

# An Inquiry into the Use of Vocative Adjuncts in *Efuru* and *The Concubine*: A Systemic Functional Linguistics-oriented Contribution

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**Résumé** – La récurrence des vocatifs est une caractéristique commune à la langue de *Efuru* et *The Concubine*, deux romans que les critiques littéraires aiment souvent comparer, mais avec une tendance à mettre l'accent sur les dissimilitudes. Le présent article, qui relève de la linguistique littéraire, notamment de la théorie systémique fonctionnelle, a inventorié et analysé ces vocatifs afin de montrer la pertinence de leur récurrence pour chacun des deux romans.

## 1. Introduction and brief literature review

Most Anglophone African novels published in the late 1960s are similar in many respects, including text building features that Applied Linguistics can help to clarify. *Efuru* and *The Concubine*, for example, make a couple of novels that are worth comparing through a minute linguistic analysis.

*Efuru* (1966) is the Nigerian woman writer Flora Nwapa's first novel and *The Concubine* (1966) is the Nigerian Elechi Amadi's first novel as well. Both novels have been read and enjoyed by a large number of people so far, including lay readers and literary critics. The famous critic Eustace Palmer states that he has met many students who frankly admitted that of all the African novels they have read, *The Concubine* was the only one they could respond to because it presented an exact copy of village life as they knew it. Of course, in our modest opinion, Palmer or the students he refers to actually meant *The Concubine* was the novel they could most respond to (not "the only one they could respond to") as far as village life features are concerned. For *Efuru*, just like many other 1960s Anglophone African novels, does offer an almost perfect image of village life as well.

In judging Nwapa's fiction, in which women play the central roles, critics are fond of comparing *Efuru* to *The Concubine*, even though some of them tend to focus on the shortcomings of the female novel and the excellence of the male. In his review of *Efuru*, Palmer says that this novel leaves the reader with the impression that its author has not mastered her craft, especially because it lacks the fluency, effortlessness and economy of *The Concubine*. Eldred Jones says that

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Nwapa's novel (*Efuru*) lacks a strong overall conception, referring to it as a "manual" on how young brides are treated in Igbo culture. Mear (2009) disagrees with him, saying that the novel focuses on much more than brides; she writes that it focuses on how women - married, divorced, widowed, single, childless, and with children - are treated in Igbo culture, especially if they seem to step outside traditional roles.

Contrary to all the comments above, which are based on pure literary criticism and influenced by the high tendency of being gender-oriented and biased, the present article is linguistic criticism and seeks to show an instance of striking similarity that exists between the two novels under analysis. The article aims at studying a specific linguistic phenomenon which occurs almost on regular basis in both novels. The linguistic phenomenon in question is the recurrence of what is known in Systemic Functional Linguistics as interpersonal adjuncts, especially vocatives and their contribution to meanings. The linguistic notions at stake are explained in the first section entitled "Theoretical framework". In fact, this article consists of an introduction, a theoretical framework, a practical analysis and a conclusion. The practical analysis includes an overall data collection, detailed analyses of the data in the extracts and a general analysis and interpretation beyond the extracts. Of course, a reference list has been provided and an appendix (the corpus of the analyzed extracts) ends the article.

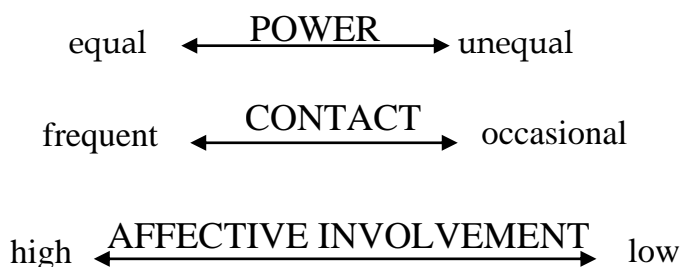
## 2. Theoretical framework

In Systemic Functional Linguistics, we distinguish three types of meanings when analysing a text, including literary artifacts: experiential meaning, interpersonal meaning and textual meaning. The experiential meaning (or "the WHAT") relates to the field of discourse, the interpersonal meaning (or "the WHO") to the tenor of discourse and the textual meaning (or "the HOW") to the mode of discourse. Given the nature of the topic that is being dealt with in this article, the interpersonal meaning is the one whose conceptual clarification seems indispensable here.

The interpersonal meaning is also called "the WHO" because it is derived from the answer to the question "who are the people involved in an interaction?" It is not just a matter of naming the people, but the real issue consists in determining the kind of relationship between/among the interactants. That is what systemicists call "the tenor of discourse". The term "tenor" is defined by Eggins (1994) as "the social role relationships played by the interactants". Wales, in *A dictionary of Stylistics* (1989), explains: "Tenor involves the relationships between participants in the situation, their roles and status. This will affect the kind of language chosen, particularly in respect of the



degree of formality". For instance, language is not used the same way in a conversation between a student and his or her lecturer (student/lecturer) as it is in an interaction between two friends (friend/friend). Tenor variation consists of three continua established by systemicists: power, contact and affective involvement. The three continua are schematized as follows:



- equal power + frequent contact + high affective involvement = informal situation
- unequal power + infrequent contact + low affective involvement = formal situation

It means that the interactants/participants of discourse may have the same (equal) power or one of them may have some authority over the other(s). The interactants may be people who see each other and talk either very often (frequently) or just occasionally; so the contact is either frequent or occasional. There may be some or no expression of affection between them; so affective involvement may be either high or low. Thus, in terms of context of situation, an informal situation corresponds to equal power, frequent contact and high affective involvement. A formal situation will correspond to unequal power, infrequent contact and low affective involvement.

