LASU JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES
(LASUJOH)

A publication of:

LASU Journal of Humanities (LASUJOH)

Volume 14, 2020 Edition

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   Journal Address: LASU Journal of Humanities
   c/o The Dean, Faculty of Arts, Lagos State University, Ojo
   Lagos, Nigeria. e-mail: lasujournalofhumanities@lasu.edu.ng

- Subscription—The Journal is published twice annually although submissions are accepted throughout the year

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A Study of Lexical Priming in Newton Jibunoh's *Hunger for Power*

Hunjo, Henry J. PhD & Ajakah, John Chukwuma

Abstract

This study investigates the autobiography of a consummate corporate leader, environmentalist and opinion molder, Newton Jibunoh, with a view to identifying the types of lexical priming featured in the story and explaining the priming strategies that the writer uses to express his experiences and cultural ideation. The book, Hunger for Power, *was selected for this purpose. The theoretical framework of Hoey's lexical priming (LP) is adopted. Excerpts obtained from the book are analyzed, using LP and discourse-related theories such as Davis and Harre's (1990) positioning, Bakhtin's (1981) dialogism and Halliday's (1985) systemic functional linguistics (SFL) to reveal the patterns of lexical priming that characterise the story. The findings showed that the story is characterized by priming patterns such as creative, semantic, collocation and repetition priming. The study further revealed the creative use of positive priming in portraying the individual and group identity of the protagonist. The identities explored in the book include his nationality as a Nigerian of Igbo extraction, cultural ideation and worldview in relation to the traditional beliefs and culture of Akwukwu-Igbo, his speech community. His life story as an orphan raised by foster parents encapsulates the typical experiences of the less privileged in many African societies. Members of his in-group, such as friends and colleagues, are also presented in a positive light while those in the out-group are depicted otherwise. The study concludes that Newton Jibunoh's autobiography, is characterized with lexical priming strategies that enhance effective communication, its aesthetic value, meaning potential and stimulate the reader's active participation in interpreting the intended message.*

Keywords: *autobiographic discourse, lexical priming, Newton Jibunoh, positive self-image, language user*

Introduction

L ANGUAGE USE REMAINS AN INDISPENSABLE ELEMENT IN THE COMPOSITION and interpretation of texts, including autobiographical writings. This study is motivated by the need to examine Michael Hoey's (2005) Lexical Priming theory in a language domain other than newspaper writing where it was first tested. The paper investigates the autobiographic discourse which exhibits some features that make it an interesting area of study, focusing on the priming patterns, realized through diverse word combinations and psychological associations. In the context of this paper, lexical priming refers to the systematic ordering of words that positions a particular lexeme or sequence of words in the mind of the reader.

Berryman (1999:71) avers that

> There are characteristics that are common to the majority of autobiographical works. These are the grammatical perspective of the work, the identity of the self, self-reflection and introspection.

This implies that Language use in the autobiographic discourse is characterized by peculiar lexico-grammatical features that revolve around the identity, experiences, thoughts and cultural ideation of the writer in relation to the worldview of the society. Moreover, some lexical items can be specially ordered in a narration, to enhance their semantic implication in given contexts. Such ordering is sometimes realized through lexical priming, a process which primes the reader's mind to mentally process the linguistic elements to arrive at interpretations akin to the writer's intended meaning.

The lexico-grammatical features in autobiographies are functional as they perform different purposes, ranging from communicating information about personal life experiences, to asserting perceived truth regarding certain societal phenomena. One of the most interesting aspects of the genre is its ability to influence attitudes and opinions. Anderson (2001) explains this by saying that:

> Autobiography is a form of personal witnessing which matters to others as people are interested in the actual lives of others and want to know about their pasts, feelings and desires.

The conversational implicature of this assertion is that the stories may not be personal after all since other members of the society are interested in it.

As a genre of literature, the autobiographic discourse is characterized by distinct language features and marked with some peculiar features such as the use of internal dialogues, elements of fiction, repetitions, reiterations, references (proper nouns—real names of persons and places, personal pronouns, quotations), monologues, kinship terms, culture specific words, introspections, paralinguistic codes and self-positive description of the protagonist. This study examines the features that characterise the language of literature within the autobiographic discourse. The choice of the study of autobiography, among other

forms of literature, is primarily informed by the perceived impact of the real life stories of successful persons on audience perception and response.

The autobiographic genre is a veritable platform to examine the relationship between language use and the society as the textual content is produced with a message for other members of the speech community. As Akhimien (2017) observes in respect of advertisements (citing Nwagbara and Umor (2012), the autobiographic discourse, "like other forms of communication activities, take place within a specific cultural context and must . . . reflect the culture of the environment in order to connect with the audience." In other words, autobiographic writers use lexical items that are intricately entwined in the sociocultural fabric of their societies to express and reinforce their belief system. Lexical priming is a linguistic strategy some of such writers use to reinforce their ideas and persuade the reader to accept the intended message. Mandela (1995) corroborates this in declaring that ". . . without language, one cannot talk to people and understand them; one cannot share their hopes and aspirations, grasp their history, appreciate their poetry, or savour their songs" (114).

