



**POWER DYNAMICS IN THE CONTEXT OF POLITICS IDENTITY IN
BOLE BUTAKE'S *DANCE OF THE VAMPIRES*:
DOMINANCE, MANIPULATION AND RESISTANCE**

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ABSTRACT: *Daily conversations are charged with nuances of symbolic power, evenly or asymmetrically distributed, shaping social relationships between groups or individuals. This sociolinguistic inquiry examines top-down and bottom-up power dynamics, manipulation and resistance in Bole Butake's Dance of the Vampires, a political play portraying a monarch who sacrifices his people for the quest of absolute power. The study is a trimodal investigation that extends beyond the usual monolithic treatment of language-power relationships by including manipulation and resistance in power dynamics analysis. Power dynamics, manipulation and resistance variations in the examined play were analyzed through the lens of Foucault's social theory of power and Van Dijk's socio-cognitive framework. The content analysis method was used to analyze selected power variables. The findings reveal that power exercise among characters in the scrutinized play is multifold. Power dynamics variations in top-down relationships express power asymmetry manifested through critiques, honorifics, commands, royal proclamations, destitution decrees, signatures and seals, questioning, warnings, threat and conditioning. Resistance to power hierarchy in bottom-up relationships is exercised through disapproval of orders and arrest and destitution of the ruler. Manipulation is orchestrated by the monarch to control the thoughts of his subordinates, using devices such as corruption and gaslighting. It emerges from the writer's political ideology that social contract, collectivism and egalitarianism should guide political rulers in governance. The study concludes that the language of power in creative writing reflects hierarchical and top-down models' power in intergroup communication and institutional structures.*

KEYWORDS: Sociolinguistics, power dynamics, resistance, manipulation, ideology.



INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

Power dynamics studies abound in critical studies, sociolinguistics, conversational analysis, the social psychology of language, applied linguistics and communication. The studies account for the relationship between language and power pondering over the power behind language, the language of power and the power of language. Power dynamics refer to the ways in which power is distributed, exercised, and negotiated within social relationships and structures. They integrate manipulation, resistance and identity. Power dynamics are manifested across domains such as politics, economy, education, culture, and the workplace, among others. Conceptually, power is ontologically physical and linguistic in nature. Eelen (2001: 224) defines power as 'something people do to each other.' So, power is the way people reciprocally control themselves or assert authority. It is a behavioral process. It overcomes the objective physical force to become a behavioral social concern, that is, how people in positions of power subdue others in communication. Overall, power is a dynamic multifaceted force, a relational and social practice that expresses conflicts of interests and how individuals use them in interactional contexts. It is not something static and inherent to individuals but it is a dynamic force that can shift from one form of power to another and is subject to resistance. The exploration of power dynamics in contemporary writing is the centrality of this paper.

The current study explores power dynamics in Bole Butake's *Dance of the Vampires*, unraveling how power is exercised, enacted and challenged in the discourse of politics by characters belonging to different social scales in top-down and bottom-up relationships. It demonstrates how language is used to reinforce or contest social hierarchies, shape perceptions, and control discourse, reflecting and perpetuating power dynamics. What is examined here is power in discourse and power behind discourse. Characters in Butake's play use linguistic hierarchies that shape power relations, inequality and change constitutive of the rapport between power holders and the governed.

Statement of the Problem

Several studies on power dynamics in sociolinguistics dig into language as an expression of power and domination, overlooking language as an instrument of resistance and manipulation in power relations. Bole Butake's *Dance of the Vampires* is a postmodern political play that highlights the manifestations of absolute power in an imaginary government, shades of manipulation of conscience and contests to the established order. The monarch called Psaul Roi, who incarnates power in this government, uses illegal means to ensure total control over his subjects. The language used between the monarch and his subordinates features domination, manipulation, resistance and identity formation within political and social hierarchies.

Research Questions

The above-mentioned problem led to the following research questions:

1. What are the power dynamics variations in *Dance of the Vampires*?
2. What are the shades of manipulation and resistance in the play?
3. How is political identity constructed and negotiated across the text?



Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it brings to light how influential and instrumental powers are enacted in a political play to control and subdue others. Also, the findings of this research permit understanding of the relationships between political leaders in Africa and the population they administer in the post-colonial era and the political system in place pressed by the exigencies of globalization enhancing freedom and respect for human rights. Finally, this study has significant implications for sociolinguistic studies in African literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews ideas on the relationship between sociolinguistics and power dynamics and how individuals express resistance using a powerful language.

Sociolinguistics and Power Dynamics

Sociolinguistics is “an interdisciplinary field that studies the intricate relationship between language and society, examining how social factors influence language use, language variation and change” (Andrus, 2024: 7). Factors influencing language use include age, gender, social class, social context, ethnicity, race, education, technological advancement, migration, globalization, and social power dynamics as well. Power looms over all spheres of the society like politics, economy, culture, religion, media, education, etc., and is exercised differently depending on circumstances. It is sometimes used to enforce the law, unite or divide people, and control or assert authority over others. Analyzing sociolinguistics and power dynamics concurs in showing how language enhances social inequalities. Andrus (2024) discussed instances of power dynamics, shedding light on how language can perpetuate social inequalities. For instance, she stated that the concept of “linguistic capital” suggests that certain languages or dialects are valued more highly than others, often reflecting broader societal hierarchies. For example, standard English is frequently viewed as the language of power and prestige in many English-speaking countries, leading to stigmatization of non-standard varieties. This dynamic can impact individuals' opportunities in education, employment and social mobility, making it imperative for sociolinguists to address these disparities and advocate for linguistic diversity and inclusivity. Further, the scholar opined that code-switching is another instance of linguistic inequality where individuals alternate between languages or dialects in a conversation reflecting social identities and structures.

