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LINGUISTIC ELEMENTS OF DECAY IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S *A MAN OF THE PEOPLE*

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Abstract

This paper investigates the verbal components that illustrate socio-political and ethical decay in Chinua Achebe's satirical prose narrative *A Man of the People*. With its setting in a post-independence African state, it represents a society overwhelmed by leadership collapse, corruption and socio-economic suffering along with desolation. Thus, the study looks at the novelist's application of precise linguistic devices to demonstrate the ethical rot within the postcolonial state. A close analysis of the novel aids the investigation in highlighting precise stylistic mechanisms like code-switching, Pidgin English, political rhetoric, irony and metaphors of dirt and disease. The research findings reveal Chief Nanga's manipulative language and Odili's cynical narrative voice, showing how these features create and broaden the gulf between nationalist principles and communal reality. The narrative conscious juxtaposition of the Nigerian Pidgin and Standard English remains a sociolinguistic contrivance to underscore intense class stratification and hypocrisy, as well as, deep cultural prejudice and alienation. Again, the paper scrutinises the subversion of traditional proverbs, as well as, the conversational degradation in the narrative, revealing how these echo the disintegration of native structures of morality. Scrutinising these verbal components has shown that the crash of language in the narrative is not only a stylistic feature, but an express indication of general socio-political decomposition. This linguistic examination, hence, present new outlooks into Achebe's appraisal of the postcolonial disenchantment, through grammatical and lexical varieties within the novel's ideological critical space.

Keywords: Linguistic decay, Chinua Achebe, political corruption, postcolonial satire, Nigerian Pidgin.

Introduction

This reading investigates Achebe's linguistic application of *A Man of the People* (1966) in epitomising the post-independence political and moral rottenness of Africa nations. Relying on the detailed analysis of devices of narrative techniques consisting of pidgin shifts, sarcastic registers, degraded proverbs, among other devices, the enquiry exposes how linguistic manipulation by such characters as Chief Nanga enables to artist highlight general greediness, betrayal of democratic principles and scuttle the promises of independence. The novel represents a sarcastic socio-economic and political verdict, probing the gloom and disenchantment of a

recently independent fictional African state. It details how the evolution from imperial rule to political autonomy generated great expectations that were short leaved and swiftly destabilised by ethical compromises and general corruption of the political elite along with the widespread culture of socio-economic sabotage. Notably, in *A Man of the People*, Achebe turns his attention from traditional rural life to the modern municipal political arena. The narrative exploits the narrator, Odili Samalu, along with the enigmatic populist, Chief Nanga, to orchestrate a harsh ideological conflict.



A number of readings of *A Man of the People* focus on the subject matter of political fraud and character foils. However, there is a serious necessity for inquiries on the *linguistic* procedures that foster this ethical malaise. To what extent is the societal decadence conveyed through an appropriate linguistic tool? This study, thus, looks at the degradation of language as a means of depicting socio-economic exploitation, ideological and political corruption within the narrative. It stresses how politicians like Nanga disguise their exploitative activities and life styles, using language as a weapon by maneuvering Standard English, Nigerian Pidgin and traditional idioms, especially the proverb.

Purpose of the Study:

The general aim of the study is to critically mirror, satirise and critique the post-independence socio-economic, ethical and political rot of Africa. However, the specific objectives are to:

- i) identify how characters retain power and maneuver the populace through verbal components by code-switching between Standard English, Nigerian Pidgin and indigenous idioms;
- ii) identify how rhetorical devices (sarcasm and dramatic irony) portray the double standards and ethical disintegration of both the ruling class and the disillusioned intellectuals;
- iii) investigate how specific political slang, euphemisms and vocabulary, depict the decay of accountability, integrity, et cetera, among the political elites;
- iv) scrutinize how traditional linguistic components like folklore and proverbs are consciously misapplied and distorted by fraudulent politicians to legalise, abuse, greed and deception.

