A LEXICO-SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF LEILA SLIMANI'S 'SEX AND LIES'

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Abstract

This work examines a lexico-semantic analysis of Leila Slimani's 'Sex and Lies' in order to reveal the author's creative use of some lexical devices to achieve meaning in the text. The work adopts Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) as a theoretical model, since this work focuses on the deployment of lexical devices to provide meaning in the text. As a library and text-based research, the work uses a descriptive and simple random sampling technique in examining the data studied. Previous studies focused on the issues of feminism and sexuality without much attention paid to how lexical devices are used in the text to produce meaning. The work also observes that meaning do not exist in isolation rather they are connected to words. This is made possible through the author's ability to make use of some lexical devices such as synonym, antonym, polysemy, repetition, etc. to improve the textual quality of the text. The work concludes that the use of lexical devices by the authors enhance the reading and comprehension of the text by the readers.

Keywords: *Sytemic Functional Grammer, Feminism and Sexuality Sex and Lies*

Introduction

Eka and Udofot (1996) posit that "language is the most brilliant of human inventions" (P.2). Through language, people who live in a particular environment can be able to communicate and express their thoughts and feelings. A necessary implication of the use of language for the purpose of communication is that information expressed by language has to be meaningful to the hearer otherwise communication or interaction does not take place. This idea is stressed by Gimson's (1980), here, he described language as:

as a system of conventional signals used for communication by a whole community. This pattern of conventions covers a system of significant sound units, the inflection and arrangement of words and the association of meaning with words (Pp. 4-5).

If conventional symbols have to be associated with meaning, it follows that the words we use in language and the sentences we make by putting words together have to mean something. Also,

Edem (2005) maintains that one of the most important roles of human language is that it is used as a means to pass information through interaction between two persons in a society. The source further notes that language helps man to establish social relations and other forms of network (Edem 2022; Oyeleye 2005).

It is against this background that Edem (2020) observes that writers depend on lexical items and their connotative implications to convey their intended messages. Therefore, the knowledge of lexico-semantics gives credence to lexical items in a text. Lexico-semantics is a sub-branch of semantics that deals with the study of words and meanings and the relatedness of lexical items in syntagmatic structures (Edem2022; 2023a and 2023b). Yule (2003) added that words either denote physical and abstract things or connote images in the real and imagined world. This relationship is between the lexicon of a language and the various meanings that can be generated in different contexts (Edem 2015, Edem 2023b).

On the other hand, Johnson (2008) views lexico-semantics as "the relationship between the lexicon of a language and the various possible semantic categories created by the human mind" (p.119). Here, every language divides the word differently in terms of what sorts of concepts are made into words, and how the meaning of those words reflects the reality around us. The units of analysis in lexical semantics as by (Edem, 2023a) are lexical units which include not only words but also sub-words or units such as affixes and even compound words and phrases. Lexical semantics looks at how the meaning of the lexical units correlates with the structure of the language or syntax. The study of lexical semantics simply looks at: the classification and decomposition of lexical items, the difference and similarities in lexical semantic structures and the relationship of lexical meaning to sentence meaning and syntax. Geeraerts (2010) affirms that "the first stage in the history of lexical semantics runs from 1830 to 1930. The lexical semantics as an academic discipline originated in the early nineteenth century, but that does not mean that matters of word meaning had not been discussed earlier" (p. 2).

It is noted that lexico-semantics is derived from the combination of two words, "lexical" and "semantics" which means "words" and "meaning". The term "lexical" is coined from the word lexis or lexeme which means linguistic item like word. On the other hand, Lyons (1981) said that "semantics was coined from the Greek word meaning to "signify" (p.400). It focuses on the relationship between signifiers like words, phrases, sign symbols and their denotation. It is often used in language for denoting a problem of understanding that comes down to word selection or connotation. Yule (2002) posits that "semantics is the branch of linguistic study that deals with examination of the conventional meaning of words, phrases, and sentences in language" (p.114). This was included to (Udofot 2008, Edem 2016, 2022 & 2023a).

