

## The Lexico-Semantic choices in the construction of cyprian ekwensi's 'Iska'

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### Abstract

The study examined the lexico-semantic choices selected by Cyprian Ekwensi in the construction of the novel *Iska*. It particularly explored the lexical features and figurative language that gave perceptible meaning to the novel *Iska*. The researchers employed the content analysis as an analytical tool to unravel the words, codes, figurative language and the meaning derived from the selection of the lexis and language. It was discovered that Cyprian Ekwensi utilized semantic field, word field, compound words, synonyms, local words from indigenous Nigerian languages: Ibo, Hausa and Yoruba to explore his thematic preoccupations. Also, the researchers discovered the use of figurative language in the forms of metaphor, simile, personification oxymoron and repetition in giving clarity and colour to the novel. Cyprian Ekwensi succeeded in capturing the realities in human experience excellently. It was also discovered that the novel bore hallmarks of social-cultural filterings which is typical in modern African prose.

**Keywords:** construction, language, codes, preoccupation, lexico-semantics, choices

### Introduction

The creativity of language is perceptible in the lexical and semantic choices employed by authors in exploring diverse themes. Writers select a wide range of words and sentences to convey their ideas and thoughts explicitly. Thus, lexico-semantic choices are stylistically constructed to unravel manifold subject matters. These choices are consciously utilized to explore human life experience and realities in the contemporary world. Yeibo and Akerele (2015) <sup>[18]</sup> stress that lexical items help the writer to crystallize his thoughts, express certain emotions and create images which give literature its unique expressive beauty.

Alibi (2008) remarks that lexical choices are required in distinct contexts, subject matters and genres for meaningful expressions and authors capture such imperatives in the choice of words. Also, Radford (1997) asserts that syntax studies the level of language that lies between words and meaning of utterances, that is, sentence structures. Semantics is crucial in the context of grammar because of the interaction between syntactic forms and structural aspects of meaning (Olaniyi, 2015) <sup>[14]</sup>. So in prose texts, authors resort to words and sentences to present salient ideas and realities of life in different contexts found in the society. Writers creatively exploit language to achieve their purposes consciously or unconsciously. Furthermore, most authors mirror the society through other stylistic ideas. The linguistic choice of an author is an index of social, political, economic and cultural projection of the society (Akinola and Olatipe, 2016) <sup>[2]</sup>.

This paper, therefore, examines the lexico-semantic choices employed by Cyprian Ekwensi in the exposition of the novel 'Iska'. The researchers have particularly, explored the meaningful words, phrases, sentences and figurative expressions utilized by the author to discuss his thematic preoccupations. To pursue the study, two research questions are hereby posited. What lexico-semantic features portray the realities of human life experience? What figurative language portrays the realities of human life experience?

### Related Works

Different researchers have studied lexico-semantic studies using various parameters.

Yeibo and Akerele (2015) <sup>[18]</sup> have stressed that the linguistic choices a writer make from the plethora of options at his/her disposal is engendered by subject matter and content as these elements select their own variety of language. Lexis constitutes the bits and pieces of language which are combined meaningfully for linguistic expression and human communication to be realized. (Yebo and Akerele, 2015). The authors have stressed that the value of lexico-semantic patterning serves as a vehicle for the negotiation of various messages and themes embedded in a text. Thus, lexis and meaning play crucial roles in the production of literary text as a form of communication (Yebo and Akerele, 2015) <sup>[18]</sup>.

Through the explication of lexico-semantic parameters in a prose work, Edokpayi (2020) <sup>[8]</sup> stresses that Nigerian writers modify and contextualize the English language in their literary works to adequately articulate the African culture, world views and concepts.

Akinola and Olatipe (2016) <sup>[2]</sup> have examined the use of words in exposing the ills of African society through figures of speech, lexical relations and sense relatives. So, lexical items are employed to develop the central message in a given text and selective meaningful words, phrases and sentences bring out identifiable pattern of meaning relationship as a novel.

