

A LEXICO-SEMANTIC STUDY OF MARIAMA BA'S SO LONG A LETTER

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ABSTRACT: *It is always asserted that literary writers do not write in vacuums, they usually present literary work to serve as a mirror of life in order to evoke universal human experience, and most of the time, to relay things that happen to human beings. In the same vein, Mariama Ba's So Long a Letter has been lexically and semantically presented, to reflect or imitate the realities of life. Therefore this study attempts a lexico-semantic study of Mariama Ba's So Long a Letter in order to reveal the author's creative deployment of language to achieve her purpose in the text. In other words, the study examines how the author uses words to expose the ills of African society through the use of figures of speech, lexical relations and sense relation among others in the text, to develop the themes of political exclusion, evils of polygamy, sadness and loneliness, socio-economic degradation, betrayal, immorality, among others.*

KEYWORD: *Lexico-Semantic, Study, Letter, Lexical Relations.*

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a social discourse in which the writer operates on the linguistic and communicative presupposition in the social context. In this way, the writer's language, in form, functions and meaning, derives from the same source as the social -political and cultural situations informing the urge to write (Babatunde, 1997). Halliday (1976) asserts that the particular form taken by the grammatical system of language is closely related to the social and personal need that language is required to serve, Babatunde (1997: 175) observes that:

Literature is like language, interaction between People. To regard it as social discourse is to stress its personal institutional dimensions, concentrating on those parts of textual structure which reflect and influence reaction with society.

Apart from linguistic function, literature also; widen our mental horizon, perform psycho-therapeutic or palliative function, performs historical function, educates, entertains, helps in preservation of cultural events, and serves as a mirror of life (Adedeji, 1999). It should therefore also be noted that literature plays an immeasurable role in the growing, up keeping, developing and assisting the society to face its problem and burning issues by suggesting alternatives, as a means of reflection on the human condition and urging social cohesion (Oladipupo, 2004).

The main aim of literary artist is to model and remodel the society to become an enviable environment. This is usually achieved through the use of different characters to express their minds. The concern of this work is therefore, to bring to the fore how Mariama Ba exploits selective meaningful words, phrases and sentences to bring out certain identifiable patterns of meaning relationship in the novel So Long a Letter by carrying out certain lexico-semantic analysis of the text in order to explicate its thematic preoccupations.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section aims at discussing the meaning and concept of text. Text, according to Halliday (1976) is any passage spoken or written of whatever length, that does not led whole. It is a chunk of language that is actually spoken or written for the purpose of communication by real people in actual circumstances. In other words it is a language stretch of language that makes meaning. Therefore, any group of sentences, which are which are just collection of unrelated words cannot be described as a text.

A text can be described as a super sentence, that is, a grammatical unit larger than a sentence but related to it in the same way that a sentence is related to a clause, a clause to a phrase (group), a phrase to a word and a word to a morpheme (Halliday, 1976) A text may be spoken or written, prose or verse, dialogue or monologue. It may be anything from a single proverb to a whole play. It is a unit of language in use that is not a grammatical unit like a clause or a sentence and it is not defined by its size. It is just any piece of language that is operational and functioning as a unit in some context of situation (Oladipupo, 2004).

Meaning is important to the concept of text because in judging whether there is texture not in a text, we have recourse to some feelings about how much the sentences do actually interrelate in meaning. It is the cohesion that makes the meaning of the element interpretable. It should be noted that cohesion is inevitable where the interpretation of any item in the text requires making reference to some other items in the text. Cohesion itself is a relational concept. It lays emphasis on the relation between one item and the other and also account for the essential semantic relations whereby any passage of speech or writing is enabled to function as text. The concept of cohesion which is classified into distinct categories like reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion is represented in the text by particular features like repetitions, omissions, occurrences of certain words and constructions which have in common the property of signalling that the interpretation of the passage in question depends on something else. Although there are other semantic relations associated with text which are not embodied in the concept of cohesion, the one that it (cohesion) does embody is in some ways the most essential, because it is common to text of every kind and is in fact, what makes a text a text (Halliday 1976).

