

# Swapping Boots for Sneakers: A Stylistic Analysis of Cadences of The Nigerian Air Force

EGBAH IKPOMWOSA ANDREW

## Abstract

This paper is an examination of stylistic strategies of military cadence, which forms a basic element of military folklore and fitness exercise in the daily life of a soldier. It adopts a qualitative research design in the presentation and analysis of data. The study is guided by aspects of Jeffries' (2015) Textual Conceptual Functions and Social Practice Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as proposed by Fairclough (1989) in the analysis of military cadence calls in the Nigerian Air Force (NAF). The analysis uncovers the vital relationship existing between the military and the folklore settings that produced them. The findings reveal Nigerian soldiers employ lexically dense discourses in their cadences to promote propaganda, propagate folklore of bravery and discipline, and ultimately, request the troops to be patriotic in the face of daunting challenges from the job. These cadences are, therefore, not just songs for jogging or running, but they form a vital part of military folklore and group solidarity.

**Keywords:** Cadence, Stylistics, Military Folklore, Nigerian Air Force, Textual Conceptual Functions, Social Practice Model.

## Introduction

This study is a stylistic analysis of military cadence calls, which are vital elements of military folklore, training, and fitness sessions. The aim is to discover the various stylistic features of the military chants at different levels of language use and to see how these stylistic structures interact to communicate the themes of the cadences to the soldiers in the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) and the wider society.

The Nigerian Government established the NAF via an Act of Parliament on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1964 as an arm of the Nigerian Military (the others being the Nigerian Army and the Nigerian Navy). As a Unit of the Nigerian Defence Forces, the soldiers go through several training and fitness sessions to keep fit in the face of the tedious rigours of the job. In their fitness, physical training, and jogging sessions, the soldiers employ cadences to boost their morale.

In the armed services, a military cadence (or cadence call, referred to as Jodies in the USA) is a traditional call-and-response work song, sung by military personnel while running or marching. Requiring little or no instruments to play, these military songs and chants are basic rudiments in oral military folklore of the military march. As types of work songs, military cadences take their rhythms from the work being done or the movements in the running sessions.

Cadences are military songs and chants which are employed to break the boredom of long marches, teach military folklore, and instill pride in the troops. Cadences are important military practices, as armies put their recruits and trainees through physical training (marching and running) and other fitness sessions designed to increase physical and mental stamina. Hence, the modern cadence chant is a property of the ingenuity of personnel in the lower ranks, while the upper ranks and commissioned officers must approve their usage to avoid abuse.

Many cadences have a call-and-response structure where one soldier starts a line, and the remaining soldiers complete it, thus depending on teamwork and camaraderie for completion. The cadence calls move to the beat and rhythm of the normal speed (quick time) march or running-in-formation(double time) march. This serves the purpose of keeping soldiers "dressed", moving in step as a unit and in formation, while maintaining the correct beat or cadence.

Kent Lineberry states that cadence calls serve several functions in the military such as giving commands, as tools to psychologically detach the soldier from homesickness, and as means of inculcating an acceptable level of aggression and bravery in the minds of the troops. They are also useful to the soldier, who can use these songs as a mask to vent his dissatisfaction, without taking individual responsibility for the expressions. Common themes in cadence calls include boasts of one's own Unit, nostalgic reminders and homesickness, daily complaints about the hardships of military life, and insults (which could be directed to a member of a rival Unit or the enemy).

The positive, negative, and neutral themes in the Jodies are easily communicated, using the tool of music. These songs, therefore, serve as rhetoric-laden media for persuasive and dissuasive ideology. Music transforms into a double-edged weapon: a powerful communication organ for the expression of human actions and reactions, and a medium that echoes societal issues to allow its members better understand more about life. Lara Allen supports this view by asserting that "so many people articulate their ideas, beliefs, and feelings through its (music) creation, performance, or consumption" (27). The lyrics of these songs are often crafted to convey the intention of coaxing listeners into action, dissuading them from an action,

or just passing information.

Music is also a vital cultural emblem of a people. It works with other expressive cultural performances such as dance, drama, and festivals, and encodes the way of life and collective identities of social groups. Hence, music has been assigned significant roles in different contexts, including religious, cultural, social, and political levels.

Members of the Nigerian Air Force adopt cadence chants and military music in order to encapsulate the experiences of the soldiers. These martial songs are key elements of military folklore and oral performances, while enabling the rank and file of the Nigerian military to keep fit and stay healthy. Such songs significantly influence the troops at emotional, physical, and cognitive levels. These cadences also continue to grow in popularity and find their way into the larger society, where members of the civilian population employ them as morale-boosting songs in specific contexts and events. Given that most verbal folklore is developed and maintained in the foregoing ways, the military cadence call gains more recognition as a military oral tradition.