When talking to someone, we often need to call the person either by their surname, their first name, their nickname or by a title. Calling people before or while talking to them helps to negotiate their attention; when you do that, they are likely to listen to you more carefully. In addition, this way of addressing people is an expression of attitude or feeling, insofar as it may be a sign of friendship, politeness, anger, etc. The term (name or title or any other kind of lexis) you use to call somebody you are addressing is called a vocative, more specifically a vocative Adjunct (in Systemic Functional Linguistics), and it is associated with interpersonal meaning.

The systemic functional analysis of the types of meanings specified above is based on text division into clauses and smaller units or constituents. In the grammar of interpersonal meaning, for example, a clause consists of MOOD and RESIDUE – which is not explained in details in this article – and each of these two parts includes smaller units. Adjuncts, as Eggins (1994) says, can be



defined as "clause elements which contribute some additional (but non-essential) information to the clause". There are three broad classes of Adjuncts: Circumstantial Adjuncts (which add experiential meaning), Modal Adjuncts (which add interpersonal meaning) and Textual Adjuncts (which add textual meaning). Modal Adjuncts, which are of interest here, consist of four types: Mood Adjuncts, Polarity Adjuncts, Comment Adjuncts and Vocative Adjuncts. The analysis of Vocative Adjuncts, which occur a great deal in both *Efuru* and *The Concubine*, is the focus of this paper. The purpose of the analysis is to show how (much) those Adjuncts contribute to making meaning in each of the two novels.

### 3. Text analysis

#### 3.1. Overall data collection

There is a particularly high number of vocative adjuncts in *Efuru* and *The Concubine*. These adjuncts occur on almost every page of each of the two novels whenever the text turns to a dialogue or a conversation instead of a narrative. Identifying and counting them results in the following tables, the possible counting and calculation errors (in the tables and in any figures further mentioned in the article) being hopefully insignificant.

Chapter		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of Vocative Adjuncts	in <i>Efuru</i>	37	60	27	48	40	31	34	34	48	28
	in <i>The Concubine</i>	00	12	11	02	15	06	12	28	27	26

Table 1: Number of vocative adjuncts per chapter

11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
24	32	02	04	13	39	11													
33	27	18	33	31	22	16	07	02	09	17	16	19	13	09	09	42	15	23	25

	Number of pages	Total number of Vocative Adjuncts	Average rate of occurrence (per page)
<i>Efuru</i>	215	512	2.3
<i>The Concubine</i>	216	520	2.4

Table 2: Recapitulation

Table 1 shows that there are 37 vocative adjuncts in the first chapter of *Efuru* but 00 in the first chapter of *The Concubine*, 60 in the second chapter of *Efuru* but 12 in the second chapter of *The Concubine*, 27 in the third chapter of *Efuru* but 11 in the third chapter of *The Concubine*, and so on. That makes a total of 512 vocative adjuncts in *Efuru* as a whole and 520 in the whole of *The Concubine*, as recorded in Table 2. The whole text of fiction in *Efuru* goes from page 7 to page 221,



which makes 215 pages as indicated in table 2. The whole text in *The Concubine* does run from page 1 to page 216, so it covers 216 pages. The calculation of the average rate of occurrence – in short, the ARO if one were allowed to call it so – helps to estimate and compare how much or how often or to what extent vocative adjuncts occur in the two novels. As can be seen in Table 2, The "ARO" is nearly the same in the two novels:  $2.3 \approx 2.4$ . This "ARO", which is almost the same (2.3 or 2.4) is high indeed. Why is it so high? In other words, why are there so many vocative adjuncts in *Efuru* and *The Concubine*? How can the occurrence – or recurrence – be accounted for? How do they contribute to making meaning if they do at all? The answers to these key questions are in the following sub-sections.

### 3.2. *Vocatives in the extracts*

Be it in *Efuru* or in *The Concubine*, some pages contain many more vocative adjuncts than others. Pages 56 and 73 in *Efuru* and pages 39 and 62 in *The Concubine* contain the highest numbers of vocatives. They constitute the extracts that are analyzed here, under the titles *Efuru 1*, *Efuru 2*, *Concubine 1* and *Concubine 2*.

#### 3.2.1. *Vocatives in the extracts from Efuru*

##### - In *Efuru 1*

The first vocative adjunct in this extract occurs in the clause

(1) "How are you, my daughter?"

in which *Efuru* is the speaker and her baby the addressee. So, the vocative adjunct "my daughter" refers to the baby, a baby that cannot talk yet. That a woman talks to a baby that is not yet able to speak, asking how it feels and even using a vocative adjunct, is but an expression of high affection. So, this is a sign of very high affective involvement.

The second vocative adjunct occurs in

(2) "Mother, how am I going to stop her?"

and the third, which is the same as the second one, in

(3) "All right, mother"

These second and third vocatives, used by *Efuru* to address her mother-in-law, are meant to set a high and permanent affective involvement in a frequent contact between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law. Vocative n°2 seems necessary as it helps the speaker to let the hearer know that she is the one the question is being put to although there are no other people around. It is a way of "negotiating" her attention as well. As for vocative n°3, it doesn't seem so necessary, for the clause in which it appears could simply have been "All right" and it would still be clear enough as an agreement to "mother's" (actually



mother-in-law's) advice. However, the way it is repeated after vocative n°2 may be understood as an expression of both affection and respect. Therefore, it is an expression of unequal power (respect); in this respect, it proves quite useful.

Next comes "Ossai" in

(4) "Ossai, are you in?"

Ossai being Efuru's mother-in-law's name, she has been asked this question by her sister Ajanupu who is coming in for a visit. She does reply by saying:

(5) "yes, I am in. is that you, Ajanupu? Come in."

