LINGUISTIC STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF BEN OKRI'S TALES OF FREEDOM

Victor Kelechi Ashiegbu
Department of English,
Babcock University, IIishan, Ogun State
fadavictor38@gmail.com

Ebenezer Deji Ogunrinde, Ph.D
Department of English and Literary Studies,
Federal University Oye Ekiti, Nigeria
ebenezer.ogunrinde@fuoye.edu.ng

Mofoluwalope Olayiwola Adedoja
Department of English and Literary Studies
Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria
Olayiwola.adedoja@fuoye.edu.ng

Abstract

This paper dives into the ideas of literariness and style in Ben Okri's *Tales of Freedom*, highlighting how various linguistic and narrative techniques shape the work's unique aesthetic and philosophical essence. Using stylistic and literary analysis, the study examines Okri's blend of prose and poetry, his incorporation of myth, allegory, and parable, and how he skillfully plays with language to create rich meanings and push the boundaries of traditional storytelling. The paper posits that *Tales of Freedom* represents a distinctive storytelling approach where the line between fiction and philosophical thought blurs, ultimately enriching the text's literariness. Through detailed textual analysis, it showcases how Okri's stylistic decisions emphasize themes of freedom, transcendence, and the metaphysical, placing his work within the context of both African literary traditions and wider postmodern aesthetics.

Keywords: Tales of Freedom, literariness, style, stylistics, African literature, postmodernism, narrative form, myth, sentence

Introduction

The constructive ways writers use language has interested researchers in the Humanities. Language provides insight into an author's style and influences how readers make meaning from what they read. There are multiplicities of meanings abound in a text, and the reader can assess this according to their literary biases. Literary biases, according to Jonathan Culler, are a literary competence. It means a reader's literary competence (skill) is highly informed by the social world in which a text is produced, as it usually has a shaping effect on his or her interpretation of such a text. With this in view, writers have deployed various techniques to enhance readability for both aesthetic values and for academic purposes. Okeke posits that human language is the raw material for studying style. This is when style is thought of as language variation.

A few research studies have been carried out with respect to Okri's *Tales of Freedom,* to investigate meaning, form and aesthetics in the work, especially from the literary/ stylistics perspective. Gray explores the poetic cause in Ben Okri's Stokus from *Tales of Freedom.* The article analyses the poetic theme in Ben Okri's *Stokus* from his *Tales of Freedom* with a focus on its use of serendipity. Jay in a literary review of Okri's *Tales of Freedom* entitled 'Introducing the Stoku'. Jay avers that Okri creates a new form in his book, a loose collection of thirteen folk tales, most of which are rendered in parables of writing. From the above reviews, no comprehensive linguistic stylistic analysis has been carried out on *Tales of Freedom*. It is therefore necessary to undertake a linguistic stylistic investigation of Ben Okri's *Tales of Freedom* with the view to unearthing those linguistic features that are stylistically used to bring about special meanings and aesthetics. This is the gap this paper intends to fill.

Literature Review

Development of Stylistics

Onwukwe opines that stylistics has to do with the modern study of different styles of writing. It emerged in the European continent in the 20th century (21). It owes its origin to the works of European and American structuralists, philologists, formalists, semanticists and new critics like I. A. Richards, T. S. Elliot, Roman Jacobson, Charles Balley, Leo Spitzer and others. Onwukwe maintains that scholars in the early 20th century felt that literary criticism was barren, highly subjective, mechanistic and external. There was no close analysis of the understanding and interpretation of the text. Interest was mainly in the historical background of the text, such as the socio-economic conditions of the time and the biographical details of the writer. Critics felt these issues were unnecessary in appreciating a work of art, and this discontent led to new methods of style to be evolved; this was aimed at achieving a close acquaintance with the literary art never known before in literary criticism. She argues that with the equipment of this descriptive method of the professional linguists and the taste of a literary artist, attention was now paid to the words of the text and the organisation of the writer. This shift of emphasis in literary appreciation soon became popular, and scholars' interest was now "in the texture of the poet's language seen as a symptom of the quality of the creative process" (Hough, 1969, Np).