This paper accepts the notion that Stylistics is the linguistic study of style; We could define Stylistics as 'the study of language as used in literary texts, with the aim of relating it to its artistic functions' (Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short, 13). Stylistics aims at explaining the relation between language and artistic function (Leech and Short, 11) and as Leech and Short contend, the motivating questions in Stylistics are not so much as *why* and *how language is used in a specific way*.

Stylistics has come a long way in modern linguistics and is largely built on two interconnected movements in linguistics: the Russian Formalism and Prague School Structuralism (Paul Simpson 50). Following the works of key figures like Mukarovsky and Jakobson, who have made significant contributions to literary theory, Stylistics has transcended the previously perceived exclusive realm of literary writing to accommodate other forms of discourse such as advertising, journalism, popular music - even casual talk. It can be argued that song lyrics and chants could be accounted for through the use of stylistic analysis, since these literary forms usually employ the same stylistic devices adopted in other forms of literature like traditional poetry, prose, and dramatic texts.

The stylistic analysis of music and song varieties is a rather newer area of research when compared to the other (more traditionally established) forms of literature. In the course of our research, we came across works like the *Linguistic Analysis of the Beatles' Lyrics* (Keith J. Petrie, Pennebaker, J. W., and Sivertsen, B., which take a psychological point of view of how the various members of the Beatles

as songwriters changed their writing styles. Also, we considered the stylistic analysis of the lyrics to Genesis's album *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway* (Magistra), which aims at uncovering the poetic devices used in the song lyrics of the Genesis; and a study investigating Linkin Park's song lyrics *What I've Done* (Martin Alegre).

None of these studies mentioned here tries to account for the stylistic investigation of music in the military, prompting the present inquiry into the use of military cadences within selected military domains. The study of cadences and chants in Nigeria has received little attention over the years. This present study, therefore, is an attempt to fill this gap, by revealing how soldiers employ lexically loaded cadences to promote power and ideology, propagate military folklore and encourage military fitness.

### Theoretical Framework

We adopt a dual theoretical framework for the stylistic investigation of cadence in this study: Lesley Jeffries' (2015) Textual Conceptual Functions and Social Practice Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as proposed by Norman Fairclough (1989). Several theoretical frameworks have been used in guiding stylistic analysis. However, the most common one employed by many studies is the Textual Conceptual Functions (TCFs) of Jeffries (2016). Jeffries sees stylistic judgments as a direct testament to texts. He opines that linguistic models employed in textual analysis enable the researcher to gain a critical perspective of the functions of texts in context. To achieve a robust inquiry, Jeffries builds his model of Textual Conceptual Functions on three types of references. These are the linguistic, ideational, and interpersonal variables.

The linguistic reference includes the structural, de-contextual, and semantic levels that account for the different levels of language (such as phonology, syntax, lexis, graphology, morphology, and so on). The ideational reference refers to the co-textual linguistic choices available and manipulated by the interlocutors. This links up with the interpersonal reference that defines associations and situations that enable social interchange.

These three core variables build up a communicative operation that defines the basic conditions for communication to take place. These references agree with M.A. K. Halliday's (1964) framework suggesting the use of a systemic functional model abstracting and linking language used to different social contexts. These models, according to Halliday, are the field, tenor, and mode, which provide deeper linguistic analysis to texts.

Fairclough's (1989) Social Practice Model of CDA is the second analytical

model employed in this paper. The framework accounts for the relationship between language and power, which is an important aspect of human societal systems. Fairclough developed this model on the premise that language is an intrinsic aspect of power struggles and management of ideologies in speech communities.

As this paper is focused on the NAF, a Unit of the Nigerian military- where language use is tied to ideology and power management, both Jeffries' and Fairclough's models are adopted in the investigation of the messages embedded in military cadence. These theories help to provide an in-depth study of the motivations for which cadences are created and adopted in the formal and informal fitness and training sessions within the selected military domain.

### Research method

The data for this work is basically textual and was sourced from the Diary Recording of a single (live) jogging session at the Nigerian Air Force Base Kaduna on June 24, 2019. The researchers got these data after receiving due permission from the NAF Base Kaduna Base Services Group Unit that handles such authorizations. Electronic instruments were not allowed due to military laws on confidentiality and ethical considerations. We adopted Purposive Sampling in the selection of Cadence calls and songs, in order to pinpoint the chants that are appropriate for this study.

