



A Stylistic Analysis of the Sense of Negritude in VÉRONIQUE TADJO'S *As the Crow Flies* at the Lexico-semantic Level

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Abstract— This paper aims at examining the sense of negritude in Tadjó's *As the crow flies* using the Lexico-Semantic Theory of stylistic analysis. Analysis of the data revealed three main findings. First, the narrator's nostalgic feelings demonstrated an interpersonal relationship with her country of origin. Second, the narrator's continuous description of the exile depicts the ordeal of the earliest Negros under the French colony. Finally, the search for self-identity and/or rediscovery epitomizes the resolve of the African to attain freedom and liberty from French imperialism. Data collected for this study was derived from the text. The Qualitative Content Analysis approach to data analysis was adopted since the lexical items in the text are the main focus. The study has implications for further research.

Index Terms— foreground, lexico-semantics, negritude, stylistics, stone city, *As the Crow flies*, Veronique Tadjó

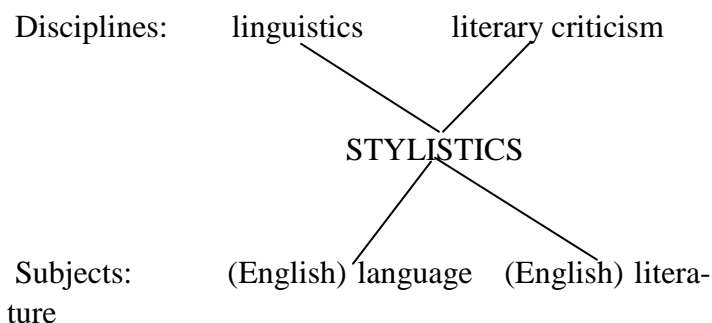
1 INTRODUCTION

THE implied sense of negritude in Véronique Tadjó's stylistic literary oeuvre, *As the Crow flies*, provides a fertile ground for interrogation and a critical discourse engagement in the literary space. Though implicit, the exposition of the subject in the text underscores this critical discourse and therefore the underpinning factor for this study. The resolve of the writer to abstract the explicit expression of the constitutive elements of negritude such as exile, nostalgia, self-rediscovery and the love for one's country function to explain the compelling force exerted on the African(s) in Diaspora to see the "stone city" – the destination of the narrator – as heaven and the place of hope and redemption.

Descriptively, one could posit that the scope of the concept is non-notional and therefore does not merit this adventure of postulation. However, its interpretative purview gives a notional urgency to engage a discourse of it. *As the Crow flies*, translated in (2001), can be viewed as a metaphor of conscious interconnectedness between the narrator and her origin (Africa). It espouses an illicit love affair which turned sour between the narrator and her root. Using the Lexico-Semantic theory of stylistic analysis, we examine the negritude elements which constitute her oeuvre.

Justifiably, the meaning of stylistics has attracted va-

ried scholarly interpretations since its inception. Like most scholars, Widdowson (1975) views stylistics as a discipline which involves both literary criticism and linguistics, as its morphological making suggests: the "style" component relating it to the former and the "istics" component to the latter. He explains that stylistics is a means of relating disciplines and subjects, as shown in the following diagram:



Stylistics could therefore be said to be an area of mediation between two disciplines which include: language and literature. Fakuade (1998) reinforces this view by saying that, stylistics is the confluence between the literary and linguistic rivers. As a discipline, one could say that, stylistics is equal to linguistics. This means that stylistics has the same divisions as linguistics which constitute phonological, lexical and syntactic levels in the study of style (Turner, 1971:30;

Halliday, 1971; Babajide, 2000).

That notwithstanding, stylistics may simply be said to be the study of style. What then is style? According to Lucas (1955) style is “the effective use of language, especially in prose, whether to make statements or to rouse emotions. It involves first of all the power to put fact with clarity and brevity” (9).

Leech reinforces Lucas’ ideation of style by quoting Aristotle who posited that “the most effective means of achieving both clarity and diction and a certain dignity is the use of altered form of words” (Leech, 1969:14). Therefore, Style could be used to mean the description and analysis of the variability forms of linguistic items in actual language use, so to speak.