Another key area of study within sociolinguistics the scholar points out is code-switching, which refers to the practice of alternating between languages or dialects within a conversation. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent in bilingual or multilingual communities, where speakers navigate different linguistic environments. The scholar explained that code-switching could serve various functions, including expressing cultural identity, signaling group membership, or facilitating communication. Sociolinguists analyze these practices to understand how language use reflects social relationships and cultural contexts. To end, studying code-switching contributes to our understanding of bilingualism and its cognitive, social and emotional implications.

Fairclough (1989:44-55) identified two dimensions of power/language relationships in social practices: power in discourse and power behind discourse. Power in discourse is



concerned with discourse as a place where relations of power are actually exercised and enacted; power behind discourse focuses on how certain types of discourse are shaped and constituted by relations of power. In other words, power behind discourse means that the whole social order of discourse is put together and held together as a hidden effect of power. One dimension of this is standardization.

Sociolinguists have identified culturally diversified signs that illustrate how people use language to exercise power in conversations. They are forms of address; speaking turn negotiation; topic selection and maintenance; questioning; use of evaluative statements (Damicko et al., 2008). There are other ways that interactional power manifests, such as the asymmetrical use of politeness forms, the lack of mitigation during a difficult interactional situation, and overt statements of power, among others. Fairclough (1989) offered devices of power control or manipulation such as Instructions/Evaluating the other participant's verbal behavior/Questions/Interruption/Explicitness/Controlling topics/Reformulation/Repetition. The sociolinguistic analysis of power dynamics in Bole Butake's *Dance of Vampires* explores power asymmetries, dominance and resistance in political discourse.

Power and Resistance in Discourse

Critical inquiries on language and power relationships mostly concentrate on power enactment, maintenance and perpetuation in top-down relations of dominance overlooking power resistance and manipulation in bottom-up relations wherein low people through language challenge and resist domination. This paper attempts to demonstrate that discourse is a context of dominance and resistance. Power and resistance in discourse are intertwined. Foucault (1981:93) acknowledges that discourse is a place where dominance and resistance meet. He claims that discourse is a "locus for power to be resisted, contented and challenged." Thus, discourse is not only an instrument of power exercise and perpetuation, but it is also a reservoir of power contest, challenge and resistance. Power and resistance relationships articulate how power is enacted, challenged, contested and resisted in discourse. Dominance and resistance are dyadic concepts in conversations, implying that no participant is powerful throughout the discourse. Participants keep on using linguistic devices to resist each other; power shifts from one interlocutor to another. In this light, Harris (1994: 156) points out that discourse is "a bargaining table where each participant in discourse brings the devices of power to the bargaining table." In other words, discourse is a struggle where no participant monopolizes power indefinitely, no interlocutor is a passive subject, and power enactment is interpersonal above all. Bavelas et al. (1992:22) in the same perspective, noted that "whenever people interact, there is interpersonal discord to be observed." This confirms Fairclough (1989:43)'s idea that "power relations are always relations of struggle." Participants constantly attempt to control topics in interactions.

Previous Studies

Below are selective works on power dynamics reviewed in the paragraphs below. They discuss language and power relations in politeness and gender.

Akumbu and Atanga (2020) studied the language of greetings and power dynamics among the Babanki and Fulbe of the Northwest Cameroon, paying attention to the influence exerted by the participants of each community. Data collected through observation of real-life situations in Badem and Babanki Tungo provide evidence that the larger, more powerful host community, Babanki members, tend to be more controlled in a greeting context than the



minority pastoral Fulbe group members who have recently moved into the Babanki community. The linguistic analysis of greetings has shown that the Fulbe tend to dominate conversations controlling turn-taking, topic choice, and the duration of conversation whether in Pidgin-English, Fulfulde or Babanki, in this order, depending on whether the Fulbe has learned Babanki or not. Concerning the type of information sought during greeting, the Fulbe are clearly seen to impose their extensive information-seeking pattern on the Babanki. They ask as much information from the Babanki as they can, whereas the Babanki might have asked only a single question at the beginning of the interaction. This is so because the Babanki would normally start by asking about the time of the day and then one question about news or well-being. The Fulbe, on the other hand, would ask about the day or night, the well-being of the interlocutor and that of the members of their household, property, work, etc. To sum up, the findings portray the Babanki as hierarchically lower during greetings, although the Babanki are the hosts and more dominant than the minority migrant Fulbe. This led the researchers to reconsider the traditional understanding that the host group is more likely to dominate and influence the newcomers in situations of contact both in terms of language and culture. The study provides a new perspective to contact linguistics, which has tended to focus on contact-induced changes on grammatical systems while neglecting socio-cultural changes that might result from language contact.

