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Keywords: syntactic features, english usage, implications, standard english, students.

I. Introduction

In Nigeria today, a lot of our Nollywood stars have become most of our role models. Though, we are all aware that drama is unrealistic unless they are based on a true story; what the protagonist does or says can give us ideas which sometimes are not the best ideas. Oftentimes, if a favorite character tends to use a word or sentence contrarily to its actual meaning to tease people in a particular movie, it might instigate viewers to do the same by automatically adopting such word or sentence to tease. The implication of this is that movies have the potential not only to affect our thoughts but also influence our lifestyle and communicative abilities. Being obsessed with a fictional character can influence students or anyone generally, to want to look like, talk, act or become someone else.

Adeniyi and Bello (2006) contends that man, through the media, can get what language form, fashion, music and so on that are in vogue. In little or no time, through our listening to the radio set or watching the television set, we could get to do what others are doing. The media, therefore, become a fast means through which we could get anything promoted. As a result of the fact that youths get what language form, fashion, music etc that is in vogue through movies, Nollywood stars appear to have encapsulated the life of the average urban youths (Omojola, 2006) and increasingly also the lives of rural youths across the country with the various language used in their movies. As these fans consume the content of the movie, they also flow with the language used.

Most of the language style, slangs and catchy phrases that Nollywood stars deliberately use in their movies to increase the rate of acceptability of such movie and also for them to create a landmark worth discussing even while the movie is no longer in vogue are now popular almost on every street in Nigeria (Liadi, 2012). Because Nollywood movies are highly accessible and quickly incorporative through various forms of media, most of these slangs and catchy phrases tend to affect the way students communicate on daily basis. This emanates from the usual habits of students' imitation of the Nollywood stars and an attempt to want to speak like them. Students who are fans of the Nollywood stars have always attempted to mimic their utterances, grammar and style of pronunciation in movies. Resultantly, the widespread popularity of the Nollywood language has a significant impact on the English language that is used by today's students.

Jenifa's Diary, one of the popular film show which has gained the attention of fans in and out the country, has no doubt played a key role in determining the language use of teeming fans across the country. Many lovers of the TV show would rather set aside all they are doing to watch the show (Akham, 2019), and the bastardized use of English in the movie series is now the trending language among the vast majority of youths who are students of primary, secondary and tertiary institution. *Jenifa's Diary*, which is a dramatic show by the ace actress; Funke Akindele, is a long-running TV episode series that is attracting greater attention, most probably because the characters therein spoke the English language as opposed to the formal way of using

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it (Oriloye, 2018) which now trend among students and general public.

The use of English of the protagonist of the TV show, Jenifa; is armed with horrendous grammar, poor expression, bastardized intonation and arbitral code-mixing and code-switching of English and Yoruba dialect and after watching the popular film show, viewers have not only attempted to mimic the protagonist of the play but also have been inspired to speak like Jenifa. Viewers, in which students constitute majorities not only attempt to mimic the lifestyle of Jenifa, they also inculcate the habit of speaking ungrammatical English the way she used them. Jenifa's use of several incorrect words in place of words with similar sounds, resulting most times in humorous utterances have become the usual way students talk nowadays. The type of language and the accent used is very inappropriate and students are acquiring it at a dangerous level.

This film might inevitably bring a certain frustration to language learners who have not achieved a high proficiency level. Against this background, this study attempts to analyze the syntactic features of English usage of Jenifa in *Jenifa's Diary*in order to expose its implications on the English usage of Nigerian students.

II. The Observed Problem

It is a point of note that bad English is what motivates people to watch the movie. However, the problem arises when the trending comic relief sitcom has an adverse effect on poor Nigerian students. In vogue, grammatical expression as pleasantries amidst Nigerian students in recent times has been "how is you" and "my friendship" and the usual reply is "I is fine" and "Yaun" bastardized with bad accent and intonation.

Recently, I overheard a little girl speaking exactly like Jenifa. She was telling another kid, "Joe, ava? and he replied, "I is fine". Then, I wondered the damage it will cause to their English speaking ability in the long run. My point is, people who already know the right grammar to use may not be a victim of this. However, people especially students who are still learning the English language or with low proficiency in the language can be confused and misled. Hence, there is a need to analyze Jenifa's use of English in *Jenifa's Diary* from the syntactic level of linguistic analysis in order to find out how such a widely acclaimed movie series can influence the language situation of the viewers- positively or otherwise. Therefore, this study attempts to linguistically analyze the English of Jenifa in *Jenifa's Diary* with a view to expose its implications on the English usage of students.

III. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to:

i. Identify and describe the syntactic features of Jenifa's English in *Jenifa's Diary.*
ii. Investigate the impact of these features on the English usage of Nigerian students.

IV. Literature Review

a) Jenifa's Diary as a TV show and Language Development of Students

Akindele Olufunke Ayotunde (popularly known as FunkeAkindele) is a Nigerian actress and producer. According to Wikipedia (2019), Funke starred in the sitcom *I Need to Know* from 1998 to 2002, and in 2009, she won the Africa Movie Academy Award for Best Actress in a Leading Role. She plays the lead character in the show *Jenifa's Diary*, for which she was named Best Actress in a Comedy at the 2016 Africa Magic Viewer's Choice Awards. Funke has over 100 movies to her credit as an actress, writer, and producer (*Chidumga, 2017).*

Jenifa's Diary, an award-winning comedy movie series is a combination of funny characters which has got thousands of people thrilled and thus gained a lot of fans. *Jenifa's Diary* is a Nigerian television comedy series, created by Funke Akindele which started in 2015 and ended in 2017 has 16 seasons and several episodes (Ahkam, 2019).

In Jenifa's Diary, as explained by Oriloye (2018), the story revolves around the same humorous and eponymous character; Sulia turned Jenifa, (played by Funke Akindele), a village school drop-out who is obsessed with living the campus life and becoming a big girl in the city. She deployed crooked means in the bid to leave Ayétòrò, her village, for the city and Toyosi; an undergraduate she had once helped had to put up with her. Suliat expresses her comic character by her loose attitude, hasty comments, the spirit of adventure and most especially, poor English expressions and Yorùbá dialect. Armed with her horrendous grammar, quick wit and beloved diary, she battles her way through whatever obstacle the city hurls at her. Funny enough, the least one would have expected from such a character is a diary where she records her day-to-day experiences and thoughts in soliloquies! With themes bordering on love, friendship, family and self-actualization, "Jenifa's Diary" is indeed a viewer's delight.

However, while many people have praised the T.V show for the elated humour in the series, other people have zero tolerance for it sight on their TV screens as they termed the show a waste of time with no solid lesson gained. Uzoma Ihejirika, a writer in Bakwa Magazine commented that humour is one of the

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strong points of the movie series. He noted that many times he laughed out loud at Jenifa's confident massacre of the English language. He noted that despite Akindele's use of "corrupt English'', the programme was still entertaining. He added that the entertainment industry needed to produce movies and series as `Jenifa's Diary' (Bakwamagazine.com, 2016). Also, another viewer of the programme, Miss Ifeyinwa Ohanwe, a public servant described the programme as hilarious. She commented that she enjoyed watching the programme because it is hilarious, entertaining and kepts her wanting to see more (The Vanguard Newspaper, 2016). As argued by some commenters in the article "Grammatical Intelligence: Jenifa's Diary Not For Kids" posted on Nairaland Forum in 2019, *Jenifa's Diary* show passes information to the public. Beyond her accent are some information and valuable lessons of life which she was able to past across to the audience through her unique accents.

On the other hand, others condemned the use of language in the movie series. Ohanwe, noted that she would not recommend the programme for children, adding that if they watched it overtime, it might corrupt their use of English. He added that *Jenifa's Diary* is not for school children because kids learn things fast and if they know it, it is hard for them to forget it. Another commenter advised that people especially children who are still learning the English language should not view that movie because it might instigate them to form a habit that will negatively hamper their language development (The Vanguard Newspaper, 2016).

Ritonga and Sofyani (2018) opine that there are several important things in the process of language development of children such as physical preparation, mental readiness, the existence of a good model to be imitated, the opportunity to practice, as well as motivation and guidance. Television is one of the most effective media in delivering its message. As asserted by Guru, Nabi and Raslana (2013), the eye is one of the most powerful sensory organs and two-thirds of learning come through the sense of sight much more than what people learn through the sense of sound. Guru et al. (2013) note further that audio-visual information lasts long in one's memory. The presence of color enables one to show things in natural colours enhancing the level of communications and the motion gives one more dynamism to the process of communication. Thus, the presence of these rich characteristics of theatre in television makes the communication process more effective and helps the viewers in the perception of information and poor language television models can affect children's language development.