Exploring the sense of negritude using the lexico-semantic level of text analysis, there exists a vibrant literature on the scope and concept of Lexico-semantics (Lyons 1981:140; Leech, 1981:20; Lyons, 1995; Baldwin, 2003), however, we have not specifically found work done on the sense of negritude in Tadjó’s *As the crow flies* although there are a few works on the text such as *Surrealism, Subversion, and Storytelling in As the crow flies* (Teiko, N.O. 2016, p.139-162) from the viewpoint of postmodernist theories, focusing on partly surrealistic and partly traditional approaches in blending several artistic modes, such as poetry, narration, drama, myth-making, and imagistic symbols and the *Cutting a long story short: A semiotic and postmodernist reading of Véronique Tadjó’s As the crow flies* (Adjei, 2013, p. 99-114) who established the claim that Tadjó writes in her own subversive way “to literally turn the art and craft of storytelling on its head” (113).

The present paper is a Lexico-Semantic analysis of the sense of negritude in Véronique Tadjó’s *As the crow flies*. Following this, we outline the focus of the study by highlighting the aim as well as the research questions. It is followed by the theoretical perspective as well as the conceptual framework which underpins it. We then follow this with the methodology, analysis and interpretation. The conclusion is a summary and implications of the findings of the study.

2 Procedure for the Research

2.1 Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the sense of negritude in Véronique Tadjó’s *As the crow flies* using the lexico-semantic level of stylistic analysis to show how issues of nostalgia, self-rediscovery and love for one’s country as manifested in the character traits of the narrator are depicted in the text. The following questions address this concern:

1. What are some of the issues of negritude in the text?
2. In what ways are these issues manifested and represented by the narrator?
3. What is the relationship between the narrator and the country of origin?

2.2 Theoretical Perspective

We carry out the analysis of the sense of Negritude in *As the Crow flies* using the Lexico-Semantic level of analysis drawing on Lyons’ (1981) notion of lexico-semantics. To progress, we will segment the interpretive meanings assigned to the concepts of Lexis (the lexico) and Semantics. Broadly speaking, the Lexico-Semantic level of analysis, according to Lyons, deals with the representation of the semantics of lexical items. Lyons claims that “the meaning of a sentence depends upon the meaning of its constituent lexemes [...]; and the meaning of some, if not all, lexemes depend upon the meaning of the sentences in which they occur” (140).

Technically, the Lexico-Semantic level is the study of the meaning of words either denotatively or connotatively (see Leech, 1981:20; Lyons, 1995; Baldwin, 2003). Linguistically, the explicit meaning of a signifier such as a word, phrase or symbol is its denotative meaning. Simply put, the literal meaning a word or phrase denotes is the denotative aspect. On the other hand, when the meaning of a word or phrase is suggested or implied as opposed to the literal meaning, then we are engaged in a connotative meaning. From the foregoing therefore, one could infer that when a stylistic analyst looks at the author’s deployment of words and their meanings in a text, they engage in either the denotative aspect or the connotative aspect or both.

In linguistics, the set of all words and phrases in a language; including, any unified subset of words from a particular language is lexis. It is expedient in this study to explore certain set of words or phrases to examine the constitutive sense the writer seeks to communicate across. According to Milmkiaer (2002) the

study of lexis is “the study of the vocabulary of a language in all its aspects” (339). Many linguists have started to develop interest in lexical studies in English, perhaps as a result of the realization that “there is a need for a separate level of linguistic analysis ... to cater for certain linguistic patterns and regularities which the grammatical level... alone cannot take care for” (Ajulo 1994: 5).

The other aspect of the concept under study is semantics. Semantics is the study of the linguistic meaning of morphemes, words, phrases and sentences. Sub-fields of semantics are lexical semantics and structural semantics. Lexical semantics is concerned with the meaning of words and the meaning of syntactic units larger than the word. Roman Jakobson is quoted by Fromkin et al (2003) as saying: “that language without meaning is meaningless”. Semantics is the philosophical and scientific study of meaning. It can also be said to be a branch of linguistics which is pre-occupied with the study of meaning. The term is one of a group of English words formed from the various derivatives of the Greek verb “semano” (“to mean” or “to signify”). In its own case, lexis describes the entire storage of words and expressions in a language. The term ‘lexicon’ is derived from the root word ‘lexis’, and it refers to the list of the possible words in a language.

