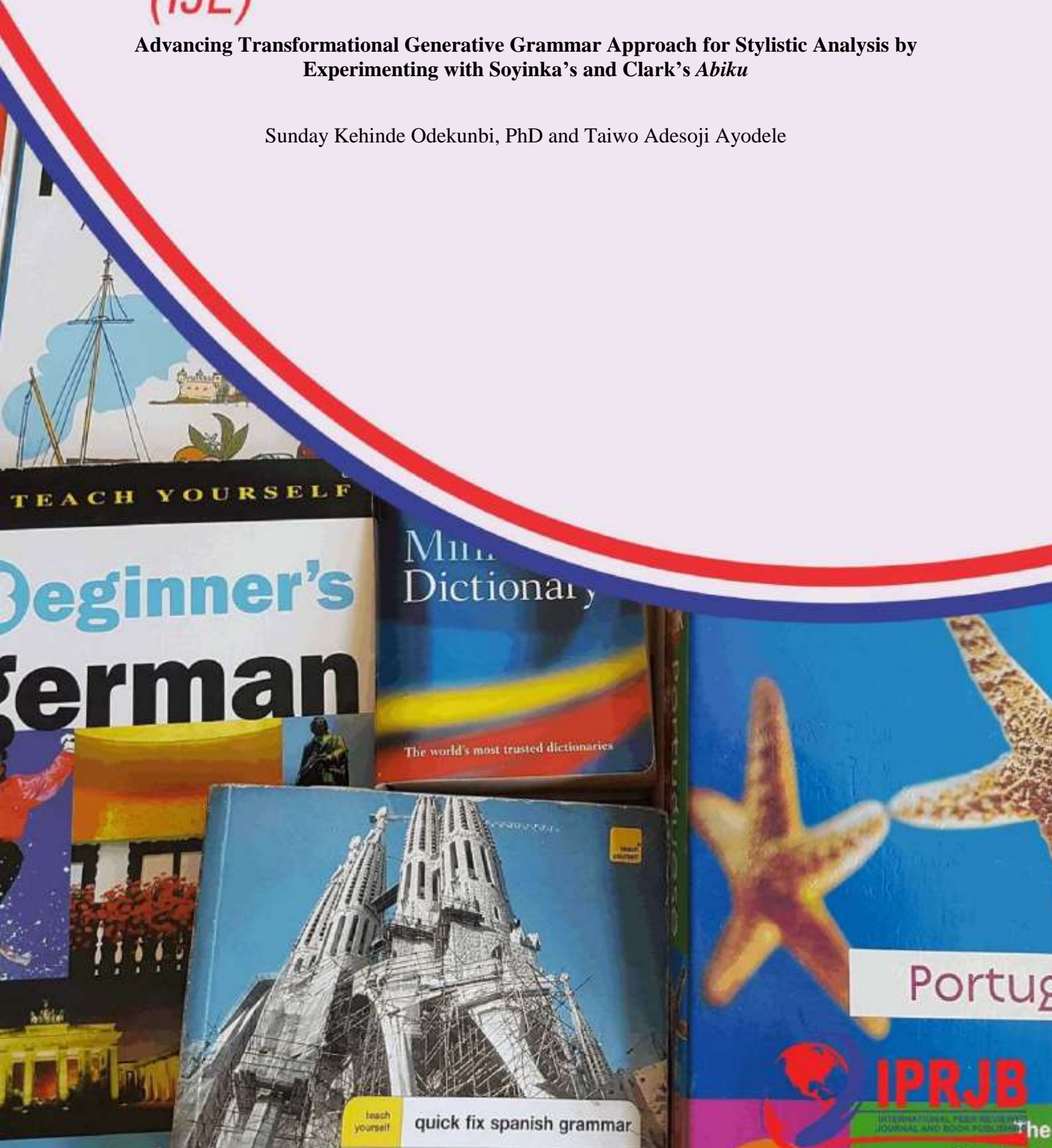


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Advancing Transformational Generative Grammar Approach for Stylistic Analysis by  
Experimenting with Soyinka's and Clark's *Abiku*

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**Advancing Transformational Generative Grammar Approach for Stylistic Analysis by Experimenting with Soyinka's and Clark's *Abiku***



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**Abstract**

**Purpose:** The focus of this study is to examine the appropriateness of Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) approach to linguistic stylistic analysis since many stylistic scholars have argued against its appropriateness, claiming that Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) approach is a more accessible analytical framework. This study advances the use of TGG in stylistic analysis by applying Ohmann's (1964) transformational manipulations of reordering, combination, addition and deletion to the teaching and interpretation of African poetry.