Robin (2004) contends that a child's age and linguistic maturity, the suitability of the content for his or her age group, the quality of the content viewed, the amount of television viewed, and the involvement of parents during viewing all inform the likelihood of language learning from television. To Robin (2004), the correlation between high quantity of general television viewing and poor language ability may be attributable to the quality of content viewed and/or the time spent viewing. Evidence suggests that children who are frequently exposed to inappropriate television tend to have a lower vocabulary and poorer expressive language which are attributable to both the quality of the content on offer and the quantity of exposure to television more generally.

Research finds that children who have language delay tended to watch television too early. Children who are less than twelve months and watch more than two hours a day of television are six times more likely to develop language delay (Essay, 2018). This means that age-appropriate educational television programs can teach new vocabulary to children even in the absence of accompanying adults and children with high television exposure and inappropriate content may have low expressive language skills and the possibility of

All the assertions discussed above show that television contents have a great impact on the language development of students. While appropriate content at appropriate times will enhance vocabulary and language use of students, inappropriate language contents can also negatively affect the language acquisition of students, especially those who are yet to form accepted language habits. Thus, the bastardized use of language in the TV show- *Jenifa's Diary* will definitely affect students' use of English.

V. Theoretical Framework: Observational Learning Theory

The theory that is employed in this study is Observational Learning Theory. The Observational Learning Theory is the theory that behavior can be learned through observation of others. Also known as the Social Learning Theory. The simple process of observing someone else's activity is enough for one to learn targeted behavior. This theory was created by Behaviorist Albert Bandura, who supported his ideas with thorough experimentation. This theory and its creator are part of the Behaviorist School of Thought in Psychology. It is a precursor to the Social Cognitive Theory, which involves the idea that people learn and construct thought processes from their experiences within social settings. Bandura believed that the mind, behavior, and environment all play a vital role in the learning process (Stone, 2019).

In Observational Learning Theory, one person's behavior (the model) is witnessed by a second person (the observer). Observational learning has occurred when some aspect of the model's behavior controls a related aspect of the second person's behavior. The observer's behavior may match the model's along the dimensions of topography,

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function, or discriminative context (Bandura, 1977). A topographical relation involves similarity of form. For example, a mother might say to her child, "You are incorrigible today' and the child replies, "I'm'corrigbal." Matching along the functional dimension involves the similarity between the outcome of the model's and observer's behavior. For example, a child might see people on a television commercial drinking bottles of soda; the child may then hurry into the kitchen to get a cup of juice. An example of observational learning of discriminative context (and topography) may be seen when a child can correctly name a real helicopter after having been exposed to pictures of helicopters and the word *helicopter* during picture-book reading with parents.

The relevance of this theory to language learning is that observing television models can affect language behavior in many ways, with both positive and negative consequences. It can teach completely new language skills and at the same time, it can also increase or decrease the frequency of rules of a language that have previously been learned. Learning by observation and imitation of other people's behavior is an everyday affair for most children and a central process in acquising a wide variety of new behaviors. Extensive research has shown that modeling is an effective way for children to acquire, strengthen, and weaken behaviors. Since Nollywood stars are often seen as role models, students often attempt to mimic their utterances, grammar and style of pronunciation in movies. This means that through observation of the television models, the widespread popularity of the Nollywood language has a significant impact upon the English language that is used by today's students.

VI. Research Method

A survey research design was utilized in this study. Description and analyses of the language use of Jenifa provided data for the study. All *Jenifa's Diary* movie series constituted the overall population of the study. However, due to time limitations and constraints, a representative number of seven episodes were randomly selected for analysis. Content Analysis was used to analyze the collected data. This includes a content analysis of *Jenifa's Diary* English to explore the features and errors of Jenifa's English. Notable features and errors of Jenifa's English were recorded and its implications on students' usage of English were drawn afterward.

a) *Presentation and Analysis of Data*

The description of the syntactic features of Jenifa's English is given below.

b) *Deviant Use of Verbs*

One of the features of Jenifa's English is the deviant use of verbs. The deviant use of the verb is seen in mis-selection of verb forms and distortion of verb tense.

c) *Mis-selection of verbs*

In the mis-selection of verbs, Jenifa showed confusion in the use of verbs. Jenifa failed to select the appropriate verb to form correct sentences to express herself in certain contexts. The following extracts from the English of Jenifa analyzed may therefore appear deviant to Standard English.

