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The Use of Marked English Verbs as a Tool of Protest in African Commonwealth Poetry

Eric Dzeayele Maiwong

Department of English, ENS (HTTC), University of Yaounde 1, Yaounde, Cameroon

E-mail: maiwonge@yahoo.co.uk

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Abstract

This paper examines the use of marked English verbs as an aspect of the highly technical manipulation of the English Language by some distinguished African Commonwealth poets, in order to achieve their aims. By using data from African Commonwealth Poetry, selected from the writings of Brutus (1973), Nortje (1973), and Mtshali (1972), and basing the analysis on Markedness theories, Semiotics, and Critical Discourse Analysis in order to buttress its analysis. Among its key findings and contributions, the paper establishes that marked English verbs constitute an efficient tool that enables the three poets in focus to protest against the various injustices of apartheid and that Africanization of the English Language is not the only solution available to African Commonwealth writers, as they grapple with the problem of expressing themselves in a foreign language. Furthermore, the paper has made a pertinent contribution in linguistic studies by proving that the linguistic phenomenon of markedness goes beyond existing linguistic terms like hyponymy and polysemy and can thus not be better expressed by them as some scholars claim. It equally proves that a closer study of African Commonwealth Literature necessitates an analytical study of various parts of speech and not only the bigger units of English. Finally, in the analysis of a data of marked English verbs, it has been discovered that markedness as specification for semantic distinction can lead not only to a suggestion of adjectivals and adverbials, but also to that of figures of speech.

Keywords

markedness, semiotics, Critical Discourse Analysis, apartheid, Africanization, African Commonwealth writers, hyponymy, linguistic economy, polysemy

1. Introduction

Most scholars who have examined the linguistic tools used in African Commonwealth poetry to protest

against colonialism and its aftermath on the African continent, have dwelled mostly on figurative language (Kenn, 1982; Chinweizu et al., 1980); the use of revivalist myths (Knipp, 1980; Okpewho, 1979); the indigenization of the English language through code-mixing, code-switching and other techniques (Heron, 1984; Maiwong, 2019), and the revisionist use of some lexical items so as to rid the language of racial prejudice (Alvarez- Pereyre, 1984, Maiwong, 2019). They have rarely examined the highly technical manipulation of the English Language that constitutes the strength and protest of arsenal by some very distinguished African Commonwealth poets.

The scholars cited above have hardly delved into the use of smaller linguistic units like parts of speech, let alone phonological and morphological elements, which constitute the smaller building blocks on which poetry is really made. They have equally ignored the fact that, while poets from the African continent who have an indigenous culture to fall back to, have opted for the indigenization or Africanization of the English Language. There are also major coloured poets from multiracial African Commonwealth countries like South Africa and Namabia who have no ethnic African culture to fall back to and, have no choice but to master British Standard English (BSE) as a strategy for survival.

This paper aims at delving into the linguistic phenomenon of markedness (Trubetzkoy, 1931; Jakobson, 1963) as manifested in the use of English verbs in the poetry of three major South African poets, Brutus (1973); Nortje (1973) and Mtshali (1972) to show how they have used their mastery of the English Language, to protest against the injustices in their society. This work also intends, through the examination of these verbs, to show the usefulness of the phenomenon of markedness, which has been of great interest in linguistic studies in recent years (Haspelmath, 2006).

In this section, we shall define and clarify the following key terms: ‘markedness’; ‘protest’ and ‘African Commonwealth Poetry’. Despite the wide range of definitions that linguists have given the phenomenon of markedness, they largely agree that it has twelve categories. Most of these twelve are based on works that were focused on phonological, morphological and socio-cultural data, but the one that is relevant to this paper is semantic markedness, which has to do with “markedness as specification for semantic distinction” (Haspelmath, 2006, p. 26; Roussou, 2016, p. 2; Lobner, 2002, p. 152). This means that marked features or items contain certain properties which unmarked items lack.