Fromkin et al (2003) asserted that one of the important ways of representing semantic properties is by use of semantic features. These are formal and notational devices that indicate the presence or absence of semantic properties by pluses (+) and minuses (-). Pioneered by Katz and Fodor (1963), lexical semantics believes that words are decomposable into primitive meanings which can be represented by markers such as plus (+) and minus (-) matrices. For instance, ‘spinster’ may have the following componential features: +HUMAN, +FEMALE, + MATURITY, +SINGLE (- married). Thus, words can be broken down into their distinctive semantic features in order to describe what they mean. In our analysis, these semantic features would be applied to show how Tadjó’s text manifests these linguistic properties.

Accordingly, lexis exists in close relation with semantics. Lyons (1977) and Leech (1981) view basic or primitive semantic relations as synonymy, antonymy and hyponymy. Synonym refers to similarity of mean-

ings. This is the relationship between “go” and “proceed.” Antonymy suggests oppositeness. It also denotes converseness for the reversible relationships between “husband” and “wife”, “male” and “female.” This is what Leech (1981: 102) calls relative opposition. Hyponymy is the relation of inclusion. For instance, the word “flower” will have the following co-hyponyms: rose, hibiscus, pride of Barbados. Similarly, the word “vehicle” has the following relations: van, bus, car, lorry and its co-hyponyms.

2.3 The Concept of Negritude

The term “negritude” evolved from the French word *nègre*, a derogatory term for “Black man” in original usage in the mid-1930s. The term was used generally to describe the black world in opposition to the West. Great French scholars like Césaire Aimé, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Léon Damas were the major proponents of negritude to signify a new cultural and literary movement among Francophone African and Caribbean Intellectual Diasporas living in Paris (Micklin, 2008).

To Senghor and Césaire, the issues of redefining the black identity, racism, alienation, exile and the importance of cultural heritage were significant elements for the emergence of Negritude. These were subject matters that characterized their earlier poetic works which served as the manifestoes of Negritude (Senghor, 1964; Césaire, 2001).

Césaire (2001) in his poem, *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*, used the term Negritude to mean the “homecoming” of the blacks to their native land, Africa. To Césaire, negritude is a campaign or a manifesto so to speak, for the black race to trace back their root. He further expressed his thoughts on the need for the black man to identify with his African culture in the midst of a colonial setting.

Micklin (2008) posits that negritude was a political movement which responded to the alienated position of blacks in history. In an article, the *Blackpast*, a study on the “Negritude Movement”, Micklin claims that, from the standpoint of politics, Negritude was an important aspect to the rejection of colonialism. This suggests that the Negritude movement was a campaign to shore up the voice of colonialism rejection.

However, the movement received criticism from fellow black scholars. Sembene was a compatriot and archenemy of Senghor, both politically and culturally: he was a virulent opponent of Negritude, which he viewed as an obfuscating, essentialist discourse that had no answers for a contemporary Africa emerging from the trauma of colonial rule. In his scathing film *Xala* (1974), Sembene denounced what he saw as the hypocrisy of Senghor's "African socialism", while his novel, *Le Dernier de l'empire* (*The Last of the Empire*) (1981) included vitriolic caricatures of both Senghor and Negritude (cited by Murphy, 2000).

Another literary critic like Soyinka, criticized the ideologies of the Negritude Movement. He believed that the movement is still in tune with colonial ideology. He claims that if the blacks deliberately and continually speak about and pride themselves in their colour, it would place the black people on the defensive side. His saying on this is a French rendition which translates "A tiger doesn't proclaim its tigerness; it jumps on its prey" (Soyinka, 2010).

3. Methodology

Data collected for this study were derived from the text, library search, and journals. The Qualitative Content Analysis approach to data analysis will be opted since the lexical items in the text are the main focus.