Theoretical Framework

This investigation is powered by a dual-theoretical approach, blending Postcolonial Stylistics with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), to probe into how Achebe uses precise linguistic components to reflect socio-economic, political and ethical rot in the society. In the first place, Postcolonial stylistics combines postcolonial literary theory with linguistic scrutiny. It is an interdisciplinary field that applies the investigative mechanisms of linguistic stylistics to postcolonial literature. It looks at how writers from former colonised states adapt the imperialist language to appraise socio-economic and political structures and reproduce local realities. The foundational theorists and leading proponents of the concept include Ashcroft, Bill, et al (2002, pp. 38-45), who introduced crucial terminology like "abrogation" and "appropriation" that illustrates how postcolonial writers take over the coloniser's language and apply it to articulate their own cultural realities. On the African literary arena, Chinua Achebe (1975, pp. 55-62), Isidore Okpewho (1998, pp. 112-19) and Vicki Briault Manus (2012, pp. 88-94) are prominent African scholars and exponents of the notion.

While Isidore Okpewho underscores the definite rhetorical prototypes and cultural forces attached to postcolonial African texts; Chinua Achebe mainly known for his novel, laid the

groundwork for postcolonial stylistics particularly concerning how indigenous writers challenge the Eurocentric canon. This he did, in his initial essays on the politics of language. Again, Vicki Briault Manus has done distinctive works developed through the stylistic showcasing of how native writers achieve their uniqueness and domesticate English in postcolonial milieu akin to South Africa. In the selected text, *A Man of the People*, therefore, Achebe intermingles components of Standard English with Pidgin and Igbo proverbs. It presents the devices to interpret Achebe's distinctive exploitation of Afro-English linguistic alternatives. A linguistic hybridity, it is deemed appropriate for mirroring the fragmented nature of postcolonial identity. Semantically, new but fraudulent meanings are given to traditional terms to reflect their new roles in a decomposing society. there is also the application of diverse untranslated Igbo ideas which marks the degradation of local values and norms following the new era of political greed amid socio-economic and ethical rottenness.

Secondly, Critical Discourse Analysis is relevant in probing into how supremacy, control and social disparity are achieved, replicated and defied by means of speech and text. The enquiry explicitly employs Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional theoretical model, consisting of: i) Social Practice involving Postcolonial Political Corruption and Decay; ii) Discursive Practice which entails Production and Consumption of Text; and iii) Textual Analysis involving Grammar, Vocabulary, Metaphor (1992, p. 64, 1995, p. 28, 2001, p. 1.). For the study, textual analysis concentrates on the definite grammar, vocabulary and syntax utilised in the novel by characters like Odili Samalu and Chief Nanga. Such linguistic features involve the use of euphemisms in masking robbery. **The aspect of social practice involves situations where narrative language** is closely attached to the wider post-independence systemic fraud, favoritism and erosion of democratic institutions. Precisely, this dissects how political misinformation is fashioned and consumed by an easily influenced, disenchanted and gullible populace. In the long run, CDA unites diverse micro-linguistic options to the major systemic political disappointment and ethical disintegration in the text.

Review of Relevant Literature

This literature review synthesizes foundational and modern scholarship on *A Man of the People* by Achebe. It traces the major critical perspectives on the novel, paying much attention to the interface of postcolonial disillusionment and linguistic stylistics. Foundational and modern scholars mostly scrutinise Achebe's *A Man of the People* from diverse critical perspectives including: **Post-colonial Theory, Cultural and Class Conflict, Political Satire and Irony, and Stylistic/Linguistic Analysis**. These perspectives examine how post-independence elites perpetuate corruption and highlight the disillusionment of everyday citizens. In the first place, many critics discuss this novel underscoring the problems of neocolonialism consisting of leadership failures, the betrayal of nationalist dreams by native African elites. Following this critical angle, such studies explore how formerly colonised African leading political elites symbolised in the text by Chief Nanga and the educated middle class symbolised by Odili,

replicate the systems of corruption, authoritarian traits thereby perpetuating colonial-era vices and leaving the masses to wallow in underdevelopment. Further studies on corruption in the novel relate how politicians utilise a submissive, listless electorate using bare rhetoric and support, with ensuing ethical gulf diminishing democratic procedures to thuggery, commotion, blood-letting and military interference. Among these foundational and modern scholars during the first phase are critics like Lindfors (1973, 75), Carroll (1980, 112) and Gikandi (1991, 105). Lindfors looked at Achebe's bitter satire and political allegories in post-independent society, while Carroll appraised the novel's catastrophic course and its prophetic expectation of military coups owing to prevalent political rot. A well-known modern critic, Gikandi assessed the interface of postcolonial state structure and the disintegration of the national bourgeoisie in Achebe's prose narratives.