In recent years, scholars and critics have paid much attention to the text basing their opinion on the issues of feminism and sexuality in their works. Zemmouri (2022) discussed "Feminism and Sexuality in Leila Slimani's 'Sex and Lies' where she focuses on feminism in relation to the sexual dimension, which she considers as the aspect that represents to a greater extent the preoccupations of women in Moroccan and Arab societies. Also, Erquiua Fernandez in her contribution sees Leila Slimani's 'Sex and Lies' on the perspectives of "The Presence of Women in Leila Slimani's work". Her major contribution is that women find it very difficult to live and speak openly with honesty about their sexual lives and identities and the need to be free.

From the above discussion, it could be seen that these scholars paid much attention to feminism, sexual lives and identities raised in the text studied. However, not much attention, in my view has been paid to the lexico-semantic analysis of Leila Slimani's 'Sex and Lies' which is the main focus of this paper. Edem (2023b) however, looks at the Lexico-semantic analysis of Helon Habila's 'Oil on Water' to determine how lexical cohesion is achieved in the text under reference. Also, Edem (2023a) examines the Lexico-semantic analysis of Eyoh Etim's 'Don't Marry Anglica'. But the present work is similar to Edem's because they tend to examine lexico-semantic analysis of literary texts but different in style of writing, theoretical framework and data. Also the major concern of this work is not on lexical cohesion which Edem's work discussed, but is to determine how lexical devices are used to facilitate explanation of meaning in the text and how these devices are functional for constructing meanings of different kinds.

The main objective of this study is to carry out a Lexico-semantic analysis of Leila Slimani's 'Sex and Lies'. To identify some of the predominant lexico-semantic devices and the functions of these devices in the overall evaluation of the text. To illustrate the manner in which the writer's experiences are conveyed at the lexical and semantic levels to showcase the distinctive usages of lexical items in the novel and finally to evaluate how words get their meaning and how complex expression depends on it's part to bring about meaning and effective communication in the text.

Theoretical Framework: Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG)
The research adopts systemic functional grammar (SFG) model of M. A. K Halliday, as a theoretical framework suitable for this research work. Systemic functional grammar grew out of J. R. Firth's work and was later developed by M. A. K Halliday. Here, Halliday considers "grammar to be a network of systems of interrelated contrast whereby particular attention is paid to semantics and pragmatics in the expression of meaning such that the theory cannot be separated from daily experience" (p. 17). In addition, Hart (2004) and Edem (2015) sees systemic functional grammar as a theory of language based on purpose and choice. Hence, (Gee & Handford 2012) point that the main objective of systemic functional grammar is "to facilitate explanation of meaning in context through a comprehensive text-based grammar that enables analysts to recognise the choices speakers and writers make from linguistic systems and explore how these choices are functional for constructing meanings of different kinds" (p.12) and (Edem 2024, p. 40, Edet & Edem, 2024).

Gotzsche (2009) opines that systemic functional grammar considers: "Language as a resource that is fundamentally shaped by the uses that people make of it; hence, it aims to explain the forms of language in terms of the meanings that they express " (p.226). It also provides with the potential for mapping out languages in general terms, scaffolding the particular description developed for each language under investigation (Matthiessen, 1995).

Moreover, systemic functional grammar (SFG) is a theory of language which highlights the relationship between language, text and context. Its scope is wide in that it sets out to explain how humans make meaning through language and other semiotic resources, and to understand the relationship between language and society. Therefore, the term systemic refers to the view of language as "a network of systems, or interrelated sets of options for making meaning while functional refers to Halliday's view that language is as it is because of what it has evolved to do. Thus, what he refers

as the multidimensional architecture of language "reflects the multidimensional nature of human experience and interpersonal relations" (Halliday, 2003). The fundamental advantage of this theory is that language is modeled as a social semiotic; in other words, as a meaning - making resource and insists on the interrelation of forms and means (Halliday, 1978). Eggins (1994) provides the following explanation:

> If language is a semiotic system, then the process of language use is a process of making meanings by being seen (interpreted) against the background of what could have been meant (said or written) in that context... (p.22).