Atanga (2009) investigated gender and power relations in the Cameroonian parliament using a critical discourse analysis approach to portray unequal relations within institutions. The study identified different gendered discourses within the speeches of Members of Parliament and government ministers. Consciously or unconsciously, these participants within parliamentary debates draw on topics that construct women and men in specific ways, sometimes sustaining gender stereotypes or challenging existing conditions. The way men and women are constructed using language also was indicative of gender and power relations within this particular community. The study also looked at the way men and women were constructed using traditional discourses of gender differentiation and how some of these discourses get challenged, appropriated or subverted using progressive gendered discourses that advocate equal opportunities, gender equality and gender partnership in development. The discourse used by men constructed entrenched and legitimized patriarchal socio-cultural hegemonies, and on the other hand, equivalent discursive strategies were employed by female MPs to resist, counter, subvert and deconstruct dominant gendered discourse.

To sum up, scholarship on power dynamics focuses much on dominance in language/power relationships, neglecting resistance in the broader theory of power. This study fills this gap by showing in light of Foucault (1981)'s ideas, that power is enacted, maintained, challenged and resisted in discourse both by elites and subordinates.

Theoretical Framework

This study exploring power dynamics, resistance and manipulation in the context of politics and identity draws inspiration from Michel Foucault's model of top-down and bottom-up power dynamics framework and Van Dijk (1998)'s Socio-Cognitive Approach.

Michel Foucault (1981) negated the conventional understanding of power as a simplistic, top-down, repressive force imposed by the state or ruling elite. He admits that power is diffuse, pervasive, and present in all the spheres of society. According to Foucault, power is both repressive and productive. Power is exercised through diverse arrays of institutions, discourses,



and practices shaping individual behaviors, desires and subjectivities. Rather than something possessed by few individuals, power is an intricate network of relationships, constantly exercised and experienced.

One of Foucault's major contributions to apprehending power dynamics rests on his concept of the "disciplinary society." He holds that contemporary societies are characterized by disciplinary mechanisms that regulate and control individuals. Institutions such as schools, hospitals, prisons, and workplaces employ techniques like surveillance, normalization, and examination to produce compliant and submissive subjects. Through disciplinary practices, power molds individuals, shaping their behaviors and subjecting them to hierarchical structures.

Foucault's conception of power extends beyond the disciplinary society, embodying the broader concept of "biopower." Biopower refers to the mechanism through which power operates on the biological and social aspects of populations. It includes practices like public health policies, welfare systems, and biopolitical interventions aimed at managing and controlling populations. Biopower governs and regulates life itself, including birth, death, sexuality, and reproduction. By exploring the intersections of power and life, Foucault reveals how power operates at the very core of our existence. Foucault does not view power as an all-encompassing force that renders resistance futile. He emphasizes the existence of various forms of resistance that arise in response to power. According to Foucault, power is not a one-way street; it involves a dynamic interplay between those who exercise power and those subjected to it. He underscores that resistance is an inherent aspect of power relations and that power itself generates counterpower. Foucault's theory has meaning in this study, as it shows how power in *Dance of the Vampires* challenges top-down relationships

Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach is an interplay between the micro-structure of language and the macro-structure of society. The approach offers insights into how power relations are reflected in cognitive processes, making it suitable for studying how dominant ideologies are reinforced or challenged through discourse. According to Van Dijk (1993a), social cognitions encompass socially shared representations of societal arrangements, groups, and relations, as well as mental operations such as interpretation, thinking, arguing, inference, and learning. Discourse encompasses various forms of communication, while cognition refers to the mental structures and processes involved in discourse and interaction. The macro-structure encapsulates power, dominance, and inequality among social groups, while the micro-level encompasses language use, discourse, verbal interaction, and communication. Van Dijk posits that societal structures are linked to discourse structures through the actors involved and their cognitive processes. The current study figures out the cognitive processes characters in *Dance of the Vampires* engage in to influence their alter ego.



METHODOLOGY

Material

Dance of the Vampires is a play by Bole Butake, a Cameroonian playwright who is of late now. He was a prolific postmodernist literary critic who wrote a series of books. His repertoire of plays includes *The Rape of Michelle* (1984), *Lake God* (1986), *The Survivors* (1989), *And Palm-wine Will Flow* (1990), *Shoes and Four Men in Arms* (1993), *Dance of the Vampires* (1995), *Zintgraff and the Battle of Mankon* (2003), *Family Saga* (2005), *Betrothal Without Libation* (2005), and *Cameroon Anthology of Poetry* (2010). *Dance of the Vampires* is a political play that portrays a monarch, Psaul Roi, who desires absolute power and does not want to share it with the vampires who have a chunk of power he does not control. The play is made up of eight characters, such as Psaul Roi (Monarch), Song (Chief of Protocol), Town Crier (Chambiah), Five masked figures (Vampire cult), Albino (Emissary from Albinia), Nformi (Army General), Four Soldiers and Voices off.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

This study uses a qualitative research design to explore power dynamics and resistance in Bole's Butake *Dance of Vampires*. The content analysis approach is used to gather patterns of power relations from the material studied. Extracts of power structures, social practices and linguistic devices spread through *Dance of Vampires* will be collected, presented either individually or in conversations and analyzed using the thematic approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Power Dynamics and Resistance in Bole Butake's *Dance of the Vampires*

Asymmetrical Power Dynamics

Asymmetrical power dynamics describes situations power is unevenly distributed. People use their position to influence others or subdue them.

a) Authority

The quest of absolute power haunts Psaul Roi soul. In a conflictual power relationship with the vampires, Psaul Roi does not want to be dominated as extract 1 below demonstrates.