Some foundational and modern scholars analysed Achebe's *A Man of the People* from stylistic appropriations and sociolinguistic variation, looking at Achebe's stylistic craftsmanship in domesticating the English language. Such scholars emphasised the novelist's tactical employment of pidginisation, proverb adaptations and code-mixing to mirror the changing realities of postcolonial era Africa. Obiechina (1975, 130) is among these foundational critics whose sociological approach to the West African novel underscore the role speedy urbanisation in ethical compromise, abuse and economic exploitation by the elitist. Thus, the power dynamics and exploitative traits of the new ruling class are shown through the linguistic scrutiny of conversational interface involving shifts in registers. **Some studies have revealed** Chief Nanga's handling of both Standard English and informal Nigerian Pidgin to mask his populist and deceptive exploitation.

Some of these scholars on Achebe's *A Man of the People*, including Killam (1969), Lindfors (1973, 75) and Carroll (1980, 112), **have also anchored their critical works** on stinging satire, grim humour and rhetorical devices for the portrayal of socio-economic and political rot. Thus, the first-person narrative viewpoint of Odili Samalu, the flawed protagonist, creates an ironic gap that ridicules the insincerity of both the ruling elite and his own self-righteous claims as the symbol of educated young intellectuals. Scholars **have** stressed frequency of intertextuality and citations in the novel, exposing the blend of speeches, quotations and public notices used by politicians in persuasive language to coax the populace. Notably, *A Man of the People* like most works of Achebe is often seen as a pointed ironic rejection of toxic democratic codes of greediness, violence along with an ethical rot of newly independent nations. **A hand-full of critics of Achebe's novels, including** Kalu Ogbaa (1999, 45) and Chantal Zabus (2007, 112), have applied stylistic and linguistic analysis, examining the novel's verbal and textual approaches. These commentators have stressed Achebe's radiant fusion of Igbo proverbs and other oral traditional components with foreign European literary forms like existentialism, along with Nigerian Pidgin English structures, in communicating the dismal ethical rot as well as other socio-economic and political realities of post-independence era. **Other critics of the novel** like Eustace Palmer

(1972, 123), Biodun Jeyifo (1985), and F. Abiola Irele (1990, 49–67), come to the novel from the viewpoint of cultural and class conflict. These scholars stress the apprehension between traditional West African practices and Western political and cultural philosophies launched by means of European education. Hence, they concentrate on the gap between the emerging contemporary and rotten intellectuals and the larger traditional rural community. Moreover, there are core critics, like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986, 45) and Chidi Amuta (1989, 88), who extend this perspective, anchoring their works on socio-political and Marxist perception. These probe the enormous economic isolation between the ruling elites and the indigent populace. An influential contemporary of Achebe, Ngugi explores the narrative as a distressing reflection of the disenchantment experienced by African intellectuals in the post-independence era. Again, Amuta, another major Marxist critic of African literature, offers a meticulous examination of class dynamics, exposing the emergent elite classes and how they deprive the working class in post-colonial nations. On the whole, the critics scrutinise the sham perception of the voters, while showcasing the politicians' ploy in using state resources and patronage fueled by tribal sentiments to disguise the broad-spectrum of inequalities. Wide-ranging research studies have been done on the novel's thematic postcolonial rot and common stylistic features like proverbs and pidgin, but research gaps exist in the area of lexical degradation involving semantic modifications in public discourse and lexical corruption of political slogans, etc. which this study tries to fill.