For further explication, at the level of grammar, Halliday proposes four categories such as: unit, structure, class, and system. Eka (1994) posits that "the unit carries grammatical patterns" (p.26). According to Edem (2016b) whenever a grammatical choice is made, there must be a unit that carries the choice. Whereas Halliday (1961) cited in Edem (2023) sees "structure as a category set up to account for likeness between events in successivity" (p.59). It describes the patterns of syntagmatic relations at the grammatical level and captures the similarities between them.

On the other hand, a "class" is said to be a set of items having similar possibilities of operation in the structure. It is noted that, items in the same class must belong to the same unit since they normally have the same structural possibilities."System" which is the last grammatical category according to Halliday (1961) is set up to account for "the occurrence of one rather than another from among a number of like events" (p.61).

From the above definitions, it is noted that systemic functional grammar accounts for fundamental grammatical patterns of any human language through the categories of unit, structure, class, and system to bring out meaning, since meaning is produced from linguistic and non-linguistic factors. Consequently, our analysis of Leila Slimani's 'Sex and Lies' with such a model is invaluable in bringing out the lexical devices such as synonym, antonym, polysemy, repetition, figures of speech and lexical field to convey meaning to the readers and how these devices are functional for constructing meanings of different kinds.

Methodology

The research methodology is discussed under these subtopics: Research design, method of data collection, method of data selection and milieu of the study.

Research Design
This work employs a qualitative and descriptive research design. According to Bodgan and Biken (2007), "qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is descriptive, it tends to analyse their data inductively and meaning is the essential concern of the qualitative approach" (27-28). The major aim for this analysis is to bring to the fore some underlying lexical devices that aids the creation of meaning in Leila Slimani's 'Sex and Lies'.

Method of Data Collection
The primary and main source of information for this work is Slimani's 'Sex and Lies'.

Method of Data Selection
This research adopts a simple random sampling technique. What is significant about this technique is that it provides researcher with an opportunity to select the lexical devices for analysis randomly without bias. Secondary sources of information such as text books, scholarly journals, articles, and internet materials are consulted to boost the contents of this work.

Milieu of the Study
Slimani's 'Sex and Lies' was written as a series of conversations with Moroccan women and men who come from a huge range of diverse backgrounds and experiences. The author makes the reader to recognise the sufferings and humiliations inflicted upon women by a society that defends the egoism and tyranny of men.

Data Analysis and Discussion
Systemic functional grammar is semantics oriented and it is used for the description of language in context and also centered on the notion of language function. The following lexical devices such as: synonym, antonym, polysemy, repetition, figures of speech and lexical field will be employed in the analysis of the text.

Synonym
Synonym is a semantic relation that states the similarity of meaning between the units of speech with other speech units. In addition, Kennedy (2003, p.68) asserts that words that show similar meaning are known as synonym. However, it can be adjective, noun, verb or adverb. The following are some of the instances of synonym used in the text.

Excerpts One (1)

i. Servant/slave or subordinate (Soraya, p.13).
ii. Television/ cinema (Nour, p.29).
iii. Misogyny and hatred (Nour, p.45).
iv. Love and affection (Zhor, p.14).
v. Rights/freedoms (Sanaa El Aji, p.66).