In carrying out this study, the qualitative research design is employed. This is because the study seeks to uncover the hidden meaning relating to the social structures, ideologies, and power relations between the soldiers and, where necessary, the civilian populace. The qualitative approach is used to detect discursive structures within the transcript of the cadences and discover the ideologies and power structures underlying them.

In order to achieve a near objective form of stylistic analysis, the three stages of the analytical procedure, proposed by Fairclough, are adopted in this paper. These three components of the analytical procedure are description (formal properties of the text), interpretation (the relationship between text and communication, by seeing the text as the product of the process of production, and as a resource in the process of interpretation); and explanation (the link between interaction and social context, with the social determinants of the process of production and interpretation, and their effects).

### Presentation and Analysis of Data

We present the Songs and Chants as "Cadence and Chant" along with other Units such as domain (the physical context or situation in which a communication

exchange takes place), interlocutor, speech situation, role relation and topic of discourse.

Three different data have been selected and presented for analysis. The data is tagged Cadence Chant (CC) for easy identification and we present one jogging session featuring ten cadences for analysis:

#### Cadence Chants of Soldiers at NAF Base Kaduna

Domain: Military

Interlocutor: Fitness Instructor-Soldiers

Speech situation: Physical Training/Jogging Session

Role relation: Officer/Instructor- Soldiers

Topic of discourse: Morale-boosting Songs.

Call-and-Response Chants (Each Cadence is repeated about five times in the course of the chants):

CC1: Never Again

CC2: This is the way I wanted to be oh (twice) Eh hh I want to be a soldier, eh hh I want to be a soldier, eh eh I want to be a soldier, this is the way I wanted to be.

CC3: Today today tomorrow no more, if ah die today, ah will die no more.

CC4: Morale (High)!

CC5: 0 shobe (eh)

CC6: I am a junior, you are a senior; I am a raw material. I must obey you I must obey you I must obey your order.

CC7: He's a miracle-working God, He's a miracle-working God, He's the Alpha and Omega, He's a Miracle Working God.

CC8: I no no say ekaete ekaete carry belle

CC9: Wetin dem sey go spoil our barrackjaburata? Mai lemu go spoil our barrack jaburata

CC10: See monkey ooo but him mama like am

#### Stylistic Analysis

##### Refrain, Repetition, and Rhymes

Refrain (as Call-and-Response) features heavily in the cadence calls recorded in this paper. A **refrain** is a verse (or collection of verses) that is repeated at intervals in a song, poetry or chant. Often called the chorus, a refrain is usually made up of two parts: the lyrics of the song, and the melody. They usually sing the refrain to the same tune, with the rhyming and rhythm patterns strictly kept as the soldiers move to the beat of the music or chants. These refrains come as the repetitive utterance of the

cadences by the leader of the sessions, with his group repeating in unison.

For example:

CC5: O shobe(eh)

Here the soldiers say 'eh' in unison when the fitness instructor says 'O shobe'. The essence of the refrain and repetition' patterns (Call-and-Response) is to emphasize and possibly make listeners remember the cadences easily. Repetitive rendition of cadence underscores easy memorization of the lines of the songs (and their messages) in the heart and minds of the speaker and listener.

Repetition, while serving a psychological purpose of building 'a mental textbook' in the minds of the soldiers, helps the soldiers to develop new codes, neologisms, and jargons. This is in line with David Lodge's view that "the perception of repetition is the first step towards offering an account of the way language works in extended literary texts" (86). Repetition of cadences goes beyond mere echoing of the same sounds and rhythms of words or phrases, to serving as a rhetorical device for accentuating key ideas or specific messages. This we see in:

CC1: Never Again

CC3: Today today tomorrow no more, if ah die today, ah will die no more.

(the soldiers repeat the same lines continuously following the given tempo).

Rhyme is another of the stylistic devices employed for fostering phonological understanding in poetry and songs. Rhyme is a linguistic style based on the repetition of parallel sounds in two or more words, which could occur in selected syllabic positions of the lyrics of the cadences. This we can see in:

CC6: I am a junior, you are a senior; I am a raw material. I must obey you I must obey you I must obey your order.

In the foregoing cadence, 'Material' rhymes with 'order', and helps to add melody and balance to the song.

### Metaphors

In the military cadences adopted in this study, imagery is enhanced through the use of metaphors. A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase makes an implicit comparison to something that is usually unrelated to the target concept. A metaphor sets up a relation of likeness between two referents as though they were the same thing. In our data, we see the soldiers being referred to as 'monkeys' and 'raw material' in the following cadences:

CC6: I am a junior, you are a senior; I am a raw material. I must obey you I must obey you I must obey your order.