Analysis of Linguistic Elements of Decay in Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*

Indications of ethical negligence are conveyed by means of various linguistic elements in the novel. Pidgin is occasionally applied to reveal how proper socio-political forms are devalued and trivialised for transactional selfish political gains. It becomes a linguistic indicator of moral rottenness: "*I think our trouble in this country is that we are too nervous. We say we are neutral but as soon as we hear communist we begin de shake and piss for trouser. Excuse me*" (Chapter 8, Page 76). Here, a member of the Common People's Convention (C.P.C.) slips into Pidgin to express a rough and sarcastic geopolitical observation. This sarcastic glide into Pidgin touches on the speaker's innate insincerity, revealing the unrefined, offensive veracity of governance where genuine political principle is sacrificed and cheapened into a "dirty game" reeled out by a dismissal democratic conscience. It is simply the transactional politicians rule: "*You chop, me I chop, palaver finish*"

(Chapter 13, Page 162). This phrase has become a cliché among the political elite, summing up their understanding of governance and democracy which is seen as a makeshift bargain of mutual gorging. Within this arrangement, formal socio-political formations, like parliamentary debate or national development are reduced to nothing but a transactional game for mere survival, denoting an ethical negligence that entails regularising looting on a national scale as an tolerable right. In the long run, this trend justifies the commodification of justice: "*make you put minister*

money for my hand and..." (Chapter 6, Page 64). Used mostly by characters aligned with the political machine, such as Nanga's faction, this expression demonstrates the open but shameful treatment of state funds as personal slush finance. Here Pidgin is employed to create a formal distance between personal wealth and civil trust, revealing the ethical rot and danger of making government fraud open, domestic and informal without any room for public honesty.

In *A Man of the People*, Achebe applies Pidgin as the emblematic voice of the marginalised city and working classes. It is the **language of the subaltern, for instance, revealing** the street-level pragmatism of the bodyguard: "*Na this boy dey halla so for master im face?*" (Chapter 4, Page 37). This is spoken by Chief Nanga's thug (bodyguard) while Odili tackles the minister, showing how the working-class enforcer uses Pidgin to assert his monstrous power in defense of his master. This is how the marginalised city class is co-opted by dishonest politicians, to exercise a limited, street-level voice in defending the very repressive formations that impoverished them. This clearly portrays the double standards of the political elites who employ Standard English to oppress and prohibit the very masses whose language they mimic when looking for their votes: "*Me one, he said. I no kuku mind the jatakata wey de for inside. make you put minister money for my hand and make you throway the remaining...*" (Chapter 7, Page 69). Uttered by an associate or working-class supporter at Chief Nanga's party, this explicitly rejects the moral grandstanding of educated elites. Hence, the speaker reduces intricate national politics to a simple jumble for materialist gains indicated by such expressions as "minister money" and "throway the remaining". Since the oppressed populace is conscious of the systemic corruption, people demand their instant share of the national cake rather than accept vacant democratic oratory, showing a subaltern pessimism within the society.

In the novel, the artist equally apply **satirical lexicon** to depict an inversion which ridicules the lack of true relationship of the elitist class to the populace: "...the most approachable politician in the country... anybody who knows him knows he is a man of the people" (Chapter 1, Page 1). There is an over-riding and disgusting irony in the title "man of the people" used to describe Nanga's public image; hence, the term "*approachable*" refers to access to trivial patronage instead of policy responsibility, showing the political class being more interested in building a satiric world of popularity instead of accountable system. Thus, Chief Nanga along with other members of the political class consistently exploits this populist yet satirical lexicon in covering their subterranean detachment from the masses, structuring cruelty and systemic neglect as generosity. This is pointedly depicted by such metaphoric expressions as "juicy morsel" of "good fortune": "*Tell them that this man had used his position to enrich himself and they would ask you... if you thought that a sensible man would spit out the juicy morsel that good fortune placed in his mouth*" (Chapter 1, Page 1). In other words, through the use of such lexicon as these, the narrative denounces the decriminalisation of greed, turning political burglary to a normal act of hard-work, while derisively