There is reciprocal use of first names between the participants here, in (4) and (5), due to the fact that there is equal power between the two sisters.

On the other hand, Efuru and Adjanupu greet each other in the following terms:

(6) "Adjanupu, welcome... I heard your voice"

(7)+(8) "How are you, my daughter? Is everything well with you, my daughter...?"

This sequence shows that Efuru calls her aunt-in-law Ajanupu by her name and the latter calls her "my daughter". Frequent contact favours the fact that Efuru calls Ajanupu by her name. Of course, she (Efuru) is in more frequent contact with her mother-in-law but she calls that one "mother" instead of "Ossai"; the tenor relation is not the same. Efuru and Ossai are in "daughter-in-law / mother-in-law" relation (a woman and her husband's mother), which requires absolute respect and somehow formal behaviour (say, language) on Efuru's part on almost any circumstance. As for Ajanupu, she rather plays a role of visitor, especially a very regular visitor who has established frequent contact and a great deal of affective involvement with Efuru. The high affective involvement accounts for her calling Efuru "my daughter", which she does repeatedly in greeting her, as one can read in (7) and (8) above.

In the course of their talk, Efuru and Ajanupu address each other as follows:

(9) "No, I am not pregnant, Ajanupu."

(10) "Efuru, I came to your house."

The vocative in (9) confirms the remark that has just been made about (6). Meanwhile, given that one can freely call one's daughter by her first name, it is no wonder that Ajanupu chooses now to call Efuru "Efuru" in (10). In addition to the frequent contact and the high affective involvement, her position of senior and aunt-in-law gives her the right to call Efuru with variable vocatives. The affection expressed in using "my daughter" - in (7) and (8) - is no doubt higher than the one in (10), but that is at Ajanupu's discretion. In fact, by calling Efuru in a face-to-face conversation as done in (10), Ajanupu mainly intends to negotiate her interlocutor's full attention. Being about to tackle a new and probably more serious topic, she expects Efuru to listen to her more carefully;



the vocative "Efuru" (in addition to the statement "I came to your house"), can help to reach that expectation.

To sum up the analysis of the vocative adjuncts in this first extract, one can say that there are three active participants in it: Efuru, her mother-in-law Ossai and the latter's sister Ajanupu. Efuru is affectionately called "my daughter" by both women. She respectfully calls her mother-in-law "mother" but she calls Ajanupu by her name. The latter calls Efuru either "my daughter" or by her name Efuru. The high number of vocative adjuncts in the extract is due to the fact that the participants are keen on calling each other (with those vocatives) almost whenever they take turns in speaking, out of sheer habit (frequent contact) and/or affection. They communicate in an informal way while each of them is fully aware of her social role of daughter-in-law, mother-in-law or aunt-in-law as the case may be.

We now want to see whether it is the same situation in the second extract from *Efuru*.

- **In *Efuru* 2**

The first vocative adjunct in this extract occurs in

(1) "Nwasobi, if you don't know how to sympathize with a woman..."

Indignant at Nwasobi's bad way of sympathizing, Ajanupu cannot help but shout this woman's name to call her to order. Thus, this vocative is used to express anger, i.e. very low affective involvement. Ajanupu's indignation being welcome, she is supported by another woman who uses vocatives (2) and (3):

(2) "Ajanupu, you are right."

(3) "Nwasobi, don't talk like that any more"

Vocative n° 2 is used - in a friendly way - to announce an approval of Ajanupu's objection to Nwasobi's attitude. Following this approval, Vocative n°3 is used to reiterate the warning. This vocative is unlikely to be as friendly as n°2, but both are worth using, n°2 as a sign of agreement and n°3 a sign of disagreement.

Recognizing she has had a wrong attitude, the woman in question says

(4) "I am sorry, my daughter",

referring to Efuru as her daughter. This vocative "my daughter" (n°4) contributes to negotiating Efuru's forgiveness, which is clearly asked for in the clause "Please pardon me." Were it not for the intention to reinforce the negotiation of forgiveness, as it were, the speaker could just say "I am sorry" with no vocative adjunct. So, this vocative is not necessarily an expression of high affective involvement. One may go as far as taking this vocative (n°4) as a device to bribe Efuru.

The vocative "my daughter" is repeated in:



(5)+(6)+(7): "My daughter, Ajanupu said to Efuru placing her hands on her shoulders. (6) My daughter, please weep, weep, (7) my daughter, weeping will do you good."

This passage can be rephrased in one sentence with only one adjunct as follows: "Efuru, I advise you to weep, for that will do you good." However, the speaker's choice of the vocative up to three times in the same sentence may be justified by the necessity to sympathize deeply with Efuru; so, this use shows high affective involvement.

Likewise, vocatives n°8, 9 and 10 are basically meant to show deep closeness between the interlocutors:

(8) "I cannot weep any more, Ajanupu."

(9) "No, my child, try and weep."

(10) "Ajanupu, my daughter has killed me."

In fact, even if the vocative had not been used in (8) and (10) there would be no ambiguity about who is being talked to in the clauses "I cannot weep anymore" and "My daughter has killed me." Still, the speaker (Efuru) uses the vocative adjunct almost spontaneously because of the frequent contact and the high affective involvement. The addressee would also be clearly known without the vocative adjunct "my child" (n°9) but this does occur for the sake of closeness. Moreover, the eagerness to use friendly vocatives prompts Ajanupu to shift from the use of "my daughter" to "my child." It is noteworthy as well that all the way from (5) / (6) / (7) to (10) the conversation has rather turned to a dialogue with virtually reciprocal use of vocatives between Efuru and Ajanupu.

