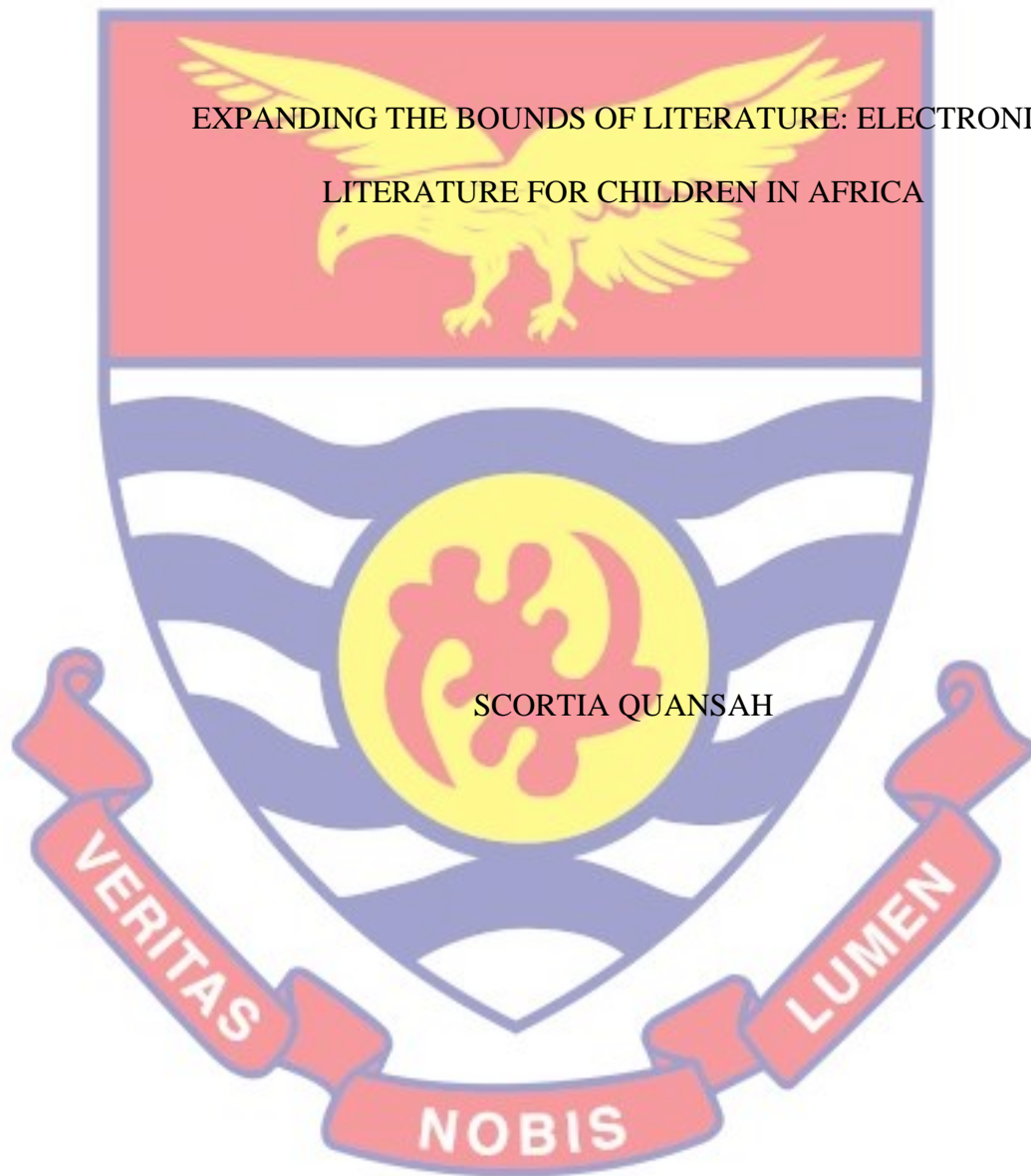
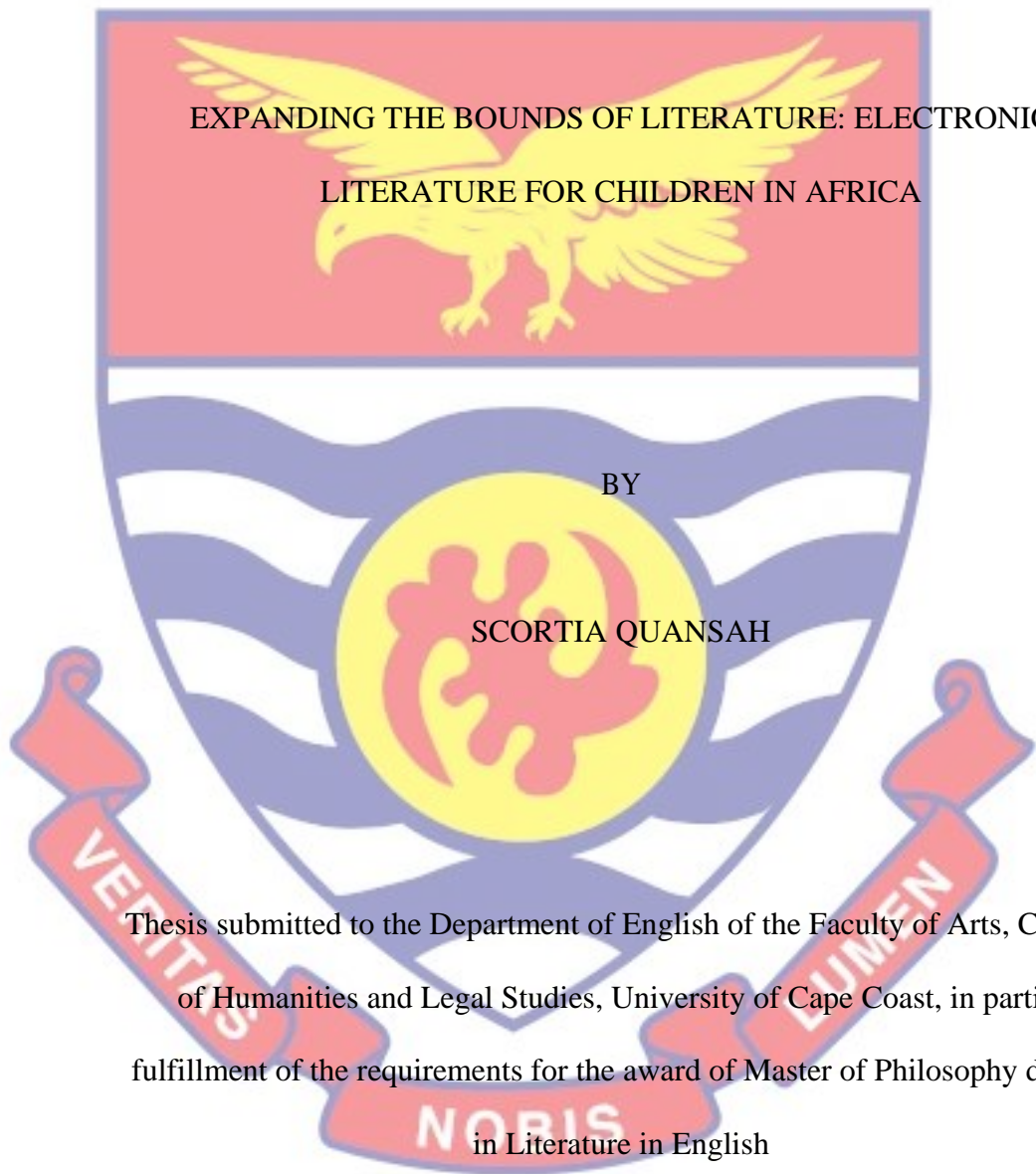


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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature..... Date:.....

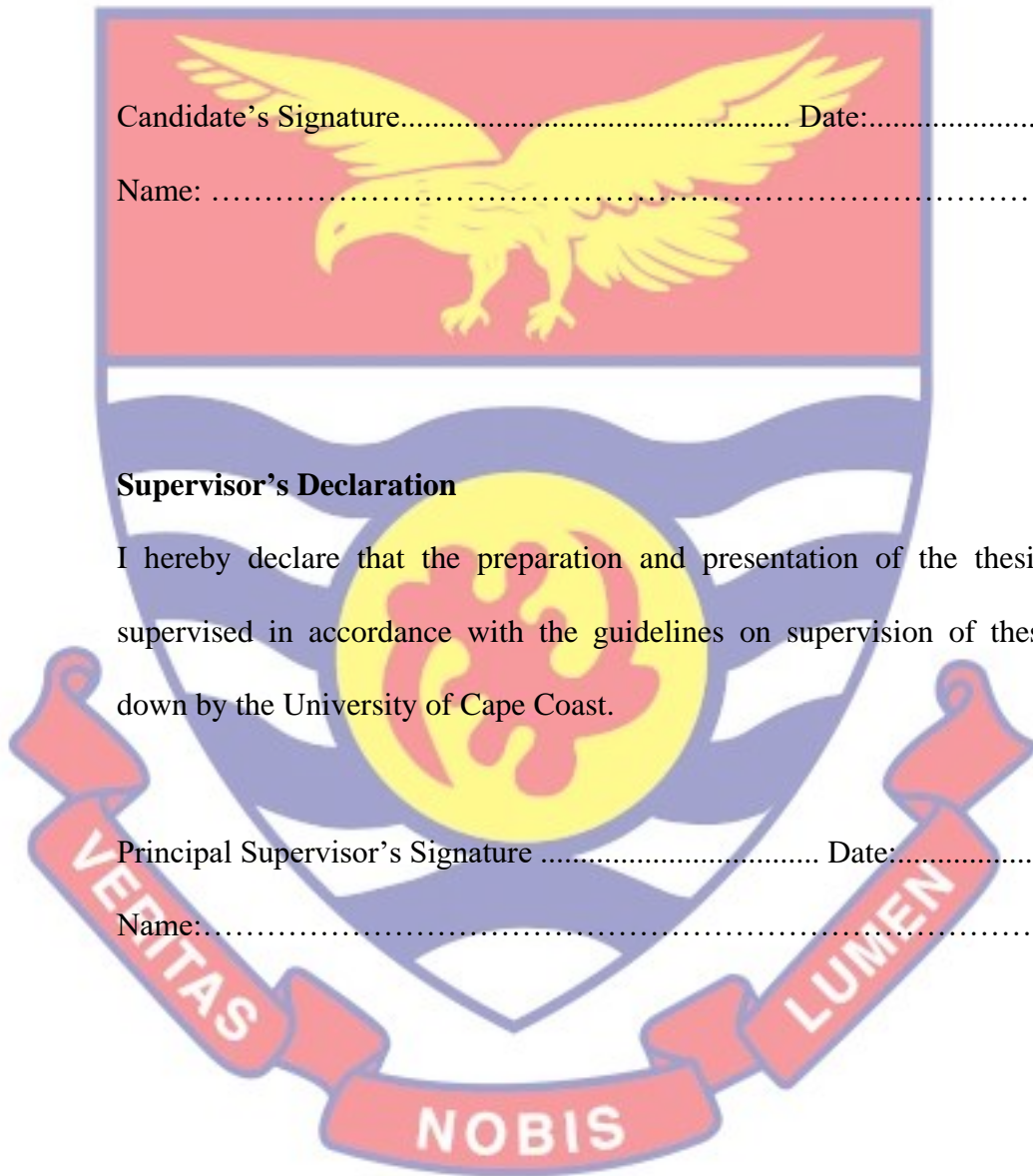
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Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

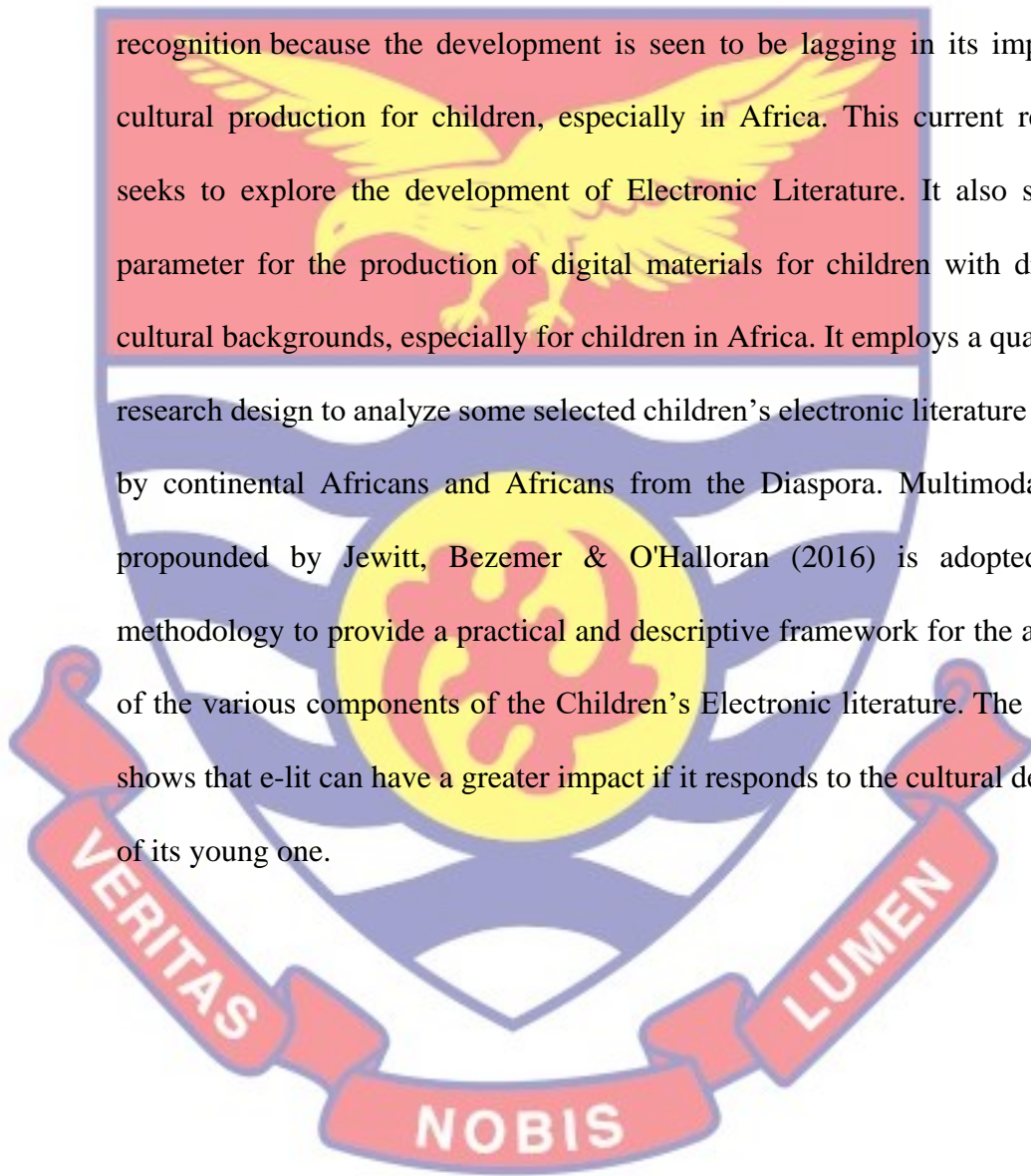
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ABSTRACT

Researchers investigating Children's Literature have observed the emerging perspectives from the advancement in technology becoming a part of our lives. Electronic Literature becomes an emerging field of study with the admittance to technological innovation. There is an inherent limitation that needs recognition because the development is seen to be lagging in its impact on cultural production for children, especially in Africa. This current research seeks to explore the development of Electronic Literature. It also sets the parameter for the production of digital materials for children with different cultural backgrounds, especially for children in Africa. It employs a qualitative research design to analyze some selected children's electronic literature written by continental Africans and Africans from the Diaspora. Multimodality as propounded by Jewitt, Bezemer & O'Halloran (2016) is adopted as a methodology to provide a practical and descriptive framework for the analysis of the various components of the Children's Electronic literature. The finding shows that e-lit can have a greater impact if it responds to the cultural demands of its young one.



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DEDICATION

To Mr. Kwabena Nkansah Darfor (Department of Economics, UCC),

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Prof. Moussa Traore

and all who made this writing a reality.



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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

It has been established without any doubt that technology has revolutionized almost every facet of our lives. Children's literature today experiences a new wave of development that has attracted the attention of scholars and researchers (Reynold, 2011). Electronic Literature is the latest development in the history of literacy for children. This calls for critical engagement and literary discussion of the emerging field of study.

This chapter provides a background to the study and the development of Children's Literature in general as well as in Africa. It also traces the trends of electronic literature with its varying changes. The chapter again presents the gap the study seeks to fill and the significance it will have in the knowledge industry. The methodology adopted in approaching the research and the structure the work is organized into is spelt in this chapter.

Background to the Study

The concept of childhood is understood to be a cultural construct. This means that no two cultures have the same view of what childhood is. How societies perceive children varies considerably from one another depending, essentially on the culture in question. Finnegan (1970), in justifying the limited discussion on the context or local significance of children's verse in Africa cautions "... in a given society, it depends on the local classification of children and one cannot necessarily assume that the children's songs of another society are directly comparable with those of one's own (p. 304)". She again presents the different ways some societies mark off childhood from the adult world.

The scenario she creates shows that different cultures have different needs and understanding of the concept of children. Going further to portraying the specific needs that children's verse responds to, she notes, "if the exact nature of children's verse must be seen as depending partly on the particular ideas of each society about age structure, assignment of tasks and behaviour expected of the various age-group... (p. 305)" then it behoves that children literature has the greater mandate to also respond to the specific needs of children in Africa.

Therefore, literature becomes the medium through which the different cultural needs of children are attended to. Bond (1996) establishes that literature, in its many forms, is the primary conveyer of cultural heritage. Elaborating on this assertion, Bettelheim (1977), a critic and child psychologist notes that when children are young, it is literature that supplies them with the information they need to make meaning out of their lives (p.3). Bettelheim warrants that fairy tales are an indispensable part of a child's development and, they are of the utmost significance in nourishing the child's growth and recognition of their world. In addition to this proposition, Yitah & Komasi (2009) states that folktales, myths, and legends are the predominant genres that have had the most impact on written children's literature.

Bettelheim (1977) maintains that by dealing "with universal human predicaments, especially those which pre-occupy the child's understanding, these tales articulate to the child's ego and promote its development". He further suggests that the cultural heritage transmitted in the right manner is an experience that can promote the child's ability to have a meaningful life and this cultural heritage finds expression in the fairy tales that are communicated to the child. Osa (1985) surmises that "the uniqueness of children's literature lies

primarily in the audience that it addresses”. Thus, the meaningful life that is needed by the “young adults”, according to Osa can be filled using literature. He again states that “the more experience a child has with literature, the greater his or her ability will be to draw meaning from a story” (p. 138). It can be inferred from the assertions of the named scholars that literature drawn from the culture performs an integral role in the development of children. With culture furnishing literature with its content, literature undoubtedly becomes a powerful tool for socializing children into becoming responsible members of society. It allows the cultural heritage that society considers most urgent or most worthy of being passed on to the next generation (Yitah & Komasi, 2009).

Clearly, the relationship between culture and literature is emphasized in the statement by Bettelheim. Literature draws from the culture of society to provide the child with their identity and societal expectations (Finnegan, 1970; Yitah & Komasi, 2009). From what these scholars have established, literature unquestionably equips children with worthwhile life experiences filled with enriching activities, fulfilling associations, informed discovery, and emotional growth. Most importantly, it enhances the capacity of children in critical thinking. Marciniak (2016) attests to the fact that the words, filling children’s literature have had some impact in shaping the identities resulting in the deeper sense of our lives that catalyses the range of emotions. These compelling tales make up the object of amusement for children and they tend to explain the meaning of life. They also convey to children the universally accepted values one has to uphold and pass on to subsequent generations.

Hunt (2004) argues that people have in some ways transmitted part of their culture through language play, story and enhanced information. Here, Hunt reveals that stories are crafted in content and context, reflecting the culture from which the literary material is produced. This account then conveys the impression that having diverse works originating from the African culture would have content that matches or can be adapted to the local cultural situation thereby becoming relevant to the African child. Chinua Achebe in an interview with Jonathan Colt in 1980 notes:

“Our responsibility as Nigerians of this generation is to strive to realize the potential of good and avoid the ill. Clearly, children are central in all this, for it is their legacy and patrimony that we are talking about. If Nigeria is to become a united and humane society in the future, her children must be brought up on a common vocabulary for the heroic and the cowardly, the just and the unjust. Which means preserving and refurbishing the landscape of the imagination and the domain of stories”
(Ohaeto, 1997).

This remark by Achebe which was said concerning writings for Nigerian children can be said to apply to African children. In effect, authors from the African culture are being encouraged to preserve and refurbish the aspect of creativity and the realm of stories that contribute to the upbringing of the child in knowing the good and the evil. This is similar to the suggestion given by Schmidt (1965) that “it seems that if there is to be an improvement in the quality of children's books about Africa, those who know Africa best will have to make some kind of contribution to the writing of these books”

(p.65-66). By this assertion, Schmidt is of the view that it will greatly be an honourable service for writers who are well versed in the African culture to write for children in Africa. Therefore, the charge to authors who produce children's materials is that the age we find ourselves offers a great opportunity that can be tapped to enhance the quality and relevance of materials produced

for children. Electronic Literature is an evolving trend in the history of Children's Literature. As an emerging field, the attention of researchers to this area of study can promote writings that respond to the specific needs of the African child. Children's Literature now covers not only the intricate worlds of children's poetry, picture and wordless books but digital books and storytelling video games, new theoretical groupings of animal tales and non-fiction studies that examine genuine investigations and huge information of writing on cyberspace.

From the Children's Literature Association, Joseph (2019) notes that just as "dreams, movies and television relentlessly encompass children in imaginative actualities, reading often represents a child's first opportunity to ponder in a focused way on the means by which symbols are created, how symbolic thought is culturally effectuated and directed...". He further submits that the study of children's literature regardless of the discipline it is situated in, expedites our grasping of the many complicated avenues through which society reflects on the operations of symbolic thought.

Development of Children's Literature

There is a long history of the development of children's literature from the preliterate periods. History documents that children relished themselves in oral traditional forms such as myths, rhymes, folktales, fairy tales, fantasies, and

other legendary stories with originality and creativity in preliterate ages. Out of these, folktales evolved into an elaborate tapestry of children's literature (Lerer, 2008; Lukens, 2014; Masters, 2012, Yitah & Komasi, 2009). The concept of childhood evolved to make books tailored to the needs of children necessary. The books that became dominantly produced for children were extremely moralistic, prescribing the moral conduct expected from children. From chapbooks and pocket-sized books of religious passages, ballads, and folktales, writings for children were found in these forms (Gangi, 2004). With the invention of the printing press, picture books for children were produced. Several centuries down the line, literacy became widespread and books intended for children are produced with a gradual transition from their didactic nature to forms that entertain and inform (Russell, 2009).

Recent years have seen a rise in the number of productions for children. More than ever before, the twenty-first century has seen tremendous improvement in the literature written for children. The factor that has accounted for this is the advancement in technology (Houston, 2011; Unsworth, 2006; Nguyen, 2017; Duhoe & Adansi, 2020). This advancement in technology has revolutionized the works of art being composed for children. Many new techniques are being developed today, which are expected to provide much insight into the electronic document for children. Reynold (2011) outlines that electronic fictions are the latest instance of writing for children responding to another medium. The new forms of literature are designed bearing in them children's competence and curiosity. However, they are mostly skewed toward western cultures.

Development of Electronic Literature

The history of Electronic Literature began as hypertext fiction in the 1980s and it has become increasingly available with the explosion of multimedia (Hayles, 2007; Unsworth, 2006). Leonardo Flores, the president of the Electronic Literature Organisation, during a presentation at the University of Bergen on January 31, 2018, traced the history of electronic literature categorizing the works that have been produced into waves with their accompanying genres. These waves he identifies are the “first generation or wave” from 1952-1995. This wave was characterized by pre-web experimentations with electronic and digital media. Some examples of genres of works produced from this wave include Generative Text, Interactive Fiction, and Video-poetry. The “second generation or wave” witnessed an elaboration of the first wave with innovative work resulting from personalized interfaces and forms. The period this occurred was from 1995 to the present. Instances of the genre from this wave consist of Electronic Poetry, Hypertext, Augmented reality works, Video games, Net arts among others. The last wave he proposes was the “third-generation” which overlaps with the second wave. This generation is characterized by its large user base from established platforms, social media networks and text screen devices. The genres of E-lit which make up this wave are mobile and touchscreen apps, Instagram poetry, Social media bots, Netprov and many others. These improvements indeed have had great impacts on literature especially electronic literature for children.

Today, via the screens (desktop computers, tablets, and mobile phones), the web, CD/DVD and other audio aids, innovative literary narratives find expression. Unsworth (2006) highlights that what has made electronic

children's literature different from conventional children's literature is the engagement that young readers get from the explosion of digital storytelling on CD-ROM, the internet, and the myriad of complex game narratives.

