, are pragmatically marked by notions and such concepts as reference, personal pronoun, deixis and tense. These functionally enhance readers' identification of the characters and the specific contribution to the work. The devices of voices [Voice trash, voice mash and voice crash], as seen in this paper, is used to project the perspectives/views of the author. This is so because voice gives expression, that is, vocality, to the inner thoughts and feelings of the author as expressed by the characters. Habila tactifully denounces the government and the oil companies' indifference towards the intoxication and death of the people of Irikefe Island. He also shows that the militancy actions have many drawbacks on the environment around Niger Delta Region: the fauna and the flora are destroyed.

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