

# Character and Code Blending in Chika Unigwe's Selected Novels

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## Abstract

Character and code blending are two very important stylistic techniques that help the text producer in creating the kind of text that appeals to the text recipient. It is believed that text producers feature a variety of character inventions that cut across different strata of the society. They create characters that reflect real human personalities and also match them to appropriate codes in texts making text recipients connect with these character types. This stylistic technique is termed Character-Code Concordance. It is a stylistic technique that enables the novelist to create the right character type and match him or her to the appropriate code to create what is referred to as "linguistic realism". This is where the text recipient engaging with the text can perceive the language codes/variety used as ideational in nature reflecting or representing the world in which he/she finds himself/herself. Thus, the paper examines selected extracts from Chika Unigwe's selected novels. It interrogates codes assigned to characters by the author in order to determine whether these codes are appropriate to character and code blending in the selected texts. Findings reveal that characters in selected texts had appropriate codes for interactions. It was also found out that character and code blending projects the positions of characters and reflects the various societal backgrounds they represent. Lastly, the study found that extra-verbal codes, code switching and code mixing for interactions were deployed by characters for effective interaction. The study concludes that Chika Unigwe deploys a spectrum of character types with the right appropriate codes for interactions in the selected texts.

**Keywords:** *Character, code, concordance, stylistics, text*

## Introduction

Text producers feature a variety of character inventions that cut across different strata of the society. They create characters that reflect real human personalities. These characters can be protagonists; antagonists; round characters; flat characters; static characters; and dynamic characters. These characters help story lines and ultimately create rich plots (sequence of events) for the

texts. Omole (107) asserts that an understanding of a text depends largely on the understanding of the characters, making characterisation an important artistic asset of texts. In creating these characters, the text producers create codes with the appropriate words and blend them with certain character types. The foregoing suggests that the novelist is expected to use the right codes, words, and characters to make the text recipient engage

properly with the texts. Characterisation therefore produces characters through actions, words and thoughts which make the text recipients have good understanding of the thematic concerns of the entire text. This element helps the other linguo-literary elements in texts to take shape and ultimately help text producers create worlds that are fictional but reflect the actual worlds that text recipients can connect to. Matching characters with the appropriate codes is very important as Azuike (1) declares that:

The novelist always strives to create convincing characters the reader would identify not only in his dreams but also in his consciousness. For the reader to be at home in reading and following the events in a novel, the characters must sound real enough to be next door neighbours, fellow communicants and worshippers in a church or mosque, the familiar traders in a near-by market, representatives of our houseboys and housemaids, health officers, madmen and criminals, rulers and relations, etc.

From the foregoing therefore, the text producer has a crucial role in selecting his/her character type and matching them with the appropriate codes that will make them look real to the readers. Azuike (1) calls this stylistic technique “Character-Code Concordance”. It is a stylistic technique that enables the novelist to create the right character type and match him or her to the appropriate code to create what Omole (9) refers to as “linguistic realism”

where the text recipient engaging with the text can perceive the language codes/variety used as ideational in nature reflecting or representing the world in which he/she finds himself/herself. Accordingly, text recipients will more likely than not accept a character type that they connect with either through the role assigned to them or through the appropriate language code/variety they are matched with in the text. This perhaps is the reason why Azuike (1) again opines that the Nigerian novelist(s) in creating credible and identifiable characters populate their texts with character types that the text recipients can identify with and accept as the norm. Thus, novelists create certain character types and match them with the right/appropriate codes. For instance, the character type of a house maid in a Nigerian novel is more likely to be assigned the code of Nigerian Pidgin and or a local dialect, while the character type of a learned person like a seasoned Lawyer or a Professor of Law will be made to connect more with the text recipients via the most formal and standardised code like the English Language. There are exceptions however, as text recipients can also come in contact with educated maids/servants in texts. Importantly, is the fact that there should be appropriate character and code concordance because anything short of this is seen as a deviation

from the norm and this has far reaching consequences in maintaining and sustaining make-believe.

Since make-believe or “linguistic realism” is an important aspect of story-telling by novelists, the appropriate codes must be assigned to characters for there to be character and code blending. Make-believe as a stylistic feature of the novel enables the novelist portray his or her thoughts, feelings, fears, hopes, dreams and aspirations helping him or her elicit responses from the text recipients who engage with the text producers through these novels. The imagination and creativity of the novelist is further brought to the fore when he or she succeeds in blending character with the appropriate code.