**Methodology:** The study adopted descriptive research design. Using Soyinka's and Clark's *Abiku* as instructional texts, the study examines the pedagogical effectiveness of transformational manipulations as practical tools for stylistic analysis. Soyinka's *Abiku* was first analysed as a classroom model using the four transformational tools, after which students were instructed to apply the same approach independently to Clark's *Abiku*. The population for the study comprised thirty stylistic students from each of the selected colleges of education in Southwestern Nigeria, making a total of one hundred and eighty (180) students. Data were analysed through textual stylistic analysis and quantitative evaluation of students' performance across the transformational manipulations.

**Findings:** The findings showed that students were generally able to apply the transformational tools successfully, with reordering and combination recording higher performance than addition and deletion. The results refute the claim made by academics such as Ellis (1970) that Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) is too abstract or unapproachable for useful stylistic research. The study demonstrates that TGG approach provides accessible and systematic procedures for teaching stylistic analysis and strengthens Ohmann's (1964) argument that stylistic variation is rooted in performance and linguistic choice rather than competence alone.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:** The paper concludes that transformational stylistics remains pedagogically relevant for the teaching of African poetry and linguistic stylistics. This implies that TGG can function as an approachable framework for stylistic education and should not be limited to theoretical linguistics alone. To improve students' analytical skills, curriculum designers should incorporate transformational operations like reordering, combination, addition and deletion into stylistics courses.

**Keywords:** *Transformational Manipulations, Stylistics Pedagogy, African Poetry, Abiku, Performance, Competence*

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## INTRODUCTION

This introduction covers general introduction that acquaints readers with the tenets of the discourse surrounding Transformation Generative Grammar (TGG), Ohmann's (1964) transformational manipulations and other stylistic analysis approaches, in particular, Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) and lays open the statement of the problem.

### General Introduction

Controversies abound on the appropriateness of Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) approach to linguistic stylistic analysis. Some scholars emphasise that the Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) provides more appropriate and accessible tools in this regard. Hence, when one compares the availability of linguistic stylistic works in both SFG and TGG approaches, there is paucity of linguistic stylistic works from the perspective of TGG in general (Ayodele, 2021, p. 48). The first notable giant stride to presenting a TGG approach to linguistic stylistic analysis is Ohmann (1964). According to Ohmann (1964, p. 428), in the discourse on style, there are, at least, three important characteristics of transformational rules which make them more promising as a source of insight into style than Phrase Structure rules. These are: (i) optionality in transformation, (ii) working changes on structures but retaining a part, and (iii) explaining syntactic complexity as a simple sentence built up into a complex one (Ohmann, 1964, 428-430). In emphasising these characteristics, Ayodele (2021, p. 48) contends that for Ohmann (1964), an exploration into the important characteristics of transformational rules would provide clues to a TGG approach to the study of linguistic stylistics. Therefore, Ohmann's (1964) exploration results in what he tags transformational manipulations which entail reordering, combination, addition and deletion, which are the stylistic analysis tools the current paper focuses on for the analysis of the two selected poems.

Consequently, the paper depends on the description of the transformational manipulations as presented in Ohmann (1964) and Ayodele (2021). Ohmann (1964, p. 429) gives a condition for applying transformational manipulations - they are performed on fully formed sentences rather than as a way of getting to parts of fully formed sentences from incomplete, abstract symbols such as NP. Deletion, according to Ayodele (2021, p. 52), is the exclusion of a word or words in a sentence without doing any damage to the structure. Reordering is an attempt by a speaker or a writer to play with, interchange, switch or alternate the parts of speech/phrases in a sentence (Ayodele, 2021, p. 52). Moreover, additives (addition) offer methods of adding information about a single "thing" with a minimum of repetition using relative, conjunction or comparison (Ohmann, 1964, p. 434). The fourth tool, combination, affords a speaker or a writer the opportunity to combine words, phrases and clauses using different mechanisms that suit the purpose of the discourse (Ayodele, 2021, p. 52). The paper also focuses on the issue of the relevance of style in stylistics as discussed by scholars in stylistics, and complements Ohmann's (1964) assertion that style as choice establishes the usefulness of TGG as an appropriate approach to linguistic stylistic analysis.

Hence, the study advances the use of the TGG approach for linguistic stylistic analysis by demonstrating its adequacy, rewards and accessibility as a formal framework for interpreting literary texts. It specifically applies the four transformational manipulations – reordering, combination, addition and deletion – as systematic tools for the linguistic stylistic analysis of Soyinka's and Clark's poems, *Abiku* to demonstrate the appropriateness and efficacy of TGG for stylistic analysis, using stylistics students from six colleges of education in Southwestern Nigeria. Moreover, the research explores the impact of style as choice on how two different

