Iconicity in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*

Odoemenam, Temple Chibueze[ϒ]

Abstract
This paper aims to examine and bring to the fore the relevance of iconicity in literary works in general, and in Huxley's dystopian novel, *Brave New World* in particular. Iconicity in language, which is seen by linguistic experts as the similarity between a linguistic form and its meaning, is considered in this paper as a very important factor in asserting literary quality. This paper reveals, through many examples of iconic language, the contribution of iconic signs in the enhancement of aesthetics and artistic appeal in the novel. The study reveals that the novel benefits from linguistic iconicity as seen in certain rhymes that appear in the form of slogans.

Keywords: ***Iconicity, iconic signs, language, literature, strange world, dystopia***

Introduction
Iconicity in the language is the similarity between a linguistic form and its meaning. It is considered an important factor for literary quality and is examined in Huxley's *Brave New World* in this work. The phenomenon of linguistic iconicity which is the analogy between a linguistic sign and its meaning has attracted a lot of attention, not only in general linguistics and semantics but language acquisition (Bickerton 2009 and Zaretsky et al 2011). Iconicity plays an important role in literary analysis. Almost all literary texts that have been considered for various awards, the genres notwithstanding, have evidence of iconicity. This is supported by Noth (2001) who affirms that iconicity is the very essence of literature. Noth's argument is hinged on the fact that literature is an imitation (mimesis) of real life and that iconic signs are more natural and 'real' than non-iconic signs. Thus, iconicity increases the aesthetic and creative appeal of a piece of literature. Aesthetic linguistic features such as rhymes and alliterations are iconic and best suited for verbal motivation and creativity and may have strong effects on the recipients of a literary piece.

Although iconicity seems to be more salient in poetry, iconic linguistic signs may also be strongly prevalent in the literature that has a strong scientific approach (e.g., science-fiction or utopian/dystopian literature). Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, for instance, has some sort of scientific appeal and full rhymes, metaphors, unusual first names, and unknown but science-oriented expressions, as well as coinages. These aspects are very well suited for examination within the framework of iconicity. The novel, therefore, serves as the corpus for an examination of phenomena of iconicity in a work of literature for this paper. The major interest of this paper, aside from the adoption of the principle of form mining, is to show the importance of iconic signs in the language of Huxley's *Brave New World*. In examining the relevance of iconicity in the language of *Brave New World,* the paper will in the following sections examine the concept of

ϒ Odoemenam, Temple Chibueze, National Institute of Construction Technology and Management Uromi, Edo State. *tcodoemenam@gmail.com*

iconicity, its types, its use in the study of *Brave New World*, and previous studies on iconicity as a concept.

Iconicity: A Conceptual Overview

Iconicity as a semantic concept was first introduced by Charles Sanders Peirce in the framework of this general theory of signs. As a concept, iconicity has often been defined in contrast to arbitrariness and this opposition has frequently been associated with the dichotomy of the natural and the conventional signs. While the icon on the one hand is the natural sign (which is similar to its object of reference), the arbitrary sign on the other hand is the conventional sign (which shows no similarity to its referential object). The word 'iconicity' is derived from the word 'icon'. According to Fischer (1997), 'an icon is an image that more or less reflects a situation, concept or object in the real world. Jacobson (1971,p.700) remarks that "icons are partly symbolic …" The import of Jacobson's statement above is that photographs, dinuvies, traffic signs, or gestures can be seen as icons. Similarly, it is believed that all writing systems (including but not limited to Egyptian or Chinese ideographs) began as iconic symbols (Fischer, Ibid). Even spoken language may have also started as icons. To buttress this point, Bolinger and Sears (1981,p.129) posit that,

> Everything points to icons as more primitive than symbols. Children invent them. Two speakers without a common language resort to them for communication. But however vivid the beginnings, the colors have long since faded to a uniform gray… Language has become an almost purely conventional code, with a few exceptions listed as curiosities.