Lexical choices in prose works are stylistically made to create a synergy between the language used in the text and the environment in which they are used (Abioye and Ajiboye, 2014) <sup>[1]</sup>. Also lexis, as used by the authors, comprises certain phrases and idiomatic expressions which are larger linguistic stretches than the traditional lexical items in which writers employ to convey their messages.

In the analysis of the syntactical stylistic devices, Saftri and Rosa (2018) <sup>[17]</sup> have remarked that inversion, repetition, parallelism, climax, a syndeton, rhetorical questions are

various syntactic devices employed in texts.

Furthermore, Yebo (2011) <sup>[19]</sup> stresses that for one to fully appreciate the use of words and their meanings, there is need to situate them in the proper socio-linguistic context since a lot of socio-cultural and historical variables come into play in the construction of an African literary text.

The pragmatics of lexis and semantics in African literature shows that African writers appropriate English words and adapt them to their own semantic and expressive intention. (Bamiro, 1996) <sup>[4]</sup>.

Also, in poetic stances, Olaniyi (2015) <sup>[14]</sup> states that poets do not alter the syntax of English but rearrange the clause elements. As long as meaning is derived, the positioning of the subject matter, nominal or object nominal as well as the mental and material processes is irrelevant (Olaniyi, 2015) <sup>[14]</sup>.

### Theoretical Framework

The researchers employed the theory of Content Analysis as an analytical tool for the study. Content analysis is a method of analyzing written, verbal or visual communication (Cole, 1988) <sup>[7]</sup>. It is used in analyzing the meaning or semantic relationship of words and concepts. It also involves the coding and interpretation of texts for the purpose of making valid inferences. Therefore, it is a research method used for the interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005) <sup>[12]</sup>. Content analysis is also a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matters) to the contexts of their use (Krippendorff 2004). Researchers use content analysis to find out the purposes, messages and effects of communication. (Luo, 2019). While utilizing content analysis, researchers point out the presence, meaning and relationship of words, concepts, and subject matter. Researchers can also code the text or written communication and categorise them for further analysis. Content analysis, is therefore, a qualitative data reduction and sense making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core constituencies and meanings (Patton 2002).

### Synopsis of the Novel

Iska is a story about Filia Enu, a charming young Nigerian girl being nurtured academically at St. Monica's Convent. She falls in love with Dan Kyabi who is from the Hausa tribe. Her father, Uzodike Enu rejects their love relationship. Filia defies all odds and marries Dan Kyabi secretly. Her mother recommends Nafotim, a politician from Ogabu to Filia for marriage after her father's death. Due to uncertainties surrounding Filia's life, Dan Kyabi takes her to a fortune teller called Malam. It is forecasted that Filia is a child of the wind: Iska. Her marriage to Dan Kyabi is shortened as a young man kills Dan Kyabi in tribal conflict. Filia moves on with life and resettles in Lagos. She secures different jobs in Lagos as a sales girl and a clerk respectively. Her acquaintance and friendship to Remi leads her to a religious sect. She is introduced to Iska Dabra, the leader of the religious sect at the Turkey beach. She witnesses the duplicitous and false attitudes of the leader and some members of the sect. She eventually becomes a model at Chief Mrs. Jolomi's boutique and gets to meet politicians, journalists, artists, sculptors of the Lagos generation at the party organized by Chief Mrs. Jolomi. She

meets Nafotim again and a journalist named Dapo Ladele. The political, tribal philosophies and discussions at the party cause a quarrel and a fight. Some guests are injured. Dapo Ladele falls in love with Filia and their love relationship blossoms. Unfortunately, the child of the wind, Filia Enu has a short life span. She is kidnapped and mesmerized by ritualists who eventually rejects her. She is found naked by a neighbour who takes her home. At the hospital, a surgery is recommended. After her surgery, her condition deteriorates and Filia: the child of the wind dies.

### Textual Analysis

Ekwensi has employed a lot of lexical items to unravel human experiences and realities of life. The lexical choices are suitable for each subject matter the writer presents.