poets present the same subject matter, thereby supporting Ohmann's (1964) assertion that stylistic variation is a matter of performance rather than innate competence. Lastly, it performs a systematic comparison of the two selected texts to provide a clear interpretation and lucid understanding of African belief system on reincarnation.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The central challenge in contemporary stylistics lies in the ongoing controversy regarding the adequacy of Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) as a viable tool for literary stylistic analysis. While foundational scholars like Ohmann (1964) established that style is a byproduct of optional transformational rules, many modern stylisticians have migrated toward Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), claiming it offers more systematic and accessible descriptive tools. This shift has resulted in a significant research gap, particularly in African scholarship, where TGG remains insufficiently utilised despite its potential to link syntactic structures to deep-seated cultural worldviews. Furthermore, critics such as Ellis (1970) have questioned whether transformational models can truly account for shifts in meaning and attitude, suggesting that the TGG approach may be too rigid for the multi-layered interpretation of poetic language. Consequently, there is an urgent need to re-evaluate the TGG framework and demonstrate its practical efficacy in deciphering complex literary forms. However, it is important to note that the focus of the two approaches are clearly different. Thus, TGG focuses on syntactic derivation, while SFG focuses on social-semiotic function.

In addition, the problem is further compounded by the lack of comparative linguistic studies on the *Abiku* phenomenon as presented by Wole Soyinka and J.P. Clark. Although, literary critics have extensively discussed the thematic differences between Soyinka's defiant *Abiku* and Clark's pleading mother, these interpretations often lack the rigorous syntactic evidence that a transformational analysis provides. By failing to apply Ohmann's (1964) manipulations – reordering, combination, addition and deletion – to these texts, scholars miss the opportunity to see how different *performance systems* (Chomsky, 1995) articulate the same African belief system through contrasting stylistic routes. Existing literature, such as Faniran and Adetuyi (2017), focuses on formalist structural patterns but does not link these choices to the underlying generative processes that constitute a writer's *stylistic signature*. Importantly, every writer has a *stylistic signature* and the application of transformational manipulations (generative processes) makes obvious such writer's impressive linguistic dexterity. Therefore, this study seeks to address this deficiency by advancing a TGG-based methodology that proves that grammatical optionality is the primary vehicle for stylistically interpreting the cultural and ideological dimensions of African poetry.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section presents theoretical framework that establishes the connections between TGG and stylistic analysis principles, extant literature explores the arguments in previous scholarly studies in line with that of the current study, while research gap clearly unveils the essence of this study.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is premised on three established scholarly arguments: (i) the principles of competence and performance (Chomsky, 1995), (ii) the transformational manipulations in TGG (Ohmann, 1964) and (iii) the argument that style is choice, an idea of a school of linguistic stylistics. When discussing the capacity to use and understand language (*the language faculty*), Chomsky (1995, p. 167) says we can distinguish the language from a conceptual system (*which*

*is competence*) and a system of pragmatic competence (*which is performance*). He expounds further that language is embedded in performance systems that enable its expressions to be used for articulating, interpreting, referring, inquiring, reflecting, and other actions. Performance systems, therefore, constitute an important issue in the framework of this research.

In addition, Ohmann's (1964) transformational manipulations are the linguistic stylistic tools for the current research. Ohmann argues that analysing writers' or speakers' decision and reasons for saying the same thing in alternative ways is the advantage TGG approach presents to linguistic stylistic analysis, and the tools for analysing, interpreting, understanding and describing writers' actual styles are reordering, combination, addition and deletion. Analysing texts with these tools, therefore, reveal the functionality of the performance systems in relation to writers' choice making in articulating their thoughts and ideas. The idea of alternative phrasings (now transformational alternatives), which is crucial to the notion of style, has a clear analogue within the framework of a transformational grammar (Ohmann, 1964, p. 431). He further argues that the notion of style calls for different ways of expressing the same content.

Consequently, the three theoretical positions complement one another in the present study. Chomsky's (1995) distinction between competence and performance provides the conceptual basis for explaining stylistic variation as a manifestation of actual language use rather than grammatical knowledge alone. Ohmann's (1964) transformational manipulations constitute the analytical procedures through which the poems are examined, focusing specifically on reordering, combination, addition and deletion as observable indicators of stylistic performance. Therefore, the linguistic stylistic principle that style is choice provides the interpretive framework for explaining why the poets select particular transformational alternatives in representing the abiku phenomenon. In the pedagogical aspect of the study, these same transformational manipulations also serve as instructional tools through which students are guided to analyse Soyinka's Abiku and subsequently apply the same procedures independently to Clark's Abiku. Instructively, the analysis of the poems and the assessment of students' performance are guided by these three pillars: Ohmann's transformational manipulations identify the stylistic tools, Chomsky's competence-performance distinction explains their use as performance-based choices, and the principle of style as choice supports the interpretation of those choices in both the model analysis and students' independent application.

