International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature
E-ISSN: 2200-3452 & P-ISSN: 2200-3592
www.ijalel.aiac.org.au

The Discursive Mechanisms of Nigerianisms and "Trancultured" Identities in Mary Specht's *Migratory Animals*

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history
Received: July 15, 2019
Accepted: August 12, 2019
Published: September 30, 2019
Volume: 8 Issue: 5
Advance access: September 2019

Conflicts of interest: None
Funding: None

ABSTRACT

The study of literary texts from the purely formal-sentence linguistics is less helpful because it undermines contextual effects on the use of language in literature. Discourse analysis, unlike formal sentence-level linguistics, is more robust in its analysis of literary texts since it provides insights into how sociocultural and historical factors influence, to a large extent, writers' use of language. Against this backdrop, we examine Mary Specht's use of "Nigerianisms" in her novel, *Migratory Animals* (*Migratory*), to account for the context-specific ways through which language has been used, and how these articulate transcultural identity. The analysis draws deeply from the theoretical provisions of literary discourse analysis (LDA), a branch of discourse analysis devoted to the analysis of literary texts. From the analysis, three major forms of Nigerianisms which play up specific transcultured identities have been identified: code-switching, semantic shift/extension and Nigerian pidgin (NP) expressions. Code-switching, for example, allows characters in *Migratory* to switch from one code to another, thereby providing information about their "multiple" selves. By broadening different communicative contexts, semantic extension transforms the characters' settings, drawing attention to their fragmented identities. Through NP expressions, Specht showcases the different linguistic backgrounds manifest in the English community in the text, which reflects the different the socio-cultural identities in Nigeria. From these, we argue that Specht's use of "Nigerianisms" in her novel discursively depicts the present reality of existence – people's "transcultured selves". Hence, Nigerianisms are exquisite examples of how contextualised uses of language reveal the very polygonal cultural existence of humanity.

Key words: Transculturalism, Identity, Nigerianisms, Specht, Literary Discourse Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Diverse studies have applied linguistic approaches to the analysis of literary texts. But the majority of these studies have placed emphasis on either formal-sentence linguistics or the grammatical structure of language. This is corroborated by Tolliver, who observes that "investigation into the linguistic structure of discourse, beyond the level of the sentence, has been totally ignored by those proposing to study the structure of literary narrative discourse" (1990, p. 266). This situation is made worse by discourse analysts "who consider that 'true' discourse analysis must ignore literature, that the study of everyday conversation must be the hard core of their activity" (Maingueneau, 2010, p. 148). The truth of the matter is that sentence-level analysis of literary texts tends to undermine the sociocultural and historical significations that are embedded in the texts. Moreover, discourse analysis cannot be restricted to an aspect of language study. Elaborating literary discourse analysts' stance, Benneth and Royle avow that language goes beyond "verbal, but may include everything that works as a system of signs, even without words" (2004, p. 31). Embedded in Benneth and Royle's postulate is the notion that language and literature are inseparable because language articulates or gives expression to literary ideas. In fact, Aboh believes that "A literary work is a composition of linguistic artifacts. Hence it remains an interesting data for linguists who are interested in the social and cultural meaning of language in use" (2015, p. 44). Consequently, any linguistic theory or approach can be applied to the analysis of literature. Supporting this view, Benneth and Royle (2004, p. 266) insightfully note, "Literary texts not only say but do things: they do things with words and words do things to us". This position does not appear to be different from John Austin's pragmatic notion that things can be done with words. If readers must focus their attention on the nature of the sentence, their attention to what the text is saying is forcefully foreclosed, and this makes "reading a purely relativist process" (Miall, 2002, p. 324) This highlights the fact that even individual words, examined from

Published by Australian International Academic Centre PTY.LTD.

http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.8n.5p.1

literary discourse analysis perspective, have the capacity of generating several meanings, such as transcultured identities.

It therefore follows that, in order to understand how transcultural identity is constructed, one needs to understand how language works in context-specific ways. This specificity defines what people actually mean and "do" when they use language. Transculturalism, according to Onghena (2008, p. 183) is "a process the elements of which are altered and from which a new, composite and complex reality emerges; a reality that is no mechanical mixture of characters, nor mosaic, but instead a new, original phenomenon"**.** It describes a practice in which the singularity of existence is altered, thereby creating opportunities for the emergence of a complex existence. This conjecture is not too far to seek since transculturalism, in practice, breaks individual, cultural and national limitations. But perhaps the core of transculturalism is that people or individuals no longer live in a single culture; they embrace multiple cultures. Hence, culture and identity are not static, but are in a constant state of flux, making every individual a mosaic of cultural identities.