Onwukwe states that this new interest and way of studying literary art was called 'Practical Criticism'(22). I. A. Richard was a chief exponent of this new criticism and as a result of his effort in his latest book, *Practical Criticism,* "unsupported judgement, mere statements of the taste and preference were felt to be inadmissible; they had to be backed up by precise references and analysis" (Hough, 1969 Np).

Tales of Freedom

Tales of Freedom is one of the well-received and acknowledged texts by Ben Okri. Expectedly, it has attracted scholarly reviews and analysis. Bailey submits that *Tales of Freedom* is a book of two halves, with a short story entitled 'Comic Destiny' taking up the majority of the book (1). Comic Destiny is one of those happily plot-free literary pieces where everything in it is a symbol for something else, while at the same time, the book remains easy to read. As such, each word is carefully placed, and the sentences are perfectly and deliberately crafted, giving the reader the feeling that they need to crack the author's code. It is full of paradoxes as well as poignant ideas that almost everyone will be able to relate to, with Okri making comments on basic human desires such as ambition, love and family.

In this section of the book, dialogue is the means through which the author gets across most of his ideas. Bailey continues: The use of mostly unattributed dialogue adds to the play-like feel as well as the sense of the characters living and speaking into a void (1). The long passages of short lines of speech also leave a lot of white space on the page, exacerbating the feeling of being in an empty space. Okri employs a narrative style that is unique. It is an esoteric combination of poetry and prose, of symbolism but also details from everyday life that will be familiar to everyone. Bailey observes that the second section of the book is made up of thirteen stokus - a cross between a short story and a haiku. Each of these stories is between two and four pages long and captures a unique moment in the character's life. When asked what stoku is, the author himself answers according to Bailey (2) that "[a] stoku is an amalgam of short story and haiku. It is a story as it inclines towards a flash of a moment, insight, vision or paradox". Bailey records that these stukos are just as carefully crafted as the previous section of the book; they are also highly symbolic but easier to digest as they are written in a more familiar way, and with a more tangible plot (2). These stories are beautiful, touching, startling, thought-provoking and countless other adjectives that all come together to mean outstanding writing. Each of these stories poses a challenge to the reader about how people of different ages succeed in their life endeavours. The stories are meant to galvanize one into action. This review is relevant to the research because it discusses the content of the book, *Tales of Freedom.*

Daniel posits that *Tales of Freedom* takes an alternative view of literature's purpose (1). The first half of the book is a fragmented novella concerning a group of people lost in a forest, including an escape from an asylum, an old man and woman and their slave. "They spoke alternately," writes Okri, "as if they were in a dream, or a trance, or a ritual," which sums up his style fairly well. The novel is like the book of Apocalypse in the bible that needs an exegesis to comprehend. Its origin is mysterious; its purpose is revelation, its form compact, its subject infinite. Its nature is enigma" although they have some quirky charm, these prose pieces read more like ideas for half-formed stories that are far from transcendent. It's also hard to see what revelation they bear to the haiku form -this is usually called prose-poetry. (Daniel,1)

Okri's language drifts off into a dreamland of deliberate timelessness, the aura of "ancient ritual" that shades into vagueness and imprecision. The book ends with a hopeful parable, "*The Message*", in which the reader is addressed as a weary traveller in a mysterious fairy-tale kingdom, whose journey has been the book itself. *Tales of Freedom* is stimulating to read. The tales are simple with elegant descriptions. Daniel's review is very pertinent to the use of language in this work because it talks about the exegesis of the text.

Chikogu and Ofuani maintain that Ben Okri's use of word classes- verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, pronoun and interjection establishes him as a good prose writer. They posit that Ben Okri thus exploits the graphological resources of the English language as an aid to communicate the various dimensions of the fictional reality he creates. It is the usage of words that makes literature. Literature communicates thoughts, ideas, information, education and experience to its audience. It is the artist's desire to communicate these five related elements that first drives him into creativity.