### **Empirical Review and Research Gap**

The empirical review engages three issues: (a) TGG's descriptive adequacy, (b) the interface of performance systems and stylistic choices, and (c) context-specific (African) applications of formalist models.

### **TGG's Descriptive Adequacy**

The study of stylistics has long revolved around the interaction between language structure and artistic creativity. Ohmann's (1964) study remains the cornerstone of Transformational Generative Stylistics, introducing transformational manipulations – reordering, combination, addition and deletion – as analytical tools for identifying stylistic choices. He argues that these manipulations reveal how style represents the writer's linguistic performance rather than innate competence. Ohmann (1964) establishes that transformational grammar provides practical means of interpreting literary style by viewing it as alternative ways of saying the same thing, and that these alternatives constitute stylistic variation – a principle that later discussions, such as Ellis (1970) and Kintgen (1974), further examine and critique. In contrast, Ellis (1970)

challenges the concept of style within linguistic analysis, asserting that it often obscures rather than clarifies meaning. Further challenging the assumption that stylistic variation simply equals alternative expressions of the same proposition, he argues that word choice often shifts meaning and attitude, a point he contends complicates the transformational model of style. Ohmann's view was, however, supported by Kintgen (1974), who emphasises that transformational stylistics provides useful tools for understanding literary style as different methods of expressing the same idea. In Kintgen's (1974) re-examination of Ohmann's framework, he acknowledges that transformational stylistics provides a formal means of describing alternative sentence structures but questions whether such transformations alone can adequately account for stylistic or interpretive meaning – a point the present study aims to address. Similarly, Enkvist (1973), Leech (1969), and Leech and Short (1981) demonstrate that formal linguistic models can systematically explain how grammatical and lexical choices produce stylistic effect and aesthetic meaning. These foundational studies established the descriptive adequacy of TGG for stylistic analysis, although they focused largely on Western literary texts and general stylistic theory rather than African poetry.

While Ellis (1970) and Kintgen (1974) question the extent to which transformational grammar alone can account for literary meaning, the present study contends that *Abiku* by Soyinka and Clark provides an appropriate testing ground for Ohmann's framework. Both poems exhibit extensive syntactic restructuring through foregrounding, clause combination, expansion and omission, despite their treatment of the same cultural phenomenon. These recurrent transformational patterns make the poems particularly suitable for analysis through reordering, combination, addition and deletion, since such manipulations reveal how each poet organises grammatical alternatives to produce distinct stylistic and ideological effects. For this reason, the transformational approach is adopted not merely for its description of structure, but because it provides a systematic means of explaining how alternative syntactic configurations contribute to meaning in the two poems.

### **The Interface of Performance Systems and Stylistic Choices**

Chomsky's (1965, 1995) distinction between competence and performance provides an important foundation for understanding stylistic variation within Transformational Generative Grammar. His proposition that language users generate infinitely varied expressions from finite grammatical rules explains how writers develop distinctive stylistic signatures through linguistic choice. Building on this framework, Newmeyer (1986) argues that linguistic theories, including generative grammar, operate within broader social and intellectual contexts rather than independently of communicative purpose. Complementing this position, Carter (1997) demonstrates that discourse structures reveal both grammatical organisation and social meaning, thereby linking linguistic form with communicative function. Likewise, Leech and Short (1981) operationalise this relationship by providing systematic procedures for explaining how grammatical and lexical choices shape literary interpretation, while Fowler (1971) argues that literary language remains continuous with ordinary language but acquires stylistic distinctiveness through structural and cultural choices. Enkvist (1973) similarly maintains that stylistic variation is observable through linguistic markers that connect grammatical choices with communicative intention. Collectively, these studies establish that stylistic meaning emerges from performance choices realised through grammatical structures rather than from competence alone. They also reinforce the view that TGG extends beyond formal description by accounting for how writers manipulate structural alternatives to achieve particular stylistic effects.