The concept of transculturalism in literature has triggered interest in literary criticism (Dagnino, 2013). In fact, such literary scholars as Frank Schulze-Engler, Sissy Helff, Sabrina Brancato, and others initiated the field of Transcultural English Studies in Germany and The Network for Literary Transculturation Studies, drawing on (the Cuban sociologist) Fernando Ortiz's concept of 'transculturation' (Gaylard, 2015, p. 276). Following these schools of thought, many studies have come to explore different manifestations of transcultural identities in literary texts (e.g. Dagnino, 2013, 2015; Gaylard, 2015; Vassilatos, 2016, etc). While these studies focus largely on the study of 'New Literatures in English', particularly from literary perspective, the linguistic indices through which different cultures or identities can be transferred have hardly been examined. The focus of this paper, therefore, is to investigate the role language plays in individuals' articulation of their multifaceted existence. To achieve this aim, two goals have been set; namely, to identify the linguistic patterns of Nigerianisms deployed in *Migratory Animals*, and to examine how these Nigerianisms generate specific transcultured identities in the text.

METHOD

The study is essentially a descriptive analysis of *Migratory Animals* (hereafter *Migratory*) with insights from Maingueneau's (2010) concept of Literary Discourse Analysis (LDA). The exploration of language use in *Migratory*, which focuses on both the narrative and conversational units, is anchored on two concepts that drive the literary discourse analysis; namely, the Context of Transculturalism and Nigerianisms. LDA, itself, an approach of analysing literary texts from a discourse analysis perspective, unlike traditional stylistics, deals with literary texts "as part of the discursive practices of a given society" (Maingueneau, 2010, p. 152). It locates the language of literary texts within its context of production. The ideas that inform the writers' use of language are important indices to be considered by analysts to understand what the text is really saying. Both the text and the context of the text are important to the literary discourse analysts. Maingueneau reasons that "for discourse analysts, there is no inside and outside text. What is 'inside' must construct its own 'interiority' through interdiscourse" (2010, p. 151). Therefore, it is less helpful to analyse Specht's *Migratory* without recourse to the Nigerian sociolinguistic milieu that the novel is partly situated. The novel describes the world as a cornucopia of "transcultured selves". Through the metaphor of birds or travel imagery, it depicts people's cultural migration from one part of the world to another. But the emphasis, in this article, is on the migration from America to Nigeria. In corollary, Specht's novel illustrates the shifting trend of literature in terms of focus and linguistic resourcefulness. The novelist appears to be interested in depicting the significance of contemporary existence, global interaction and the migration of not just individuals, but also their cultures and identities across the globe.

Migratory is strategic in its discussion of identity and transculturalism. However, these subjects are interspersed with other themes which, in some ways, complicate the plot and narrative arrangement of the novel. Consequently, the novel traces the coming of Flannery to Nigeria, her romantic relationship with Kunle – a postgraduate student at University of Ibadan and the complex turn of events. Drawing from the subjects of migration, transnationalism and transculturalism, Specht depicts the fragmented nature of human existence. The novelist presents us with a panorama of American and Nigerian life where her characters engage questions of culture, identities and belonging. This trajectory is profoundly textualised in the character of Flannery. Flannery, whose characterisation schema appropriately details the modern individual's multi-layered existence, breaks the kernels of her American-ness to take up a Nigerian identity. Essentially, Flannery's duality as expressed in "migration" dramatises a motivation to locate one's self in a continuing mutating world. Therefore, it is credible to say that many people strive to attain some cultural plurality.

Specht achieves this sense of cultural dynamism not only through anthropological insights, but through linguistic illumination into Nigeria's sociocultural realities. Thus, following the views of Benneth and Royle, cited earlier, literature, through strategic calibration of linguistic resources, transverses continental borders. Specht attempts, in her creative initiative, to put an end to racism, cultural bigotry as well as stereotypes through code-mixing/switching techniques, semantic shift/extension and Nigerian Pidgin expressions. She carefully switches codes in areas where she feels her American English cannot help in expressing her thoughts – an exemplification of the need for linguistic complementarity. Although there are instances where other languages, Spanish expressions (*No mames, giiey* and *Callate, gringo* 201), for example, are used in the novel to actually depict transculturalism, our focus in this paper is to interrogate how Nigerian ways of using English, known as Nigerianisms, articulate "transcultured" identities in *Migratory*.

Identity or identity construction is a constitutive part of human existence and can manifest in different forms and various human transactions. However, the term has remained

one difficult notion to define. It could be seen as the way an individual wants to be regarded or the way an individual is regarded or constructed by others (Ononye, 2018, p. 85). The multifaceted and fluid nature of identity is perhaps the reason Ahmed (2016, p. 138) argues that "Identity can, hence, change, just like the chameleon's multicolours, to suit different situations and occasions". Ahmed's position resonates with the concept of transcultural identity. Although there are factors that articulate as well as construct people's identity or identities, language is elemental to identity enactment. One's knowledge and use of language says a lot about one's experiences in life. Cuccioletta points out that "human experience and existence is due to the contact with the other, who in reality is like, oneself" (2002, p. 2001). The title of the novel, *Migratory Animals*, bears eloquent testimonies of the "transcultured" self as well as redefines the notion of identity. It illuminates how the concept of identity occupies a heterogeneous space where conventional notions of identity are reconsidered. Specht, in her creative resourcefulness, interlaces her narrative with her experiences in Nigeria and it is in this kind of interspacing that the collective narrative of the novel takes shape and its central metaphor of "migratory animals" finds articulation in our "transcultured" or fragmented reality. Through Flannery, Specht delineates what is essentially Nigerian as well as allows Flannery to take up a voluntary identity. Voluntary identity, as conceived by Kavalski,

> depicts the idea of an independent choice of individual identity accentuated by a more flexible understanding of cultural frontiers; it is an articulation of the conjecture of the past with the social, cultural and economic relations of the present (Kavalski, 2005, p. 3).