Now Efuru shifts to quite a different adjunct referring to a third participant, namely her chi:

(11) "Oh, my chi, why have you dealt with me in this way?"

The chi, which is not a human participant but a spiritual one, cannot talk to answer Efuru's question, but she uses the vocative "my chi" as an invocation to complain about her plight. The occurrence of this vocative is necessary as it shows who "you" refers to in "why have you dealt with me in this way?"

In this second extract from *Efuru*, there are four active participants: Nwasobi, Efuru, Ajanupu and another woman. Nwasobi has been called out (twice), in a rather unfriendly way, for a warning. Efuru is almost always called "my daughter" or "my child" by the other participants, who are old women. They all call Ajanupu by her name whenever talking to her. There is frequent contact among the participants but the power is not fully equal among all of them. The affective involvement is remarkably high only between Efuru and Ajanupu but vocatives are much used by all the interactants for various intentions.





### 3.2.2. *Vocatives in the extracts from The Concubine*

#### - In *Concubine* 1

The first vocative adjunct in this extract is "Nne", in:

(1) "Nne, remember to take some mushroom home"

The occurrence of this adjunct is a necessity in that there are a lot of people (The members of Ihuoma's family) sitting together; the little boy (named Nwonna as revealed later) uses this vocative to let her mother, Ihuoma, know that she is the addressee. The mother replies:

(2) "I will, my son."

This adjunct "my son" is not necessary at all to indicate the addressee. Had Ihuoma just said "I will", it would still be clear that she is talking to her son, replying to his request. However, the presence of this adjunct is useful as an indication of high affective involvement. Ihuoma endears her son by adding this vocative to her reply. Moreover, the successive use of vocatives in (1) and (2) shows a high extent of affective involvement between a son and his mother.

A third participant steps in by saying:

(3) "Stop talking, Nwonna."

In the command made by Ihuoma's father Ogbuji, the adjunct (n°3) is used to reinforce the order, making also sure that it is directed to Nwonna the talkative boy. The same person (Ihuoma's father) asks:

(4) "Ihuoma, is this how you are bringing them up?"

In fact, Ogbuji has a higher power than his daughter Ihuoma and the latter's son Nwonna, which is also witnessed in Ihuoma's reply

(5) "Nnanna, he does not listen to me."

Then the old man (father to Ihuoma but grandfather to Nwonna) turns to the little boy:

(6) "Is that true, Nwonna?"

Grandfather's authority over - and also affection for - both daughter and grandson is shown through the use of vocatives as he addresses them one by one, in (3), (4) and (6). Ihuoma's use of the vocative "Nnanna" (n° 5) also shows her respect, added to affection, for her father.

Next comes an exchange between old Ogbuji and his own wife, which includes:

(7) "My lord, some men are more foolish than women."

(8) "Keep quiet, woman, and eat!"

(9) "I am sorry, my lord."

The vocatives "my lord" and "woman" show unequal power between the interlocutors. The use of "my lord" (which is repeated) is an indication of respect or even reverence by the old woman for her husband. The old man's use of the term "woman" as a vocative confirms his high power though it is also



noteworthy that vocatives (2) and (8) are attached to sentences whose MOOD and RESIDUE consist of imperatives only; that, to some extent, is a further confirmation of (grand)father's authority.

The last three vocative adjuncts are in:

(10) "Put out some more soup, Nne."

(11) "What do you say, my lord?"

(12) "But, father, Nne cooks really well."

Like the very first vocative in this text, n°10 is an utterance from the little boy (Nwonna) and, here again, the vocative is followed by an imperative sentence standing as the MOOD and the RESIDUE. This use of imperatives preceded or followed by vocative adjuncts is not due to unequal power as one is tempted to believe, but it is an effect of affective involvement and frequent contact between a kid and his mother usually chatting informally.

As to the next vocative, which is "my lord", this is the third time it has occurred. There is no doubt that the term "lord" in itself (without even being used as a vocative adjunct in a given context) is a valuing term that confers high power to an individual. Thus, this vocative (11) does carry the same function as in the two clauses above where it occurs, that is, a woman showing respect for her husband. Meanwhile, its usage may also be a translation of high affection in terms of endearment for the interlocutor, especially when the latter is a woman's husband. One would certainly not be mistaken to believe that it is the case here, between Okachi and her husband Ogbuji. Whatever the usage may be, by dint of being used so often (almost whenever the husband is addressed), the vocative "my lord" does eventually carry a meaning of high affective involvement though it does not guarantee the reciprocity of involvement. The significance of the last vocative "father", used by Ihuoma addressing her father, lies in the fact that it specifies who the piece of information "Nne cooks really well" is actually directed to and it also expresses high affective involvement in an informal talk characterized by joking and teasing terms among the members of a family set to a meal.

In a nutshell, there is a great number of vocative adjuncts in this first extract from *The Concubine* because it is an informal talk among the members of a family, a somewhat extended family. There is very frequent reciprocal use of vocatives between son and mother (Nwonna and Ihuoma), between daughter and father (Ihuoma and Ogbuji), between husband and wife (Ogbuji and Okachi).

#### - In *Concubine 2*

The first two vocative adjuncts in this extract stand by themselves without any MOOD-RESIDUE parts:

(1) "Nkechi".



(2) "Nnenda".

These are the names of two participants who have greeted each other just by calling each other's first names in a friendly way: Nkechi and Nnenda – for these are the names of the two participants – are acquainted with each other and probably meet very often. Moreover, they are at home, in an informal situation, Nnenda having paid a visit to Nkechi's family.

The third vocative occurs in:

(3) "Nne, I forgot all about it."