To clarify the assertion that marked features have more specific properties or information than their unmarked counterparts, linguists have given examples like the following:

Table 1. Example of English Unmarked and Marked verbs

Unmarked Feature (uF)	Marked Feature (mF)
Donkey	Mule
dog	bitch
prince	princess
cow	bull

soldier	general
vehicle	bus
steward	stewardess

In the specific case of verbs, one could add a few examples like the following:

uF	**mF**
walk	wobble, shuffle, limp, stalk, lumber, waddle
drink	sip, gulp, gaggle, gobble

All these go to support the assertion of Jakobson (1963, p. 186), that "the meaning of a marked category states the presence of a certain property". Thus, in the specific case of verbs with which this contribution is concerned, the more additional statements a verb makes, the more semantically marked it can be considered to be.

Concerning the word 'protest', it refers to a "statement that denies or objects strongly" (Thorndike, 1959, p. 504) or a "Statement of disapproval or objection" (Hornby, 2015, p. 672).

Within the context of African Commonwealth literature, it is better understood as literature which thematically is characterized by the rejection of the abject poverty, appalling living conditions, discrimination and inequalities, hypocritical Christianity, economic exploitation and cultural alienation of the African as a result of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism (Chato et al., 1998). Finally, African Commonwealth literature refers to the literary products of the independent countries of Africa, "which were once colonized by the United kingdom" (Maiwong, 2019, p. 16). Consequently, its key linguistic characteristic in that it is written in English. Thus, 'African Commonwealth Poetry' is that which part of African Commonwealth literature is.

2. Method

2.1 Theoretical Considerations and Methodology

Three methods of analysis are chosen for this paper. They are markedness which has to do with opposition of linguistic features and, more specifically, semantic markedness which has to do with complexity resulting in semantic specifications (Trubetzkoy, 1931; Jakobson, 1963; Haspelmath, 2006). This method insists that marked features necessarily contain additional linguistic properties (Jakobson, 1963).

The second method is necessitated by the first. Since the oppositions detected by semantic markedness theories frequently lead to figures of speech, a semiotic analysis becomes necessary because this figurative language cannot be taken at its face value as a result of the fact that its underlying meaning has to be read from the point of view of a given culture (Barthes, 1964).

Finally, some of the markedness detected leads to allusions with ideological implication, which necessitate the use of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995a) or, more specifically Historical Critical Discourse Analysis (Wodak, 2009).

2.2 Review of Relevant Literature

Attempts to master European languages and adapt them to the aims of African Commonwealth literature, have been varied and have met with various levels of success. Of the three major genres of literature, poetry has proven to be the most sensitive in its linguistic choices and manipulations and this has naturally not escaped the notice of outstanding scholars on African Commonwealth Literature. Yet, their works based on data from African Commonwealth literature, have often been superficial in some respects. This also means they limit their manipulation of language to clauses, and sentences and do not pay attention to the smaller components of language. That is exactly the issue raised in this paper.

In a section of *Towards the Decolonisation of African Literature*, entitled "Poetic Eloquence and its Devices", Chinweizu et al. (1980) examine the syntax of early African Commonwealth poets like Soyinka, Clarke, Echereu, etc. and conclude that they mainly practice inversion of word order, which merely amounts to "syntactic jugglery" in addition to their Eurocentric imagery. On the other hand, Chinweizu et al. credit the traditionalists or revivalist poets like the later Okigbo, Kofi Awoonor, Okot p'Bitek and Mazisi Kunene with the incorporation of oral forms like proverbs, praise names, fables and parabolic and gnomic sayings, all from their communal repertory. This interdiscursivity and intertextuality, they rightly argue, constitute a credit to the language of African Commonwealth poetry.

In the particular case of Okot p'Bitek, Chinweizu et al. (1980) point out that his English is conversational and his strategy of dialogue between his personas renders his poetry dramatic. They equally draw attention to the fact that the traditionalists gain in authenticity by using mainly imagery that is based on the flora and fauna of their environment and their poetry distinguishes itself by its emphatic repetitions and parallel phrasings at the level of syntax.

The main problem with their statements on the use of English in African Commonwealth poetry is that they are based on larger linguistic units at the level of syntax and the interplay between various poetic forms at the level of interdiscursivity. They do not delve into smaller linguistic units at the phonological, morphological and lexical levels, which constitute the building blocks out of which poetry is really made. Secondly, their too much concern with ideology makes their study largely thematic and out of their 308 pages, they devote only to the methods of expression used by African Commonwealth poets.