Analysis of Excerpts One (1)
"Servant/slave or subordinate" have a similar meaning. This is used in the text when the author's parents explained that it is forbidden to have sexual relations outside marriage. But the author opines that if she were to have a child without marriage and the new "Family Code" of 2004 allows a child born outside marriage to be registered, if unfortunate the father disowned the child that she will take the responsibility as a mother and choose a name ranging " from a list, all including the prefix abd, meaning "servant", "slave" or "subordinate". These words indicate that women in Morocco also have responsibilities of choosing a name for a child born out of wedlock. In "Television/cinema", this is used to describe the author's childhood experience that they find it difficult to understand a film's plot whenever they are watching "television or at the cinema" because all the sex scenes have been edited out. The author uses these words to illustrate how sexual scenes in a film's plot are hidden and forbidden so as to promote sanctity in the life of the young Moroccans. The use of "misogyny/ hatred" by the author vividly describe two personalities in the dogmatic branch of Morocco's governing PJD (Justice and Development Party) who legislates Puritanism but they were caught in a sexual position. These words are used in the text to depict that in Morocco everyone is equal before the law and this also points to the meaning that "love and affection" are seen as taboo in Morocco. Nevertheless, the use of "rights/freedoms" interchangeably indicate the difficulty and sexual restrictions among the Moroccans, as can be seen in the sentence below: "people really find it difficult to understand individual's rights and freedoms". Therefore, the use of synonym in the text helps the readers to understand the incident that takes place in Morocco and how words are used to make meaning.

Antonym

Antonyms are usually regarded as semantic opposition. Ogbulogo (2005) also points that "a lexical relationship of antonym exists between words that are opposites" (p.30). Examples of antonym in the text are as follows:

Excerpts Two (2)

i. Mother/father (Soraya, p.6)
ii. Married/ unmarried (Soraya, p.15)
iii. Young/old (Soraya, p.20)
iv. Rich/ poor (Soraya, p.15).
v. Daughter/ son (Soraya, p.5)
vi. A boy / a girl (Nour, p.31).
vii. Married/ divorced (Nour, p.5)
viii. Live/die (Mustapha, p.3)

Analysis of Excerpts Two (2)

The use of "mother/ father" here depicts a close relationship between Soraya's parents. The author uses these words to illustrate that an intimate relationship should be limited to husband and wife in the text. Depending on this context, "married/unmarried" signifies that before a woman gets married according to the Family Code in Morocco, she must provide a "certificate of unmarried status" so as to prove her sexual identity. The author uses" young and old", "rich and poor" to indicate that everyone could be propelled by the wish for sexual intimacy despite one's status in the text. Moreover, the deployment of "daughter/son" in the text shows the different advice that a mother could give to her children as this will help to eradicate gender inequality in the text. The use of the word, "a boy/a girl" who posted a photo on Facebook of themselves kissing were arrested and prosecuted. The author uses these words in order to promote good morals in Morocco. Moreso, " married/divorced" is used in the text to show Nour's determination that she has the right to choose her husband not like her cousins who all get married very young and were divorced within two years. This illustrates the breaking away from marital bond and the right to make decisions in the text. And the use of "live or die" means how the Moroccans conducted justice themselves in the name of religion. Hence, the use of this lexical device makes the reading meaningful and comprehensible to the readers.

Polysemy

This is when a word has more than one referent and consequently more than one meaning. According to Abdul (2002, p.302), polysemy is defined "as a unit of language, particularly the word, a phrase that could also have more than one meaning". Examples in the text include:

Excerpts Three (3)

i. As a teenager, I realized that my sex life was everybody's business (Soraya, p.15).
ii. She has always pushed me (Nour, p.3).
iii. For years, doctors and activists have been fighting to bring these horrifying statistics to light (Nour, p.19).

Analysis of Excerpts Three (3)

"As a teenager, I realized that my sex life was everybody's business: Society was entitled to control it". The phrase "sex life" means that an individual is able to, on an either regular or semi-regular basis, enter into voluntarily agreed and consensual situations involving partnered sexual activity but for the purpose of this text it means how the Moroccans focused and restricted individual's sexual activity in a relationship. Using this phrase gives a clearer picture of how Moroccans infused good morals among the younger citizens in the text. "She has always pushed me". The word "pushed" may mean to continually prompt but in this context it means to encourage someone to do something that they may not want to do as in the case of Nour's mother who sent Nour to school because she was unable to further her education. The author uses this word to show how mothers value their female children in Morocco. Furthermore, the use of "fighting" in the sentence: " For years, doctors and activists have been fighting to bring these horrifying statistics to light", simply do not means violence or conflict but an act of bringing solution on how young Moroccan women should promote self respect and this helps in the readability of the text.