Therefore, this very important linguo-literary technique can be achieved via direct (explicit) and indirect (implicit) characterisation. Text producers can directly or explicitly tell text recipients the personalities of their characters. If text recipients feel that they know a character through his or her character development, one can certainly say the characterisation is explicit. On the other hand, indirect characterisation occurs when the text recipient infers what the character is like. This can be achieved when text producers bring to the fore a character's speech, thoughts, effect on other characters, actions and looks.

For example, a character's appearance, words, actions, reactions, feelings, movements, thoughts, and mannerisms or how he/she speaks can be indicative of a characteristic trait. This paper thus aims at examining selected characters and codes assigned to them by the author, Chika Unigwe. This is with the view to determine whether these codes are appropriate and leads to character code blending in the selected novels. The author whose works are selected is Chika Unigwe, an award winning Nigerian feminist author. The selected novels are *The Phoenix*, *On Black Sisters' Street*, *Night Dancer*, and *Better Never Than Late*. The language codes/varieties deployed in her selected novels includes English, Nigerian English, Dutch, Nigerian Pidgin, Igbo, Yoruba, Urhobo, Bini, French, et cetera. The data for the study are sixteen extracts from selected novels. Four extracts each are selected from each of the four novels. In the selection of characters, one character who happens to be the protagonist/narrator in *The Phoenix* was selected for *The Phoenix*. On the other hand, four characters were selected each from *On Black Sisters' Street* and *Better Never Than Late* while two characters were selected from the *Night Dancer* respectively. These texts are subjected to stylistic analysis for description, explication and interpretation to establish if the author achieves character and

code blending in her selected texts. Purposive random sampling was used to select the characters and thereafter the codes assigned to selected characters were identified.

### **Language Codes and Importance in Text Production**

Throughout human evolution and as humans make contact with one another through trade, intermarriages, travels, migration, among others, the use of appropriate language codes became necessary. Accordingly, Omole (59) observes that:

...African writers face the artistic dilemma of relating their world views in a language other than their own, the language of their colonial masters. Therefore, one characteristic feature of their writing is the process of bits and pieces (if not chunks) of their native languages.

Thus, African text producers such as Chika Unigwe infuse lots of linguistic codes from several languages they have interacted with. Unigwe infuses several of these language codes in her writing including her native *Igbo* language as can be seen in her novels and short stories. The importance of the deployment of language codes in text production cannot be over-emphasised especially if its influence on the reader's perception is taken into consideration. Language codes in texts influence the reader's/audience's perception of the text producer (speaker or writer) making

them focus their thought or attention on some specific aspects of the text production or text producers' attitudes and moods. It can be further argued therefore that this influence can challenge and change the perceptions of the reader.

The deployment of language codes in text production by text producers is also important because it addresses different social groups/communities ensuring that language caters for all in the society. Writers of texts address different social groups such as men, women, boys, girls, old and young in the society. It can also be used to show social identities, social status, gender, age, and ethnicity. It is in line with the above that language codes help text readers to identify and place characters according to their social, cultural and ethno-religious backgrounds. This is important because language and culture are intertwined.

In interactions, people desire greatly to be understood and not to be misunderstood. Hence, the use of a diversity of language codes goes a long way to help in mitigating miscommunication. For instance, language variation serves to aid interactions of people engaging in different social activities in the society as every group is catered for. These groups of people are the educated, semi-literate, the uneducated and those who for one

reason or the other enjoy communicating via pidgins, creoles or slang. In interaction also, it is important that communicative participants deploy the appropriate use of language according to the different situations, whether formal or informal in which they find themselves. A Professor of Law in Nigeria is likely not to be understood by an uneducated fish seller if he/she decides to do transaction in Standard English. For there to be good transaction, he/she will communicate better in the local dialect of the fish seller or better still in pidgin.