### Semantic Field/Word Field

Finegan (2004) states that a semantic field is a set of words with identifiable semantic identity. It is a set of words that relate in meaning and are grouped by meaning. Semantic field is also known as word field, lexical field, field of meaning and semantic system (Norguist, 2019). It is discovered that a plethora of semantic field exists in the novel 'Iska'. These semantic fields are categorized according to different subject matters: religion, politics, and tribalism. Therefore, a semantic field describes a set of lexical items grouped by meaning and referred to a specific subject. Some of the semantic fields which are discovered are:

### Words Depicting Religious Affairs

Prayer, baptized, pious embrace, exultant congregation, song, procession, praying ground, solace entrant, cross, worshippers, bishop, drums, singing, dancing, drumming, robe, cape, believe, miracle, chapel, vision, God, peace, disciples, Lord, monks, nuns, flowers, born again, sinners, devotion, faithful, white robes, prayer meeting, messiah, celestial, almighty, ministered, Apostle, praised, spiritual, psalm, devout, light, Jehovah, wooden cross, Halleluyah, repent followers.

Ekwensi's use of some of these lexical sets are geared towards satirical assessment of false religion as captured in the novel. Thus, he criticizes the nefarious activities of some men of God who conduct their religious activities in the beaches. In the novel 'Iska', the author selects apt words to depict obnoxious falsehood as exemplified in the sentences below:

One of them especially carried a white cross behind him wherever he went (131).

The expression 'white cross' is a typical example of false show of religion as portrayed by the author.

She does not sleep. When she leaves here, she goes to the Turkey beach. That her friend Remi is a priestess ... I hear that the priest marries them all. (139)

'Priestess' 'Priest', 'Marries' portray the false and ridiculous roles some members of the congregation play in the Turkey beach. Ekwensi consciously selects these words to show the falsehood in their religion.

Did Remi in fact imply that she must give herself to Piska Dabra to be 'purified'? (141)

You will get your soul charged with the waters of heaven. Only from Piska Dabra can you drink them. (140) Filia thought of what Remi has said. Charged with the waters of heaven only from Piska Dabra can you drink them. (140)

Filia saw Abigel in white robes with a star on her breast and a bridal veil over her face. The angelic one who brought peace on earth (144)

Jehovah has commanded ... I saw it all in vision ... Piska Dabra is destined to bring salvation to the whole world. He is the Messiah. (144).

I flew to heaven and came back always till I knew everywhere in heaven. I saw the road. They planted flowers on the paths and I had wings so that I flew over and saw the world. (144)

It was during my illness that the messiah Piska Dabra began to come to our house. (144) It was due to the magic hands of the Apostle of Christ Piska Dabra.

Then one day I woke up and packed my things and followed Piska Dabra to this beach as I was told in the vision (145).

She did not care about them but danced on like one in a state of drunkenness, like the hemp smoker who feels high, except that her own intoxication was spiritual .... She broke out into a psalm and everyone joined her (145).

Ekwensi satirises the false spiritual events at the beach. He also portrays the gullibility of the believers who have been brain-washed to believe that Piska Dabra is the Messiah. The lexical choices and expressions such as 'purified', 'waters of heaven', 'white robe' 'bridal veil', 'angelic' 'vision', 'salvation'. 'messiah', 'Apostle' of Christ' are selected by Ekwensi to portray the stupidity of the congregation and the falsehood perpetuated at Turkey beach as religion.

The extremity and gullibility of the believers are also unraveled through the following words 'destined, salvation, messiah in this expression.

Piska Dabra is destined to bring salvation to the whole world. He is the Messiah. (144)

The duplicitous nature of the false prophet Piska Dabra is also shown by Ekwensi through the use of the words 'Halleluyah' vision, 'sniffs' 'sobs', 'moans', 'groans'. This is buttressed in these sentences:

Sniffsobs, moans and groans Piska Dabra lay on the floor unconscious. It happened before, explained a disciple. He must have seen vision. He will soon return.

... Halleluyah ... Halleluyah ... He will soon wake up. Halleluyah ... He has seen a vision. He will relate his experience when he wakes up.

An awful silence among his followers: In the silence, they heard the words gurgled out ... Doom ... awaits you until you repent.

Furthermore the words 'vision' returning 'disciple' show the naivety of the so called followers of Piska Dabra.