Methodology
The research method adopted is qualitative linguistic stylistic analysis. According to Widdowson, linguistic stylistic analysis is "the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation" (3). The work is qualitative research. According to Dornyei, "qualitative research involves data collection procedures that result primarily in open-ended non-numerical data which is then analysed primarily by non-statistical methods (24)". The data to be analysed is Ben Okri's *Tales of Freedom*, a collection of thirteen short stories referred to as stokus (an amalgam of a story and haiku), thematising such themes as the journey of man on earth, freedom, freedom versus slavery, man and nature, etc. Okri's *Tales of Freedom* is seen as a literary experiment in that the author presents the short stories as a continuum. In this way, Okri attempts a fusion of two otherwise separate genres of literature in an attempt to create a new literary form, one which thematises existential issues among human beings. Therefore, the primary data is the text Tales of Freedom, while the secondary sources are academic articles, reviews, journals, and other literary materials in the text.

Analysis and Discussion
The text, *Tales of Freedom*, is divided into two halves, with a short story entitled "comic destiny" taking up most of the book. The other half comprises thirteen 'stokus', a story and a haiku. The first segment of the book talks about five characters: Old Man, Old Woman, Pinprop, Young Man and Young Woman who are marooned in Eden, a forest which is the setting of the text; and the suffering they pass through to escape from their hopeless predicament.

The analyses proceed from the graphological analysis.

Graphological Analysis
According to Dada, "graphology or graphemics is the study of a language system or orthography as it is seen in the various kinds of handwriting and typography. It is the patterned system of the graphic substance of language and its study" (196). On the other hand, Leech explains that graphology is the written representation of the spoken version of language and "refers to the whole writing system: punctuation and paragraphing as well as spelling" (39). He

further identifies graphological rules as a subset of linguistic rules. Simpson maintains that graphology "exerts a psycholinguistic influence on the reading process" (28). This is because visual elements are as essential as the text. Onwukwe discusses graphological deviation to include deviant use of capital letters where they are not expected, predominant use of commas, the spacing of words or sentences and organization of lines of poetry into visual shapes. Chapman lends credence to the relevance of graphological analysis of written texts when he affirms: "The graphology of text is of great importance in identifying the stylistic peculiarities of a writer" (33). The graphological features discussed include the punctuation marks- ellipsis, arbitrary use of comma and capitalization.

Okeke maintains that foregrounded features are the unique creative innovations used by literary artists generally, especially poets. According to Adedoja, Ogunrinde and Jayeoba (2023), these foregrounded features are provided by the lexis for imaginative creation. He argues that foregrounded features include category violations, collocational violations and sometimes, extra regularities such as pattern repetition, alliteration, rhyme, sentence and phrase structures. The purpose of foregrounding, linguistic or non-linguistic, is to add an unusual and unique idea to the language. Foregrounding can manifest in diverse ways in any data. These include unusual capitalization, italicization, comma, ellipsis, bold words and arrangement of lines in the text. Sometimes foregrounding could bring about deviation. Onwukwe adumbrates that "deviation in stylistics is a departure from the normal or standard linguistic usage in a language. Its intention is to catch the attention of the reader; this will make for a greater understanding of what is being read" (12). Onwukwe further says that deviation is a unique usage of a writer is a kind of deliberate disruption of the normal processes of communication. Wales further explains that "deviations are violations of linguistic norms, e.g. grammatical/semantic norms, strange metaphors, similes or collocations that are deployed to achieve special effects in a text, especially poetry, amount to foregrounding" (183). The deviations in graphology have to be studied because they not only foreground the various parts of the data but are also devised to bring to fore the preoccupations, connotations and the substance of the text.

Punctuation Marks
Punctuation helps Okri to present his ideas lucidly. Punctuation marks help writers properly demarcate boundaries within sentences, just as they are used to mark tones and pauses graphically. Several punctuation marks are used in the text to achieve stylistic and aesthetic ends. Some of these include comma, elliptical marks, capitalisation and italics. Exemplifications of these are discussed below.

> His father, who was the bus driver, was beside him, shouting,
> waving his arms, defending his son (181).

