
RESEARCH ARTICLE

GRAPHOLOGICAL PATTERNING IN HELON HABILA'S NOVEL, *MEASURING TIME*

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Abstract

This paper explores the graphological devices deployed by Helon Habila in his novel, *Measuring Time*, to convey his messages and intentions. Graphology is simply the graphic representation of language on paper. In literature, literary artists deploy language resources and style in a manner that their messages are best articulated. Although the graphic substance is not a component of linguistics, its affinity with the phonic substance in particular and language in general is so close that it exerts some considerable influence on stylistics. The graphic shape often attempts to represent the phonic substance. Hence, the patterned system of the graphic substance is an aspect of the style of written discourse, which should not be overlooked. Helon Habila is one of Nigeria's new generation writers, preoccupied by the socio-political malaise responsible for underdevelopment in Nigeria. In *Measuring Time*, Habila does not only identify the societal ills, but he advances suggestions aimed at proffering solutions, thereby making his literary works useful to the society.

Keywords:graphological,language,Nigeria, literary works etc

Introduction

Geoffrey Leech claims that graphology is “the characteristic line-by-line arrangement of words on printed page” (68). Katie Wales also asserts that graphology refers to “the written system of a language, as manifested in handwriting and typography; and to other related features” (183). Wales identifies punctuation, paragraphing, shapes, spacing and capitalization as graphical features (183).

Helon Habila is a Nigerian novelist whose literary works are preoccupied with the socio-political problems in Nigeria that are a bane to growth and development. In *Measuring Time*, the author makes extensive use of graphological patterns to derive meanings and messages.

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Synopsis and Thematic Survey of *Measuring Time*

Measuring Time is Helon Habila's second novel, which is set in Keti, a village in Northern Nigeria. It is a story about Mr. Musa Lamang, his family and the events in Keti village. Lamang who was originally from a poor family became one of the richest men in Keti, as a result of the wealth, which he inherited from his father-in-law, popularly called Owner of Cattle. Though Lamang was a rich and popular business man, he became a politician despite all the efforts by Iliya, his elder brother, to discourage him from politics. Unfortunately for him he was betrayed by his friends and political associates, and his traumatic experiences in politics led to his untimely death.

The novel also tells the story of Keti, a once peaceful community, but turned apart by religious rivalry and the corrupt practices of the traditional leadership in the community. The persistent crises between the Christians and Muslims led to the religious riot in which lives and properties were lost. The church and mosque in Keti were also burnt down during the riot.

Corruption in the traditional leadership of Keti is a major theme in the novel. Mai, the traditional ruler in the village, and Waziri were so corrupt that their corrupt practices led to protest and

violence, resulting in the burning of the Mai's palace and loss of lives. Generally, the novel is preoccupied by the socio-political problems in the society, corruption in leadership, colonialism, religious crisis, adventure, aftermath of war, among other issues.

Textual Analysis

David Crystal and Derek Davy, who assert that graphology is the analogous study of language's writing system, or orthography, as seen in the various kinds of handwriting and typography, identify the distinctive uses of punctuation, capitalization, and spacing, among others as graphological features (18). We analyse below Habila's deployment of graphitic highlighting, capitalisation, italicization and punctuation in *Measuring Time*, to communicate his messages, ideas, sensibilities and intentions. As a creative artist, the novelist puts the poetic license at his disposal to an advantage, violating the graphological rules of the English Language sometimes for stylistic effects.

Typography

Typography involves the size, arrangement and style of letters in writing and printing. Habila deploys different sizes, types, and arrangement of letters and print in the text to achieve his individual style. With these graphological devices, he gives prominence to certain words and expressions, sometimes conveying

RESEARCH ARTICLE

additional meanings in *Measuring Time*. For instance, he presents the thoughts of his characters, letters, newspaper publications and biographies either in bold print or italics for stylistic purposes. We exemplify below how the author utilizes these devices to convey the themes of the novel.