### Words Depicting Politics

House of Representatives, Greater Nigerian Party (GNP), councillor, Party flag, member, stalwart, progressive, politicians, diplomacy, bodyguard, things, 'MP', constituencies, freedom, natural pride, party headquarters, political raid, reformer, parliament, club, chief whip, Reformed People's Party, minority party, leading party, political stability, government house, political correspondent.

Ekwensi mirrors the unhealthy rivalry, chaos and violence in politics through the words employed in the novel.

You call yourself a politician sir, but I am afraid if your brand of politics were the only brand we would have all slaughtered ourselves three thousand years ago. (171).

The words 'politician, brand of politics and slaughtered'

portray the violent politics being exposed by Ekwensi. Also the author reveals the ironic twist in the lives of some politicians.

It is you who employed a bodyguard.

It is you who appeal to the police for protection! How can you reconcile the two? You raid an opponent's house. And then you ask for police protection.

Thus, the words 'appeal', 'protection', police, 'protection', 'raid', 'opponents' show the ironic twist in the lives of politicians.

Extreme cases of incessant quarrel, selfishness and enmity are shown in the text through the following words: 'vendetta', 'tears', 'great', 'selfishness', trouble, thugs.

...almost in tears ... Oh, a vendetta. A political raid. You can keep your greed and selfishness and all the nonsense to your party headquarters and your constituencies. (173) it's the politicians who bring all the trouble. (173).

Furthermore, Ekwensi examines the danger in violence and thuggery and uses suitable diction to demonstrate these. The lexical items presented in the statement below clearly shows this.

He leaned forward and parted his hair. See that scar? Thugs did it with a broken bottle. Three months in hospital. (171)

These lexical items are 'thugs', 'scar', 'broken bottle' and 'hospital'.

In Iska, Ekwensi unravels the crisis and disunity readily found in politics to expose the realities in life as exemplified in the following lines:

We have this crisis in the party and I am splitting away with Yusuf Alabi and Musa to form R.P.R. ... Rejected People's Party, oh! No. Reformed People's Party. (172)

In the extract above, the words 'crisis', 'splitting', 'rejected' clearly show extreme cases of catastrophe and mutiny prevalent in Nigerian politics as revealed by the author.

Also, cases of hatred and terrorism in politics equally pervade the novel. Ekwensi makes use of the following words to achieve this: 'horror', 'hate', 'goal', 'excrement'. This is exemplified in the following lines.

The boy's eyes shone with horror. Why do you young men go about spreading hate, allowing politicians, to use you? They are in their mansions. You are here in gaol. They are with their wives and children, you are sleeping in your own excrement. (74)

The novel also illustrates how Ekwensi's words are appropriate in exploring political events and scurrying for favour with such lexical items as 'speeches', presentation', 'organizing', mobilizing, 'leader', party 'support'. These words are shown in the following lines:

Though a new member of the House of Representatives, he was well known in Ogbu because of his support for the Greater Nigerian Party usually called the GNP. Whenever the leader of the party was coming to Ogbu, Nafotim would go from house to house organizing and mobilizing.

In the evening, there would be speeches and presentations (64).

Apparently, these words capture the expression of political rally which takes place in politics.

Furthermore, politics is seen as a major cause of tribalism. Ekwensi shows this perceptibly in the metaphoric expression used in these lines.

Normally, the Ibo man worked like a steam engine, multiplied like the guinea-pig and effervesced with honesty. The Hausa man was tolerant, philosophically accommodating, believing that whatever would be would

be. Both had lived peacefully together for a hundred years. Then came politics – the Vultures foot that spoils the stew. (14)

### Words Depicting Tribalism

*Northernisation, tribalism, Yorubas for Yorubas, Ibos for Ibos, Hausas for Hausas, separatism, protection, tribal hatred, hate, gulf.*

Ekwensi unravelled the vices seen in tribalism in the text as exemplified in the following lines:

She was Ibo, he was Hausa. Between Ibo and Hausa....the gulf was wide. (14)

You preach tribalism: Yorubas for Yorubas, Ibos for Ibos, Hausas for Hausas etc. ... All your children are being brought up in Yoruba homes. Is that how you practice your separatism. (171)

Are there no more Northern women left? (30)

'Can he not see that the Southerners hate us?' (31)

The words and expression 'tribalism, 'separatism' Yoruba for Yoruba all portray the tribalism which is practiced and perpetuated by politicians in the society.