The text uses asyndeton commas. It means the deliberate omission of conjunctions between series of related words in sentences. Asyndeton aims to make parts of a sentence logically connected. Using comma above allows the author to eliminate conjunctions like 'and or 'but.' This rhetorical device works to make a speech more dramatic and effective by speeding up its rhythm and pace. The use of comma allows the author to link about four different ideas, like

thoughts, notions, or concepts and clauses together. By doing this, the author is able to pass across a number of information like facts, evidence and material to the reader in one sentence. Another example in *Tales of Freedom* is:

> The bus chugged across a bridge, past an orchard, an isolated villa, vineyards, a crumbling castle, and a field with a white horse staring at the sky (182)

In the above excerpt, the asyndeton comma has five entries. The movement of the bus also follows a similar progressive tempo. This was the time Reggio's father was driving the bus recklessly, loaded with passengers. He is a professional driver. The use of comma allows the author to connect six noun phrases/nominal groups together as the author is expressing the progressive movement of the bus towards a direction. This progressive movement as a result of the excessive use of the comma, builds up a tempo as the reader encounters the different nominal groups. It helps establish the vividness of the images as well as the progression of the persona in the activity in which they are involved. Asyndeton comma is used to build up a series of descriptions and then a series of actions. And that builds up leads to a climax.

The full stop is an end marker usually placed at the end of a declarative or imperative sentence. It shows that such a sentence is complete. In the text, the author makes a lot of utterances that are not in sentences, yet they end with a full stop, thereby elevating them to the status of sentences. Some examples are:
1. The excessive stench of putrefying bodies (9)
2. Too much blood and tiredness and iron in the throat (9)
3. Small places turning septic, and large spaces tumbling into confusion (9)
4. And people becoming hell (9)
5. And hunger bloating too many bellies (9)
6. Tiredness and tiredness and chaos… (10)

The use of full stop in the text demonstrates a sense of completeness that is understood by the interlocutors. Although these examples are not complete sentences in themselves because they are either verbless (examples 1, 2, 6, etc.) or have non-finite verbs (examples 3, 4, 5, etc.). Therefore, they are phrases because they have no finite verbs. Yet the author elevates them to the level of full sentences by starting each with a capital letter and ending each with a full stop. Observation shows that these structures are utterances of characters in the text. And such incomplete structures are common in conversations among speakers and hearers, especially in real-life situations. By presenting these non-clausal structures as sentences, the author captures the participants' interactions as naturally occurring conversations. In other words, the author presents the interactions among characters exactly as the characters have uttered them. This enables readers to assume that there is no authorial intrusion, just as it portrays the author as being true to his characters and actions.

According to Ahaotu, elliptical dots comprise three horizontal dots that indicate the omission of a word, phrase, a clause or a sentence from either a sentence or a passage, which is usually quoted. Longe and Ofuani maintain that "where matter is omitted, ellipses are used. Ellipses are indeed sometimes used to indicate some kind of discontinuity…"(228). Ellipsis is used when

omitting a word, phrase, line, paragraph or more from a quoted passage. Functionally, elliptical marks may signal interruption by other speakers (when the current speaker still holds the floor), refusal of the current speaker to continue with the talk, and forgetfulness on the part of the current speaker, among others. The following are some elliptical marks in the text:

1. It was even funnier when... (16)

2. I rewrote them, indeed I did. And... (16)

3. ...a man came along and saw his skeleton embedded in the body of a building (16)

4. ... I thought it was funny myself that I had rewritten the last sign I saw that said 'And I was last (17)

5. And now,' said Pinprop, 'that we have arrived at a temporary destination... (20) *Old Man interrupts Pinprop.*

6. ... I may as well remember for myself... (21).

In the first example above, Old Woman interrupts Old Man while he is talking, but Old Man soon interrupts Old Woman to take back the floor, as seen in the second and third examples. In the fourth excerpt, Old Woman again interrupts Old Man. These interruptions between the two are cooperative and supportive interruptions because the interrupter only utters statements that support what the interrupted was saying, rather than utter contrary opinions. The cooperative interruptions above show that the characters (Old Woman and Old Man) are anxious and are eager to contribute to the discussion.