The Use of Bold Print

The novelist deploys bold print for the artistic effect of foregrounding as shown below. All the entries in Mrs. Hannah Drinkwater's diary and newspaper headlines in the text are in bold prints. Here are examples:

1. **It is not enough to conquer their land; we must conquer their minds as well. And to do that we must use more than the Christian gentle persuasion, more than books and schools. We must we must break their backs and throw them down into the dust ... Then they'll become our loyal co-workers in the huge task of civilization. (217)**

2. **Reverse Osmosis: Lamang loses to Danladi (115)**

3. This morning I re-read your essay, "A Plan for True History of the Keti." In

which you propose to model your work on Plutarch's **Parallel Lives** and thereby

achieve a truly human history of your people. (229)

4. **Today I bought a lamp from Ngendi, our nearest neighbour and one of our new converts in the village. He wouldn't accept money but requested to be paid in one of Nathan's old khaki pants... (216)**

Habila uses bold print, which serves as eye-catching device for arresting the attention, and arousing the curiosity of the readers in the novel. He also utilizes it to highlight and emphasize his facts and information. For instance, in extract 1 above, the novelist deploys bold prints to convey the deception associated with European civilization and colonialism. The extract is Mrs. Drinkwater's entry in her diary on Mr. Graves, the British representative, in Keti and his visions for the people. Most Europeans came to Africa with the guise of spreading the gospel, and trading along the coast of Africa, but with the ulterior motive of exploiting Africans. They forcefully deprive Africans of their rich natural resources for their selfish interest of enriching their home countries at the expense of the Africans. The author portrays Mr. Graves, the district officer in Keti, who Mrs. Drinkwater refers to as an indifferent Christian in her diary. He exhibits deception in all his actions and utterances as depicted in the sample. To Mrs. Drinkwater, Mr. Graves is a deceitful man, and therefore not trustworthy.

In the same vein, the author deploys graphological variation to convey the theme

RESEARCH ARTICLE

of injustice and betrayal in sample 2. The bold print for the newspaper headline in the excerpt is for eye-catching effect, that is, for arousing the interests and curiosity of the readers. This lends credence to Crystal and Davy's assertion that the most noticeable device in graphetic and graphological variation is the graphetic highlighting of the headline (174). Stating the importance of headlines, they claim that:

the function of headlining is complex: headlines have to contain a clear, succinct and if possible intriguing message, to kindle a spark of interest in the potential reader, who, on average, is a person whose eye moves swiftly down a page and stops when something catches his attention; and the chief means of producing 'eye-catching effect' is by making use of the full range of graphitic contrasts (174 - 177).

In the headline, the novelist calls the attention of the readers to the technique known as "Reverse Osmosis". Danladi claims that with the technique, they can supply the whole state with water cheaply and steadily. The implication of such scientific technique is a final solution to water problem, the major problem in Keti and its neighbouring villages. Aside arousing the interest of the readers with the caption in board print, the writer states that Lamang loses to Danladi in the

chairmanship election conducted in the state capital by the Victory Party.

It is worthy of note that Habila deploys the normal print in giving details and information about the headline in the extract. The messages inherent in the extract are those of betrayal and injustice. Ironically, the scientific technique of "Reverse Osmosis", an idea got by Lamang from his series of business trips, and explained to his political associates, is used by Danladi to defeat him in the election. Danladi is unanimously declared the chairman of the Victory Party to Lamang's surprise and disappointment. Despite all Lamang's efforts to seek redress from the party for the injustice done him, nothing is done. The party officers and his political friends betray and frustrate him out of the party to the New Victory Party. It is important to state here that Lamang's betrayal and traumatic experiences in politics are responsible for his ill health and subsequent untimely death.

In sample 4, Habila uses bold print to emphasize the quest for imported goods by Africans. Ngendi, the Drinkwaters' neighbour, requests for Late Reverend Drinkwater's old khaki pants instead of being paid in cash for the lamb Mrs. Drinkwater buys from him. His request is borne out of the fact that the khaki pants are foreign. In this extract, Habila has not only ridiculed the scramble for foreign goods, but discourages the neglect of locally made

RESEARCH ARTICLE

ones, thereby calling for the promotion of locally made goods.

