

The Significance of Ijaw Linguistic Features in Ebi Yeibo's *The Fourth Masquerade*

Arnold Stanley Udisi^{1*}

¹Department of English and Literary Studies, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, PMB 071 Bayelsa NG, Amassoma 560103, Nigeria

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*Corresponding author: Arnold Stanley Udisi

Department of English and Literary Studies, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, PMB 071 Bayelsa NG, Amassoma 560103, Nigeria

Abstract

Stylistics is a branch of linguistic studies, which uses the linguistic features in analysing literary texts and other works of art. Stylistics is also seen as the academic study of styles, where a scholar can look at the language and style of any author he chooses to study. This research work looks at the Ijaw linguistic features Ebi Yeibo employs in *The Fourth Masquerade* to send his intended messages to his readers. The work's title is The Significance of the Ijaw Linguistic Features in Ebi Yeibo's *The Fourth Masquerade*. The Ijaw linguistic features are identified and interpreted to the readers. The theoretical frameworks chosen as guides to the study are: Leo Spitzer's Philological Circle and Geoffrey N. Leech's Style as Deviation models. The study adopts the Qualitative Approach as the methodology because it is interpretative, descriptive, analytic and evaluative in nature. The aim of the study is to project the fact that code-mixing and code-switching are veritable linguistic tools in a language contact situation. The data of the study is collected through primary and secondary sources, which include: the careful reading of the primary texts, excerpts from a personal interview with the author, and comments from other critics. The work is significant to both researchers, scholars, critics and the society in general because it reveals that an analysis of a literary text from a linguistic standpoint is possible. The study explicates that Yeibo uses lexical borrowings, Ijaw idioms/proverbs, native rhetorical patterns, semantic extension and dislocation, etc. to address the themes of corruption, oppression, poverty, protest, bureaucratic inefficiency of government and institutional and moral decay of the Niger Delta.

Keywords: Stylistics, *The Fourth Masquerade*, linguistic tools.

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INTRODUCTION

Linguistics is the scientific study of human language; it is an exciting area of study because all other fields of study also make use of language in their fields. Language is the chief means by which human beings communicate their ideas. Since, language is human beings chief means of communication, everybody uses language in the society. Although, everybody uses language in the society, different people use language in divert ways.

The use of language is influenced by several factors, which include the family, religion, environment, the society at large, educational background, exposure, the profession of an individual, etc. The profession of an individual greatly influences his use of language and every speaker has his preferred choice of words (diction). Writers, especially, poets, use language mostly

differently from the established codes of the language. Poets have what is known as "Poetic Licence" which permits them to ignore some rules and conventions generally observed by users of the language. This license does not mean that the writer can use anything he likes but the licence refers to creative licence, where the poet can employ his creative ideas to bring in new areas of his experience. Creativity brings aesthetic value to a piece of writing, especially poetry. Yeibo, who is a creative writer and a stylistician, is not an exception. He takes his knowledgeable advantage of his Ijaw language to employ the Ijaw linguistic features in his poetry written in English.

In this research work, we are going to identify some of those Ijaw linguistic features Yeibo employed in *The Fourth Masquerade* and analyse them to see how they contribute to the aesthetic and communicative values of the work. In a bilingual setting, people infuse

the code of one language into another. This infusion is not disorderly, there must be parallelism and Yeibo has been parallel in his infusion of the Ijaw linguistic code into the English code.

Therefore, it is anticipated that after going through this work, one will be educated on how to mix the codes of different languages without causing incomprehensibility to the readers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify and discuss the significance of the Ijaw linguistic features in Yeibo's *The Fourth Masquerade*. The study brings out the manner in which the Ijaw linguistic features are used aesthetically by the poet to address the themes of poverty, oppression, protest, marginalization, corruption, the bureaucratic inefficiency of government and the decay of infrastructural and moral institutions in the Niger Delta Area.

The study shows that there is a relationship between linguistic features of the Ijaw language the English language as employs the Ijaw linguistic features in his poem written in English. The study demonstrates that Yeibo has taken advantage of his knowledge as a native speaker of the Ijaw language and his experience of Ijaw environment to embellish his poetry. The native speakers of any language are competent users of that language and hardly commit errors. Apart from not committing errors, they can use the language in special ways to send their messages that non-native speakers hardly comprehend. The study is aimed at identifying the various Ijaw linguistic features in the text, analysing them, discussing them, and interpreting their intended messages to the readers. The readers, who would come across these Ijaw linguistic features for the first time might find it difficult to comprehend them. Therefore, this study would help to ease the difficulties the readers would encounter.