The paper further explores how Lexical Priming is employed in Newton Jibunoh's *Hunger for Power*. It is designed to identify and explain the linguistic patterns that instantiate Lexical Priming in the book, with particular reference to the use of Lexical Priming strategies in communicating the text producer's intended message.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

a. identify the types of lexical priming that characterise the select texts,
b. discuss the priming strategies in *Hunger for Power*,
c. explain the combinatorial patterns that constitute priming, and
d. examine the functions of lexical priming in given contexts

Literature Review

Duguid and Partington (2017) examine forced lexical priming in trans-discursive political messaging with emphasis on the production and reception of such priming. They assert that Hoey's Lexical priming is a term for the processes by which listeners, by repeated exposure, first internalize and then reproduce the constituent elements of language, their combinatorial possibilities and the semantic and pragmatic meanings associated with them. They argue that "Advertising combines with politics in the periods around general elections and referendums where professional campaigns are run, employing advertising agencies to put over political messages in a simple way" (70). In such contexts, campaign posters or brief messages are clearly created to express a party's position. Their study focuses on the linguistic discipline of routine political communication, which requires the strategic preference of a particular form with determined implications that must be positive for the speaker's side and negative for the opponents (Bakhtin, 1981; Linde, 1993).

In agreement with Hoey's (2005) view on the naturalness of language and the user's creative ability, Daramola (2009) asserts that "the relation of grammar to semantics is natural because language is an evolved rather than a designed system-our interpretation of experiences (thinking with language) and interpersonal exchanges (acting with language) are coded in the semantic structure" (26). He opines that lexico-grammar, a combination of vocabulary and grammar, in functional terms, is one of the realizations of wording which encode meaning in language. Daramola further observes that the direction to the study of language has "shifted from sentence analysis to the study of discourse or text, text being both grammatical as well as semantic" (26). He posits that grammar is the study of wording: it interprets the wording by reference to what it means and how it is organized in sentences and discourse.

As a language user, the autobiographic writer's communicative competence, perspectives or prejudices may influence the diction to the extent that certain words occur more frequently than others, especially in expressing a particular phenomenon. Lejuene (1975) in Anderson (2001) defines an autobiography as: "a retrospective record in prose that a real person gives of his or her own being while emphasizing personal life and in particular the story of life."

In a study aimed at working out an inventory of the linguistic correlates that the language user utilizes frequently to refer to himself or herself, the empathic other-peers, friends and members of his or her in-group and to the antagonistic other-represented by the opponents or the out-group, Olateju et al (2007:187) observe that "Autobiographical discourse is highly reflexive, as it arises out of introspection and self-exploration. The speaker can select from a continuum of degrees of subjectivity, depending on his or her linguistic choice from the possibilities the system offers." They further corroborate Bakhtin's (1981) proposition that "During the discursive configuration of self, the symbolic figure of other has an overt or a covert intervention," pointing out that "In the recreation of experiences, a complex interplay of personal, social and cultural identities is at work, mingled with the subject's memory, emotions, which affects the positive as well as the negative worlds of references that are evoked." The study reveals that speakers (writers) tend to prioritize assertive patterns, intensifiers and clearly defined agents when constructing the in-group, but prefer to use mitigating expressions or avoid direct mention when referring to the out-group. Moreover, they assert that "Lexical selection constitutes a powerful resource to signal the peers" positive aspects and the antagonists" negative characteristics."

Theoretical Framework

Michael Hoey's (2005) lexical priming theory, developed from corpuses gathered from newspaper writings, initially accounted for the way native speakers store up words naturally until they develop fluency as language users without relying on the conventional rules of grammar, but the theory is increasingly being studied in other domains. Hoey posits that native speakers are naturally primed in their

first language while second language users have difficulty communicating in that language because they had been psychologically primed in a different language. Hoey (2015) believes that "each time we encounter a word (or a syllable or combination of words), we subconsciously keep a record of the context and co-text of the word (or syllable or combination of words), we build up a record of its collocations." He argues that "We are primed by each encounter so that when we come to use the word (or syllable or combination of words) we characteristically replicate the contexts in which we had previously encountered it." This process, according to Hoey, accounts for both collocation and other phenomena in language use.