portraying the gullible populace who blindly support their own oppressors. Chief Nanga's acts and shouts during a parliamentary sitting directed against the educated "Miscreant Gang" show his application of mechanical, Western Democratic expressions ("*government of the people...*") in his pretended role of a classy statesman: "*They deserve to be hanged... catch red-handed in their nefarious plot to overthrow the Government of the people by the people and for the people...*" (Chapter 1, Page 4). The novel also uses the ironic voice of Odili's picture the huge gap between the suffering citizens and their self-serving political class: "*Perhaps it was their impatience with this kind of hypocrisy that made men like Nanga successful politicians while starry-eyed idealists strove vaingloriously to bring into politics niceties and delicate refinements that belonged elsewhere*" (Chapter 3, Page 16). Here, Odili downsizes Nanga's lack of moral principles by differentiating him from "starry-eyed idealists". This sarcastic defence of corruption points out that political success requires discarding of integrity absolutely to attain, revealing that true service to the public has become artificial but isolated shows of power competitions. This stresses the ironic overtures in titles such as "Minister of Culture", "Man of the People" and several others as inversions to ridicule the lack of true relationship of the ruling class with the populace.

The novel also uses the constant exchanges between native linguistic components, formal British English along with Pidgin to depict the vicious twists in power plays, showing the imperative role of register disparity and code-switching in furthering thematic exploration. One observes that Chief Nanga employs refined English on his administrative corridors but swings into a reachable, debasing Pidgin to maneuver the uneducated masses, revealing language as a weighty weapon of socio-economic and political exploitation in Achebe's prose fiction. As a sample, this novel presents characters who are persistently tied between the intricacies of Nigerian Pidgin and Standard British English, along with local proverbs. Look at this instance: "*Look my frien I done tell you say if you no wan serious for this business, make you go rest for house*" (Chapter 6, Page 58). Frequently, Chief Nanga code-switches into Nigerian Pidgin while addressing his social assistants or intimates, including drivers, domestic employees and journalists. His application of the native dialect is to simply enhance his "man of the people" status in order to disguise his privileged supremacy. In other words, oscillations in language usage by the elitist class assist them in audience patronage, signifying their in-group, grassroots legitimacy that endears them to the commoners or the "*silly, ignorant villagers*" (Chapter 1, Page 2), and especially the less-educated voters. Another use of **Pidgin English** in manipulating the local population is clear in the following: "*Our true leaders are not those intoxicated with their Oxford, Cambridge or Harvard degrees but those who speak the language of the people*" (Chapter 1, Page 4). The party organ of anti-intellectualism is, thus, weaponised at rallies by figures like Nanga. The local population is deceived by casting an elitist aura of betrayal over Western education, while self-righteously seeing his lack of intellectual depth as an asset among the masses. His double standards in linguistic maneuvers prevent the impoverished and

uneducated masses from trusting sincere, extremely educated critics who mark his fraudulence and treachery.

Achebe's narrative also exposes the silencing of the press through maneuvering of linguistic components: *"If I don't give him something now, tomorrow he go and write rubbish about me. They say it is the freedom of the press. But to me, it is nothing short of the freedom to crucify innocent men and assassinate their character"* (Chapter 6, Page 66). Here, Nanga drops mid-speech from a Standard English terrace as he explains the Western notion of "freedom of the press" to rationalise inducing a reporter, employing official abstract ideas like *"assassinate their character"* to sound like an worthy victim in order to invite communal support. The novel also satirises the bourgeois notions or crazy for titles through maneuvering of linguistic elements. This is seen from Nanga's hilarious brags about an impending honorary degree award from an American institution, and hoping to employ this rigid colonial-style titles to scheme out an immense public standing: *"They are going to give me doctorate degree... Doctor of Laws, LL.D. ... the Honourable Dr. M.A. Nanga, M.P., LL.D"* (Chapter 2, Page 20). Again consider: *"Na waa! Nothing fit passam... 'Chief Dr. Mrs.' ... That one no sweet for mouth"* (Chapter 2, Page 20). Here he slides from his self-important title list to mockery in Pidgin with Odili, appraising how phrases reverberate or *"sweet for mouth"*, thus, casually reinforcing the eventual tune of his fraudulent generation: *"you chop, me I chop, palaver finish"*. In other words, it is merely ornamental for political influence that Nanga's class values their numerous titles.