Significance of the Study

This study would be useful to both the critics, scholars, the society and other researchers because it would serve as a guide to them. It complements Geoffrey N. Leech's *Style as Deviation* because the Ijaw linguistic features are deviations from the English code. Other researchers and scholars are made to understand that deviations are also worthy of academic study.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is limited to Yeibo's *The Fourth Masquerade*, and the Ijaw linguistic features discussed are: lexical borrowings, code-mixing and code-switching, Ijaw proverbs and idioms, semantic extension and dislocation of words. The study identified these aforementioned Ijaw linguistic features in the selected poem and analysed them to the readers.

Theoretical Framework

This study chose two theoretical frameworks that are chosen to it: Leo Spitzer's *Philological Circle* and Geoffrey N. Leech's *Style as Deviation*. The *Philological Circle* states the cyclonic movement in stylistic analysis. It also states the inseparable nature between language and literature. This study is an interface between language and literature. Leech's *Style as Deviation* is also connected to the study because the Ijaw linguistic features discussed are deviations from the English code.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study reviews language, literature, linguistics, and stylistics. Ogum (2017) defined stylistics as the study of different styles of textual composition, the analyses of these effects that the styles produce as well as their interpretations. Stylistics is a broad field that has been applied profitably to a range of disciplines. One of the disciplines in which the *what, how and why* questions of stylistics are professionally asked and rewardingly answered is literature. Kamalu (2018) defined stylistics as an academic study of styles. Stylistics is a branch of Applied Linguistics which uses the linguistic principles to analyse literary texts and other works of art. From Kamalu's standpoint, I draw inference that stylistics is a branch of Applied Linguistics, which gives semantic and phonological information to the syntactic structures of a text. Stylistics is a linguistic instrument used in measuring the language use and the language effectiveness in a text. It is not a supplementary discipline to any; it is an autonomous discipline which investigates the *what, how and why* in a discourse. Linguistics is the scientific study of a language. Linguistics is the scientific study of human language as a system of communication. It encompasses different areas of investigation such as phonetics (articulation, transmission and reception of speech sounds), phonology (system and patterns of sounds in a language), morphology (word formation and the internal structure of words), syntax (sentence structure), semantics (meaning). Linguistics is a science because it scientifically studies the principles of human languages. Language is the chief means by which human beings communicate. It is man's major means of communication which involves meaningful sounds, symbols and nonverbal cues. Yule (1985). Literature is any printed material which teaches, directs, informs, and entertains society. Literature is any work of art with the aim to teach, educate and entertain. There are two major types of literature: written and oral. Leech (1969).

Data Analysis and Presentation

Lexical borrowing is a process of taking lexical items (words) from one or more languages to fit into the vocabulary of another language. One of the commonest sources of new words in English is the process of borrowing, that is, the taking over of words from other languages (Yule 1985). It is important to mention that no language is free from borrowing. Borrowing

presupposes some element of cultural contact (Ndimele 1999).

Lexical Borrowing

The following excerpts contain cases of lexical borrowing:

1. The fish in biran's company exudes the same buoyant aura (*TFM* 71).
2. After all oleilei remains on the beautiful beach (*TFM* 67).

The excerpt number one above has biran as the borrowed item from Ijaw. Biran is a specie of fish that has a stinking spot in it. The Ijaw man believes that any fish that congregates with the biran (a fish from the catfish family) would be infected with that smell. It is an illustration that anybody that associates with politicians would behave like them. The average politician in Nigeria is presumed as not saying the truth. Politicians in Nigeria are perceived to have bad habits, just as the biran that has the stinking spot. The Ijaw word for that specie of fish (biran) serves better in this context because English does not have a specific name for this particular fish. The biran in English is classified generally under the catfish family. Therefore, the use of the English term catfish would not send the exact message to the readers. The Ijaw readers of this work would comprehend better because there is a local-colouring in the expression.