Specht's description of Nigeria's cultural life through the prism of Flannery's characterisation is an instantiation of the multi-dimensionality of humankind. This is why Flannery does not consider it an issue to be "Nigerian". Consequently, her willingness to marry Kunle and ability to find Nigeria habitable implies that Nigeria is her constructed new home. She admits: "it really hadn't been difficult to adjust to daily life in Nigeria" (p. 137). But Specht's construction of dual identity relies heavily on her ability to use both American English and Nigerian indigenous expressions. It could be said that her understanding of the frequency of cultural regulation makes her creative process an effective construction of human structures, structures that are amenable to the reality of living in a "transcultured" world. Invariably, her novel births not an entirely new idea, but an amplification of cultural fluidity. Bitsani explains this postulate better as she states that "Cultures and identities are dynamic sets, they change over time and adapt to circumstances. They are also complex wholes, encompassing heterogeneous components" (2016, p.3). It is, therefore, difficult to "coagulate" or abridge them in just one level. Bitsani's observation has epistemological grounding and cultural validation since one can hardly talk about an entirely pure or singular culture. To study language in terms of identity construction implies buttressing the fact that identity is a constantly shifting phenomenon because neither identity nor language is fixed.

Nigerianisms is a technical term that describes the peculiar use of English in Nigeria. In Aremu's (2015, p. 94) view, "Nigerianisms in Nigerian English are characterised by lexical borrowing, acronyms, first language interference, proverbs, slang, honorifics (polite tokens), code-mixing, code-switching, semantic shift, etc.". He further says that Nigerianisms are common-place in written Nigerian literature. Specht has also adapted this Nigerian linguistic modality in her novelistic articulation of transculturalism.

Extensive studies (Odumuh, 1984; Adegbija, 1998; Udofot, 2007; Jowitt, 1991; Aboh & Uduk, 2016, among others) have validated the existence of a variety of 'World Englishes' known as Nigerian English. It therefore appears superfluous to take up such an argument in this article. These scholars, in their respective studies, have described the dynamic use of English in Nigeria as *domestication*, *nativisation*, *acculturation* and *hybridization* (Ononye & Ovu, 2013, p. 186). Ojutunde (2013, p. 254), in substantiating the peculiar use of English in Nigeria, observes that "Its [English] interaction with other indigenous languages in Nigeria has given rise to the variety of English which has the colouring of distinct Nigerian indigenous languages at all levels of linguistic analysis; lexis, syntax, semantic, phonology and discourse". Like a typical Nigerian novel, there are numerous uses of Nigerian English expressions in *Migratory*. It is from this notion of language use that we discuss Nigerianisms: code-switching, semantic shift/extension and Nigerian Pidgin expressions as linguistic strategies by which Specht, in *Migratory*, expresses transculturalism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Three major forms of Nigerianisms which play up specific transcultured identities have been identified in the text; *viz*. code-switching, semantic shift/extension and Nigerian pidgin expressions. These will be discussed in succession.

Code-switching

For the Nigerian writer, switching codes is a definition of their bilingual identity. Code-switching is, therefore, a display of the multiple languages and cultures that are available in Nigeria. The English used by the Nigerian writer is often a blend of English and indigenous languages. Okunrinmeta clarifies that "the mutual linguistic influence that English and the Nigerian languages share … demonstrates how Nigerian literary writers have succeeded in effectively capturing, in their work, this mutual influence in Nigeria's multilingual society" (2013, p. 118). Using a learned language for a bilingual person, therefore, entails translating — both ways — between languages and cultures, or moving like a pendulum back and forth into linguistic and cultural spaces, and concurrently tracking belonging. Although it can be said that Specht is not a bilingual in the Nigerian sociolinguistic epistemology, her novel bears exquisite testimonies of bilinguality in the sense that *Migratory* demonstrates the simultaneous use of Nigerian and American English expressions.

Code-switching, therefore, is a construct which does not comply with the norms of either English or a native tongue,

but rather draws attention to the experience of living in translation. Castillo refers to this phenomenon as language "trouble" that multilingual writers suffer,

> Unsatisfied with a single tongue, they trouble language through elegant, aggressive, delicate, humorous deployment of code switching. They have double trouble with language's excesses and insufficiencies, and suffer, enjoy, question, deplore the possibilities of doubleness in identity or voice (2005, p. 157).