These 'curiosities' according to Fischer (ibid) include onomatopoeic words and, to some extent, the use of 'phonesthemes' (i.e. sounds that are aesthetically pleasing because they reflect in some way the concept they refer to). The criterion of iconicity generally adopted in language studies is the similarity between the verbal sign and its object. From Pierce's point of view, however, similarity is not the central criterion for iconicity. He distinguished between the genuine or pure icon as the ideal but unattainable borderline case of iconicity and the real iconic sign which he calls hypoicon (Seecp 2.276). This hypoicon is defined as a degenerate (imperfect) or derived kind of icon. By these distinctions, the linguist is presented with (according to Pierce) the genuine (pure) icon and the hypoicon (derived icon). He, thus, summarizes the characteristics of genuine iconicity when he states that, 'pure icon is a sign (which by its being an immediate image) that is to say by virtue or character which belongs to it in itself as a sensible object and which it would possess just the same were there is no object in nature that it resembled.. (cp4.447). The hypoicon, however, is only similar to its object and it shares only some of its features with its object. The discussions and distinctions above show that there is a scale of iconicity from the important iconicity (i.e. hypoiconicity) to the pure (i.e. genuine) iconicity. This revelation brings to bare a very important question: does genuine iconicity exist? This question, however, is not the focus of this present study, since our interest is to examine the linguistic relevance of iconicity in literary texts.

Types of Iconicity

Three types of iconicity exist according to the subdivisions of iconic signs by Charles Sanders Pierce. The first type is imaginal iconicity. This is the type of sign that evinces an immediately perceptible similarity to its object of reference. In this type of iconicity, there

is a direct one-to-one relationship between the 'sign' and the 'signified'; this relation is iconic. For instance, each of the onomatopoeic words, 'miaow', 'cuckoo', 'ping-pong', or 'gbam-gbam' are iconic. Diagrammatic iconicity is the type that shows the similarity between the 'sign' and its 'object' structurally and relationally "as in the case of a narrative told according to the ordo naturalis of the events", where the sequence of the propositions of the narrative is the same as the sequence of the event repeated in the narrative. What this means is that in a diagrammatic iconicity, there exists an iconic link between the horizontal relations on the level of the signified. For instance, the foot can represent (a) a body part or (b) the lowest part of a mountain. Metaphorical iconicity, according to Pierce, is also known as mediated iconicity. This presents a semantic relation, (the similarity between a body, an object such as 'foot', and the lower part of a mountain) that leads to the same sign being used for both. The ideas conveyed by the sign and the idea conveyed by its object are mediated by a third idea the 'tertium comparationis' between the tenor and the vehicle of the metaphor. We shall briefly illustrate the diagrammatical and metaphorical iconicity using an example from Noth's (2001:6) English proverb.

"March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb."

The proverb, according to Noth, evinces both diagrammatic and metaphorical iconicity. The sequence of the two main clauses A (March comes in) and B (March goes out) which are linked by the conjunction, reflects the temporal sequence of A and B. Hence, this is the principle of diagrammatic iconicity (i.e. a correspondence between a structural pattern and its meaning). In the same vein, the proverb evinces metaphorical iconicity. Though the example above seems not to have a real metaphor (as we could only see a simile in the comparisons of 'the month of March to lions and lambs'), according to Pierce's broader definition which describes a metaphorical icon as a sign "which represents… by representing a parallelism in something else" (CP2.277), we can argue that it does contain metaphorical iconicity. Iconicity can also be grouped into phonetic, lexical, and syntactic iconicity (See 1.4).

Previous studies

Noth (2001) critiqued Charles Senders Peirce's work (the founder of modern semiotics) on iconicity. The researcher tried to find out how Pierce defined iconic signs in contrast to the other signs and the extent of the relevancy of his theory (of iconicity) to the study of language and literature. Aside from the concerns raised above, the researcher argues that iconicity in language goes beyond the principle of 'form miming meaning. Furthermore, he considered a different kind of iconicity in language which is based on the principle of 'form miming form. Having done this 'linguistic extension of the scope of iconicity', he concluded with certain remarks on the ubiquity in language and also showed that iconic signs are, to a certain degree, omnipresent in language and verbal communication.

In another study, Fischer (1997) explored how iconicity is used as a generic force in language, in both natural and poetic works, and the way its workings are reflected in language change (especially syntactic change). He argues that linguistic changes themselves may reveal more clearly through the iconic impulse present in language users since it is through change that both the structure of language and the principles

underlying it often become more visible. With copious examples, Fischer showed how an individual's use of iconicity may spread to the whole community which can result in a systematic change in the language itself. He also illustrated with evidence from some cases of syntactic change, how iconicity (or lack of it) may bring about change.