The next item borrowed from Ijaw is Oleilei. Oleilei is a kind bird, which stays mostly at the beach side. The English equivalent of it is Ostrich. The Oleilei is known to feed on fish from the river, so it always stays by the river. The Ijaw term Oleilei is used instead of the English word Ostrich because the poet is addressing a domestic issue peculiar to the Niger Delta and he wants the readers to feel the real impact. The Oleilei represents the government/political leaders, while the beautiful beach represents the Niger Delta Area that produces the natural resources the nation gleefully feeds on. Yeibo again, has used his wealth of experience and competence as a native Ijaw speaker to send a message to the public that just as the Oleilei lives perpetually on the beautiful beach to feed on fishes, the Nigerian government does not want to leave the Niger Delta Area. The area is beautiful and richly blessed with natural resources.

Code-switching

Code-switching is a linguistic situation where a person who has the knowledge of two or more languages mixes the linguistic features of one language with another language in a discourse. Code-switching can be used to refer to a situation where a speaker uses a mixture of distinct language varieties as discourse proceeds (Akmajian *et al.*, 2022). Code-mixing occurs quite commonly in everyday speech with regards to levels of style, as, for example, when a speaker mixes formal and informal styles. Code-mixing can often happen within a

single sentence (and at numerous points, within a sentence). Among the most interesting cases of this sort of code-mixing are the those in which a speaker mixes distinct (mutual unintelligible) languages, a situation that often arises in a bilingual or multilingual areas such as American Southwest and Nigeria, etc.

In cases of code-switching, the speaker is in effect using two distinct language varieties at the same time. This is because he has a command of both languages and he wants to reach out to a wider audience. In this case of this study, Yeibo is code-switching from English to Ijaw; two distinct languages. Some of the cases of code-switching in this study are discussed below.

1. Again, the masquerade will retire
Without striking a soul
Sankia, Owa...
Wuwu wuwu wuwu...(*TFM* 23)
2. Aye's net caught
In far away Agoro River
Hence the congomen:
Ala beni kolo kolo... (*TFM* 23)

There are cases of code-switching here, where the Ijaw linguistic utterances are mixed with the English expressions. The Ijaw language is accompanied with onomatopoeia sounds in most cases to explain the meanings of some expressions better. Here, the onomatopoeic sound Sankia Owa...Wuwu wuwu wuwu... usually made by masquerades is used to explain the fierceness and the level of destruction of the Niger Delta Area by the Federal Government of Nigeria. Code-switching has helped to explain the situation better because masquerades usually carry artificial machete to frighten people and ties native beads round their ankles to make the onomatopoeic sound- Sankia Owa... Wuwu wuwu wuwu... which the Ijaw readers of Yeibo's poetry understand better. Besides, other readers apart from the Ijaw readers, who understand onomatopoeic sounds would get a better understanding. The Ijaw linguistic features are used instead of English because they serve better in this context and there are no exact English equivalents to serve this purpose. The onomatopoeic sounds indicate destruction which explains the Federal Government's fierceness and bitterness towards the Niger Delta people.

The second excerpt above also has a case of code-switching. The Ijaw linguistic features are Aye, Aghoro and Ala beni kolo kolo. These terms are mixed with the English words to make the meanings clearer to the readers. The Aghoro land in Delta State was very fertile in comparison with a fisherman with a good catch- "Aye's net caught", until the Federal Government extorted the crude oil in the land and made it infertile. Hence, the people (Aghoro people) made life uneasy for the Federal Government... Ala beni kolo kolo. Yeibo,

here again has mixed the Ijaw code with the English code to explain how the Ijaw angry youths made life difficult for the Federal Government as a result of the forceful extortion of oil in the area. The expression Ala beni kolo kolo, which means salt water is bitter has been mixed with the English words to express their meanings. It means that, just as salt water is bitter, the Niger Delta angry youths have made life difficult (bitter) for the Federal Government in the land.

Ijaw Proverbs/Idioms

Proverbs are common sayings usually known by many people, stating something commonly experienced or given advice. They are earthly expressions with Heavenly meanings. Proverbs are easily understood by native speakers and elders but their meanings are not very clear, except by special interpretation by those who use them regularly (Saeed 2003).

Idioms are groups of words in a fixed order that have particular meanings that are different from the meanings of the individual words. They are groups of words, whose meanings could not be explained by the individual words (Ndimele 2000). The Ijaw language is full of proverbs and idioms. Proverbs and idioms are mostly used by elders, who technically use words to share their experiences, teach morals and give advices. Poets also make use of proverbs and idioms aesthetically and stylistically to express their feelings and ideas. Yeibo, who grew up in Ayamassa Community in Ekeremor LGA of Bayelsa State, has a grand knowledge and command of the Ijaw proverbs and idioms. He has used the Ijaw proverbs and idioms in his poem to send his messages to his readers.