As a research method, it represents a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Schreier, 2012).

Using this approach enables the researchers to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within the text. The researchers quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of such words and concepts, then make inferences about the messages within the text.

4. Analysis and interpretation

As cited in the work of Teiko (2016), Véronique Tadjo's novel *As the crow flies* (2001) is an enigmatic novel that innovates and radicalizes the art of storytelling. The novelist sets out to tell a tale in a non-linear progression primarily because she believes, "human

lives mingle, people tame one another and part" (Tadjo, Prologue). The novel is an exploration of a complexity of issues ranging from love for country(nostalgia) and self, rediscovery, and to issues of negritude. It starts however, with an illicit love affair which turns sour as the story unfolds and ends with an indelible rediscovered love lodged in the heart of the narrator. We will carry out our analysis on the bases of those issues aforementioned.

To start with, negritude and its constituent variables are putatively expressed in implicit but composite terms in Tadjo's text. Partly a portrayal of the exodus of the African intellectuals and partly a campaign towards self-regeneration, reconstitution and a return to Africa. Africa is obviously different from the "stone city", the destination of the industrious African on exile. We see a repetitive lexical phrase, "I am leaving" suggesting a reinforced force of extinction and/or separation where the narrator is disbarred from keeping touch with her land, which she never knows when she "...will ever return". We argue that the narrator's tone in expressing the state of the exile is constitutive of a divorce between the African and her origin. This is revealed in the following expressions:

You fly to another place. Home, to a big city of stone. You leave as one does. One always leaves. But you do not know if you will ever return. I am leaving, I am leaving, will I ever return? I am leaving you today. Yesterday, I had left you (chp27, p.41)

You + *fly*
leave. The verbs in the bracket are paradigmatically related because they are syntactically related to the pronoun (You). They form a synonymous relation since they share the semantic feature +

exile
going away to foreground the sense of negritude.

The exile from Africa to the Diaspora is further re-

vealed in: I am + *leaving*
leaving
leaving. These verb phrases form a

paradigm of semantic congruence to lay emphasis on the exile which further foreground the rhetoric posed by the narrator as to whether she will ever return or

not. This also reveals the sense of negritude. In furtherance, the following expressions, by the narrator explain the sense of exile. She says, “He **left** his vast country in Africa. Now he **lives** in the **big city of stone**. And it is better for him, this **exile**. An **exile** where the inhabitants have respect for a **white stick**, where the state ensures his wellbeing and where facilities enable him to read and write” (chp88, p.102). It is obvious from the extract that her blind but courageous friend by dint of his visual impairment, sought refuge in the city of stone (Diaspora) where he could access education and even be respected. This was the case in colonial Africa where most of the Africans had to exit the shores of Africa for Paris to access education. Hence, the sense of negritude.

Additionally, Nostalgia is another palpably preconceived event which occurs to normalize the anxiety of the disillusioned African in the city of stone. From the text, it is obvious that the narrator is homesick and is keen or desirous of returning home. When this occurs, it gives the reader a petulant impression of discontent and frustration with life in the Diaspora. In the following lines, expressions of nostalgia function to foreground the sense of negritude in the text. For instance, in the illustration below, the following lexical items reflect this sense.

<u>Sense/theme</u>	<u>Lexical items</u>
Nostalgia	+ I think of my country... (chp54, p.72) + I dream of my country... (chp55, p.72) + At night, it lies next to me, making love with me (chp55, p.72) + I think of Adjame... Yopougon (chp56, p.73) + I think of the three-lane motorway (chp56, p.73)

The above lexical items are paradigmatically related by virtue of the fact that they are related to the noun (country). They form a synonymous relation because they share the semantic feature + [nostalgia] to foreground the sense of negritude. The narrator further reveals how she is so obsessed with reminisces of her country which flood her mind even in her dreams. She is anxious to get back to Africa, see Africa again or hear about Africa. This anxiety is further demonstrated through the saying that “she sees herself in that large conference room, listening to writers from Africa”

(chp54, p.72). She is highly homesick about Africa to the extent that even at night Africa “makes love” with her. Similarly, the narrator’s nostalgia is further demonstrated through her anxious check to see if there is a mail for her from her country, Africa. She says: “I check to see if there is any mail for me. Stamps from my country. I pick up the newspaper. Here, there is a great of talk about South Africa” (chp87, p.100). These obsession and anxiety reveal that she is homesick. This is akin to what the earlier founders of negritude experienced in Paris, hence, the sense of negritude (Césaire, 2001).