Pace-Sigge et al (2017) posit that "Lexical Priming as a theory, aims to explain the phenomena discovered through corpus linguistics techniques: collocation, colligation, semantic association and the statistically significant preference of one word linking to another." Baker, McEnery and Hardie in Pace–Sigge et al. (2017) apply the lexical priming theory in their investigation of English representation in Turks and Ottomans in the early modern era-the seventeenth century, when the Ottoman presumably experienced a change of representation in discourse. They agree with Hoey that "words are primed for collocational use" (Hoey, 2005:8). McEnery & Baker (2016) and Davis (2012) observe that data sources such as Corpus of Historical American English provide over a billion words of English from the seventeenth century that will make the exploration of priming easier and allows a drift in the priming of many content words, especially Hoey's (2005) lexical priming theory reverses the order of traditional grammar that separates grammar and vocabulary. The theory emphasizes that lexis precedes grammar contrary to the position of earlier linguistic theorists (Chomsky, 1965:4-8) that grammatical choice is made first, generating a frame before words are inserted into the frame to realize different meanings. Hoey posits that native speakers use the language naturally and creatively. He opines that the knowledge of the word-context of usage, other words it combines with (co-texts), background of interlocutors and so on, makes the language user to first select the lexical items before placing such words in the order that becomes grammatical and socially acceptable in relation to language and society.

The theory of lexical priming anchors on psycholinguistic analysis as it involves mental processing of verbal representations. Hoey (2009) states that "Every native speaker has knowledge of the word and the usual associations and can easily get the combinations in any given situation," adding that "lexical priming assumes that language users store words they know in the context in which they were heard or read." He explains that "This process of subconsciously noticing is lexical priming." The main thrust of the theory is that priming is a psychological concept as words are naturally stored in our minds either separately or in sets. The naturalness of word associations in language use props semantically related words when a reader or listener comes across a previously encountered word.

Hoey's (2005) theory reveals that the language user may deviate from

conventional collocation patterns and creatively form new sets when combining words to realize meaning. This results in what he describes as "creative priming" in his work on literary creativity (Hoey, 2015).

Methodology

The method for this study comprises the steps observed in qualitative perspective, relying heavily on inductive reasoning skills (Strauss &Corbin, 1994, Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The analysis involves an exploration of the discourse strategies the writer deployed in the narration, beginning with the systematic observation of the linguistic phenomenon that instantiates Lexical Priming to an explanation of its function within a given context. The inductive procedure focuses on the functional aspect of language, observing contextualization clues, participants and semantic implication of a primed corpora as proposed in Hoey's (2005) lexical priming theory, incorporating concepts in Halliday's (1985) Systemic Functional Grammar as well as de Beaugrande and Dressler's (1981) textlinguistics model (TL). Lexical Priming (henceforth LP) is the name given to a linguistic theory developed by Hoey (2003, 2004, 2005) which seeks to relate corpus linguistic concepts such as collocation and colligation to the experimental findings of psycholinguistics about the retardation and acceleration of word associations. Hoey (2005) believes that "words are "primed" for use through experience with them, so that everything we know about a word is a product of our encounters with it."

Lexical priming is an approach to the analysis of discourse with focus on intentional ordering of some lexical items through processes such as repetition and collocation (co-occurrence) in order to etch such words on the mind of the reader or hearer. In the context of this paper, a word or a group of words that occurs more frequently than others in each select text, constitutes lexical priming. The analysis of natural language in LP provides order and explanation of the linguistic and social contexts in which the expressions occur. LP describes the way in which language users use words to achieve the intended goal of communicating information. It focuses on the patterns of recurrence of certain lexical items or expressions in the course of the narration of events. As an approach to the study of language that accounts for the recurring patterns distribution and forms of organization across naturally occurring words, it provides a link between corpus linguistics and psycholinguistics (Hoey, 2009 and Pace-Sigge et al., 2017). This fact distinguishes LP from other approaches to discourse analysis.

The Lexical Priming theory is used to investigate language in terms of functionality. Simply put, it is an approach to the creative organization of texts. LP aligns with the basic principles of textlinguistics as propounded by Dressler and de Beaugrande's (1981) and Halliday's (1985) description of language. A typical autobiographic discourse embodies an intermingling of the metafunctions (ideational, interpersonal and textual) of language, which Halliday uses to represent the organizing principles of the linguistic system.

LP provides the methodology for analyzing patterns in autobiographic discourse. For instance, the context a word occurs in and the grammatical functions it performs. Features such as selection of topics, unusual collocations, repetition of word combinations, infusion of indigenous lexical items, utterances that connote negative reference to the antagonistic other, recurrence or co-occurrence of certain words and expressions that reflect the speaker's positive self constitute data for this study.

According to Hoey (2015), four assumptions characterise LP, namely: (1) lexical priming is a product of the individual, not the word (2) Because priming is a product of an individual's encounters with the word, it follows inexorably that everyone's priming is different because everyone's linguistic experience is necessarily unique (3) The existence of a priming for an individual cannot be demonstrated directly from corpus evidence because a corpus represents no one's experience of language. (4) The claims that might be made about a word's likely priming for a particular set of members of a speech community must be limited to the genre[s] and domain[s] from which the evidence has occurred. This informs the necessity of the study of priming patterns and features in autobiographies and the role they play in achieving the intended purpose of the writer.