On his part, Alvarez-Pereyre (1984) equally dwells on the macro linguistic structures of English in his discussion of the use of the English Language by South African poets. In a section entitled, "Reflections on language" (Alvarez-pereyre, 1984, pp. 261-264), he opens up with the following significant statement: "the poets of the first generation express themselves in a much studied English. Whereas Brutus, in his admiration of Donne and Hopkins plays with quotations and implicit references to assert his mastery of the English Language and culture, which are denied him, Pieterse, full of the joy of discovering in the English Language a tool that enables him to play with words, and meanings, finds the language itself a personal freedom, which no one can take away from him." Despite this lofty opening, Alvarez-Pereyre does not bring in data to prove his point, which seems to rest principally in interdiscursivity and lexico-semantics.

Heron (1984) on his part, notes emphatic repetition as an important aspect of the English Language used by African Commonwealth poets, and states about Okot p'Bitek's use of imagery. "Okot has completely avoided the stock of common images of English literature through his familiarity with the stock of common images of Acoli literature." He also argues that Transliteration tends to reduce the semantic impact of some forms borrowed from orature, and to support himself, he cites Taban Lo Liyong who says: "The meaning of deep Acoli proverbs are made very light by their rendition into English word for word, rather than sense for sense, or proverb for proverb" (p. 8). This discussion by Heron, serious as it is again limits itself only to macro structures of the English Language. There is no attempt on his part to believe into the manipulation of individual parts of speech, for example.

While other critics think that Achebe has succeeded most in the Africanization or indegenization of the English Language, Heron (1984) makes the following claim for Okot p'Bitek:

"… Many African writers using English or French have attempted to 'Africanise' these languages. Okot p'Bitek has succeeded in this more than any other previous writer" (p. 9). The problem, of course, still remains that Heron's claim is based on an examination of literary forms and larger linguistic units like syntax. Such claims hardly examine the smaller linguistic units out of which poetry is really made.

Further, Moba (1988) points out the Africanization of English through the use of English lexis together with lexis borrowed from African languages, but when he attempts to make a statement about micro linguistic elements (like parts of speech), he jumps into inaccuracies because he has not gathered enough data to analyze and arrive at serious conclusions. Thus, he states: "Pidgin does not distinguish between the tenses. The state of the verb is only determined by the context" (p. 61). He say this because of the absence of inflections that can act as tense markers in Pidgin. Yet, if he were speaking from a vantage position of someone with enough data, he would have realized that tense in Pidgin is determined by auxiliaries.

Maiwong (2019) is one of the few studies devoted to the use of the English Language in African Commonwealth literature that covers all the genres. The section devoted to the use of the English Language in poetry focuses on the works of Nortje (1973); Lenrie (1967); and p'Bitek (1966) and examines linguistic features like figurative language, syntax and lexis.

The problem again is that this study dwells mostly on the larger linguistic units and does not delve into an analysis of the smaller components of language that could yield more knowledge about the African Commonwealth poet's mastery and use of the English Language to express themselves. Only in the seventh chapter of his work that deals with lexis, does this work attempt an analysis of smaller linguistic units like the revisionist use of 'white' and 'black' and use of marked verbs. Even with the relatively small data he uses to examine the use of marked verbs, which is a very important linguistic phenomenon, he makes a point as pertinent as the following about Nortje:

"By using marked verbs, he is able to **denote an action** and **suggest an adverbial** in the same word. The adverbial, in turn, becomes a new signifier and a conveyor of new meanings. Thus, only a **demonstration of a mastery** of the code by the poet, but also proof of a determination to attain **accuracy**

and economy. For the poet's use of any member of a collocational set always depends on his intent." (p.345) (my emphasis).

