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TEXTUAL CUES AND CHARACTERISATION IN CHILDREN'S FICTION

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ABSTRACT

Studies on language as a tool for fictional characterisation have hardly focused on children's fiction, which motivated this study to fill this knowledge gap. Culpeper's (2001) model of characterisation, complemented by Halliday's transitivity processes, served as the framework. Four children's fictional texts were purposively selected: two human stories (Aisha Nelson and Idowu Oluwasegun's *Aku the Sun Maker* and Mimi Werna and Edwin Irabor's *Magical Rainbow River*); and two personified animal stories (Chinua Achebe and John Iroaganachi's *How the Leopard Got His Claws* and Fary Silate and Awwalu Sakiwa's *Drought and the River of Blessings*). The study identified situational cues like folk ontological beliefs and the allocation of weighted roles to animals by their physiological/physical attributes. Both explicit and implicit textual cues aided character reading in the data. The explicit textual cues are the narrator's presentation, self-presentation and other-presentation, with seven representational modes/strategies: description, introspection, collectivisation, individualisation, identification, exclusion and nomination. The implicit textual cues are lexical/syntactic like conditional modals and imperative sentences; and paralinguistic/visual features like kinesics. The study concludes that the interpretation of characters in children's fiction is supported by situational, explicit and implicit textual features that index their representation to align with children's worldviews.

Keywords: Textual features, fictional characterisation, children fiction, literature

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INTRODUCTION

Every work, either literary or nonfictional, that is created for children is designated as children's literature. This can be a book, story, magazine, folk song, lullaby, or the like. It can be written or oral, and has to appeal to the language, social, affective, cognitive and physical abilities of the child. In essence, the focus is on children as the target audience, and this has to reflect on the content and presentation, which should be

easy to read and assimilate by them. Consideration is thus given to age and developmental domains. The age group is biologically considered, as children's age ranges from birth to puberty at 13 years (O'Toole, 2013; Schuiling and Likis, 2016), which transverses infancy, toddlerhood, pre-school stage and school-aged period (Kail, 2015).

At these various stages, different genres of literature are introduced to entertain, cheer

up, lull or educate a child. This shows different stages of child development, cognitively and in other domains, and the types of literature that are required by age. Age-specific classification of literature identifies picture books as appropriate for pre-readers, who are infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers. The next group is the early readers' class who are early school-aged children between 5 and 7 years, and combines pictures with reading skill-enhancing content. For the older early-school-aged children, chapter books are considered appropriate. By genre, the categories of children's literature include fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and drama. Anderson (2006) adds picture books to the classification to describe books that teach alphabets, counting and pattern to children. Children's fiction is a story that may be completely created from imagination or based on true life story. It includes subgenres like fantasy, science fiction, historical fiction, folk tale, fable, myth and legend. Non-fiction, on the other hand, is a true narrative about any subject of interest; and it includes biographies, which are true life stories of historical figures that are written to educate children, especially the school-aged group. Children's poetry is a literary piece created in verse forms for children, which takes the form of nursery rhymes and lullabies; and there are also folk poems, lamentation from folklores, among others; while Children's drama or play is written to be acted for children. The focus of this paper is on children's fiction, especially the interpretation of characters that are constructed in the stories.

As children's stories are narrated, characters are creatively constructed to fit their literary purpose and align with children's worldview. The personality, attitudes and appearances of the characters interplay to

influence the plot, themes, setting and other literary elements in the stories (Akeredolu-Ale et al, 2014). The creation of the fictional characters is regulated by the author's narrative, which guides the perception of each character. How the characters are formed is tailored to the fictional requirement of the different subgenres. For instance, fantasy fiction presents highly imaginary characters with supernatural abilities, and nonhuman characters like inanimate objects and animals that are made to talk and perform other human roles. Similarly, science fiction shows incredible scientific adventures of characters based on speculation, projection or entirely fictional insight.

Fictional characters are traditionally interpreted by some rudimentary literary approaches. These account for the description of characters by their traits or features, including their appearance and personal information; their actions and reactions to what others do; and the utterances credited to them in the stories. This method also shows how characters are developed by their role types as main, minor or flat characters. In addition, different literary theories have been introduced to provide deeper meaning and contextual insights to character analysis. Some of these theories are post-structuralism, Marxism, feminism, post-colonialism, deconstruction, reader-response theory and psychoanalytic criticism. For example, Kwatsha (2007) undertakes a psychoanalytical interpretation of the characters in a novel by A. C. Jordan, where the hidden causes of the neurosis behind the conflict in their behaviour are uncovered.

Similar enterprise has been undertaken from linguistic perspectives to explain how linguistic insights can further provide methods to infer information about characters. This is

exemplified in Bollobos (1980), Short (1989) and Miller (2002) to reveal how the analysis of characters' speech acts has provided a lot more information about the characters in the literary texts. These studies have examined language as a tool for characterisation in drama and even in fiction, but hardly explored its application to children's fiction. Yet, studying fictional characterisation through language and text/discourse will uncover how context and text influence character reading in children's fiction. Therefore, this study was designed to fill this knowledge gap with a view to identifying the explicit and implicit textual and extra-textual features that aid characterisation in children's fiction.