Rad (2014) in a thesis analyzed the characteristics of totalitarianism in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eight-Four*. The author's analysis reveals the manner of the construction of differences and similarities. He achieved this by dividing the paper into two parts. While the first part deals with the construction of surveillance and their attendant methods and control measures in *Brave New World*, the second part dwelt on surveillance in *Nineteen Eight-Four and their methods*. Rad argues that the system of *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eight-Four* are totalitarian whose ultimate goal is to preserve themselves. It, therefore, shows that they serve completely different means as the aim of one is the absolute well-being of the population while the other is an absolute concentration of power in a few individuals. Similarly, Lange (2013) considered iconicity as an important factor for quality literacy in *Brave New World*. He posits, by presenting many examples of iconic language used in the novel, that iconicity enhances the novel's aesthetics and creative and artistic appeal. He also believes (as he showed) that the reader's potential identification with the strange and appalling world that the novel describes is enhanced by the use of iconic language. The researcher assumed that the success of such a dystopian novel is a result of the wonderful manipulation of linguistic iconicity. This, he brought to the fore by arguing that the use of certain slogans by the characters in the novel supports and sustains the totalitarian system and manifestation dominant in the work.

Iconicity in the language of *"Brave New World"*

As opposed to Ferdinard de Saussure's (1916) postulation of the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign, Charles Sanders Pierce introduced the principle of iconicity. This deals with the similarity between the sign (vehicle) and its referential object (Noth, 1990). Generally, iconicity may be divided into two parts: exophoric and endophoric iconicity. Exophoric iconicity occurs when an icon refers to an object of the non-linguistic world while endophoric iconicity is used where an icon depicts a segment of language occurring in the preceding linguistic context. In what follows, therefore, we shall examine iconicity in the language of *Brave New World* from the standpoint of phonetic, metaphorical/lexical iconicity, and syntactic iconicity.

Phonetic Iconicity

Phonetic iconicity or sound symbolism, (the phonetic motivation between form and meaning) 'is based on man's imitative instinct, which leads us to use characteristic speech sounds for name-giving (Marchand 1960: 397). For example, in examining the words 'clink' and 'titter' used in Huxley's book, it can be observed that a high and thin tone is rendered which partially proves the assertion that the /i/ vowel stands for thinness. Sadness, as well as darkness, is expressed by /u/. For instance, in 'boohooing and 'gloomy' (See Waugh and Newfield, 1995:199). Another example from the novel for /s/ expressing sharpness could be 'sibilant' (Huxley 49). Swinging movements expressed by /sw/ can partially be discovered in 'swivel' and 'sweeping' (Huxley 1932: 183). Examples of initial /sp/ denoting jet movement are *speed*, *sprouting,* and *spray(ing).* Initial /sn/ is connected with the mouth, the nose, or the face in *sniff(ed), snoring, snubs*

*(*meaning snub noses), *snatch,* and even in *a snigger.* /sl/ expresses a sliding or falling movement in *slip* and *slope(s).* Initial /pl/ expressing a dull impact is found in *plunge(d).* /br/ expresses an unpleasant noise in *the break, brush(ed),* even in *bra(s),* and from a certain perspective even in *brass.* The relation to sight expressed by /gl/ can, for instance, be found in *glinted, glean(ed),* and *glance(d).* Examples of a grumbling inimical noise expressed by /gr/ are *groan* and *growl.* Initial /tw/ denoting small sounds can be found on *Twitter(ings).* Initial /tw/ denoting small, chiefly, twisting or movement is, for instance, expressed in *twitch(ed).*

These examples show that the principles discovered by several authors can be proven. Many convincing examples can be found, especially for the initial /sn/. However, there are counter-examples for many of the examined relations. Taking the initial /br/ expressing unpleasant noises as an example, a few words to which this semantic relation applies can be found. But there are by far more words starting with /br/ which are not at all connected with unpleasant noises, such as *bring, broaden[ed], breathe briskly, breast, brave, and brim* (Huxley 1932:296).

Onomatopoeia

A lot of onomatopoeic words can be found in the novel, such as *whizz, click, hum, rattle, cock-a-doodle-doo, cuckoo, murmur, boom, bang, crack, cough, howl, drip(ping), thump,* but also *purr, crash, hiss, splash, pop, hush, screech, clang, mumble, clap, gush, smash, tinkle, whoop, roar, fizz, whir, growl, buzz(ing), wheeze, cackle, hiccough(s),* and *squeak(s).*

Marchand (1960: 402) uses the word 'bang' as an example of an onomatopoeic word as a compound of several symbolic elements. The /æ/ renders the sound (the slamming of the door causes) which is an imitation of the vibration of the air following it. The /b/ is expressive of the bluntness of the explosive sound. Without icons, it would be difficult to evoke mental images (Nöth, 2001). In a science-fiction novel such as *Brave New World*, we are confronted with a world unknown to us and completely unknown to readers in 1932. Therefore, it is not surprising that iconic language, for instance, using onomatopoeic words, is used to describe this world so that the reader can relate to it. To examine this point, let us consider the onomatopoeic words mentioned above and relate them to their context in the novel.