The Use of italicization

Italicization is one of the graphological features; it involves printing in a peculiar manner for the purpose of foregrounding. Certain information are highlighted with the use

of italics in literary texts. The novelist uses italicization extensively in his novel for various purposes, among which are to ensure the clarity of writing, present the thoughts of his characters, for writing biographies, diaries, letters and newspaper publications. In *Measuring Time*, Habila also italicizes lexical items and expressions that are not in English Language. Below is an exploration of Habila's utilization of italicization for various stylistic effects in the text. For instance, in the following excerpts, the novelist uses italicization for the presentation of the thoughts of some of his characters in the novel.

1. *Can't you see my father is only using you as a common thug, to do his dirty work,*

and does it give you much prestige to drive around drunk in a van intimidating

people? Don't you know this is only going to end up one day in disaster?
(154)

2. *Of my uncle's silence I could write many books, Even my father's selfish ambitions had more nobility than these frauds have in their own lives. (232)*

3. *What really is there to write about their lives? Their combined life wouldn't be worth more than a chapter in a decent book. (231)*

4. *What's the use? ...*

What's there to say? (183)

In the novel, we observed that Mamo, the authorial voice, is often lost in thoughts, probably due to his sickle-cell anaemia, which has shattered his dreams and deprived him of many opportunities, especially that of joining the army with his twin brother, LaMamo, who is now in Liberian army. In sample 1, the author presents Mamo's thought about Asabar, his cousin who is highly irresponsible. Asabar indulges in alcoholism, smoking and selling marijuana. As the leader of the youth wing of Lamang's party, Asabar drives the party's van round the village with his irresponsible friends intimidating people. As the novelist captures Mamo's thoughts and mind, his feelings are expressed. Though disturbed by Asabar's behaviour, Mamo cannot advise him as he does not heed advice. Mamo's burden is that telling him that his father, Lamang, is only using him, or advising him against the danger of his irresponsible behaviour will only amount to waste of time.

RESEARCH ARTICLE

In excerpts 2 and 3, the novelist captures Mamo's psychological torment due to the precarious situation in which he finds himself. Under normal condition, he is principled and upright and would never have indulged in acts against his principles. Mamo finds himself in a dilemma having to write the history of very corrupt traditional rulers against his wish because of his call to duty, and the need to uphold his principles. However, he is forced to compromise his principles by his position as the secretary to Mai, the traditional ruler of Keti, as well as the need to make a name for himself in his writing career.

Habila also presents Mamo's thought about his father's responses to his request to tell him about his late mother in italics in excerpt 4. His request is made in anger against his father due to the unfair treatment meted out to her before her death.

The writer utilizes italicization in samples 5 and 6 to present two letters written to Mamo. The first letter is written by LaMamo while the second is from James, his friend.

5.

June 1985

Dear brother, I am writing from a small village, on the border of Mali in the Sahara desert a war has been going on for a long time. It is between the Tuaregs and the government. The Tuaregs feel they are oppressed and they want to be free. Everywhere people want to be free and I

think it is right. We are fighting on the side of the Tuaregs. ... I see the stars in the sky and know that death is everywhere...

Yesterday the government forces came and raid our camp in the night I was lucky, many died. I was covered with limbs and blood. ... but he can hear his sister scream as they rape her before they killed her, and his mother begging them not to kill his sister, and the husband begging them not to rape his wife. There was blood in the church everywhere, even the pastor killed because he belongs to this tribe. ...I will write again soon, tell Auntie Marina and Asabar and everyone I am fine and I send my greetings.

Your twin brother,

LaMamo (91-92)

6. *My Dear Mamo,*

I must first apologise for taking so long to reply your last letter, which I received almost a year ago. But so much misfortune has befallen me since then and I am sure you will forgive my tardiness when I tell it to you. Before I go on to weigh you down with my sad stories, though, let me first say that my sadness is now in the past and (even though I am over sixty years old). I look in the future with some optimism. Let me also say that I hope you and your dear ones are fine ...

RESEARCH ARTICLE

But now, let us talk about you. Have you done anything about your ambition to write biographies? I have already mentioned it to a few friends of mine who are in the publishing business and they have expressed their keenness to see it. I am not writing this to rush you into finishing your book, but to encourage you on a worthy ambition. Write soon and tell me how you are doing.