However, in the last six examples, Old Woman and Old Man interrupt Pinprop, who holds the floor. This type of interruption is rather disruptive since the duo is not necessarily supporting him. Since Pinprop is their slave, they find it easy to interrupt him at will whenever he is talking. This interruption makes him feel small and reminds him that he is still a slave to them. Elliptical marks are used a lot in *Tales of Freedom.* Some more examples include:

> The first person who offers us some food will receive ... (120)
> from such a lackadaisical throw.... (163)
> In an art so fiendish that it amounted to sorcery.... (165)

The profuse use of ellipsis in *Tales of Freedom* signals that characters engage in many conversations, since there cannot be interruptions where there is no conversation. Cooperative interruptions also show that characters are anxious to contribute to the talk while supporting each other. Disruptive interruptions show a lack of cooperation with the current speaker, as well as agitation and impatience. It is also an index of class difference as Old Woman and Old Man, who are socially placed above Pinprop, are not often patient with his talks. Thus:

Pinprop resumed pacing. He appeared slightly confused.
'I 'm glad it makes sense.'
'Well, go on,'
'Well, em, where was I?'
'The mouse becomes a trap,' Old Woman said, irritated.
'Yes. Where was I before that?'
'You were here, you fool,' Old Man snapped. (7)

An intriguing clue to Pinprop's personality is that he admits any name his masters give him. On page nineteen, there is another humiliating dialogue going on in the text between Pinprop and his masters, thus:

Surely. You're too old for that.'
I shall outdo the rainstorm, sir, Pinprop shouted. Who knows
what clouds are anyway?
'Shut up, Pinprop,.. (19)

Lexis and Style in the Text

Ndimele adumbrates that lexicon (lexemes) "are units of vocabulary which are listed in the lexicon of a language. The lexicon refers to the total list of words in a language" (6). This discussion will identify the content/lexical words like nouns, verbs, adverbs and adjectives. Afterwards, grammatical words like pronouns, prepositions, articles, conjunctions, determiners and particles will be discussed. Muhammad asserts that "as lexical words denote the expression of a writer, grammatical words formulate the syntactic framework of the text/sentence" (205-206). In light of the assertion, a lexical analysis was carried out to know how the writer used linguistic features to serve thematic and literary purposes.

Table 1: Word Class/Frequency

Word Class	Types	Frequency
Content Words	Nouns	3509
	Verbs	4697
	Adverbs	789
	Adjectives	1562
Function Words	Pronouns	1317
	Prepositions	1588
	Conjunctions	717
	Articles	1623
	Determiners	551
	Particles	318
Total		16,680

The text under study contains sixteen thousand, six hundred and eighty words (16,680). The words are divided into two: the content words or lexical words, and the grammatical words or structural words.

Lexical Repetition
This is a deliberate use of the same word, group of words, clauses or larger units occurring severally in an expression or utterance. The aim is for emphasis. It is a linguistic stylistic device consisting of the reiteration of the word or word group that the author uses to make their utterance forceful. There are a number of examples of repetition in the text. Some examples are presented below:

(1) Tiredness and tiredness and chaos. And fear, Sir, limitless fear. (10)

(2) So one day they had an argument and the fellow who sniffed a lot sniffed and sniffed and sniffed. (29)

(3) You know, routines and routines. (31)

(4) Yes Yes (47)

(5) You know, a nice cosy room where we would have no arguments, no jealousies, no routines, no boredom, no fights.' 'Yes. No jobs, no poverty, no diseases.'(55)

(6) Pinprop, you shall suffer for this a thousand thousand times. (84)

The underlined parts in the above sentences are examples of lexical repetition. Characters repeat certain lexical items to create certain effects. For instance, in sentence (1) above, the repetition of 'tiredness' and 'fear' is a concise manner of expressing their state of being as the characters are engulfed with tiredness and fear. So, the repetition enhances brevity. In example (2), the repetition serves to foreground the character's most notable attitude and behaviour. The character is described as the one who sniffed a lot and now, he sniffed again and again. While the repetition in example (3) serves to express the boring routines of the characters' life and shows that he is not happy with it, the repetition in example (4) shows the character's happiness and anxiousness that the other actually said what he wants to hear. In example (5) between the two characters, the negative marker 'no' is repeated seven times as a means to foreground their distastes for all their fears. And this use of 'no' helps greatly in the climatic build-up of the sentences. Lastly, in example (6), the repetition of 'thousand' stylistically indicates how very much or how greatly the speaker wants Pinprop to suffer for his action.

Generally speaking, the use of lexical repetition as seen in the above examples is to express tiredness, fear, boredom and emotions (dislike, elation, anger and expectation). These emotional states are understandable especially within the context of the story where the characters have to navigate through hardship and intense agony in order to escape their unfortunate circumstances. The repetition of the lexical items is stylistically significant in that it heightens and emphasizes meaning.