The data source is the autobiography of Dr. Newton Jibunoh, titled *Hunger for Power*, published in 2017. The scope of the study is restricted to the selected work among his other books, because of the need to limit the data to a manageable size. The choice of Jibunoh's autobiography is informed by its significance as an account of the real-life experiences of a person who went through the difficulties of life right from childhood as an orphaned toddler to become a successful member of the society. The choice of this particular autobiography is primarily dictated by the fact that it is recent and available. Moreover, the aspect of Newton Jibunoh's story which this study focuses on has not been treated by other scholars.

Analysis and Findings

Types of lexical priming in *Hunger for Power*
The predominant types of lexical priming patterns identified *Hunger for Power* include: collocation priming, forced/creative priming, statistic priming, semantic priming, historical priming, colligation priming, and metaphorical priming.

Collocation priming:
Hoey (2013) agrees with Halliday and Hasan (1976:287) that

> Collocation is a cohesive device and cover term for the kind of cohesion that results from the co-occurrence of lexical items that are in some way or the other typically associated with one another because they tend to occur in similar environments."

Although Halliday and Hasan make no direct reference to lexical priming, Hoey (2005) identifies a kind of priming he termed as "collocational priming," stating that "Collocational priming is sensitive to the contexts in which the lexical item

is encountered, and it is part of our knowledge of a lexical item that it is used in certain combinations in certain kinds of text." Leech (1974, p. 20) defines "collocative meaning" as a word combination that "consists of the associations a word acquires on account of the meanings of words which tend to occur in its environment." In other words, the word acquires connotations as a result of the words that surround it Louw (1993) Stubbs (1995, 1996). Leech's definition entails both statistical and psychological realities as well as the connection between the two.

As instantiated in *Hunger for Power*, the word or the lemma being considered as the appropriate analytical category in this context is that found in a linguistic environment where it frequently co-occurs with other words which may not be so repeated. The primed lexical item[s] may also trigger other possible word associations and meanings.

The first category of collocation priming occurs in the excerpt below as the language user reconstructs his personal experiences, using the collocation *in those days*:

Sample 1

> Now, *in those days*, the practice of midwifery necessarily came with some connotations and not so muted echoes of fetishism. Not being regulated or totally exposed yet to modern best practices, midwifery *in those days* was steeped in local customs that were also shared by native doctors, especially because midwifery skills were usually handed down in a family, from generation to generation, just like native doctors. It did not also help that herbs, roots, spices, tree back, etc., were the chief tools at their disposal, which also happened to be the stock in trade of native doctors. The midwife was pretty much the native doctor (*dibia*) for women/childbirth affairs. . . . (28)

The adverbial phrase, "in those days," as used in the above text typifies collocation because the constituents (in, those and days) are naturally occurring words in English language. The expression is used to recall a certain time in history. As it does in this context, it often triggers thoughts of experiences or events that occurred in the era so referred. The author also uses the expression in many other sections of the book to reconstruct either his personal experience or the collective experiences of members of his speech community. For example: "*In those days*, people used to refer to houseboys from our area, which is across the Niger, as better houseboys. They thought we were better than people from the other side. They called us *Ndi o fe osi mili*." (57)

Combinatorial patterns

The second category, unusual collocation, is realized in word combinations where the author generates collocations that seldom occur in SBE or native speaker's environment. This is prevalent in the excerpt below, which expresses the author's peculiar experiences in housekeeping as a home help:

Sample 2

> I was *a very good houseboy* . . . I must have been *a very good houseboy*.
> When I lived with my uncle, I set his table, waited on him while he ate,
> made his bed and ran sundry errands for him and his many women. But
> all that didn't guarantee me enough food. My uncle must have taken note
> of how good I was when it came to *housekeeping*, because at a stage, when
> it became patently apparent that I would never get along with my uncle's
> wives, he decided to give me away as *houseboy* to one Mr. Ukadike. . . . He
> wasn't getting rid of me; he was in many ways, ensuring that I had a better
> life and lived in a place where I would be free from his wives and where
> I would at least have enough food to eat... Mr. Ukadike had expressed to
> my uncle his desire to pick a *houseboy* from our area. In those days, people
> used to refer to *houseboys* from my area, which is across the Niger, as "*better
> houseboys*" . . . I became a *houseboy* to the brother of the Vicar, and that
> for me was a good thing because it was a relief. Going to live with Ukadike
> meant leaving a hostile environment, where it was clear that I wasn't so
> liked. It also meant that I had three square meals daily. . . . I was *a good
> houseboy*. I showed my uncle and Ukadike that I could do house work. It
> wasn't the best option for my uncle, I think, but that was where I was able
> to show my full talent; *housekeeping*, plus I had full charge of the kitchen
> and so was constantly fed. (56-57)

The unusual collocation priming pattern is realized through the recurrence of "houseboy" in stretches of sentences that explicate both the linguistic and situational contexts. The idea of being a domestic servant (houseboy) in order to escape the scourge of hunger reinforces the message that the reader's mind has already been primed on. Moreover, although the expression, "houseboy" is a derogatory term, especially in Nigeria where it connotes a "modern-day domestic slave," Jibunoh creatively deploys the lexical item "houseboy" to portray a positive self-image by repeatedly using it in a positive sense and making it recur with words that depict positivity: "a very good houseboy," "a good houseboy," "better houseboys," ". . . that was where I was able to show my full talent; housekeeping . . . ," emphasizing the importance of that role in: "I had full charge of the kitchen and so was constantly fed.'