Embedded in Castilo's postulate is the supposition that as writers switch from one code to another, they do not only "trouble" language, but provide information about their "double" or "multiple" selves. In this way, writers, through code-switching technique, voice their dual identity as they navigate the seamlessness of their existence; an individual cannot as a matter of fact claim a "singular" identity.

Specht code-switches just the way many Nigerian literary writers do, that is, she adopts into her novel various Nigerian expressions. For example, there is the use of "Oyinbo". In Nigeria's naming technology, anyone who is white in complexion is called 'Oyinbo'. This sociolinguistic index addresses Flannery, the American. Kunle, as well as other Nigerians, calls her "Oyinbo". When she is back to America, she tells Molly what the lexical unit signifies. By so doing, Flannery symbolically brings to Molly's consciousness that if she has the opportunity to be in Nigeria, she will also be called "Oyinbo". But perhaps the most significant aspect of such a linguistic socialisation is that the lexical unit reveals how Flannery has learned a new word, a word that defines many Nigerians' naming technique, especially of western Nigeria – because the word has a Yoruba etymology. It is important to note that in learning a new word, she also learns another way of understanding the world. This makes it plausible for us to talk of both identities and transculturalism.

In her "new world," Flannery does not actually encounter difficulties in adapting to Nigeria's life style. Her transmutation appears to be very fast. For example, she and Kunle go out to drink "palm wine", juice tapped from palm trees in most parts of Nigeria, and as they drink from little plastic cups, "Flannery imagined she and Kunle were bound in the pages of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* [an allusion to Amos Tutuola's novel] and sitting and drinking was the only job they had in the world" (p. 4). Specht, in this instance of language use, forays into a cultural pattern of her host community where members of the community sit out to drink "palm wine" and have open conversations about what their immediate environment offers. But more to this, "palm wine" functions as a means of formulating a Nigerian identity for the American. The palm wine drinking is one spectacular moment for Flannery as it weaves a series of symbolic identity construction for her, which draws deeply from the overall meta-discursive context of transculturalism. It is not that she attempts to put down her American identity; rather, she provides an enlightening example of how human beings navigate the seamlessness of cultures. It is at this intersection of multidimensionality that Hobsbawm writes of how

> The concept of a *single,* exclusive, and unchanging ethnic or cultural or other identity is a dangerous piece of brainwashing. Human mental identities are not like shoes, of which we can only wear one pair at a time. We are all multi-dimensional beings (1996, p. 1067).

Hobsbawm persuasively argues that individuals operate a framework of multiple identities. In fact, even nations that are thought to be homogenous are, at the background, heterogeneous in identity. There are diverse people, in that supposedly homogenous nation, with diverse ways of existence, of viewing the world. Interestingly, Flannery goes on with her daily life the way she finds Nigerians do.

No doubt, language constructs identities and gives us belonging. In *Migratory*, Kunle uses "abi?" (p. 15), a Yoruba expression that means "isn't it?" or "right?", when talking on the phone with Molly, Flannery's sister. This word is often borrowed into Nigerian English literature and it functions as a conversational strategy which discourse participants deploy to "make" listeners agree or confirm what they say. For Kunle to use the Yoruba word with an American who has never been to Nigeria should not be conceived as a demonstration of arrogance but a deliberate act of identity "transfer". He presupposes that Molly would understand what it means. But most importantly, in "fixing" this word in her characters' mouth, Specht typifies the fact that one does not necessarily have to live in a particular community for one to imbibe the cultural patterns of a people, for language embodies the ways of life of a people. Kunle's use of "abi" while talking with Molly is strategic: it means that he has expanded the linguistic frontiers of English so as to relate unencumbered with Molly.

One of the definers of Nigerian English is the pragmatism that underlays its use. There is, for example, the calculated use of "wahala" by Flannery when she thinks of Molly. "Wahala" is a Hausa expression that translates as "trouble", "problem" or "controversy". But the context actually determines the depth of the meaning. In some cases, it's meaning is weightier than mere "trouble" or "problem". Having lived in Nigeria, Flannery understands that it can be used to mean more than "trouble". This is the reason she deploys "wahala" to tell the degree of the psychological trauma Molly is undergoing because of Huntington disease – a genetic disease passed to her from their mother. In displaying her "transcultured" selves, Flannery, through the discourse strategy of linguistic apposition, tells us what "wahala" means – "big trouble" (p. 16). In fact, "wahala" better explains what she thinks of Molly's situation. It is fascinating to see how Flannery navigates the seams of existence through the linguistic choices she makes.

Following the trend of the bilingual Nigerian novelist, Specht adopts indigenous expressions in her creative initiative to explain the conflation of language and the presentation of sociocultural reality. She uses the Nigerian term "Okada" which describes both a commercial motorbike and the rider. Ontologically, it describes a town in present day Edo State, Nigeria. Flannery systematically mediates an internal sense of belonging to Nigeria. This feeds into the fact that she will become Nigerian when she marries Kunle. Kunle is a Yoruba-Nigerian Flannery falls in love with. She reminisces how

> … they sped by on the back of an *Okada*. …Flan behind the driver; Kunle behind her. She remembered how his

> breath passed along her ear and the side of her face as she leaned back into him. His legs straddled hers, and his hands barely touched her torso as if held there not by muscle but by magnetism. It was joy and movement and freedom in a liminal space, invisible ghost licking at their heels (p. 22).