In *A Man of the People*, the subversion of proverbs is yet another aspect of the general linguistic maneuvering, with politicians twisting them to rationalise greed and selfishness. This is against the traditional Igbo cultural backdrop of *Things Fall Apart*, where Achebe depicts proverbs as *"the palm oil with which words are eaten"*. Unlike the natural and cultural essence of proverbs, cultural decadence is echoed, characterising the decomposition of traditional shared principles in a society that now favours the codes of Eurocentric socio-political exploitation: *"The communal ownership of chieftship which was once a source of strength has been corrupted into a share of the national cake"* (Chapter 12, Page 131). Leadership and titles in traditional Igbo society were marked with sacred responsibilities upheld and sanctioned by the community. In contrast, the colonial codes of leadership, with its aggressive, brute and cutthroat materialistic principles turned the post-independence era into a total scramble for state resources. Hence, indigenous shared unity gives way to an alien distrustful, selfish vision of the homeland. Proverbs of sharing victuals are inverted into ones of regularised communal robbery as public obligation waned into personal acquirement and 'sharing of the national cake': *"Let them eat choosingly... because they are not eating for themselves alone but for us too"* (Chapter 11, Page 124). Indeed, this proclamation issuing from the village elders concerning fraudulent politicians, like Chief Nanga, affirms the established notion of a representative returning home to the clan with honour and resources, which has become the vague justification for colossal economic embezzlement. With the new

crop of leaders of postcolonial era, expected intelligence is weaponised to silence responsibility, as the community aggressively defends its dishonest leaders, considering systemic exploitation as a lawful method of ethnic continued existence and progress instead of an ethical disappointment. Consequently, people are now reasoning 'up-side-down', overturning the essence of communal proverb under the weight of individual self-indulgence or greed: *"An old man who thinks that a house is built by one man has never seen a house being built in the village... But nowadays, if a man is inside the house, he locks the door against the rain for himself alone"* (Chapter 1, Page 11). The import of this statement is that the rich value inherent in proverbial wisdom (*Ilulu*) is applied in lamenting the obliteration of traditional harmony. Once a shared village effort, building a house have been turned through contemporary politics into a private protection for the privileged class. Put another way, post-colonial political strategists utilises the combined labour of the masses to achieve power, but instantly discard the customary responsibility of communal protection from the "rain" of poverty and other emergencies associated with modern existence. This inversion of responsibility is seen in an earlier instance: *"My people have a saying: 'The man who brings ant-infested firewood into his hut should not grumble when lizards start visiting'"* (Chapter 1, Page 1). The significance of proverbs cannot be over-stressed, seeing that the narrator Odili applies the above-stated celebrated adage in the opening segment of the narrative. However, this adage which marks an understanding of personal liability for one's deeds is inverted to ascertain the deeper corrupt political system that generated a wider socio-cultural decadence. It points to politicians as persistent sources of "ants" of greediness and tribal bigots for the national house with no proper communal punitive sanctions. This relates to the men of modern world where justice and truth are sacrificed on the altar of self-serving politicians, who *"know book, but ... don't know culture"* (Chapter 1, Page 4), indicating that Western education and political systems have effectively isolated African leaders, like Odili and Nanga, from the customary mechanisms of responsibility, severing the ethical bonds of communal unity and generating a sense of things falling apart.

In *A Man of the People*, politicians also use desecrated language as a tool in stripping educational texts and proverbs of scholarly worth in order to maneuver the populace. These perform a mere degrading role of decreasing intricate socio-political realities to empty, selfish slogans that deceive and keep the voters isolated but content: *"Let us now and for all time extract from our body-politic... all those decadent stooges versed in the text-book economics... Away with the damnable and expensive university education..."* (Chapter 1, Pages 3-4). Here, Chief Nanga uses populist expression to capture higher education as a disruptive and privileged syndrome. This anti-intellectual crusade slogan, posturing educated professionals as *"decadent stooges"* helps the politicians in brandishing anti-intellectualism as a means of covering their own position. It appeals to the superficial cultural nationalism, requiring an unschooled devotion instead of capability. Hence, Nanga deliberately and disdainfully looks down at intellectual capability, depicting *"book learning"* as a field far

isolated and unrelated to governance: "Take your money and take your scholarship to go and learn more book... And leave the dirty game of politics to us who know how to play it" (Chapter 11, Page 113). With this reasoning code, political power is seen more clearly as a "dirty game" that simply fits amoral empty-heads and self-centred opportunists, and by design had to alienate super-educated, morally sound agencies of leadership, whose major drive is to politically give power to the electorate.