In conclusion, the unity that a text has is a unity of meaning in context: a texture that expresses the fact that it relates as a whole to the environment in which it is produced. For a text to actually be a text, it must be meaningful, logical, cohesive and coherent.

African Literature and the Issue of Language

Language and literature are interwoven and so are working together Bateson. (1997) maintains that a work of literature is successful linguistically when the best words are in the best order, when

appropriate stylistic devices cooperate to unify value judgments. Therefore, without adequate knowledge of language, no good literature works can be written,. However, in their frequent creative use of English, African writers have added "colour" to the language, perhaps, as a result of mother tongue interference or deviation to create originality (Oladipupo, 2004)

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is systemic grammatical model of M.A.K Halliday. For Halliday language is a meaning potential, that is, how people exchange meanings by "*linguaging*" (Halliday, 1985). He also explains that the necessary characteristics of general linguistic theory consist of different levels of analysis. The primary levels are those of substance form and situation. Substance can be divided into phonic (verbal) and graphic (written) manifestations of language. Form is the internal meaningful structure i.e. it is meaningful internal patterning. The situation is the environment in which text comes to life (Halliday, 1985) In other words, it is the extra linguistic setting in which use language takes place.

In systemic functional model, there are interacting of the levels of language. This is diagrammatically represented below.

SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL MODEL

PHONETIC/GRAPHETIC	↔ ↔	LINGUISTICS	↔ ↔	
Substance		Form		Situation
Phonic	Phonology	Grammar		Thesis (subject matter) immediate situation
Graphic	Graphology	Lexis		Wider situation

Oladipupo (2004:43)

At the level of grammar, Halliday proposes four categories; units, structure, class and system. "Units" is the category set up to account for stretches of language carrying grammatical patterns. "Structure" is the category set up to account for likeness between events in successively, "class" is the grouping of members of a given unit which is defined by the operation in the structure of the unit next above while "system" is the category set up to account for the occurrence of one, rather than another, from among a number of like events, Halliday (1976) The units of grammar are the morpheme, the word, group, the clause and the sentence.

Apart from the fact that the systemic grammar accounts for fundamental grammatical patterns of any human language through the categories of units, structure, class and system, it also uses the

idea of extra-linguistic factors like thesis, wider situation and immediate situation to bring out meaning, since meaning is produced from linguistic and non-linguistic factors. Consequently, our analysis of *So Long a Letter* will such a model very invaluable in bringing out the context of social, political, cultural and Linguistic convergence in Africa as portrayed in the text.

The Background to the Play

So Long a Letter is a semi-autobiographical novel originally written in French by the Senegalese writer Mariama Ba. It presents a sequence of reminiscences, some wistful, some bitter, recounted by a recently widowed, Ramatoulaye, a Muslim, French-educated, middle aged Senegalese school teacher during her mourning period of four months and 10 days prescribed for Muslim widows. It was an informal letter addressed to Aissatou, a separate who works at the French Embassy in USA. Both women had a bitter experience of polygamous family.

The main thematic preoccupation of the novel is the condition of women in Western African society Raamatoulaye, the heroine is used by the author to criticize the evils of polygamy among the Senegalese men who always betray and abandon their former families for new love. Some other themes of the novel include exclusion of women in politics by men, lack of upright moral values, the oppression of women through unjust religion legislation, non-provision of social amenities among others. The novel style is episolatory, it has salutation and ending; the qualities of any good letter. It has even been clearly revealed in the first paragraph that this particular letter is going to be a long and emotional pouring one;

*I have received your letter. By way of reply, I am
beginning this diary, my prop in my distress, Our long association
has taught me that confiding in others allays pain (Pgl)*

A Lexico - Semantic Analysis of So Long a Letter.

Lexis is an independent level of linguistic form, the level of patterning of lexical item as distinct from the syntactic patterning in which they exist Tomori (1977) also describes it as the level of form at which open set patterns operate in a language. Lyons (1969) asserts that the sense of a lexical item may be defined to be, not only dependent upon, but identical with, set of relations which hold between the item in question and other items in the same lexical system. One thing that is clear from these views is that lexis and semantics cannot be separated from each other hi practical terms.