Sentence Types in *Tales of Freedom*

A sentence is a group of words which contains at least a predicator and is meaningful. There are four types of sentences such as simple sentence, compound sentence, complex sentence, compound complex sentence.

Structural Classification in the text

The sentence is the highest and largest level of the grammatical unit. It is a group of grammatically related words that expresses a complete thought. The stylistic reason for bringing out the number of sentences is to show why the author used a particular sentence type over and above others. First and foremost, the discussion is going to look into the structural classification of sentences which will be followed by the functional classification of sentences. The syntactic features or sentence structure that have significant stylistic effects are simple sentences, compound sentences, compound complex sentences, and complex sentences.

Nordquist explains why writers like Okri use different types of sentences or a variety of sentences: "In a composition, sentence variety refers to the practice of varying the length and structure of sentences to avoid monotony and provide appropriate emphasis" (1). The predominant use of simple sentences in the text makes the text simple, direct and easily comprehensible by an average reader. DeGeorge and Ray (1985) believe that varying the length of a sentence accomplishes clarity, interest and directness in a sentence. Nordquist affirms that variety in sentences is what is needed. He maintains that "all short (sentence) will sound stupid. All long will sound stuffy" (1). Okri's sentence length, pattern and variety are carefully woven in order to sustain the interest of the reader. According to Anyanwu, "a simple sentence is one that has only a predicate around one subject" (33). The subject as well as the predicate may vary in length and composition, but they always function together. According to Bider, Conrad and Leech, "a sentence is a complete structure found in written texts, bounded by sentences punctuation." (460). A table of sentence types as used by Okri in *Tales of Freedom* is presented below:

Table 2: Showing Sentence Types and their Frequency of Realization

Sentence Types	Frequency	%
Simple Sentences	1013	44.96
Compound Sentences	518	22.99
Complex Sentences	438	19.44
Compound Complex Sentences	284	12.60
Total	2253	100

As shown in Table 2, the text consists of two thousand, two hundred and fifty-three sentences (2,253). The simple sentences are one thousand and thirteen (1,013), making up 44.96% of the

total sentences. It means that the author uses more simple sentences than other types of sentences. Simple sentences are short and brief because they express only an idea, with one finite verb. Having the simple sentences constituting almost half of the sentences in the text implies that the author wishes to express the experiences in the text in simple, short, and concise language for easy comprehension. Stylistically, simple sentences make for simple ideas and messages. The next sentence type that is frequently used is the compound sentence, which has 518 entries and constitutes 22.99%. This is a sentence type which has two coordinate clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction. In other words, the compound sentence is a combination of two simple sentences since it has two finite verbs. Compound sentences make for equality of ideas, such that the two ideas presented in the sentences are considered equal and balanced.

Another type of sentence used by the author is a complex sentence. In a complex sentence, one part expresses the more important or superior idea while the other expresses the less important or subordinate idea. Such a sentence with main and subordinate ideas is usually joined by a subordinating conjunction. In *Tales of Freedom*, there are 438 (19.44%) complex sentences. Complex sentences, by nature, suggest that ideas are unequal. They portray the imbalance in the status of the two ideas expressed in a sentence, such that one is seen as superior to the other. Readers are therefore expected to perceive the ideas as having a superordinate-subordinate relationship. Further, the compound complex sentences have 284 (12.60%) entries. A compound complex sentence expresses two main or independent ideas, plus one or more dependent ideas. Put differently, the sentence has two finite verbs or two main clauses and one or more subordinate clauses. This implies that a compound-complex sentence expresses three or more ideas at once. And for readers and listeners, this type of sentence requires special cognition to understand. It is the only type of sentence that may be structurally difficult for readers to decipher. Although Okri varies his sentence patterns, the first three types: simple, compound and complex sentences make for easy understanding by the readers. These sentence types make the work appealing to average readers. Some examples of the sentences are presented below.