I remain yours,

James, K. Batanda (299)

An examination of the excerpts above shows Habila's use of italicization for letters in the novel. He deploys the letters for the conveyance of information. The first letter gives detailed accounts of the wars taken place in African nations. The novelist reveals the destructive effects of the Liberian war, not only on the country and Liberians, but on Africa in general. In the first letter, he conveys the theme of oppression, the quest for freedom, wars and the aftermath of wars. The Tuaregs on whose side LaMamo and his friends fight are in war against the oppressive government. The fight for freedom from the oppressive system has resulted in brutality, loss of lives, mass destruction of valuable things and so on, thereby impoverishing the nation and individuals. In this excerpt, Habila portrays incessant wars in Africa as

a bane on the development and growth of the continent.

In the same letter, the creative artist captures brutality, rape, the killings and losses as a result of inter-tribal war in Liberia. LaMamo narrates the bitter experiences of Samuel, his closest friend in the army, who has suffered the loss of his entire family on his sister's wedding day due to the inter-tribal war. The novelist states that Samuel has joined the army due to his determination to avenge the loss of his family members.

The author conveys the theme of encouragement in the second letter written to Mamo. His friend, James, writes to encourage him in his writing ambition.

Moreover, Habila italicizes the borrowed words from other languages into the target text for artistry as exemplified below.

1. Mamo had seen them arrive separately earlier on, all wearing their best *buba* and *wrapper*, their head scarves tall and stiff on their heads. (75)
2. "I don't know," she said, looking up guiltily, as if caught in *flangrante delicto*. (220)
3. The equestrian display proved to be the day's *piece de resistance* even the

RESEARCH ARTICLE

governor couldn't help waving his swagger stick in appreciation. (239)

We observe from the sentences above that the artist italicizes words of other languages to indicate that they are not of English origin. It is important to state that he also italicizes the words of Nigerian local languages due to their lack of English equivalents, as well as to project and promote Nigerian languages and culture.

Capitalization

Capitalization involves the use of capital letters in the appropriate places in writing; they are used at the beginning of sentences, for proper nouns and deities, among others. But in literary creation, writers violate the conventional use of capital letters for artistry. This involves the deviant uses of capital letters. For instance, some words are foregrounded through capitalization for communicative purposes, as well as to give prominence to certain information. We exemplify below Habila's prominent use of capitalization for stylistic effects. In the first place, we observe that Habila capitalizes the first two words at the beginning of every chapter in the novel. He also capitalizes some words and sentences to attract the readers' attention. The speeches of some characters are also in capital letters for emphasis.

1. HATE THY FATHER, MAKE HIM PAY. (20)

2. Since that day,"CHEAT DEATH, BE FAMOUS' became his second commandment in his mental diary. (21)

3. Mamo wasn't looking at his father as he spoke; he was looking at the plague on the wall: THE SILENT LISTISTNER TO EVERY CONVERSATION. (183)

4. ... Bintou as she knelt before the concrete headstone bearing the simple word, LAMAMO LAMANG 1963-1994 (305)

All the examples above are instances of the author's use of capitalization in the text. In sample 1, he presents Mamo's mental diary in capital letters. As Mamo learns the art of prioritizing, he begins to keep an imaginary diary. In it, he writes his first priorities in bold and capital letters to enable him to be focused in life. The great extent, to which the twins hate their father, Lamang, is depicted in the diary. Their desire to punish him as exemplified in extract 1 forms the first item on the priority list in Mamo's imaginary diary. Their hatred for their father has started at the age of three years. According to the authorial voice:

The twins stayed with their Uncle Iliya for the first three years of their lives, believing him to be their father... But after three years their father came and shattered

RESEARCH ARTICLE

their illusion, he took them away___that was the day the seed of their hatred was planted, and when they grew older and began to hear the song about the King of Women, and about the maltreatment of their mother by their father, the seed sprouted into a tree. (16}

To achieve their aim of punishing him, the twins drop scorpion into his shoes occasionally for the scorpion to sting him, or misplace his car keys just as he is about to go out.

Moreover, their father neither cares nor has time for them. Their aunt, Marina, becomes solely takes up the responsibility of caring for the twins like a mother. In the light of the reasons above, Lamang's relationship with his only children has never been cordial.