Although there are motorbikes all over the world used both as private and commercial means of transportation, the lexical entity "Okada" is a means of transportation that is specifically known by Nigerians. The word "movement," in the context of the novel, is symbolic; it connotes a transitional process Flannery undergoes to embrace a new identity while maintaining her American-ness. In this instance, it does not seem out of place to argue that "Okada" systematically functions as a vehicle of psychological identification: a means that liberates her from cultural constraints. Specht's use of language activates Flannery's schema of dual or multiple existences. The preference for the Nigerian expression over the English one (motor bike) should not be read as Flannery's eradication of her American-ness, but an explicit account of her "transcultured selves". This is why when she is back to America, she feels a deep sense of incompleteness without Kunle and she laments: "I wish Kunle were here" (p. 41).

Relatedly, there is the use of "danfo" (p. 41), a minibus taxi. Although the origin of the word "danfo" is not certain, it means "hurry" in Yoruba. It is one of the chief means of commercial transportation in Lagos, Nigeria. A ride in a "danfo" can be quite uncomfortable; it is not the best means of transportation because of what it signifies. Significantly, the novelist uses "danfo" to provide her readers with visual account of transportation system in the city of Lagos. So Flannery imagines when Kunle "would be riding a Danfo" crowding 'four to a seat…painted with maxims like 'Protected by the Blood' or 'No food for lazy man"' (p. 41). Moreover, the important thing to note from the above use of language is Flannery's consistent psychological flux between America and Nigeria, a definition of transculturalism. Besides that, expressions such as 'Protected by the Blood' and 'No food for lazy man" are hand-written inscriptions one finds on commercial vehicles, including on some private ones, in Nigeria. Notably, they function as semiotic constructs in the sense that they enable Flannery to identify with and accept something new, something that, perhaps, she does not see in America. Both "okada" and "danfo", thus, function as transforming process that diminishes the concept of single identity.

In her cultural excursion into Nigeria's ways of life in terms of greeting, Flannery uses the Yoruba word "ekaaro" (p. 135) to illuminate the premium some Nigerians place on greeting. It means "good morning". Unlike the American greeting culture, "ekaaro" comes with body movement – the male child is expected to prostrate and the female genuflects while greeting an elderly person. This body movement speaks volumes for the amount of respect attached to greetings in Nigeria, implying that it goes beyond phatic communication. Meeting with Kunle's mother, Flannery takes on a different identity than the American one. She switches from the formal mode of the English language to Yoruba which carries its own sensibilities and social functions. For, what informs code-switching, as Hudson puts it, is that "the switches between language always coincide with changes from one external situation (for example, talking to members of the family) to another (for example, talking to the neighbours)', and that the choice of language at a point is decided by situation which in turn is defined by it" (1994, p. 53). Hence, Flannery having understood that she is conversing with a Yoruba woman, uses "ekaaro". Flannery's conscious cultural transportation lends credence to her identity construction goal. This is manifest in her tongue swap. Her linguistic representation echoes Onghena's (2008, p. 182) view, "we can safely say that cultures are constantly evolving and that we should consider them dynamic. Moving from the descriptive to the more explanatory nature". It does not appear to be out of place to mention that Flannery's use of language indicates her transitive process of navigating two cultures.

Our position in this discourse is that there seems to be a conjunction between the language of literature and the identity that produced it. The deployment of "suya" (p. 154) to capture the culinary habit of many Nigerians is an instantiation of the foregoing conjecture. "Suya" describes strips of beef with oil sprinkles grilled on skewers over open fire. It is a Hausa expression that is commonly used in Nigeria. Knowing this, Flannery buys it for Kunle and they both sit out "devouring" it (p. 154). While Flannery is familiar with grilled meat, it can hardly be said that she is used to "suya". Even Kunle is marvelled at Flannery's adaptability. He says, "I'm surprised an *oyinbo* can take the spice". Therefore, her eating "suya" despite the fact that it is spicy could be seen as an attempt to calibrate herself into the cultural pattern of Nigerians in terms of food. It is during the scene of "suya" eating that "they talked about their childhood". The "suya atmosphere" offers a perfect opportunity for them to dig into their respective histories, enabling them to get to know each other better. This is a dynamic transformation, an indexicalisation of our polygonal existence. In the next section of the paper, we focus on the strategic use of semantic shift/extension in *Migratory.*

Semantic Shift/Extension

Another noticeable manifestation of Nigerian languages in Nigerian English usage is the broadening or shifting of the semantic base of English words and expressions. Semantic extension or shift in Nigerian English (NE) "involves old words that are given new meanings. This is perhaps the most productive strategy in Nigerian English" (Bamgbose, 2014, p. 20). Importantly, the expanding or shifting of the semantic base of English resonates with the cultural pattern of Nigerians. Put differently, the cultural epistemology of Nigerians defines the use of English in their physical environment. Some of these expressions, as found in *Migratory,* are discussed presently. For example, cuisines have cultural variations—they may be obtainable in one culture but not in another. Expressions such as *goat stew*, *pepper soup*, *Calabar stew* and *periwinkle snails* are cultural collocations that are well known to many Nigerians.