Similar to this venture is Maiwong (2023), who handles the different levels of English and identity in African Commonwealth literary discourse systematically. His analysis reveals that African Commonwealth writers use strategies like grafting, code-switching, code-mixing, punning, transliteration, intertextuality, and interdiscursivity to meet their objectives. He ascertains that the effective use of Acrolectal English helps in characterization, social criticism and creation of humour rather than a usurpation of the speech of characters, and that various forms of both Mesolectal English and Basilectal English often lead to a redefinition of identity. Despite his succinct contribution, his corpus is limited to the novels of Achebe (1982), Asong (1995), and Tah (2015), and his analysis is largely structural, grammatical, functioning of Acrolectal, Mesolectal, and Basilectal English from Structural, Semiotic, and Critical Discourse Analysis dimensions and does not delve into the functioning of smaller linguistic unit like Marked Verbs from the Markedness, Semiotic, and Critical Discourse Analysis perspectives.

The work differs from the aforementioned in that its corpus is poetry, and it handles three different authors who consciously and/or unconsciously use Marked English Verbs to transmit their messages. These authors are Brutus (1973), Nortje (1973), and Mtshali (1972), all from South Africa. Thus, it stands a better chance of examining the Marked English Verbs in African Commonwealth Poetry, and contributing to some reliable findings on linguistic studies.

2.3 Brief Biography of Authors under Study

All three poets in focus are products of apartheid. Dennis Brutus, the eldest of the three, was born in Salisbury (present day Zimbabwe) in 1924, but spent most of his life in South Africa where he experienced the deprivations, censorship and imprisonment resulting from apartheid, until he had to go on forced exile.

Nortje, also a white coloured South African like Brutus, was born in Oudstboorn in the Cape Province of South Africa and educated in Port Elizabeth and at the Segregated University College of Western Cape and at Jesuit College, Oxford. He taught in Canada before returning to Oxford where he died in 1970.

On his part, Oswald Mtshali, born in the Natal Province of South Africa is of Zulu descent and studied only up to High school, then worked as a post office agent before settling to write poetry.

2.4 Synopsis of Works in Focus

All three poets have distinguished themselves by their mastery of the English Language. Brutus (1973) and Nortje (1973) because they have no African language to fall back to, since they are white coloured South Africans, they have no option than to master the British Standard English. In the similar vein, Mtshali (1972), a black coloured South African, because of the harsh censorship of the repressive apartheid regime, which he strives to circumvent, he needed to master the English Language.

In his poetry, Brutus (1973) essentially conveys his experiences as a coloured South African, discriminated against, imprisoned and forced into exile. These are the major themes highlighted in *A*

Simple Lust (1973), which is a collection of poems earlier published in "Sirens, Knuckles Boots" (1963); "Letters to Martha" (1965); "Poems from Algriers" (1970) and "Thoughts Abroad" (1970).

On his part, Nortje (1973) lambasts racial segregation with its attendant destructive effects on love, education and freedom of movement. He equally dwells very poignantly on the effects of exile on the individual and the resultant frustration. He expounds Pan-Africanism and castigates the inhumanity of imprisonment in his lone collection, *Dead Roots* (1973).

Finally, Mtshali's poetry, entitled, "Sounds of Cowhide Drum" (1972), is essentially an examination of the nefarious system of apartheid and its multifaceted effects on the lives of both non-whites who are oppressed, and the whites who are guilty of oppressing fellow human beings.

3. Result

Table 2. Data and Analysis

s/n	Marked Verb	Unmarked Verb	Meaning of Marked form with Additional Linguistic Features for Properties Underlined
1	Survive	Live	continue to live or exist; live or exist longer than; remain alive after.
2	Wither	Dry	become dry, faded or dead.
3	Rake	Search	search for facts etc.
4	Uncoil	Unwind	unwind or straighten out e.g. like a snake
5	Hissing	make a sound	making the sound [s] e.g. like a snake
6	Clobber	Hit	hit something very hard
7	Scream	Cry	give a loud, high, cry because you are hurt, frighten, excited, etc.
8	Gush	Flow	flow or pour suddenly and quickly out of a hole in large amounts
9	Reared	made to grow	made to grow; brought up
10	break forward	Move	move suddenly forward
11	Thrash	Move	(cause to) move violently
12	Flow	Run	run like water
13	Mounting	Rising	rising in amount
14	Become	Be	grow to be
15	Revive	Live	bring back or come back to life or consciousness
16	Sucks	Sucks	take liquid or air out of something
17	Congealed	Freeze	of blood, fat etc. cause to become thick or solid by using cold temperature
18	Swish	Move	to move quickly through the air in a way that makes a soft sound
19	Straining	Injuring	injuring yourself or part of your body by making it work too hard.
20	Crouching	Stooping	stooping low with bent legs like an animal ready to spring, or like a