Extract 1

EERIE VOICE: The sounds will never cease! The dance will never stop! Power is in our hands. The land is in chains as the vampires dance the dance of the vampires. He that does not believe, let him open his eyes and ears and watch a most spectacular spectacle—Dance of the Vampires!

PSAUL ROI: Power is in our hands? We who? Psaul Roi and who? Power is in our hands! Psaul Roi, you are a fool. You are a king with only the semblance of power. Real power, absolute power is in the hands of the vampires. What to do? Psaul Roi, what to do to have absolute power? I want power! Psaul Roi wants absolute power. Absolute power even if I have



to wrestle with the vampires. I want absolute power! Power!!! (*An apologetic knock at the door. Psaul Roi swallows a mouthful and then impatiently*) Who is it? Who is there? (pp. 5-6)

Psaul Roi is against sharing power with the vampires, holders of spiritual powers in the community the monarch rules. Sharing powers with the Vampires will make him a semblant king so he must snatch the parcel of power they control for supreme power. The monarch's anxiety for centralized and tyrannical power compels him to fight the vampires to reign alone over the land: "I want power! Psaul Roi wants absolute power. Absolute power even if I have to wrestle with the vampires. I want absolute power! Power!!!"

b) Critiques

In a top-down relationship, putting pressure on the superordinate is risky and exposes the concerned to reprimands, critiques and disrespect. The following extracts portray such situations.

Extract 2

SONG: In the waiting room, Your Most Royal Majesty. He said it was urgent because...

PSAUL ROI: What was urgent? Seeing me? You are all beginning to fly places. Like the vampires that you all are. Who decides the urgency of any matter in this land?

Song respectfully informs Psaul Roi that the Commander in Chief would like to see him and it is urgent. Psaul Roi recalled his reminding Song that he solely can decide on the land matter, echoed in the rhetorical question, "Who decides the urgency of any matter in this land?" The monarch is so angry that he compares them to flies and vampires. His tone reinforces his authority and superiority over his subordinates.

c) Honorifics

Power in Butake's *Dance of the Vampires* is asymmetrically distributed according to characters' roles in the play. Linguistic hierarchies, such as markers of status are employed to establish the social scale difference existing between the characters. The subordinates mostly use titles of deference to address their superior, as portrayed in the conversations below:

Extract 3

PSAUL ROI: Come. Come inside. You want a drink? Serve yourself.

SONG: (*Advancing with all humility*) I am very sorry to disturb **Your Most Royal Majesty** at this time of day.

Extract 4

PSAUL ROI: (*After very careful consideration*) All right. I will grant you royal pardon. Go right

away and ask my **Chief Counsellor**... what is his name?

SONG: Chinkene, **Your Most Royal Majesty**.



Extract 5

SONG: Chief of Protocol, Your Most Royal Majestic Emperor, I was...

PSAUL ROI: You think I am one of you pigs whom you can flatter?

SONG: No, Your Most Royal Majesty. You are...

Extract 6

PSAUL ROI: Am I or am I not the Commander in Chief of the Royal Armed Forces of...

SONG: Your Most Royal Majesty, you are. And Chambiay is Chief Commander. He is also the High Priest of our...

Extract 7

SONG: Your Most Royal Majesty, his Excellency Emissary Albino from Albinia.

PSAUL ROI: Oh, my friend Albino from Albinia, welcome to our modest but, I can assure you,

very hospitable kingdom.

Extract 8

ALBINO: Thank you, Your Excellency the Most Royal Majesty. I must begin by presenting the condolences of the people of Albinia to Your Most Royal Majesty for the great calamity that has befallen your beautiful and very hospitable kingdom. It must have been a terrible plague judging from the corpses on your streets.

As the above extracts show, PSAUL ROI is the ruler of the kingdom, and thus subordinates revere him through titles of respect. They use an assemblage of honorifics such as “Your Most Royal Majesty,” “Your Most Royal Majestic Emperor,” and “Your Excellency the Most Royal Majesty.” These titles empower the one who occupies a royal status. His kingship is not contested and superlatives are overly used to state his respectability. He is sometimes called “Your Most Royal...,” “...Emperor,” or “...Excellency” to express his grandeur, therefore marking social distance, in a top-down relationship, between the monarch and his subordinates.

The other members of the palace are titled with subordinate roles that specify their power scale in the kingdom. The title “Chief Counsellor” designates the chief adviser of the monarch named Chinkene; “Chief Commander” and “High Priest” for Chambiay, who is the chief of the armed forces and Cult of Vampires; and “His Excellency Emissary” for Albino, an emissary from the kingdom of Albinia, the businessman. To sum up, the honorifics used in these contexts are cues to save the hearer’s face, achieving positive politeness. Brown and Levinson (1987) acknowledge that in communication people sometimes often attach importance to face during conversations to avoid conflicts.



c) Humilifics

“Humilifics” refers to “words that downgrade the status of a person.” (Ude & Idara, 2023 p.80) Psaul Roi sometimes downgrades his subordinates to exercise his authority over them. The dialogue below is an illustration.