1. The okra tree, however tall, must bow to the whims of its indubitable owner. (TFM 29)
2. The lion does not eat a bestriden animal. (TFM 41)
3. Where the water pot stands, there is no dry season. (TFM 49)
4. The hen's sickness never tarries till evening. (TFM 59)
5. The goat that avoids yam has a broken set of teeth. (TFM 100)
6. What is made public is no longer a moral closet. (TFM 113)

In excerpt 1, where we have the okra tree and its indubitable owner, the implied meaning is that the political leaders, however rich and influential they could be, they would still depend on their society because the society still determines for them. Especially, in their bid for second tenure in office. The okra tree represents the political leaders, while the indubitable owner represents the society or the electorates. What Yeibo expresses here is that, some of the political leaders that marginalize us in the Niger Delta Area are actually our brothers and sisters. They make so many promises and give us false hopes during their campaigns and manifestos, but when

they assume office, they forget about their promises and oppress the same people they promised to care for. Yeibo here, sends a proverbial okra tree and its indubitable owner message to them that they would surely come back to us again, begging for our support. This complements King Robert Ebizimor's comments in one of his songs "You will go and come and meet me for where I am". It is obvious that, just as the owner of the okra tree can bend it to any direction it wants and harvest its fruits, the electorates can address and command the aspirants/candidates as they want during elections and negotiations. This is an admonition to politicians to be reliable and keep to their promises.

The second excerpt is about the lion not eating a bestriden animal. This excerpt implies that the Niger Delta people need to stand firm and be determined, so that the greedy political leaders would not deceive them and make use of them as they want. The proverb implies that, just as the lion does not eat a bestriden animal, the politicians would not be able to use them as they want if they unite. Besides, the politicians should not determine the pace of development or percentage to be given to the Niger Delta people. The people should be allowed to decide what they want. Yeibo wants the Niger Delta people to unite and speak one voice, so that the government would not bribe some people and use them to fight against their own land.

The next excerpt with the water pot means that the people in the Niger Delta Area of Nigeria are the producers of the crude oil that the nation feeds on. Therefore, are not supposed to lack anything. Yeibo implies that, just as the man that has a water pot standing by him would not die of thirst, the Niger Delta people should not be living in poverty and be begging government for survival and development. This is because they are the right owners of the nation's source of income. The crude oil serves as the proverbial water pot so the owners should not be marginalized. It is an Ijaw proverb which means anybody that has much wealth does not live in want or beg for food.

The next excerpt is about the hen's sickness that does not tarry till evening. This adage implies that there is hope for the Niger Delta people. Yeibo uses his knowledge as an Ijaw man to employ a proverbial saying that, just as the hen's sickness doesn't tarry till evening, the oppression and marginalization on the Niger Delta people would not last forever. Political leadership is in turns and has duration. Therefore, a messiah would come someday. The proverb suggests hope; there is hope for better things to come in the nearest future.

The next excerpt is about a goat that avoids yam. The excerpt is about goat, yam and a broken set of teeth. The proverb is about cowardice. Goat naturally likes yam, therefore, any goat that does not eat yam has a problem with its teeth. The implication of the proverb is that, if the Niger Delta people refuse to complain about

their dissatisfaction by the Federal Government on the development of the area, then, they are cowards. Therefore, they would always air out their views or take necessary actions to stop the oppression on them. We all must not take up arms to fight; they are various ways of fighting; Yeibo has used poetry to fight. We all should look for our own ways to stop this oppression; the Niger Delta people are not cowards.

The last excerpt is about what is made public that is no longer a moral closet. This proverb implies that it is no more a secret that most Nigerian leaders are corrupt and the Federal Government is marginalizing the Niger Delta people that produce the resources the nation feeds on. Yeibo again, is declaring, through poetry, that the Niger Delta people are not happy with the way they are being treated by the Federal Government and their unhappiness is glaring.

Native Rhetorical Patterns

Rhetoric is an art of effective speech or writing. Rhetorical question is a literary device in which a question is made to suggest its own answer without demanding a direct reply from the reader or listener (Richards 1929). The Ijaw language is full of native rhetorical patterns, especially, employed by elders to create effect in their conversations. These rhetorical patterns appear in question forms but they do not require answers. Although, they do not need direct answers, they are very effective and convey strong messages. Yeibo has used his background knowledge of the Ijaw language to employ some Ijaw rhetorical patterns in his poetry to send his messages to his readers. Some of the Ijaw rhetorical patterns employed by Yeibo are identified and discussed below.