Repetition

This is the consistent use of words, phrases or statements in order to create emphasis and developed a certain idea.

Excerpts Four (4)

i. Just once, to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and be seen there by the wrong person (Soraya, p.14).
ii. ...nice girls don't smoke, nice girls don't go out in the evening... aren't friends with boys... don't wear shorts... don't drink in public... don't speak up before their brothers... don't dance in front of men..." (Soraya, p.21).
iii. I grew up with the idea that love leads automatically to sex and that every demonstration of love is about sex (Zhor, p.14).
iv. One of my friends met a man with whom she fell deeply, deeply in love (Malika, p,9).
v. To rediscover the meaning of sexuality is to rediscover the meaning of God (Asma Lamrabet, p.7)

Analysis of Excerpts Four (4)

There is a repetition of word in the sentence: "and because you need only, just once, to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and be seen there by the wrong person". Here, the repetition is seen by the use of voiced alveolar liquid /r/ in the word "wrong" to show emphasis in the text. There is also a repetition of alveolar nasal /n/ in the word "nice" and voiced alveolar plosive /d/ in the word "don't" .Leila uses these words to show how Moroccans lay emphasis on morality especially with the young ladies. "I grew up with the ideas that love leads automatically to sex and that every demonstration of love is about sex", here, alveolar liquid lateral /L/ and the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ are repeated. The words are used to show the mentality of the young girls in Morocco because they are not exposed to sex education rather they are restricted. The use of voiced alveolar plosive /d/ is repeated in the sentence: "one of my friends met a man with whom she feels deeply, deeply in love", the word "deeply, deeply" is repeated to create emphasis in the text. And the use of the phrase; "to discover the meaning of sexuality is to discover the meaning of God "is repeated to make the readers understand how Moroccans place value on sexuality by making reference to God.

Figures of Speech

Generally, figures of speech are used for clarity in an utterance. They are used to give necessary and vivid detail and useful descriptions which enable the readers to understand the people and the environment where they appear and also to put more emphasis on the expression in order to fully bring out meaning and create mental images in the mind of the readers. The author uses a

number of literary tropes as lexico-semantic devices. Such devices includes: Simile, personification, alliteration and rhetorical question

Analysis of Excerpts Five (5)

Simile

This is a figure of speech that shows indirect comparison of one thing with another. It is a comparison with the use of "like" or "as". The following are examples of simile in the text.

i. She was smoking like a Chimney (Soraya, p.3).
ii. A laugh like crumpling a page that made her look down a little (Soraya, p.3).
iii. She took fright and fled, like a mad woman, without explanation (Soraya, p.10).
iv. We treat them like precious stones (Society on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown, p.8).
v. Your wives are as fields ("harth") for you (Asma Lamrabet, p.19)

Simile is used in the text to introduce concrete images about abstract concepts thereby making the novel comprehensive.

Personification

This is a way of endowing inanimate objects with human traits or attributes. Also, Perrine (1969) defines personification as "giving the quality of a human being to an animal, an object or an idea, as where inanimate and non-human objects, ideas, or concepts are endowed with human feelings, actions, etc." (p.67). Examples of personification in the text are as follows:

i. The reality is different and many people bend the rules (Soraya, p.14).
ii. A chilly gust sweeps over the spatio where we're sitting (Nour, p.4).
iii. A cloud passes over Nour's face (Nour, p.4).
iv. Thanks to Facebook, younger people don't have the same relationship with what's forbidden or taboo (Faty Badi, p.4).

The author uses this device in order to paint a clearer picture of the text in the mind of the readers and also improve the textuality of the novel.