BRIEF NOTES ON THE SELECTED TEXTS

The selected texts cut across human and animal stories. The human stories are *Aku the Sun Maker* written by Aisha Nelson and Idowu Oluwasegun (2018) and *Magical Rainbow River* by Mimi Werna and Edwin Irabor (2018); while the fables are *How the Leopard Got His Claws* by Chinua Achebe and John Iroaganachi (1973) as well as *Drought and the River of Blessings* by Fary Silate and Awwalu Sakiwa (2018).

Aku the sun maker by Aisha Nelson and Idowu Oluwasegun

The story is about a young girl in Sunland, named Aku, and her encounter with the sun. It started with Aku's many wonderings. This first happened when she accompanied her father, Ataa Ankra, to fish in the river. While fishing with her father, she wondered why the sun always looked at her. In the second instance, her brother, Oti, and the other boys did not allow her to play football with them. The girls too did not play with her, but instead teased her about her long legs. So, Aku was left lonely, and she had no one to talk to about her many thoughts.

Soon, she became a friend to the sun, and always looked forward to seeing it every morning. She and her shadow would dance in the ambience of the early morning sun to the music of birds' tweet and cocks' crow. The sun made Aku happy and to smile a lot. However, there came a day when the sun did not rise, neither did the birds tweet nor the cocks crow. As a result, the people in Sunland could not proceed with their daily activities and means of livelihood. The sky became grey and sad; and Aku missed the sunrise and early morning music.

Everyone became curious about where the sun had gone to. Some said it was dead, while others said it had travelled; but Aku disagreed with all of them, and claimed the sun was her friend. Everyone forgot about the sun and laughed hard at her, and she was pained and saddened by this. So, she hurried home and along the way she kicked her brother's ball accidentally. The ball rolled to hit a calabash of palm oil, which spilled its content that soiled the ball. Aku picked up the oil soiled ball and ran off, while the people of Sunland watched her with curiosity.

On getting to the middle of the town square, Aku stopped, dropped the ball and kicked it. The ball spun and bounced off the root of a palm tree at one end of the town square and shot into the sad sky beyond the clouds. The people were astonished as the ball flew beyond their gaze. After a quiet moment, the sky suddenly cleared, the clouds became white and then a big ball, red and yellow like palm oil, returned from behind the clouds and the ball was the sun – Aku's sun. Everything returned to normal and everyone resumed their daily business.

Magical rainbow river by Mimi Werna and Edwin Irabor

This is a story about three little siblings who got so fascinated by a rainbow that they wanted to go out and touch it; but their

mother would not let them. They cried and one of them tried sneaking out, but their mother remained unyielding, and tried some playful tricks to dissuade them to prevent them from catching cold. So, she came up with the story of a rainbow with healing powers. They were all eager to hear the story and thus their mother succeeded in diverting their interest from playing in the rain.

In the story narrated by the little kids' mother, the rainbow was said to be a river hidden inside certain green magical woods, and was guarded because of its healing power. Because of its magic, there was ice cream along its banks, with similar colour like the rainbow: red, green, orange, yellow, purple, blue and indigo. People, particularly children, who came to drink of its water enjoyed the ice cream. On a certain day, a naughty old woman came to take a drink and was healed. However, she sought for everlasting life and jumped into the river, but unfortunately the river rose and vanished into the sky, never to return – although, it returns sometimes to the sky after the rain. After the story, the little children shared what they each learnt from the story.

How the leopard got its claws by Chinua Achebe and John Iroaganachi

The story started with how all animals had lived peacefully under the reign of their king, the leopard, who was strong, but gentle and kind. He ruled wisely, and all the animals liked him. The animals lived peacefully, as none of them had sharp teeth or claws. King Leopard then only had small teeth, and was without claws. The only exception was the dog, who had big and sharp teeth. He was however mocked and teased as foolish for carrying them.

As the rainy season approached, the idea of

building a common shelter for all was broached by the deer and other animals discussed and supported it. The dog and duck objected to the idea; the dog had never liked the leopard. He regarded the building as waste of time, and not a necessity to him since he had a cave to retire to. Majority upheld the idea and built the shelter. On a particular day, while leopard was away, rain poured but the animals took shelter in the building. The rain was too heavy and the dog's cave was flooded, so he ran to the hall. The animals tried to stop him from coming in but he attacked each one of them with his teeth and threw them out into the rain. The animals cried in pain, and the deer lamented, calling the leopard to return home. The cry reached the leopard and he came back to the village. He called out the dog, and they both engaged in a duel. The leopard was defeated and got badly wounded by the dog's teeth and claws. The conquered king called on all the animals to join forces and evict the dog, but the animals were terrified and turned their back on their king. Instead they transferred their obeisance to the dog as their new king.