The deployment of language codes in text productions enables linguistic practitioners to compare how people use language differently, and in the process establish similarities and differences between users of language. This perhaps may be suggestive of how and why there is an established similarity and difference in the British and American conventions: meaning, spelling of words, grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The work is premised on the workings of the Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), a form of grammatical description postulated by Michael Halliday. This form of grammatical description uses language to construct a

theoretical model of experience and its applications cover linguistic fields such as Discourse Analysis, Stylistics, and Pragmatics. SFG's form of linguistic description is said to be systemic because it has to do with the network of systems or interrelated sets of options available to the Linguists for making out meanings, while functional refers to Halliday's position that language is what it is because of what it has evolved to do. In other words, language has the power to create and can be put to create things. Accordingly, Halliday and Mathiessen (4) posit that:

when people speak or write, they produce text; and text is what listeners and readers engage with and interpret. The term 'text' refers to any instance of language, in any medium, that makes sense to someone who knows the language; we can characterise text as language functioning in context. Language is, in the first instance, a resource for making meaning; so text is a process of making meaning in context.

To explicate this linguistic theory

further, Halliday and Mathiessen (30-31) aver that language should be explained in terms of the functions it can be put to. This suggests that language carries out certain functions and enables interlocutors get by their daily activity. Thus, languages are shaped and organised in line with three functions otherwise known as metafunctions. Again, Halliday and Mathiessen (30-31) assert that language construes human experience, enacts personal

and social relationships between people and construct texts. The text construction is where the construing of human experience(s) take effect, the enacting of social relations interfaces to build the sequence of discursive flow in texts thereby creating cohesion and coherence in texts.

Therefore, it can be argued that language produces different kinds of meanings or performs different functions. These, as said earlier are also known as metafunctions and they are ideational; interpersonal; and textual. These metafunctions of language identify different aspects of language structure and use. For instance, Halliday's transitivity system helps verbs in influencing the nature and number of participants in interactions at the same time also helping them to act as pointers to who carries out a particular process (ideational). The modal system is another example of an interpersonal linguistic system. It provides the Point-of-View (POV) of the text producer and can be said to be Halliday's interpersonal metafunction of language. Modality which is a form of participation by the speaker or text producer in a speech event in the interpersonal function, suggests to the text recipients whether the text producer is making judgment or making predictions. In Linguistics, modality is used to discuss possible situations like what is probable,

possible, or certain using auxiliary verbs like can, could, should, and may. This stylistic technique deals with a speaker or writer's attitude towards the world. A speaker or writer can express certainty, possibility, willingness, obligation, necessity and ability by using modal words and expressions. The third - textual metafunction is where the actual function of creating texts takes place as well as the stylistic choices deployed by the text producers such as language varieties, tone, diction, and graphological features, among others. Feng (87) citing Thompson (1996) explains the three metafunctions of Halliday's functional grammar as follows:

- (i) Language is used to talk about people's experience(s) of the world, including the world in their minds, to describe events and states and the entities involved in them **(ideational)**.
- (ii) Interlocutors use language to interact with other people, establishing and maintaining relations with them, to influence their behavior, to express their own viewpoints on things in the world, and to elicit or change theirs **(interpersonal)**.
- (iii) Finally, language helps interlocutors to organise messages

in ways which indicate how they fit in with the other messages around them and with the wider context within which they talk or write from **(textual)**.

Since functional grammar as a linguistic theory helps linguists understand how language is used for different purposes and in different situations, its adoption as a theory for analysis of selected texts will help researchers and those interested in the field of study to understand the various ways language is deployed in selected texts to uncover ideologies. Its linguistic application which covers names of entities (persons and things), names of processes (actions, events/happenings/doing) and names of qualities (where persons and things are named by nouns, adjectives and verbs) is similar to the Critical Stylistic (CS) approach of naming and describing and representing actions/state and events respectively. The SFG approach helped the researchers to access meanings through the metafunctions of language especially the interpersonal metafunction where language helps interlocutors to interact with one another, helping them to establish and maintain relations with one another, and ultimately influencing their behaviours. This approach helped the researchers to identify and classify the various character types and the language

codes assigned to them and the cohesive and coherent flow of thoughts that construes meaning to the text recipients (textual meaning) with the view to ascertaining if there exist concordance between the characters and the language codes.