"Nne", meaning "Mum", refers to Nkechi's mother. It is a matter of fact that she should call her mother "Nne", but the occurrence of the vocative "Nne", here, is especially meant to express affection. Nkechi could have said "I forgot all about it"; there would still be no doubt at all about who the addressee is, given that she is answering a question asked by her mother. Now, out of sheer affection, it is as if she couldn't do without this vocative "Nne", and she uses it almost spontaneously. At the same time, she is called (once again) by Nnenda who uses her first name. That is where the fourth vocative occurs:

(4) "Nkechi, get us chairs".

It may be necessary to call on someone before giving an order so that the person should know he or she is the one receiving the order. The use of vocative (4) helps to make it clear that whatever the situation, calling Nkechi by her first name is also a matter of habit for Nnenda since these two participants even greet each other with their respective names as intimated above from vocatives (1) and (2).

Ekwueme and Nnenda greet other by calling each other's first names as well. That is the cause of the occurrence of vocatives (5) and (6):

(5) "Ekwe"

(6) "Nnenda"

The relationship between Ekwueme and Nnenda is like the one between Nkechi and Nnenda, as described above in the analysis of vocatives (1) and (2). What is more, vocative (5) is a diminutive of Ekwueme's name. So, Nnenda greets Ekwueme just by calling out the diminutive of his name. This is a typical informal situation where there is equal power, frequent contact and high affective involvement between participants.

Ekwueme's mother (Adaku) also uses the diminutive of his name to address him:

(7) "Ekwe, don't mention my name because ..."

Ekwueme replies by saying:

(8) "Nne, you are not the guilty one."

Such use of Vocatives between mother and son is obviously due to frequent contact and high affective involvement, all the more as they are chatting and



teasing each other (Ekwueme is being teased about his traps which have caught nothing) in this context.

Adjuncts (9) and (10) occur when Nnenda announces her departure from Adaku's house and the latter wishes her goodbye:

(9) "Adaku, I am leaving."

(10) "Go well, my daughter, and greet your husband."

Once Nnenda has announced her leaving by specifically addressing Adaku, the latter could have said "Go well and greet your husband" without adding "my daughter". The additions of the vocative "my daughter" can be accounted for as an expression of warmth, say affection, for the interlocutor.

The last three vocatives are the ones in:

(11) "Ekwueme, you looked a little worried."

(12) "Nnenda, I have something very important to tell you."

(13) "What can it be, Ekwe?"

This sequence shows the reciprocal use of vocatives between Ekwueme and Nnenda again. In this last part of the text, there is no third participant but Ekwueme and Nnenda. It is said in the text "somehow Nnenda found herself walking with Ekwueme..." So, they could communicate without calling each other's names. However, vocative (11) seems useful as an additional expression of sympathy from Nnenda for Ekwueme as the latter had "looked a little worried" earlier in the group chat. vocative (12) helps to negotiate Nnenda's attention since Ekwueme has "something very important" to tell her. In the end, vocative (13), which is the diminutive "Ekwe", helps to assure Ekwueme that he does have Nnenda's friendly and full attention and that he can say out whatever important thing he wishes to tell her.

To round off the analysis of vocative adjuncts in the second extract from *The Concubine*, it is worth noting that the extract has four participants: Nkechi, Nnenda, Adaku and Ekwueme. It is a casual talk among the members of a family and a close neighbour, which favours very frequent (reciprocal) use of vocatives. So, it is an informal situation of communication with somehow high affective involvement, frequent contact and equal power among the participants.

### 3.3. *General analysis beyond the extracts*

The analysis of the extracts having shown that the situation is informal and that the reasons for the intensive use of vocatives are almost the same in all the extracts, we now need to have a look over each of the novels as a whole.

#### - *In Efuru*

To start with, since Efuru is the name of the central character of the



novel *Efuru*, this title itself can be rated as a vocative adjunct. In this respect, it is interesting to notice that *Idu* (the second novel by Nwapa after *Efuru*) is this type of title as well. However, let us concentrate on the vocatives in *Efuru* which is the subject matter here.

In *Efuru*, vocative adjuncts start occurring on the very first page of the novel (page 7): "Efuru" in "It's late, Efuru, where are you coming from?" On page 8, "my brother", which is a term of family relationship, occurs three times and it is still repeated on the next page, that is page 9. In fact, there are three main categories of vocatives, as it were, throughout the novel: terms of family relationship (or kinship terms), people's names, and names of non-human beings.

The kinship terms that are frequently used as vocatives include:

- "my brother(s)" occurring on pages 8 and 9;
- "my / our daughter" on pages 8, 9, 11...;
- "my husband" on pages 10, 30, 50 ...;
- "(my) mother" on pages 11, 17, 26 ...;
- "my son" on pages 12, 143, 144 ...;
- "my wife" on pages 12, 26, 98 ...;
- "my sister" on pages 15, 16, 17;
- "my / our people" on pages 22, 23, 135 ...;
- "my (dear) child / children" on pages 34, 35, 42 ...;
- "my / our father's" on pages 35, 62, 63 ...

It is noteworthy that "my daughter" is much more recurrent than the other vocatives. It has been used more than eighty times, which amounts to more than 15% of all the 512 vocatives in the novel. It is so often used that sometimes, it rather gives way to the vocative "my child", given that a person's daughter is his or her female child. Next to "my daughter", the numbers of the vocatives "(my) mother", "my sister" and "my wife" are strikingly high as well.

As for people's names, more than ten are used as vocatives in *Efuru* but the most frequent ones which occur from the beginning to the end of the novel include:

- "Efuru" on pages 7, 27, 31 ...;
- "Ossai" on pages 15, 19, 28 ...;
- "Nwashike (Ogene)" on pages 22, 23, 25 ...;
- "Ajanupu" on pages 27, 29, 33 ...;
- "Ogea" on pages 42, 43, 64 ...