*Nobody *hears* English better than me. (understands)

*I *am understanding* you. (can understand)

*You *are saw* her? You see her?

*What are you *cook? (*cooking)

*I want to *suggestion* something (suggest)

*I *heard* the smell of jollof rice. (perceived).

*Driver, please *wait,* I want to come down. Driver, please stop, I want to get off.

*I *is* fine (am)

*NEPA *has take* light. NEPA *has interrupted* electricity supply.

* Segun, why *are you woke me up now*? *Woh* is it? (Segun, why did you wake me up? What is it?)

*Our leaders *have eaten* our money. (embezzled)

d) *Distorted use of verb tense*

Tense is usually defined as relating to the time of an action, event or state. It is needed in forming sentences and commonly expressed by the verb. The tense form of a verb indicates distinctions in time. The correct use of tense enhances meaning and fluency which facilitates comprehension and effective communication. Jenifa seems not to understand the functions of English tenses as she could not apply them correctly in the right contexts. Consequently, Jenifa used her discretion to choose tenses and invariably switch tenses haphazardly. On most occasions, she either mis-select or distort the verb tense in her utterances.

*Please ma, don't *sacked* me (Sack)

*I will *broke* your head (break)

*How *is* you? (Are)

*I *begging* you (Beg)

*I *disagreement* with you (disagree)

e) *The Omission of Function Words*

This has to do with the omission of grammatical elements that do not contribute to the meaning of the utterance. This omission occurs with function words such as conjunctions, prepositions, articles, etc and content words such as verbs, adverbs, etc. Some of these elements may have no meanings of their own, but they are necessary and important to ensure that the sentence is grammatical, complete and meaningful.

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Jenifa wrongly uses the articles or at times, omit them where they are to be used, as in the following extracts:

*You are feri feri carin poson o (You are a very caring person)

*consumers hurry go (The consumer left in a hurry)

Though, these are distorted sentence on its own with misspelling and redundant use of the adjunct "very", but the definite article 'a' has been omitted rendering the sentence ungrammatical.

f) Redundant Use of Modifiers, adjective and adjuncts for Emphasis

**This* my friend is not serious o (This friend of mine is not serious at all)

*Please, do *sharp sharp* . (quickly)

**Toyo always like wearing *small small clothes*. (jumper)

**I will be there *now now*. (that is right now/immediately)

g) Code-mixing

Code-mixing is a means of communication which involves a speaker mixing two languages within the elements of a sentence structure (in this case, English and Yoruba). The use of code-mixing of English and Yoruba is prevalent in Jenifa's utterances. Here are some extracts in English and Yoruba languages:

**Igba ti won refuser mi ni fisa ni (it was when I was denied visa)

*wey Kokoro? (where is the Key?)

*why water plenty like this inside jollof rice? Rice that suppose to do woroworo come out singular (why is water much in the jollof rice? Its supposed to stand in grains)

*why you are olodo like this, Segun? (why are you this dumb Segun)

**you be my aburo (you are my younger brother or sister)

**Mo try lati write story kan about the man's ordeal in the police station. (I tried to write a story about the man's ordeals in the police station)

h) Literary Transfer

Literary transfer here can also be regarded as a direct translation. It involves the transfer of direct or exact meaning of a word from the native language into the target language regardless of the context or co-linguistics of the utterance,

*Do *small small* there o. (be careful with your steps there)

**Come down* at lekki, *take* Uber from there

*Their house beautiful *pass* all the houses.

*E scatter in my brain (I got confused)

In examples above, jenifa employed a direct translation of her MT pattern by using the words '*small small*' to mean 'be careful' and 'come down' instead of 'alight'. The fourth example which is * E scatter in my brain (I got confused)' is a direct translation from the Yoruba dialect "o sapamilori"

i) Malapropism as a Result of Mispronunciation

Malapropism refers to an amusing mistake somebody makes when he uses a word that sounds similar to the word he wanted to use. Malapropism in the context of jenifa's English could be regarded as a mispronunciation. She mispronounced many words that only sound like the real words but are actually wrong. She used bastardised intonation to make it sound like the actual word

*Yaun… Yes

**Reske*t yourself (Respect yourself)

**Lif* me alone (Leave me alone)

**Gu mornig* (Good morning)

**Stuf* it now (Stop it)

*You are a *chife* child (You are cheap)

**Woh* is it? (what is it)

* *woh is daa rubis!* (What rubbish!)