## **Selected Texts and Textual Analysis**

### **Novel 1: *The Phoenix***

#### **Character 1: Oge**

- i. The woman is called old mama youngy, agadiékwenka (13)*
- ii. They are sista and broda (13)*
- iii. "Imakwa", she would exclaim. European women do not suffer the pain of childbirth (45)*
- iv. "What sort of work are you looking for? They would ask. And when you said Bediende, office job, they would promise to get back to you as soon as they found something appropriate (163)*

The character, Oge who is the protagonist and narrator made the selected utterances. Oge as the protagonist has the plot of *The Phoenix* (the sequence of events) revolving round her. There are three codes of English, Nigerian Pidgin and Igbo in extract *i*. and this is an instance of code mixing. Extract *ii* which uses the Nigerian Pidgin code is also an example of code mixing and this utterance

is also by Oge, the major character/narrator in *The Phoenix*. Unigwe seems to assign the codes of Nigerian Pidgin, Igbo and Dutch to the character of Oge as Oge is presented as very cosmopolitan. She grew up in Enugu, Nigeria and so, speaks Igbo, English and Nigerian Pidgin with great dexterity. Her acquisition of another code, Dutch is as a result of her marriage to a Belgian and her relocating to Belgium. The phrase in extract *i.* above uttered by Oge which is *the woman is called old mama youngy, agadiekwenka* (13) has a three code blending. These are English, Nigerian Pidgin and Igbo. Whereas, *old mama youngy* can be said to be an example of Nigerian Pidgin meaning old woman who feels young at heart, *Agadiekwenka* translates from Igbo to mean *this old woman*. This utterance is made in response to the European culture where older women can be in relationships with younger men and back home in Oge's culture, it is an aberration.

Although, the Nigerian novelists favour assigning the codes of Pidgin to characters such as servants, messengers, the semi-illiterates and the illiterates, Azuike (5) asserts that Pidgin can be assigned to educated characters in novels. Perhaps this informs Unigwe's character and code blending for her protagonist, Oge in *The Phoenix*. Text producers do this to indicate an atmosphere of

informality. *They are sista and broda* in extract *ii* above which translates from the Nigerian Pidgin to mean *sister and brother* (13) is another stylistic technique of blending of codes to the character of Oge deployed by the author, Unigwe. Here, it can be seen that she used English and Nigerian Pidgin to suggest in the extract *ii* above that for mark of respect, older siblings and or older people in one's neighbourhood should be called *sista and broda* and not by their actual names.

In example *iii* however, both code mixing and code switching can be seen. Similarly, example *iv* shows the presence of code switching from English to Dutch and back to English. The aura of informality can also be seen in the phrase "*Imakwa*", *she would exclaim. European women do not suffer the pain of childbirth*. The above utterance is an example of a CS tool termed *presenting the speech and thoughts of others* as Oge gave a reported speech of her mum in her interlocution with her European neighbour and friend, Lisa. "*Imakwa*" translates from Igbo to mean *do you know?* The use of the word *Bediende* which in Dutch means office job can be seen in sentence *iv*. Therefore, it can be said that Unigwe assigns appropriate codes to the character Oge to enable her communicate effectively in all of the situational contexts in the four extracts above. She is able to switch

from one code to the other and even within interlocution, carry out code mixing effectively to establish social relations in the different environments in the selected extracts.

From the foregoing, it may be safe to say that Unigwe presents Oge as a dynamic character who is also very cosmopolitan as she plays the role of the protagonist and narrator. This is so because her character changes and grows as the story unfolds. She responds to events and experience changes in attitude and outlook. Two roles rolled into one. Her character and code(s) blending opens the reader's mind to a sneak peek into her experiences. Experiences such as her relocating to Belgium from Africa, the loneliness she felt that seemed like an empty void, the cultural shock she experienced as well as the inability to adapt seamlessly to the Belgian way of life, the loss of her only child and the trauma she suffered and finally, her cancer diagnosis. Oge, played the roles of a woman, wife and mother as against for instance the role of her husband Gunter who it can be argued did not play a supporting role to his wife. Akanni (301) suggests that Unigwe presents Oge to her readers as a female character that is strong, courageous and hence cannot be seen as the weaker sex.