In chapter one, the apparatus in the Bottling Room, which is unknown to us, is described using an onomatopoeia: 'Whizz' and then, 'click' while the lift-hatches flew open (page 29). In the same chapter, the 'Embryo Store' is described as a place where artificial human beings are created.

The machinery which is used to do so is again totally unknown to us. We find onomatopoeic words in the following description: 'The *hum* and *rattle* of the machinery faintly stirred the air (page 31). In chapter eighteen, a reporter arrives at John's lighthouse. We find many onomatopoeic words in the following quotation (in italics), which serves as a description of his transmission device: 'He pressed a switch on the left side of the hat and from within came a faint *waspy buzzing*; turned a knob on the right and the *buzzing* was interrupted by a stethoscopic *wheeze* and *cackle*, by hiccoughs and sudden *squeaks* (page 296). These quotations seem to prove that onomatopoeic words are very well suited to make unknown machinery—or generally speaking, unknown elements imaginable. From this perspective, a science-fiction novel depends on phonetic iconicity to deliver a comprehensible depiction of an unknown world. Apart from the

realistic depiction of unknown elements, they generally promote the literary quality of a novel as they increase realism, as in the following quotation, where playing children are described: '*Buzz, buzz!* The hive was *humming*, busily, joyfully (page182).

Morphological and Lexical Iconicity

The more complex an idea gets, the more code is required to express it. 'The Quantity principle', as described by Givon (1995) for iconicity in syntax, is an appropriate term to express this idea in morphological as well as lexical iconicity.

Sports

The following popular sports can be found in the novel: 'Centrifugal Bumble-puppy' (p.52), 'Obstacle Golf' (p. 69), 'Escalator-squash' (p.93), 'Electro-magnetic Golf' (p.116), 'Electro-magnetic Tennis' and 'Riemann-surface tennis' (p. 292), and 'hunt-the-zipper' (p.245), which refer to the game 'hunt-the-slipper' (See Rau, 199,p.74). It is striking that these names are longer than the names of the sport we are used to, which is in most cases the result of compounding in which familiar sports names, such as golf or tennis, are used as free lexical morphemes. Names of present sports, such as golf, tennis, squash, (ice) hockey, soccer, football, baseball, basketball, cycling, and handball, are mostly disyllabic, and very few are monosyllabic, which might correspond with the simplicity of the rules of the games and the equipment needed to play them. To play soccer one needs nothing more than a soccer ball and a goalpost to shoot the ball into, which might even suffice as an explication of the game's rules. This simplicity can be discovered in most of today's games, which does not surprise them as this simplicity is a particular appeal to the sportsmen who play them as well as to the viewers who watch them.

Concerning equipment, the quantity principle seems to be valid for the sports in *Brave New World* compared to today's sports. What can be said about the rules of *Brave New World's* games? In the game 'Obstacle Golf', we find the addition of a nominal modifier 'obstacle' preceding 'golf'. Hence, this sport is some sort of Golf in our sense but has to be played with additional obstacles. In 'Electro-magnetic Golf', an electromagnetic device must play a decisive role. In 'Escalator-squash' an escalator is needed which necessarily makes the game more complex than normal squash, demanding more expertise as well as equipment. All these additions, which go with a larger chunk of code, must, therefore, find expression in the composition of the games.

Let us examine the 'Centrifugal Bumble puppy' in detail. This game is described in chapter three as follows: 'Twenty children were grouped in a circle round a chrome steel tower. A ball thrown up to land on the platform at the top of the tower rolled down into the interior, fell on a rapidly revolving disk, was hurled through one or other of the numerous apertures pierced in the cylindrical casing, and had to be caught' (p.52]. The rules of this game, whose name seems to be the longest among all the games, appear to be easy, which can easily be explained by the fact that it is a game for children. Concerning equipment, we discover a complexity that seems unnecessary though. From our perspective, no such complex apparatus is needed for a game whose simple goal is to catch a ball. Hence, considering equipment, there is a motivated relation between form and meaning. The name of this game can be examined further by referring back to phonetic iconicity: The /I :/ sound as found in puppies might express smallness, sharpness, and quickness, as already discovered. We find the idea of quickness, but also

the idea of sharpness in the above description of the game in the form of *thrown up, rapidly, hurled*, and *pierced*.