Semantic priming

Jibunoh employs "semantic priming" in Sample 3 as he uses "hunger" to mean a strong desire for food and associates that crave with his childhood experiences as "an orphan whose parents died before he had fully learnt to walk." Being hungry for food is a universal phenomenon especially in this context which involves "an orphan" in a poverty stricken third world country such as Nigeria. Within the same context, the writer uses other words that denotatively relate to hunger such as: consumed, ravenous and sustenance:

Sample 3

> All my life, I have known hunger. At first, it was hunger for food and

sustenance as an orphan whose parents died before he had fully learnt to walk. Then as I got older, I became consumed with this incredibly ravenous hunger to dream more and to do more with my dreams . . . I have an abiding hunger for the power to stop the mighty Sahara from engulfing Africa and my beloved country, Nigeria. . . . (17)

Moreover, semantic extension is realized as the primed lexeme is made to co-occur with words such as "abiding" and "power" in: "abiding hunger" and "hunger for power." In both expressions, "hunger" is used connotatively to suggest a perpetual state of deprivation and a quest or an ambition for power.

The title of the book, "Hunger for Power" predominantly recurs in most parts of the narration. As instantiated above, "hunger" is primed and used both denotatively and connotatively, in a recurrent manner, all through Sample 3. It occurs as a noun functioning as the object/ complement in the four clause complexes that make up the text. The primed word, "hunger" is also metaphorically used in association with descriptive adjectives such as "ravenous" and "abiding" (ravenous hunger, abiding hunger). This pattern instantiates what Hoey (2013) refers to as literary creativity in lexical priming.

The clauses are presented in the declarative mood to express the speaker's personal experience, desire and purpose within a sociocultural context which he mutually shares with the hearer or reader. With the exophoric reference to abject poverty in his country, the author recounts the deplorable state of things which leaves many especially orphans hungry. He also refers to unhealthy sociopolitical practices such as tribalism, religious bigotry, environmental degradation and high level corruption in Nigeria.

Colligation Priming

In some cases, the adjectival form (hungry) of the primed lexical item, "hunger" is used instead of the noun. Sample 4 below illustrates lexical priming, involving the word "hunger" or its colligation, "hungry":

Sample 4

I am *hungry* for more power to affect lives and impact unborn generations; *hungry* for power to stop poverty in its insidious tracks; *hungry*, *very hungry*, for power to end the blight of corruption and expunge graft...*My hunger* for power is to abolish tribalism and fight bigotry to a standstill; I am hungry for power to save a world on the brink of climate and environmental apocalypse; I am absolutely *hungry* for power to rescue nations from devastating religious fanaticism and the remorseless tragedy of global terrorism. I am *very hungry* for that power to resurrect my country's crumbling institutions and arrest the decay in Nigeria's educational system; *hungry* for power to stop modern-day slavery and put an end to child trafficking; *hungry* for power to eradicate child abuse and combat domestic violence..."

Creative Priming (Forced Lexical Priming)

Hoey (2009) considers the phenomenon of Lexical Priming as being associated with literary creativity, stressing that "lexical priming is quite compatible with being creative." Duguid (2009) describes "Forced Priming as a process by which speakers or authors frequently repeat a certain form of words to deliberately "flood" the discourse with messages for a particular strategic purpose" (p.68). Duguid posits that priming can be forced for particular effects in many fields such as politics and education. This form of lexical priming occurs in exercises meant for rote learning and slogans coined to be repeatable as in advertisements. Creative or Forced Lexical Priming is elaborately used in the epilogue to *Hunger for Power* as instantiated in the priming of the word, "power" in the excerpt below:

Sample 5

> *Power* is so many things. *Power* is life and *power* is death. I have seen people go from prison to *power* and from *power* to prison. When people hear of "power" they think immediately of position or an office. But power can refer to a multitude of things from influence to impact, ambition to chance. *Power* is many things to many people. However, what fascinates me about *power* is what it does, its whole ability to change lives, influence outcomes, and sometimes destroy destinies. . . . I remember an advert I saw many years ago for Pirelli Tyres. It was a simple Ad but it packed a punch. It said simply: "*Power* is Nothing without Control." That Ad, which featured legendary Olympian, Carl Lewis, made it to the front pages of many newspapers across the globe, won many awards, and was even included in a book, *The 100 Best Posters of the Century.* . . . But it wasn't the Ad or the creativity behind the simple poster that interested me. It was the message, the clear reference to *power* as of no effect when not controlled. (322-323)