## Context-Specific African Applications of Formalist Models

Within African scholarship, Bamgbose (1991) and Adegbite (2000) demonstrate that linguistic structures are closely connected to the cultural and communicative realities of African discourse, suggesting that grammatical choices often encode culturally situated meanings. More recent studies have extended formal stylistic analysis to African texts, although not always within a transformational framework. Thiede (2009) asserts that writers exploit the mixed syntactic systems of English to achieve stylistic variation, reinforcing the expressive value of grammatical alternatives. Nnadi (2010) examines Chukwuemeka Ike's novels and shows that stylistic effects often arise from systematic syntactic transformations rather than thematic concerns. Hence, Sani (2016) explores gender variation in broadcast discourse and confirms that linguistic performance manifests through deliberate transformational patterns, although Ohmann's transformational manipulations are not employed. Faniran and Adetuyi (2017) analyse Soyinka's *Abiku* from a formalist perspective, concentrating on structural and rhetorical features without adopting a transformational generative framework capable of relating those stylistic choices to deeper linguistic processes. Most directly related to the present study, Ayodele (2021) applies Ohmann's transformational manipulations to Raji-Oyelade's *Black Laughter*, substantiating that stylistic distinctiveness arises from performance-based grammatical choices. Together with Leech (1969) and Stockwell (2002), these studies show that systematic linguistic approaches can account for how writers manipulate form, syntax and stylistic effect. Nevertheless, existing studies have neither comparatively examined Soyinka's and Clark's *Abiku* through Ohmann's transformational manipulations nor investigated the pedagogical effectiveness of using these manipulations to teach stylistic analysis. More specifically, none has demonstrated why the recurrent transformational structures in the two *Abiku* poems make Transformational Generative Grammar the most appropriate framework for analysing their contrasting stylistic representations of the same African belief system. In all, the present study addresses this theoretical and pedagogical gap by applying TGG both as an analytical framework for interpreting African poetic discourse and as a pedagogical model for developing students' stylistic competence.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive research design involving both textual stylistic analysis and pedagogical evaluation. The study applies Ohmann's (1964) transformational manipulations of reordering, combination, addition and deletion within the framework of Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) to the analysis of Wole Soyinka's and J. P. Clark's poems, *Abiku*. Soyinka's *Abiku*, a thirty-two-line poem arranged in eight quatrains, was used as the model text for classroom instruction, while Clark's *Abiku*, a twenty-six-line poem presented in a continuous poetic structure, was used for students' independent stylistic analysis. The poems were purposively chosen because they treat the same cultural belief system of reincarnation through different stylistic approaches, thereby providing suitable materials for comparative transformational analysis. In addition, the poems were also selected because they display rich transformational structures involving reordering, combination, addition and deletion, making them particularly suitable for analysis within Ohmann's (1964) transformational stylistic framework.

The population for the study comprised stylistics students from six purposively selected colleges of education in Southwestern Nigeria. These are: (i) Oyo State College of Education, Lanlate, (ii) Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, (iii) Sikiru Adetona College of Education, Science and Technology, Ogun State, (iv) Federal College of Education, Osiele,

Ogun State, (v) Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, and (vi) College of Education, Ikere Ekiti. Thirty students were randomly selected from each institution, giving a total population of one hundred and eighty participants. The colleges were selected because they offer comparable English language and literary studies programmes in which stylistics constitutes part of the curriculum, thereby providing relatively similar instructional contexts for the study.

Data collection was carried out in three stages across the selected institutions. The first stage involved introductory visits and the random selection of participating students. In the second stage, students were taught Soyinka's *Abiku* using the transformational stylistic tools of reordering, combination, addition and deletion as a model analytical framework. In the third stage, the students were instructed to apply the same transformational manipulations independently to the analysis of Clark's *Abiku*. Afterward, their responses were assessed to determine the extent to which they successfully transferred the TGG stylistic approach from guided instruction to independent textual analysis. The generated data were analysed through qualitative stylistic interpretation and quantitative evaluation of students' performance across the four transformational manipulations.

To ensure instructional consistency across the six colleges of education, the same lesson plan, instructional procedures and teaching materials were used during the classroom demonstration of Soyinka's *Abiku*. The researchers personally conducted the instructional sessions in all the selected institutions, applying the same sequence of explanation, textual examples and classroom activities based on Ohmann's (1964) transformational manipulations of reordering, combination, addition and deletion. Each session followed the same teaching duration and analytical procedure, allowing students equal exposure to the transformational framework before undertaking the independent analysis of Clark's *Abiku*. This standardisation minimised instructional variation and ensured that differences in students' performance were attributable primarily to their application of the transformational stylistic tools rather than differences in classroom delivery.

## RESULTS

This section presents the analysis of the data generated from the students' application of Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) stylistic tools to Clark's *Abiku* after the classroom model analysis of Soyinka's *Abiku*. The analysis focuses on students' performance in applying the four transformational manipulations of reordering, combination, addition and deletion across the six selected colleges of education. The data are presented in tables 1 to 6 to show the varying levels of students' performance in each transformational tool. Attention is paid to the extent to which the students successfully transferred the modelled stylistic approach to an independent textual analysis. The section also provides the basis for evaluating the pedagogical accessibility and effectiveness of transformational linguistic stylistics in teaching and analysing African poetry.

### Analysis of Students' Performance

After the model stylistic analysis of Soyinka's *Abiku*, students were instructed to apply the same transformational manipulations – reordering, combination, addition and deletion – to the analysis of Clark's *Abiku*. Thus, their responses were assessed to determine the extent to which they could independently apply the TGG stylistic tools introduced during the classroom demonstration. The performance of students across the six selected colleges of education is presented in Tables 1-6 below. The tables provide the basis for evaluating the accessibility of

each transformational tool and the extent to which students transferred the modelled TGG approach to an independent stylistic analysis of Clark's *Abiku*.