The expression *pepper soup* is a special type of consommé made with meat or fish, and pepper but without oil. While

most Nigerians prepare *pepper soup* at home, it is mainly served at restaurants. As the name suggests, it is usually very spicy. *Goat stew* (p.135) is prepared with mutton or the offal of a goat. *Calabar stew* (p.136) is a kind of Efik soup known as *edikang ikong* and is now consumed in almost every part of Nigeria. *Periwinkle snails* (p.136) are obtained from some Nigerian rivers and are used to make soup and other sorts of food. Interestingly a feature of Nigerian literature, the meaning of these English words has been shifted or extended not only for communicative pertinence within the Nigerian "communicative context," but "domesticated to reflect the meanings that their equivalents in the Nigerian languages express" (Okunrinmeta, 2013, p. 123).

By making specific references to Nigeria's food technology, Specht takes her readers on an anthropological excursion into the culinary culture of Nigerians. As she does so, she allows Flannery to manifest her transcultural identity. Food is a constitutive aspect of a people's material culture. Symbolically, the various references to Nigeria's food culture in *Migratory* transform the author's natural setting, enabling her to enact not only a Nigerian identity for her characters, but to also draw attention to people's fragmented existence. Using language as the gateway to Nigeria's ethno-linguistic space, Specht succeeds in reproducing a pattern of life that is ontologically Nigerian. For example, the expression *Calabar stew*, as used in

> One of Kunle's neighbors from Cross River State stuck her head in to ask if they'd eaten – "Done chop?" They spooned up her *Calabar stew*, sucking the periwinkle snails from the shells and scooping big chunks of leafy greens with balls of soft *fufu* made from boiled cassava (pp. 136-137).

provides cultural information about the food culture of the Efik ethnic group of southern Cross River State. The sucking of *periwinkle snails* and swallowing of balls of *fufu* are telling examples of the eating pattern of the people described. Yet, that Specht's central character finds herself assimilating such a pattern of life is an illumination of her multiple existences. Specht writes of how "Flannery was living in mental possession of two worlds" (p. 224).

In a similar anthropological cum historical excursion, the NE expression, *Boys Quarters (BQ),* refers to the quarters where (male) servants are housed. *Boys Quarters* is a vestige of colonialism that has continued to recur in NE usage. In Nigeria today, some people build a main house and a special, small apartment slightly cut off from the main residence and they call it BQ, a place reserved for the "boys" and possibly home helps. In other instances, it is reserved for non-members of the immediate family and visitors. Invariably, many present-day Nigerian BQs do not have that subservient, dehumanising colonial tinge. Flannery tells us what a BQ means:

> Kunle's room was in a BQ, or "Boys Quarters," a term for the small building adjacent to a residence that, during colonial times, had been used to house servants or "houseboys." BQs – and his was no different – were usually a row of three or four rooms connected by a slab porch, which, since there wasn't a proper kitchen, was where inhabitants set up hot plates and buckets of water (p. 135).

Besides providing architectural information about BQs and the fact that it is a colonial vestige, it tells us about some students' housing life style in some Nigerian universities, specifically University of Ibadan where Specht was a Fulbright scholar. Flannery is Kunle's girlfriend and when she goes to see him, she is amazed how Kunle lives in a small apartment with two other postgraduate students. But perhaps an interesting aspect of such linguistic deployment is that whenever BQ is mentioned, many a Nigerian can tell what it means because it describes a familiar housing system. But importantly, Specht has consciously unravelled the historical situation and condition responsible for the creation of a linguistic expression that can be deemed as typically Nigerian. As much as Flannery does not belittle where Kunle lives, she identifies with him: such identification is significant in the understanding of transculturalism. Kalpana corroborates this, as he notes, "…identity is stuck within the nation's history, for individuals are at a point identified only if they have a location within the historical moment" (2015, p. 50). We can then say that Specht's use of language symptomises how writers use their artworks to give expressive force to transnational identity.