As an emerging field of studies, scholars have attempted to explore electronic literature. However, much of their focus has been on electronic literature with adult themes and concepts. Evaluating the number of investigations conducted on Electronic Literature in general, it can be seen that there is no corresponding number for children's electronic literature. What is mainly available for children's electronic literature is pedagogic. Again, the available children's electronic literature is not designed to cater to the needs of children from different cultural backgrounds. The critical attention that electronic literature for children in Africa deserves has not been responded to. It is against this background that the current research seeks to explore Electronic Literature for children in Africa.

Regional Contribution to the Development of Children's Literature in Africa

The development of African's Children Literature cannot be well accounted for if we do not recognize its regional contributions to the canons of literature. Some countries in Africa were conscious of promoting literature devoted to children. West Africa in particular had a group of highly talented writers who were dedicated to publishing books for children since colonial times. According to Khan (2019), a large number of books published in Africa came from four countries. These countries are Nigeria, with one hundred publishers, followed by Kenya, then Ghana and Cameroon - which used to be second in publishing output until the economic slowdown slightly made her publishing rate decline.

In general, most countries in Africa had a rich treasury of oral tradition forms existing in the various local cultures such as lullabies, folksongs, riddles, rhymes, drum language poetry, funeral dirges, play songs, work songs, tongue twisters, chants, praise poetry, wise sayings and proverbs. These spoken, sung or chanted forms of literature were according to Plastow (1996) ritual and didactic serving the need for entertainment and were expected to inculcate in young ones the lessons of pleasant and unacceptable conducts, social roles, appreciation of their background, and the norms regarding amicable coexistence (Yitah & Komasi, 2009). Schmidt's *Children's Literature about Africa* points out that writings that are worthy of recommending have been "written by, or with the advice of, persons who have lived in Africa for an extended period are trained Africanists". Khan (2019) shows in his work that "Nigeria is one of the leading contributors to this genre". There were some problems associated with children's literature for children in Africa. Among them include the limited number of writings produced for children in Africa. Schmidt (1965) also records that the total volume and number of children's literature about Africa is small and mediocre though there has been a rapid increase in books that have been published since 1960 than in the preceding three decades. She further recounts that the kind of writings that were produced for children in Africa were animal stories, folk tales, histories and geographies, surveys of modern African states, and stories about the African child. Khan (2019) denotes that children in Africa were reading books that were designed and written by European writers for European children in most African countries before their independence. These books featured cultures entirely different from the African culture. "These books lacked authentic indigenous

life experiences because European authors could not employ the indigenous proverbs, refrains and orderly repetition, as found in the life of the African peoples” (p. 2). Again, stereotyping images of Africans as primitive, half-naked Black people and the terrible things that went on in the Dark Continent were the content of these writings. Two examples of such writings are *How I Found the*

Livingstone by H.H Stan and *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad. One of the worries Schmidt shares is the fact that these writings for the African young reader hardly increase the child’s understanding of their culture and people and that they had in them inaccurate, distorted information and no unified views of the issues presented in different countries could match. Explaining the different categories of writings, she cites the picture books that depicted the everyday life of the typical African child. However, the expenses incurred in getting extensive publications of picture stories brought about the limited number that was produced. Moreover, some books did not reflect the life of the majority of African children making this category uninteresting to most children in Africa. Then, there came a time when books about school-going children were written by some Africans. According to Schmidt (1965), these were by far the best set of books that presented and interpreted African life from the viewpoint of an African. Two of these books that Schmidt (1965) points out are Cyprian Ekwensi’s *An African Night’s Entertainment* and Audrey Ajose’s *Yomi’s Adventure*.

There came a time also when books for children in Africa retold the histories of Africa in its modern times particularly dealing with the subjects of European invasion into the continent as well as the rise and conquest of empires. It is affirmed by Schmidt that the books for African children address

the life that the missionaries propagated. The subjects of such writing predominantly focused on education (abroad), Christian life and westernization. Adding to this proposition, Yitah & Komasi (2009) assert that colonial subjugation necessitated the introduction of literacy using the languages of the colonial masters in most parts of Africa.

Towards the dawn of independence, African writers began to realize the need for writing and publishing in Africa for the African child (Khan, 2019). The need for the colonial administration to provide a re-orientation of reading materials for the child was deemed necessary. As a result, there were translations of English folktales and legendary stories that served as the most predominant form of children's literature in Africa. Khan (2019) reports that Nigerian children began reading books that were written, edited, and published in Europe. In Ghana, as reported also by Yitah (2017), some children's books originally published in English were then translated into books in local languages of traditional Akan, Ga, Ewe, Dagbani, Gurune, or Kasem. Nursery rhymes and play songs were brought to life through traditional children's poetry that later influenced the written domain of literature. In a survey of Children's literature in Ghana, Yitah & Komasi (2009) accounts for the transition from oral stories to written texts with their accompanying significant changes in form and content that reflect the complexities of changing times was outlined. The "genrescape" they examine echoes the written children's literature in Ghana since colonial times and how it has changed over the years to give a space for Ghana's contribution to the development of children's literature in the current theory-driven scholarship in Africa. They pay attention to the nature, the range, and the characters of some Children's literature to reveal to the reader the

broader scope of activity in children's literature in Ghana. The different periods they present are the pre-colonial era where children's literature draws its themes from the daily experiences in rural life, antisocial behaviours that are frowned upon and punished, obstacles, hardships and the qualities to overcome them among others were subjects that shape the plot, the imagery employed, and the mode of narration of the stories told. The colonial-era also introduces retold stories published in the form of single-story books or as collections with many similar stories being published in different versions. Again, the books introduced in the colonial era spiced the traditional materials giving them a more modern or contemporary atmosphere through the adaption of stories to the practical requirements of the present-day for children. For instance, metropolitan life, school life, adventures in rivers and forests, and travel became the subject of the stories during this era. Lastly, books that feature historical developments of societies and outstanding personalities were published. Khurana &Yenika-Agbaw (n.d) point out how the current trends in African writings for children include fictional works depicting the complex realities of contemporary African societies. Toward the end of this era, (Yitah & Komasi, 2009; Yitah, 2017) give a hint of the impact of technological developments in the industry as they cite an instance where *Tahinta*, a story reissued in 2000 as a rhythm play was published with an audio cassette accompanying it.

The Shift in the Trend of Children's Literature: Era of Digital Literary Texts

Emerging scholars with engagement in Children's Literature Studies have realized the influence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in changing the forms of literary texts as well as generating new kinds of

literary narratives (Unsworth, 2006). These scholars confirm the fact that the advancement in ICT has profoundly influenced literary texts being produced. (Huck, 1964; Serafini & Youngs, 2013; Bittman et al. 2011; Sargeant, 2015). Huck outlines that technological improvement has brought about a new freedom in the art concerning printing and picture production. Similar to this proposition, Serafini & Youngs (2013) submit that the coming of personal computers has brought about an evolvement in the way individuals especially children read and respond to books. Researchers of Children’s Literature also acknowledge the new wave in the trend of materials children engages with. Children now get to interact with the characters, themes, and settings of the books they love to read (Houston, 2011; Kucirkova,2018; Serafini & Young, 2013; Duhoe & Adansi, 2020). Houston (2011) identifies the current generation as “digital natives” a term first coined by Prensky (2001). She explains that these groups are dependent on the internet for the solution to all their questions. Houston is of the view that making books accessible in digital formats for this group is a worthwhile move to undertake by publishers and authors of children’s books.

Unsworth (2006) further adds that the taking up of the literary interest by digital media should not be a substitution for the book's presentation of format rather “what emerges should be synergistic complementarities, where the story world of books are extended and enhanced by various form of digital media” (Unsworth, 2006). What Unsworth implies is having digital resources thus, the transformations of the book to animated versions, film adaptations, graphic novels, television programs, DVD or CDROM to complement the print resources. Another worth noting shift co-occurring in children’s literature

studies is multicultural literature. It defines how people who live in diverse parts of the world acquire knowledge about their customs and traditions as well as that of others. It also presents a clear image of the culture it projects and deals with stereotypes or assumptions about a distinct society or culture that are oversimplified or based upon generalizations. It is from these accurate descriptions that one can formulate a definite understanding of the culture's heritage as it is presented in a text.

Statement of the Problem

The statistical distribution of children's literature production shows that over 50,000 children's titles are currently in print and more than 4000 are published yearly in the United State. The Cooperative Children's Book Center in 2017 records that 11% of children's books published featured black characters. Out of the 330 books produced also, 100 were created by black authors and illustrators. A situation that Opoku Agyemang (2017) terms as "western concentration" where the literature available has little to appeal to children from different cultures. The problem that inspired the study is the "western concentration" (Opoku Agyemang, 2017) and the "lack of specificity" (Finnegan, 1970) in the available electronic literature for children. I, therefore, sought to theorize this field of study by proposing a synthesized model for the analysis of electronic literature as well as providing a conceptual framework for writing electronic literature by assessing the constituents or composition of the few existing e-literature for children in Africa.

Having read the accessible literature on electronic literature for children from the seminal works, conference materials, scholarly articles from blogs and vlogs of researchers interested in the field of children's literature, I discovered that the

bulk of information (the volume and quality of investigations conducted) on Electronic literature is centred on adult literature, apportioning a little space for children's literature. Moreover, Opoku Agyemang (2017) establishes that there is a "western concentration" in regional demarcation on the scholarship of electronic literature (p.4) therefore, having an African voice projected in the emerging field of study is needed to neutralize the "western biases of our understanding of digital textuality" (p. 10). This is akin to what Yitah & Komasi (2009) claim as "access to culturally appropriate books" (p. 252) for children.

Finally, a Conference and Media Art Festival organised by the Electronic Literature Organisation (ELO), an international body responsible for the investigation of literature produced for digital media from July 16-19,2020 at the University of Central Florida witnessed many researchers of children's literature from different cultures calling for electronic literature for children that are familiar with their culture. The implication of the issues presented at the conference makes it evident that it is about time that different cultures realized the need to have local content imported into digitized materials for children.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this research is to theorize an African version of Electronic Literature for children. The study is expected to generate a positive contribution to the field as available literature indicates that there is a lack of interest and no active discussion and critical examination ongoing as far as Electronic literature for African children is concerned. Therefore, theorizing this field of study would prompt other researchers' engagement. It will also serve as a contribution to the body of knowledge by proposing a framework and

model in establishing the nitty-gritty of Electronic Literature for Children in Africa.

Objectives of the Study

To achieve the stated purpose, the research sets out to achieve the following:

- to identify the structural, narrative, and thematic features of Electronic literature for children in Africa
- to provide the meta-functional usage from the identified structural, narrative and thematic features that have been reinforced with the semiotic resources employed by the authors and illustrators from the selected electronic literature.

These objectives have been set to enable the researcher to offer an explanation of the area of study and to provide the conceptual framework for children's electronic literature. By identifying the constituents, the study attempts to figure out the identifiable trends evident in the structural, narrative, and thematic features of the electronic literature for children using the samples gathered for the analysis. It will also propose a model for analysing children's electronic literature which could serve as a guideline for writers or individuals (creators) who work to produce electronic literary material for children's consumption. By so doing, these authors and illustrators would align and shape their content to meet a specific need for the target group of children they are composing content for. The research questions for the objectives are as follow.

Research Questions

1. What constitutes electronic literature for children in Africa considering the structural, narrative, and thematic features presented in the selected electronic literature for children?

2. How have the identified structural, narrative, and thematic features been reinforced with the semiotic resources employed by the authors and illustrators for meta-functional usage from the selected electronic literature?

Significance of the Research

The proposed research has the potential of enhancing the quality of digital production for children in Africa. Authors, illustrators, publishers and all who work to produce writings for children (creators) would be informed on the “specificity of needs” (Finnegan,1970; 2012) of children to respond in their compositions. In other words, writers could produce works that would adequately reflect the thoughts and cultural elements known to the African child.

In addition, the research hopes to test the proposition that global trends have implications for the local cultural situation. Hence, it behoves that cultures contribute to the global trend to have a share of its impact. Furthermore, it will contribute to the existing literature on Children's Literature, Electronic Literature and African Literature as this research proposes a synthesized model for analysing electronic children's literature. Finally, the study will have implications for Multicultural Literature. It would inform writers, researchers and others to learn about the African culture as implicated in works produced for children. The findings from the study would show the representation and the peculiar way of life of the Africans when presented in the electronic literature for children.

Delimitation

The current research will be limited to the search of African online stories accessed from YouTube and the International Children's Digital Library

(ICDL). The e-lits to be analysed are obtained from YouTube because materials for this research are readily accessible. Access for cross-examining purposes with findings from the study can be attained. The International Children's Digital Library is also a recognized website that contains collections of children's books from around the globe. It is a reliable digital library designed to support communities of children and adults in exploring literature "through innovative technology in partnership with children and for children".

Furthermore, the Electronic literature that will be analysed will be limited to those written in English noting the challenges with translations as well as the researcher's background. Wa Thiong'o (1986) reveals that English is assumed as the Natural Language of literary and political mediation between African people in the same nation and nations in Africa and other continents (p. 6)". Apart from that, English as a language has a wider readership and can serve a dual purpose of educating children from the African culture while catering to those from non-African cultures. Wa Thiong'o further hints that "European languages were seen as having the capacity to unite African people against divisive tendencies inherent in the multiplicity of African languages within the same geographic state" (p. 6-7).

As has been observed, most children's literature engages in visual rhetoric. The study is not entirely visual rhetoric, the engagement with visual analysis is an approach adopted to show how semiotic resources are used to unravel ideology in children's electronic literature.

Defining the Scope of Africa in the Context of the Study

It is important to define the scope of focus for the study. It should be noted in this study that, Africa does not refer to the known landmass as the

second-largest continental. But, all groups of people who can be identified with her historical, political and cultural traits that are shared in the past. Thus, my emphasis is on a group of people who have a similar record of imperialism, slavery, and invasion that scholars can attest to and as a result has birthed common instances and encounters that have become ingrained in the people's

way of life. This encounter, in Opoku-Agyemang's view, particularly as it pertains to the slave trade, has created a fractured (African) world; therefore, writing for the child requires that authors "look at our past and tell the story properly (p.88)". The African Studies Encyclopaedia asserts that

"For centuries the continent of Africa has been home not only to people of traditional biophysical description, but also to people descended from Europeans, Asians, Arabs, and Hispanics. Moreover, centuries of biological intermingling have produced a continent of hybrid people"

Therefore "Africa" as used in this study, includes works of writers from continental Africa as well as the African writer in the Diaspora.

By expanding the scope of Africa and not limiting it to geographical positioning, it allows for the works of Africans in the Diaspora a space in the study. The scope of Africa used in this study differs from what other researchers consider as the sample size for their investigations where their focus is on a particular country like how Opoku Agyemang (2017) used Ghana as a metonym for Africa in his work.

Methodology

The research employs a qualitative design. A multimodal research approach is used to analyse the data. Since this approach is used, it mandates that the researcher uses the theory that the approach comes with (as illustrated in the table below).

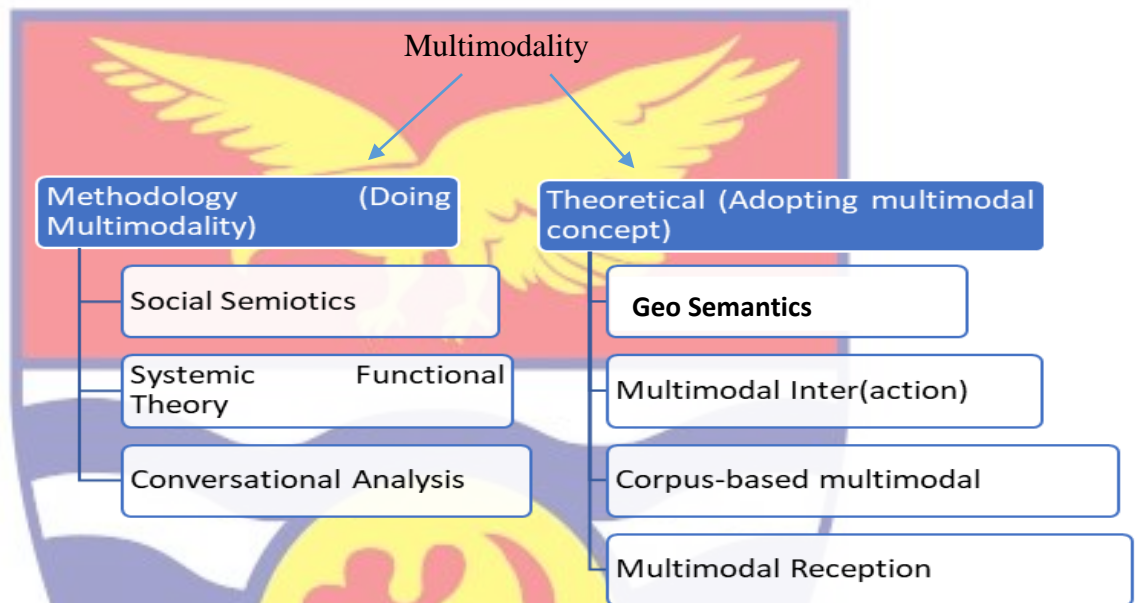


Figure 1. Summary of the Multimodality Approach.

Jewitt, Bezemer & O'Halloran (2016)

The diagram above shows the two dimensions of multimodality.

According to Jewitt, Bezemer & O'Halloran (2016), multimodality can be used as a methodology or a theoretical basis for a study. It is mainly concerned with meaning-making and the different means which appear together in the meaning-making process. It recognizes the combination of different means integrated or in a “multimodal whole” (Jewitt, Bezemer & O'Halloran, 2016).

Adding to this assertion is Lyons (2015) who proposes that multimodality is a theoretical and methodological approach involved with the application of semiotic resources to interpret sign and sign-making or to make meaning expressed in different modes in a text (It explains the meaning of not only

linguistic signs but visuals, gestures, colours, design, sounds, and others). The research employs multimodality as a methodology and social semiotic theory as a framework for the study.

Justification for the choice of approach

The emerging intricate and sophisticated spoken, written, image, and multimodal texts for different purposes and readers which are becoming common features associated with children's electronic literature require that there is a system to account for the different modes as a way of making meaning. A 'single' mode can hardly provide or partly give an account of what happens in the composition of children's electronic texts. Meaning is conveyed through the several modes employed in the text and the recurring modes operate mutually in varying ways to give the meaning to be made. The ability of writers and illustrators to convey a message through different modes facilitates the understanding of the message presented to the group the message is aimed at. Jewitt (2009) posits that how to manage the multiple combinations of different modes throughout the whole text and how to creatively and purposefully opt for particular modes might communicate different meanings at different moments in the texts to fully send the message of the story.

Meaning is conveyed to the reader through alternating blends of written language, visual, gestural, and spatial modes. With children's electronic literature comprising intricate digital multimodal text productions that include digital stories, interactive stories, animation, film and web pages such as stories on the Children's International Digital Library(www.icdl.com), it would not be far from wrong to adopt multimodality as an approach for the analysis of the selected children's electronic books for this research.

Data for the Study

The data for the research consists of seven children's e-books obtained from the official websites of children's digital libraries and other reliable digital platforms published within the last decade. The number of children's e-lit selected is representational of the common genre of children's e-lit. The reason for selecting children's e-lit within the last decade is that technology advances and betters with time, thus the last decade is enough to establish the internal consistency and challenges that may result from the particular trend. Again, the researcher prioritizes a more recent publication of the last ten years because technology betters with time and the more recent the e-book, the more sophisticated its components turn out to be. The seven selected children's electronic texts for the analysis are *Going Down Home with Daddy* written by Kelly Starling Lyons illustrated by Daniel Mintah; *Same Difference* by Calida Rawles; *The Undefeated* by Kwame Alexander; *Gbagba* by Robert Neajai with illustration by Chase Walker; *The Three Little Birds* by Saran Kaba; Youssouf Diallo, & Mariama Diabate and *The Alien* authored and illustrated by Anthony Mwangi.

Data Collection Procedure

Data for the study comprise seven children's electronic literature collected online. The data for the analysis are purposively generated from scenes and pages with the most relevant functional load from the selected electronic literature for children considered for this research. The selected scenes and pages were captured using Snipping Tool (computer software). Description and transcriptions are provided where necessary, bearing in mind ethical considerations. Interpretation in response to the research question is

given with justification from the secondary sources. The gathered transcripts are then categorized into codes for easier reference to them in the analysis. The codes for the data are derived from the three main words from the title of the electronic literature except for those titles with less than three words. In effect the codes are, Going Down Home for *Going Down Home with Daddy*, Anansi-the Spider for *A Story A Story: Anansi, The Spider Man*, Three Little Birds for *The Three Little Birds, The Undefeated, The Alien, Same Difference* and *Gbagba*.

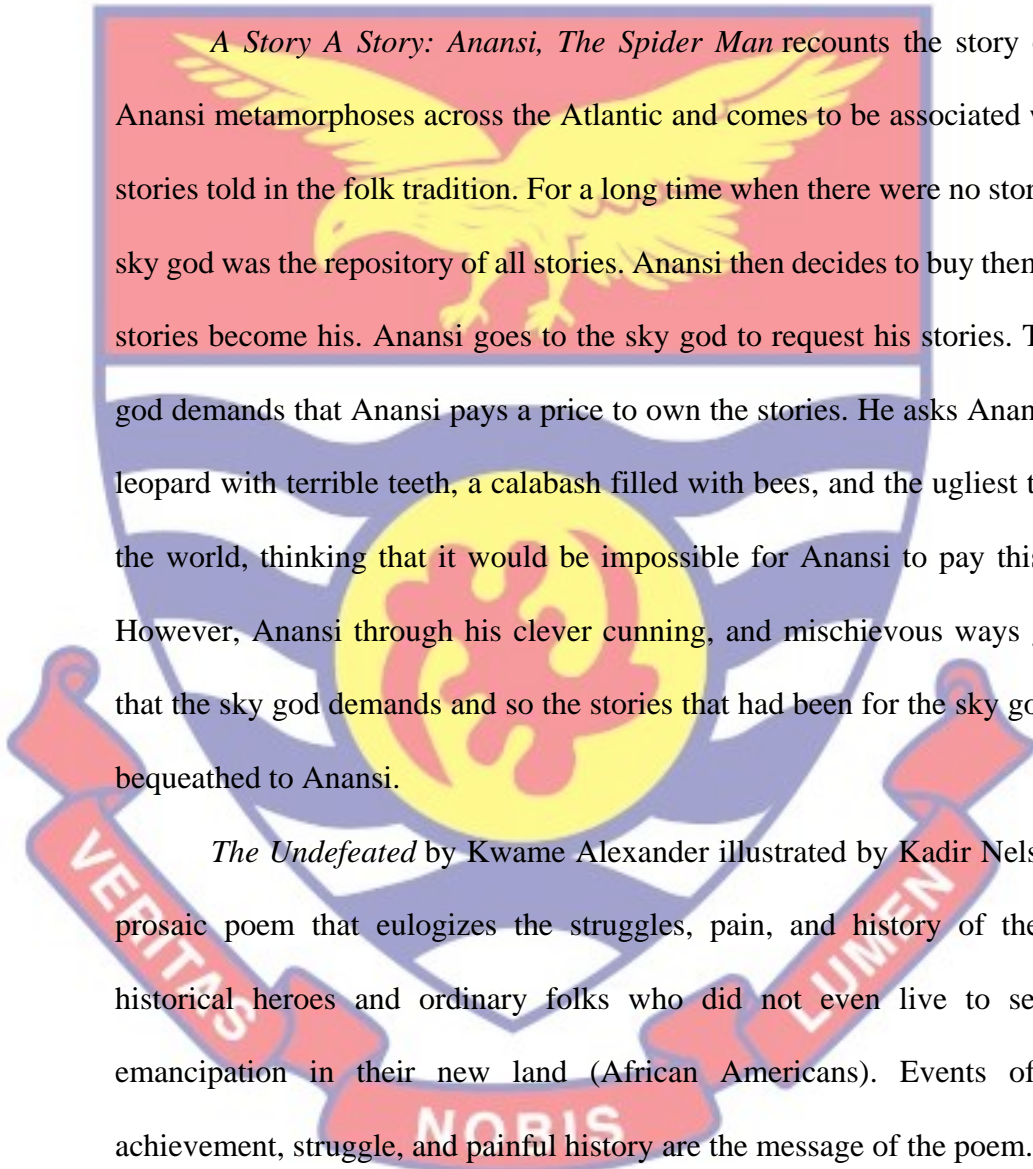
The seven selected electronic literature for children are the primary texts for the analysis. Multimodal units of words, images, and page layouts were purposively selected and analysed in response to the research questions for the study. These units of analysis were chosen based on their ability to identify and project ideological meanings, cultural representations, and user engagement features that are inherent in the selected electronic literature for children.

Scholarly supporting articles and papers published which serve as secondary sources were reviewed to provide justifications for the interpretation that was arrived at for the analysis. A critical examination of the multimodal units with the much 'functional load' of meaning-making relevant to the research objective was targeted.

Summary of the Selected Electronic Literature for Children

The Three Little Birds written by Saran Kaba, Youssouf Diallo, and Mariama Diabate features the story of three birds with remarkably annoying voices. They decide to work together with their voices and they sang in harmony and made unusual music that brought them success and fame in the village they lived in. As their popularity begins to grow, they become proud.