**Table 1: Performance of Students of Oyo State College of Education, Lanlate**

SN	The Tools	No of Students	No with High Performance	%	No with Low Performance	%
1.	Reordering	25	20	80.0	05	20.0
2.	Combination	25	20	80.0	05	20.0
3.	Addition	25	15	60.0	10	40.0
4.	Deletion	25	05	20.0	20	80.0

Table 1 shows that students of Oyo State College of Education, Lanlate performed better in reordering and combination than in addition and deletion. Reordering and combination recorded 80% high performance respectively, addition recorded 60% performance, while deletion recorded the lowest performance at 20%. This suggests that structurally visible transformational manipulations were more accessible to these students than omission-based structures requiring inferential interpretation.

**Table 2: Performance of Students of Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, Oyo State**

SN	The Tools	No of Students	No with High Performance	%	No with Low Performance	%
1.	Reordering	27	19	70.37	08	29.63
2.	Combination	27	20	74.07	07	25.93
3.	Addition	27	07	25.93	20	74.07
4.	Deletion	27	22	81.48	05	18.52

Table 2 reveals that students of the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, performed better in deletion and combination than in reordering and addition. Deletion recorded the highest high-performance rate at 81.48% closely followed by combination and re-ordering with 74.07% and 70.37%, while addition recorded the lowest at 25.93%. This suggests that the students demonstrated stronger ability in identifying omission-based structures than in recognising stylistic expansions and descriptive additions.

**Table 3: Performance of Students of Sikiru Adetona College of Education, Science and Technology, Ogun State**

SN	The Tools	No of Students	No with High Performance	%	No with Low Performance	%
1.	Reordering	24	14	58.33	10	41.67
2.	Combination	24	05	20.83	19	79.17
3.	Addition	24	20	83.33	04	16.67
4.	Deletion	24	19	79.17	05	20.83

Table 3 indicates that students of Sikiru Adetona College of Education, Science and Technology performed better in addition and deletion than in reordering and combination. Addition and deletion recorded the highest performance at 83.33% and 79.17 respectively, whereas combination recorded the lowest at 20.83%. The result establishes that students found

descriptive expansions and recoverable omissions more accessible than structurally linked combinations of clauses and phrases.

**Table 4: Performance of Students of Federal College of Education, Osiele, Ogun State**

SN	The Tools	No of Students	No with High Performance	%	No with Low Performance	%
1.	Reordering	25	20	80.0	05	20.0
2.	Combination	25	15	60.0	10	40.0
3.	Addition	25	20	80.0	05	20.0
4.	Deletion	25	08	32.0	17	68.0

Table 4 demonstrates that students of the Federal College of Education, Osiele, Ogun State, recorded high performance in reordering and addition, both with 80.0%. Combination recorded a moderate performance level, while deletion produced the lowest performance at 32.0%. This reflects that students more easily identified visible structural movement and descriptive expansion than omission-based transformations requiring inferential interpretation.

**Table 5: Performance of Students of Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo**

SN	The Tools	No of Students	No with High Performance	%	No with Low Performance	%
1.	Reordering	26	18	69.23	08	30.77
2.	Combination	26	20	76.92	06	23.08
3.	Addition	26	21	80.77	05	19.23
4.	Deletion	26	06	23.08	20	76.92

Table 5 reveals that students of Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, performed best in addition and combination, with addition recording the highest performance at 80.77%. Deletion recorded the lowest performance at 23.08%. The findings indicate that students demonstrated stronger ability in analysing descriptive and connective structures than in reconstructing omitted grammatical elements.

**Table 6: Performance of Students of College of Education Ikere Ekiti, Ekiti State**

SN	The Tools	No of Students	No with High Performance	%	No with Low Performance	%
1.	Reordering	28	21	75.0	07	25.0
2.	Combination	28	23	82.14	05	17.86
3.	Addition	28	08	28.57	20	71.43
4.	Deletion	28	21	75.0	07	25.0

Table 6 indicates that students of the College of Education, Ikere Ekiti, performed strongly in combination, re-ordering and deletion. Combination recorded the highest performance at 82.14%, re-ordering and deletion had 75.0% each, while addition recorded the lowest at 28.57%. This suggests that students were more comfortable analysing structural linkage and recoverable omissions than identifying stylistic expansions through additive elements.

### Overall Performance of Students across Transformational Manipulations

To provide a clearer quantitative interpretation of students' performance across the six selected colleges of education, table 7 shows the average high-performance percentages for each

transformational manipulation, which were calculated from Tables 1-6. This, therefore, helps to determine the overall accessibility of each stylistic tool within the TGG framework.