Extreme cases of tribalism and tribal violence are prevalent in the novel and Ekwensi uses apt words to assess the situation in Nigerian society as depicted in the text and expressions. These words and expressions are 'fight' 'mistake, 'wrong', 'insult', 'tribe', 'fanatics', 'wars' 'riot', 'lootings', 'killings', 'rappings', 'suffer', 'mob', 'fight', 'bones', 'broken', 'cutlasses', 'war-cries', 'mangled', 'trampled' hate' as seen in the lines below:

It was after the riot that your father decided he will return home with his head still on his shoulders.. (22)

Filia listened while her mother told stories of lootings, and killings and rappings... (22)

....and suddenly I heard something like war-cries. (23)

'They began to fight. People gathered. That's all, it had started. Of the people who gathered, some were Ibos, some were Hausa. One mistake they all made. Not one of them tried to find out what was wrong. The Ibos came. They saw the Hausa man fighting with the Ibo man. They joined the Ibos. The Hausas came they saw the Ibos fighting their man. They joined their own man. Just like sport. Just like children. But this was serious. Bones were being broken. The spectators themselves began to insult not just themselves but their tribes. (23).

The fight had begun. From that she ditspread throughout the market, throughout the whole town and into the suburbs. Ibo's versus Hausas. Hausas versus Ibo's. (23)

Tell me what any Hausa man has done to me that I should fight him because two fanatics began a fight in the market. Anyway that is how wars begin.

'Do you know that overnight all the cutlasses in all the stores were cleared?' (23)

It was two days later that they brought back his body, mangled and trampled. (24)

You have lived in hate. You are trained to hate the innocent. (75)

Therefore, words in a semantic field share common semantic property and the fields are defined by subject matter (Briton, 2000). Semantic or word field gives meaning to the text and advances the subject matter in the exposition of human life experiences.

### Compound Words

The novel also reveals a lot of compound words that

captured salient ideas and events portrayed in the text.

These compound words include

Light-skin, high-heel, fancy-store - (11)

Head- dresses (12)

Guinea-pig (14)

Big- breasted (16)

Produce- buying (18)

Thick-headed (20)

Gall – bladder - (72)

Bleary – eyed - (56)

Small – scale - (56)

Half – brother - (57)

Open – mouthed – (62)

Fat – salaried – (73)

Non- alightment – (206)

Quick – laughing – (57)

Self – conscious – (16)

Mid – morning – (22)

Brother – in-law – (87)

Grab-instinct - (112)

Stem – faced (132)

Half-drunk (32)

Fortune- teller (34)

Bright – drunk (76)

Daughter – in-law (33)

Smooth-surfaced (34)

Roof-tops (35)

Fashion- conscious (52)

Bleary- eyed (56)

Soul-stirring (59)

Open-mouthed (62)

Match-making. (138)

Bald-headed (145)

Chair-back, fair- skinned (148)

The compound words, in the forms of grey – eyed', 'small – sale', 'open- mouthed', ' quick- laughing', 'fat –salaried', ' half –drunk', 'stem-faced, 'self- conscious', 'bright- skin', 'grab-instinct', bald-headed, etc are used as descriptive adjectives in the text to clearly describe and evaluate thematic expressions. 'Brother-in-law', 'swan-song, 'night-gown', daughter-inlaw, non-alightment, 'in-laws', etc are all nouns. Apparently these nouns are employed by Ekwensi to explore human realities of life.