This destroys their friendship and the prosperity they achieved. Yet there is one consistently clever bird that sought to keep the group together but failed to unite them. The two other birds detach themselves from the clever bird and they meet their untimely failure and death. The clever bird gets rewarded for his tremendous contribution to helping his society.



A Story A Story: Anansi, The Spider Man recounts the story of how Anansi metamorphoses across the Atlantic and comes to be associated with all stories told in the folk tradition. For a long time when there were no stories, the sky god was the repository of all stories. Anansi then decides to buy them so the stories become his. Anansi goes to the sky god to request his stories. The sky god demands that Anansi pays a price to own the stories. He asks Anansi for a leopard with terrible teeth, a calabash filled with bees, and the ugliest thing in the world, thinking that it would be impossible for Anansi to pay this price. However, Anansi through his clever cunning, and mischievous ways gets all that the sky god demands and so the stories that had been for the sky god were bequeathed to Anansi.

The Undeclared by Kwame Alexander illustrated by Kadir Nelson is a prosaic poem that eulogizes the struggles, pain, and history of the black historical heroes and ordinary folks who did not even live to see their emancipation in their new land (African Americans). Events of black achievement, struggle, and painful history are the message of the poem.

Going Down Home with Daddy by Kelly Starling Lyons and illustrated by Daniel Minter narrates the story of a family's reunion. A family of four wakes before dawn to prepare for a trip to their granny's place. They arrange to join their external relations for a family celebration. However, Lil Alan worries

that he may not have a suitable gift for the extended family's 75 years celebration of owning their land. Having frets over what to do, he composes a short but powerful speech, from things he sees around which wins the admiration of all.

Same Difference by Calida Rawles is a story of two cousins who notice their differences in a mirror. This arouses their curiosity about their physical difference making them find themselves odd with each other. It takes the wisdom of their grandmother to explain to the girls to realize that their difference cannot be controlled but the bond they share is deeper than what they see with their differences making them beautiful.

Gbagba by Robtel Neajai Pailey with illustration by Chase Walker describes the story of a twin, Sundaygar and Sundaymah who leave the countryside with their aunt for a visit to the city of Monrovia. Their arrival in the city is met by a thug "in dirty clothes" who attempts to snatch their suitcases in broad daytime; they also witness their auntie's driver tipping (bribing) a police officer. The twins get awed by their encounter in the city as the things they experience are in contrast to what they have grown to know. Their encounter in the city taught them a new word "corruption" which they were curious to find out. They look up the word in a dictionary when they arrive at the aunt's home. The twins interpret 'corruption' to mean "gbagba", the word they know in their first language (Bassa- Liberian local language).

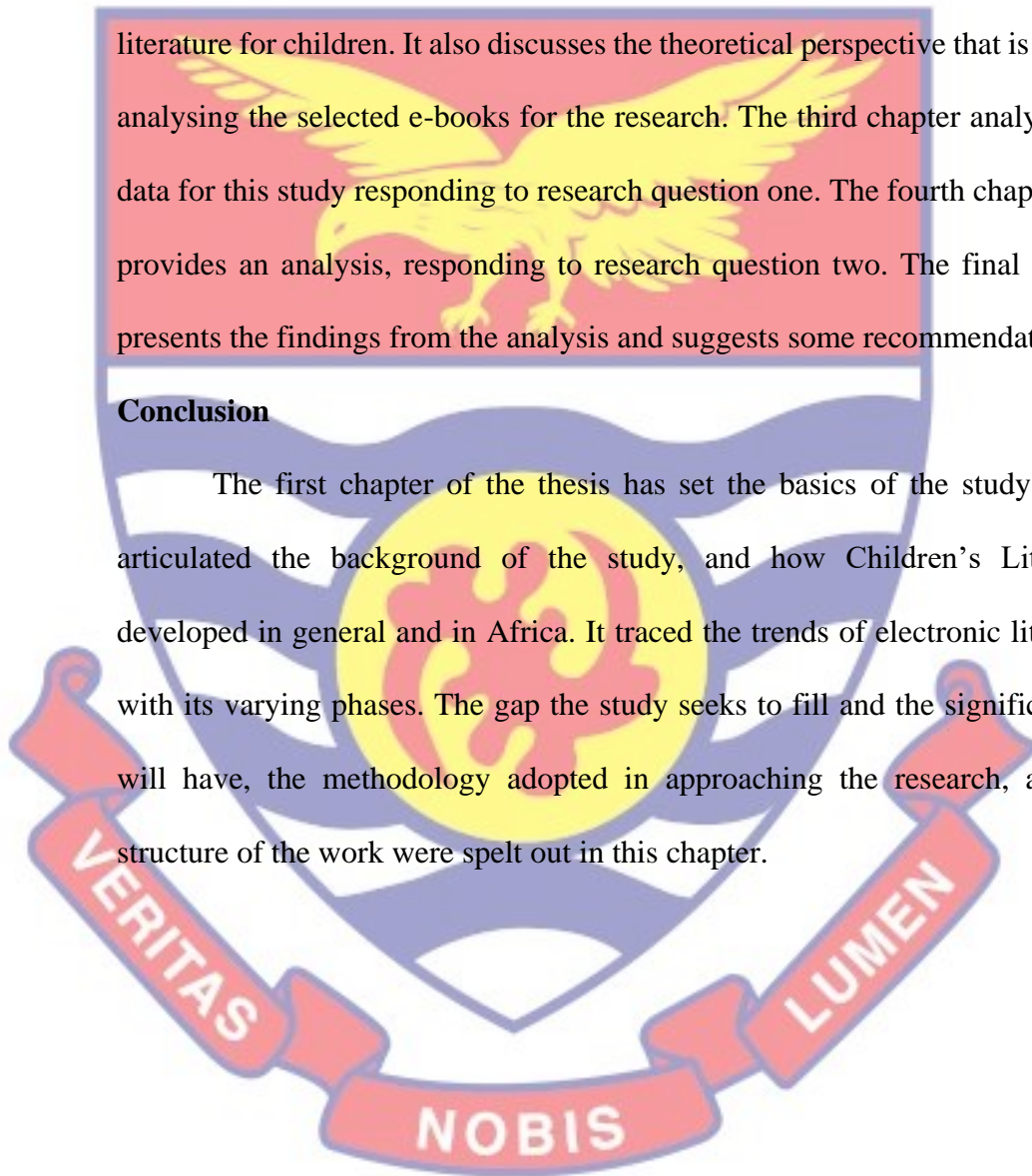
The Alien, authored and illustrated by Anthony Mwangi recounts the story of a small Kenyan boy, Pakko, who carries out experiments through trial and errors to heal wounds, and later harnesses the power of electromagnetism to create rain, catch crooks and travel through space.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is sectioned into five chapters. The first chapter, the introduction, offers a general background to the study. It presents the identified limitation in the literature and states the purpose of the research and its significance. The second chapter reviews the literature on the state of electronic literature for children. It also discusses the theoretical perspective that is used in analysing the selected e-books for the research. The third chapter analyses the data for this study responding to research question one. The fourth chapter also provides an analysis, responding to research question two. The final chapter presents the findings from the analysis and suggests some recommendations.

Conclusion

The first chapter of the thesis has set the basics of the study. It has articulated the background of the study, and how Children's Literature developed in general and in Africa. It traced the trends of electronic literature with its varying phases. The gap the study seeks to fill and the significance it will have, the methodology adopted in approaching the research, and the structure of the work were spelt out in this chapter.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The previous chapter set the pace at which the study is built. This current chapter offers comprehensive literature related to the problem being investigated in this study. The more recent contributions to the scholarship on literature for children chronicle the shifting trend of children's literary materials from print formats to digital formats. This section of the research explains some key concepts of electronic literature, reviews some works on African children's literature and electronic literature for children, and highlights the gaps the current study seeks to fill. The second chapter of the study elaborates on the theoretical perspective available for conducting research of this kind and presents a proposed model that can be used for analysing electronic literature having taken a cue from the features that have not been accounted for in other studies.

Definitions of Key Terms

a. *Electronic Literature (E-lit)*

The Electronic Literature Organisation (n.d) explains electronic literature as works with important literary aspects that take advantage of the capabilities and context provided by a stand-alone or networked computer. According to Hayles (2007), E-lits are digitally born or first-generation digitally created objects on the computer and are meant to be read ordinarily on a computer. Hayles' stance is arguably objected to by many scholars. Her definition suggests that electronic literature is work created digitally and is meant to be viewed digitally. This excludes print literature that has been digitalized. As demonstrated by Hayles

(2007), "Electronic Literature is generally estimated to include all digitally "born work", hence a book that is originally in print form but is transformed into an e-book is not an example of Electronic Literature. I believe that the distinguishing factor to categorize Electronic Literature should be its access to digital media, its composition of complex or multiple modes and its ability to engage and interact with its users. In this case, electronic literature will include all digitally born as well as recontextualized versions of prints. As explained by Glazier (2002), posits that electronic literature is best understood as a continuation of experimental print literature. The feature that makes electronic literature different from other types of literature is that it combines digital components (such as photos, and music) along with the text, which creates an interactive adventure for its users or readers.

Adding to the earlier works done, Opoku-Agyemang (2017) emphasises that Electronic literature is a creative expression that requires an electronic device such as a computer, a mobile phone, or a tablet to be created, functioned, and engaged with. Finally, Flores (2021) concurs that Electronic literature is a language-centred art (artist engagement of language) that retains the expressive potential of electronic and digital media. The recent Market Report 2021 of The Global Expresswire postulates a definition for Electronic literature or digital literature as "a genre of literature encompassing works created exclusively on and for digital devices, such as computers, tablets, and mobile phones". It further amplifies that a work of electronic literature is "a construction whose literary aesthetics emerge from computation and work that could only exist in the space for which it was developed/written/coded in the digital space". In all the instances given on what electronic literature is, one could realize that central

to E-lit are the artistic, imaginative, and creative works designed and can be accessed with electronic media. In short, E-lit is an innovative and contemporary literary narrative composed of multimodal wholes and accessed with digital resources.

b. Children's Literature

Huck (1964), in an attempt to define what constitutes Children's Literature, establishes the criteria for evaluating Children's Literature. These criteria include the plot, characterization, style, and format. She discussed briefly what is intended to be considered Children's Literature. Her approach was not to give definitions or the semantics of the concept of "Children's Literature" but to establish the features that characterize Children's Literature as a way of defining the concept. Her work fundamentally examined the elements that constitute Children's Literature to the degree where one would look out for the criteria and judge whether literature meant for children is reliable or not.

Unsworth (2005) furnishes the definition of Children's Literature by stating that Children's Literature is written to entertain the young and covers global fiction, poems, and picture books available in different forms, multimodal texts, and not excluding screen-based reading provided by the digital technology revolution, with its attendant "democratization of online spaces" and new "rules of social engagement", using interactive technologies.

What Unsworth (2006) did was take cognizance of the emerging trend resulting from technological advancement. Kucirkova (2018) reckons that Children's digital literature included different advanced media, multimodal kinds of engagement such as personalised multimedia and interactive books with their

utilization engrossed in the closeness of screens and is a wide extent of developments open to young children today that “it revises adults’ traditional notions of what it means to read and enjoy stories” (p. 32).

According to Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson (1993), Children’s Literature is “a good quality trade book for children from birth to adolescence, covering topics of relevance and interest to children of those ages through prose and poetry, fiction and non-fiction”. Here, Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson point precisely that children’s literature is written for children from infancy to adolescence and those working with children (teachers, parents, librarians, and others). Schmidt in her work on *Children’s Literature about Africa* ascribes an age boundary to the books that to her are said to constitute Children’s Literature. She, therefore, defines Children’s Literature as works written for children up to twelve or thirteen years of age.

I have observed from my readings on the subject that the child whom the children’s literature is written for is “a dependent and unprocessed being”; therefore, he/she needs guards and guides to direct and scaffold them in their attempt to acquire knowledge of themselves and their world and even to amuse themselves with the literary productions designed for them. Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (1993) suggest that “there must first be someone, more than likely an adult who has the knowledge, willingness and practice to guide the child to books (p. 8)”. Children’s Literature is also read by an adult probably a parent, educator, or librarian among others to know the content and be able to recommend them to the younger ones or their students.

Heath (2011) also appends that as children improve in their reading, they require sufficient space for sprawling bodies and books whose quantities and

volumes may overwhelm the capacity of available bookshelves. Children who cherish and love reading books need time for stop-action attention from adults willing to watch dramatic re-enactments and listen to retellings of their tales.

In explaining the features that make up the literature for children, Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson suggest that the content and quality of writing must be crucial to Children's Literature. By the quality of writing, they posit that literary writing should relay an original and relevant idea to children with the use of imaginative language, the beauty of literary and artistic style (in other words, graphical and visual illustration should accompany the writings), and should be useful to a particular age and endure with the years that pass by. They further explain that the content of children's literature should contain the daily experience of children and situations that do not necessarily form part of childhood but are of interest to children and a source of humour and suspense. More so, in the presentation of issues in Children's Literature, it should portray life in a light and delightful manner not depicting children as victims of hardship prevalent at a time and place, with stress on hope for the future.

c. Digital Storytelling

Anderson & Chua (2010) define digital storytelling as the creation of short, personal narratives with the combinations of text, sounds, and images, in a multimedia computer-based platform. They further suggest that the present technological age affords young ones the opportunities to draw from media experiences to enhance their critical thinking capacities.

d. Electronic Media

These are electronic equipment that use electronics or electromechanical means for one to access the content of its purposed function

or the various technologies powered by electricity to which modern and current artists have had recourse in their work. These include mobile phones, digital video, slide presentations, audio recordings CD-ROM, online content, television, computer, telephone, and radio.

e. Electronic Literature for Children in African

Deducing from the key terms defined above, one can understand that Electronic Literature for Children in Africa is any creative work designed to be accessed with electronic media that is immersed in the indigenous culture and values of Africa to respond to the specific needs of its children while supplementing other cultures with its rich cultural experience. Schmidt rightly gives the content of literature for African children as:

“It is written by an African author, illustrated by African artists, edited and published by Africans in Africa. The context is almost always African usually specific to the African country or geographical region in which it is published... They are not single-mindedly didactic to the point of excluding creativity and stimulating reading for pleasure. Although some Europeans still write, illustrate, edit and publish books for African children, most of them live or have lived in Africa and are familiar with contemporary African life” (p.304-306).

State of Emerging Electronic Literature for Children

Huck (1964) unfolds that in the past children’s classical books were held in “veneration by virtue” of their past success, however, modern books, especially in the digital format, have become “a more social event” (Serafini & Young, 2013). Smyk (2017) opines that technological advancement has evolved from the rise of dynamic storytelling through multimedia experiences

designed most engagingly to entice children. Watson (1993) describes the sort of readers most children are today as modern and multi-layered. Smyk further outlines that when it comes to multimedia storytelling, various media such as (texts, video and audio, and graphics) are used in several mixed forms to give an immersive digital insightful experience. By this means, there is added relevance, coherence, and meaning given to the story to bring it closer to the audience as they get engaged and can interact with the story.

When interacting with digitally-based texts, one can harness and enjoy the full potential provided with the right techniques to meet those needs. Again, I have observed that electronic literature is a 'breathing or living experience' of a story. As people engage by watching, listening, or reading the digital story there is the chance to invite users or viewers/readers to add to the content of the story by responding through the comments and feedback sessions. In other words, the community through which the story is accessed offers a platform for engaging its users. As users too contribute to the content, they become invested in the storytelling process, a worthwhile experience that deepens their interest in the e-narratives.

Additionally, most of the electronic literature available makes room for a personalized storyline narrative for the reader. Some forms of E-lit allow users to choose their adventure. In addition to this, there is user-generated content, and participatory platforms for creating, posting, sharing, responding to, critiquing, and engaging in other participatory activities that accompany the digital stories (Anderson & Chua, 2010). For example, *Together Tales* has packs of different activities to engage children through the use of web interactive games, print books, and adventure in outdoor activities. The use of

augmented and virtual reality (the creation of real-world experiences and relationships by the interacting audience) in sharing experiences is another instance of the recent state of electronic literature that cannot go unnoticed. Another observable trend taking place is the recreation of children's classics for today's readers. There has been a lot of adaptation of all-time children's stories into movies and games spicing the reading moment children now have.

It can be concluded that the features of e-lit for children are that they are written and accessed with digital media, they have complex interactivity features that engage their users and they are made up of multimodal resources (speech, writing, images, video, music) among others. The Electronic Literature Market Report 2021 confirms that "elements crucial to the text are unable to be carried over onto a printed version". It is these unique and peculiar features that distinguish electronic literature from traditional literature (prints). The Electronic Literature Market Report 2021 submitted by Ajar has it that, the digital literature world continues to innovate print conventions nonetheless some novels are exclusive to tablets and smartphones as these are mediated by a touchscreen.

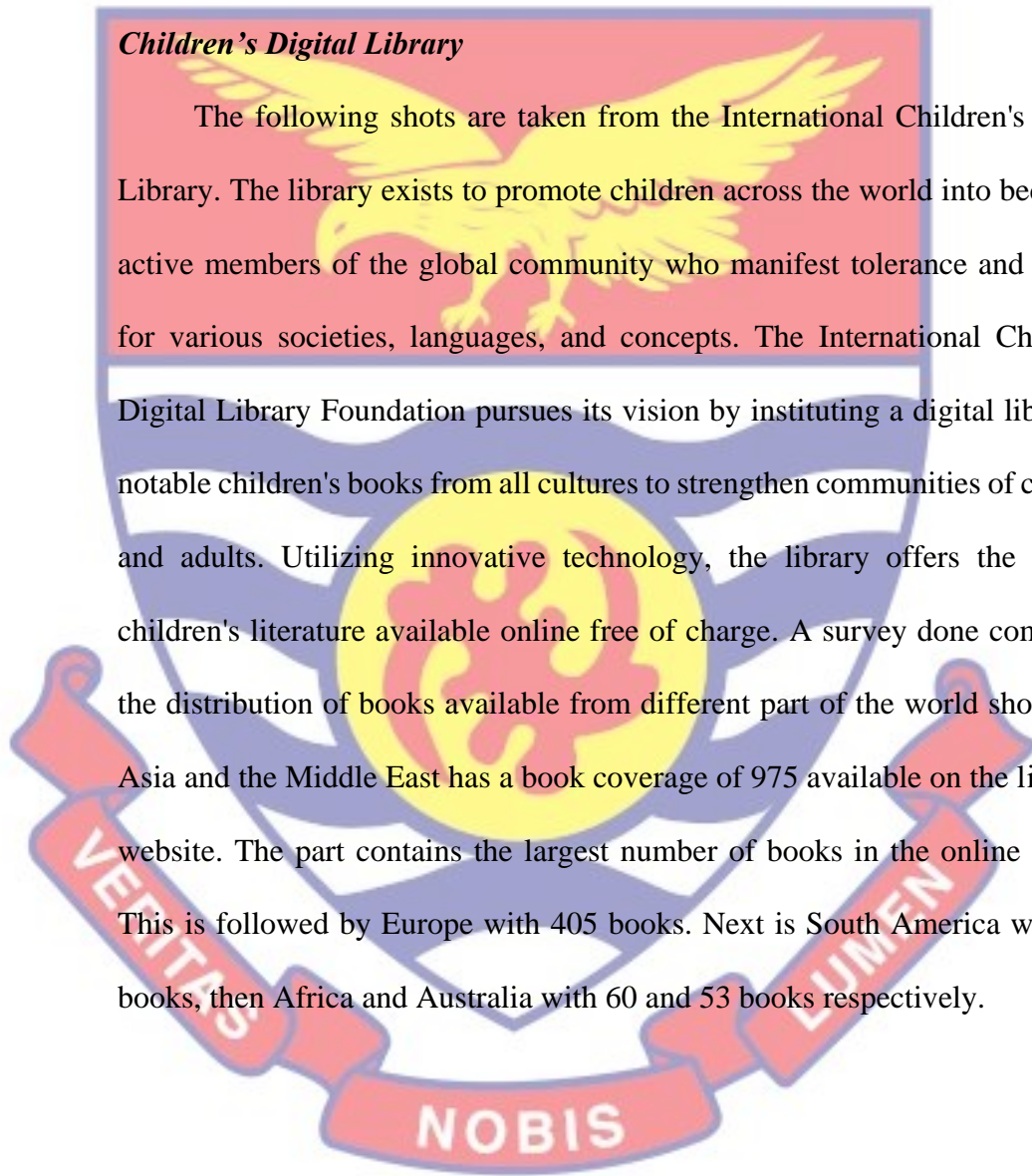
From the emerging electronic literature for children, it can be seen that the production of electronic literature carries in them values and didactic messages intended to be transmitted to the child. Noorman & Nafisah (2016) illustrate an instance in Indonesia where they state that "the rising production of films for children with didactic messages trend becomes more pronounced with the emergence of the Reform Era after 1998". From their investigation, they give a hint of how the visual presentation of stories not only aids better understanding but also the ability of the child to retain the message in mind for a

long period. In addition, they show the contribution of film production in transmitting ideologies (social and political) in nature to children. From this submission, it can be apprehended that the electronic literature can be utilized to relay and nurture expected behaviour from children.

Regional Distribution of Children's e-literature from the International

Children's Digital Library

The following shots are taken from the International Children's Digital Library. The library exists to promote children across the world into becoming active members of the global community who manifest tolerance and respect for various societies, languages, and concepts. The International Children's Digital Library Foundation pursues its vision by instituting a digital library of notable children's books from all cultures to strengthen communities of children and adults. Utilizing innovative technology, the library offers the best in children's literature available online free of charge. A survey done comparing the distribution of books available from different part of the world shows that Asia and the Middle East has a book coverage of 975 available on the library's website. The part contains the largest number of books in the online library. This is followed by Europe with 405 books. Next is South America with 105 books, then Africa and Australia with 60 and 53 books respectively.



Asia (975 books)

975 books found 1 - 12 shown
Books per page 12

View Cover Sort Title Location From Asia and Middle East

The grid displays 8 book covers. The first row includes: 'The adventures of a small boy' (Persian/Farsi), 'The adventures of a small boy' (Mongolian), 'The adventures of a small boy' (Persian/Farsi), and 'The adventures of a small boy' (Persian/Farsi). The second row includes: 'The adventures of a small boy' (Persian/Farsi), 'The adventures of a small boy' (Mongolian), 'The adventures of a small boy' (English), and 'The adventures of a small boy' (Mongolian).

Europe (405 books)

405 books found 1 - 12 shown
Books per page 12

View Cover Sort Title Location From Europe

The grid displays 8 book covers. The first row includes: 'ABC Pictures for Children' (Danish), 'A B C Primer' (Finnish), 'A B C Primer' (English), and 'ABC' (Polish). The second row includes: 'ABC and Bascho book' (German), 'Activities in nature' (Serbian), 'The adventures' (Serbian), and 'The adventures of Topuz-Bey' (Yiddish).

South America (103 books)

103 books found 1 - 12 shown
Books per page 12

View Cover Sort Title Location From South America

The grid displays 8 book covers. The first row includes: 'Abu Ali counts his domes' (Portuguese), 'The adventures of the fox' (Spanish), 'At the airport with animals' (Spanish), and 'The Amaru' (Spanish). The second row includes: 'Alamir, the last boy of...' (Spanish), 'At the coast' (Spanish), 'The bald eagle and other' (Spanish), and 'A big little girl' (French).

Africa (60 books)



Australia (53 books)



Figure 2. The Distribution of Books Available on ICDL as of September 2020

(Source: www.icdl.com)

Publishing of Electronic Literature and Digital Content for Children in Africa

Kulesz (2011) discloses that digital technology has shaken the foundations of the book industry in the recent decade. His report on Children’s digital publishing in Africa, the Arab World and India highlights that 21% of all children’s books sold in the US are in digital format. The explosion of mobile applications coupled with the increasing use of tablets and other interactive tools by children and teenagers has brought a new scenario for the publishing

industry. Enumerating the advantages this opportunity presents to publishers, Kulesz remarks that electronic media would make it possible to reach new international markets where distribution can be made more efficiently and effortlessly. It is worrying to note that there is a lack of diverse children's content when searching on multiple online platforms such as Netflix, Booknook, Amazon Prime, Book store shelf, and many others. This claim is disclosed by Dr. Carlotta Penn, speaking on the subject of "*Lifting Black voices in Children's Books*" (TEDx Talks, 2018).

With the aim of registering the effort in publishing African E-lits, Octavio Kulesz, the reporter of *Digital Publishing in Developing Countries* discovers some measures that have been adopted to enhance the production and sustainability of electronic literary materials for children in Africa. These strategies include setting in place non-commercial projects such as, 'BookDash' which organizes "book-making marathons" that attract many writers, illustrators, photographers, and other artists to create children's books with high visual quality. Also, Nouvelles Editions Numériques Africaines (NENA) witnessed the publication of 125 works by African authors, on different subjects. In April 2014, NENA presented its African Digital Bookstore. Another strategy is developing personal software for publishing interactive books as done by Kalimat (Sharjah), a children's publisher founded in 2007 by Sheikha Bodour Al Qasimi.