> The man paused. (p.31) (Simple Sentence)
> He laughed. (p.94) (Simple Sentence)
> I remember. (p.95) (Simple Sentence)
> Pinprop sat up straight and came to his senses. (p.5) (Compound sentence)
> Old Man raised his head, saw the Man, and went back to sleep. (p.26) (Compound Sentence)
> Then he (Pinprop) laughed, looked excitedly about the clearing, ran off into the woods, and soon came back with a…You know, thick tree-branch in his hand. (p.34) (Compound sentence)
> They spoke alternately, as if they were in a dream, or a trance, or a ritual. (p.14) (Complex Sentence)
> I am glad it makes sense. (p.7) (Complex Sentence)
> You know, I saw a good joke while I was running, (p.31) (Complex Sentence)

He (Sedgewick) had mastered something so unique that no one even dreamt it was there to be mastered. (p.164) (Complex Sentence)
Pinprop wailed and laughed wildly at the same time, while they chained him. (p.12) (Compound Complex Sentence)
We were all there, downstairs, outside, and the dapper Jackson was demonstrating a classical overarm bowl, with a wrist action that was his speciality. (p.164) (Compound Complex)

These excerpts make it clear that certain types of sentences can easily be grasped and understood by readers. In other words, the cognitive processes involved in deciphering the messages in these types of sentences are direct. On the other hand, difficult structural patterns such as compound complex sentences, which require cognitive and mental exercises to grasp their meanings, are few in the text under study. Perhaps Okri, recognising that such patterns may be difficult for general readers, reduced their incidence in the text. Reducing the difficult structural patterns of sentences and utilizing the simple patterns more makes for easy understanding of the work. These also make the work appeal to average readers and enhance the smooth reading of the text.

Functional Classification in the text
The sentence types according to function, such as declarative, interrogative and imperative, are also identified and discussed.

Declarative Sentence
A sentence is declarative if its function is merely to inform the reader or listener. Such pieces of information to the reader, either from the author or characters, are usually products of the knowledge of the world experiences of the writer or speaker(s), because declaratives are used to express our experiences of the world around us. It usually ends with a full stop or a period. Wales (1989: 106) claims that 'declaratives in English have a sentence order of subject-verb-object normally, and a falling intonation pattern.' The text has a large number of declaratives, some of which are listed below:

Pinprop resumed pacing. (p.7)
The footsteps got closer. (p.25)
I saw unforgettable things. (p.131)
His chemistry had changed. (p.164)
A woman with several men came on. (p.117)

The information about each character is short and simple, devoid of unnecessary details. For instance, on page 7, Pinprop is the type who likes walking up and down each time he wants to talk. He beams with pride as he strolls through the bush. He loves attention. The author wants the reader to know that Pinprop likes to showcase his importance in the midst of his masters. On page twenty-five, there are some unknown persons who are approaching the place where the Old Man, Old Woman and Pinprop are resting. The footsteps come to them as a surprise and disturbance. Everybody seen around the forest is a suspect owing to the fact that insecurity was their major challenge. In the bush, Pinprop also sees some images he is unable to explain,

which instil fear in him. All these expressions create an aura of fear, glumness and dejection in the passage.

Interrogative Sentences

These are sentences that pose questions and expect answers to those questions. An interrogative sentence is used to ask a question in order to obtain new information. Wales asserts that there are two main types of interrogatives in English. These are the 'yes-no' question which often expects an answer of 'yes' or 'no' and the wh- questions formed with the interrogative pronouns and other forms (258). Interrogatives end with a question mark (?). For example,

> What's the matter with you? (26)
> Do you understand what I mean? (27)
>
> Are you dead or alive? (33)
> Are we going or are we to listen to this fool? (41)

In the text, Old Woman is fond of using interrogative sentences to ask her husband questions. All these questions are asked in the bush. Old Woman's questions in the bush are asked for her to get information as she is confused, troubled and requires soothing information and explanations. Further, the Old Man and Woman, along with their slave boy Pinprop, are downcast because help is not forthcoming to them. They suddenly become irritated at the slightest provocation. This scene of hopelessness gives birth to nagging and makes them hold grudges against one another. The author uses all the myriad questions asked by Old Man, Old Woman and Pinprop to demonstrate that their minds could not grow above the suffering they are passing through in the forest. Some further examples are presented below.

> You mean we have not yet arrived? (6)
> Yes, where was I before that? (7)

Further, the myriad questions asked by Old Man, Old Woman, and Pinprop show their states of mind: they are confused and anxious and expect a better, more soothing, and comforting life as opposed to the suffering in the forest.