The leopard left the village, painfully, and travelled for several days to obtain iron teeth and claws from the blacksmith, and a thunderous voice from Thunder. Then he returned to the village. He fought the dog again and defeated him; and then turned to the animal, who became trembled. He reprimanded them for betraying him, and threatened to rule with terror going forward. He ordered everyone to retrieve what they contributed to building the hall; so the shelter was pulled apart. The dog, now wounded and weak, left the village and went to seek the protection of a hunter and in exchange he offered to be the hunter's slave and to show him how to hunt down his fellow ani-

mals.

Drought and the river of blessings by Fary Silate and Awwalu Sakiwa

This story is about the climatic experience of the animals and their survival struggle. The animals were hit with a long dry season that resulted in a drought, so all the rivers dried up excluding the River of Blessings. The animals were thirsty but the River of Blessings was located far away. Some of the animals suggested going there to drink and bring some back for others, but other animals thought some would be dead before they return. So, all agreed to march together to the river, and they were led by Camel.

On their way, some animals grew weary and were helped by the next stronger ones who swallowed them. Guinea Fowl was the first to be exhausted and was swallowed by Chicken. Chicken became weak and was ingested by Sheep. This continued with Goat, then Cow, Horse and finally Camel swallowing Cow. Camel endured and struggled to reach the river. On arrival, each animal vomited the animal each had swallowed, starting with Camel. Eventually, all of them were able to drink from the River of Blessings.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is mainly anchored on three theoretical constructs: Culpeper's (2001) model of characterisation, Halliday's (1985) transitivity system and van Leeuwen's (2008) representation of social actors L. These are explained in turn.

Model of characterisation

Culpeper's (2001) model of characterisation examines how readers can derive information about characters through the words of a text. The concept is guided by three objectives: to determine how the prior

knowledge of readers contributes to characterisation; how character inferencing is done from texts; and the textual cues involved in characterisation. Informed by Pfister's (1988) distinctions, Culpeper (2001) broadly identified the textual cues in texts as explicit and implicit.

Explicit cues in texts are direct information about a character, which can be obtained via self-presentation or other-presentation. Self-presentation by a character is an attempt by a character to provide explicit information about him or herself. This can be done in the presence of other characters and can offer deeper meaning depending on what motivates it, the social and psychological factors that influence it, and other strategic inter-character effects. Self-presentation is also engaged in the absence of other characters through literary elements like soliloquy and aside. However, the validity of the information is examined within the limit of the character's sincerity and self-knowledge. Other-presentations stem from the perception of a character by another or other character(s). The validity of the characterisation is screened to assess the values and social motivations. The narrator's presentation is added to this theoretical orientation to cater for the fictional data.

The implicit textual cues are the verbal and nonverbal devices that convey implied information about the character. The verbal cues can be conversational, lexical and grammatical. The conversational structure is concerned with how talk is distributed between the characters; as well as the number of conversational turns, the length of each turn, talk alternation and other conversational strategies. In addition, power relations may be interrogated in the talk exchange. However, this seems to be more pronounced in play

than in fiction. Lexis and grammar also play key roles. The kinds of words and grammatical forms may convey vital information about the character’s personality. The non-verbal cues include paralinguistic and visual features in the texts.

The theory is summed up with a model for readers to comprehend characters, which combines prior knowledge and textual elements. At the base of the model is the syntactic and semantic component that constitutes the surface structure of the model. This forms the next higher component, which is the *text base* that provides propositions from a text about characters. The third component is the situational model that constitutes prior knowledge or extra-textual cues that shape the reading of the characters within social contexts. The fourth element is the control system that regulates the entire model. This model is the major construct of the theoretical

framework for this study, as it provides how prior knowledge and propositional contents are combined to produce extra-textual, explicit and implicit textual cues for interpreting characters.

Transitivity system

The transitivity system belongs to the ideational component of the three metafunctions of Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). This forms part of his view of language as a social semiotic device designed to achieve certain communicative goals. Transitivity as an ideational token of meaning explains how language represents the experiential aspects of the world, both the inner and outer realms. This is expressed through the clause as a grammatical unit with three semantic categories: the processes, participants and circumstance. The processes have been categorised into six: material, relational, mental, verbal, behavioural and existential. They are summed up by Halliday (1985) – Table 1.

Table 1. Transitivity Processes

S/N	Process Type	Category Meaning	Participants
1.	Material: Action Event	Doing Doing Happening	Actor, Goal
2.	Mental: Perception Affection Cognition	Sensing Seeing Feeling Thinking	Senser, Phenomenon
3.	Behavioural	Behaving	Behaver
4.	Verbal	Saying	Sayer, Target
5.	Relational: Attribution	Being Attributing	Token, Value Carrier, Attribute Identified, Identifier
6.	Identification Existential	Identifying Existing	Existent

Source: Halliday (1985, p. 131)

Under material process, there are action and event processes (Table 1), which are semantically realised as processes of doing and happening, respectively; and their participants are actor (doer of the process), and goal (the participant affected by the process). In the case of mental process, there are three subtypes – perception, affection and cognition (Table 1) – that respectively encode the processes of seeing, feeling and thinking. The mental participants are the senser – the conscious being that sees, feels and thinks – and the phenomenon, which is sensed. For relational process, there are attribution and identification, which both have token and value as participants, or are allocated separate roles – carrier and attribute are linked to attributing process, while identified and identifier are tied to identifying process.