It can be established that the effort put into having electronic literature for children in Africa is overwhelming. In Ghana and Kenya 'LetiArts' is producing its collection of digital comics "Africa's Legends", designed for cell phones. In the same vein, in 2014 the Kenyan company 'AfroKidz' created the

application Safari Tales’, which brings together stories from across the region, adapted to an interactive format. The list mentioned highlights the contribution of publishers in Africa in the generation of electronic literary texts

Impacts of Children's Electronic Literature

Assessing the impact that Electronic Literature has on children’s lives, Tapscott & Williams (2006) reports that online new media practices enable learners to consume and produce knowledge creatively with their participatory culture. Chung (2006) also comments that it “allows students to develop and apply multiliteracies skills and funds of knowledge, aesthetic sensitivities, and critical faculties to address greater issues of importance to a larger audience” (p. 48). These personal narratives play a central role in the construction of the cultural and self-identity as a societal phenomenon with democratising potential (Burgess, 2006). These are essentially didactic and function as a facility to form character and identity (Hunt, 1994; Ewers, 2009). Electronic works of literature can be adapted to serve as an archive for preserving the cultural heritage of societies. With the adoption of technologies in the production of literary materials for children, the aforementioned traits are necessary to provide children with memorable characters and situations from the electronic literature they interact with because it is a great way to sharpen the imagination of children.

Duhoe & Adansi (2020) and Kucirkova (2018) take a different side on the impact of the advancement of technology on children’s literature. In their view, the advancement in technology has weakened the moments that children spend with their parents listening to stories. In their study conducted to evaluate the changing trend of bedtime stories with a comparative study of African and

European Children's literature, they explored the medium that children get to hear stories in the African context before the emergence of modern technology in Africa. It is reported that children resorted to their parents and teachers who spend a great deal of time telling children stories and such moments have been greatly affected by the new trends (Duhoe & Adansi, 2020).

Again, Kucirkova (2018) stresses that the oddity of screens and the extensive proportion of unreasonable and inappropriate substances that can be gotten through to children have justifiably prompted a few worries about the negative impact of screens on reading among children. Problems of limited resources to digital devices and the cost of the internet to having this electronic literature do exist to probably hinder some children from getting digital literature to read. There may also be some problems with connectivity to the internet which can discourage the consumption of electronic content by children.

Some Related Studies Conducted

In other investigations, attention is drawn to the framework for managing the new forms of narratives that are emerging (Houston, 2011; Serafini & Young, 2013; Unsworth, 2006). Houston's work focuses on providing the context for the advancement of children's literary narrative by reviewing key terms such as digital design features, digital collection, and advanced structure highlights of visuals and images. Serafini & Young (2013) offered a different dimension by outlining how multimodal, digitally based text and resources shape analysing, sharing, and reading, of Children's Literature. The approach by Serafini & Young (2013) involved diving deeper into the impacts of the digital age on Children's Literature by providing a means of analysing digitally based text taking into consideration the visual images,

design elements, and hypertextual components. Unsworth's investigation comparably sought to establish the link between the different literary media in the new age. He puts the relationship between literary texts and digital media into three divisions which incorporate "augmented texts", "re-contextualized texts" and "originated literary text". Kucirkova (2018) additionally set out to find the key trends in children's use of digital books and the production of their materials. She further samples the research that have been conducted in Children's Literature. However, she narrows the study to research that deals with digital books as a specific type of children's engagement mediated by a screen.

Previous works on African Children's Literature

Schmidt (1981) gives a survey of children's fiction about Africa in English. Her study is one of the earliest works that amasses the interest of researchers in Children's Literature in Africa. Schmidt examines 542 novels and volumes of short stories which focused on blacks in Africa. Her study, she notes is "not literary criticism of children's fiction rather it combines anthropological and literary approaches" (p.7). She juxtaposes the fiction written for Euro-American children with those written for African children.

The finding from her study shows that there is a negatively biased view of African life in Euro-American books. The biased view detected in the Euro-American Literature as she recounts is seen in the diction which portrayed the African as lowly servants, pastoral or nomadic people. An observation made from the study carried out, as revealed by Osa (1983) shows that Schmidt lacked an understanding of the school-age children and adolescents in Africa.

Consequently, she failed to set the age boundaries related to children's writing leading her to classify both children's fiction and young adult fiction as "children's literature". In reviewing Schmidt's work, Osa (1983) appreciated the effort of Schmidt in the new approach to the concept of African children's literature yet putting both young adult fiction and children's fiction as "children's literature" Osa comments, "overlooks a most critical period in a person's life". Schmidt's assertion that "adult fiction can be 'changed' into children's fiction by being issued in a lavished illustration" is vehemently contested by scholars. Osa (1983) reveals that it has been the practice with most works of children's writing but this does not make abridged versions and furnished illustrated adult works prepared to suit children become children's literature because these works still carry in them concepts related to adults. To him, paraphrasing and re-adjusting adult content for children are described as a "disservice to children" (Osa,1983).

Following this, Osa (1985) presents "*The rise of African Children's Literature*". Here, one finds that Osa raises the problem of appropriating adults' text for children. He attributes this problem to the lackadaisical interest of African scholars shown in Children's Literature. He then justifies the need for African writings that are apt for children of the African continent. His stance is that this act would warrant children's writing with elements from the African culture. When such is achieved, what Finnegan describes as "specificity of needs" (p. 298) of children from the African society would be responded to.

Osa's work "*African Children and Youth Literature*" has been reviewed by Bond (1996) and she reveals the sudden decline of the once-interest rallied in researchers and scholars following Nancy Schmidt's study of *Children's*

Fiction about Africa in English in the 80s. Schmidt as cited by Osa states that despite the number of efforts put in place to revive the once-ignited zeal in African Children's Literature such as the instituting of the Journal of African Children's and Youth Literature, conferences and book fairs to garner discussions and critical examination of African literature written for children, as well as several attempts by international bodies in solving this challenge, the field has been ignored and "marginalized".

Bond (1996) sums up the fundamental concepts of Osa's work that the African literature written for children is formed based on the African literary tradition to achieve relevance in the African child's life as well as perform its function as a didactic tool. Bond commends Osa's work that has added to scholarship on African Children's writing. This work, being one of the earliest studies that offer the historical context for studying African children's literature serves as a guide to the study of children's literature in Africa. Yitah & Komasi (2009) explains how the written literature for Africa originated from the classic traditional oral forms which had as its goal to enable children to dive and immerse themselves in the cultural heritage they are identified with. Khan (2019) also offers a critical appraisal of the evolution of children's literature in Africa, from the colonial period through to the modern day. He does this by retelling the history of children's literature in Africa and the contributions made by some of its member countries, particularly Nigeria.

Previous Studies Relevant to the Current Study

Johnson (2014) provides an update on the trends in Children's Literature in her work "*Trends in Children's Literature and the Social Implications*". She traces the trend in Children's literature with a focus on the

style of story progression, the genre that distinguishes the various children's literature, the social relation that resonated with the relationship between realism and creativity, and the different media. She discusses at length the trend of children's literature mostly centering on the traditional modes. She acknowledges the role technology plays in transmitting stories to children. She posits that the habit of parents reading to their children has been an age-long tradition before there was written language or rehearsed storytelling to fulfil a similar purpose. The subject of many books and how children consequently receive the information with an e-reader is the change she identifies. She further describes the historical antecedents that have shaped the writings for children globally. Hayles (2007) presents the state of Electronic Literature in recent times from its inception as hypertext from the 1980s (although there was electronic literature that was not popular and developed). She also tries to address the overlapping issues of E-lit with its print counterpart. She argues that there should be new ways of analysing and critical models to interpret works of E-lit.

Gabelica's paper *Children's Electronic Literature Criticism: Exploring Electronic Picture Books* articulates the genres and position of Children's Literature with specific consideration to their narrative possibilities. She acknowledges the contribution of technology to the production of literary works for children. Adding that the transformation has resulted in these children's books being didactic tools to entertaining tools. Nevertheless, she worries that certain features of the digital materials promised to include get absent from the e-books. For instance, she cited (Montfort, 2003) "labelled as interactive stories ...the promised interactivity lacks a meaning interactor". She also explains the

digital environment that electronic literature is said to be situated. She questions the traditional books with fairy tales, fantasy stories, and fables that have been transported into digital media. Just like Reynold (2011) who proposes new skills and approaches to interpreting works of children's literature in electronic formats, Gabelica calls for "digital poetics" to interpret works of 'cybertext'.

In Opoku Agyemang's (2017) "*Beyond Digital/Oral: Ghanaian Electronic Literature as a Paradigm for African Digital Textuality*", the incorporation of digital technology in African Literature is examined. Three genres of African E-lit in the context of Oral Literature are analysed to highlight how oral tradition influences the nature, form, and shape of African E-lit.

Other related works include the use of digital storytelling in informal learning (Anderson & Chua, 2010). Kuo et.al (2009) and Choi (2008) conduct national surveys on accessibility to technology and the adoption of the internet. Noorman & Nafisah (2016) explore how the subject of nationalism is construed in four children's films. One striking finding they revealed is the exposure of children to nationalism through their attachment to their local setting. Adopting qualitative research design, they analyse online literature for children as text. They place a premium on the role of local settings helped in nurturing nationalism in Indonesian children.

Again, Molina & Belmonte (2016) provide extensive work on the multimodal characterization of digital stories by focusing on the construction of meaning in digital stories precisely, meaning-making in the text, *To Every Child*.

From the blog and vlog of researchers interested in Children's Electronic Literature, it is seen that a lot is been done to create awareness of the need to publish books to meet the specific needs of children using local objects that

children can be identified with. Mkhize (2019) realizes there are not many materials projecting positive things in Africa, and people of colour; she, therefore, creates a decolonizing history for children through her writing “*In Africa with Avi and Kumbi*”. She emphasizes the fact that the representation of black children and Africa is the origin of technology. Other researchers have worked on what and how the environment is represented in children’s literature to the child reader. Specifically, how the African author employs two African texts to outline the representation of the environment and how environmental issues are unravelled in creating eco-consciousness in the African child.

In all cases, I observed that the reviewed literature imparts an awareness that technological innovation has become a part of our existence. Its influence in shaping literary works for children and the benefits of enhancing literacy among children cannot be overlooked. Taking cognizance of the era we live in now, I am of the view that digital resources can be utilized to shape the cultural and literary production of African children. The merging of electronic usage and cultural elements to meet the specificity of the need of the African child could be seen as a response to an ages-yearned-hope-fulfilled as authors and illustrators of children’s literature adapt to the latest trend of development.

Limitations in the Literature

The plethora of investigations conducted on Children’s Electronic Literature examines the impact of electronic books on children's learning. The situation is as if electronic literature is coterminous to children’s literacy. Aside from this, it can be realized that the limited materials available are unfriendly to the differences in cultures. Finnegan (1970) surmises that attention is not given to Children’s verse in Africa. And as well, the limited number of works that

have been done usually have no significance for the local situation. She cites an instance where she observes that specialized rhymes are in limited quantity in African society. She points out that it is unclear in published evidence how the specificity of children's verse in African societies is affected by the previous lack of a distinct body of children's verse for school children. From her perspective, one could find that, with children being the audience for children's literature, it presents a specific need that has to be addressed yet the concept of "children" is treated as a universal concept. She again highlights the conventions of typical societies and their various means of communicating. Finnegan (1970) gives a forewarning on what is to be classified as children as the concept of children differs from culture to culture. Her assertion concerning the nature of children verse being dependent on what pertains in a typical African society shows that any material produced for such culture should have in them some elements of the African culture.

Theoretical Framework

The implication of Piaget's theory shows that children are more visually oriented than adults. They, therefore, need pictorial information to guide their reaction to verbal information. The lavishly visual structures in children's electronic literary text outline particular interpretations of social interaction and various forms of experiences. One can attest to the fact that there is a difference in expressing something verbally or visually. In any medium where signs can be made, sign-makers are to utilize the forms they consider apt to express the ideas they mean. The dominant mode of materials designed for children makes intense use of representational images. Hence, the reason many researchers use multimodality for the analysis of children's books.

Social Semiotic Theory situated within Multimodality Approach by Jewitt, Bezemer & O'Halloran (2016) is adopted as the theoretical basis for the study. Social Semiotic Theory encapsulates that communication and representation draw on a multiplicity of modes, all of which contribute to meaning. The four key concepts central to multimodal analysis are mode, modal affordance, semiotic resource, and inter-semiotic relations. Mode is defined as a socially and culturally shaped resource for making meaning (Lyons, 2016; Kress, 2010). Modal affordance refers to the possibility that various modes offer various possibilities for making meaning. It influences the sorts of semiotic work a mode can be used for, the simplicity with which it may be done, and the various manners by which modes can be utilized to accomplish comprehensively comparative semiotic work. They are associated with the mode's material and social histories. Thus, the social purpose utilizes it in a particular context. Semiotic resources are the means for making meaning which include the actions, materials, and artefacts used for communicative purposes.

The basic tenets of the social semiotic theory that originated from Saussure are “langue”- (available forms’ and ‘available classifications’) and “parole” individual acts of sign-making. Multimodality, according to Kress (2009) shows the forms (signifiers) such as colour, perspective and line, and how these forms are used to realize meanings (signifieds) in the making of signs. The Social Semiotic Theory situated in the Systemic Functional Linguistic propounded by Halliday attempts to represent the world around and inside us to establish social interactions as social relations through several compositional elements. Hence, revealing the ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions.

The criticisms levelled at the social semiotic theory by Kress and Leeuwen are that they have not provided enough discussion on how the four concepts relate to one another, and how they can be used in the practical analysis of specific pictures. Secondly, it has more to do with making meaning in visual communication while the literariness of the text is unaccounted for.

Some difficulties are encountered when accessing and annotating dynamic audio-visual media such as film, sound, and modern interactive hypermedia (Lemke, 2002). The development of sophisticated interactive digital media, together with the increasingly collaborative nature of research in the twenty-first century demands that justice is done to the other literary resource that makes up the text. Digital narratives or children's e-lit texts are complex multimodal texts. They dynamically combine the semiotic systems of written language, audio, moving images, spoken language, and gesture (acting) to convey meaning. In an attempt to cater to the inadequacies of the theory suggested, there is the need to combine and adapt the theories others have used in analysing children's electronic text to meet the targeted purpose of the current research.

According to Gunther Kress & Theo van Leeuwen (2006), their work sought to give "a usable description of major compositional structures which have become established in the course of the history of Western visual semiotics, and to analyse how they are used to produce meaning by contemporary image-makers" (p.1). They further noted that their "visual grammar" (in justifying the use of the term) is a "general grammar of contemporary visual design in "Western" cultures, an account of explicit and

implicit knowledge and practices around a resource, consisting of the elements and rules underlying a culture-specific form of visual communication” (p.3).

The deduction from the statement is that the multimodality analysis by Kress and Leeuwen might be biased toward productions, not from Western Culture.

Researchers with a literature background may not be at advantage applying the multimodality by Kress & Leeuwen wholly. Again, their theory tends to be appropriate as disclosed by Thuy (2017) “the book (referring to *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*) offers a framework for still and moving image analysis in Western Culture (p.168)”.

The application of this theoretical backing is mainly useful for artworks, communication, and media. One may encounter a challenge using this theory when working on electronic literary works. It is in light of these inconsistencies that the current study adopted a model building on what other researchers employed in analysing their electronic literary pieces. Enough discussion has not yet been provided on how multimodality can be used in the practical analysis of electronic literature.

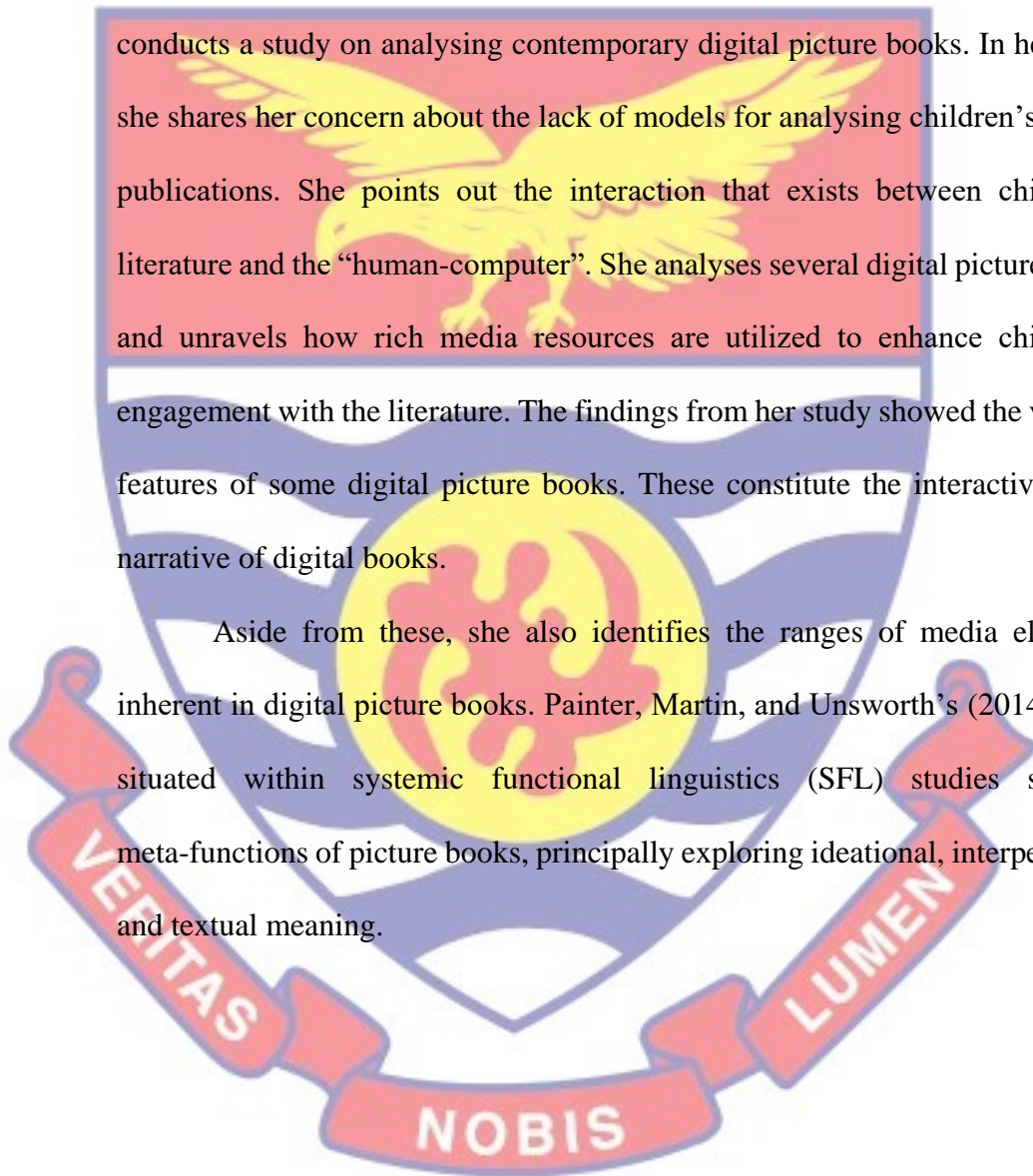
Some Selected Samples of Work that Inspired the Proposed Model

Moya Guijarro (2014) uses a multimodal approach to analyse the relationship of semiotic resources between visual and verbal elements in nine picture books. Situating his work within the *Visual Social Semiotics* by Halliday and Kress & Leeuwen, he explores the strategies of verbal and visual elements available to writers and illustrators in putting across representational meanings. He also examines the interpersonal relationships in picture books which are the external relationships between the writer and the reader in creating a coherent text. Moya Guijarro (2014) worked on a static and fixed

picture as data sources for his analysis and the finding shows the potential of combining verbal and non-verbal language evident in picture books.

This differs from the current research which seeks to analyse digital multimodal texts where meaning can be extracted from the sampled data through the use of semiotic resources in a different mode. Sargeant (2015) also conducts a study on analysing contemporary digital picture books. In her case, she shares her concern about the lack of models for analysing children's digital publications. She points out the interaction that exists between children's literature and the "human-computer". She analyses several digital picture books and unravels how rich media resources are utilized to enhance children's engagement with the literature. The findings from her study showed the varying features of some digital picture books. These constitute the interactivity and narrative of digital books.

Aside from these, she also identifies the ranges of media elements inherent in digital picture books. Painter, Martin, and Unsworth's (2014) work situated within systemic functional linguistics (SFL) studies specific meta-functions of picture books, principally exploring ideational, interpersonal, and textual meaning.



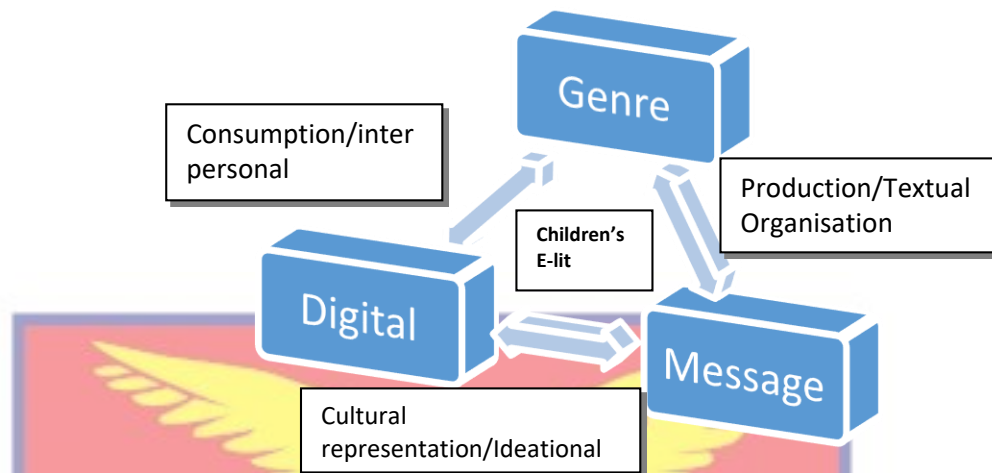


Figure 3 The Model Adopted for the Analysis

Moya Guijarro (2014), Sargeant (2015), Kress & Leeuwen (2006)

Description of the Model

The above model is a synthesized model that has been adapted from Kress & Leeuwen's Theory of Multimodality and Betty Sargeant's (2015) model for analysing electronic texts (picture books) for children. This model has three phases or dimensions of focus when employed for analysis. The first phase accounts for the range of media, the second account for meta-functional usage since it is rooted in the Systemic Functional Linguistic theory of social semiotics, and the last phase, the socio-cultural details of the electronic text.

From the diagram, the 3-D shapes represent the range of media (Sargeant, 2015). Sargeant identifies the range of media to be the medium through which the electronic text has been employed to present its work. These include “*storytelling*”, “*written text*” and “*television*”. “*Storytelling*” represents the genre of the children’s electronic literary texts, “*written text*” represents the message or the content, and “*television*” which represents the interactivity and engagement with its users. What Sargeant terms as *storytelling*, *written*, and *television* in this study correspond with what the

researcher has chosen to be called Genre, Message and Digital Interactives in order to account for the areas that might have been overlooked as it has been clearly understood that E-lit presents supplemented features which are absent from the print literature.

The arrows that connect the range of media are the meta-functions that indicate the exchange between the range of media and the meta-functions of children's electronic literature. Semiotic fulfils an 'ideational function'- a function of representing "the world around and inside us", 'interpersonal function'- a function that identifies the relationship of the viewer, reader, listener and their interaction with the digital resources and 'textual function' which comprises the text structure and organization of the design, thus, a layout that build meaning and guide the reader/viewer/listener through the text as well as explore the illustrator's contribution to the digital literary text.

Why the Model, the Tenets, Merits and Demerits

Western Sydney defines research to be the creation of new ideas or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way to generate new concepts and understanding. The synthesized model is adapted from Betty Sargeant (2015), Moya Guijarro (2014), and Kress & Leeuwen (2006) who discussed extensively the range of meaning in children's electronic texts. Integrating the different dimensions addressed by the named researchers help to cater to the different features related to the emerging electronic literature for children. In other words, the model becomes a conduit in which words complex, sophisticated features as well as the imaginative aspects of the electronic text are accounted for to provide readers with an understanding of the message the authors and illustrators put across with their works. The thing that accounted for

a good book for the past generation cannot be said to be the same for the target audience of the current generation. In the past, technology was not as keen on knowledge acquisition as they are so much needed in current trends.

The model, therefore, integrates the traditional theories and literary elements and braces them with the intricacies of technology. It delves much into unveiling the technicalities while not sparing the creative and artistic impression conveyed in electronic literature designed for children. The model is also a step to having a bigger "poetics" for analysing e-lits. It would also be expedient for other researchers to have the opportunity to test the validity and to work on improving the model for further analysis of other electronic literature designed for children.

Application of the Model: Procedure for Carrying out an Analysis

The framework situated within the Social Semiotic Theory foregrounds Halliday's meta-functions of meaning-making in different modes. The three meta-functions connect the ranges of media such that there is an interplay between the range of media and the meta-functions.

In carrying out an analysis, one needs to identify the structure, message (written, image, comic), and narrative style. This can be done by examining the literary elements that are dominant in the text such as the themes, the metaphors used, and the setting among others to help establish what is happening in the text to bring out the meaning. The presentation of the written (message) is central to also unveiling the textual organization, the cultural representation, and the interpersonal functions. Here, the selected multimodal units such as images and texts are critically assessed to give an account of the meaning the writer and illustrator convey in their work.