## **Novel 2: *On Black Sisters' Street***

### **Character 1: Efe**

**v. *She died? Iya Ijebu? Osalobua! What killed her?... (9)***

This utterance in extract v was by Efe, one of the four major characters and or protagonists in the novel *On Black Sisters' Street*. Extract v. above also has the language codes of Yoruba, Bini and English respectively and it contains a stylistic technique of code switching as they (codes) appear sententially. It can be argued that there is a character code concordance between the codes used in excerpt v and the character of Efe. The author created her to be a dynamic character and assigned the appropriate codes for her interaction in both formal and informal settings. From the novel, it can be deduced that Efe as a character is assigned these codes because, of all the women, she is the least educated and hence will communicate better in her local dialect and the dialects of the environment she comes in contact with. In the case of the Yoruba code as seen in *Iya Ijebu*, Efe is expected to be able to speak or understand a bit of Yoruba having grown up in Lagos. Her name Efe also shows that she is from the South-South region of Nigeria and so the use of *Osalobua* which means God in the Bini code from Edo State is not out of place. Efe is a dynamic character as her character changes and grows in the novel

*On Black Sisters' Street*. She started as a young girl who suddenly loses her mum and had to begin catering for her younger siblings and dad and becomes entrapped in a love affair with an older man, Titus who impregnates her but refuses to accept responsibility to her being recruited into an international prostitution ring in Belgium by one Senghor Dele and ending up as a madam herself.

**Character 2: Chisom's (Sisi's) father**

**vi. *I had bookhead, isiakwukwo (19)***

In extract vi the language codes are English and Igbo and the stylistic technique used is that of code mixing. The character in this interlocation is a static one created by the author, Unigwe. His character never changes all through the story. This character is Chisom's (Sisi's) father. It can be seen that he like Efe is not very educated for he dropped out of school to work to support his siblings. Hence, Unigwe achieves a character code concordance in the excerpt above. Chisom's (Sisi's) father's statement is borne out of deep-seated regret he feels about his lack of education. He holds the view that his lack of adequate education kept him in the state of penury. He believes strongly that if he had gone all the way to school, he would have had better fortunes. So, he encourages his daughter, Chisom also known as Sisi to go to school so

she can succeed in life. The character from the Igbo extraction of the South East of Nigeria is not well educated and so mixes the codes of English and Igbo effortlessly in interaction and especially as the interlocation is in an informal setting between him and his beloved daughter. In this wise, the author achieved character code concordance.

**Character 3: Dele**

**vii. *What kin' job I go dey want fine, fine woman to do for me? Na for to wash clothes. Ugly woman fit wash clothes too! I no need fine woman for that. I tink say you na mature woman. (165)***

For extract vii, it can be seen that one language code of the Nigerian Pidgin is assigned to the character who is none other person but *Senghor Dele*. Dele is portrayed in the novel as an antagonist (a villain) to the four protagonists of the novel. These protagonists are: Sisi; Efe; Ama; and Joyce. *Senghor Dele* had a character flaw in the novel that portrayed him an adversary of these protagonists. These include his goal to use them as sex slaves for his own benefit; and not giving them adequate information on the kind of job they are to do in Europe before they set out. There is a character code blending in this excerpt because the character, Dele who is the head of an international prostitution ring in Europe is

portrayed as not so educated and a terrible person. Although, he lives and recruits his victims from Lagos, Nigeria and thereafter, sends them to Europe, he has an assistant in Madam who superintends over these girls in Belgium and ensures they provide service to their customers and make returns to her for safekeeping for Dele. Dele is also assigned the code of Nigerian Pidgin for use in interlocution in informal settings as most of the girls he recruits are young semi-educated impressionable girls whose poor background and little education make them very vulnerable. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that Azuike (3) views the use of Pidgin in interlocution as one that provides the interlocutor extra verbal code with which he/she operates at an informal level. Thus, Dele in *On Black Sisters' Street* has the perfect match in the appropriate use of the Nigerian Pidgin with which he interacts with these young girls and lures them into prostitution.