As exemplified in Sample 5, the discourse is flooded with the word, "Power" which occurs in diverse positions in the epilogue. A simple word count of the text (322–324) reveals that power is used over 20 times in the relatively short epilogue. That the discourse is flooded with the primed lexical item, "power" is also obvious as it occurs in virtually every sentence in the excerpt. From the opening sentence of the first segment of the narration: "*Power* is so many things," where the word predominantly functions as a subject, to the second segment where it alternately functions as either the object of the verb or the compliment to the subject. The writer creatively deploys the word to achieve his purpose which is primarily to persuade the reader to see "power" as an instrument of coercion that must be handled with care: "it wasn't the Ad or the creativity behind the simple poster that interested me. It was the message, the clear reference to *power* as of no effect when not controlled. This observation is stated more clearly in Sample 6:

Sample 6

> A mad man armed with a gun is a good example of power without control. His possession of a gun gives him sum *power* over the unarmed while mental impairment makes him a dangerous man without control. . . . I

have seen examples of mad men wielding *power*. I have also encountered spineless men suddenly thrust into positions of *power* who ended up abusing it. And in the same breath, I have seen men who got *power* and used it for good. . . . When I think of *power*, the only other thing I think of is fire. *Power* is like fire; it can keep you warm and it can burn you. It can cook you a meal or raze your house. It can purify gold or calcify a human being. Ensconced deep within its core are elements of good and evil.

Metaphorical priming

Metaphorical priming as used here is a form of creative priming or what Hoey (2013) describes as "literary creativity and lexical priming." The creative priming pattern prompts the writer to juxtapose the primed lexeme, "power" with the target word, "fire." In subsequent expressions, the target word "fire" becomes a lexically primed item.

In Sample 6, Jibunoh presents a graphic illustration of the "double edged nature" of power, using the imagery of "a mad man armed with a gun" and "fire." The author further delves into metaphorical priming as he depicts power as "fire" which has the potential to build or destroy, stating: "Power is like fire; it can keep you warm and it can burn you. It can cook you a meal or raze your house."

Sample 7

> In ancient Greece, <u>fire</u> was regarded as the most potent symbol of power and that was why when Prometheus approached Zeus and asked to be allowed to take *fire* to the people. Zeus refused. Consumed by his belief that *fire* would make men happier and change the course of their lives, Prometheus stole *fire* from Mount Olympus and gave it to men. Then he paid dearly for his action.

The allusion to "Ancient Greece" mythology, represents intertextuality, one of the seven standards of textuality propounded by de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981). Intertextuality occurs when a previously known text is brought into a new linguistic context, especially with the purpose of making the intended message clearer to the receiver or adding some pep to the narration. With the reference to the ancient story and repetitive use of "fire" in the passage, the author psychologically primes the reader on the two lexical items "power" and "fire," triggering thoughts on the pragmatic functions of both words.

The author then makes further references with which he contextualizes the primed lexical items in contemporary human society, citing instances of the destructive and redemptive use of the phenomena:

Sample 8

> This has been the lot of men for centuries, men who hankering after <u>power</u> have sought it with all the resources at their disposal destroying lives and careers in their quest for *power*. Think about them: Genghis Khan, Napoleon Bonaparte, Hitler, Idi Amin Dada, Saddam Hussein, Muamar

Ghadaffi, and many others. They sought <u>power</u>, they obtained it and it destroyed them.

The most humbling contemporary tale of <u>power</u> sought, obtained and handled deftly must be that of Nelson Mandela. Mandela, not a saint by any stretch of the imagination, fought for his people's freedom, spent 27 years in jail, was released and then elected the first president of newly independent South Africa. But then after just one term in office, a man who spent 27 years in jail waiting for the very thing he had obtained, stepped down from *power* and handed over without rancour.

Priming Strategies in *Hunger for Power*:

Repetition, psychological priming, exophoric reference, intertextuality, reiteration and recurrence are the predominant strategies Jibunoh adopts in *Hunger for Power*. Repetition is a major discourse strategy that the writer employs as instantiated in most of the excerpts, including Sample 6 where Lexical Priming functions in two major ways. First, as a discourse marker, indicating a change in the direction of talk: "Now, *in those days*…" Second, it functions as a deictic or reference marker indicating a certain period in history: "<u>In those days</u>, people used to refer to houseboys…"

Another strategy the author effectively deployed in the narration is reiteration. That is, a given clause complex is reframed to express the same message as in: "I have an abiding hunger…"; "I am hungry for power…," "I am hungry for more power…" and "I am very hungry for that power…"