This study is particularly concerned with the participants in the processes, and how they are engaged in children's fiction. The study examines the transitivity characteristics and how the allocation of roles to characters represents the children worldview. In addition, the apportioning of roles to the human and animal characters is analysed to identify inter-textual and textual cues in the representations.

Representation of social actors

Van Leeuwen's (2008) representation of social actors is a theoretical work in critical discourse analysis that provides ways in which people can be represented in discourse, and the socio-semantic inventory of these representations. These representations are sociological categories about social actors, which are indicated in Van Leeuwen's social actor network. They are broadly classified under exclusion and inclusion. Under exclusion, there are subtypes: suppression

and backgrounding. The inclusion categories are a lot more with complex groupings, starting with activation, passivisation, personalisation, impersonalisation, among others.

Few of these representations are explored in this paper, which considers their use as textual strategies in the representation of characters in children's fiction. These are exclusion, collectivisation, individualisation, nomination, and identification. Exclusion strategy is an attempt to discount another social actor. Collectivisation is indexed through personal pronouns and terms that are used to identify ingroups. Individualisation is engaged when characters are individually referenced. Identification occurs in the process of defining characters by what they are; while nomination is used when actors are presented by their unique identity.

The major theory for analysis is Culpeper's (2001) model of characterisation. As the textual cues for fictional characterisation are identified, especially the explicit cues, the transitivity system is deployed to depict the allocation of roles to the literary participants. In addition, the representation strategies for narrator's presentation, self-presentation, and other-presentation are articulated as they project the characters in the selected texts.

METHODOLOGY

Four children's fictional texts were purposively selected: two human and two personified animal stories. The human stories are *Aku the Sun Maker* by Aisha Nelson and Idowu Oluwasegun and *Magical Rainbow River* by Mimi Werna and Edwin Irabor; while the animal stories are *How the Leopard Got His Claws* by Chinua Achebe and John Iroagana-nachi and *Drought and the River of Blessings* by Fary Silate and Awwalu Sakiwa. Guided by Jonathan Culpeper's model of characterisa-

tion and M. A. K. Halliday's transitivity indices, the textual cues for characterisation in the texts were analysed to identify their representation of children's worldview.

DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis is undertaken in two major parts. One is the extra-textual or situational cues for characterisation in the selected texts, and the second one is the textual cues that aid the characterisation. Three situational elements were identified in the text, and they are family portrayal, folk ontology and role allocation to animals by their characteristics. Both explicit and implicit textual cues were identified in the selected texts.

SITUATIONAL CUES FOR CHARACTERISATION IN CHILDREN'S FICTION

The situational cues constitute social categories and cultural elements that are carried into the texts to influence the construction and interpretation of the characters. Those identified are the portrayal of the family units, folk ontological beliefs and role allocation to animals by their physiological and physical features.

Family portrayal as characterisation cues

The stage of children development makes their social network to significantly revolve round the family. They long for parental care and attention, as well as siblings' connection. This forms the bedrock of their cognitive and social development, and has been represented in fictional characters as a reflection of the children's immediate social environment. In a family setting, the parents are expected to provide warmth and necessary structure to cater for the various psychological and physiological needs of a

child, including his/her physical and emotional health, safety, and social competence. The parents are expected to provide for the children when they are hungry; take them to fun spots to cheer them; lull them to sleep; and see to their safety. The siblings, depending on their age difference, provide close relationships and cohesion within the family to further aid the child's development. These situational elements are replicated as extra-textual cues for characterisation in children's fiction.

The characterisation in *Magical Rainbow River* is basically on the family unit. The text presents three characters, Udoo, Erdoos and Eryum, who are little siblings that play together. They are presented as sharing similar fascination and desire: they enjoyed the music of the rain and wanted to dance in it; they are also enthralled by the rainbow in the sky and wanted to touch it. Eryum, the only boy among the siblings, even tried to sneak out to satisfy his inquisitiveness. This exploratory drive of the children reflects the inborn curiosity a typical child is known with. Their mother, on the other hand, knows the rain would bring them cold, and would not let them out.

She was also vigilant to see when Eryum sneaked out. She brought him back in and told him the danger of playing in the rain, but she did so to promote healthy communication with the child. To cheer up the children, she told them a story, a fantasy about the magical rainbow river. The mother shows a positive parenting style that caters for her children's safety and emotional/psychological wellbeing. Notably, this shows a single-parent gender trend, particularly of a caring mother, without any reference to the father.