### Synonyms

The use of synonyms is also shown vividly in the novel. Thus, Ekwensi resorts to synonyms to give the ideas a clear variety. Some of the synonyms found in the text are

Tribalism: Separatism

Vendetta: Battle/dispute

Commotion: Trouble

Thick: Headed: stubborn

Dark: Night

Unarmed: Unprotected

Secret- Confidential

### Local Words

Ekwensi also employs a lot of local words in various indigenous Nigeria languages; Ibo, Hausa, and Yoruba to buttress facts that have no English equivalents. Some of these words include; *burukutu, gowgie, sollo, gaskiya, mallan, ramadan, hankuri, sallah, alhaji, purdah, Iska* for the Hausa language, *Ogbanje* for the Ibolanguage, *Abiku* for

the Yorubalanguage, *odinani, akwette, mmo, ogbo, nchi, akonu, ogene, obi, lalle, tau, shekere, ayo, ewedu, okro, amala, jaguda, saka-jojo, kabu kabu*. Hence These are examples of socio cultural filterings found in the novel.

### Imagery/Figurative Language

Another style employed by Ekwensi to buttress his facts is the use of images. Thus, there is a preponderance of images in the text to give the themes a pictorial effect.

These images include:

|                                              |       |       |
|----------------------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Scraggy trees, thatch huts and mud buildings | -     | (11)  |
| Decorated walls, magnificent hotel           | -     | (11)  |
| Fishing festival                             | -     | (14)  |
| Threshold                                    | -     | (16)  |
| Mud walls                                    | -     | (17)  |
| Haze of harmattan                            | -     | (18)  |
| Half- drunk man                              | -     | (32)  |
| Mat on the floor                             | -     | (34)  |
| Tattered pages.                              | -     | (34)  |
| The blood had begun to soak the bedsheet     | -     | (35)  |
| Cocunt palms                                 | -     | (131) |
| White cross                                  | -     | (131) |
| Pale lips                                    | (35)  |       |
| Eroding hillsides of Milikan Hill            | (125) |       |

The palace of the Emir, a sollo building with an arched entrance, was hung with ribbons and flogs in front of this, the seats had been displayed and the spectators formed a panoramic stretch in sharp colours – rainbow umbrellas held high over yellow red waistlands and brass buckles.

It was late evening, when the boles of the trees became tinted with splashes of yellow and a dampness softens the dead leaves and twigs under the feet. (57)

Ekwensi uses a lot of words to create images in the mind of the reader. Thus. These images make thematic explanation vivid, convincing and compelling.

### Metaphor

In the novel, Ekwensi uses metaphorical expressions to explore his themes and capture salient ideas in human life experience. These metaphors equate dissimilar ideas.

Bearer of bad news! (12)

You and Jewel are my pride (21)

Then came politics- the vulture's foot that spoils the stew (14)

Her heart was a flutter (17)

She sat on the buttress of large forest tree and thought of herself; a child of the wind (57)

It is the man in the street who suffers for the poisoned seed you sow (17)

Dan's eyes were pure fire (31)

All I see is ISKA. Wind. (35)

The platform became a chorus of weaving hands and tearful faces. (45)

Ogabu was green, another world, so very different from Kaduna. (49)

This was what they called Lagos: a circus, a cinema show put on by some ambitious ass... A home of bastards...and phony characters... (125)

In the metaphor: 'Then came politics – the vulture's foot that spoils the stew', Ekwensi compares politics to a vulture's foot to portray the evil in politics. Also, the selection of metaphoric expressions are affected by cultural settings and opinion. Thus, Carton (1987) states that cultural

attitudes to particular areas of human activity can often be seen in the choice of metaphor.

### Simile

Ekwensi also captures salient ideas in the novel through the use of simile. The simile reflects the theme of tribalism, uncertainty and exposes the weird nature of human life. Whenever she came here it was like Baghdad or Arabian Nights (13)

But like the heroine in the folk-tale, she chose not to heed her father... (15)

Is that why he should start chasing Dan away like a dog? (22)

Not yet. All I see is Iska. Wind. It comes; it goes like magic .... (33)

She was like aspectre radiant, unattainable (121)

'There is something in your life which moves - like wind... Shifts, like sand. (34)

It comes, it goes, like magic...' (35)

Marry and have children like sister Jewel so that I may come and stay with my grandchildren. (137)

Stripped of her wig and make-up, she was as pale as a fading moon... (114)

He was like a hungry man who is offered the choicest dish and suddenly his appetite vanishes. (124)

This was a place as artificial as plastic dishes, as treacherous as the eroding hillsides of Milikan Hill. (125)

### Euphemism

To convey sensitive and unethical issues in a mild way, in the novel, Ekwensi uses euphemism. This can be seen in the statement below

Secretly, she hoped no other man would take away her innocence (16)

The word 'innocence' is used in place of 'virginity'

If you are sure you do not just want to bed this girl and finish with her, prove it! (20)

The word 'bed' is used in place of 'have sex with'.