The relationship between the form of the electronic literary text and the digital interactives employed shows the relationship of the viewer, reader listener and their interaction or engagement as well as to whom the message is directed to. Relationships among participants thus, the interactive ways in a multimodal text can be realized from the written (message) and the digital interactives. O'Halloran & Smith (2012) recognize the technologically-driven text as part of the organization of the physical phenomena through which meaning is created.

The designs and layout build meaning and guide the reader/viewer/listener through the text. It is key to note here that a comprehensive analysis can be done by considering all the compositional elements in children's electronic literary text. On the other hand, the dominant elements in a particular children's electronic literature for making meaning can be the focus of the analysis. The third phase of the analysis deals with the sociocultural which supplies the background details about the particular children's E-lit. The production, consumption and cultural representations of the children's electronic literary text are relevant to be accounted for. This stage of the analysis relies on some specific traditional theories that are relevant to supply the needed information to supplement the e-text.

Conclusion

This chapter has explained some key concepts or terms used in the context of this research. It has also reviewed some works on African children's literature, and electronic literature for children, and highlighted the limitations in the literature upon which the current study seeks to fill. Furthermore, the

chapter elaborated on the theoretical perspective and presented a proposed model that can be used for analysing electronic literature.



CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION I

Introduction

This section of the study constitutes my initial analysis. It examines the selected electronic literary texts for the study to respond to research question one. The analysis dissects the data gathered to outline what constitutes electronic literature for children in Africa written in English. This is carried out by situating the selected electronic texts within a class based on their function, purpose, form and format available online and for download. Unsworth's (2006) classification of electronic texts is employed to serve as a base for establishing the patterns in the selected e-lits for children.

Connections from other sources from the literature are compared to also establish the textual and visual compositions in the selected e-lits for the analysis. It is similarly significant to note that with the emerging trends of literary resources for children, the patterns are analyzed to draw the reader's attention to the different kinds of electronic texts that one can choose from to read. It again provides a guide to writers and illustrators on the different forms they can design their works suitable for or meet children's specific needs.

This chapter gives a response to research question one which aims at showcasing the structural, narrative and thematic features of electronic literature for children in Africa. At end of this analysis, (respond to research question one) the first tier/phase of the proposed framework would have been applied. It would inform critics on the form, content and interactives which correspond to the three ranges of media (Sargeant, 2015) which are genre,

written and digital on the proposed framework as shown in figure 2(see appendix)

Question One: What constitutes electronic literature for children in Africa considering the structural, narrative, and thematic features presented in the selected electronic literature for children?

In establishing what constitutes electronic literature for children in Africa, it would be prudent to dissect the various components such as the structural, and narrative styles, as well as thematic concerns as these, come together to serve the bulk production of the electronic literature designed for children tailored for their specific needs. The analysis done here, considers the structural, the thematic concern and the narrative style of the e-lit for children. These constituents correspond to the relationship established as the range of media which includes the form (storytelling), the content (message) and the narrative style (interactives). At the end of this analysis, the proposed model would enable one to unearth the range of media of the electronic literature, thereby responding to the research question - what constitutes electronic literature for children in Africa?

Structural Component (Form of Children's e-Literature)

To begin with, the structural, narrative style and thematic issues presented in the e-lit consolidate to form the constituents of Electronic Literature. Authors and illustrators in displaying their message employ several modes, varieties of forms and formats that best convey their message to their intended audience. The structural component of the e-lit simply refers to its form or format as presented for access to reading either online or offline. The form of children's electronic literature can be identified based on its Traditional

or Fundamental Genres. The genre here as surmised by Martin (2009), considers the knowledge of the social functions and contexts in which a text is produced and used as well as how the text is staged and organized in meeting a specific social purpose. The Traditional or Fundamental Genres are the classes of literary work, this could either be prose, poetry or drama. Aside from this, an

e-lit could be classified based on the material it is composed of. By this category, electronic literature for children can be 'Paper-based Multimodal Texts' or 'Digital Multimodal Texts'. A Paper-based Multimodal Text includes graphic novels, comic strips, picture books among others that have been uploaded onto the digital space. Unsworth (2006) further gives a breakdown of these forms by highlighting the relationship between digital text and literary text. With this, he gives the term "Electronically Recontextualized Texts" to paper-based multimodal texts which are originally published in print format however, with the influence of technology they have been republished online or in CD/DVD or audio. Their presence on digital media reveals their original form as a print that has been scanned. From the data gathered, it can be observed that *The Alien* and *The Undeafated* are classic examples of paper-based multimodal text which have been electronically recontextualized.

The second, Digital Multimodal Texts are kinds of e-lit where meaning is extracted from the use of semiotic resources and the different modes in the multimodal text. Again, Unsworth (2006) supplements this structural type by categorizing this kind into two which are "Electronically Augmented Media Texts" and "Digitally Originated Literary Texts".

According to Unsworth, the e-lits, which feature the literary texts being published first in book formats and later have been given added features to make the story real with online resources and also enhance the story world of the book or where these stories are recreated in digital formats such as animations, videos and others are termed as “Electronically Augmented Media Texts”. From the sampled data for this analysis, *Same Difference* and *A Story, A Story, Anansi- the Spider* can be said to be Electronically Augmented Media texts. Lastly, Digitally Originated Literary Texts are similar to what Hayles (2007) calls “digitally born works”. These forms exist as e-stories for early readers which make use of hyperlinks and audio to support decoding the printed words and provide a mode for reading. Other kinds of digitally born works are ‘linear narrative, ‘digital storytelling and interactive story context. *Gbagba, Going Down Home* and *Three Little Birds* can also be classified as digitally originated literary texts.

Identifying the forms using Unsworth (2006) classification helps to put the gathered data into categories based on the format available online and when downloaded for offline reading. Evaluating the constituents of E-lit based on the format available is not enough to generalize what an African E- lit should be made up of. In this vein, one needs to probe further to uncover the form identified from the gathered data. The data gathered reveal certain information about the society, people and their norms, histories as well as the challenges they have lived with and continue to fight to overcome. The information about people, their cultures and norms is designed and woven into the story that is presented to the child.

Adding to the above, the purpose or function of the e-lit can be a basis for providing the structure or form of the e-lit for children. Authors and illustrators shape their contents into forms that enable them to present, address and comment on issues to their intended readers/audience. Unlike in the past, where children's literature was prescriptive and solely used for a moralistic purpose (Lerer, 2009), it can be seen that serious social challenges that confront our world are presented in children's electronic books.

It can be observed from the data gathered that critical issues of corruption, slavery, racism, displacement, identity and belonging, moral values and virtues are presented in the electronic literature designed for children. Therefore, by the purpose, an e-lit can be a sociological e-narrative, such as *Gbagba*, which recounts the direct situation of life in the city - as encountered by Sandaymar and Sandaygar in the city of Monrovia. The twins get exposed to corrupt practices and the activities of crooks in broad daylight and even in the presence of high-profile persons such as the police officer and their aunty, Auntie Mardie, a government official.

The varying ways of presenting issues that confront the society, nations and trans nations, their history and communal life can reveal the form of the e-lit for children as historical, sociological, fictional, folklore/folktale among others. *The Undefeated* and *Same Difference* present transnational issues such as slavery, racism and injustice. *The Alien* is a science fiction that prioritizes a Kenyan boy. Pakko, having special gifting, applies his gifting to solving the problem in his community. Right from his childhood days, Pakko invents things and prepares portions that heal people, and animals. He experiments several times and discovers a means that could relieve drought with a rain machine.

When he grew up, he goes into hiding for eight years while during that time he works on how to manipulate light rays. He invents light rays making them powerful enough to lift objects and even people. When he reappears in the guise of an alien, he uses his discovery for the good of punishing the criminals and saving innocent people's lives. It projects the application of scientific knowledge acquisition, and the essence of attaining training and education to solve the everyday problems that confront people and societies.

The means of categorizing children's e-lit based on the purpose of the book goes to attest to the fact that children's literature as it is emerging in recent times presents serious and critical issues to children. Unlike sometime past when children's book discusses light issues, there is a shifted outlook with content produced for children (Rettberg, 2018).

In furtherance to the points explained earlier, *Anansi, the Spider* explains a phenomenon, the reason for cultures associating stories with Anansi. This is a typical trait of the etiological tale. A kind of tale that explains how things came to be, how things were before and why, and how things are now and why. Although such stories were a part of folk life and were told to explain the unknown before scientific knowledge was used to clarify the cause of some of these phenomena. Such tales, finding their place in the digital space have modified features yet they contain in them their indigenous elements which appeal to members of the culture familiar with folk life.

Another way of categorizing children's e-lit is provided by Rettberg (2018) who suggests that the genres of electronic literature can be placed in historical, technological, and cultural contexts. These include combinatory poetics, hypertext fiction, interactive fiction (and other game-based digital

literary work), kinetic and interactive poetry, and networked writing based on our accumulated experience of the Internet. He argues that electronic literature enjoins to be delivered both through the lens of experimental literary practices dating back to the early twentieth century and through the specificities of the technology and software used to create the work (p.3).

It can be realized that any electronic literature that is produced falls into one of the above classifications. The structural and narrative style, form and interactives used by authors and illustrators of e-lits go a long way to contribute to the artistic style and reader's engagement with the text as well as add to the means of making meaning from the text.

Thematic Concerns

In analysing the thematic concerns in the selected electronic literature for children in Africa, it must be emphasized that there are some commonalities that run through the sampled data. Regardless of the form/structure, the e-lit is designed to serve, it portrays these critical issues. However, there are diverse ways that the identified critical issues manifest in the various children's e-lits selected for this study.

A common feature of a literary work is the reflection or depiction of the society from which a literary work is produced. Previously, children's fiction did not reflect their immediate lived world and changing social conditions; this situation has now changed. The richness of the culture from which a literary work is composed is as relevant as the intended audience written. The sampled e-lits collected for this research reveal some patterns or common thematic concerns that cannot be overlooked.

Projecting African Values and Ideas

Of the themes that run through the selected texts is the projection of African ideals and values. Traditional arts of dance, performance and oral storytelling have been crafted in the various e-lits coupled with ideals and values worthy of emulation. Authors and illustrators aside from entertaining readers with their works also educate and instill in readers some lessons that society deems appropriate. Children discover the world they live in from what they see and what they read in books. Accepted behaviour that is to be cultivated by children in guiding them to become responsible members of society is always displayed in the stories that children engage with.

Of these values and ideals, the electronic literature for the African child doubles as a tool for reconstructing the negative stereotypes, and world views about the African culture while it aims at preserving and transmitting values to its young members. Puurtinen Tiina (1998) posits that children's literary work is an important conveyor of world values, knowledge, ideas and accepted behaviour aside from being entertaining and a tool for improving children's reading skills (p.2). A detailed description of how the projected African values, ideals and moral manifested in the selected E-literature is as follow.

First, *The Three Little Birds* recounts the stories of three friends, Dodo Gido dogito, Bibi Bania and Taki takki. These three birds joined their talent of singing and as result, they become famous and prospered. The story teaches ideals, values and morals such as being responsible, the earnestness of uniting with people, friendship brings happiness, working together produces great results and success.

Nothing as great as a family: a Mutual Communalism

Second, there is a high premium attached to family and communalism. In most instances of the data samples for the analysis, family and communalism are portrayed to the reader or audience. Burgess & Locke (1945) defines family as a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption constituting a single household interacting and intercommunicating with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife, mother and father, brother and sister creating a common culture. The family as one finds in the selected e-lits shows members as the father, mother, children, and external relations as grandma, and others. The definition offered by Burgess & Locke (1976) is important as it renders a comprehensive limit to the creation of family not only by blood ties but also by creating a common culture.

The implication then is that a group that holds on to common ancestry, shares a common origin or anything that amount to the creation of a common culture is said to be a family. Thus, a group of individuals that share a bond through lineage, similar history, and a mutual understanding of a common cause “creating a common culture” is a family. The varying ways family is portrayed in the selected texts are discussed briefly. The family that can be described as transgenerational or transnational with emphasis on the creation of a common culture is seen largely in *Going Down Home with Daddy* and *The Undeclared*.

Going Down Home by Lyons depicts a family and their experiences in a land that has permitted them to flourish. The story tells how Lil Alan, his sister and his parents prepare to join their external relations thus their great-grandparents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, and cousins for their annual reunion in remembering and celebrating the history of their

family. "On reunion morning, we rise before the sun. Daddy hums as he packs our car with suitcases and a cooler full of snacks. He says there's nothing like going down home"(p.1).

The African-American family way is highly portrayed in this text. The descriptions given, language used and names are enough evidence to ascertain this claim. Granny's cowry shell earrings, the patterns in her attire and the farm animals (taking care of her chickens) reflect customary material plans. Granny's cowry shell hoops bring to mind seaside Africa, and on each page in the text are African adinkra images. Inferring from the backdrop of the experiences of slavery, the history of Lil Alan's family began in Africa and continued in the United States as enslaved people. Generations later, the family owns many acres of land that is so much treasured by the family.

Similar to this situation is what is presented in *The Undefeated*. It relates and acknowledges the history of the African indigenes who were chained and sent to the New Worlds. It retells the lives of these natives who were captured as slaves and brought to America by ship. Having endured the suffered injustices and segregation, they relentlessly championed the rights movement for equality and never quit but worked to leave a mark of excellence in music, politics, education, and other fields of human endeavours. In these texts, it is realised that the community is an institution built on love, with means of alliance and a common goal to better the lives of its individuals. These individuals whom the poetry sings their praise are people with common roots and as Burgess & Locke's definition of family centres on creating a common culture, the Africans in the Diaspora can be said to constitute a family. A broader view of family is given by Vanier Institute (2013) which states that family is

“any combination of two or more persons who are bound together over time by ties of mutual consent, birth and/or adoption or placement and who, together, assume responsibilities for variant combinations of physical maintenance and care of group members, the addition of new members through procreation or adoption, socialization of children, social control of members, production, consumption, distribution of goods and services and affective nurturance – love”.

This definition is regarded as a well-defined one as it tells the formation and function of members who are joined and referred to as a family. It is to be noted that, the result of recent globalization has brought changes in the patterns and structure of the family such that there are ‘a living-apart-together’ families and transnational families (Shukla, 2015) as well as alternative families Lynch & Tomlinson (1993). Recognizing the unique roles played by members of the family is relevant to strengthening the cordial relationship that exists among them. One can find in the selected e-lits for the analysis that older members have a responsibility toward the younger members. In *Same Difference*, Lisa and Lida are cousins who lived with their grandmother. Having been doing the same thing for a while, one day, they spot their differences in a mirror. This arouses their curiosity and they resolve this difference through their grandma who answers all of the questions running through their heads. *Same Difference* shows two cousins who find themselves in doubt about their difference (their identity) and their doubt is cleared with the wisdom of their grandmother. The parents of these cousins are not mentioned but it can be

inferred that their grandmother is the one raising them or the cousins have been brought to spend some time with their grandmother as one can find in *Gbagba*. The bond and attachment that members shared are cherished and there is always a means to strengthen it. For instance, in *Gbagba*, the story presents the encounters of the twin as their parents send them to live with their aunty, a big woman in the government in the city of Monrovia, Liberia's capital.

In *Going Down Home*, the younger members of the family are tasked to perform an activity to mark their celebration. This causes Lil Alan's worry about what he would do (the performance to enact). In *Three Little Birds*, *Anansi, the Spider*, and *The Alien* communalism is showcased. The village where Anansi lived was one where its members entertained themselves with the Sky god's stories. Likewise, in *Three Little Birds*, the community as people with one accord is emphasized. The community is much concerned about the disturbing noise by the birds yet when the birds join to utilize their talents the village is thrilled and they amuse themselves with the music composed by the three birds. One finds in *Three Little Birds*, the mutual understanding of the people in the community.

Diversity in Identity: Unity with Uniqueness

Despite the commonality, it is projected that there is some uniqueness in people who even share things in common reiterating the common adage "unity in diversity". In *Three Little Birds*, there are three different birds with different talents that are unique in their way, their uniqueness when they harness and put together becomes the secret to the success and prosperity they chalked as they remained together. One could also see in *Same Difference* that, the two cousins, Lida and Lisa of different colours notice their difference and this becomes a

source of worry to them. Their grandmother assures them that their individuality is a source of strength as it is that which fuels their uniqueness. In *Going Down Home with Daddy*, Lil Alan finds that all the other children find something to exhibit as part of the celebration when the families join their grandmother. Worrying over what to display on his part, what he sees as a weakness (inability to think and come up with an idea) he produces something that the other children even enjoy more.

Again, in *Gbagba*, one finds that diversity and uniqueness are seen in how the twins are awed by the activities in the city which were different from the training they received from their parents. How they approach some issues from the way their parents trained them to handle issues is different from what they encounter when they hang out with their aunt. The twins' parents detested corruption such as the market woman who cheated their mother yet their aunt refused to bring to book the storekeeper who sells expired chocolates.

These diverse ways are important in exposing children to the realities of the world. *The Alien* goes an extra way to present Pakko who has the ability and is gifted in the sciences. He uses this gift to help his community. In *Anansi, the Spider*, there is a community of folklife. The folklife that is depicted here has one thing they share in common. It is the stories that were owned by 'Nyame', the Sky god. It is these stories "Nyame sem" that the folks amused themselves with that Anansi makes up his mind to use whatever means to be its custodian instead of 'Nyame'.

Societal Ills and Rottenness

The next thematic concern that runs through the selected electronic literature for children is societal ills and rottenness which manifest in different forms in the sampled data for the analysis. Among the issues that confront the society presented in the sampled children's e-lit are corruption, robbery, fraudulent activities, and others. In the selected e-lits, different forms of rottenness in the societies are addressed. It can be seen that in *Gbagba*, political and economic rottenness is dominant. Here, in this story, the state institutions downplay the virtues that should foster the building of the nation. For instance, the twins are sent to spend some time with their aunty in the city of Monrovia. Even before they reach their Auntie's home, they witness numerous incidents of corruption. First, on reaching the city, a robber attempts to steal their bags.

Second, Auntie Mardie's driver bribes a policeman to allow their car to pass through the traffic in a different lane. As if this is not enough, their aunt ignores the shopkeeper who sells expired chocolates because the storekeeper is her friend. The governing authority is represented by the police officer and Auntie Mardi, a minister. Yet these two get involved in corrupt practices that overwhelm the twins. What even worsen the situation is that the bribery and robbery are done in the open yet no one cares. Auntie Mardie sees nothing wrong with her driver bribing the police officer. The rate of corrupt practices being indulged in by almost everyone in the city awes the twin. Thus, prompting their curiosity to find the meaning of the word "gbabga" which becomes the title of the story. There were other instances of corruption such as the teacher who pockets school fees, the pastor who uses church money to build a "mansion on the beach", and market women who cheat those who buy from them. Corruption

has engulfed the country of Liberia so much that it became a big national issue to address. When Auntie Mardie and the twin were on the way to the city, there was a national broadcast on the radio by the president centred on corruption. The president remarked “corruption is the enemy; it is not the government that we find this problem. It is everywhere. We must fight it”. What is even more appalling is the fact that people who are at the helm of affairs and need to fight corruption are rather encouraging it.

A clear instance is Auntie Mardie’s driver who issues out 100 Liberia euro bill to the police officer who afterward allows Auntie Mardie’s car to drive on a special lane. She also falters when she allows the store owner who sells the expired chocolate to carry on with business operations without being penalized. Rottenness in the community or society also includes robbery and fraudulent activities of people as can be seen in *The Alien*. Rottenness in society manifests at the societal level, where people constantly struggle with themselves, compete, fight against, rob, and cheat others.



Figure 4. Image from *The Alien*: An instance of the rottenness in the society

The rottenness in society makes some irresponsible members put the lives of innocent members in danger. The picture shown above discloses how some hungry people use every dangerous means to stripe off possessions from their rightful owners. Three robbers with deadly weapons like knives, hammers, and others chase a man to claim from him his money, “Give us all your money or you’ll regret this day” says one of the robbers. In the same vein, we find that some robbers attack a bank’s bullion van with money in it. With Pakko’s invention, he rescues the bank from being attacked by the notorious robbers.

In *Anansi-the Spider*, societal rottenness occurs at the individual or a personal level. Anansi’s character as a mischievous person is highlighted to portray to readers how some individuals use their wit to outsmart others for their parochial interest. In the story, one finds that Anansi wants to be the custodian of stories instead of “Nyame”. Therefore, Anansi is willing to go to all lengths to achieve his aim. Succeeding in finding his way to the residence of the Sky god, he challenges the Sky god of his intention. A mission that the Sky god thinks is impossible to achieve as a price for his stories is done with ease by Anansi. Anansi’s ability to trick the leopard, the bees and the ugliest man tells how some people will do whatever it takes to cheat others for their selfish interests. The rottenness here is seen in the cantankerous, dubious and mischievous methods Anansi employs to get Nyame’s stories as his own. So far as he wants to own Nyame’s stories, no task is too difficult for him to accomplish.

Going Down Home and *The Undefeated* take a different dimension of rottenness which is transnational or interracial. In these stories, the issues present different races and inequality among people. The disparities are so awful that children are even affected. In *Same Difference*, transnational rottenness fuels the cousins' concern about their differences. *The*

Undefeated alludes to the historical event of black people's presence in a foreign land. It highlights subtly the injustices suffered; the discrimination based on colour. It, therefore, eulogizes the efforts of people's struggle to end the injustices and segregation based on race.

Another state of rottenness in the society presented in *The Three Little Birds* is environmental pollution. Activities of man have been the major factor contributing to the deplorable state of the environment. An instance in the story reveals that the cause of the Princess' sickness is the contaminated water she drinks.

"while flying around, Dodo Gido dogito found that the princess who was ill appeared thirsty and drank from the pond that was black because of the dirt in it"

The state of the pond shows how humans pollute the environment that it becomes a threat to them. Just as Dodo Gido dogito saw the princess drinking from the black pond, he was not far from wrong when he concluded that the dirty pond might have been the cause of the princess' sickness and it truly turned out to be so.

Narrative Component (interactives)

Having so far assessed the structural and thematic concerns of the electronic literature, this part pays attention to the narrative component. With the print format of a literary work, narrative style solely accounts for the perspective in which the story is told. However, with the added sophisticated feature of the electronic text, the narrative style assesses the mode of narration and the means for possible engagement with its reader (which is based on the form or format of the e-lit available to the audience/readers).

One thing one needs to understand is that with e-literature, there is a lead /virtual reader for e-books that have been recontextualised or augmented, or a narrator for e-lit that have been digitally born works such as animations, films, videos and other related kinds. Evaluating the data sampled for this analysis, the following are some observable narrative components identified.

The Three Little Birds as written by Saran Kaba, Youssouf Diallo, and Mariama Diabate is a folktale. The three birds are anthropomorphized in this folklore, they interact with humans, are understood by humans, and are considered part of the social existence. There is a narrator who tells the story of the three birds with remarkably annoying voices. The narrator explains how the birds decide to work together with their voices and made unusual music that brought them success and fame in the village where they lived. Their friendship is destroyed due to their pride which becomes swollen from the popularity they gained. The story interspersedly allows characters to voice their thought and suggestions to other characters.

Another tale similar to *The Three Little Birds* is *A Story A Story: Anansi, The Spider Man*. *Anansi, the Spider* is also a folktale that explains why "Anansi is associated with stories over the world. Unlike the first whose author is known, the latter has its origin in the folk or oral tradition. The writer is unknown yet the individuals who uploaded the story online are associated with and they are are acknowledged. Like the first, there is a narrator who oversees every action, thought and intention of all the characters. The narrator allows the characters to voice their thought and opinion.

A narrator tells the story as images move to enact what the characters do, say or think to readers. The narrator imitates or acts out the actions for emphasis when a character laughs, dances, slaps, runs and such. In other words, the narrator or storyteller switches or modifies the voice to imitate what a character says. For instance, when Anansi presents his request to "Nyame" – Anansi's intention to buy Nyame's stories, the reply that Onyame gave was said by him (the character) and not the narrator. "... the price for my story is that you bring me Osebo, the leopard with the terrible teeth, "moboro", the hornet that stings with fire, and "motsia" the fairy man never seen", said the Sky god. The narrator goes on to recount how Anansi is able to achieve this impossible task using his clever cunning and mischievous ways.

The version of the story is akin to De-Graft Hanson's *The Amazing Anansi*. In his collection, he retells the story of how Anansi performed three difficult and dangerous tasks set for him by the Sky-god, Nyankopon, proving his courage, cleverness, and endurance, and winning for himself the honour of having the tradition of Akan folktales, Anansesem named after him. It can be realized that the story originating from oral tradition, still has its nature or form

of storytelling not changed. As the narrator begins to tell the story, the narrator cautions his listener about the authenticity of the story. “This story I am about to tell whether it is true or it is not true...”