			person hiding.
21	Walk	Move	be compelled to walk
22	Fly	Go	Go or move quickly
23	Hammer	Strike	Strike or beat with a hammer produce by hard work; work hard at
24	Forge	Shape	Shape by heating and hammering
25	Tearing	Pulling	Pulling apart by force; pulling violently
26	Course	Flow	Flow or move quickly
27	Foil	Prevent	Prevent something from carrying out its plans
28	Forged	Made	Made, shaped, formed as in a forge
29	Shone	Were bright	were bright as if with light
30	Pour	Come in or go	Come or go in large numbers
31	Bursts	Is full	Is full to over – flowing (with grief)
32	Stilled	Killed	Made to be without movement; made to be quiet
33	Matched	Equaled	Equaled
34	Filled	Made full	Made full until there is room for nothing more
35	Roars	Cries	Makes a loud deep sound like a lion
36	Blots	Covers	Disgraces

4. Discussion

4.1 Discussion of findings

One of the main aspects of apartheid that all the three poets in focus bitterly protest against, is police violence. To mark verb in a manner that confirms the assertion by Parker (1979, p. 1) that a serious linguistic analysis of any form of discourse must first enquire, which parts of speech carry most of the meaning.

Brutus, the eldest of the three, complains in “Somehow We Survive”.

“Somehow we survive and tenderness frustrated does not wither.

Investigating searchlights rake our naked unprotected contours…” (ASL, p.4)

The underlined verbs are marked forms in the collocation sets to which they belong, and the choice of the poet, in each case, is not accidental. It is a purposeful way of condemning the violent methods of the South African police under apartheid. The verb “survive” stresses that they continue to live or exist longer than expected, given the inhuman conditions in which they are forced to live by the apartheid system. And despite the inhuman treatment they receive from agents of the regime, their own “tenderness”, “kindness” or “humanity” does not “wither”. The marked verb “wither” which he uses generates a metaphor, which implicitly compares tenderness, which is an aspect of moral beauty, to a flower which does not become dry, faded or dead. This confirms the assertion of semioticians like Barthes (1964) that texts are not to be taken at their face value.

Again, he complains that despite their innocence, investigative searchlight rake their naked contours in

the night. The marked verb "rake" shows the degree of seriousness with which the police search for incriminating information among the population that lives in ghettoes, full of poor habitations with creaking roofs. The specific information about the nature of the police search brought in by the verb "rake" in a manner to confirm the assertions of Trubetzkoy (1931) and Jakobson (1963) about markedness and semantic specification. And the verb also suggests that the apartheid regime does not bother about the welfare of its citizens, but about its subsistence in a way which confirms the ideological stand of advocates of Historical Critical Discourse Analysis like Wodak (2009).

In "Nightsong: City", Brutus (1973) further complains:

"Sleep well, my love sleep well: the harbor lights glaze over restless docks, police cars cockroach through the tunel streets …" (ASL, p.18). The terror in which the oppressed live is convey in these lines and the numerical strength of the police who invade the ghettoes is vividly conveyed by the marked verb "cockroach" used to describe the action of the Cass. Indeed, the poet does not find any existing English verb accurate enough to describe the movement of the police vans in the night than the neologism he invents – "cockcroach". This new verb is a marked form of the neutral verb "move" comparing the movement of these vans in the night to that of cockroaches that come out in the night to pick remains of food. The literary effect of this neologism is an analogy, which further gives specific information about the movement and activities of the police vans (Trubetzkoy, 1931; Jakobson, 1963).