**Character 4: Mrs. Apiu (Joyce's mum)**

**viii. *Do not play football, Alek, it's not ladylike. Do not sit around playing awolet, it's for men only (185)***

In example viii, there is the mixing of the language codes of English and Fur (Sudanese code). The phrases '*do not play football, Alek, it's not ladylike. Do not sit*

*around playing awolet, it's for men only*' are uttered by the character, Mrs. Apiu, Joyce's (Alek's) mum who wants her to be properly brought up and is not particularly intrigued by her *tomboyishness* (185). The character, Apiu is assigned the codes of English and the Sudanese Fur. This is proper as the character is educated and from an average Sudanese family of four: parents and two children. It is thus safe to say there is character and code blending in the excerpt.

Unigwe therefore features interesting characters in *On Black Sisters' Street* through whose roles very powerful and illuminating themes of migration and sex trafficking are captured aptly.

**Novel 3: *Night Dancer***

**Character 1: Ezi**

**ix. *You do not have a father, kpomkwem. Onweifeozo? (21)***

**x. *Are your brains upside-down? Isi omebiligi? (34)***

**xi. *A bum Chukwu? Am I God? (148)***

In extract ix, there are two language codes of English and Igbo respectively. This can be said to be an example of code switching and mixing as codes occur both sententially and intersententially. The utterance is accredited to Ezi, Nma's mum in the *Night Dancer*, a radical feminist and one of the main

characters in the novel in which the plot revolves around and who opposes some societal norms inimical to women. The character of Ezi is a very dynamic one. She is highly educated in the novel and is seen as someone with *first class brains* because of her intelligence. Thus, Unigwe assigns to her the codes of English to show her level of education and her local dialect to show her ability to establish social relations in informal settings as well. She uses these codes appropriately in both formal and informal settings making the author achieve character and code blending. For example, the utterance is directed at her daughter at a very informal setting where mothers and their daughters relate. A no-holds-barred kind of situational setting where they could bare their hearts out and talk freely.

For sentence x with the phrase *are your brains upside-down? Isi omebiligi*, there are two codes of Nigerian English and Igbo. The phrase also contains code switching as the language codes are used alternatively. The interlocutor in the excerpt is Ezi, the major character in the novel who represents the African radical feminist. The alternating of the language codes of Igbo and English occurs intersententially in extract xi above and utterance is made by Ezi. This utterance is more out of desperation as the character Ezi is unhappy with her husband's uncle talking

about her inability to bring forth children. The author also achieved a character code concordance with this character and the codes assigned to her for interactions.

#### **Character 2: Ezi's mother in-law**

**xii     *Ndiagahara, girls whose eyes were up, up there in the clouds, they could never make good wives for anyone (95)***

Code mixing is seen in extract xii as the language codes of Igbo and Nigerian English occur within the sentence. Utterance is made by Ezi's mother in-law, a flat or static character in the novel who sees in Ezi all the good qualities of a wife material, one suitable for her son. However, it can be inferred from the extract that Ezi's mother in-law is not as educated as can be seen in the choice of words in her code usage. Thus, there is character code concordance as she is able to communicate using the codes assigned to her by the author with her daughter in-law who is highly intelligent in the manner she will understand.

The use of characters and codes in the *Night Dancer* cuts across different strata of the society. This also reflects the traditional and modern African societies as well as the radical and liberal feminist movements as represented by the characters of Ezi on the one hand and Nma at the other divide. Unigwe thus, portrays

Ezi, the major character as cutting the picture of a liberated woman, one who is not bugged down by the demands of the tradition of her people and appropriated to her the right codes to communicate these themes.

#### **Novel 4: *Better Never Than Late***

##### **Character 1: Prosperous**

**xiii. *Haba! All those languages and a teaching degree to be able to teach mathematics to a bunch of kids! (32)***

The extract *xiii.* has English and Hausa codes and contains code mixing. Utterance is credited to Prosperous, the major actor. The character of Prosperous is portrayed to be a very dynamic, amiable and hospitable character as she and her husband play host to the Nigerian community in Belgium once every week. She is described to have been very successful in Nigeria before a calamity befell her and her husband. Unigwe seems to have assigned her the use of the language code of Hausa as seen in *haba* for she had once lived in Jos, North central Nigeria with her husband and so is expected to have some level of Hausa language proficiency. The author also assigned to her the language code of English to show she is well educated and was once a top shot in the banking sector. While she rose to the peak of her career in the banking sector, her husband ran a thriving business before religious

fanaticism took away all they had in a riot. Thus, it is safe to say that there is no character and code discordance but character and code blending in the extract.