Gbagba by Robtel Neajai Pailey with illustration by Chase Walker describes the story of a twin, Sundaygar and Sundaymah who leave the countryside with their aunt for a visit to the capital city of Liberia, Monrovia. Their arrival in the city is met by a thief “in dirty clothes” who in broad daylight, tries to snatch their bags and they later find their aunt’s driver bribing a police officer. The twins are awed by their encounter in the city as the things they experience are in contrast to what they have grown to know. Their encounter in the city taught them a new word “corruption” which they were curious to find out. They looked up the word in a dictionary when they arrived home. The twins interpret 'corruption' to mean "gbagba", the word they know in their first language (Bassa).

The Undefeated is a lyrical poem that eulogizes the struggles, pain, and history of the black historical heroes and ordinary folks who did not even live to see their emancipation in their new land. The message packaged in moments of poetic prose portrays a world in which the natives sent to the New Lands take the course their hearts dictate and excel in different areas of life. Thus, the writer writes to sing the praise of the Africans in the diaspora for the achievement, struggle, and painful history that need to be relived. The group of individuals mentioned, having wept with happiness spared none of the joy and great memories as they survived the savage experiences. They live to make an exceptional mark in different areas of life in a land not owned by them. There is the celebration of their inner strength as they championed their liberty in the

new land and succeeded in doing that. Being a recontextualized e-book, the lead reader reads the text on the pages accompanied by the illustrations. In *Going Down Home with Daddy* and *Same Difference* there is a lead or virtual reader who reads the story of how Lil Alan's family prepares for a trip to their granny's place for their annual reunion and the realization of physical difference by the two cousins, Lida and Lisa respectively.

Another key feature of the narrative style from the sampled data is the use of comics. According to *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, comics are "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic (p. 20)". Comic books are engaging for all ages, even adults. This format gives the readers a chance to feel the excitement through the images and the character's personal voices. The accompanying illustrations with the actions and thoughts of the character enable readers to easily follow the progression of the story.

Another dominant narrative style is the use of children as main characters as well as animals that interact with humans. It is relevant to the child as children's characters are portrayed as a "shadow of themselves" helping the child to connect or relate with the happenings in the story. The characters of children's stories can be used to serve as role models that can shape the behaviour of those children that encounter them. Fictional representations of children and adult characters can encourage readers to accept existing social structures, which privilege adults, or they can question or even shatter this hierarchy (Michelle, 2017). Children's characters are portrayed to engage children at their own developmental level as they relate to the character playing a particular role in the text. De Graft Hanson (1993) observes that the children

characters seem appropriate for such stories, as children have a natural affinity with animals, perhaps because many of the animals involved in our traditional lore are those that may be considered an integral and vital part of the world of rural communities. Also, literary devices like rhyme and alliteration are the predominant narrative style in works designed for children. These features are not lost but find their way into the electronic literary production targeted at children from Africa partly because these works have evolved from traditional folk stories and they are useful for sustaining the interest of children. History records that before the colonial era, children's theatre in various societies consisted of the performance of traditional genres such as chants, games, play songs, and folk storytelling by and for children, whether at playtime or during an evening storytelling session by the fireside (Yitah, 2017).

In addition, the roles that children play in festivals, symbolic acts, rituals, and rites of passage provide fulfillment "as these activities call for children's involvement". The vibrancy of the indigenous African culture such as proverbs, refrains and orderly repetition are translated into a delightful and simple poetic language in the electronic texts produced for them. The data sampled employ these techniques to communicate both the contemporary experience and the historical process to the understanding of children. Yitah notes that the correspondence between oral literature and social life is exemplified in how the lessons in the stories affect children's general behaviour and their relationship with others around them as well as their world. Notwithstanding, the situations that caused the production of these stories are evolving as radio and television have made their way into the remotest rural areas of the country, competing with and quite often displacing the storyteller as the principal source of

amusement. In an attempt to “preserve the landscape of the imagination (Achebe, 1981) and to transmit stories beyond the cultures in which they originated, many writers of children’s books have transcribed, translated, or adapted the oral narratives in their works.

Reading from the 21st Century combines three of the core building blocks of relationships thus, communicating, listening, and comprehension (Duhoe & Adansi, 2020) that involve a range of lecture channels and provide a variety of ways of communicating both with the text and with the narrative. The present study has especially seen an increase in attention to the ability of mobile technology in encouraging the participation of children in stories (Strasburger et. al, 2013). The virtual reading method is useful for enhancing and building listening skills, comprehending, and giving feedback.

Through technology, the writers re-awaken the age-old tradition of oral literature, carried in songs and incantations, in Africa. For instance, some of the e-lit have audio or folk songs being played in the background. These organizational patterns namely the structural, thematic, and narrative components as expatiated above are relevant as they contribute to conveying the message the authors and illustrators put across.

Conclusion

The third chapter has discussed the form, content, and narrative styles of e-lits written for children. It has applied the first tier/phase of the proposed framework. The first phase of the synthesized framework provides the possibilities of supplying the ranges of media that solve a considerable variable in the study, thus the constituents of E-literature for children in Africa written in English.

Having unravelled the constituents, it would inform critics on the form, content, and interactives that correspond to the three ranges of media which are the genre, written, and digital features. The analysis done in this chapter caters to the features of electronic literature designed for children tailored to their needs, considering the structure, the thematic concern, and the narrative style of the e-lit. These constituents correspond to the relationship established as the range of media which includes the form (storytelling), content (message), and narrative style (interactive).



CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION II

Introduction

Chapter three of the study commenced the analysis of the sampled data to draw attention to the components that consolidate to forming E-literature for children in Africa written in English. The present chapter continues with the analysis and it aims at discussing the meta-functions as Social Semiotic Theory is grounded in the Systemic Functional Linguistics spearheaded by Halliday. In effect, this part of the analysis attempts to elaborate on the meta-functional usage reinforced by the semiotic resources identified from the structural, narrative, and thematic features employed by the authors and illustrators to convey meaning in the selected electronic literature.

The discussion that follows attempts to explore three things that are the focus of the analysis done here, these are the interplay of the ranges of media to highlight the ideational, textual and interpersonal function of the selected e-literature.

Extracting Meaning from Multimodal Whole

The modes investigated are informed by the meta-function which stems from sociological, cultural and historical happenings in the selected samples for the analysis. It is worth noting that these modes of conveying meaning affect the reader in a way and evoke a sense of awakening in the reader's view of the world around them. These modes (images and written texts) are chosen having been peer-reviewed for inter-coder reliability. They have been purposely selected with the guide that assesses the mode's purpose, its characteristics, and their cultural significance. The interpretation given is personal responses with

evidence from scholarly writings and observation by other students and lecturers inclined to the objectives of their study.

As stated earlier, this part of the analysis provides a response to research question two which is centred on two things. How have the identified structural, narrative, and thematic features been reinforced with the semiotic resources

employed by the authors and illustrators for the meta-functional usage of the selected electronic literature?

Exploring the Interplay of the ranges of media vis-à-vis meta-functional usage of E-literature for Children

Electronic literature as we have come to appreciate depends not just on the message but the conduits through which the message is presented and distributed. One would agree with the fact that the visuals and other structures in children's electronic literature offer various forms of experiences and interpretations of our social interaction. Sargeant (2015) discloses that the ranges of media refer to the medium through which the electronic text has been employed to present its work.

As noted earlier, in any medium where signs can be made, sign-makers use the forms they consider apt to express the ideas they intend to their audience. Sargeant (2015) further identifies this range of media as *storytelling*, *written text* and *television*. For the purpose of this study, the ranges of media have been labelled as "Genre", "Message", and "Digital Interactive" respectively. The mode of materials designed for children makes intense use of representational images. The arrows that connect the range of media are the meta-functions (refer to figure 3, page 53). They indicate the interplay between the ranges of media and the meta-functions of children's electronic literature.

In a similar vein, semiotics as pointed out, fulfills first an ‘ideational function’. This is a function of representing “the world around and inside us”. Secondly, it fulfils an ‘interpersonal function.’ This also is a function that identifies the relationship of the viewer, reader, listener and their interaction with the digital resources. Lastly, semiotics fulfils the ‘textual function’ which comprises the text structure and organization of the design, thus, a layout that builds meaning and guides the reader/viewer/listener through the text as well as explores the illustrator’s contribution to the digital literary text.

Genre/Message (*Ideational or Experiential Function*)

The relationship between the Genre and the Message as seen in figure 3 relays the meta-function termed Ideational or Experiential function. The Experiential meta-function is concerned with meaning, that is, with the way language interprets experience. The ideational function refers to the ability of semiotic systems to represent objects and their relationships in a world outside the representational system. The Conversation Global (2010–2020) opines that narratives for children that rely massively on pictures and images than text inspire early-aged interaction with storytelling. The pictorial nature of these narratives is an essential part of developing a child’s sense of character, setting, plot, theme, and conception of time. For instance, early readers like board books, and wordless or picture books. The images serve as symbols with meanings inherent in them. A symbol is a thing that represents something else, such as an object, idea, relationship, or something similar. Symbols of tree roots in granny’s attire and okra seed can be seen in the artwork of *Going Down Home with Daddy* that goes to emphasize the seeds, root of a race that has existed for generations.

Schnotz (2002) suggests that text and visual displays belong to different classes of representations, namely depictive and descriptive representations. Depictive representations include iconic signs that are associated with the content they represent through common structural features on either a concrete or more abstract level. Depictive representations are more concrete and specific in nature whereas Descriptive representations consist of symbols that have an arbitrary structure and are associated with the content they represent simply by means of a convention. Descriptive representations have a rather general and abstract character (Elia et al., 2010). The identity and attributes of the visually depicted character - both in a single image and concerning the story sequence encompasses what is termed ideational function.

Invariably, the lavished illustrations in Children's e-lits are packed with them ideologies that overtly shape people's understanding, educate and communicate information to children, to confirm or deny issues culturally assigned to societies. It attempts to persuade people's thoughts or brainwash the child's mind or shape the mind with various ideologies about other people's cultures. Many Children's Literature scholars believe all texts are inevitably infused by ideology. This has been particularly difficult to accept in the world of children's literature, which is still widely assumed to be innocent of concerns of gender, race, power, among others.

However, as argue by McCallum & Stephen (2011) "There cannot be a narrative without an ideology" (p.359). This means that every work of art with meaning contains an ideology. Ideology is a system of beliefs and values which are linked to the concept of power. It is understood that children discover the world they live in from what they see and what they read from books, hence

when the literary production they read are filled with creative creations about their culture, it would help them to discover more about themselves and their culture. Wa Thiong'o(1986) notices that culture is indistinguishable from language and that culture is a product of history which in turn, reflects by forming images or pictures of the world of nature and nurture. Hence, making language an image-forming agent in the mind of the child. The stories that children listen to infuse the world they live in them. As writers are influenced by the society and culture they write from, writers of children's literary texts create a world that accommodates the child, and fills them with the assumption of issues of gender, power, and race. These tales are passed on with valuable insights into the human condition of life to children.

The electronic literature for children especially African Children can be harnessed to counter the negative narratives and stereotypes that have been ingrained in the mind of African children for such a long time. To justify this claim, Wa Thiong'o's (1986) *Decolonizing the Mind* presents a case of how African children have been conditioned to see the world in a certain way. In effect, Africans contributes little or nothing in terms of scientific and technological application to solving problems. An instance where children's literary production is used to project African values is found in *Decolonizing History* by Mkhize (2019) who maintains there are not many materials projecting positive things in Africa, people of colour. Mkhize (2019), therefore, creates a decolonizing history for children through her writing "*In Africa with Avi and Kumbi*". She emphasizes the fact that the representation of black children and Africa is the origin of technology. One can ascertain that from the sampled data, in *The Alien*, the writer debunks the wrongly perceived notion

that the invention the world has greatly benefitted from is the handiwork of non-Africans. Readers will notice from *The Alien* that Africans can equally employ science to accomplish and solve some of its social related problems. The ideology presented considering the form and the message hints that *The Alien* as a comic strip is used to debunk the notion that Africa is not

well-grounded in science and technology. It allows the reader to laugh at the negative and toxic views others have about Africa and addresses the wrong notion of scientific and technological applications for dealing with the problem in society. In the story, we find Pakka's invention of the magnetic rays which is reported supposedly as "the alien object". It provides rescue and relief to people.

There is a distribution of geopolitical awareness of the impact that the black can make in debunking some earlier thoughts about Africans.

The purpose of the e-lit is to accomplish socialization, and educational intention, confront abuses, offer an explanation of happenings of man and render specific orientation towards the reality constructed by the society that produces them.

Hollindale (1988) in *Ideology and the Children's Book*, suggests three levels of ideology in texts. The first is formed from "the explicit social, political and moral beliefs of the individual writer and his/her wish to recommend them to children throughout the story". This type of ideology is mostly deliberate, and overtly promotes the message that the writer wishes to convey. However, Hollindale argues that this is mostly to an unhappy consequence, in which the "ideological explicitness is often achieved at the cost of imaginative depth".

This kind of ideology is at play in *The Alien*.

For quite too long, the black identity has been portrayed with the utmost contempt. The African continent has been branded as a dark continent, with its culture being associated with savagism, barbarism and no civilization. The tag has been ingrained in the mind of even its young people. The effect of this deficiency is that Africans are made to believe they are limited in science, education, sport, and music, among others. One of the underlining ideologies in *The Alien* is a sociological ideology (that education can improve people and the community's livelihood). *The Alien* illustrates how Pakko carries out experiments through trial and error to heal wounds, and later he harnesses the power of electromagnetism to create rain, catch crooks and travel through space.



Figure 5. The front cover of *The Alien*

This image appears on the front cover of *The Alien*. In the picture, three men with deadly weapons get suspended in the air. They are robbers who attempt to rob a vehicle belonging to a bank. The picture shows the reaction of the thieves being captured by the “alien object” invented by Pakko. A second

glance at the picture even suggests a deeper reaction of people being awed by the scientific emissions invented by Pakko, an African child. With their surprised or shocked suspense in the air, these represented participants are held in front of the entire world, they are attempting to disprove the false narrative of white superiority, as the laser beam known as “the alien” invented by Pakko put all in a state of awe. The message, thus being clear, is the deconstruction of the history or belief about Africa as a continent that has no contribution to science and technology. Still, in the same book, the picture below shows a young girl on her way to her grandmother’s place to listen to stories. As she grumbles about her grandmother’s same old story, she faces a situation that would make a hard-believe story for her grandmother. The young girl sees an angry bull that seems dangerous to her, she starts to shout for help and run for her life when the “alien object” captures the bull. The “alien object” according to the story appears at a time when people are threatened to restore calm and rescue the situation, as seen in the two instances provided.



Figure 6. *The Alien*: An illustration of the usefulness of “the alien object”

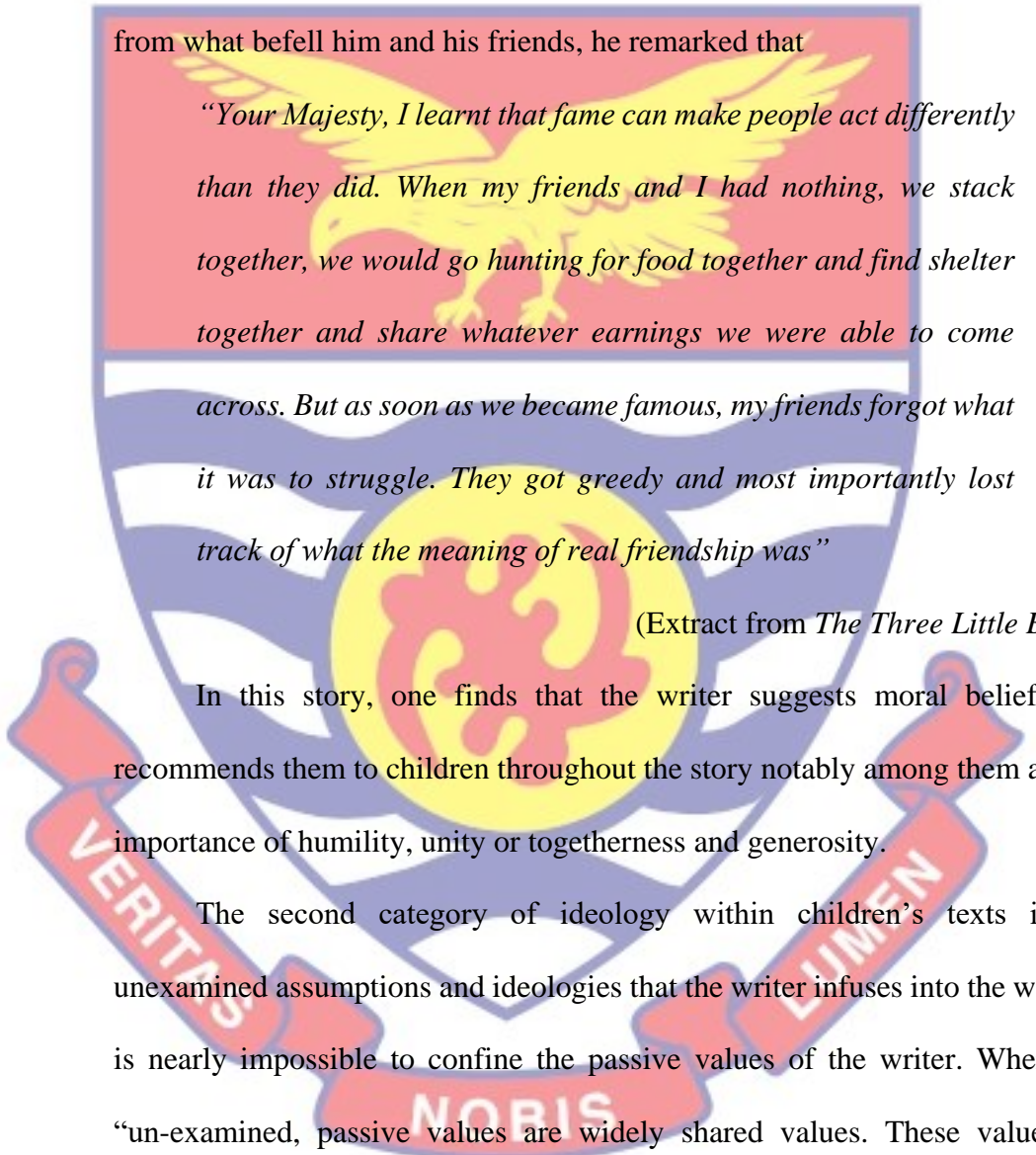
Other e-books from the gathered samples that illustrate the first category of ideology are *Gbagba* and *The Three Little Birds*. These two are animation and sociological in nature. It seems to play the video of the ongoing and daily problem associated with human's existence at the community level and the national level at large. In *Gbagba*, the everyday message of corrupt practices such as robbery, bribery, fraud in rural and urban spaces of public and private life is uncovered. Specifically, the description of corrupt practices in Liberia haunts the children's moral sense of right and wrong. The twins, Sundaymar and Sundaygar on their expedition to their auntie's house through the city encounter numerous incidents of corruption before they even reach their Auntie's home.

The children get confused and disappointed when their auntie's driver gives the policeman a \$100 Liberian bill, for his "cold water." Later, their aunty ignores to call the attention of authorities to deal with the storekeeper selling expired chocolates. Instead of a drastic measure to be taken against the individuals engaged in corrupt practices, they are not sanctioned. Even when the twins ask her, "What if he does it again?" Aunty Mardie only ignores their plea. With the kind of ideology at play, the writer shows the political power hierarchy and how people abuse them and are not mindful of its consequence.

The Three Little Birds records that the former town where the three birds had lived all their lives were unkind to animals. The two birds, Bibi Bania and Taki takki after their separation were killed because they were branded as evil spirits. After the death of Dodo Gido dogito's friend, he moved to a different kingdom that was more kind to animals. For example, in the new kingdom where Dodo Gido dogito seeks refuge from, when the people found Dodo Gido

dogito to be suspicious, they interrogated him. This tells of the approach people take in resolving issues they might be confronted with. Eventually, Dodo Gido dogito becomes a reliable asset to the village as he also becomes instrumental in finding the cause of the princess' illness. He also shared his experiences in life with them. In sharing his experience with the villagers on what he has learnt

from what befell him and his friends, he remarked that



“Your Majesty, I learnt that fame can make people act differently than they did. When my friends and I had nothing, we stuck together, we would go hunting for food together and find shelter together and share whatever earnings we were able to come across. But as soon as we became famous, my friends forgot what it was to struggle. They got greedy and most importantly lost track of what the meaning of real friendship was”

(Extract from *The Three Little Birds*).

In this story, one finds that the writer suggests moral beliefs and recommends them to children throughout the story notably among them are the importance of humility, unity or togetherness and generosity.

The second category of ideology within children's texts is the unexamined assumptions and ideologies that the writer infuses into the work. It is nearly impossible to confine the passive values of the writer. Where the “un-examined, passive values are widely shared values. These values are relocated into the text and the overall sense of the storyline. They are then relayed to the reader through subtle and often unconscious choices of language and imagery” (Hollindale, 1988). Kelly Starling Lyons' text *Going Down Home* explores the power of history and family traditions. Albeit the tainted

images of Africa, Alexander's text expresses and celebrates the cultural identities of Africans and freedom from their oppressors.

These two authors create versions of their realities as they provide a safe escape to appreciate and celebrate all of our differences and similarities as diverse people. Though there is a uniqueness that is shared by a group, community or family members, there are some sort of diversities that exist as well. *Same difference* teaches that the differences of the two young girls, Lisa and Lida do not matter as long as they live together and tolerate each other.

Identity and belonging from three of the sampled e-texts (*Same Difference*, *Going Down Home* and *The Undeclared*) demonstrate the interrogation of the notions of history, identity and belonging. They give a reminder of a deeply loving multigenerational family, historical struggle alongside cherished tradition. Family as rendered in these texts is a treasure in the hand and it is one of the most beautiful things with connection to a place that binds everyone together. The point highlighted here is the bonds of family and communalism and that, individual members of the family have roles to perform to ensure the safety and welfare of the other members. No man is an island. Everyone depends on the other to have a need met.

"... every human identity is constructed, historically; everyone has its share of false presuppositions, of the errors and inaccuracies that courtesy calls "myth", religion, "heresy" and science "magic". Invented histories, invented biologies, invented cultural affinities come with every identity; each is a kind of role that has to be scripted, structured by conventions of

the narrative to which the world never quite manages to conform” (Appiah, 2008:13).

To be more precise, *The Undefeated* as a poetic e-text sings the pains and success chalked by the Africans who have made history in the world of sport, music, politics, education and other fields of human endeavour despite the hardship and injustices they suffered in their New Land. There is an offer of a counter-narrative to the long tradition of European imperial narratives paying attention to the effects of empire, assessing the position of the colonial or the postcolonial subject and reclaiming past histories.

According to Hollindale (1988) the third category of ideology is one that suggests our thinking “may be affected by an over-simplified stereotype of possible authority and influence and that writers for children’s literature are transmitters not of themselves uniquely, but of the worlds they share.” The fictional universe that is portrayed to children in the literature is, therefore, a product of not only the individual writers but of the values that were bestowed upon them when they were children themselves. This is seen in this e-book *Same Difference*. The writers of the various e-books also paint a positive image of older women and their role to the growing child. She is presented as one who is the embodiment of peace. Unity is attached to the growing members of the family. In *Same Difference*, the grandmother of Lida and Lisa explain how people in the world are diverse which means their appearance looks different but that doesn't mean one type looks better than the other, everyone is the same, she explains.

Ideologically, unequal power distribution among people in society, and nations can be unearthed from the selected e-lits. Hunt (2004) posits that political ideologies almost always work to distribute power unequally among people in a society and justify that unequal distribution. In *Going Down Home*, the writer intends to depict a bond that is shared by members of a family. This bond is necessary for the existence of humans within society. In the story, the family refers to the natives who can trace their roots to Africa. These were those transported across the Atlantic Ocean to the New Worlds where they have lived and owned lands that Lil Alan's family gather to celebrate. They are a family that gathers to celebrate the joy of having lived to such a time at a different place. The historical context of the story reveals that the enslaved Africans struggled and with their unwavering fighting spirit, they had hoped one day they would be free, or that their children or their children's children would become the masters of their destinies (Alexander, 2009).

Diversity in Identity: Unity with Uniqueness

In the context of our social world, diversity refers to variations in human traits, cultures and ancestral heritage. Aside from our gender, social-economic status, race, geographical location, and ethnicity, the myriad modes of living, thinking, ways we speak, celebrate, educate and others all constitute social diversity. Culler (1997) proposes that the concept of identity, as far as literary stories are concerned, is premised on how characters define themselves and are defined by various combinations in their past, the choices they make and the social forces that act upon them. Therefore, who an individual becomes is defined by the norms of the social community one belongs and the choices one makes.

“Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside representation already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we” (Hall, 2015).

In a world where we are socialized to think of the colour black as having a negative association, *Going Down Home, Same Difference* and *The Undefeated* celebrate the beauty of a people with a common identity. The illustrations lend wonderfully to the poetic text that encourages the reader (a child or any person) to simply look around to relate and take pride in the beauty of oneness.