No wonder that Efuru's name is frequently called, given that she is the central character of the whole novel. Ossai, who is an aged woman, is Efuru's mother-in-law and the latter calls her "mother". However, her name is usually called by her senior sister Ajanupu and a few other people, which accounts for the recurrence of that name as a vocative adjunct. Nwashike Ogene is Efuru's



father and the latter calls him "father", but the people of his age group always call him by his name, which is why this name occurs at a remarkable frequency. Ajanupu, Ossai's sister and Efuru's aunt-in-law, is always by Efuru and Ossai's side and everyone calls her by her name; as a consequence, her name occurs as a vocative even more than Efuru's. Ogea, who is but a young girl under the care of Efuru, is always simply called "Ogea" by everyone. Moreover, Efuru does call her every time for various errands; as a result, her name (next to Ajanupu's) is the most frequent vocative.

The third category of vocative adjuncts in *Efuru*, as announced above, is the use of non-human participants' names. It includes:

- "God / orisha" on pages 27, 51, 77 ...;
- "Evil forces" on page 67;
- "my / our ancestors" on page 67, 157 and 200;
- "Ogomin" (a dead baby) on pages 69 and 74;
- "my chi" on page 73;
- "gods, Utuso, Uhmiri" respectively on pages 157, 178 and 201.

These non-human participants are spiritual forces. So, they are not talked to as such but they are invoked, especially as far as "God" or "Orisha", the ancestors and the "chi" are concerned. They are thanked when good things happen, called upon for help or protection in difficult situations as on pages 51, 67, 77... On pages 69 and 74, the dead baby is desperately talked to although it is known that it will never respond. Thus, the use of the non-humans' - say spiritual beings' - names as Vocatives is an expression of weakness, in other words, unequal power.

The overview of the vocatives used outside the extracts from *Efuru* shows that there are a lot of kinship terms used as vocatives to express (high) affective involvement in the course of informal talks. People's names are also used as vocatives, for the same reasons as in the extracts. The point that makes a difference with the extracts is the use of spiritual participants' names as vocatives; this contributes to having a broader understanding of the use of vocatives in the novel.

#### - **In *The Concubine***

The first vocative adjuncts occur on page 6. On the one hand, there are two people's names: "Nnadi" in "Well, Nnadi, you know the procedure" and "Anyika" in "Eh, Anyika". On the other hand, there are gods' names and "ancestors" in:

- "Gods of the night, take this."
- "Gods of the earth, take this."
- "Ojukwu the fair, take this."
- "Amadioha, king of the skies, this is yours."



- "And you ancestors, small and great ... take this".

As we keep reading, we find "my lord" on page 7, "my son" and "my daughter" (kinship terms) on page 9. In fact, there are also three categories of vocatives in *The Concubine*. However, Gods' names, which are invoked at a ceremony on pages 6, do not occur in the form of vocative adjuncts any more till the end of the novel. Only the two categories - that is, people's names and kinship terms - keep occurring throughout the book.

There is a large number of people's names used as vocatives and some are by far more recurrent than others. For example, "Ekwe/Ekwueme" (one being the diminutive of the other) occurs more than one hundred times; so it represents at least 20% of the total number of vocatives. "Ihuoma" occurs more than fifty times. However, the most striking phenomenon about people's names used as vocatives in this novel is that they include a lot of diminutives and/or nicknames, and they usually occur in pairs. Instances of diminutives or nicknames are:

- "Eme", for "Emenike", used on pages 8, 16, 17...;
- "Koko", for "Nwokokoro", on pages 9 and 56;
- "Ekwe", for "Ekwueme", on pages 48, 49, 62...;
- "Chichi", for "Chima", on page 66 for example;
- "Ahule", a pet name for "Ahurole", on pages 94, 96, 98...;
- "Turumbe", for "Agwoturumbe", on page 207.

As a matter of fact, the use of diminutives and/or nicknames as vocatives is a result of equal power, frequent contact and, to some extent, high affective involvement among the interactants. That is confirmed by the reciprocal use of vocatives throughout the novel.

The reciprocal use of vocatives account for the occurrence of people's names as vocative adjuncts in pairs as it were, as announced above. The first example is "Nnadi + Anyika" on page 6:

- "Well, Nnadi, you know the procedure"
- "Eh, Anyika".

Other examples include:

- Ihuoma and Wolu who greet each other just by calling each other's names on
- page 19;
- Nwonna and Ekwe on page 22;
- Ekwe and Wakiri on pages 24 and 171;
- Ihuoma and Mgbachi on page 31;
- Madume and Koko on page 56;
- Ihuoma and Madume on page 56;
- Wigwe and Chima on page 65;
- Ekwe and Chichi on page 66;



- Ekwe and Adiele on page 75;
- Nnenda and Ihuoma on page 77;
- Ihuoma and Ekwe greeting each other (with names) on page 83 and calling
- each other's names in conversation on such pages as 185, 190, 203...;
- Ahule and Titi on page 94;
- Nnanna and Ahule on page 96;
- Nnadi and Wigwe, Nnadi and Ekwe (though the former is the latter's father's age group) on page 112;
- Ahurole and Ekwe (here, wife and husband rather in a quarrel) on page 142;
- Anyika and Turumbe on page 207.

So, all those people freely call one another's names or even diminutives and nicknames while greeting one another or in the course of conversations. This accounts for the abundance of vocatives. Of course, their reciprocal and unceremonial use of names as vocatives is due to the frequent contact and some affective involvement that exist among them as members of a community, especially in a small village. Meanwhile, they also use kinship terms to address one another.