1. Don't we remember, when an orphan has a full stomach, he forgets his roots? (*TFM 41*)
2. What corpse, buried, leaves its legs outside? (*TFM 42*)
3. When a hen loses a fight, the owner shrinks in shame? (*TFM 62*)

Yeibo in the excerpt with the orphan and a full stomach, is asking the Federal Government a rhetorical question if they do not know that when the Niger Delta Area is developed with the necessary infrastructural and manpower development, the avengers would stop the fight against them? It is an Ijaw rhetorical pattern, and it implies that the Niger Delta people create problems today and fight against the Federal Government because of underdevelopment and marginalization. If the area is developed and the people are satisfied, they are ready to make peace with the Federal Government and forget that there was once marginalization in the area. Just as, when the orphan has a full stomach, he would forget about his roots, the militants and agitators of the Niger Delta would embrace peace and forever be happy with the government.

The next excerpt is about the corpse that does not leave its legs outside when buried. The rhetorical pattern here is "what corpse, buried, leaves its legs outside"? The indirect question here is, who is that person that causes trouble when he has what he wants? The implication here is that, just as the corpse does not leave its legs outside, when buried, the Niger Delta avengers would not cause further troubles, if they are given what they want. The people are ready to embrace peace as opined by Yeibo, whenever the Federal Government is ready to compromise and give the people their due share of the natural resources. The people of the Niger Delta do not enjoy making trouble; all they want is a fair share and justice to prevail.

The next excerpt discussed here, is about the hen and its owner shrinking in shame. The rhetorical question is "when a hen loses a fight, the owner shrinks in shame"?

This implies that if the Niger Delta agitators or avengers lose their fight to the Federal Government, the entire people in the region would face the consequences and it would be shameful to everyone from the area. Therefore, Yeibo is appealing and encouraging everybody from the Niger Delta to support the avengers in the fight against the oppression by Federal Government. This is because if the avengers lose win the battle, everybody in the region wins; if they lose, everybody in the area loses. The implied message here is that, we all should massively support our agitators.

Semantic Extension of Words

Semantics is the branch of linguistics that deals with the meaning of words, phrases, clauses, sentences, idioms, phrasal verbs, etc. Some writers, especially, poets sometimes use words beyond their denotative meanings and other times use words to mean the opposite of their lexical meanings. Some words are used to mean more than their lexical meanings (semantic extension). For instance, the word WIZARD when used in the world of computers, means genius but in Africa, a wizard means a male witch craft with evil powers. Semantic Extension is a mechanism in which words are used to introduce new kinds of objects, ideas and circumstances in a language. This study has identified some cases of Semantic Extension in Yeibo's *The Fourth Masquerade*.

1. These lines invoke
The frothy salt waters
Of Mangrove swamps. (*TFM 21*)
2. At my Agudama backyard
Nibbling away, in secret triumph. (*TFM 46*)
3. No one tries the patience of Odele
For too long like those wanton lads. (*TFM 106*)
4. O the wizard of Amatebe
The centre of his head

Laden with the love of the land. (*TFM* 109)

The excerpt has mangrove swamps as the semantic extension. A Mangrove swamp is a place where tropical trees are found near water, whose twisted roots grow partly above ground. Yeibo has extended the meaning of Mangrove Swamps. It now refers to all the oil producing areas in the Niger Delta. Yeibo here, is lamenting that the oil producing areas are all polluted.

The next excerpt has Agudama as the Ijaw linguistic feature. Agudama is a community in Bayelsa State. The meaning of Agudama has been extended, it now refers to all the oil producing communities in the area. The message Yeibo sends here is that some of the political leaders marginalizing us are our brothers and sisters, who live with us in the same communities. They are now political leaders and have forgotten how they were also part of the oppressed people. It further explains that even the local environments are not safe because our people are also corrupt.

The Ijaw linguistic feature in the next excerpt is Odele. Odele is a god in Ayakoromo town in Delta State. Yeibo has extended its meaning. It is no longer a single god in Ayakoromo town; it now refers to all the gods and ancestral spirits in Ijaw land. As an Ijaw man, Yeibo believes in the powers of the gods in the land. Odele is not an exception. Yeibo believes that the Federal Government has tried the patience of the Ijaw gods for too long; he wants the gods to rise up and fight against the oppression on the Ijaw man by the Federal Government.