Interactive/Genre (Interpersonal Function)

The added features of the electronic texts, narrative style or component go the extra mile to account for the kind of user engagement and the interaction to get readers to read, follow the story or participate in the narration of the story (as the e-literature has been made to call for readers' participation). The availability of the sophisticated interactive digital interface of electronic literature is not without traces of qualities of folk tradition as these play roles in engaging and sustaining the interest of children. Hence, this part of the analysis focuses on the adaptation, characterization, narration, and interactional elements among others that engage the readers or viewers/listeners of the electronic literature. Technological knowledge concerns knowledge of the technical content as well as of the processes required to produce innovative

digital media productions, including knowledge of the machines involved and the media applications (Mills, 2010, p. 224).

The second meta-function semiotics fulfils is interpersonal. This refers to the relationship that is coordinated among the viewer, reader, and listener as well as their interaction with the digital resources. Again, the interpersonal function caters for whom the message is directed to. The reader is placed in a “contact” or “observe” position with a character, and, if in the former, one is then engaged “directly” with a character’s gaze or less directly “invited” into the scene. Relationship among participants and interactive meaning in a multimodal text can be realized with such artistic elements as rhythm, movement, and page layout (Chen, n.d). These, together with the interactivity can be situated within the consumption/interpersonal function.

The Interpersonal Meta-function gives a corresponding interaction or relationship between the addresser and the audience. To a larger extent, it refers to the use of language to express and maintain relations with them and how they affect the behaviour and viewpoint on things in the world. According to Kress & Leeuwen (2006), there are two forms of participants. They are the interactive participants which refer to the participants in the act of communication who speak, listen, write and read, or view created images and content designed in a different format for their consumption. The represented participants are the participants who constitute the people, places, and things (including abstract "things") represented in and by the speech, writing, or image, the participants about whom or which the communication is made.

The personal relationships that a text establishes and reflect is explored through the orientation, the layout of pages, movement (especially with videos) and ambience of images to elicit a sense of connection or distance with readers.

Message/ Digital Interactive (*Textual Function*)

Textual knowledge encompasses both semiotic knowledge and genre.

This involves how the design and layout contribute to making meaning for the reader/viewer/listener through the text. Semiotic knowledge concerns how each mode conveys meaning in different ways in the text, where each mode has its specific task and function in the meaning-making process (Kress, 2010, p. 28).

Multimodal authors imaginatively combine different modes in various strategic arrangements throughout the text, for example, print and visual semiotic resources in a picture book, to effectively and creatively convey the meaning required. Digital multimodal creators require knowledge of the technology and of the processes necessary to produce innovative digital media productions (Mills, 2010). The carefully layered images, patterns, and textures reinforce visual affirmations of the narrative links between the message and the multimodal means. One can explore what is happening in the text (the plot, setting, characters, tone and mood through these textual elements to bring out the meaning of the text). The features of the genre and artistic elements (Line, Space, Shape, Color, Texture, Composition, and Perspective) are placed within Textual Function or Organisation. Illustrators use these artistic media to create textual imagery that accompanies the message that the writer wants to convey.

Different modes join together to communicate and make meaning from a text.

In a multimodal analysis, the focus of the analysis lies in the mode that carries the functional load in a given text. Here, O'Halloran defines "functional load"

as the mode that has the greater means of portraying the idea being projected. By this token, to help unravel the semiotic resources used analysis of the visual element in the text is paramount.

Exploring the Visual elements in e-lit and their roles in making meaning

Visual elements in electronic literature play vital roles and their significance to the meaning-making of the literary work cannot simply be overlooked. The visuals employed have striking features that help to expand or enrich the message reflected in the story. The provision offered by Kress and Leeuwen (2006; 2009) in assessing the authenticity of visuals and the message given (interpretation) implies that modality marker and textual cues are the main factors that account for the reliability of the interpretation given.

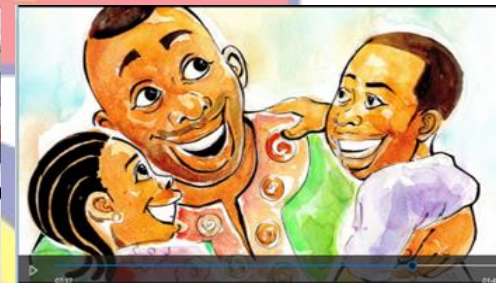
Colour is a visual element of an electronic literary work. It is used solely to complement the text. The commonly known ranges from cool ends like (grey, violet, blue, green) to warm ends (red, orange, yellow) on the colour chart. Colours could appear more or less saturated (Lynch & Tomlinson, 1995). The significance of colour employed by creators of electronic literature tends to establish the mood, the setting in connection with time, and many others as will be discussed in the analysis that follows. From the data gathered, the warm tone of orange, yellow, red is used to strengthen the emotional warmth of the story. In Picture 1, the twin's reaction to the news of visiting their Aunty in the City of Monrovia brought a mixed feelings to them. The general mood created is achieved with the warm colours that express the excitement as the twins move through town to the market station where they meet Auntie Mardie as seen in Picture 2 and 3 and their excitement even intensifies when they finally get to Auntie Mardie's place and are welcomed by Uncle Momo. The soft colours

employed in *Gbagba* are used to portray the mood of contentment and calm. As can be seen from the illustration provided below, the mood of the twins from mixed feelings is translated into excitement and one derives this justification from the colours adopted.

Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 3

Picture 4

Figure 7: Visual scenery in *Gbagba*

Children are sent to spend some time with their relatives in the city. Sundaymar and Sundaygar are to stay with Auntie Mardie and Uncle Momo in the city of Monrovia. The colours employed help to portray their mood as a warm tone of orange, yellow, and red is used to strengthen the emotional warmth of the story. Picture 1, depicts the mood of the children as they receive the news of their visit to their auntie's place in the city of Monrovia. The intensity of their expressions increases till they are finally wrapped in Uncle Momo's embrace upon their arrival in the city as shown in Picture 4. In contrast to *The Alien*, there is the dominant use of warm colours to reiterate awesomeness, perplexity, and shock. The whole idea of a small village boy

from Kenya breaking ground with his invention is awesome as expressed by the other characters.



Figure 8a



Figure 8b

Figure 8. *The Alien*: The mood of the story comes to life with the colours used

The images displayed in figure 8 are from *The Alien*. Figure 8a creates the atmosphere that suggests the process of something (the boiling pot). There is a pot on a fire that boils till it explodes into the air. Figure 8b also, depicts the reaction Pakko receives from his friends at school when he invents an ‘eagle-like thing’ called ‘popo’ that uses sonar to pick up vibration from the earth”. His mates are stunned by the invention, one could identify the shocking mood expressed by the colours used. Similarly, *Going Down Home with*

Daddy reveals the power of families coming together. Beyond this message, the long-standing history of native people taken as slaves from their ancestral land to the new world, and joining into bonds of family. The colours adopted in *Going Down Home* give a good impression of the mood created which is of mixed feelings, a reflective mood. The general mood created with the blue colour stands out. It depicts the solemnity, solitude and reflection of the characters.

“...Hand in hand, we create a ring inside the house Pa built for Granny. Heart to Heart, we share what we are thankful for. Nothing is more important than family, Granny says, ...”

Extract from *Going Down Home with Daddy*



Figure 9. *Going Down Home with Daddy*: solemn mood

The solemnity and reflective mood Granny and her family experience are created with the colour employed”. In the picture below (figure 10), Lil Alan is sinking in thought, as he fumbles with what he will display as it was expected of the children to put up some performances. The picture next is

when Lil Alan's dad retells the event of his childhood when it comes to performing before people in the church.



Figure 10. *Going Down Home with Daddy*: recalling of memories

Likewise, in *Going Down Home*, the use of bright colours to contrast blue expresses delight and a gloomy mood. From the picture (Figure 11), the portion where the children are found appears in the brightly coloured portion.



Figure 11. *Going Down Home with Daddy*: contrast of bright and dull colour

The implication from this suggests a delighted mood for the children, Lil Alan and his sister, as they join their external relation for their annual reunion. A sharp contrast is given with the father transiting into a blue coloured zone that also goes to explain the solemn, pensive and reflective state the reunion put the

adult through. The section where the children are seen as a bright colour supposes that the children are excited about the journey they are to embark on. In contrast to the colour used for their father who is rather transiting from an exciting mood to a gloomy mood amidst the bonding and attachment with the depiction of the Adinkra symbol.

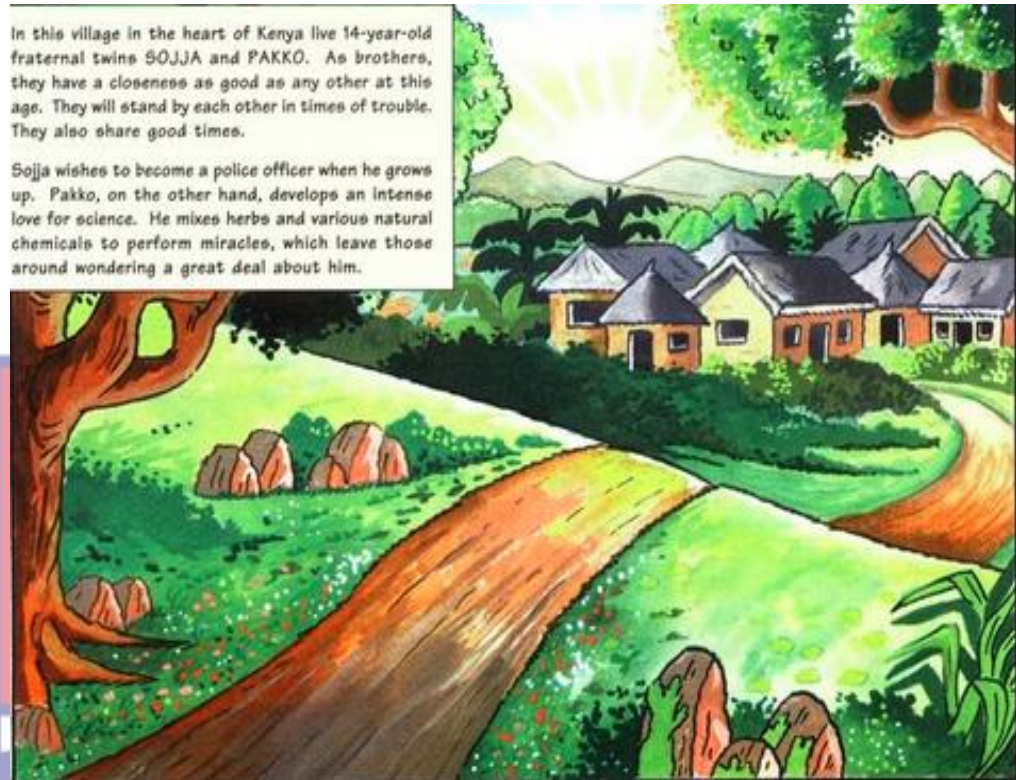
This 'Adinkra' symbol used in the background is called "Sankofa". It depicts attachment to family ties. This symbol signifies the importance of returning in time to bring to the present useful past cultural values, which are needed today. It is believed that progress is based on the right use of the positive contribution of the past which helps in building the future. It teaches people to cherish and value their culture and avoid adulteration. Thus, the symbol call for action toward positive reversion and revival. Colours are employed to expand or enrich the message reflected in the story. The dominant colours in the sampled texts go a further mile to complement the message of the story and provide vividly the setting of the story. The brown and dark green colours give the effect of originality and man's closeness to the earth. As a folktale, *Anansi the Spider Man* is a folk tale that presents a folkway of life as has been ongoing from the beginning of years. It, therefore, affirms the assertion of folklife being closer to nature. The native's environment is usually characterized by its land and the activities done on the land. Projecting of values of the folk tradition is seen with the import of local elements such as attire or costume, setting, settlement, names.



Figure 12. A Story, A Story Anansi, the Spider Man: The nature of life revealed

In the picture above, the life of the society where Anansi can be associated is portrayed. Their communalism is shown with the people performing activities together such as pounding and the younger ones and older members together where the younger ones seem to be sitting and observing the older members.

The figure below again shows the village in Kenya where Sojja and Pakko, who are twins lived. The richness of the environment that reiterates the folk's life being close to nature is highlighted with the clear green vegetation. The freshness of the environment, a good layout settlement with a clear cleared path that leads to the dwelling is well carved with colours that emphasize the life of folk being close to nature.



In this village in the heart of Kenya live 14-year-old fraternal twins SOJJA and PAKKO. As brothers, they have a closeness as good as any other at this age. They will stand by each other in times of trouble. They also share good times.

Sojja wishes to become a police officer when he grows up. Pakko, on the other hand, develops an intense love for science. He mixes herbs and various natural chemicals to perform miracles, which leave those around wondering a great deal about him.

Figure 13. *The Alien*: The richness of the environment

In *Going Down Home*, Lil Alan's father takes Lil Alan, Sis, and their mother around the fields. He shows the family the vast land that belongs to them. As Lil Alan's father takes his family through the fields, he shares with them what his Pa had told him and his brother, Jay about the lands and their ownership.



I swallow hard and climb into the trailer with Sis and Momma. I lean against the hay as Daddy drives us past the smokehouse and fishing pond and rumbles by a field dotted with puffs of white.

"Cotton has been on this land a long time, just like us," Daddy says. "Pa would drive your Uncle Jay and me on a tractor just like this one. Look to your left, Pa would say. Look to your right. The land just seemed to go on forever. Everything goes so, Pa told us, is ours." I think about what Daddy said and sit up tall. Pa is gone, but this is our time to come together and remember.

Figure 14. *Going Down Home*: lands and their ownership

He tells them, “Cotton has been on this land a long time, just like us. “... Look to your left ... Look to your right. The land just seemed to go forever. Everything you see... is ours”. From the picture, brown colour is used in relation to the land and this alludes to folk life being close to nature. Also, the idea of family is depicted. It is beyond all doubt that the mood in the story is

achieved with the colours used. But, is it only the mood and setting in relation to the place that is brought to life with the visual element?

Unearthing Ideologies from the Composition used by the Illustrators

Visual images, like all representations, “are never innocent or neutral reflections of reality...they re-present for us: that is, they offer not a mirror of the world but an interpretation of it” (Midalia, 1999, p. 131). The colour chosen and blended by the illustrator enables the author’s message to leave an impact on the minds of the reader/audience. This textual element is significant as it complements the themes in the stories associated with it. Usually, colours complement the message being conveyed.

The depiction of diversity among people is seen with the different combinations of colours to create harmony. This is evident in the smiles on the faces of the people (represented participants) in the images (illustrated in the pictures below). Different shades of colour depict the diversity of people. It tells the differences that exist between people, cultures, families and others. Yet these differences are needed to spice up life at every level where people are found. As Palumbo-Lui suggests diverse and highly differentiated experiences result from complex differences crosshatched by gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and others.

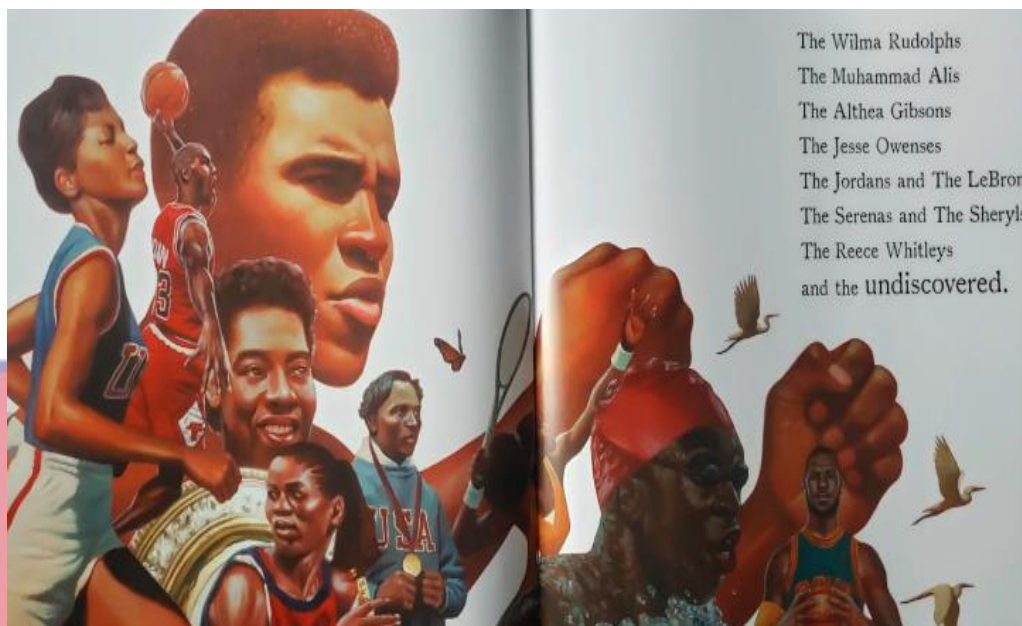


Figure 15. *The Undefeated*: the champions, the undefeated individuals of all time



Figure 16: *The Undefeated*: the hope of becoming what people will look up to

In the above picture, Nelson's illustration reveals to readers the enslaved people who lived in the new world and successfully broke ground in different spheres of life. The picture shows different colours of people. The direction of their look, 'the gaze of represented participants' seems to be

focused on a specific thing not identified in the picture. This action can be interpreted as their expectation, anticipation and hope just like the three different sizes of the moon which symbolizes the process of coming up with our differences in the hope of becoming an outstanding one for all to see.

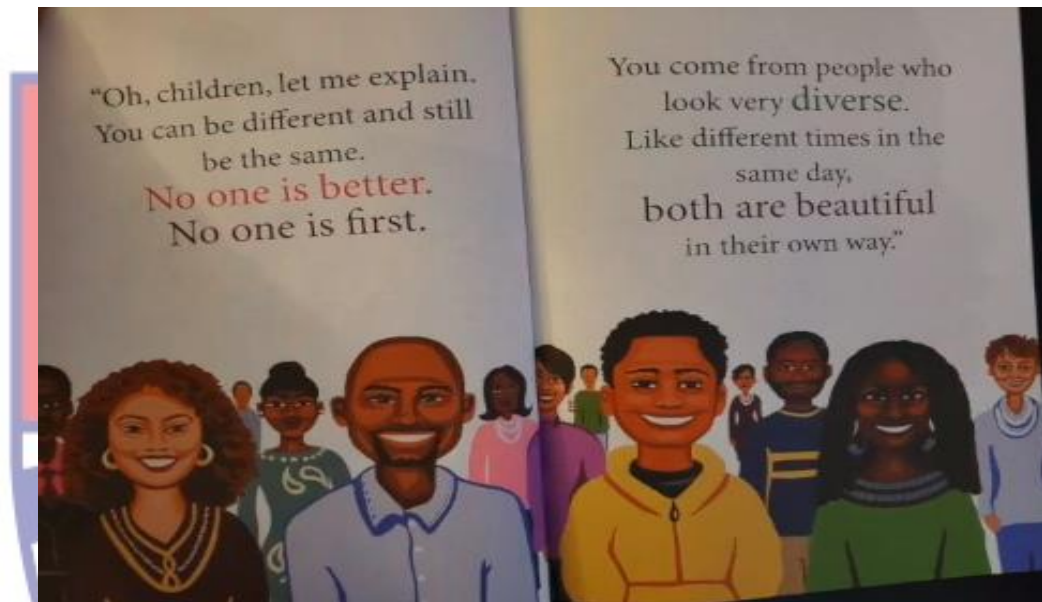


Figure 17. Same Difference: diversity in harmony

The picture portrays the excitement of people with different colours. Their harmonious smiles as they gather together spread from one to the other. Lida and Lisa's Grandma explains to them the difference that exists among people emphasizing that "You can be different and still be the same. No one is better. No one is first." At this point, the message of equality, uniqueness and the need to tolerate other differences in people is made known with the colours used together within the e-text. The effect of the combination of colours to create harmony and convey the idea of commonality and acceptance can instead create a feeling of rejection and chaos as seen in the picture below. The combination of the different shades of colours does not create harmony.



Figure 18. *The Three Little Birds*: diversity disrupting peace ends in chaos

The village where the three birds, Dodo dilo dogito, Bibi bania and Taki Taki lived is depicted with different shades of colours. The different shades adopted do not create harmony, hence we find the disaccord as people attack the three birds by throwing stones at them.

The second textual element largely used in the sample data is space. This is another visual element of art that reveal the distances or areas around, between, and within components of a piece or the area that a shape occupies. Space can be positive or negative, open or closed, shallow or deep. Positive space is the filled space by the object(s) or element(s) in the design but space is termed as negative space when there is an empty space, or open space created around, between, and within the subjects. The relevance of space is that it conveys emotion, movement, or any other concept the artist wishes to portray. In *The Undefeated* spaces surrounding the pictures of people and the blank/plain spaces are audible and they create a feeling of loneliness and isolation.



Figure 19. *The Undefeated*: any means necessary to survive in a New land

The “*bo-yo*”(not so good/ugly) expressions on the faces of the represented participants suggest dissatisfaction, pain, hunger, and resentment by every member of this family. The old, young adult and babies are affected “by any means necessary” to survive. The above image expressing the reaction of “The ones who survived America by any means possible” isn’t so good. And not even one of the members of the family is spared of this bitter means to surviving.

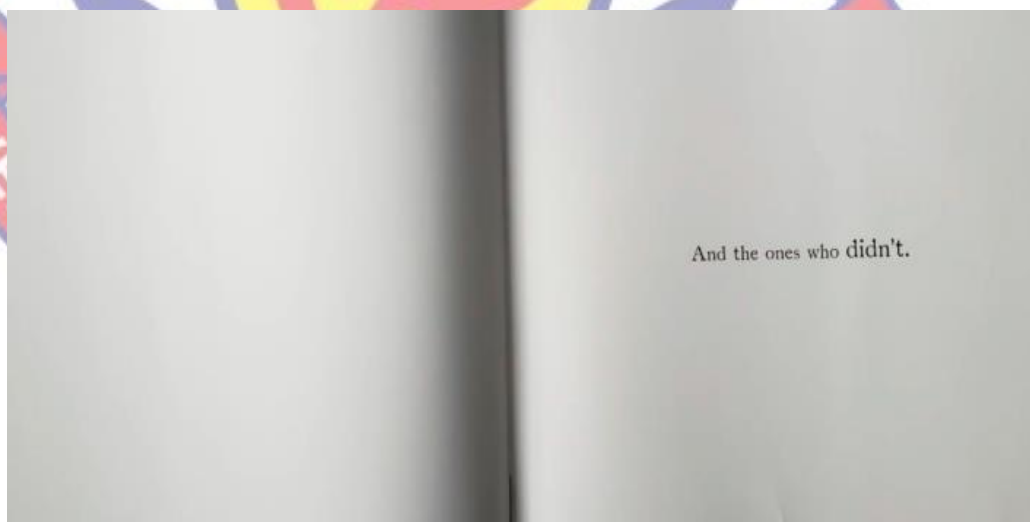


Figure 20. *The Undefeated*: dedication to the fallen one

Juxtaposing the image shown in Figure 19, (the reaction of the ones who survived the New land against all odds) with the image shown in Figure 20 (and

those who didn't) one can tell the difference judging from the amount of space allocated.

Whiles in Figure 19, the represented participants take a large space and the attention of the viewers, the image in Figure 20 apporitions greater space to just a sentence. A negative space with a simple sentence taking a whole page is

audible to reveal 'the unspeakable' of the fallen and gone members in the new land. The latter image shown in figure 21 against a neutral background leaves a reader with much to desire.

Towards the tail end of the story (*The Undefeated*), the colour of the represented participants gradually brightens giving off a feeling of joy.

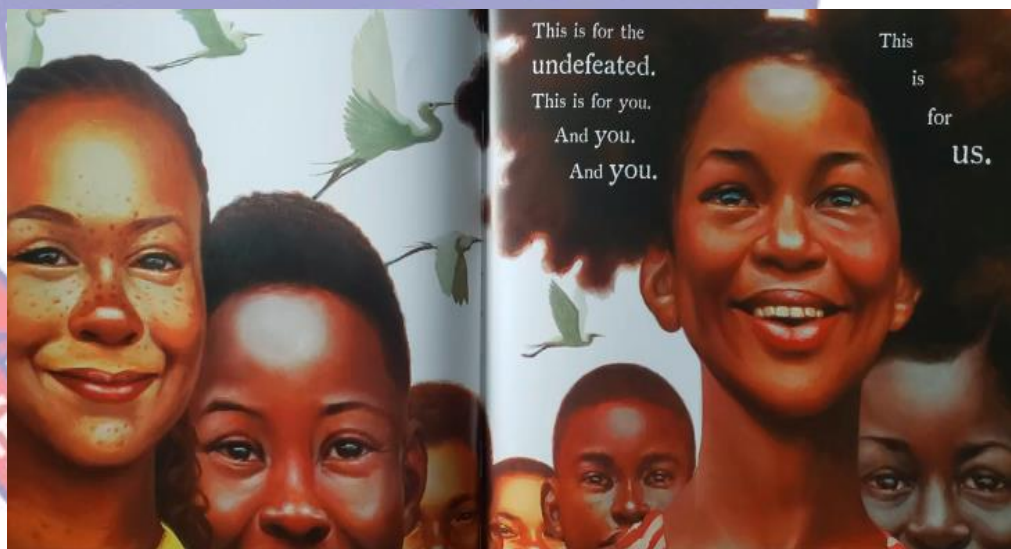


Figure 21. *The Undefeated*: the feeling of joy of having survived “any means necessary”

Every available space on the page gets covered in bright colours unlike the earlier two images showing “any means possible for surviving. This denotes hopefulness and victory in the pursuit of achievement by those the

book terms ‘the undefeated’. “This is for the undefeated. This is for you. And you. And you. This is for us”.