Contrariwise, the traditional family type is portrayed in *Aku the Sun Maker*, where two parents are involved with two siblings – a boy and a girl. Aku’s father is depicted as providing for the home, and the mother is presented as catering for them. The close connection that is required between siblings is further projected. Aku expected her brother, with his group of friends, to play with her. “Aku was left lonely. She had no one to share her many thoughts with”. She felt lonely as her brother was not there to talk to. It should be observed that the mother was not mentioned as someone Aku could share her feelings with. This is probably because Aku craved for the attention of peers. At a time, the sun stopped rising and the people of Sunland could not carry on with their daily activities, Aku was able to provide a solution through her brother’s ball.

Folk ontology and fictional characterisation

The term folk ontology seems to originally belong to the fields of philosophy and psychology, particularly influenced by thoughts

from descriptive metaphysics and folk psychology. It is connected to ontic perceptions that derive from common sense. Goldman (1989) describes it as “the set of fundamental entities, properties and relations that are posited in our naïve common-sense, pre-reflective mode of thought”. This thought is laid bare as conceived without considering the viability. So, traditional notions like folk ontology of animals, trees, sun or rain may be posited as a product of naïve, pre-reflective perceptions.

This term has been appropriated in this study, blending the terms folklore and ontology. Folklore, as a body of oral and other traditions, includes tales like fables and other anthropomorphic stories; while ontology is taken to mean the nature of being or existence, including the source or origin (Aspers, 2015). Folk ontology of nonhuman creatures in children’s fiction captures the mythical creation of nonhuman characters like animals, astronomical objects and meteorological phenomena. This runs through the data, as schematised below.

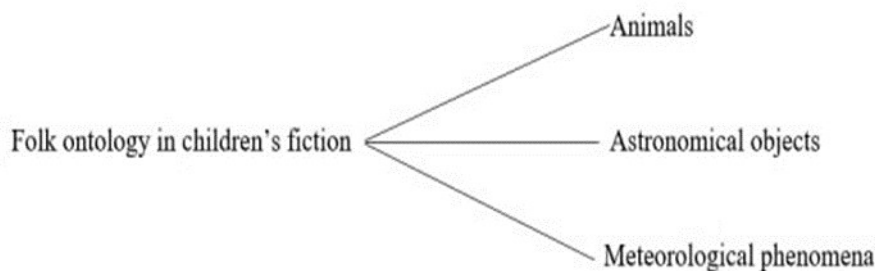


Figure 1: Folk ontologies (FOs) in children’s fiction

Three folk ontologies have been identified in children’s fiction in relation to cultural lore. These are folk ontologies of animals (FOA), folk ontologies of astronomical ob-

jects (FOAO) and folk ontologies of meteorological phenomena (FOMP). FOA is manifested in two of the texts, which are fables: *How the Leopard Got His Claws* and *Drought*

and the River of Blessings. In these texts, animals are made to play human roles, and so were given human abilities like verbal communication and intelligence. For instance, the story in *How the Leopard Got His Claws* started with an ontological phrase “In the beginning” which marks the text as a historical account of the animal kingdom. Attributes of humans’ social relations are identified with the animals. First, they are indicated to have once lived as friends and had a king, who is said to “have ruled “the animals well, and they all liked him”. They are presented as making humour and laughing, resting in the village square to share stories and drink palm wine. They are further imbued with high human intellectual ability of planning as demonstrated in King Leopard’s address to other animals “I have called you together to plan how we can make ourselves a common shelter”.

There are also mythical creations to explain some realities. The major plot of the story is a fairy tale that narrates how the leopard got his claws and became cruel to other animals. This is wound around the cowardice and betrayal of the animals. Another reality being elucidated is how the dog became an animal for hunting other animals. Dogs’ animosity to other creatures like them was traced to the canine beings’ lack of cooperation, selfishness, abuse of privilege and power usurpation. Also, the subservience of weak animals to domineering ones is linked to unwillingness to unite to oust any terror-bearing animals, but are rather quick to relinquish their freewill to the strong and cruel animals. One more notable human feature allotted to animals is human pronominal reference, where the male pronoun *he* is mostly used to reference the animals, and the female form *she* is used sparingly but distinctively in *Drought and the River of Blessings*

to index feminine resilience as the saving grace for animals’ survival.

Next is folk ontologies of astronomical objects (henceforth, FOAO), which conveys anthropomorphic traits in children’s fiction, where astronomical objects are featured as humans. This is illustrated with the representation of the sun in *Aku the Sun Maker* as contained in this narrative “While Aku fished with her father, she wondered why the sun always looked at her from the sky”. By this account, the sun is indicated as possessing visual ability like humans. The other part of the text pictures an interaction between the sun and Aku. While Aku was deserted by fellow children, she found companionship and happiness with nature. She made friends with the sun, an inanimate object, and looked forward to seeing it and dancing in the early morning sunshine to the music of the birds’ tweet and cocks’ crow. This re-enacts human appreciation of nature and affinity to it, as it is common for people to bask and recreate within the beautiful and alluring ambience of nature.