The kinship terms used as vocatives throughout *The Concubine* include:

- "my lord", which occurs on pages 7, 10, 13.....;
- "my son" on pages 9, 39, 48.....;
- "my daughter" on pages 9, 21, 37.....;
- "my child / my children" on pages 13, 21, 22.....;
- "my sister" on pages 31, 34, 150.....;
- "Nne / mother" on pages 37, 48, 61.....;
- "father / Dede" on pages 39, 102, 184.....;

Of this group of vocatives, "my lord" is the one that occurs most: about sixty times or 11% of the total number of vocative adjuncts in this novel. Next comes the rate of occurrence of "Nne" or "mother" (more than thirty times) and "my daughter" (more than twenty times).

The identification of the vocatives used in this novel - beyond the extracts from it - shows that there is a great deal of reciprocal use of vocatives, especially people's names which even stand for friendly greetings in most cases. Kinship terms do occur a lot as vocatives too, contributing to the evidence of high affective involvement among the participants. These two facts help to confirm and even to broaden the remarks made about the vocatives and the Tenor relationship among the interactants in the two extracts.





#### 4. Conclusion

The first formulation that came to mind as a title for this article is "Vocative Adjuncts in *Efuru* and *The Concubine*: abundance or redundancy?" Only on second thought and after several attempts of reformulation has it come to be what it is, that is, "An inquiry into the use of Vocative Adjuncts in *Efuru* and *The Concubine*: A Systemic Functional Linguistics-oriented contribution". In fact, as regards the *raison d'être* of the article, the considerable recurrence of vocative adjuncts in these two novels is the least argument that can be put forward, among others. That is why after the brief theoretical framework, the analysis proper has been preceded by two tables of statistics showing the great extent of recurrence of vocative adjuncts in both novels at stake. One is tempted to wonder whether the use of those numerous vocative adjuncts is really relevant and necessary or whether it is rather a redundancy throughout the novels.

The analyses of the vocatives in the extracts and the overall look into the vocatives in the rest of each novel as a whole result in the evidence that the apparent abundance of the vocatives is due to the context and that they are meant to significantly contribute to the interpersonal meaning. The participants (characters) interact in informal situation(s) and they are in frequent contact and high affective involvement with one another most of the time. The prevailing Tenor relation in both novels is that of a community membership. The interactants are almost always calling each other's names or designating each other with kinship terms such as "mother", "father", "sister", in their daily interactions within the community. In this respect, *Efuru* and *The Concubine* are definitely alike; both novels are quite chatty. Literary critics like Eustace Palmer see Nwapa's dialogue as a "ceaseless flow of talk", intending to denigrate it, but Elechi's (*The Concubine*) seen under the angle of the use of vocative adjuncts risks being described in the same terms.

On the other hand, the dominance of the occurrence of the vocatives "my daughter", "my mother", "my sister" and "my wife" (as opposed respectively to "my son", "my father", "my brother" and "my husband") in *Efuru* may be a confirmation that this novel is female-dominating. The female domination may even be suspected in the titles *Efuru* and *Idu* which are vocatives as intimated in the analyses above; had *The concubine* been written by Flora Nwapa, maybe its title would have been *Ihuoma*. This partially justifies Wilentz's assertion that Nwapa focuses attention upon the voices of women.

Meanwhile, in contrast to *Efuru*, which contains the vocative "my husband" on a few pages, *The Concubine* rather contains the vocative "my lord" which is very frequently used as mentioned in the analyses above. This shows that men are somehow valued in *The Concubine*, to the detriment of women,



who are called "my wife" (at best) or by their names or, still worse, by the vocative "woman". This fact is probably not enough to contend that *The Concubine* is male-dominating, but literary critics certainly need to be aware of it when comparing this novel with *Efuru* or any other by Nwapa.

The last - but not least - aspect that is noteworthy is the use of "God", especially gods' names and "ancestors" as vocatives. This type of vocatives, which occur in both novels but much more in *Efuru*, shows that beliefs do occupy an important place in Nwapa's and Elechi's fiction. So, when it comes to studying the novels, gods and the ancestors are worth taking into account as special participants; this may be the topic of our next article.

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### Appendix

#### **Excerpt n°1: From *Efuru*, Chapter 4 (p.56)**

Efuru packed her things and went home. Her mother-in-law was in, Ogonim and Ogea were in also. She picked Ogonim up and wiped her face. "How are you, my daughter?" she asked her. And the little one showed her eight white teeth and was busy pulling at Efuru's buba to breast-feed.

"I must be serious about weaning you. Mother, how am I going to stop her?" Efuru turned to her mother-in-law.

"I don't think she has had enough. If I were you I will continue to give her for another month or two. It is only at night that she breast-feeds, so let her have it for another month or two."

"All right, mother."

Efuru went about her business normally. She did not appear sorrowful as she was a day or two ago. When she had tidied her room and had given Ogonim and Ogea what she bought for them from the market, she took her water-pot and as she was about to place it on her head, she heard Ajanupu's voice.

"Ossai, are you in?", Ajanupu asked in a most unfriendly manner.

"Yes, I am in," Ossai replied, "Is that you Ajanupu, come in Idenu."

"Omeifeaku" Ajanupu greeted her sister. "Is Efuru in?"

"She is in"

"Ajanupu, Idenu, welcome. I am in. I heard your voice."

"How are you, my daughter? Is everything well with you, my daughter, and Ogonim, is she well?"

"Ogonim is well. I am trying to stop breast-feeding her."

"Stop breast-feeding her? Who will feed on your breast if you stop breast-feeding her? What has gone wrong with you?"



Ajanupu looked at Efuru for some time without talking. "Oh, what a fool you are! Are you pregnant?"

"No, I am not pregnant Ajanupu."