SYNTACTIC / PARADIGMATIC RELATION

Idiomatic Expression

Idiom is a special collocation, the meaning of which cannot be known through the meaning of the separate words that make it up (Ogunsiji; 2002) it consist of lexical items that together behave like a single lexical item in terms of its meaning. It has meaning beyond a denotative meaning. Some of the examples in the text are;

- (i) *I need a child beside me.....to fill my heart (P. 28)*
- (ii) *I want this child to be both my legs and my right arm (P28)*

- (iii) *You were threatened through your fresh (P31)*
- (iv) *You choose to make a break (P. 31)*
- (v) *You want to draw a line between heats felt and physical love. (P31)*
- (vi) *There is nothing one can do when Allah the almighty puts two people side by side (pg36)*
- (vii) *You are letting someone else pluck the fruits of your labour (p48)*
- (viii) *One is a mother in order to face the flood (83)*
- (ix) *I am not an object to be passed from hand to hand (p58)*

The author uses these idioms to paint a vivid picture of his message and thus enhance the creativity of the work.

Connotation

Connotation is the emotional meaning attached to a word. In other words, it refers to the meaning that goes beyond the ordinary meaning. Thus, it refers to the suggestive, Associative or figurative meaning attached to a word (Bamigbade, 1999) Connotative meaning can be said to be communal because it relates to people's cultural background or ideology of life (Ogunsiji, 2002) Its meaning has to do with history, age, sex and environment. Some examples of words used connotatively in So Long a Letter are given below:

- (i) *The presence of my co — wife beside me irritate me (p3)*
- (ii) *My house shall never be for you ... no extra burden; my "turn" everyday (58)*
- (iii) *The bush radio has informed me of your refusal to marry Tamsri (P65)*
- (iv) *I, in turn, ... have come to ask for your hand (pg65)*
- (v) *She was always trying to see into the future with her cowries (P65)*
- (vi) *Today's children are difficult to keep in check (p28)*

As seen in the examples above, the underlined words or expressions give emotional, extra-ordinary and figurative meanings. They are used in their metaphorical sense. For instance, the word "co-wife" in example one connotes second wife and it could only be meaningful to Africans who practise polygamy. It may make no sense to LI speaker of English. "Turn" in the second example also connotes statutory visit that every polygamous man must make to the bedroom of each of his wives in turn. It should be noted that the underlined words and many others in the text could only be meaningful in African setting.

Direct Translation

Direct translation is an attempt to translate words or expression from one language into another example of direct translation here is from African language of the writer to English. For examples;

- (i) *I will make this child another me (P28)*
- (ii) *Since the marriage of my children, the house has been empty (P28)*
- (iii) *I have never asked you to educate any of my daughters, not wanting to tire you (P29)*
- (iv) *.... The bitter criticisms of his hope... did not in the least prevent the periodic swelling of Young Nabon 's belly (P33)*
- (v) *How can you expect a man to remain a stone when he is constantly in contact with the woman who runs his house? (P33)*
- (vi) *You know that we are Modous blood (P37)*
- (vii) *Clothed in my dignity I go my way (P32)*
- (viii) *She must not worry herself about betrayals of the flesh (P34)*

(ix) *May God hear the prayer I say for him everyday - (P57)*

(x) *When you have "come out" (that is to say of mourning) I shall marry you (57)*

The use of direct translation as illustrated above depicts the text as a product of second language situation. It is also used to achieve originality.