Folk ontologies of meteorological phenomena (henceforth, FOMP) is yet another folk ontology that serves as a situational cue for fictional characterisation in children’s literature. This mythically constructs meteorological phenomena as supernatural elements in the selected texts. Some examples in the data are river, rainbow and rain. Some rivers are identified as magical, like the rainbow river that possessed healing powers and produced multi-coloured ice creams on its shore. The colours are same as those of a rainbow – red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, and indigo. The naughtiness of an old woman, who jumped into the river in search of eternal life, made the river to shoot high into the sky and never to return to the land of Mbadede –

except on few occasions after the rain. The story picks many situational cues like the rainbow colours and children's love for ice cream to build elements of fantasy into the narrative. In another instance, the rain is allotted more properties than the condensed dropping from the atmosphere – its drops are presented as producing some music that appeals to children.

Animals' attributes as characterisation cues

This paper also identifies the allocation of weighted roles to animals by their physical, physiological and legendary features. Roles were assigned by these attributes which

serve as situational cues for the construction of characters. Depending on the children's age, the animal characters are familiar ones, like in *Drought and the Rivers of Blessings* where the characters are farm or domestic animals like cow, sheep and chicken; in *How the Leopard Got His Claws* the category is varied to include wild animals, like leopard, baboon, and deer – this element may qualify the latter text as not appropriate for pre-schoolers. These fables generally refer to all the animals as characters but only few of them are mentioned and assigned roles: seven in the former and seventeen in the latter. Prior knowledge about these animals guides their characterisation in the texts (Table 2).

Table 2: Situational Cues for Fictional Characterisation of Animals

S/N	Animals	Situational Cues: Physical/ Physiological/ folklore Attributes	Fictional Characterisation
1.	Leopard	It is strong, fierce and hunts down other animals with its claws and teeth.	He changed from being a kind to a terrifying king because of the other animals' cowardice and betrayal.
2.	Dog	It has sharp teeth, and is used by hunters to kill other animals.	He was cruel, lost out in power tussle, and unites with the hunter against his kind.
3.	Tortoise	Known in folklore as sly and witty.	He teased the dog for his sharp teeth, but was quick to change sides when the leopard was defeated by the dog.
4.	Camel	It has humps that gives it the ability to travel many desert miles without water.	The Camel's ability to travel long distances without water saved the animal kingdom.
5.	Monkey	It hops through trees.	The monkey was pictured jumping to tease the dogs, or in excitement because of the plan to build a shelter.
6.	Pig	It is a popular character in animal stories.	He was one of the six animals sent to bring the wounded leopard back to the village. He was bold enough to deliver the order of the new king to the fleeing ousted king, leopard.

In the beginning...all the animals in the forest lived as friends. Their king was the leopard. He was strong, but gentle and wise. He ruled the animals well, and they all liked him. At that time the animals did not fight one another. Most of them had no sharp teeth or claws. They did not need them. Even King Leopard had only small teeth. He had no claws at all.

The animals are described as friendly, and their king as gentle in spite of his strength. Most of the animals are said not to have nor need sharp teeth or claws. This description sustains the congenial pattern of the narrative. Later in the story as events take a new twist, there is a transition to a hostile pattern in the description: "Today the animals are no longer friends, but enemies. The strong among them attack and kill the weak." These clauses are relational and material processes, respectively, and they show the characters as activated as token and actor. This is recursive in the descriptions that run through the stories. In other words, the characters are described as active agents in the narrative development of the stories.

Another mode of narrator's presentation is introspection, which is also regarded as an internal monologue. It conveys a character's thought, and focuses on the interiority of character reading (Browne et al, 2004). This is particularly evident with Aku, who at different times is presented to wonder about a number of things

- a. While Aku fished with her father, she wondered why the sun always looked at her from the sky
- b. Aku wondered why palm oil looked red in calabash but yellow in yam pottage

- c. Aku wondered why Oti, her brother, and the other boys would not let her play football with them.

These extracts show an attempt by an omniscient narrator to introspect into a character's inner world. Aku is presented as an activated *senser* who cognitively engages with some other actors and inanimate objects. The information affords readers a deeper understanding of the character, Aku, while complementing other modes of the narrator's presentation. Culpeper (2001) believes it may contribute to the *rounder* impression of the character.

Self-presentation

Self-presentation is said to occur when a character provides direct information about him/herself. This is done strategically to reveal information about oneself, and might be influenced by individual, interpersonal and social factors. The animals in *Drought and the River of Blessings* self-disclose their common problem and agreement to address it. The first to speak was Camel: "As you know, we are very thirsty and all the rivers have dried up, except the River of Blessings". Horse had suggested that some of them should go and bring water for others, but Cow thinks those left behind could die before they return.