In furtherance, Self- reflection in Tadjó’s text, though implied, expresses a sense of introspection, a regenerated memory and a radical normalization of consciousness. The urgency with which the narrator reveals these reflections foregrounds the ideas of negritude. For instance, the narrator intimates that:

But sometimes I say to myself, ‘There, Africans are fighting, dying and I am doing nothing, My life is sheltered in the heart of this city of stone. I just don’t know, I just don’t know’ (chp87, p.101).

The narrator engaging in self-talk in the city of stone (the Diaspora) and signing off with the expression of dilemma (I just don’t know) are suggestive of deeper self-reflection of her need to be “home” in Africa, which however is involved in fighting. This self-reflection is further demonstrated in the following: “Increasingly, I **feel myself slipping**. There are days when I **can hear myself speak or breathe**. Your letters are on my bedside table and I am no longer happy. You are **far away**. The sheets of paper tell me so” (chp37, p.55). It is obvious that the narrator is distant from Africa and can no longer hide the feelings for the return but is “far away”. These senses of self-reflection characterized the negritude movement hence, foreground the idea of negritude in the text.

Again, the following sentences reflect the sense of liberation in the text:

“We spoke of conquest. We spoke of destruction. We spoke of boredom. And he told me how he was finding life painful, of his interminable languor, and of his feeling of insatiation.”

ble emptiness" (chp78, p.92).

The narrator speaks of the fight for freedom which came at a costly value (the insatiable emptiness, the boredom, the painful life etc.). These also characterized the negritude movement in their quest for liberation of the African continent.

We spoke of + $\begin{bmatrix} \text{conquest} \\ \text{destruction} \\ \text{boredom} \end{bmatrix}$. "boredom" violates the

selection restriction rule but has been contextually conditioned by neutralization of the semantic oppositions [conquest and destruction] to share the semantic feature + [liberation] which foreground the sense of negritude.

Furthermore, the narrator reveals the sense of warning or caution to renegades who have turned blind and deaf to the need to reunite with Africa, their root. She says:

Must you be blind, to not see?
Deaf, to not hear?
Mute, to not scream? (chp60, p.75)

Must you be + $\begin{bmatrix} \text{blind} \\ \text{deaf} \\ \text{mute} \end{bmatrix}$ to not + $\begin{bmatrix} \text{see} \\ \text{hear} \\ \text{scream} \end{bmatrix}$

The phrasal verbs in the brackets are paradigmatically related because they are in syntactic relation to the pronoun (you). They have been contextually conditioned to share the semantic feature + [caution to renegades] who have turned deaf, blind and mute to hear or see the need to reunite with Africa. Therefore, these foreground the sense of negritude.

Also, the narrator speaks of search for self-identity or rediscovery or country, Africa in the following:

With you I have rediscovered simple words, rediscovered the joy of evenings spent chatting, nights spent holding hands, hoping for a city that will not leave behind a bitter taste of defeat in the mornings. Maybe together, we will make it. Please, do not reproach me for

unleashing a storm upon this sleepy city, for mislaying dreams made of rare pearls and fetish gold (chp91, p.104)

I have ± $\begin{bmatrix} \text{rediscovered} \\ \text{rediscovered} \end{bmatrix}$ + $\begin{bmatrix} \text{simple words} \\ \text{joy} \\ \text{hope} \end{bmatrix}$ for a city

(the new Africa). The verbs in the bracket are semantically congruent by virtue of the fact that they are a paradigmatic relation, pre-modifying the adjectives (joy, hope) to foreground the rediscovery of the new city- Africa. The narrator in fact, relates the extreme joy of the rediscovery and pleads for no offence when unleashing a storm upon this "sleepy city", the Diaspora.