Loans Words

These are words taking from a language or languages into vocabulary of another language. Various examples of loan words can be found in the text. For instance

<i>Zem - Zem (P3)</i>	-	<i>special water</i>
<i>Siguil ndigale</i>	-	<i>a condolence message</i>
<i>Imam (P9)</i>	-	<i>the leader of prayers in mosque.</i>
<i>Gongo (P8)</i>	-	<i>a kind Senegalese food</i>
<i>Griots (P7)</i>	-	<i>apart -poet or part - sorcerer</i>
<i>Alhaji (P10)</i>	-	<i>man who has performed Haji</i>
<i>Alhaja (P10)</i>	-	<i>woman who has performed Haji</i>
<i>baccalaureat (10)</i>	-	<i>French word for secondary school</i>
<i>djou — djoungs (28)</i>	-	<i>royal drums.</i>

Mariama Ba uses loan words from French Senegalese Indigenous Languages in order to retain the freshness and originality of meanings that the text conveys. It also reveals the multilingual settings of most African societies.

Code Mixing

Code mixing is the random alternation of two languages within a sentence. Banjo (1983) sees it as a language mixing - and it occurs in a sentence made up of elements of Languages A and B. In other words, it is the mingling of codes, that is, mixing of words or phrases of different languages within a given sentence or utterance. Some examples of code mixing in So Long a Letter are given below;

- (i) *They must take incense eau-de-Cologne, cotton - wool the hospital (P3)*
- (ii) *The Zemzem, the miracle water from holy land (P3)*
- (iii) *The Siguil ndizale come one after the other (P5)*
- (iv) *People called her gnac (42)*
- (v) *He signaled to imam (57)*
- (vi) *The smell of lakh cooling in the calabashes (P5)*
- (vii) *Yesterday they offered us some excellent thiankrv to quench our thirsty - P7*
- (viii) *The Fall family griot is proud.... (P7)*
- (ix) *To visit Mecca to acquire the tittles of Alhaji and Alhaji (10)*
- (x) *... who was preparing for her baccalaureate*
- (xi) *We would walk from Dakar Corniche (P21)*
- (xii) *These days, the road to Rufsique (P27)*
- (xiii) *Pompenguine, where the Catholics celebrate (P27)*

Sociolinguistically, the codemixing is used to achieve freshness and originality because there might not be perfect and accurate English words to replace 'griots', 'ZemZem 'gnac', 'lakh, 'mirasse' without losing their authentic meanings. Also words like "Allah" "Koran", 'Minatou - Minaouara mosque' 'Imam' 'Mecca' 'Alhaji' and 'Alhaja' show that the geographical setting of the novel is a predominant Muslim society. Also French words like 'mirasse' 'baccalaureate', 'Dakar Coninche'

'Rufisque' 'tours' rapides etc. are deliberately retained to achieve cohesion in the text and to show that the geographical setting, Senegal, is a Francophone country.

Lexical Fields

So Long a Letter has various themes, each of which has a distinctive set of lexical et. Some of the lexical items relating to the major themes explicated by the text are assembled below;

Theme	Lexical Items
Political Exclusion	Right (P. 61) independence (61) deputies (60) minister (61) rebel (61) political field (61) national assembly (61) citizens (62) democracy (64) party (164) political secretary (64) socialism (P64) one party system (P64) freedom (65) electoral constituency (P67) liberating (P77) nation (P.89) liberation (88).
Problem of Polygamy	Divorced (PI) co-wife (P3) irritates (P3) betrayal (P9) irresistible love (ii) madness (PI 1) weakness (PII), inner confusion (11) inner aqitation (P38) rejected (68) separated (89) partner (88) family (P89), bad habits (P89). House wives (Pg63) no peace of mind (P59) revenge (P58) object to be passed from hand to hand (P58) wives (P58) inherits (P57) detach (P56) <u>seduced (P56)</u> <u>deceived (P56)</u> hatred (P56).
Sadness and loneliness	Heartlessness (P12) despair (P12) cries (P46) imprison (P48) shyness (P51) destroy (P60) sadness (P68) unhappiness (P70) loneliness (P70) bewilderment (P70) wailing (P83) humiliation (P89) bad (P89) failure (P89) evils (P89).
Socio-economic degradation	Hunger (P66), overcrowded (P66), hard.(PI8) jobless (P18) manual workers (PI8) restlessness (P66) thirst (P66) thirsty (P67) bank loan (P70) greedily (P76) harmful effects (P77) constructed (P77) failures (P89) poor (P89) starvation(P47), poverty (P47) penniless (P8) sufferings (P69) heart - attack (P2) struggle (P73) burdens (P73) degradation (P77).
Betrayal	Weakness (P12) heartlessness (P12) betrayal (P9) madness (P12) abandonment (P9) cradle - snatcher (P50) humiliations (P89) repressed (P89) disappeared (PI 1) extra-marital wanderings (P87)
Immorality	Fraudulently removed (PII) mysteriously disappeared (PII) short skirt (PI7) smoking in the bedroom (P76) sexual (P87) extra - marital wanderings (P87) Forbidden games (P87) sexual act (P87) means of contraception (P87) profligate (P87) debasement (P87)
Wickedness	Fierce (P30) crushed (P34) removed (P36) distress (P38) heartlessness (P12) pluck (P48) imprison (P48) exiled (P48) rejected (P68) embarrassment (P51) thief (P82) suffered (P71) disappointments (P89) humiliation (P89)
Love	Loving (P12) fineness (P13) love (P12) polished (P14) shapely contour (P35) handsome (P14) tenderness (P33) politeness (P48), beauty (P48) lively (P48) kindhearted (P48) softness P47 heartfelt love (P31) physical love (P31) perfect (P14) seduce (P60) docility (P29).