'Anyway, I have not done anything with Dan. How can I be pregnant?' (22)

The word 'anything' is also used in place of 'sex'.

The lorry took her direct to Uzodike Enu's house 'where something happened'. (51)

'Where something happened' is a subtle way of saying somebody Died.

'Don't worry about her. She is an easy- life gal. She will from that party go anywhere'. (101)

'Easy-life' here means wayward.

It's all over town that you are not a man. (124)

'Not a man' here means impotent

### Personification

Ekwensi employs the use of personification in the novel to portray his ideas.

Jos lay in a haze of harmattan (18)

Two years ago, this street has been barren (11)

Drawing all eyes to herself by the fluid language of her movement - (11)

It was a thin and sickly smile (28)

Her heart went out to him for his genuine concern (15)

Everyday when you come into town my eyes are hungry to see you and only you. (16)

...the tattered pages of the holy Koran peeped out beneath the leather binding. (34)

She leaned forward until the train belched its way up a steep incline and the railway signal box hid the two from sight. (45)

The train chugged and puffed, winding into the belly of the hill like some enormous mountain snake with its tail caressing its head. (49)

When she looked out of the window and saw the tombs, stony and silent... (49)

The wedding of ancient and modern gave the city a specially appealing look. (71)

The sun was climbing rapidly in the sky and warming up the city. (72)...and they found themselves outside the frowning white walls of the prison.. (75)

The house slept. (90)

It was past sleepy time but Lagos never really slept. (137)

The wind was high and the dredging machines droned and yawned and swung their gargantuan teeth against the paling sky. (147)

The silence told her someone was near. It was a listening kind of silence, a silence full of watching eyes. (148)

Filia sat up in bed reading a romantic story until sleep claimed her. (180)

### Repetition

Ekwensi captures a lot of ideas which need emphasis through the use of repetition. This is clearly shown in these lines:

It is you who employ a body guard

It is you who appeal to the police for protection (171)

It is the politicians who bring all the trouble.

It was also the politicians who brought national pride and freedom (173)

### Oxymoron

In order to express absurdities in human life experience, Ekwensi resorts to the use of oxymoron as clearly depicted in these lines.

Soon after her parents returned to the East, they wrote to her to come home to Ogabu and get married; that her education was enough and that her place was in the home. But like the heroine in the folk-tale, she chose not to heed to her father and mother but to listen instead to the beautiful stranger with the deceitful tongue (15)... I have warned you against smooth-tongued deceivers. (20-21)

Filia was pleasantly tired. (61)

But what about the black figures I saw on the beach before Piska Dabra came? One was carrying flowers. Black flowers, you hear? Flowers of death (136).

Beside them was the glorious destroyer Rayimi. (187)

In the novel, Ekwensi employs figurative language to present his ideas lucidly to evoke comparisons and to make his ideas colourful.

### Conclusion

Authors of prose texts employ colourful and apt words to convey salient ideas on human life experience. The choice of the words employed in the text 'Iska' reflects different areas of human life experiences. Ekwensi employed lexical sets, semantic field, synonyms, compound words, images and figurative language in the exposition of the subject matter in 'Iska'. Thus, he deploys lexico-semantic features as a creative device in the novel 'Iska'. The use of these devices is borne out of Cyprian Ekwensi's need to construct the realities of human life. The construction of a literary text

is a conscious or deliberate process in the sense that any meaningful linguistic construct is a product of deliberate patterning of lexical choices within specific contextual frameworks (Yebo & Akerele, 2015) <sup>[18]</sup>. Therefore, in the construction of thematic ideas, authors select different lexical features meaningfully.

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