Alliteration

It is the repetition of initial consonant sound in successive or closely associated words in a sentence. Below are some of the examples on the text.

i. She's some married man's mistress? ------------------ bilabial nasal /m/ (Faty Badi, p.8).
ii. Whose punishments are far from fantasies------------ Voiceless labio dental fricative /f/ (Society on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown, p.29).
iii. We'll sit in a corner, order a bottle of white wine and wait----------- bilabial semi- vowel /w/.
iv. A secondary school students said to me -------------- voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ (Abdessamad Dialymy, p. 4).
v. My parents are pious people-------------- Voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ (Sanaa El Aji, p.5).
vi. She has never hidden her homosexuality---------------- Voiceless glottal fricative /h/ (Mouna, p.1).

The author makes use of this device in order to make the reading meaningful and to appeal to the reader's sense of hearing.

Rhetorical Question

This is a figure of speech that is posed not to elicit an answer but to emphasize a point or create a dramatic effect as enthused by (Udofot and Ekpenyong 2001, p.82). The examples include:

i. Where can lovers meet? At the parent house? At a hotel? (Soraya, p.18)
ii. Why should I hold back, what was stopping me? (Nour, p.9).
iii. She's done it with him, why not with me? (Nour, p.14).
iv. What would become of her? (Malika, p.13).
v. Are Western women really happier? (A Question of Identity, p.3).

This device is used by the author in order to reveal the inner meaning of the text. It also explains how the characters make meaning through the use of language and this help to improve the textuality of the novel.

Lexical Fields

Leila Slimani's 'Sex and Lies' consists of various themes, each having a distinctive set of lexical items. Some of the lexical items relating to the major themes discussed in the text are shown in the table below:

Excerpts Five (5)

Theme	Lexical items
Marriage	This failure had put an end to their marriage (Soraya, p.4). All life outside marriage is forbidden to women (Soraya, p.14). I could never marry someone I don't already know (Nour, p 13). Sexual relations outside marriage are illegal (Nour, p 22). Her father had married her to one of his friends (Faty Badi, p.3).
Inferiority	In Morocco, a woman has no right to feel desire (Nour, p.5). Issues of sexual freedom and women's right to their own bodies were completely ignored (Nour,p.21). If women haven't fully understand the state of inferiority in which they are kept, they will do nothing but perpetuate it (Nour, p.24). I feel we have always been classed as inferior compared to the norm, which is the male (Asma Lamrabet, p.17).
Parent irresponsibility	Twenty-four babies on average were abandoned every day... not to mention the corpses found in public bins (Soraya, p.13). I've picked babies out of dustbins (Mustapha, p.6).
Superiority	For when we talk about sexual freedom, men's dominance naturally creates a very unlevel playing field indeed (Nour, p.43). My mother covers her hair because my father makes her (Zhor, p.4). She married my father at sixteen to escape from her brother was extremely violent (Zhor, p.4)
Death	Women waved portraits of the young dead girl and registered their rejection of the condition of Moroccan women (Nour, p.35). My father died five years ago (F, p.7).

From the above, we can posit that the lexical items helped to enhance the readability of the text and also made significant

contributions on how language is used to portrays the textual quality of Slimani's 'Sex and Lies' and above all how these linguistic devices convey meaning to the readers.

Conclusion

This research examines lexico-semantic items in Leila Slimani's 'Sex and Lies'. It has attempted a discussion on lexical and semantic devices including synonyms, antonyms, polysemys, repetitions, figures of speech and lexical field. The application of Halliday's Systemic functional grammar (SFG) model helps in illustrating the relationship between language and its functions in the text. The analysis reveals the communicative import of the text especially concerning the author's goal and intention as shown in the way the linguistic units are combined to project certain themes such as: marriage, inferiority, parental irresponsibility, among others as shown in the text. The authors' intention was not merely to entertain but to reveal the ills of the society, persuade the people, chastise them and discuss serious issues that relate to them as individuals living in the society at a particular point in time that are haunted by common fears and societal expectations. The application of these devices have made the text easier in passing to the target audience its desired message.

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