The other animals agreed with Cow and each expressed their readiness to go to the River of Blessings:

- a. Sheep said, "Maa! Maaa! I will go to the River of Blessings and drink water."
- b. Goat jumped up and said, "Meee, meee! I will also go to the River of Blessings."
- c. Chicken said, "Keer, ker ker ker! I too will go to the River of Blessings."

The self-presentation of need and solution show a rare instance of consensus building in the animal kingdom. The animal characters are presented as united to confront a common enemy – thirst – in order to survive. Contrariwise, unity was lacking when the peaceful order of the animal characters in *How the Leopard Got His Claws* was threatened. King Leopard added to his many laudable character traits when he sought to unify the animals to confront a common enemy, dog. He said: “Let us go in together and drive out the enemy. He is strong, but he is alone. We are many. Together we can drive him out of our house.” This depicts collectivisation in King Leopard’s self-representation.

However, the other animals were too afraid to realise that they are stronger together. The goat was the first to reply the ousted king: “We cannot face him. Look at his strong teeth! He will only tear us to pieces”. The other animals agreed with the goat: “The goat is right....He is too strong for us”. These self-presentations by the other animals confirm their trepidation and cowardice. It represents their identification with the superior party when the balance of power swings. Meanwhile, some of the animals, particularly dog and duck, showed elements of individualisation during the animals’ meeting on building a town hall. They objected to the idea because they thought they had no need of it. Thus, the explicit cue of self-presentation in the texts is fashioned by collectivisation, individualisation and identification.

Other-presentation

Explicit cues about a character can also be gleaned from others. Some extra information about a character are picked up from what other characters say about him/

her. Aku was left lonely and no one would want to play with her. It was unclear why this was so, until the girls teased her, saying: “Your legs are too long”. This other-presentation is exclusionary. Similarly, what is known about the sun and Aku happens to be what she said about it when the sun stopped to rise and others thought it was *dead* or *had travelled*. Aku said: “No, the sun is not dead. And the sun has not travelled. Or it would have first told me”. This other-presentation of the sun invests it with human attributes and shows its anthropomorphic value.

In addition, the lament of the deer in *How the Leopard Got His Claws* reveals something new about the leopard: the first is about the leopard being nominated or uniquely referenced as the “spotted king of the forest”; and, secondly, the deer cried out to the leopard for help to affirm its role as the protector of the animal kingdom. The lament also corroborates available information in other parts of the text that the dog was cruel. The other-presentation of the dog by the other animals emphasises the advantage that the dog held over other animals, due to his sharp teeth and claws, before the leopard got his own. In summary, other-presentations in the data were generated through exclusion and nomination strategies.

The implicit textual cues for characterisation

The implicit textual cues identified in the texts are the verbal and nonverbal elements, like the lexis/syntax and paralinguistic items/illustration.

Lexis and syntax

Words that are associated with a character can provide some cues about the character. The lexical choices appear to vary with

character development. When the animals lived in harmony, their utterances reflected their geniality. These are marked by consideration for the weak, like the words of Horse: "Some of us can go to the River of Blessings. We can drink and bring water for the others". Such convivial lexis also reflects communal agenda and shared goal, as evident in King Leopard's opening remark during the animals' meeting: "I have called you together to plan how we can make ourselves a common shelter". The animals endorsed the plan, as the giraffe and many others respectively chorused: "This is a good idea"; "Yes, a very good idea". Even the dissenting view among them, from the dog, was benignly voiced: "But why do we need a common house?"

As the narrative transited to a hostile setting, the lexical choices became bellicose. The camaraderie gave way to confrontational exchange. The dog did not contribute to the building of the town hall, but when his cave became flooded he made straight for the hall. This led to a conflict and later violence between the dog and other animals, as captured below.

- a. "What do you want here?" said the deer to the dog.
"It is none of your business," replied the dog.
"It is my business," said the deer.
"Please go out, this hall is for those who built it."
Then the dog attacked the deer and bit him with his big, sharp tooth.
- B. King Leopard was very angry. "Come out of the hall at once," he said to the dog. The dog barked and rush at him. They began to fight.

In an aggressive tone, the deer asked the dog what he was doing in the hall. This is

particularly accentuated with the adverbial locative *here*. This elicited a confrontational response from the dog, through the assertive sentence that followed. This reply shows how the dog changed from just ignoring taunts to becoming haughty and, later, violent. The leopard also took on a combative toga as his words changed from being communal, like "make ourselves a common shelter", "We do need somewhere to rest well". In his new (aggressive) mood, the leopard's language became imperative: "Come out of the hall"; and the temporal adverb "at once" heightened the imperative tone. As the character of leopard transited to being resentful of the animals for their betrayal, he called the animals by different uncharitable names "You miserable worms", "You shameless cowards".