Also, capitalized in the novel is Mamo's second commandment in his mental diary. This commandment arises from the twins' encounter with an aeroplane, which they assume is carrying only famous people. This informs their decision to become famous like the people in the plane, so that people can remember them even after their death. Mamo also sees this as a solution to his health issue. His decision to achieve quick fame is borne out of the fact that as a sickler, he might never live to be twenty. He concludes that the only assurance to immortality is quick fame.

Excerpt 3 contains a plague with capitalized inscription. Mamo asks his father in his helpless state of health to tell him about his late mother. The question arises in anger against his father for the ill-treatment he has meted out to them and their late mother. Due to his hatred for his father, he decides to presses further and bombard him with questions, and harass him for answers till he breaks down and confesses his cruelties to their helpless and disillusioned mother, and negligence of his own children. In an outburst of anger, Mamo confesses, lifting off the burden that has tormented him for so long to his father. The burden is his erroneous assumption that he is responsible for Asabar's paralysis and his father's arrest and rigging scandal. Mamo makes the confession, not looking at his father, but his gaze fixed on a plague on the wall with the inscription "THE SILENT LISTISTNER TO EVERY CONVERSATION" boldly written in capital letters as in sample 4. We observe that Mamo's focus of attention on the capitalized inscription arrests his attention, gives him the courage to make the confession, thereby lifting off a heavy burden that has hunted him for so long.

However, unknown to Mamo, he has suffered from guilt and hatred for himself, blaming himself for Asabar's predicament for which he is not responsible. His letter to the police reporting Asabar's involvement in election

RESEARCH ARTICLE

malpractice never got to the authority, but has been intercepted and given to his father by a corrupt policeman who works for him for money. At this juncture, Mamo's anger is rekindled against his father for keeping the secret of intercepting the letter from him.

Punctuation

In every write-up, punctuations are used due to the vital roles they play in effective communication when correctly used. Inyang Udofot and Bassey Ekpenyong explain the functions of punctuations in their assertion that:

In sentence construction, it is important to indicate that one sentence has ended, and that another is about to start, or that it is time to break either for a short time or because a certain quotation, list or another part of the sentence is about to follow. At times, punctuations signal abbreviations, proper nouns or omissions of certain letters. Some sentences require one type of punctuation only while others require more than one. (139)

Jayanthi Murthy asserts that punctuation plays an important role in developing writing skills, and that it is very often proved that punctuation may alter the meaning of a sentence (319). Commenting on the use and importance of punctuations, F. Dikiya notes that punctuation marks are "used in writing to provide the same signals such as pause, voice pitch or stress that we

use in speech to delineate one word or a group of words ... to aid the reader to understand the writer's idea easily and clearly. (106-107).

Punctuation marks comprise full stop or period, comma, question mark, capitalization, exclamations mark, among others. Some punctuation marks are used at the end of sentences while some are used within sentences for artistic effects as we exemplify below.

The Full Stop or Period

The full stop or period is used to mark the end of a declarative or an imperative sentence that issues commands mildly ... (Udofot and Ekpenyong 139). In the text under study, instances abound where Habila makes deviant use of it to emphasize certain important messages and intentions as in the following sentences:

1. Supply and demand. (75)
2. We are cut off from our office in Monrovia, no communications. Bad. Soon, the rebel will be here, and I tell you they don't care who they kill. (139)
3. By Mamo Lamang. (312)
4. "... No word up to now. Rebel." (139)
5. Interspersed amid the male laughter were a few female voices. The widows. (75)

RESEARCH ARTICLE

In excerpt 1, the noun phrase “Supply and demand” used as a sentence” constitutes a deviant usage. Stylistically, the author deploys it to communicate the important information from Lamang about the technique referred to as “reverse Osmosis”, as the members of his politic party meet to map out strategies to win the forth-coming election. As it is common in political discourse, he asks them the rhetorical question, ‘What if we assured the people that we could solve the problem of drought that is confronted by Keti Community and its environs for years. To convince the people, Lamang emphasizes the seriousness of his proposal, giving instances where he has taken advantage of “Supply and demand” to achieve success. He says that it is the kind of approach he wants to bring to politics.