The lexical items above enhance the coherence and cohesion of the text and it also the contribute to the textuality of the text as a whole.

FIGURES OF SPEECH AS NARRATIVE STRATEGIES

Figures of speech are literary modes of expression in which words are consciously used in a special manner in speech and writing. They are used in extra - ordinary senses to lay emphasis on statement and to achieve special meanings or effects. Some of the common figures of speech found in So Long a Letter are given below.

Simile

This is a statement that compares two things. The qualities of one item are used to elaborate fully those of another item. It is introduced by the word "like" or "as" e.g.

The man is bold as lion

She talks like parrot.

The following are examples from So Long a Letter

- (i) *His look -was like a whip (P33)*
- (ii) *She would eye those already seated ...like that of a spoilt child (P50)*
- (iii) *...with a wave of hand like a magician (P5Q)*
- (iv) *The smell of stale sweat and food blend as trail in the air (P7)*
- (v) *Those that have burst miserably like soap bubbles (PI 5)*
- (vi) *We learnt how to do it like apprentices (P23)*
- (vii) *A woman is like a ball; once a ball is thrown, no one can predict where it will bounce. (P 52)*
- (viii) *They remain stolid like marble (P52)*
- (ix) *I missed our bursts of refreshing or understanding laughter like Opium(pg52)*

The similes above are used to clarify meanings. They are also employed to concretize abstract ideas and also for clarity of expressions.

Metaphor

This is a figure of speech where one thing is described in terms of something else.

In other words, it is direct transfer of a quality of one thing to another. Some of the metaphors in the text are given below;

- (i) *The past crushed beneath your heel (P34)*
- (ii) *Her shoe tapped on the ground announcing her presence (P50)*
- (iii) *The wandering of my thoughts chased away sleep (P52)*
- (iv) *You are my good luck*
- (v) *I still keep intact my memories, the salt of remembrance (Pgl)*
- (vi) *The past is reborn (Pgl)*
- (vii) *You are my protecting black Angel (Pgl 4)*
- (viii) *There is nothing more beautiful than a fish out of water - Pg.20*
- (ix) *Life is both body and mind Pg23*
- (x) *He remained the prisoner of his mission (Pg24)*
- (xi) *I need a child beside me (Pg28)*

Mariama Ba uses abundant metaphoric expressions in order to bring closer the idea which are abstract in nature and also give concise and clear meaning to expressions in the text.

Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of initial consonant sound in successive or closely associated words in a statement. Below are some of the examples in So Long a Letter:

- (i) *who went to consult medicine men (P43)*
- (ii) *I was well awake of where the right solution lay*
- (iii)*complained about burnt - out bulbs (P51)*
- (iv) *I will take a seat -with a less and less embarrassment (P51)*
- (v) *I have told you that there can be ... (51)*
- (vi) *You the goldsmith daughter gave me your help (P54)*
- (vii) *I try to spot my faults in the failure of my marriage (P55)*
- (viii) *He wore his social success boldly... (P59)*
- (ix) *We need a mountain of money (P 62)*
- (x) ... *the whole range of material and moral poverty (P62)*
- (xi) *She waited for it,... her hand on her chest (P43)*

As shown in the examples above the author has been able to appeal to our sense of hearing. It makes them sound poetic.

Repetition

It is the use of the same word or statement in two or more places in speech or writing to secure emphasis. Some examples of repetition are given below;

- (i) *My friend, my friend, my friend. I call on you three times (pi)*
- (ii) *She waited for it.... her, hand on her chest*
- (iii) *She began consulting doctor after doctor (P43)*
- (iv) *In the midst of life, in the midst of poverty, in the midst of Young Nabou...(P47)*
- (v) *Binetou who went from night club to night club (P50)*
- (vi) *Waiting! But waiting for what? (P51)*
- (vii) *I ask myself, I ask myself, why? Why did Modou detach Himself? Why did he put Binetou between us? (Pg56)*
- (viii) *Shut up! Shut up! Stop! Stop! Pg 58*
- (ix) *Who? Who is behind this theft, for there has been a theft? Who is behind this injury, for injury it is has dared? Who? Who? Pg 82*

Repetitions are used to register deep impression in the minds of the readers and also to give a detailed information.

Rhetorical Question

It is an assertion put in form of a question. It is a question that does not demand a direct reply. A quite number of these questions are used by Manama Ba in So Long a letter. For instance;

- (i) *Madness and weakness? Heartlessness or irresistible love?*
- (ii) *What inner torment led Modou Fall to marry Binetou? (Pgl2)*
- (iii) *How am I to tell you? (Pgl2)*
- (iv) *Should we have rejoiced so whole heartedly? Pg18*
- (v) *Were we not beginning to witness the disappearance of an elite of traditional manual workers? Pg18*
- (vi) *What will the unsuccessful do? Pg 18*

(vii) *What then is the significance of these joyous, institutionalized festivities that accompany our prayers for God's mercy? Who has come out of self-interest? Who has come to quench his own thirsty? Who has come for the sake of mercy? Who has come so that he may remember? (Pg8)*

(viii) *But how many mothers are able to accomplish that feast? (Pg47)*

Mariama Ba uses rhetorical question in abundant in order to give a deeper comprehension of the text. They are used as a strategy of probing into the mind of the reader and also make the reader think deeply about the issues raised. They are also used to involve the readers in the development of the themes of the text.

Generally, figures of speech are used to clarity meaning. They are also used to deepen meaning of the expression. They are deliberately used to give necessary vivid details and useful descriptions which enable the readers to comprehensively understand the people and the environment where they appear and also to put more emphasis on the expressions in order to fully bring out meaning and create mental images in the mind of readers.

ASPECT OF LEXICAL RELATIONS

Lexical relations are relationships that hold between lexical items or units. Akande (2003) maintains that words can be expressed not only in terms of referents but also in terms of their sense relations with other lexical items within a unit of discourse. Synonyms, antonymy and hyponymy are among the sense relations to be examined here.

Synonym

Synonymy is a cohesive device that means similarity of meaning. It is a situation where two or more words express similar meanings. That is, where two or more words are closely related such that one can substitute for, or, be used instead of the other. The followings are some of the examples from So Long a Letter.

<i>Words</i>	<i>Synonyms</i>
<i>Depression (P22)</i>	<i>sadness (P22)</i>
<i>Past (P26)</i>	<i>old(P26)</i>
<i>Disappointment (P89)</i>	<i>humiliation (P89)</i>
<i>Pain (PI)</i>	<i>inner torment (PI2)</i>
<i>Wailing (P83)</i>	<i>cries (P46)</i>
<i>Divorced (PI)</i>	<i>separated (P89)</i>
<i>Penniless (P8)</i>	<i>poor (P89)</i>
<i>Out dated (PI3)</i>	<i>old (P70)</i>
<i>Joy (P80)</i>	<i>happiness (P71)</i>
<i>Unhappiness (P70)</i>	<i>sadness (P4)</i>

The use of abundant synonymous words in this text gives the text a clear and vivid picture. And it also gives cohesive effects to the text.