##### **Character 2: Emmanuel**

**xiv. *Smells delicious, nwunyeanyi. Nwunyeanyi, our wife (43)***

Extract *xiv* is an example of code mixing with bits of the English and Igbo lexicons. Utterance is made by Emmanuel, a static character who is one of the fellow Nigerian compatriots that frequents the home of the Agus' weekly in Belgium. Although, it is difficult to decipher the level of education of Emmanuel, one can say he has some level of education and is from same ethnic extraction as Prosperous and her husband in the use of the Igbo code as can be seen in *nwunyeanyi. Nwunyeanyi, our wife* which is suggestive of possessiveness as Emmanuel addresses her in such manner because of the role she plays in hosting him and other Nigerians in Belgium.

##### **Character 3: Ada**

**xv. *She will swear that she knows nothing about witchcraft but believe me, by the time we're through with her, she'll tell us the truth, eziokwu (64)***

In extract *xv*, the language codes are Nigerian English and Igbo and it is an example

of code mixing as alternation occurs within sentence. The character who made the above utterance in extract xv is Ada, Kambi's cousin. The code choice for Ada is appropriate because it matches her character as one who believes in religious fervor and fanaticism. She accuses Ijeoma, her cousin, Kambi's maid of witchcraft. This turns out to be false as the girl is innocent of the accusation. Kambi is another Nigerian character residing in Nigeria but also connected to the Agus' by blood. She is portrayed to be a single lady whose unmarried status is attributed to the witchcraft activity of her maid Ijeoma. Kambi is portrayed in the text as very gullible and naïve in spiritual things in spite of her educational background. The characters and code usage of Kambi's cousin, Ada and the Pastor of the *Holiest of Holies Jehovah Jireh Jehovah El Shaddai Evangelical Church of God* explores the concept of spiritual charlatanry as they accuse an innocent girl of witchcraft. Accordingly, the codes assigned to the character are near perfect as she seems educated and of the Igbo extraction. In addition to these is the belief of character in witchcraft in spite of claiming to be a Christian. Thus, the author assigns her the appropriate language codes that portrays this.

#### Character 4: Agu

xvi     *'He thought white women were lining up waiting for ndioji to fall for and marry'*  
(75)

Code mixing occurs in extract xvi with English and Igbo codes. This statement is made by Agu in response to Godwin, a Nigerian migrant who had always thought black men were highly sought after by white women. Unigwe assigns the appropriate codes to the character in order that the mindset of Godwin and other migrants of African extraction who think in the same way can be brought to the fore. The characters in this very compelling and intriguing text cut across several strata of the society and each has appropriate codes assigned to them by the author in communicating the themes in the novel.

#### Conclusion

It can be argued therefore that having the right characters with the appropriate codes is a good start for story telling by novelists. This is so because text recipients can connect to these characters as if they are real creating an ideational world of their human experiences. Language codes help interlocutors to establish relations in both

formal and informal settings. Also, in interaction, humans pick up extra verbal codes which aid their interactions and establish social relations. This can be observed from Unigwe's selected novels that the author is skilled in creating character types with the appropriate codes for interaction. It can also be observed that in the selected extracts, these characters are able to also switch from one code use to the other effortlessly providing extra verbal codes.

Findings also reveal that code switching and mixing in accordance with the appropriate changes in the speech situation/context was created by the author through the character types in selected works to reflect the real world of human experiences.

Thus, one can also argue that the ability to use extra verbal codes which is both sociolinguistic and stylistic helps Chika

Unigwe in the choice of either to make her characters code switch and or code mix languages in accordance with the appropriate changes in the speech situation/context she creates in her text production. Finally, the codes assigned to characters by the author help project the positions of characters in the society, whether they are educated, semi-educated or uneducated. Azuike (2) captures this aptly as he says

the code a character employs is therefore not only a means and an indication of his expressive capacity but in addition, it could be for the reader, the gauge for evaluating the character's social standing, education and perhaps preferences within the ambit of the sociocultural mores of his society.

This study concludes that the author, Chika Unigwe deployed a spectrum of character types with appropriate codes for interactions in the selected texts. Accordingly, she achieves the stylistic technique of character and code blending.

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