Euphemisms are linguistic features employed by the political class to depict political brutality, thuggery, rot and material inducements, masking the reality of societal **atrocities** and disintegration. For instance, Odili plays down on his private insecurities and revenge, understating his own ethical influence. Like others in his class, he regards vicious intimidation as habitual public obligation. By means of euphemism or mild metaphoric expressions, the elitist class as well downplays systemic rottenness, disguising their brutal and excessive abuses of authority: "*I am only giving you this money because I feel that after all my years of service to my people I deserve to be elected unopposed so that my detractors... will know that I have my people solidly behind me*" (Chapter 11, Page 117). Here, Chief Nanga tries to rationalise outright monetary inducement and physical bullying, viewing it as a re-compensation for his "years of service". Again, the brutal suppression of opposition is masked through the expression "elected unopposed", thus, disguising thuggery and vote-buying with the delusion of democratic accord. This method is used to mask entire processes of unconcealed embezzlement, bribery and decay which sum up the vicious neo-colonial system: "*Tell them that this man has used his position to enrich himself and they would ask you... if you thought that a sensible man would spit out the juicy morsel that good fortune placed in his mouth*" (Chapter 1, Page 2). Indeed, the notion of a "juicy morsel" of "good fortune" simply entails public money and its flagrant misappropriation. Here, politicians devoid of conscience see stealing from the public treasury fortune instead of a crime, thus, showing a skeptical communal collusion that regularises fraud and promotes societal degeneration. On the whole this systemic degradation consequent upon the impunity perpetrated by the ruling class is captured in the "You chop, Me I chop" syndrome codes: "*...in the fat dripping, gummy, eat and let eat regime just ended... in language ever more suited to the times: you chop, me I chop, palaver finish...*" (Chapter 13, Page 162). Thus, through the manipulation of linguistic element of colloquialism, the rot and decay of national honesty and moral principles are underestimated, viewing such as a childish allocation of the "national cake". It amounts to a commodification of national life in a transaction that gives every political representative a bite of the "cake".

Conclusion

In *A Man of the People*, Achebe intentionally employs degraded linguistic features, including corrupted English, sullied proverbs and opportunistic code-switching to Pidgin, in characterising both ethical and political decomposition of post-independence leadership. These linguistic and stylistic preferences helped the artist in portraying the political class and its deliberate

manipulation of language to ingrain widespread socio-political corruption, which eventually gives the narrative a catastrophic standing. The vital findings include the prevalence of ironic linguistic features, illustrated by the irony in titles, particularly "A Man of the People". Other linguistic features are exaggerated campaign slogans that expose the general rot of democratic principles. Subversion of customary proverbs by dubious characters like Chief Nanga was effected to mask their impunity and appease the exploited masses. The novelist also portrayed the weaponisation of language through **linguistic code-switching, between** Standard English, Nigerian Pidgin and vernacular, underscoring the socio-political isolation of the intellectual elite from the oppressed populace. On a final analysis, this reading reveals that linguistic debasement in *A Man of the People* is beyond exploitation as an aesthetic device; it is rather a calculated problem-solving mechanism, exposing the root causes of the failure of democracy in postcolonial Africa. By tracing the decay of traditional harmony to the sarcastic political double standards, Achebe showcases the continent's disenchantment with the fruits of independence, blaming post-colonial leadership failure for socio-economic miseries, politico-cultural woes in Africa. Ultimately, the study confirms that the degeneration of ethical values remains inextricably associated with linguistic maneuvering, forcing readers to reflect about the futility of a democratic system that favours oratory and shuns honesty.

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