To take a last example from Brutus (1973) concerning police violence, he further complains in "Somehow We Survive": "Patrols uncoil along the asphalt dark hissing their menance to our lives" … (ASL., p. 4). The marked verb "uncoil" which denotes the unwinding of something like a string, combines with the marked verb "hissing" to constitute metonymic references to a snake, which suggest total danger. Thus, the use of these two marked verbs is able to convey very vividly the danger that police patrols spell to the oppressed in South African ghettos by suggesting this analogy with a lot of linguistic economy. The poem thus becomes an effective reports to the outside world about human right abuse in South Africa under apartheid.

On his part, Mtshali (1972) uses four marked verbs in "Just a Passerby", to condemn the same police violence and also report this inhuman treatment to the world. Mtshali's persona reports about a fellow black in this poem as follows:

I saw them clobber him with Kieries,
I heard him scream with pain
Like a victim of slaughter;
I smelt fresh blood gush
from his nostrils,
and flow on the street.

(SCD in PBA, 1975, p. 317)

The marked verb "clobber" means to hit very hard, and "scream" denotes a loud cry as a result of pain. The verb "gush" does not only mean that blood is flowing, but also adds that it is doing so in large

quantities. These verbs, therefore, communicate more effectively by not only denoting what their unmarked variants denote, but also suggesting adjectival and adverbials that further describes the actions denoted by the unmarked variants (Jakobson, 1963).

On his part, Nortje (1973) uses an analogy that compares police violence to the violent action of sea waves and the marked verbs he uses to describe the action of these waves consequently connote the action of apartheid police. He states in his poem entitled "Soliloquy: South Africa":

Should you break my heart open, revive the muscle for March grows on with mounting horrors how to be safe is our main worry. To keep you happy I shall speak more, though only in whispers of freedom now that desire has become subversive.

The gulls are screaming, I speak to sea. Waters, reared for attack, break forward: without a word, this violence. From the chiffs above the warm, shark-breading sea that drowns the oracle of the vibrant air, I walk and hear the ropes that thrash against the flag poles. (p. 5)

The inhuman treatment bred by police violence seems to kill love and so the marked verb 'revive' finds its place when it refers to the action of the heart. Love needs to be rekindled or in metaphorical terms, his heart needs to be brought back to life in this kind of society. The expression "mounting horror" conveys fear, that is, growing fear bred by the oppressive atmosphere in South Africa. And, human desires that must be freely expressed in any society have "become subversive" under the oppressive regime of apartheid. The marked verb "become" shows that something which should normally just "be" is now being viewed in a negative way. These first three marked verbs in the extract above, definitely carry the bulk of Nortje's message.

Then, the next stanza comes of the crux of the matter as its four marked verbs convey the violence of apartheid police. The "screaming" or sharp cries of the sea gulls in pain; the suggestion carried by the verb "reared" that this violence is not incidental, but well planned; the violence implied by the verb "break forward", which means "move forcefully forward" and "thrash against", which means "move violently against", all vividly convey the violence Nortje is complaining about in metaphorical terms.

The next nefarious aspect of apartheid about which all three poets in focus demonstrate their process in the use of marked verbs, is imprisonment. Brutus who devotes a whole collection entitled "Letters to Martha" (1965) to his prison experience, complains in "cold": "The clammy cement sucks naked feet …" (p. 52).

The active verb "suck" which is a marked variant of the unmarked verbal "take out" liquid or air from something, connotes a certain aggressiveness from the cold floor. It is as if the floor is made active or personified, and its wicked activity made more evident. Such connotations tie in with the arguments of semioticians like Barthes (1964) that one have to go beyond surface meaning and the assertions of Trubetzkoy (1931) and Jakobson (1963) that marked verbs of necessity have additional properties.

Brutus (1973) also refers to those in prison as "those congealed in concrete" (p. 176). The marked verb "congealed" refers to blood or fat made to become thick or solid in freezing conditions. Thus, this marked variant suggests that the effect of cold concrete floors on the prisoners is to freeze them almost like

corpses in the mortuary. No doubt, it is surprising that in somehow they survive, Brutus effectively registers his protest against prison conditions in South Africa, which he reports even to the outside world in his poetry.