Imperative Sentences

These sentences express a command, or a request or a piece of advice. It is simply called a command. It is modified with evocative words in prayer or with 'please' in request. Often, the subject in an imperative sentence is 'You', though it may not be expressed in the sentence. Since the imperative sentence is supposed to be directed to a listening audience, the subject of the sentence, 'You', is usually omitted. Imperative sentences usually end with a period but may end with an exclamation point. In social interaction, commands often come from superiors or elders to subordinates or the younger ones. Some examples from the texts are:

> Forgive me sir. (9)
> Let us not talk about age (12)

> Shut up, Pinprop! (18)
> Hello, excuse me; please… (26)

Old Man and Old Woman are known for using imperative sentences as they relate to their slave boy, Pinprop, as has been indicated above; unfortunately, most of these commands get a reply from Pinprop, who is flippant. Each time Pinprop notices that his masters are angry with him, he displays fruits of repentance: "Forgive me Sir". It is an act of diplomatic servanthood by Pinprop. It sets in motion tolerance on the part of Pinprop's masters. On page forty-one, the Old Man sees some of Pinprop's utterances as lacking in sense. In fact, the Old Man Pinprop has a sour tongue, full of self-impulse and would not like to pay attention to him (Old Man). On page eighteen, Pinprop is shut down as he is talking. The author uses these imperative sentences to remind the reader that Pinprop is still under the tutelage of his masters, Old Man and Old Woman.

Exclamatory Sentences
These are sentences that express some strong or sudden feeling. It is also called an exclamation. An exclamatory sentence always ends with an exclamation mark (!). For instance,

> Chain the insolent clown! (62)
> That's Impossible! It's an abomination! (126)
> What luck! (196)
> Shut up, Pinprop! (18)
> You stupid fool! (48)

It is used to show surprise and doubt in the text. On page sixty-two, "chain the insolent clown!" Old Man gives the order for Pinprop to be tied. Old Man believes that Pinprop is becoming impudent and needs to be checked. Old man endeavours to dissipate the pride in Pinprop. At this point, Old Man expresses anguish and disappointment on Pinprop. Pinprop is, to an extent, regarded as a closet comedian who is always gibbering. Pinprop uses any platform he sees to amuse his masters. The author presents Pinprop as a scoundrel. Pinprop provides comic relief to the story. On page one hundred and twenty-six, the narrator uses the clock's movement and function to mesmerize his audience, who have just seen the clock for the first time. For the audience, it is an abomination and a show of surprise that a lifeless object could move. On page one hundred and ninety-six, the exclamation "What Luck!" was used by the narrator to show a kind of surprise to his audience that their quest and journey are over. Without proper use of sentence patterns, one cannot express one's thoughts effectively in writing; without varying one's speech or writing with different sentence patterns, that utterance looks hackneyed, loose and redundant. "Variety is the spice of life."

At the syntactic level, Okri experiments with different structural patterns such as SPCA, SPA, ASPC, SPC, etc., to achieve various forms of parallelism. Therefore, the work deploys parallelism to achieve rhetorical effect and rhythm, to juxtapose the experience of the characters in the forest, to express equivalence and balance of thoughts, ideas and actions among characters, to re-echo in a climatic manner meanings and messages, to strengthen and emphasise the messages of certain characters and, to create a mellifluous effect on the text.

Conclusion

In this study, we've delved into the linguistic stylistic features found in Ben Okri's *Tales of Freedom*, uncovering how his unique use of language intricately shapes meaning, tone, and thematic richness. By employing various stylistic devices—such as metaphor, repetition, symbolism, syntax, and narrative voice—Okri weaves together a complex narrative that beautifully merges realism with mysticism, all while challenging our traditional views on freedom, identity, and consciousness. Our analysis reveals just how much Okri's linguistic choices enhance the emotional impact of his storytelling, echoing his philosophical ideas and artistic vision. Ultimately, this study underscores the importance of linguistic stylistics in revealing the subtle relationship between form and meaning in literature, and it reaffirms Ben Okri's status as a linguistic maestro whose works go beyond simple labels, inviting readers into a space where freedom is both a personal journey and a shared quest.

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