Extract 9

PSAUL ROI: (*Looking at his watch disinterestedly*) When did you come?

SONG: When I came now, Your Royal Majesty.

PSAUL ROI: When you came now...

SONG: I beg...

PSAUL ROI: Not for royal pardon again. I will not grant it. Too much work for **one insignificant worm** I picked up from the gutter. You are all **rotten maggots** I exhumed from the grave. What were you before I made you...?

Song has come to ask for royal pardon for the second time to Psaul Roi. The monarch's refusal was adamant. The monarch humiliates Song using dehumanizing attributes such as “insignificant worm” and “rotten maggots” to assert authority over him. These epithets downgrade Song, proving that he is nothing in the eyes of the king.

d) Orders

An order is a discourse instrument that compels people to react to the speaker's instruction. When it comes from an authority, an order is not contested. Extract 10 below is an illustration.

Extract 10

TOWN CRIER: I do not stop you, Royal Majesty. Only that I fear for the consequences.

PSAUL ROI: **Leave the consequences to me.** I will take care of them. **But I want this initiation**

tomorrow; and that is an order, a royal edict. I will instruct Chief Counsellor to

prepare a royal proclamation for our signature and seal. (p.16)

In the above dialogue, Psaul Roi desires to be initiated as a member of the cult of Vampires, though the land practices do not entitle him to the position. Despite the consequences the land may face if Psaul Roi is initiated, the monarch insists. Using an imperative mood, he orders Town Crier, the chief of Vampires to initiate him in these words: “Leave the consequences to me. [...] But I want this initiation tomorrow, and that is an order, a royal edict.” Psaul Roi is controlled by absolute power so he does not admit that Chambiay, the Town Crier and at the same time Chief Commander of Armed Forces and Chief of Vampires possess a parcel of power that he does not control. Thus, Psaul wishes he had become a member of the Vampire Cult to have absolute power over his subjects, though he is not



ignorant that the transgression of the community administrative rules will bring woes to the community.

e) Proclamation

Power is vested upon individuals through decisions, decrees, orders, proclamations, etc. In the following dialogue, Town Crier, the chief commander of armed forces, reminds the forgetful monarch, Psaul Roi, that he was made Chief Commander through a Royal proclamation.

Extract 11

PSAUL ROI: Who made you Chief Commander?

TOWN CRIER: By Royal Proclamation No. 999/777/555/DOV/RME signed and sealed by Your Most Royal Majesty on April 6, 19... (p.12)

The “Royal Proclamation No. 999/777/555/DOV/RME” proclaims Town Crier as Chief Commander, making him the commander of armed forces. Through this decision, Chambiay, the Town Crier, is in charge of the Monarch’s security and people’s properties, safety and mobility over the land. The royal decision allows him to exercise power in the army and regulate people’s behaviors in the land. The army as a state institution is an instrument of power exercise, oppression and domination.

f) Destitution

In socio-structural societies, destitution is a coercive instrument in the hand of power holders, which permits them to destitute their subordinates in case of misbehavior, disobedience or absence of results. The leader’s subjectivities may also cause the sacking of the subordinate to control power to their advantage, as Psaul Roi attempts to extract...below.

Extract 12

Psaul ROI: Go right now and ask the Chief Counsellor to prepare a royal instrument of destitution in favor of Town Crier. Most urgently; and the instruction takes precedence over the instruments of royal pardon in your favor. He will proclaim the destitution himself. I am in no frame of mind now to designate another. As soon as he is done with the proclamation, he must be immediately put under the custody of the army. These are royal instructions and I want them executed with maximum celerity.

SONG: (*Alarmed*) Your Most Royal Majesty, this instruction cannot be executed. I beg... (pp. 10-11).

In the above extract, Psaul Roi instructs Song, the Chief Counsellor, “to prepare a royal instrument of destitution in favor of Town Crier, the Chief Commander.” Town Crier’s destitution is a result of the Chief Commander objection to initiating Psaul Roi to become a member of the Vampire Cult, for fear of a wave of calamities that will strike people, taking away their lives. Town Crier is respectful of the land’s tradition and people’s welfare, whereas Psaul Roi is thirsty for power, having no concern for his people’s security.



g) Signature and Seal

Signature and seal are symbols of power that give authority and authenticity to official documents. They are instruments of royal authority in Botake's *Dance of the Vampires*, as extract 13 showcases.

Extract 13

TOWN CRIER: (*Pulling it out from breast pocket*) A copy, Your Most Royal Majesty. Duly certified by Your Royal Majesty's Chief of the Security Service.

PSAUL ROI: (*Examines it closely and hands it back*) This looks authentic. And... were you made Town Crier by **royal proclamation** under **my sign** and **seal**? (p.13)

The noun phrases "royal proclamation," "my sign," and "seal" are power symbols that Psaul Roi duly uses in the play under scrutiny to grant royal pardon and appoint or destitute his subordinates. Signatures and seals are institutional symbols that are used in different domains of life to decide people's fate. The king questions the legitimacy of Town Crier through the rhetorical question, "And... were you made Town Crier by **royal proclamation** under **my sign**?" and **seal**?" signaling his skepticism and asserting his authority. The evocation of "royal proclamation" is a symbol of monarchy.

h) Questioning

Questioning is another subtle influential linguistic tool used by Psaul ROI to control his subordinates, as extract 14 demonstrates.