Cc10: See monkey ooo but him mama like am.

These derogatory images of 'raw material' and 'monkey' are employed with the goal of influencing the ways by which the subordinate soldiers conceptualize their lower status in the eyes of their superiors

### Allusion

Allusion plays important functions in the development and use of cadences in this study. As an important stylistic strategy, soldiers leading the cadences often deploy allusion in their chants to persuade their members, appeal to their sentiments, and convince them of the need to support their military goals and ambition. In the present study, these allusions could be historical (with 'Never Again'), religious (CC7), and socio-cultural (for instance, chants dehumanizing women) like 'I no no say ekaete ekaete carry belle (CC8)'.

### Social Situation and Explanation of the Military Cadences

#### Cadence as Reverent and Morale-Boosting Songs

Soldiers make reverent cadence calls to build and strengthen the tradition of oratory's recounting of military history in the convention of cadences. This instills a greater reverence in the squad performing the cadence and for the overall Nigerian military force, whose story is retold in the Physical Training and jogging sessions.

The former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, came up with the inspiring slogan "Never Again" (CC1) as a charge during his visit to the soldiers fighting at the front lines and executing a military onslaught on the Boko Haram Islamic extremist movement, in February 2015. 'Never Again' served as a promise by the former president that the Nigerian government will no longer lose its territories to the insurgents, following a string of attacks by the terrorists on soft targets and the civilian population. In recent times, therefore, the use of this cadence serves as an oral pledge that the Nigerian troops will not lose out to their opponents in the war against terror and banditry.

Sometimes, the reverent cadence call could come in the form of an unwavering pledge to the profession and service to humanity:

CC2: This is the way I wanted to be oh (twice) Eh hh I want to be a soldier, eh hh I want to be a soldier, eh eh I want to be a soldier, this is the way I wanted to be.

CC3: Today today tomorrow no more, if I die today I will die no more.

The CC (3) cadence further reveals that the register in the songs of these soldiers is mostly repetitive, rhythmic, and has non-standard grammatical features. The use of "ah" instead of the pronoun "I", helps the soldiers to flow with the rhythm

of the song. Also, the chant ("today today" or "tomorrow no more") helps the troops to emphasize their determination to overcome all challenges, even in the face of death. Grammatically, "tomorrow no more" would be incorrect and should be correctly put as "there is no tomorrow" (if you die today).

Although the chant reminds the soldiers of the temporal state of their existence and the possibility of confronting death, the clause 'if I die today, I will die no more' expresses fearlessness. There is a display of power by the speaker. The soldier reminds the world (and his colleagues) that death has no power over him because he cannot die twice. The soldier, therefore, overcomes the fear of death and, as a result, can confront anything, even literal death. The use of Reverent Cadence calls, thus, serves as a key element in military folklore, as well as a way of boosting the morale of the soldiers.

#### Lack of Respect for Mortality and Morality

Closely related to the Reverent theme is the base way in which some cadences treat human existence. The soldiers are encouraged (both directly and indirectly) to debase mortality, euphemize graphic violence, ostracise weak members and objectify sex as either recreational or rough.

The joggers answer the chant 'o shobe! (Which means 'Apes Obey')' which is raised by the fitness instructor to show the baseness of their willingness to obey any order. This is earlier connoted in CC (4) where the recruits are expected to show great endurance even in the face of death. Another instance could be seen in the metaphorical representation of humans as monkeys in CC10.

Moreover, CC (6) record the soldiers are visualizing themselves as 'raw material' since they are soldiers and would need their superiors to refine them into well-groomed soldiers in the future. That is the reason these soldiers pledged to obey all orders given to them by the Fitness Instructor and other senior officers in the cadence:

'I am a junior, you are a senior, I am a raw material. I must obey you I must obey you I must obey your order.'

#### Cadence and Dehumanization of Women

The hierarchical system of the Nigerian Air Force, just like other military organizations, is essentially macho-dominated and embodies a master-subordinate relationship that favors the male gender. Some of the cadences adopted during the jogging sessions, therefore, connote a measure of masculinity to show the existing status quo of power, authority and domination by the men. In order to achieve this,

derogatory chants and songs depicting women as weaklings and sex objects are employed. This we see in the following cadences:

CC8: I no no say ekaete ekaete carry belle

CC9: Wetin dem sey go spoil our barrack jaburata? Mai lemu go spoil our barrack jaburata.

In CC8, the repetition of Ekaete' (denoting a promiscuous woman in this context) serves the purpose of emphasis as the soldiers are drawing the attention of the public to a lady whose amoral act ended in pregnancy. The soldiers may also be signaling to their colleagues to steer clear of the same Ekaete to avoid being handed a baby that is legally not theirs.