Antonymy

Antonymy is the opposite of synonymy. That is, the word that means the opposite of another word. In other words, it expresses semantic contrasts. The examples below are from So Long a Letter

<i>Words</i>	<i>Antonyms</i>
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<i>Jay (P53)</i>	<i>sadness (P53)</i>
<i>Mother (P53)</i>	<i>father (P53)</i>
<i>Fortunately (P63)</i>	<i>unfortunately (P63)</i>
<i>Nothing (P68)</i>	<i>everything (P68)</i>
<i>Student (P73)</i>	<i>teacher (P73)</i>
<i>Impossible (P24)</i>	<i>possible (P24)</i>
<i>Domination (P25)</i>	<i>independence (P25)</i>
<i>Victory</i>	<i>defeat (P23)</i>
<i>Man (P88)</i>	<i>woman (P88)</i>
<i>Yesterday (PI)</i>	<i>today (PI)</i>
<i>Rich (P89)</i>	<i>poor (P89)</i>

Like synonyms, antonyms also enhance the cohesive quality of the text and it brought out the idea of meaning contrast in the text clearly.

Hyponymy

It is a cohesive device that means inclusiveness. It is the semantic relation of meaning inclusion which occurs when the meaning is included in the meaning of another. Below are some examples from So Long a Letter

Superordinate	Co-hyponyms
<i>Food stuffs (P51)</i>	<i>Potatoes (P50) rice (P50) oil (P50) tomatoes (P51)</i>
<i>Fruit (P23)</i>	<i>Coconut, mangoes, pawpaws</i>
<i>Body(P23)</i>	<i>Eyes (P23) hands (P82) nails (P84) head (P82) heart(P82) teeth (P82) tongue (P83) arms (P83)</i>
<i>Animal P87</i>	<i>Lamp (P23) fish (P21) snake (P21) sheep (P22) hen (P22) Goat (P87) cows (P27)</i>
<i>Family (P89)</i>	<i>Brother (P27) sister (P57) mother (P20) nephew (P27) Children (P19) son (P19) father (PI 9) wife (P37) child (P53) husband (P20) father-in-law (P50) son-in-law (P50)</i>
<i>School (P23)</i>	<i>University (P23) college primary (P29) secondary (P29)</i>

<i>Profession (P23)</i>	<i>Doctor (P23) teacher (P23) lawyer (P29)</i>
<i>House (P56)</i>	<i>Bedroom (P16) kitchen (P49) bathroom (P49)</i>
<i>Colour (P16)</i>	<i>black (P16) green (P89) dark (P88) pink (P83) white(P53) red (P53) blue (P15).</i>
<i>Food (P34)</i>	<i>Omelleter (P49) meats (P49) roasted chicken (P49) eggs(P29)</i>
<i>Number</i>	<i>four (P53) twelve (P53) one (P53)</i>

Mariama Ba uses hyponyms to facilitate the cohesion of the text and provides opportunities for elaboration of meaning. It also attests to the author's lexical wealth.

CONCLUSION

This study has tried to explicate a lexico - semantic study of *So Long a Letter* with emphasis on the predominant lexical features. An attempt is made to use the semantic analysis to reveal the communicative import of the text, especially concerning the author's goal and intention as shown in the way the linguistic units are combined to project certain themes, such as socio -political problem of a developing nation, problem polygamy, wickedness, immorality, love sadness and loneliness, socio-economic degradation, betrayal among others. As shown in the text, the novelist does not merely wish to entertain; she intends to reveal the ills of the society, persuade people, chastise them and discuss serious issues that relate to them as individuals living in a society at a particular point in time haunted by common fears and failures. It is therefore clearly understood that linguistic choice of the author is an index of social, political economic and cultural projection of the society.

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