Extract 14:

PSAUL ROI: What is that you are wearing? Are you in the army?

TOWN CRIER: Chief Commander, Your Most Royal Majesty.

PSAUL ROI: Who made you Chief Commander?

TOWN CRIER: By Royal Proclamation No. 999/ 777/555/DOV/RME signed and sealed by Your Most Royal Majesty on April 6, 19...

PSAUL ROI: Do you have the proclamation?

TOWN CRIER: (*Pulling it out from breast pocket*) A copy, Your Most Royal Majesty. Duly certified by Your Royal Majesty's Chief of the Security Service.

[...]

PSAUL ROI: Why haven't I seen you before? I mean such an influential personality... Is that why you have not cared to come to me? (12-14)

Psaul Roi, in the above dialogue questions, asks Town Crier, the Chief Commander of Armed forces and the Chief of the Vampire Cult about the source of his authority. Actually, the king subtly intimidates the Chief Commander, showing that the latter is proud of himself and it is not because he holds a strategic position that he should not visit the king: "Why haven't I seen you before? I mean, such an influential personality... Is that why you have not cared to



come to me?” Psaul Roi asked. Implicitly, the king is accusing the Chief Commander of defiance and disrespect as a way to indicate that he is the only person who has absolute power in the land.

j) Warning

Warning in discourse carries power and implies trouble or danger if the individual talked to misbehaves. Extract 16 is an instance of a warning from *Dance of the Vampires*.

Extract 15

PSAUL ROI: What time of day is it? I can hardly make morning from noon, day from night. All because of those vandals who won't let me sleep a wink.

SONG: No need to bite your tongue about them, Your Royal Majesty. The army...

PSAUL ROI: Watch your tongue, Mr Protocol. What impudence! Insinuating that My, Our Most Royal Majesty would bite my, our tongue! (p.6)

Psaul Roi warns the Chief of Protocol to watch his tongue when he talks to the king: “Watch your tongue, Mr. Protocol. What impudence! Insinuating that My, Our Most Royal Majesty would bite my, our tongue!” The monarch blames his subordinate for being impudent, rude, and not showing respect to the king. The use of the imperative “Watch your tongue, Mr. Protocol.” By the monarch aiming at maintaining his authority over Song.

k) Threat

Threat is a powerful discursive tool that people use in conversation to silence partners or make them revise their thoughts or behavior. Extract 17 below is a glaring example.

Extract 16

SONG: Wait a little, Mr. Albino. Your Most Royal Majesty, if he leaves now then we are finished. The soldiers are marauding in the land spitting fire and spreading death everywhere... looting and raping because they have not been rewarded. Most Royal Majesty and Commander in Chief, can you imagine what will happen when they turn their weapons against the palace and demand a reward? Can you trust a dog that is hungry even if that dog has been your faithful companion for years? Think again, Your Most Royal Majesty and reconsider the proposal of Mr Albino. We cannot miss this occasion. I don't even know how Chambiay used to manage... p.39

PSAUL ROI: Don't pronounce that name in our royal presence or I will lose my mind.

In the exchange above, Psaul Roi does not appreciate that Song, the new commander of armed forces, mentions the name of Chambiay, the former commander of armed forces that the monarch destituted. Psaul commanded, “Don't pronounce that name in our royal presence or I will lose my mind.” The monarch threatens to punish Song if he ever mentions Chambiay in their conversation. Psaul Roi utterance uses the imperative, a marker of power and influence over Song.



k) Conditioning

Conditioning somebody implies that we have power over the person and the person can be deprived of some advantages if he/she does not meet the conditions meted. Albino cannot help Psaul Roi financially to clear the decomposing bodies unless the monarch calls back people of his community who went into exile, as extract 18 depicts.

Extract 17

ALBINO: Your Majesty, we must bring the people back...coax them to return. But first we must clear the land of the already decomposing bodies. But only on condition.

PSAUL ROI: What is the condition?

ALBINO: Business. Albinia cannot do business with a king who has no subjects because it is they who provide labour and consume goods. So, your kingdom must be peopled again.

(*Dance of the Vampires*, 38)

Psaul Roi needs money to reward soldiers for incinerating the bodies killed in the heavy massacre he ordered yet he is broke. Albino is a foreign businessman from Albinia sent "to rescue the land." p.43 In the position of power, Albino conditions his help to the monarch and he subordinates it to the idea that the king, through a royal pardon, should call back the people of the land who fled the land or went into exile. It is an absolute condition to fulfill so as to benefit from the help of the businessman. Albino sententiously concludes, "So, your kingdom must be peopled again." From what emerges, Albino has power over Psaul Roi because he gets finances that Psaul Roi is yearning for.

To sum up, discussions on asymmetrical powers demonstrate that there is a high use of influential instruments to establish inequality between characters in Bole's Butake's *Dance of the vampires*. The discursive instruments used are 'social practices' that mingle authority, critiques, honorifics, humilifics, orders, threats, warnings, arrests, destitution, and conditioning. Fairclough (2001a) views discourse as "a form of social practice," highlighting that spoken or written utterances are verbal expressions of power relations and struggles.