The use of Lexical Priming as discourse markers in the book is one of the strategies the author employed in presenting his experiences. The discourse markers are used to perform different functions and they occur at some specific points which hint the next thing the writer is to say. The discourse markers identified in *Hunger for Power* include: "Now, in those days, …"(28), "As a result of the stiff competition from the companies of Continental Europe which I earlier touched on…," "As part of my familiarization tours,..," "As time went on,..," "In the past,…," "Now, to put us on a sound technical footing,…," "One day,…," "I recall when …," "More importantly,…," "Most importantly,…" etc., are used as transitional markers (109–131). The identified discourse markers characterise Newton Jibunoh's autobiography, *Hunger for Power*. Most of the features are repeatedly used at the introductory, body or concluding parts of anecdotes. The recurrence of such linguistic elements marks them out as lexical priming features.

Structural Functions

The structural functions performed through the use of lexical priming include structural breaks and highlight of main points in the autobiographic discourse which facilitate the narrative flow. The structural functions include initiating discourse and marking boundaries in discourse. From pages 144 to 159, the writer discusses "Corruption, aka Gifting in Contracts" as a broad topic, using Lexical

Priming to mark boundaries. The priming strategy helps to indicate the context, shift and partial shift in topic as illustrated in Sample 9.

Sample 9

> In Nigeria, it is customary to present a gift to your elders, superiors and friends, especially when you need a favour from them or after the favour has been done to you. The colonial masters caught on and soon became adept at presenting gifts of Gin, clothing, and jewellery to our chiefs and kings. Unfortunately, with time the magnitude of these gifts began to increase exponentially, and officials in positions of authority, began to demand these gifts upfront rather than wait for the gifts to be offered. There were also instances where officials were enticed with offer of potential gifts in the quest for preferential treatments. And so, Nigerians unwittingly welcomed corruption into our business life. (p. 147).

The expression, "In Nigeria" naturally triggers the reader's thoughts about Nigeria and the phenomenon being discussed. With a number of other references made to Nigeria in the book, especially in this section, the reader has already been psychologically primed on both the subject matter (corruption) and the situational context (Nigeria). Newton Jibunoh's strategy is to use the socio-cultural knowledge about the world around the prospective reader to relate his personal experiences. Moreover, the author uses lexical priming as a strategy in the syntactical ordering to realize focus, theme and emphasis. While employing psychological priming to mark the focus of the first clause complex, "In Nigeria" the writer combines repetition, reiteration and statistical priming strategies to realize the theme, "corruption in Nigeria." The word, "gift" [s] recurs in four out of the five sentences that make up the excerpt. The repetitive use of the word underscores its importance in portraying the topic which the author ingeniously states in the fifth sentence, using the target word, "corruption." That is, "gift" is primed through repetition to influence the reader's perception and understanding of the topic of discourse. In other words, "gift" is primed through repetition, reiteration and cataphoric referencing to produce the target word, "corruption."

Sample 10 shows that Jibunoh makes elaborate use of narration of stories of past events, accounts of what some people did in the past and cultural events in the book. The author uses this strategy to portray his cultural ideation and specific incidents he considers memorable. For instance, he narrates his childhood experience; how his aunt, Naomi had maltreated him. He does this to explain how tough life was and how things later changed for good as he tenaciously, took certain steps towards a better future. Such narrations also exemplify "intertextuality" and are either used to recreate personal experiences. In the sample below, Newton Jibunoh re-enacts one of such experiences, using Lexical Priming as a discourse strategy to portray his aunt, Naomi as the antagonistic negative-other (Olateju, et al (2007)):

Sample 10

> "I am your mother, whether you like it or not." That was a refrain I heard

from _Aunt Naomi_ a lot later in my life, after my circumstances had changed and I returned home to Akwukwu-Igbo, a successful young man riding up the ladder of success in Lagos. _Aunt Naomi_, as every Christian can tell, was named after _Naomi of the Book of Ruth_, but that was where the similarities ended, because while _the Naomi of the scriptures_ was a kind hearted and nurturing matriarch, _my auntie_ and _stepmother_ was anything but... _Aunt Naomi_ was _a thorn in my flesh_. . . . She was _my auntie_ and also my stepmother, but sometimes I didn't know what to call her, _the woman who was also my mother's sister..._ (37)

This strategy features prominently in the treatment of select topics such as "Auntie Naomi and Me," "I Was a Very Good House Boy," "Newton Goes to Jail," "Culture and Tradition" and "My Brother Joshua and My Million Siblings." The excerpt also reflects a preponderance of the various types of Lexical Priming discussed in this paper. For example, "Aunt Naomi was a thorn in my flesh..." (metaphorical priming), frequent occurrence of Aunt Naomi (statistical/forced priming), "the Naomi of the Book of Ruth"/ "Naomi of the scriptures"-biblical allusion (psychological priming) and "...the woman who was also my mother's sister..." (semantic priming). One major effect of Lexical Priming observed in Sample 10 is that the author ingenuously employs it to represent a positive-self image while depicting the antagonists such as Aunt Naomi as the negative-other[s].