The search for identity is further demonstrated in the following statements:

I searched for such a long time. At the beginning, an image, an ebony-warrior coming from Azania. Then it was like a three-way mirror reflecting my past, present and future. I searched for you everywhere: in my books, at the cinema, within my weaknesses, under the fine folds of my smile (chp 24, p.39-40)

I + $\begin{bmatrix} \text{searched} \\ \text{searched} \end{bmatrix}$ for $\begin{bmatrix} \text{such a long time} \\ \text{you everywhere} \end{bmatrix}$. The

verbs (searched) are a synonymous semantic relation which are paradigmatically related to the pronoun (I) to foreground the narrator's long search for self-identity or the rediscovery of country. The image of a warrior is the focus of the search at the beginning, then it graduates to the discovery of a three-way mirror which reflects the past, present and the future experiences of the narrator. The narrator further relates the initial loneliness felt while the search was going on. Finally, there is a surprised discovery of self or country to the amazement of the narrator. This sort of self-search also characterized the negritude movement as noted by Césaire (2001), hence, the portrait of the sense of negritude.

Last but not least, in the text, negritude is revealed in

the following expressions:

SENSE	LEXICAL ITEM
Connection with Africa	<p>+ Pour libation, summon the gods, utter sacred words, assemble diviners and sorcerers, recapture the present, make peace, return to the earth, the spell... (chp17, p.32-33)</p> <p>+ I think of Abidjan's gangsters, Bouake's thieves, I say, Just open your eyes! Open your eyes, Look at the sky... (chp57, p.73)</p> <p>+ I say to myself, there, Africans are fighting, dying and I am doing nothing... (chp87, p.101)</p>
Love for rebuilding a new Africa.	+ We must stamp out bad habits, uproot false theories, face ourselves squarely... (chp56, p.73)

The above lexical items depict the sense of connection between the narrator and her origin, Africa. The narrator loves to be part of the dawn of a new Africa devoid of thieves, gangsters, bad habits, false theories and the return of serene peace. Also, the narrator makes mention of using the medium of the African gods, sorcerers, diviners and the act of pouring libation (which are African cultural practices) to achieve the rebirth of a new Africa. The narrator's constant reference to these African values, also foreground the sense of negritude in the text.

5 Conclusion and Implication

This study undertook a stylistic analysis of the sense of negritude in Véronique Tadjó's *As the crow flies*. It revealed that the narrator's nostalgia as in, "I check to see if there is any mail for me. Stamps from my country. I pick up the newspaper. Here, there is a great deal of talk about South Africa" (chp87, p.100); the connection with issues of Africa and interest in Africa's rebirth as evident in, "Pour libation, summon the gods, utter sacred words, assemble diviners and sorcerers,

recapture the present, make peace, return to the earth, the spell (chp17, p.32-33)/I think of Abidjan's gangsters, Bouake's thieves, I say, just open your eyes! Open your eyes, look at the sky (chp57, p.73)/I say to myself, there, Africans are fighting, dying and I am doing nothing (chp87, p.101); the description of the friend's exile for instance, "He left his vast country in Africa. Now he lives in the big city of stone. And it is better for him, this exile. An exile where the inhabitants have respect for a white stick, where the state ensures his wellbeing and where facilities enable him to read and write" (chp88, p.102; the sense of liberation of Africa as seen in, "We spoke of conquest. We spoke of destruction. We spoke of boredom. And he told me how he was finding life painful, of his interminable languor, and of his feeling of insatiable emptiness" (chp78, p.92) and the rediscovery or self-identity search depict the sense of negritude in the text.

The study is a contribution to the on-going research on Tadjó's *As the crow flies*. As observed, not too many works have been conducted on the sense of negritude in this text. The study therefore is a foundation for extensive exploration of the negritude ideation in the text. The findings also provide an illustration in support of the lexico-semantic level of text analysis; therefore, further research should be conducted using this theory to analyze Tadjó's literary piece.

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