Resistance in Bole Butake's *Dance of the Vampires*

Power dynamics is not always one-way straight. Resistance is a counterpower in power relations aiming at contesting power exercise, challenging social structures, and transforming or changing them. Foucault buttresses that resistance is an inherent aspect of power relations and that power itself generates counterpower. He contends that resistance takes diverse forms, ranging from individual acts of defiance to collective movements aimed at challenging oppressive structures. He highlights the significance of "micro-resistances," which encompass everyday acts of resistance occurring within the gaps and crevices of power. These acts may be as subtle as questioning norms, subverting expectations, or engaging in small acts of rebellion. Through these micro-resistances, individuals carve out spaces of autonomy and contest dominant power structures. Resistance in *Dance of the Vampires* is operational through discursive strategies such as disapproval, arrest, and destitution.



a) Disapproval

Extract 18

PSAUL ROI: Since you won't stay with me, I will have to come with you. Your meeting will be graced by our royal presence.

SONG: Most Royal Majesty, you cannot. You are not...

PSAUL ROI: I am not what?... Initiated?... So, the vamps are deciding on my fate this night?

SONG: I do not know what will be discussed, Most Royal, I was only just informed now by Town Crier. (*Psaul Roi whispers into his ear and he smiles broadly as both of them walk back to low table*)

PSAUL ROI: Sit down, my friend, Song.

SONG: Most Royal Majesty, I cannot. (p.21)

In the above dialogue, Song has to leave Psaul Roi to attend the vampires' cult meeting but Psaul Roi, the monarch, who is not a member of the cult, wants to force himself into the spiritual council with the help of his chief counsellor so as to become the chief of vampires and have absolute control over his subjects. The cult of vampires' main function is "to maintain some kind of balance of power between the king and council." The tradition of the land does allow any monarch to be a member but Psaul Roi wants to break the law, ignoring the bloodied consequences of his move. Song, an influential member of the cult, disapproves and challenges the monarch's idea to be part of the meeting in these words: "Most Royal Majesty, you cannot. You are not..." The monarch cannot be a member of the vampire cult because the law does not allow it. Further, the king ordered Song to sit down and Song resisted: "Most Royal Majesty, I cannot." Song utterances exercise power over the king, appealing to him to respect the law of the land. He fearlessly resists the king regardless of the fact that he is a subordinate in the palace.

b) Arrest

Extract 19

PSAUL ROI: By royal proclamation, Chief Counsellor, Chief Commander, Town Crier and General of the royal armed forces, Nformi.

NFORMI: (indicating Psaul Roi and Song) Arrest them! These are the vampires who have ruined our land and brought calamity upon our people.

The chief commander of armed forces, Nformi, arrested Psaul Roi and Song, all responsible for the ruins and degeneracy of the land. He ordered their arrest imperatively: "Arrest them!" he commanded. The arrest of the monarch signifies destitution from the throne and a switch of power. Nformi has challenged the power of the king, who is his superior in chieftaincy. Resistance here uses Foucault's society's disciplinary power to restore justice.



c) Destitution

Extract 20

ALBINO: Nothing about switching loyalties until we put the king away.

NFORMI: Killing him will be doing him a favor. The people need to see him naked to be convinced. **We will have to make him sign a royal proclamation destituting himself as king.**

ALBINO: Just get a few men whom you can trust, some of your family members, I guess. And we can launch the operation.

Destitution is a powerful instrument that can be used against rulers to put an end to their term of office. Nformi, in the above dialogue, intends to force Psaul Roi to “sign a royal proclamation destituting himself as king.” Committing this is an act of resistance against the ruling of the king.

Manipulation in Bole Butake’s *Dance of the Vampires*

Manipulation is a key concept in Van Dijk’s discourse of power and influence. Van Dijk (2006, p.360) contends that manipulation implies “the exercise of a form of illegitimate influence by means of discourse: manipulators make others believe or do things that are in the interest of the manipulator and against the best interests of the manipulated.” Thus, manipulation is a nuance of power standing as a cognitive process or tactic somebody uses to control people’s thoughts, actions and emotions to comply to desired interests or modify the behavior of the listener to the advantage of the manipulator. Manipulation in *Dance of the Vampires* articulated proceeds to corruption and gaslighting.

Corruption

Corruption practices in power struggles take many forms. Some of them are pinpointed in extract 22 below.

Extract 21

SONG: Envelopes, Your Most Royal Majesty.

PSAUL ROI: Ah! Song, my friend. My very good friend and daily companion; not envelopes but money. The whole palace is full of money. Take some, as many as you want.

SONG: One is good, Most Royal Majesty.

PSAUL ROI: No! Take some more, as many as you want. Hide what you have very carefully, where those other thieving vampires will not get at it.

SONG: I thank you, Most Royal Majesty. Shall I beg leave of you?

PSAUL ROI: No, my friend, you must keep me company. **I will get another bottle of this wonderful stuff from the royal brewery and we shall drink ourselves to sleep.** p. 20



PSAUL ROI: You must start learning to savor power and royalty. **If you agree with my plan, by this time tomorrow, there will be only two vamps in this kingdom: you and me. And all the wealth and resources shall belong to you and me.**

SONG: All the money shall belong to us, just you and me?