Habila reiterates the aftermath of wars in extract 2. The phrase “Bad” used in sample 2 as a sentence ending with a full stop is another instance, where Habila breaks the graphological rule for artistry due to the advantage of poetic license. It is used by a white man in a rehabilitation camp, who takes care of wounded and sick victims of war, in response to Bintou’s question whether there is any way she and LaMamo could help him. Habila uses the word “Bad.” as a sentence aberrantly to describe the ugly and helpless situation of war victims in the camp. Aside the lack of manpower, the camp lacks food, medicines

and other necessities with which to cater for the sick and wounded victims. The author deploys graphoogical feature here to paint a clear picture of lack, diseases, sufferings, pains and deaths associated with wars, thereby discovering the Africans who see wars as the only solution to national crises.

In the same vein, ”By Mamo Lamang.” in extract 3 is an example of distinct use of the full stop. The deviant use of the expression, which ends with a full stop even though it is not a sentence, acknowledges Mamo Lamang at the end of a script acted by Keti Church drama group. The acknowledgement has not only indicated that Mamo has written the script, but serves as a source of encouragement or motivation.

Worthy of note also is Habila’s unconventional use of punctuation mark in sample 4 to give prominence to the issue of gruesome killings and atrocities committed by the rebel troop in Liberian. Talking about their atrocities, the authorial voice says:

They must have been ambushed by the rebels because they are very many of them going about with nothing to do, just to loot and anything they find ... Soon the rebels will be here, and I tell you, they don’t care who the kill.They rob the sick and shoot the dead. (139)

The use of “The widows”, an aberration in excerpt 5, as a sentence is for

RESEARCH ARTICLE

satirical purpose. It emphasizes the activities of the shameless widows in Keti Community in the life of Lamang, the promiscuous wealthy man in *the text*. ***The widows are always shamelessly around Lamang, taking part in every event in his household, and even attending political meetings in his house as portrayed in the extract. Their constant presence in Lamang's house, even in his bed room has become very embarrassing.***

The Comma

Udofot and Ekpenyong see the comma as the most commonly used and the least emphatic punctuation mark, claiming that it separates sentence elements (143). Edokpayi opines that comma provides a brake or pauses in sentences, which enables the readers, assimilate the sense in the sentence (64). It is extensively used for various purposes as exemplified in the novel.

1. *The civilian state governors and the local government chairmen had been arrested by Military administrators, and as often happened after such takeovers, promises had been made, expectations had risen, most of Mamo's father's friends were now in prison "economic crimes," but nothing much had changed, (228)*

2. ... as grave passed with his policemen____he was rather a short man,with a big moustache, he always wore a howler hat, which seemed a bit too big for his head ... But he got even halfway to him, Grave brought out his gun and shot him in the chest. (228)
3. It was all a continuation of the power tussle that began when Graves, the first, district officer, disposed one of the earliest Mais, his name was La Kei, by accusing him of murder. (227)
4. He stood over his son, his head bowed, and then he turned to the white man and said, 'Let's go.' He was led through the village, his hands tied behind him, to the new lockup. (228)

Habila makes profuse use of the comma as punctuation mark in the text. For instance, five commas are utilized in extract 1 to itemize the features characterizing the coups, which have been incessant occurrences in Nigeria. Soon after each coup, are replacement of civilian governors and local government chairmen by military administrators, making of empty promises, rise in peoples' expectations and the arrest of corrupt leaders. But the question is did

RESEARCH ARTICLE

the changes in government bring the desired improvements to the lives of the people and development to the nation? Unfortunately, neither the civilian nor military governments have made any positive impact on Nigeria and the citizens.

In sample 2, the novelist deploys series of commas to paint an ugly picture of Mr. Grave, the district officer in Keti who is not only physically ugly, but evil as portrayed in the extract.

Mr. Grave's evil practices are further captured in excerpt 3 and 4 in his treacherous arrest of Mai Kei after shooting his son dead. Mr. Graves has arrested Mai Kei to get rid of him, for he sees Mai Kei as a challenge to his authority as the district officer. According to the author:

The next day he was taken to the state capital, and that was the last the village saw of him. (228)

Ellipsis

In writing, ellipsis is deployed to indicate the omission of parts of sentences, sometimes in the middle of such sentences; it is also utilized to avoid repetitions in texts. We observe an extensive use of ellipsis in the novel for various reasons. Here are some examples.