**Table 7: Transformational Tool Average High Performance (%)**

S/N	The Tools	Average High Performance
1.	Reordering	72.16%
2.	Combination	65.66%
3.	Addition	59.77%
4.	Deletion	51.79%

The results, in Table 7, reveal that reordering recorded the highest overall performance across the institutions, with an average of 72.16%. This suggests that students found structurally visible transformations involving movement and foregrounding easier to identify and apply in stylistic analysis. Combination, also with 65.66%, indicates that students were relatively comfortable analysing coordination and subordination within poetic structures. Moreover, addition recorded a moderate average of 59.77%, showing that while students could identify descriptive expansions and modifiers, the interpretive demands of such structures created some variation in performance. In this order, deletion recorded the lowest average performance at 51.79%, confirming that omission-based transformations are more cognitively demanding because they require recoverability, inference and contextual reconstruction.

As a result, the ranking of the transformational tools shows a gradual movement from structurally explicit manipulations to more interpretively complex ones. Hence, the findings strengthen the argument that TGG stylistic analysis is pedagogically accessible, although the accessibility of each manipulation varies according to its structural and interpretive demands. This quantitative interpretation further reinforces the pedagogical relevance of transformational manipulations as practical tools for teaching linguistic stylistic analysis in African poetry.

### Discussion of Pedagogical Findings

The findings reveal that the transformational manipulations were generally accessible to the students and could be effectively applied to the stylistic analysis of African poetry after guided instruction. The results challenge the assumption that Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) is too abstract or inaccessible for practical stylistic analysis as submitted by scholars like Ellis, (1970). Across the six colleges of education, students demonstrated the ability to transfer the classroom model analysis of Soyinka's *Abiku* to an independent analysis of Clark's *Abiku*, confirming the pedagogical viability of Ohmann's (1964) transformational tools. The findings further show that reordering recorded relatively high performance across most institutions. Consequently, students appeared to identify reordered structures with greater ease because such transformations involve visible shifts in sentence arrangement and foregrounding. Thus, this suggests that transformational manipulations, based on movement and positional emphasis, are cognitively more accessible to students in stylistic analysis. Similarly, combination also recorded strong performance in many of the institutions. The results indicate that students were able to recognise how coordination and subordination connect ideas and shape meaning within poetic discourse. To this end, the relatively high performance in both reordering and combination demonstrates that students can effectively apply transformational tools that rely on observable structural relationships.

In contrast, addition and deletion produced more uneven results across the institutions. While some schools recorded high performance in addition, others showed weaker outcomes, suggesting differences in students' ability to identify stylistic expansions and descriptive layering. Deletion proved particularly challenging in several institutions. This may be because deletion requires students to reconstruct omitted structures and infer implied meaning from context. Unlike reordering and combination, deletion depends heavily on interpretive sensitivity and recoverability, making it more cognitively demanding. The findings, therefore, indicate that not all transformational manipulations possess the same level of pedagogical accessibility. Essentially, institutional variation is evident in the results. Although all the colleges were exposed to the same instructional framework, performance levels differed across the transformational tools. Accordingly, these variations may be connected to differences in students' prior exposure to grammatical analysis, stylistic training and interpretive competence. Nevertheless, the general performance across the six institutions confirms that TGG stylistic analysis can be successfully taught and applied within the college of education context.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

The findings of this study have significant implications for the teaching of stylistics, particularly within the context of African literary studies and language education. Thus, the study demonstrates that TGG, often perceived as highly theoretical and abstract, can be effectively adapted into a practical classroom tool through the use of transformational manipulations such as reordering, combination, addition and deletion. In this way, this suggests that TGG should not be restricted to theoretical linguistics alone, but can also serve as an accessible framework for stylistic instruction. Furthermore, the study indicates that transformational manipulations provide students with systematic procedures for analysing literary texts. Through these tools, students are able to move beyond thematic interpretation and engage directly with the grammatical structures that shape meaning, tone and perspective. As a result, this strengthens stylistic competence by encouraging students to observe how writers manipulate language to achieve literary effects. Consequently, stylistics instruction becomes more analytical, evidence-based and linguistically grounded.

Importantly, the findings have implications for curriculum design in language and literary studies. The successful application of transformational manipulations across the selected colleges of education suggests that TGG stylistics approach can be incorporated into stylistics and literary criticism courses at tertiary level. The approach, therefore, offers a structured method for introducing students to the relationship between grammar and interpretation, thereby bridging the long-standing divide between language study and literary analysis. In addition, the varying levels of performance recorded across the transformational tools suggest that stylistics pedagogy may benefit from a graded instructional sequence. More structurally visible manipulations such as reordering and combination may be introduced before more interpretively demanding tools such as deletion. Such progression would allow students to gradually develop the inferential and analytical skills required for advanced stylistic interpretation.