According to the backdrop provided by Specht's narrative, it could be argued that *Migratory* is anthropological in many ways because it insightfully details Nigeria's culture. The Nigerian identity reproduced throughout the novel provides an objective ground for a valid discussion of transcultural identity construction. The expression, *village,* has a narrowed meaning in Nigeria. It is reduced to a rural, undeveloped area as contrasted with an urban area so that *my village* means "my rural, undeveloped hometown where my roots lie". An important indicator of the use of *my village* is that it connects a Nigerian to his or her roots. It has everything to do with identity and one's place of birth. There is a saying in Nigeria that "everybody comes from a village', meaning that, however civilised, sophisticated or educated one is at present, one's roots are located in an uncivilised space called village. It is in *my village* that *kerosene lamp* (a local lamp made with a reduced metal can with a wick in the middle that uses kerosene to burn) is used by villagers. Specht succinctly details village life in:

> Kunle's village was beautiful in its way – a pastoral answer to the maddening crowds and jammed roads of the major Nigerian cities. Women carried water on their heads, to and fro from the wells. Cocks fought and chased each other while the occasional teenager kicked up dust on a motorbike, probably going nowhere, killing time. (p. 159)

For the Nigerian who has lived or been to the village, these are familiar elements of rustic glamour: *women* (not men) *carry water on their heads, cocks fight and chase each other* and *pastoral*. True to Specht's narrative, it is in the *village* that Kunle's mother uses a *kerosene lamp* to illuminate the kitchen and the compound. It is also in the *village* that *mango trees* are commonly found. Each of these expressions provides impressive examples of life in many Nigerian villages. It is not that village is a Nigerian English word, but its deployment in the novel calibrates it to reflect the typicality of Nigerian village(s). For Flannery to consider Kunle's

village beautiful and habitable in its pastoral way means that she has accepted where he comes from, and to accept his origin is to accept him for who he is. This has a mental representation – that people shift in tune with the shifting nature of reality to have a new definition.

The expression *let me land* has semantically been shifted in NE to mean *allow me make my point* or *let me be through*. Contextually, Kunle reads through Flannery's data and becomes unhappy because she is elongating her stay only for a mere cloud seeding. On interrupting him on when he finally makes up his mind to discuss her overstay, he says, "let me land" (p. 195). Immediately, Flannery gives him back his conversational turn. Flannery, the American, understands what Kunle means because she had lived in Nigeria and knows what Nigerians mean when they say "let me land". This, of course, is an acute explication of linguistic transnationalism. The fact is that Specht's use of language demonstrates the way many Nigerians use English. The Nigerian English expression is often used when a speaker's conversational turn is grabbed or interrupted. Having drawn attention to the use of some Nigerian English expressions in the construction of transnational identity, we turn my attention to the deployment of Nigerian Pidgin expressions in relation to the enunciation of transcultural identity.

Nigerian Pidgin Expressions

Nigerian Pidgin (henceforth NP), being English-based, draws from the vocabulary of the English language and from indigenous languages to form a new language that is only intelligible to a Nigerian. Balogun writes that "The dynamic and generative capacities of Nigerian Pidgin to create from a finite set of lexical items have continued to foster communicative process and interaction among Nigerians. It has also afforded mutual interest and understanding between indigenous citizens and foreigners" (2013, p. 90). NP is mostly used in informal transactions. It is a vehicle for the formulation of friendly relationship among its users. Generally, NP serves consistently as Nigeria's lingua franca and the commonest to use as a medium of communication among the diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria. Some NP expressions used in *Migratory* are examined presently.

> The expression *Body no be firewood,* has several significations. Specht narrates:
>
> There was a saying in Nigerian pidgin: "Body no be firewood," meaning that a body is not meant to be put through all the searing pains and horrors of this life. But when she'd first heard Kunle use the phrase, she thought he was talking about romantic sparks, the burn of physical attraction. Love turning your body into sticks of firewood. (p. 42)

The context to which the expression, *Body no be firewood*, (literarily means "the body is not a log of wood") is put determines its meaning. It can be used by someone who has been stressed or strained to mean that his/her body, unlike firewood, is not meant to be subjected to unbearable suffering. But it is commonly used in Nigeria to refer to sexual craving or readiness, suggesting that one is not as sexually insensitive as a log of wood. Flannery thought that Kunle, using such an expression, means his sparkling love—as firewood does when burning— towards her but later realises that his usage aligns with the explanation offered above. She understands this more in the stressful situation she finds herself.

One noticeable feature of NP is that it is "liberal". Sometimes, its syntactic meaning can be deduced from its subtle, witty and metaphorical combination of the individual words. This can be seen in the transaction between Flannery and Kunle,

> "I'm sorry I'm not in a better state. It's not often I get house calls from Americans. How do you find Nigeria?" This was a question everyone asked Flannery and two other Americans working with her.
>
> "I like it here. I'm still here".
>
> "You try small, small. But for how much longer"? he asked. (p. 136)

The expression, *You try small small,* has its cultural embedding: the reduplication, *small small*, is used to commend someone who has been able to perform a given task to an extent so that *small small* means that the commendation is commensurate to the impartial completion of a duty. In the context of Kunle and Flannery, the expression shows a purely commendable progress, cheering Flannery to do more. She is commended for her first time experience in Nigeria as she tries to live up to it. The language – pidgin – that is used is not a language Flannery had originally known. But the time she has spent in Nigeria enables her to understand what Kunle means. An interesting aspect of Kunle's use of language is his intention to "initiate" Flannery into Nigerian ways of using language.