After his release from prison, contact with the beauty of nature reminds him of those who are still in Roben Island and their strong determination to fight for freedom when he writes about them in *A Simple Lost*, thus: "And I think of the Island's desolate dusks and the swish of the Island's haunting rain and the departed frenzy straining our prisoned breasts, and the men who are still crouching now in the grey cells, on the grey floors, stubborn and bowed" (ASL, p. 16). The marked verb "swish" conveys the aggressiveness of the rain in Roben Island as it moves quickly through the air, and the verb "haunting" taken as an adjectival, shows how frequently it rains. And yet, the valiant, endurant prisoners keep "straining" as they carry out the dehumanizing tasks assigned to them. As they do this, they have no chairs to sit on and they have to sit on the cold floor, and this complaint is brought out by the marked verb "Crouching". After paying attention to these marked verbs, one cannot doubt that the prison conditions described are both inhuman and dehumanizing. And this condemnation is clearly brought out, thanks to the additional information or semantic specifications (Trubetzkoy, 1931; Jakobson, 1963) contained in these verbs.

On his part, Nortje (1973), in his presentation of prison conditions in "Letter from Pretoria Central Prison", uses marked verbs to emphasize the lack of freedom, the role of work in prison, the intensity of hard labour therein and the need to distract oneself from thoughts about life outside prison. He states: "They walk us to the workshop. I am eminent, the blacksmith of the block; these active hours fly like sparks in the furnance, I hammer metals with zest letting the sweating muscles forge a forgetfulness of worlds more magnetic" (DR, p.49). The marked verb "walk" indicates that they are compelled to go to the forge where the persona is forced to be a leading blacksmith. The verb "fly" indicates that due to work, time moves quickly unlike during the idle hours when life in prison actually becomes boring because it consists of sitting on one spot. The next two marked verbs – "hammer" and "forge" – testify to the fact that there is real hard labour in South African prisons. To hammer means, to strike or beat with a hammer and to "forge" means to shape by beat in and hammering iron. This is real hard labour, and for an intellectual like Nortje to be compelled to do this, is one of the methods that the apartheid regime uses to silence intellectuals. "Letter from Pretoria Central Prison" is really a protest letter against these harsh conditions and a message to the outside world to intervene and end this inhuman aberration. It is a protest that evokes ideology in a manner that recalls the assertions of that outstanding semiotician, Barthes (1964), that such experiences become conveyors of cultural meanings in the third order of signification where they reflect ideology or the broad principals by which a culture organizes and interprets reality with which it has to cope.

The last major aspect of apartheid which these poets protest against, is the very doctrine of white supremacy on which apartheid is based. White supremacy or "baaskap" presupposes that blacks are inferior to whites and so, to protest against this, the three poets use heroic poems to portray not only the

deep, incontestable humanity of black heroes, but also their bravery, courage and greatness. The great heroes they portray are Chief Albert Luthuli, Abdel-Gamal Nasser and Emperor Shaka, the Great. To do this effectively, they use marked verbs. In Brutus elegy to Luthuli, entitled, "So the old Leonine heart is stilled", the poet states: "So, the old Leonine heart is stilled the grave composure of the craven face matched at last by a stillness overall the measure of bitterness, totally filled brims to the tautness of exhausted space …" (ASL, pp. 170-175). The marked verb "stilled" is a respectful euphemism for the unmarked form 'dead'. The poem also commends Chief Luthuli for his self-mastery in the face of the provocations of apartheid and that is why there is so much mourning after his death.

In the dithyramb, entitled, "Luthuli: 10 December" 1961, Brutus writes: "The African Lion rouses in his shadowy lair and roars his challenge through the clamorous earth. Its billow blots all discards and all jars" (ASL, p. 35). The marked verb "roars" which is transferred from the animals' domain initiates an analogy, which compares Luthuli to a lion so as to highlight his charisma, authoritative nature and ability to bring unity among his people as a leader. Thus, his voice is said to "blot" or wipe out all forms of disagreement.