Furthermore, the study reinforces the importance of grammar-literature integration in literary pedagogy. By analysing African poetry through transformational structures, students become aware that grammatical choices are not merely formal arrangements but carriers of cultural, ideological and emotional meaning. Inherently, this enables literary texts to be taught not only as artistic expressions but also as linguistic constructions that encode worldview and experience. In essence, the study establishes that TGG pedagogy remains relevant to

contemporary stylistic instruction. Accordingly, the transformational manipulations provide practical and teachable analytical tools that promote critical reading, grammatical awareness and interpretive engagement. The study, therefore, supports the continued inclusion of transformational stylistics in the teaching of literature and linguistic stylistics within higher education contexts.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This section offers the summary of the study by presenting conclusion and recommendation to state the need for the teaching and application of TGG approach to stylistic analysis. It also advances reasons for its inclusion in the curriculum of stylistic studies at tertiary level in Nigeria and encourages linguistic scholars to popularise this approach through further research.

### **Conclusion**

This study advocates the use of Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) as a practical framework for linguistic stylistic analysis through the application of Ohmann's (1964) transformational manipulations to Soyinka's and Clark's *Abiku*. The findings establish that transformational tools such as reordering, combination, addition and deletion provide accessible and systematic procedures for interpreting stylistic meaning in African poetry. The study further demonstrates that students were able to transfer the model stylistic analysis of Soyinka's *Abiku* to an independent analysis of Clark's *Abiku*, as a result confirming the pedagogical viability of TGG in stylistics instruction. Moreover, the quantitative results show that reordering and combination were more accessible to students, while deletion proved more cognitively demanding due to its reliance on inference and contextual recovery. These findings challenge the assumption that TGG is too abstract for linguistic stylistic analysis and instead indicate that transformational manipulations can effectively bridge grammar and literary interpretation. Hence, the study reaffirms Ohmann's (1964) position that stylistic variation is rooted in performance and linguistic choice, while also illustrating the continued relevance of transformational stylistics in the teaching and analysis of African poetic discourse.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, it is proposed that transformative stylistics be more thoroughly integrated into the teaching of literary studies and stylistics at the tertiary level. Lecturers should expose students to practical applications of Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) through guided textual analyses that demonstrate how grammatical choices shape literary meaning. Thus, curriculum developers should integrate transformational manipulations such as reordering, combination, addition and deletion into stylistics courses to strengthen students' analytical competence. Importantly, since deletion and addition seem to present more difficulties for students than reordering and combination, they should receive more instructional focus. In addition, workshops and seminars on linguistic stylistics should be organised to improve both lecturers' and students' familiarity with transformational approaches to literary analysis. To popularise linguistic transformational stylistics, future studies should extend the application of TGG stylistics to other genres of African literature, including drama and prose, to further establish its pedagogical relevance. Researchers may also investigate the effectiveness of transformational stylistics in comparison with other linguistic models such as Systemic Functional Grammar and Cognitive Stylistics. Such efforts will contribute to a more balanced understanding of the place of TGG in contemporary stylistic analysis and literary pedagogy.

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## Appendix

### Model Stylistic Analysis

To demonstrate the practical application of Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) to stylistic analysis, Soyinka's Abiku was first analysed in the classroom using Ohmann's (1964) transformational manipulations of reordering, combination, addition and deletion. The analysis served as a model through which students were introduced to the relationship between syntactic choice and stylistic meaning within African poetic discourse. In reordering, students were shown how Soyinka foregrounds meaning by altering expected sentence arrangement. For instance, in *In vain your bangles cast*, the adverbial phrase *In vain* is placed initially to foreground futility before the action is introduced. Through this structure, students observed how syntactic positioning directs emphasis and reflects the abiku's resistance to human intervention. In combination, attention was drawn to Soyinka's use of coordinating and subordinating structures to create layered meanings. Expressions such as *Though I puke, and when you pour / Libations* demonstrate how multiple clauses are linked to reflect the complexity and continuity of the abiku cycle. Students were guided to see how the poet combines ideas to produce stylistic density and unpredictability.

In addition as a tool, how Soyinka expands basic structures through modifiers and descriptive elements was examined. Examples such as *the sprinkled ash* and *the heated fragment* reveal how additions enrich imagery, introduce ritual symbolism and deepen cultural meaning. The analysis showed that these added elements intensify the spiritual and philosophical weight of the poem. Finally, in deletion, students observed how Soyinka omits recoverable elements to achieve compression and intensity. Lines such as *In vain your charmed circles at my feet* illustrate how omission sharpens expression and increases interpretive engagement. Through these transformational manipulations, students were taught that stylistic meaning in Abiku emerges not only from thematic content but also from deliberate grammatical choices.