Discussion of Findings
The analysis of the data samples presented in this section reflects the investigation conducted to detect recurrent topics, word combinations and priming strategies in the book, _Hunger for Power_. The findings reveal the use of strategies such as psychological priming through repetitions, collocations, reiterations, inversions (intertextuality), culture specific words, infusion of vernacular, and paralinguistic codes. The relevance of these priming patterns includes the fact that they help to emphasize certain issues as well as simplify the writer's intended message. For instance, in capitalizing the expression "If You Think Marriage is Difficult, Try Divorce" as a topic in chapter 17, the writer primes the reader's mind (psychological priming) on the subject as that reference triggers thoughts of the likely consequences of a failed marriage. Moreover, the writer goes on to narrate his personal experiences-as one who had married, divorced and remarried, using the above priming strategies. The chapter ended with a creative priming pattern, involving the infusion an inversion and intertextuality: Thinking about my first marriage and the emotional and physical turmoil that attended it, I seek solace in the words of Mandela penned in 1973 from his prison cell on Robben Island: "I have often wondered whether a person is justified in neglecting his own family to fight for opportunities for others" (166). The twin priming strategies (inversion and intertextuality) engaged here pinpoint the following: the dilemma of a social crusader in Africa, the protagonist's stance on marriage and divorce and group identity with emphasis on the family unit as a microcosm of the larger society.

The study also identified the prevalence of active and declarative sentences that contain primed lexical items, using personal pronouns in first person narrative point of view as in: 1. "I would be regarded as a renaissance man, a cosmopolitan man of the world who loves art and the finer things of life" (88)—individual identity expressed in positive—self 2. "There are a few curious things I discovered about our tradition. For instance, a lot of the children born by my father's wives, long after my father's death, were still given the surname, Jibunoh" (p.89)—cultural identity 3. "My father was not married (in the eyes of the of the church) by the time he met my mother, even though he was living with and had children from about five different women. But he woke up one day and asked the four women to leave his house..." (p 46)-Cultural conflict 4. "As I got older, I started making enquiries about my father and mother. I was curious to know where I come from, to know who my father was. I really wanted to find out his true nature, but the deeper I dug, the more disenchanted I became with the kind of man he was. I was disenchanted with his habits, especially with women, with alcohol, and with so many other things." (46)- Negative other and positive self. The analysis also showed that the narrator uses diverse forms of personal pronouns to reveal personal, out-group and in-group identities.

It is for that there is consistency in the foregrounding of topics, using Lexical Priming, beginning with the book title to the presentation of the author's real life experiences in childhood, as an orphan in a colonized Nigeria, conflicts in interpersonal relationships reflective of sibling rivalry and polygamous family background, significant moments in career and marriage and roles in communal or organizational settings. The investigation also showed the recurrence of certain linguistic patterns in expressing the writer's personal identity and perspectives vis-à-vis sociocultural issues such as marriage, divorce, tradition and religion. The observed linguistic phenomena are reflective of the prevalence of Lexical Priming features in the autobiography.

The study revealed the dynamism of the language of autobiographies and how lexical items have been expanded beyond their primary meanings.

Summary and Conclusion
The use of lexical priming in Newton Jibunoh's *Hunger for Power* underscores the importance of priming in an autobiographic discourse. Lexical priming features facilitate effective communication as it is observed that they help the writer to emphasize meaning and amplify the message in the discourse.

The study revealed that the cultural orientation of the author is reflected in the book as he employs linguistic strategies, including lexical priming to portray some aspects of the culture of Nigerians, especially those of Igbo extraction, his own speech community. Patterns such as recurring lexical items, phrases and clause complexes are identified and explained, using the Lexical Priming approach. For instances, by repeatedly describing himself as "A Very Good Houseboy" in chapter 6, he presents the message of hope to the downtrodden,

especially the orphans who are exploited as domestic slaves within and outside their late parents" families.

The study further revealed the use of connotations drawn from the cultural environment of the writer to realize priming patterns such as intertextuality, referencing, repetitions and creativity which are deployed to explore his personal experiences and sociocultural background. As he reveals his identity and cultural ideation, the author presents himself in a positive light, but portrays the antagonistic other[s] in the negative as in the expressions: "I showed my uncle and Ukadike *I could do housework*...I was able to show my full talent; *housekeeping*..." (57) and "From the *steely set of my stepmother's mouth* and the *raw wrath emanating from her visage*, I knew all the pleading in the world would not help me..." (54).

From the foregoing, it is clear that the autobiographic discourse is characterized with lexical priming features. The deployment of such features helps the writer convey the intended message. Finally, from the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that although autobiographies are to a large extent monologues, revolving around the self, Jibunoh's autobiography, *Hunger for Power,* is characterized with lexical priming features that make the genre interactive.

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