The last excerpt under semantic extension has Amatebe as the Ijaw linguistic feature. Amatebe is a quarter in Bomadi, a riverine community in Delta State. The meaning of Amatebe has been extended here. It is no longer just a quarter in Bomadi; it now refers to the whole abode of all the political leaders who live in Ijaw land to marginalize us. They know the problems of the Niger Delta but when they assume political offices, they forget to develop the area. Some of them are even awarded contracts to develop the area but they embezzle the money instead and convert them to their personal use. Yeibo, through poetry, is addressing them to desist from such inhuman acts and work for the progress of the Niger Delta.

Semantic Dislocation of Words

Semantic dislocation is a term used to describe a linguistic situation, where a word or words are used to refer to things or situations other than their canonical meanings. That is, a word is used to mean a different thing entirely from its original meaning. Some of the cases of Semantic Dislocation are discussed below.

1. And retired to Owu Bou

Every step a colourful memory. (*TFM* 21)

2. Yesternight, the fourth masquerade
Danced the last steps
In the village square. (*TFM* 21)

3. Even the finest fisher of men
Bathed a million times
In the baptism of the spirit
Oozes like rotten atabala head. (*TFM* 122)

4. I remember the forlorn footpath
To Kpakiam market
Through the chilly
Precincts of Asiyaibou. (*TFM* 119)

The excerpt with Owu Bou has a case of Semantic Dislocation. Owu Bou is the meeting place of masquerades in the forest. The meaning has been dislocated in this context. It now refers to the midnight meetings of political leaders, where they take wicked decisions to undo the society. The Owu Bou, which used to be the meeting place of masquerades in Ijaw land has been used to refer to the hidden places where politicians hold evil political meetings.

The excerpt case of Semantic Dislocation is found in the use of Fourth Masquerade. The meaning of masquerade is dislocated here. Masquerades are special masks worn by men in Ijaw land to display and entertain people, especially on festive seasons. But Yeibo has dislocated the meaning of masquerade; it now refers to the fierceness and wickedness of our political leaders. Masquerades are no more used to entertain people, but used to deceive people, according to Yeibo in this context. The title of the text, *The Fourth Masquerade* is also a case of Semantic Dislocation. It is used to refer to deceptive politicians.

The excerpt with atabala is another case of Semantic Dislocation. Atabala is specie of fish in Ijaw land. It is called tilapia in English. The meaning of atabala has been dislocated here. The full expression is rotten atabala head. The decisions and actions of the politicians in the society are inhuman and not pleasant to the society. Therefore, they are best described as rotten atabala heads. The atabala is a borny fish; if it is rotten, you can't eat its head because it is tasteless. The rotten atabala head is uses, so, the politicians are also useless in the Niger Delta Area because they do not have meaningful contributions.

The final excerpt discussed here is about Kpakiam and Asiyaibou. Kpakiam is a riverine community in Delta State, under Bomadi LGA, while Asiyaibou is a forest dedicated to a god in Kpakiam. The meaning of Kpakiam, which is the poet's maternal community been dislocated here. Kpakiam is used here to refer to the meeting place of the freedom fighters in the Niger Delta. The meaning of Asiyaibou has also been dislocated here; it now refers to the protective measures the Niger Delta avengers have

taken to stop the oppression on them by the Federal Government. Yeibo here expresses his faith and belief that, even though, it is difficult to fight against the Federal Government of Nigeria for the resource control, the people would win someday. This is possible with the protective powers of the gods in the land. Asiyaibou is used here because it does not have an English equivalent, besides, proper nouns are untranslatable and Asiyaibou is a proper noun.

CONCLUSION

The study has shown that Yeibo, who is an Ijaw man, used the Ijaw linguistic features in his poetry to express his thoughts and feelings to his readers. The Ijaw linguistic features are the major communicative tools used in the poem. The features are well used that the readers understand the poet's message and also sees the relationship between language and literature. The manner in which the Ijaw linguistic features are used reminds us of Leo Spitzer's Philological Circle. The reader at some point would find it difficult to separate language from literature. The study also reveals that an approach on a literary text is possible from a linguistic standpoint. The use of the Ijaw linguistic features give a local colouring to the work and it also reveals the poet's linguistic competence on both the Ijaw and English languages. Other researchers are encouraged to look at other works of Ebi Yeibo and discuss other factors of linguistic and literary Studies.

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