*Infact, you *supinse* me (Infact, I'm surprised)

**Lifia here* (Leave here)

*I *slet vine* (I slept fine (well))

*You are *feri feri carin poson o* (You are a very caring person)

**Skuriti* (Security)

j) Semantic Misapplication and Wrong Lexical Choices

Semantic is connected with the meaning of words and sentences. Semantic misapplication then occurs according to (Adebileje and Akinwale, 2017), when meaning of a word has been misapplied in a sentence. That means the word is being used in a wrong context (different from how it ought to be used and when it ought to be used). Semantic misapplication sometimes leads to the wrong lexical choice. Wrong lexical choice, as the name implies, involves using the wrong word in a sentence. Jenifa's English was mostly filed with semantic misapplication and wrong lexical choices which made her utterances ungrammatical. Her choices of words are wrongly fitted using words that do not collocate in the English language, impose the word order of her dialect and misapplying meanings.

*I pride in you (i am so proud of you)

*You want to make your head? (Would you like to plait our hair?)

*You go school? (Are you literate?)

*Is me that they are found (They are my guests)

*Toyosi, I no hungry, I tire (Toyosi, I am not hungry. I'm tired)

*No ma, I *no* sleep (No ma, I *am not* sleeping)

*Why he go gone! (Why would he leave!)

*Ais not do it another day (It wont happen again)

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*Make I come and die? (I don't want to die)

*Who is swrong in you (What is the problem?)

*We cannot be friendship (We cannot be friends)

*Come and sat (Please, have a seat)

*Why water plenty like this in jollof rice? (How come the jollof rice is watery)\

*I no angry (i am not upset)

k) The Extent to which these Errors Affect the Standard English usage of Nigerian students

One of the ways students, both at the secondary and tertiary level get to know the latest in vogue is through movie stars. They have always constituted models for many youths who are their fans. The language used in each Nigeria movie, whether Yoruba or English has the potential to attract the youth of different races, classes, ethnic backgrounds and beliefs. Hence, it's no doubt that the language use of jenifa in *Jenifa's Diary* appears to have encapsulated the life of the average urban students and increasingly also the lives of rural students across the country. Despite the ungrammaticality that characterized Jenifa's English, a large population of students imbibed the act of emulating such language use.

Today, the presence of Jenifa's English is heard in English usage of students of all educational levels. Students are seen saying "How is you" in place of 'how are you', I is fine" in place of 'I am fine' "Yaun" to mean "yes or yes?' "my friendship/friended" to mean 'my friend' "lifia" in place of "leave here" "what is stwrong in you" to ask what the problem is, "I want to suggestion something" and many more. This means that the widespread popularity of Jenifa's English has a significant impact on the English language that is used by today's students. Nowadays, students are getting addicted and their English intonation is gradually getting reshaped to jenifa's. The researcher observed that watching the movie change students' language knowledge unconsciously in their attempt to imitate Jenifa. Though, students are not seen to speak such English at formal setting but they are often thrilled when there is someone to speak Jenifa's English to and if care is not taken, they won't be able to differentiate between Jenifa's English and Standard English.

VII. Conclusion

Video material is an effective tool in language teaching and learning but not all video materials impact students' language knowledge positively. Jenifa's Diary is a comedy movie series meant to entertain. Still, at the same time, the ungrammaticality in the language use is at the detriment of students with low language proficiency. The way language was used in the movie series not only by Jenifa but other casts could mislead and confuse the students, especially those who are still learning the English language or with low proficiency in language use. Hence, students should desist from imitating the erroneous use of Jenifa's English. This will prevent the movie series from uttering their language knowledge. Students must also minimize the time they spend watching *Jenifa's Diary* or related movies to avoid forming an unconscious habit of ungrammatical English which will adversely affect their linguistic knowledge. Using Jenifa's English should be avoided in formal writings and there should be a total adherence to the standard rules of English usage. Students should prevent the use of Jenifa's English in written discourse especially in online chatting on social media. Students should cultivate the habit of writing words correctly even during chats as this too can become a habit for them overtime. Furthermore, most of the parents who rely on TV for their child so that they could finish their work or relax a bit need to discourage their children from watching TV programmes that could adversely affect their linguistic knowledge. Parents need to understand that learning takes place through modeling and imitation and when students imitate wrongly, it has a negative effect. Thus, parents need to regulate what their children watch on the television so as not to corrupt their thinking, intelligence and language behavior.

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