"I thought so. If you are pregnant I will know. Leave Ogonim to breast-feed for another month or two before you stop her. I shall teach you the best way to stop her, the best and the easiest way."

When they had had kola, Efuru's mother-in-law went to the stream and Efuru and Ajanupu talked generally. After an hour or so, Ajanupu suddenly said, "Efuru, I came to your house." "Ewuu, is it well?" Efuru exclaimed.

**Excerpt n°2: From *Efuru*, Chapter 5 (p.73)**

'That will do,' Ajanupu shouted from the room. 'That will do, I say. What nonsense. Nwasobi, if you don't know how to sympathize with a woman whose only child has died, say you are sorry and leave her in peace, and don't stay there enumerating all her misfortunes in a tone that suggests that you enjoy these misfortunes.'

'Ajanupu, you are right,' said a woman. 'I have never seen anything like that before. Nwasobi, don't talk like that any more. When you go, Efuru will think of all you have said and will be more miserable.'

The woman was embarrassed, she got up. 'I am sorry, my daughter. Please pardon me. We are old women and therefore know nothing.'

Efuru was quiet. She did not say a word to anybody. She did not even hear Nwasobi when she was blabbing like a woman possessed. When the woman said she was sorry, she simply nodded. Ajanupu watched her all the time. She saw that she was thinking very much and that was bad for her health. And what was more, she was not crying any more. It was better to shed tears than to restrain them from flowing freely. One feels better after shedding tears, for tears sometimes have a soothing effect.

'My daughter,' Ajanupu said to Efuru placing her hands on her shoulders. 'My daughter, please weep, weep, my daughter, weeping will do you good. Don't stay like that without weeping. Weep! Let your tears flow freely. If you don't weep, your heart will be injured.'

'I cannot weep any more, Ajanupu. My grief is the kind of grief that allows no tears. It is a dry grief. Wet grief is better but I cannot weep.'

'No, my child, try and weep. Tears wash away sorrows. Your burden is made lighter if you weep. Women weep easily and that is why they do not feel sorrows as keenly as men do.'

'Ajanupu, my daughter has killed me. Ogonim has killed me. My only child has killed me. Why should I live? I should be dead too and lie in state beside my daughter. Oh, my chi, why have you dealt with me in this way?' When Efuru said this, tears rolled down her cheeks.



**Excerpt n°3: From *The Concubine*, Chapter 8 (p.39)**

Ihuoma came back to her mother's home and the family sat down and ate quite for a time. Then Nwonna addressed his mother: 'Nne, remember to take some mushroom home.'

'I will, my son,' his mother replied.

'I shall carry it myself,' Nwonna persisted.

'Stop talking, Nwonna,' Ogbuji said, 'you are eating. Ihuoma, is this how you are bringing them up?'

'Nnanna, he does not listen to me.'

'Is that true, Nwonna? Then you will come to live with me next year. You will behave like a woman if you are brought up by a woman.'

'As if all women were fools,' Okachi retorted.

'well, many of you are,' her husband replied.

'My lord, some men are more foolish than women.'

'keep quiet, woman, and eat!'

'I am sorry, my lord.'

There was another quiet spell.

'Put out some more soup, Nne,' Nwonna piped.

'You seem to be exploring the soup with your five fingers,' Okachi said laughing. 'I don't blame you, the soup is good. What do you say, my lord?' Ogbuji smiled.

'Are you begging me to praise you?'

'Please praise me or I shall praise myself.'

'Well, the soup is delicious no doubt, but I suspect the fish and meat I provided played a great part. I should share the praise with you.'

'Indeed! then tomorrow I shall just boil only your fish and meat and see how you like it.'

'That would surely fetch you a beating.'

There was laughter.

'But, father,' Ihuoma said, 'Nne cooks really well.'

'Who ever denied that?' her father asked.

'But you never praise her.'

'There is no need to.'

'How will she know what types of soup please you most?'

'That is easy: from the quantity of foo-foo I consume.'

**Excerpt n°4: From *The Concubine*, Chapter 11 (p.62)**

'Where is Nkechi?' Nnenda asked.

'Here she comes,' Adaku said 'she went to fetch water.'

'Nkechi.'



'Nnenda. How is your husband's boil?'  
'It is getting more painful.'  
'So you knew Owhoji had a boil and refused to tell us,' Adaku said.  
'Nne, I forgot all about it'  
'Nkechi, get us chairs. You don't expect us to stand, do you?'  
Nkechi fetched two chairs for Nnenda and Adaku. Wigwe left the two women to talk and, as Nnenda rose to go, Ekwueme came home.  
'Ekwe.'  
'Nnenda.'  
'Did you kill any animals today?'  
'No. All my traps went off without a single catch'  
'Too bad. Whoever saw you first this morning certainly did not give you luck.'  
'That may be true. Let's see, who saw me first this morning?'  
'Ekwe,' his mother said, 'don't mention my name because you left so early that I did not see you before you left.'  
Ekwueme laughed.  
'Nne, you are not the guilty one. You always bring me luck. Actually I don't think I saw anyone before I left this morning.'  
'Then you brought about your own bad luck,' Nnenda said teasingly.  
'Adaku, I am leaving.'  
'Go well, my daughter, and greet your husband.'  
'O-oh.'  
Somehow Nnenda found herself walking with Ekwueme towards the main road of the village.  
'Ekwueme, you looked a little worried,' she said.  
'I am not.'  
'Why don't you laugh then?'  
'It would be crazy to laugh without cause. I have not eaten any laughing mushroom, have I?'  
After a pause, Ekwueme went on. 'Nnenda, I have something very important to tell you.'  
'What can it be, Ekwe?'