Marchand (1960) mentions 'bumble' as an example of a word expressing continuous vibrating sounds. Indeed, the described apparatus can easily be imagined as a continuously vibrating device. But another perspective is also valid. The voiced /b/ in bumble can be linked with the softness (see Fégany 2001). The same applies to /m/ which stands for sweetness, and the /i:/ in puppy expresses 'smallness', and therefore in some respect 'harmlessness', which corresponds with it. If we link this other perspective to the novel's content, we might discover the significance of phonetic iconicity in the games' names: In chapter three, we are at the 'Conditioning Centre' where children are conditioned to like games whose purpose is to fill people's free time, to promote consumption and therefore to contribute to stability. According to Ivan Pavlov's principle of classical conditioning, the more or less neutral stimulus of the game must be linked to an unconditioned, but more or 'less pleasant stimulus to make the game desirable. And this goal can be achieved by linking the game with ideas of softness, sweetness, and smallness.

Syntactic Iconicity

In this section, we will concentrate on the two sequential order principles described by Givon (1995), as we expect them to be especially linkable to the novel's content. Besides this, we will discover examples of metaphors, rhymes, alliteration, and repetition.

The semantic principle of linear order

In *Brave New World*, the order of clauses mostly reflects the order of events. As long as this is the case, the semantic principle of linear order is valid. There is only one major exception, the flashback in chapter eight which talks about John's childhood. Taking the flashback separately, namely as a single story, and therefore apart from the rest of the novel, in which it is embedded, the mentioned principle is valid here too because within the flashback the order of clauses reflects the order of events as well, by telling point by point how John has reached adulthood. The semantic principle of linear order, which can be found in the natural order of clauses, is a phenomenon of diagrammatic iconicity (See Nöth 2001).

The pragmatic principle of linear order

The World State's motto is 'Community, Identity, Stability (page 21). Assuming the above-described principle (4) (a) (i.e., information which is more important or more urgent takes the first position in the string) to be valid here, the community is more important and has, therefore, a higher value than identity and that identity is of higher importance than stability. By examining the novel, this assumption needs to be tested. Community refers to the citizens of *The Brave New World,* who were created artificially to match society's needs. So what is meant by a community can be considered the foundation of the brave new world. In this respect and referring to principle (4a), it is not surprising that the community is mentioned first. Identity has the meaning of sameness as well as individuality. Individuality cannot be taken as the meaning of identity, as in a totalitarian system individuality is undesired. Sameness, on the other hand, is implied as there is sameness within each caste. This sameness is one of the main aspects of a community. To be precise, it is the sameness that made the community possible in the

first place. But as community consists of more elements than sameness, we find principle (4a) valid for the relation between community and identity. Stability is mentioned the most in the novel and it was the most urgent goal when designing the new society after the war. Assuming principle (4a) to be valid, the World State's motto should, therefore, be Stability, Community, and Identity. The order as found in the novel is moving in some way logically towards the most urgent aspect of the motto, so to speak its climax, namely stability. The principles (4a), though valid for the first two aspects, are reversed for the third aspect, but for a reasonable purpose (See Noth 1993: 31). This principle applies also to the order of names when two characters are mentioned together. John the Savage, for instance, is mostly mentioned secondly, which corresponds with the fact that he as someone from the Savage Reservation is of lower social rank in the *Brave New World*.

Metaphor, rhyme, alliteration, and repetition

The metaphor was used in chapter eighteen when a group of curious onlookers arrives at John's lighthouse to see him. The description of their arrival reads: 'And from out of the bellies of these giant grasshoppers stepped men in white viscoseflannels' (page 303). Literally, 'bellies of these giant grasshoppers' means the organ of an insect. However, metaphorically, it means a cabin of a helicopter. This comparison was made because of the similarity between the shape of the grasshopper and that of a helicopter. Also, when on flight, grasshoppers make sounds that appear similar to helicopters. This subtle comparison, according to Ricoeur (2003) helps the reader have a better perception of the world.

Many rhymes can be found in the form of moral indoctrinations, whose purpose is to maintain the order of the World State. So, it is quite obvious that this dystopian novel could not work without iconicity in the form of rhymes. Here are two examples: 'Ending is better than mending' (page 74) and 'Orgy-porgy, Ford and fun, Kiss the girls and make them One (page 112). In the sentence 'We want the whip' (page 305), we see how the /w/ sound was repeated in the initial positions ('we', 'want', and 'whip').

Conclusion

Examples of iconicity in language are not in short supply in Huxley's *Brave New World*. What is noticeable is the overlapping of the three main aspects of iconicity in this work. It is striking, however, to see how many examples of iconic language are evident in the novel. Iconic language enhances the novel's aesthetics, creativity, and art as well as the readers' potential identification with a seemingly nonexistent world. Finally, the content of the novel might simply require at least some benefits from linguistic iconicity.

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