1. "I am...your uncle, Haruna. I... I... went to the war. "My uncle...?" Mamo

began, uncertain, and then stopped. (38)

2. "I ... I... am so tired," he said his eyes closing; he slowly stretched out on his back on the veranda step. "I've travelled ... for ...so far staring ... " (38)

3. "We can't go with him, he is drunk." "What ... but" Asabar spluttered, looking from one twin to another. "What do you mean I can't come with you? I am not...very drunk"

"Don't you know how serious this is? Can't you stay sober for just one day...?" LaMamo went on angrily.

"We are leaving home, it is raining and we are almost late for the bus, and ... and ..." "And ... and ... and ...so what?" Asabar mimicked and

burst out laughing ... (50)

4. "Tomorrow by this time we will be in the city, in the army, and after that...'

after that...''

"Keep going," LaMamo said.

RESEARCH ARTICLE

“Yes... after that we will keep going!” (51)

5. “I...did not do ...it alone sir,” Mamo stammered, his hand still in the governor’s tight military grasp. (240)

6. “I...I...I...I am not too bad. I am just numb...” (296)

7. “Yes,” LaMamo breathed. “I... want you to know I am not scared of dying. ...

My only regret is now I won’t see my child.” (297).

“Promise me that you ‘ll send for Binton when things are back to normal. ...I

want my child to grow up here..., beneath the hills like we grew up....I know

everything will be all right.”(297)

8. “But this is hell, Auntie ... Life in this village is hell... Tell her Mamo sorry, not

... you are sick you... (58)

In excerpts 1 and 2 above, the novelist portrays Haruna’s poor state of health and horrible experiences of war with ellipsis. Having fought in the Nigerian/Biafra war, Haruna returns to Keti seven years after, having wandered from one warring country to another with devastating experiences of wars. Habila captures his pathetic physical

state on his arrival home, looking so helpless that he could hardly talk. The pauses at various points in his speeches in the extracts depict the pathetic and helpless state. Haruna has not only been disfigured by his loss of one eye in the war, but by his psychological trauma arising from his horrible war experiences. His appearance is so horrible that Mamo, his nephew, to whom he introduces himself concludes that he is a beggar. Traumatized and unable to cope with the realities of life despite all the care and concern given him by his relatives, he commits suicide by hanging on a tree.

Habila also conveys the theme of adventure in *Measuring Time*. The twins and Asabar, their cousin, are adventurers who are eager to travel and explore the world outside their village. Samples 2 and 3 express LaMamo’s anger against Asabar for getting drunk and trying to disrupt their escape plan. The adventurers see their successful escape from Keti as the only opportunity to fulfill their dream of joining the army, and exploring the world in order to achieve their life ambitions. Moreover, they feel that this will change their future positively. The ellipsis in LaMamo’s speeches in the samples indicate incompleteness in his sentences as a result of anger, while those in Asabar’s sentences portray his drunken state. The author depicts in these extracts the twins’ ambition and Asabar’s irresponsibility.

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Sample 3 expresses Mamo's response as the Governor commends him for his effective organization of the fundraising event, which has proved so successful in Keti. We observe that the novelist deploys ellipsis dots to convey Mamo's surprise and uneasiness as the governor of the state grasps his hands.

Habila also deploys the ellipsis dots in examples 6-7 to convey LaMamo's state of helplessness, resulting from the severe injuries he has sustained during a riot against the oppressive system in Keti. We observe pauses in his speeches due to his helpless state before his heroic death for a just cause; he fights and gives his life to liberate his oppressed people. In this excerpt, the novelist conveys the theme of heroism.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have stated that Habila deploys language replete with graphological markers intentionally to achieve his unique style in *Measuring Time*. From the analysis above, it is evident that he has put graphological devices to his stylistic advantage to convey the themes of the novel. The devices deployed subsume typography, punctuation, capitalization, italicization, among others.

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