On his part, Nortje (1973) describes the great funeral of Nasser in the following lines: "Nasser is dead": "millions pour into Cairo whose grief is inconsolable No one can stem the spread of fire or the flow of tears. I think of the sons of Africa sometimes and my heart bursts. When I think of Shaka or Christ the rebel my heart bursts (DR. p. 131). So, to depict the number of people who come to mourn for Nasser, Nortje uses the marked verb "pour", which means to come or go continuously somewhere in large numbers. Definitely, this explains why, with such a sad spectacle, the persona's heart "bursts" or is suddenly filled with strong emotion. These two marked verbs, with their additional semantic specifications, poignantly convey the poet's grief and, by extension, that of Africans on the death of their hero, Nasser. Such a portrait is, of course, a protest against the myth of white superiority.

Finally, in "The Birth of Shaka" (1972), Mtshali uses a number of marked verbs to depict the great Zulu emperor who also challenged the myth of white superiority through his prowess in war. He writes:

His baby cry
was of a cub
tearing the neck
of the lioness
because he was fatherless
The gods
boiled his blood
in a clay pot of passion
to course in his veins.
His heart was shaped into an ex shield to foil every foe.
Ancestors forged
his muscles into
thongs as tough

as wattle bark
and nerves
as sharp as
syringe thorns. (SCD in PBA, 1975, p. 318)

The marked verb "tearing at" highlights the aggressiveness of a future great warrior as it means to pull at violently. The great patriotic feeling of Shaka and his valiance are mirrored by the verb "course", which refers to the quick flow of blood in his veins. Thus, he is presented as a hero fit to "foil" or prevent all enemies from carrying out their plans.

Furthermore, his muscles or biceps are as strong as if they have been "forged" – a marked verb which immediately generates a comparison between them and metals which are heated by blacksmiths to be very hot, and then hammered into shape. The use of this verb thus, leads to a lot of linguistic economy. Finally, the verb "shone" used in relationship to his eyes, highlights Shaka's foresight, which enables him to foretell the arrival of the white colonialists. Consequently, the use of marked verbs by Mtshali (1972) enables him to better portray this hero and protest against the myth of white superiority, which underlies the system of apartheid.

4.2 Summary Findings and Contributions

The analysis has proven beyond doubt that marked English verbs constitute an efficient tool that enables the three poets in focus to protest against police violence, inhuman conditions in South African prisons and racist myths, among other forms of injustice promoted by the system of apartheid in South Africa.

Secondly, given the literary techniques that these marked English verbs often give rise to, in addition to the denotative meanings of their unmarked variants, their use enables a lot of linguistic economy and proves the poets mastery of the English Language. Such mastery proves that Africanization of the English Language is not the only solution available to African Commonwealth writers as they grapple with the problem of expressing themselves in a foreign language.

In the analysis of a data of marked English verbs, it has been discovered that markedness as specification for semantic distinction can lead not only to a suggestion of adjectivals and adverbials, but also to that of figures of speech as follows:

Table 3. Specific Contributions

Verb	Meaning	Suggested linguistic/stylistic feature
Wither	Make or become dry and lifeless	Metaphor
Clobber	Hit something very hard	Adverbial
Scream	To give a loud, high cry	Adjectival
Forge	Heat metals very hot and then hammer them into shape	Analogy
Roars	Make a loud deep sound	Analogy
Hissing	Make a sound like ss	Onomatopoeia and metonymy

The linguistic phenomenon of linguistic markedness thus, goes beyond existing linguistic terms like hyponymy and polysemy and cannot be better expressed by them, as Haspelmath (2006) suggests on very thin evidence. Thus, the paper rather establishes and argues very strongly that markedness for semantic specification needs to be further explored under other parts of speech like nouns, adjectives and adverbs, so as to further bring out its usefulness.

Again, it is necessary to point out that scholarship on phonological and morphological data, unlike in this paper where data is semantic and exclusively from the English Language, whereas data in most write ups on markedness has been cross linguistic.

This paper has shown, with a lot of supporting data, that marked verbs carry much of the message in African Commonwealth poetry, and are therefore an efficient tool in the hands of protest poets on the continent. It has also made a pertinent contribution in linguistic studies by proving that a closer study of African Commonwealth Literature necessitates an analytical study of various parts of speech and not only the bigger units of the English Langauge. Furthermore, it proves beyond doubt that linguists who have been doubting the usefulness of markedness theories like Haspelmath, ought to seriously reconsider their stands.

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