One inference that can be drawn from Specht's novel is her cultural tapestry. She taps into the communal life style of Nigerians through her constructive use of NP. It is true that Nigerians live communally. Consequently, it behooves on a member of a community to want to know how other members of the commune are faring. Despite the fact that most Nigerians' modes of living have given in to western influences, some communal fragments are still noticeable among contemporary Nigerians as inferred from the use of NP. As pointed out earlier, there are questions asked about one another's welfare, health status and, in fact, well-being in general. These cultural tenets are backgrounded in NP expressions such as *Done chop?* (p. 136), *How body?* (p. 138) and *Body fine-o* (p. 138). In a sense, while *Done chop?* is a question that ordinarily asks whether one has eaten or not, it implies more than just a question. It usually comes from a caring friend or relative. Specht tells us how, "One of Kunle's neighbors from Cross River State stuck her head in to ask if they'd eaten – "Done chop?" (p. 136). The question, *Done chop? (*Have you eaten?), exemplifies the communal practice of Nigerians as well as details the charitable things Nigerians do for one another. Through her tactical deployment of the NP expression, Specht portrays the life of living together and sharing possessions and responsibilities. Corroborating this postulate, Amao opines that "Nigerian pidgin is also acknowledged as a formidable stride in the re-creation of Nigerian and African socio-cultural identity" (2012, p. 45). Specht tells us that Flannery does not only

observe this cultural exigency, but participates fully in the process.

Through the use of this pidgin expression, we can understand a connection between food behaviour and the formulation of a new identity. Perhaps we should not forget that Flannery does not at any time reject any Nigerian food she is offered. Kunle tells his aunt, "Flan loves our food" (p. 223). It is in the eating of the food that she actually comes to know their names. In this way, we understand the efforts she makes to forge a new identity for herself, a formulation that does not destroy her American-ness. Rather, it is an identity that makes her fit snugly into the complex dynamics of human many-sided existence. Accordingly, although food in principle is morally neutral, in practice, it makes moral and political declarations. It is a site, in fact, an advantaged site for the enunciation of identity.

Similarly, *How body?* with its corresponding response *Body fine-o* is a question that requests not just the respondent's physiological well-being (as could be inferred from the linguistic context of the sentence) but his/her total well-being, which includes psychological, social, economic, financial, mental health and, in fact, family relationship, so that the answer *Body fine-o* could be synonymous with the English version *All is well*, not just *My body is in good condition*. This further illustrates the point that the syntax of NP expressions is nearly always built up metaphorically to embrace the cultural definitions of the Nigerian society. Some of these expressions are pure transliterations of indigenous languages. In the novel, the very first words out of Kunle's mouth when Flannery calls him on the phone are *How body?* and she responds *Body fine-o*. From this question-response transaction, Kunle is certain that, all things being equal, Flannery is doing well or does not have some major problem. Being aware of the pragmaticism that defines such linguistic axiom, Flannery, though in America, enacts a Nigerian identity.

Every point Specht deploys a Nigerian Pidgin expression seems significant to the discourse of transcultural identity construction. Kunle's village is a stark contrast to the noisy, busy and crowded Nigerian cities. Back home in Kunle's village, Flannery will always have Kunle's mother shake her head much to the indignation of Flannery's consistent going out. The likes of Flannery are called *waka waka*. The term could be either derogatory or jocular. It is derogatory when used to describe a commercial sex worker, and jocular when used to refer to one who likes going out a lot. The latter meaning explains why Kunle's mother calls Flannery *waka waka* (p. 159). Thus, *waka* means "to walk" and "waka waka" means "to walk a lot". The meaning of NE Pidgin words and expressions are best understood in their context of use. The few examples we have discussed in this paper show how Specht interlaces American English with NP expressions to tell the stories of being a Nigerian on the one hand and retaining her American-ness on the other.

The paper set out to identify the linguistic patterns of Nigerianisms deployed in *Migratory Animals*, and examine how these are used in generating specific transcultured identities in the novel. These objectives were pursued from discourse analysis perspective, particularly privileging the theoretical provisions of Literary Discourse Analysis. From the analysis of the text, three forms of Nigerianisms are identified; namely, code-switching, semantic shift/extension and Nigerian pidgin (NP) expressions. The many examples of these Nigerianisms are utilized to demonstrate the manifestation of specific transcultured identities in the novel. Drawing examples from my reading of Specht's linguistic strategies *vis-a-vis* scholarly summations on the confluence of language and identity, we support the view that identity is not static. In challenging the monolithic or singularity approach to identity study, Bucholtz and Hall (2005, p. 587) insist that "identity is a discursive construct that emerges in interaction". Identity is not pre-given. Rather, it is expressed or "done" in linguistic interaction. The notion of "construction" epitomises the fact that identity is what an individual consciously does. Specht's use of language therefore provides us with convincing examples of Flannery's simultaneous belonging to Nigeria and America. Hence, belonging to Nigeria does not warrant abandoning her American-ness.

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