To add to the above, space apportioned for images reinforce the message of equality. Considering the two images below, the space is equally shared with the image and text by the two representative participants. These are the twins who groan over their differences to their grandmother. A page with texts is devoted to Lisa and Lida. The equal distribution of space allocation to the twins reiterates the same treatment despite the differences. Hence, irrespective of our difference, we are all one and there is a need to be treated equally.



Figure 22. *Same Difference*: none is better than the other

As their grandmother makes them understand that difference exists among people yet everyone is as important and unique as the other. The twins come to an understanding and as they continue in their united delight, the equal amount of space allocated to the twins reoccurs as shown below.



Figure 23. *Same Difference*: despite our differences, we are one

The third textual element to be discussed is Line. It is defined as the objects in the picture. Illustrators use lines to suggest motion, energy, mood as well as direction. Every kind of line employed reveals a lack of movement, calm, sleep, stability, and an absence of strife, giving a feeling of a solid, safe place, suggesting being delicate and ephemeral or boldness and strength. Depending on the lines and colours utilized, different forms have distinct connotations. The horizontal lines give the impression of calmness and serenity. The vertical lines employed in the background coupled with the sloping nature of the adjoining horizontal line indicate the severity of the issue (identity and differences). "My skin is dark and hers is light. And our hair, it's different, too. We're not the same, no matter what we do". Worried Lida pours out her frustration.



Figure 24. *Same Difference*: intensity of the issue of "identity".

Another technique to highlight the atmosphere of a picture or tale is to use shapes. Shapes are suggested by the joining and intersecting of lines, and by the meeting of colour sections. Organic shapes, which are uneven and curving in nature and handcrafted products, are common. It may be used to portray a wide range of emotions, from openness and inventiveness to terrifying unpredictability.

The shape can be created by enclosing lines, or by colour and value changes that define edges. Form and shape can be described as either organic or geometric. Organic forms are typically irregular in outline, and often asymmetrical. Organic forms are most often thought of as naturally occurring. One can observe the pattern in Lil Alan's Granny's dress. A tree-like image that has developed roots can be seen taking over the length of Granny's dress. It emphasizes the depth of a generation's existence.

To justify this claim, one also observes that the roasters and hens have dotted spots that can be likened to seeds. The reoccurring and varying numbers of the seeds are numerous as the offspring are scattered over the seven continents (the number of hens and cocks). Implicit visual movement created through vectors of lines and shapes, variation in the “status” of a character’s reappearance, “inter-event” options between character actions, the effect of characters visually moving into and out of interior spaces these and more hold layers of a story (Kress & Leeuwen, 2009).

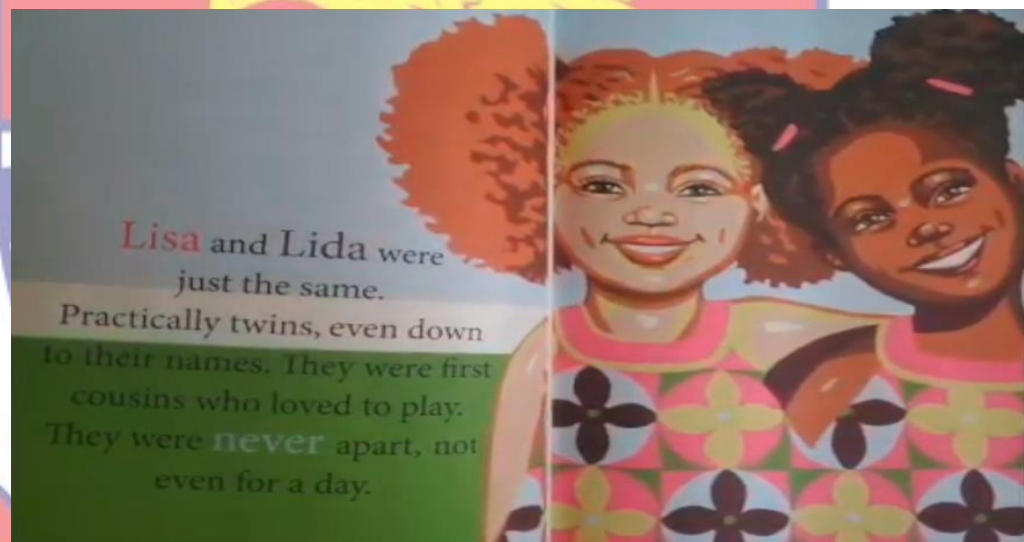


Figure 25. Same Difference: The bond we share

The joining of the images of two cousins implies the mutual bond that exists between them. As the twins share one page of their picture being together, and the text about the activities together shows their oneness or togetherness “Lida and Lisa were just the same, practically twins, even down to their names. They were first cousins who loved to play. They were never apart, not even for a day”.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed and discussed the meta-functional usage reinforced by the semiotic resources identified from the structural, narrative,

and thematic features employed by the authors and illustrators to convey meaning in the selected electronic literature. It first showed the interplay of the ranges of media that highlight the ideational, textual and interpersonal function of the selected e-literature. The study succeeded in providing a response to research question two. The different ideological stances of writers are subtly carried in their works as unravelled from the selected samples. The contribution of illustrators in using textual elements such as colour, size of the image placement of the image and the use of lines to provide visual pathways to complement the story of the writer was also established.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The previous chapter presented the analysis and discussion of selected data gathered for the study. This is the final chapter of the study conducted. It presents an overview of the entire chapters of the study. It also presents the findings from the analyzed data, draws the implication from the findings, and further gives some recommendations for further research. The contribution of the study is also spelt out in this last chapter. Finally, the chapter ends with a concluding remark from the researcher.

Summary of the Entire Study

The study was premised on the need for electronic literary production responding to the specific needs of children from the African culture. It began to establish the relationship between literature and culture. As Bond (1996) iterates literature, in its many forms, is the primary conveyer of cultural heritage. The evidence provided in the study indicated that is the “much western concentration” (Opoku Agyemang, 2017) considering the electronic literature written for children in Africa. The researcher sought to bring the attention of other researchers, writers, scholars, illustrators and among others on the need to harness the possibilities the current age offer to shape literary materials for its young ones.

It went a step further to enumerate the numerous benefits that creators (all those who work to produce literary materials) can use their production to reconstruct the negative stereotypes about the African culture while not failing to pass on the cherished values society deem fit to be emulated by its

members. With literature becoming the most secure medium through which, the different cultural needs of children are attended to, the study then highlighted the revolution that is arising in the world of Children's Literature as a result of the advancement in technology. Realizing the known gap in the literature and problematising the gap, the researcher noted the tremendous contribution of technology to children's learning, hence, there was the need to investigate electronic production for children especially written in English for African children.

The study subsequently traced the development of Children's Literature, electronic literature, and the shift co-occurring in these fields of study. Several works of promising scholars related to this area of learning were collected from their blogs, vlogs, online community discussion platforms, published papers, and articles. These were critically reviewed to provide grounds for the current research. The findings from the reviewed works informed the choice of the model adopted for the analysis of the selected sample for the analysis. The research was driven to offer a response to two questions. First, what constituted electronic literature for children in Africa and how meaning can be derived from them through their meta-functional usage taking into consideration some variables. This write-up was organised into five chapters:

The first chapter, the introduction, provided a general background to the study. It presented the identified limitation in the literature, the purpose of the research and its significance. The second chapter reviewed the literature on the state of electronic literature for children. It again discussed the theoretical perspective that is used in analysing the selected e-books for the research. The

third and fourth chapters extensively analysed the data sample for the study. It unearthed the constituents of e-lit for children in Africa especially those written in English. The last chapter, this current chapter, contains the implications of the analysis and gives the contribution of the study as well as some recommendations for further studies.

Implication from the Analysis

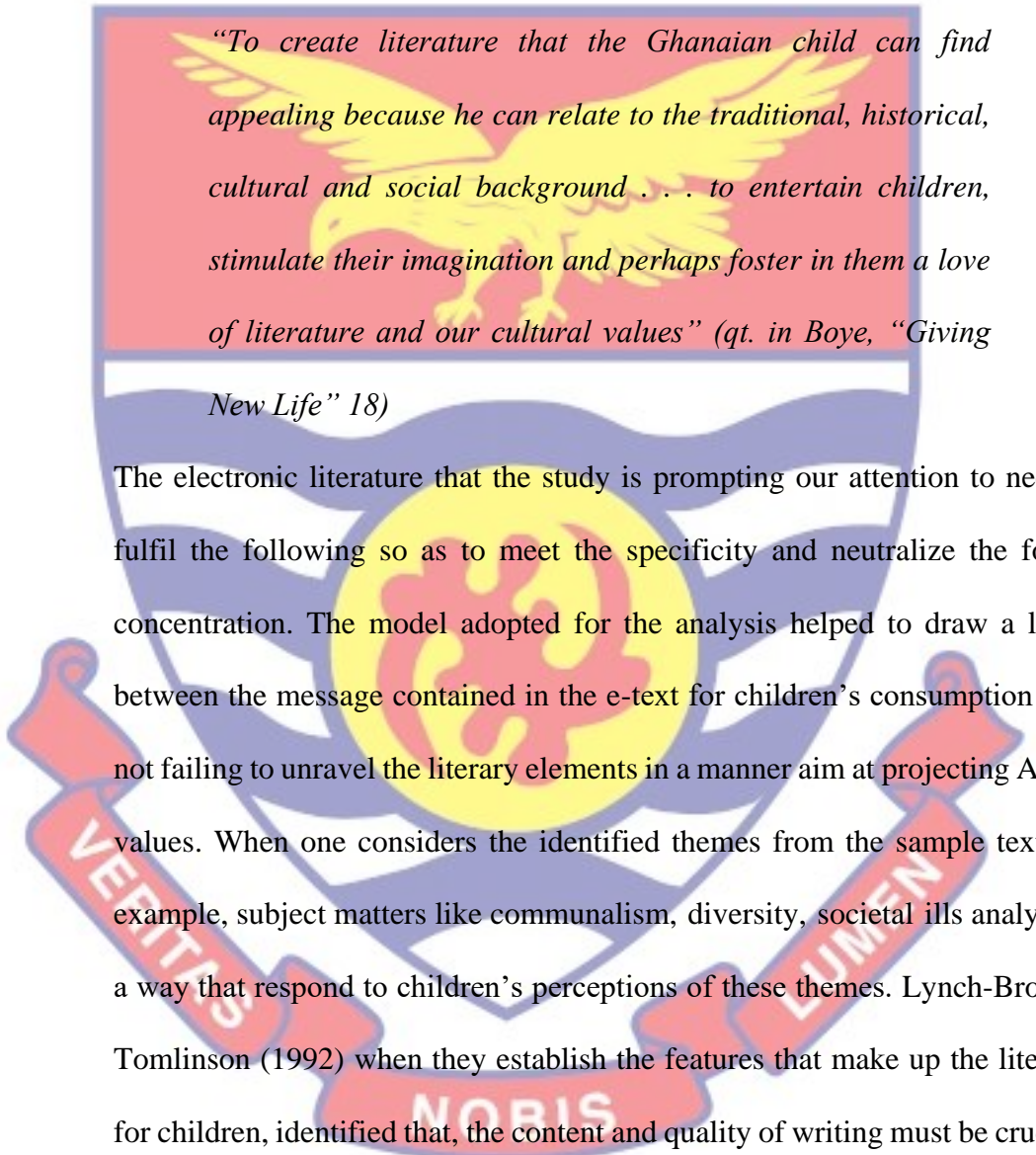
The Constituents of Electronic Literature for Children

Having carefully considered the selected e-lits used for the analysis, the researcher figured out that the electronic literature designed for children is usually multimodal and is created with a highly digitized interface. It requires access to digital media (such as television, mobile phone, tablet, and laptop among others) and preferably internet connectivity. These are the key things one needs to access electronic literature (of any kind, recontextualized, augmented, or digitally born). With these, one can have access to online e-stories or e-books from websites, YouTube, or software applications like Kindle, Anybook, and others. Even when one wants these e-stories or e-books to be downloaded and watched or read offline.

A major finding from this study shows that E-lit for children has the propensity to have a greater impact should it respond to the specific cultural demands of its young ones. An African E-lit is a medium to redefine African identity, culture, and values. The message that is given to children through the e-literary texts should not only entertain children but goes further to teach a child about the customs and values in the society for the matter, African values and traditions. As technological affordances are gradually and will steadily

become common to children in Africa, writers have a duty to harness technology to preserve and pass down the rich African culture to its children.

Most importantly, what writers and authors are not to lose sight of is the individual and cultural needs their writings need to respond to. According to de-Graft Hanson, the main purpose of his books is



“To create literature that the Ghanaian child can find appealing because he can relate to the traditional, historical, cultural and social background . . . to entertain children, stimulate their imagination and perhaps foster in them a love of literature and our cultural values” (qt. in Boye, “Giving New Life” 18)

The electronic literature that the study is prompting our attention to needs to fulfil the following so as to meet the specificity and neutralize the foreign concentration. The model adopted for the analysis helped to draw a liaison between the message contained in the e-text for children’s consumption while not failing to unravel the literary elements in a manner aim at projecting African values. When one considers the identified themes from the sample texts, for example, subject matters like communalism, diversity, societal ills analysed in a way that respond to children’s perceptions of these themes. Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson (1992) when they establish the features that make up the literature for children, identified that, the content and quality of writing must be crucial to Children’s Literature. According to them, the quality of writing of literary works should relay an original and relevant idea to children with the use of imaginative language, the beauty of literary and artistic style (in other words, graphical and visual illustration should accompany the writings) and should be

useful to a particular age and endure with the years that pass by. This provides a clue to incorporating the constituents of the e-lit as discussed in this study. Hence, a piece of electronic literature that qualifies as an e-lit for children in Africa needs to fulfil or have some rudiment that would make it relevant to the child. These requirements like every piece of writing are; that it has a purpose or need to fulfil, e-literature targeted at children should have a purpose that satisfies the creation of awareness, the shaping of imagination, fostering voice, and reconstructing the identity of the readers or its audience. The appropriation of authoritative voices is still the main goal of education in Singapore (Cheah, 1998). Students are expected to emulate the canonical and reproduce the valued types of information and ways of presenting it. The creation of electronic literary content should have an endless possibility of being meaningful and subsequently having a great influence on the lives of its young readers. One another success the model adopted for the study help to achieve was that it aided in establishing the fact that storytelling needs are framed as a creation from culture and for an audience of a culture. Therefore, the need for the promotion of cultural artefacts to a target audience who can make connections with literary elements used in the creation of e- literature is paramount.

Huck (1964) posits that modern books, especially in digital format, have become “a more social event, participatory "liaison" personalised and user engaging transforms the potential of youth creating stories into a digital community-based activity that is perspectival, contextual, and social”. The literary work designed for children is to teach them or deal with a specific problem. From the sampled data, it can be observed that the electronic children's literature has common themes running through. That to a greater part

show how these values are cherished in the African culture. In the analysed e-texts, family is an integral aspect of the African culture that literary works written to propagate the values of Africa's rich culture cannot overlook. The role of the member (older) concerning the young is implicitly mentioned in almost all the sampled e-text.

Again, the predominant challenges African nations face are dragged to the feet of children to encounter the reality of issues about their society. In a way of cautioning them against bad practices, the e-literature written for children leaves a responsibility and challenge for the young ones to live up to fight these social menaces.

Place of Cultural Electronic Literature for Children

Electronic Literature targeted at African children should have the uniqueness of the child at heart. The content presented needs to be appropriate for their children's age. The "need to know" is more pronounced in young children, especially in the "Age of Why?" from 3 to 6 years old, going up until 10 to 11 years old. This period according to scholars is the "Age of Whys". Children usually love to ask a lot of questions. Using etiological tales in school encourages curiosity, observation and reasoning. It encourages children to take the time to observe the world, ask questions about it, and, above all, change their outlook.

Literary production created by writers, illustrators, software designers and others needs to have a defined audience. Defining your children's book's audience beforehand assures parents that what they buy is something that can contribute to the proper development of their children. Most classification of children's age groups is as follows: babies (0 to 2), toddlers (2 to 3), early

school (4 to 8), and middle childhood (6 to 12). Having a clue of the target audience, creators design their stories to suit and to enable a strong appeal in meeting the specificity of the audience's need.

Whether the Children's E-Literature teaches life lessons such as friendship, courage, family, responsibility, or independence, it should acknowledge children's efforts towards enhancing mutually beneficial relationships with the use of unique and memorable characters. It needs to validate children's experiences as meaningful and valuable with engaging plots and happy endings. It should have value for children and help them make contributions to their families and communities. It ought to give voice to children's authentic values and concerns and contain suitable format, content and rich language, a credible conversation that projects the culture and norms of Africa. However, as Lynch & Tomlinson (1998) admonish, it might be a good idea to not seem too preachy with the tone when sending a message through a children's book. Since various family backgrounds and beliefs are to be considered the message is to be put in a way that respects all differences.

Contribution to Knowledge

The study offers a differing view on the analysis of children's electronic literature in terms of the approach and theoretical stance. Therefore, is essential for students and researchers in disciplines including literary studies, media and communications, art, and creative writing. I recommend that other studies be conducted to consider perspectives outside the text such as social-cultural information, background information of creators and relevant information for interpreting work in analysing electronic literature for children. This concurs with O'Toole's (1995) belief that "proper semiotics will only grow out of a

large body of analysis, description, interpretation, and theory by people with a range of interpretation”.

The study has found it keen to refer to those who produce e-lit for African children as electronic literature “Creators”. This collective name will comprise the authors, illustrators, software developers, and others. The role of African E-lit creators is echoed by J. O. de Graft Hanson who observes that child characters seem appropriate for such stories, as children have a natural affinity with animals, perhaps because many of the animals involved in our traditional lore are those that may be considered an integral and a vital part of the world of rural communities.

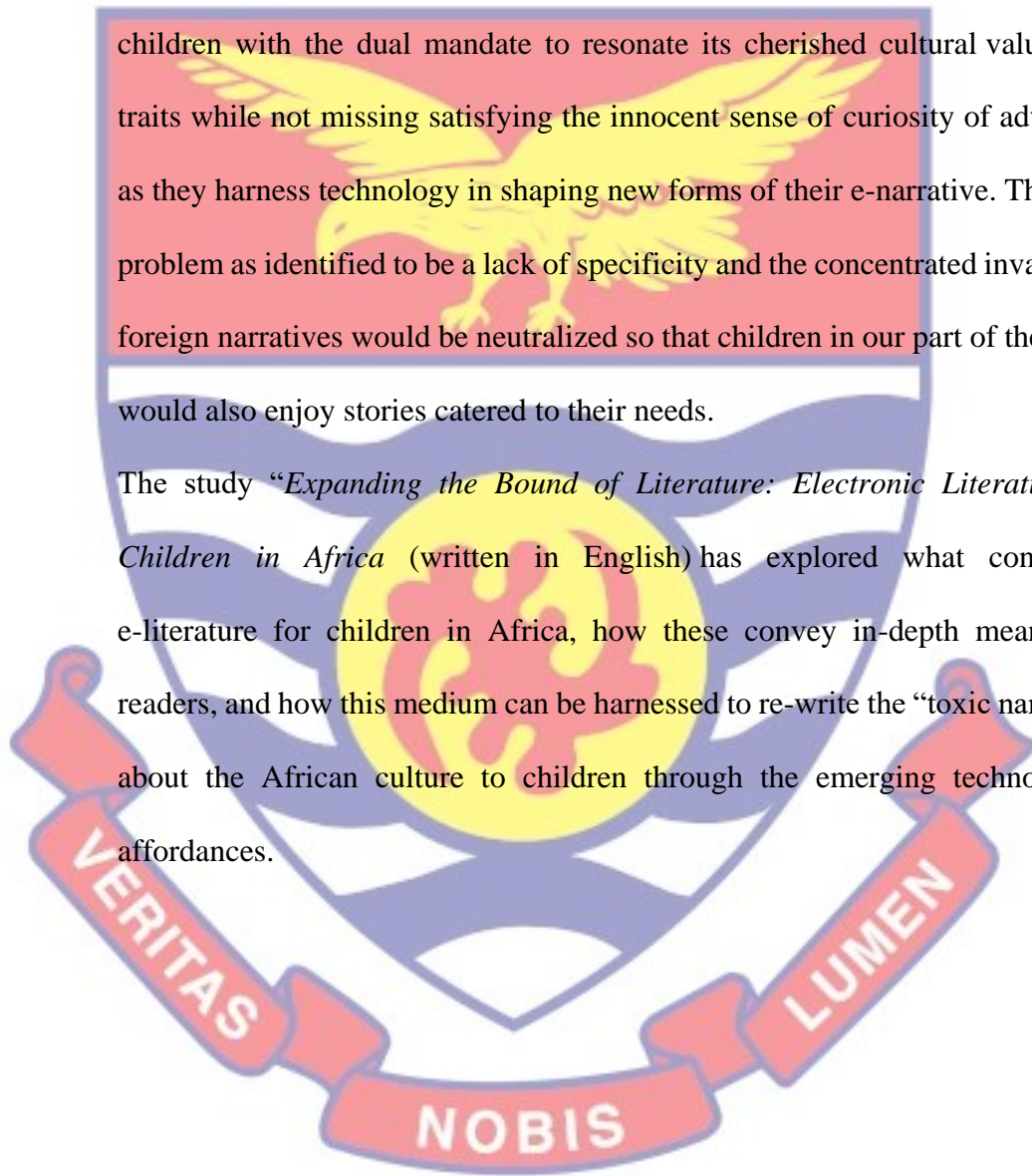
Concluding Remark

One thing we can live to tell is how literature continues to immensely preserve the culture of societies and restore the memories of universal values. Of these values, Marciniak (2016) articulates that “every new generation can feel and know beyond time and space”. When we read books, we create worlds and relive experiences that might have a possible influence on our real life. Penn (2018) also notes that “writing is an instrument of testimony, a self-representation and imagination and it is a path to freedom”. There are a variety of ways in which writers and illustrators might communicate their message to consumers such as publishing stories on the web, YouTube, and Facebook.

African Electronic Literature for children would be of great help to children when the daily life of the typical African life is relived, recreated in the stories that children read or the videos they spend their time watching. Children tend to be influenced by what they learn or see, hence having local materials and

traditional values emitted to children through the stories they interact with can go a long way to preserve the dignity and heritage of Africa's rich culture. It will therefore become relevant to the child since the child can relate to the characters, setting and other elements used in the stories they read or watch or interact with. The current age presents writers who create stories for African children with the dual mandate to resonate its cherished cultural values and traits while not missing satisfying the innocent sense of curiosity of adventure as they harness technology in shaping new forms of their e-narrative. The main problem as identified to be a lack of specificity and the concentrated invasion of foreign narratives would be neutralized so that children in our part of the world would also enjoy stories catered to their needs.

The study "*Expanding the Bound of Literature: Electronic Literature for Children in Africa* (written in English) has explored what constitutes e-literature for children in Africa, how these convey in-depth meaning to readers, and how this medium can be harnessed to re-write the "toxic narrative" about the African culture to children through the emerging technological affordances.



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[html](#)

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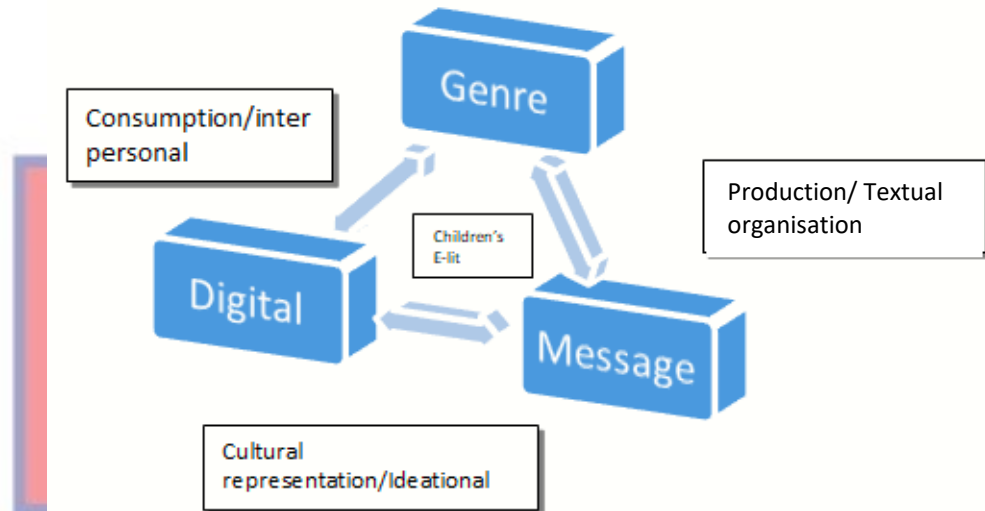
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BLvL4tDuvp8&t=127s>

<https://eliterature.org/>



APPENDIX

Synthesized Model for the Analysis



Moya Guijarro (2014), Sargeant (2015), Kress & Leeuwen (2006)