CC9 presents the derogatory representation of women as spoilers and weakness of the soldiers: 'Mai Lemu' (orange seller) is a metaphorical allusion to the breasts of a woman who comes to sell (commit prostitution) in the barracks. This is further evidence that most military cadences objectify sex, slander the feminine gender and dehumanize women.

#### Psychological versus Physiological Purposes of Cadence

Besides the psychological effects that cadences produce, they also produce significant physiological effects on the soldiers. Singing a cadence while running or marching, helps soldiers keep their heads up, take deeper breathes and exhale more forcefully.

The use of the chant-filler 'Morale!' in CC (4) with the soldiers replying 'High' is an indirect way of boosting the physical endurance of the military men during the jogging sessions and the physical training. The chant of 'morale' serves as a confidence booster for the soldiers, as they are expected to be at optimal confidence at all times and not exhibit signs of fear or weakness.

Hence, the act of singing while jogging increases oxygen to the lungs and gives the singer more energy. This, in turn, makes the Unit healthier and better prepared for any emergency that may come up.

#### Indigenous Language Usage, Use of Pidgin, and Code Alternation

Cadences feature indigenous language usage, code alternation process, and use of pidginized codes, to show group solidarity, communicating deep socio-cultural messages or simply associating with the language of the immediate or native community. Code-switching plays an important role in the chants, with the use of the Yoruba term 'Jaburata' (plenty) and Hausa term 'mai lemu' (Lemon owner or seller of

lemons) in CC6. The use of 'Jaburata' aims to show the degree to which soldiers have remained focused in the face of luring temptations from the large number of women living in the barracks. Pidgin English is also adopted to maintain a level of informality in passing the messages in these cadences.

### Conclusion

The analysis of stylistic strategies embedded in the cadences presented in this paper, has evinced our argument that Nigerian soldiers employ lexically dense discourses in their chants to retell reverent military history, propagate folklore of bravery and discipline, arrest attention, arouse emotions, persuade and, ultimately, request soldiers to be patriotic in the face of daunting challenges from the job.

Since these songs should bring people from different sociological backgrounds together, creating a collective experience, the military cadences possess a great unifying power of strengthening military bonds and canvassing for patriotic attitudes, because a single cadence has the capability of transcending linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic barriers.

The stylistic elements in the cadences significantly affect these soldiers at emotional, physical, and cognitive levels, transcending an array of possible barricades of literary expression involving military folklore, and constituting the space where military activity meets with art.

### Work Cited

- Allen, Lara. "Music and Politics in Africa." *Social Dynamics* 2 (2014): 1-19. Web.
- Dunnigan, Timothy P. *Modern Military Cadence*. Alexandria: Byrd, 1997. Print.
- Engstrom, John, and P. C. Butler. *Count Cadence Count*. California: Best Military, 1987. Print.
- Fairclough, Norman. *Language and Power*. London: Longman, 1989. Print.
- Halliday, M.A.K., and Ruqaiya Hasan. *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman, 1964. Print.
- Jeffries, Lesley. 'Textual Meaning and Its Place in a Theory of Language'. *Topics in Linguistics* 15 (2015): Print.
- Leech, Geoffrey, and Mick Short. *Style in Fiction*. 2nd ed. London: Longman, 2007. Print.
- . *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*. 2nd ed. 2007. Web. 21 Feb. 2019.
- Lineberry, Kent. "Cadence Calls: Military Folklore in Motion." *Missouri Folklore*

- Society, 2002. Print.
- Lodge, David. *Language of Fiction*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2001. Print.
- Magistra, Bayu Jaka. (2011). *Poetic Devices in the Song Lyrics of 'The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway' Album by Genesis: A Stylistic Analysis*. Bandung: School of Foreign Languages - Indonesian Tourism Foundation ABA Bandung, 2011. Print.
- Martin Alegre, Sarah. "Unstable Meanings, Unstable Methods: Analyzing Linkin Park's Song 'What I've Done'." *Proceedings of the 34th International AEDEAN Conference*. Almeria, 2010. 150-157. Print.
- Petrie, Keith. J., J. W. Pennebaker, and B. Sivertsen. "Things We Said Today: A Linguistic Analysis of the Beatles." *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts* 2. 4 (2008): 197-202. Web.
- Simpson, Paul. *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students*. 2004. Web. 2 Mar. 2019.
- Simpson, Paul. *Language Through Literature: An Introduction*. London: Routledge, 1997. Print.