Lexis has also aided in forming motherly character. How words are used by mothers show their tenderness towards their little children. The mother of the three siblings in *Magical Rainbow River* was affectionate while being protective of her children. After declining their request to play outside in the rain, little Eryum tried to sneak out of the house but the mother got hold of him and warmly told him the likely consequence of his action through the conditional modals "could" and "would": "You could catch a cold"; "You don't like pepper soup and you would have to eat some, if you caught a cold". The second conditional sentence further shows the mother's noninvasive deterrence strategy that serves dual purposes: deterring and being tender. In addition, the mother played the role of a fond parent by giving her kids the affectionate address tag "lovelies".

Paralinguistic features/ illustration

Paralinguistic features constitute nonverbal cues that are tied to characters' attitudes.

These elements are mostly found in the narratives that describe characters' kinesics as they engage in the activities in the storyline. For instance, a paralinguistic relation can be established between Aku's long legs and her ability to kick the ball that brought back the sun: "The ball shot into the sad sky... beyond the clouds Suddenly, the clouds became white... Then a big ball came from behind the clouds... The ball was the sun. Aku's sun."

Some paralinguistic features also serve as characterisation cues in *Magical Rainbow River*. Some instances can be located in the narrative account of the affectionate and protective care Udoo, Erdoo and Eryum received from their mother. When Eryum, the youngest among the three, tried sneaking out, the mother caught him, and made some body expressions that complemented her protective utterances.

She *raised her voice* so that Eryum and his sisters would hear her too.
 "You could catch a cold," she said. "You don't like pepper soup and you would have to eat some, if caught a cold," she added *with a smile*.

With the first body language, *raising her voice*, the mother showed some thoughtfulness by realising that the other siblings could try to also sneak out like Eryum. So, she raised her voice, while correcting their brother to deter them from doing so. This paralinguistic cue characterises the mother as thoughtful and protective. The second body language, *adding a smile*, reflects tender parenting and correcting children with love. These paralinguistic cues add up to show a variant of parenting that nurtures children in an environment of love and supports the de-

velopment of their emotional and other faculties.

Visual features/Illustrations in children's literature further serve as implicit cues for fictional characterisation. They complement the texts to enrich the narrative and make it easier for children to read the story and understand the characters' roles. The first picture 1 adds to the portrayal of a happy family unit (Plate 1). The affectionate and protective traits created about the mother in the textual narrative are illustrated by the image, which corroborates these traits. It comes after the mother had declined the request of the children to dance in the rain. "You could catch a cold," she said (Werna & Irabor, 2018). They had even cried with the hope she would change her mind, and Eryum had tried to sneak out. The mother was able to cheer them up by proposing to tell them a story. They were excited at the thought of that, as the picture portrays.

Similarly, the second picture illustrates how the animals lived happily together, unafraid of their king – leopard (Plate 2). This supports the other cues that the leopard was once a receptive and community-oriented king. As stated in the text, *How the Leopard Got His Claws*: "In the beginning all the animals in the forest lived as friends. Their king was the leopard. He was strong, but gentle and wise". The visual representation adds that King Leopard was accessible, unassuming and loved by other animals. The picture further presents the leopard like the human king, sitting on a throne as the father of the kingdom and surrounded by his people. However, as the character of the leopard switches to being hostile, because of the other animals' betrayal, the development is captured by another picture.



Plate 1: Family portrayal in *magical rainbow river*



Plate 2: A peaceful animal kingdom in *how the leopard got his claws*



Plate 3: Hostility among animals in *how the leopard got his claws*

The leopard, the once gentle and kind king, returned to reclaim his throne and rule the animal kingdom with terror. The information available in the written narrative reveals that “all the animals trembled” as the angry leopard roared with its thunderous voice. The image is an illustration of this narrative:

The leopard... returned to the village of the animals. There he found the animals dancing in a circle round the dog. He stood for a while watching them with contempt and great anger... He made a deep, terrifying roar. *At the same time, he sprang into the center of the circle.* The animals stopped their song. The dog dropped his staff. The leopard seized him and bit and clawed him without mercy. Then he threw him out of the circle.

The hostile image of the leopard presented in the picture illustrates the sharp contrast between the leopard as friendly in the former (Plate 2), but as hostile in the latter (Plate 3). The above picture (Plate 3), which shows the leopard as aggressive and rushing at the animals, seems to add a new storyline that is not told in the written narrative – that the animals scampered for safety as the leopard sprang into the circle.

CONCLUSION

This paper has appraised how (extra) textual cues aid characterisation in children’s fiction. Characterisation has in itself been shown to be a device in the hand of the writer and the reader, as it represents how the writer constructs characters and how the reader interprets or reads them. Characters are constructed by situational and textual cues that depict how the characters are defined along with the development of a story. They are

creatively constructed to fit the purpose of the literary genre, whether it is a fantasy, folk tale, myth, historical or science fiction. The study concludes that the interpretation of characters in children's fiction is supported by situational, explicit and implicit textual cues that index how the characters are represented to align with children's worldview. This work opens a new vista to the cognitive dimension of classifying children's literature through textual elements, and this can be examined by further studies

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