PSAUL ROI: Just you and me, and I shall have absolute power. (*As they smile at each other, gradually fade to black*). pp. 20-21

In the above dialogue, Psaul Roi employs corruptive means to manipulate Song, his chief counsellor, to obtain his favor for admission into the cult of vampires, being an influential member of the sect. The monarch uses illusions Song with money, drinks and flatteries to control his thoughts and compel him to the monarch aspirations. He allows him to take money as he wishes; further, he will get another bottle of sweet wine for them to drink and they will be the only two vampires in the kingdom and all resources shall belong to them. Psaul Roi cunningly buys the favors of his chief counsellor to belong to the spiritual sect he is not entitled to. Manipulation is a powerful instrument that shrewd people use to subdue naïve people.

Gaslighting

Gaslighting is another manipulative strategy used in discourse to assert authority. The process consists in distorting or denying the truth to make the other person doubt their perceptions. This includes denying abusive behavior, blaming the other for the abuse or distorting the truth to devalue their credibility.

Extract 22

PSAUL ROI

People of this land! My dear mothers and fathers, daughters and sons, the joy in my heart as I stand before you is immeasurable. **The joy in my heart is immeasurable because of ... why? The joy in my heart is immeasurable because... because... because... (Beckons at Song who brings him file and he reads) because we have won an astounding victory over the forces of evil and subversion in the land. (Abandoning file) My dear people, we have been victims of a bad... evil, malevolent spell cast on all the land by a... a... band... a gang even of... of... a handful of very greedy people whose sole objective has been to enrich themselves and to eat like greedy little children until you, their mothers, have to rub their swollen stomachs with palm oil and make them sit by the fire so that they do not explode like an overstretched drum. (p. 27)**

Psaul Roi has achieved his goal as far as persuading the vampire cult to seat in their midst, thereby violating the tradition of the land. He has persuaded the pillars of the cult, namely Song, Chambiay, Center, East, South, and North, to admit him into their cult no matter the consequences of his admission on the people of the land. After his prowess, Psaul Roi became the chief of vampires, fulfilling his desire to have absolute power. In the above-mentioned dialogue, Psaul addresses his community members while expressing his joy that he has won “an astounding victory over the forces of evil and subversion in the land.” The forces of evil mentioned here are the members of the vampire cult, a council in the village that balances the power of the monarch. Now that Psaul Roi has won their souls, he depicts them as forces of evil and accuses them of subversion. A spell was cast on the monarch’s community after his



admission into the vampire cult. Psaul Roi manipulates the community in his address, accusing the members of the vampires' cult of being responsible for the calamity befalling his people in these words: "My dear people, we have been victims of a bad... evil, malevolent spell cast on all the land by a... a... band... a gang even of... of... a handful of very greedy people whose sole objective has been to enrich themselves and to eat like greedy little children until you, their mothers, have to rub their swollen stomachs with palm oil and make them sit by the fire so that they do not explode like an overstretched drum." The monarch does not want to bear the responsibility of his abuse and tries to manipulate his community to adhere to the opinion that their misfortune comes from the vampires' cult. The use of the gaslighting technique by the monarch aims to make community members doubt the morality of the council members.

Politics Identity Construction

Through discourse, Bole Butake constructs a political identity that fosters equality, freedom and respect for human rights. His main ideologies are democracy and power rotation in the kingdom.

a) Social Contract Theory

Bole Butake's political theory coheres with Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, who problematize that political authority and legitimacy come from the consent of the governed. A ruler sources power from people, not from divine right or force. Without people, the ruler's position is meaningless. Extract 25 deriving from Butake's play, highlights these ideas.

Extract 23

SONG: So, he ordered me, Chief Commander, to order the soldiers to shoot. That is how there are corpses all over.

PSAUL ROI: Believe me Mr Albino, there was absolutely no provocation. Surely, vandals had infiltrated the market place.

SONG: And there was no other way of containing them.

ALBINO: So everyone in your kingdom is dead?

SONG: The rest escaped, ran away.

ALBINO: A kingdom is none unless there are people. What is the use of being a ruler without the rule?

PSAUL ROI: No headaches with vandals and no need to share the meagre resources. (p.37)

Albino emphasizes that the power of a king resides in the hands of people he rules. No population, no power. To acknowledge the power of the ruled, he states that "A kingdom is none unless there are people. What is the use of being a ruler without the rule?" This means that Psaul Roi is a useless king, having killed all the people of his land. The ideology behind this talk is that political leaders must protect their citizens and avoid carrying out oppressive actions against them because in the absence of the ruled, power is futile.



b) Collectivism (communism)

Bole Butake prioritizes collectivism over individualism. Here, the group class is valued above the rights of the individual. Extract 25 below exemplifies it.

Extract 24

ALBINO: Exactly! The great monarch is broke and Albinia has sent me to rescue the land.

SONG: The monarch! To rescue the monarch!

ALBINO: In Albinia, we do not think of individuals; we think of people.

NFORMI: I like that.

SONG: What?

NFORMI: What he said. Here we think only of His Most Royal Majesty because we are frightened of his royal edicts, instruments and proclamations. Now I have discovered his real strength and I am ashamed to be making the discovery only now.

Albino as a moralizer through this talk “In Albinia, we do not think individuals; we think people,” castigates Psaul Roi tyranny who fights only for his interest, that is, absolute power, to the detriment of common interest.

c) Egalitarianism or democracy

Bole Butake rejects the concentration of power in a single lineage to avoid marginalization or alienation. Extract 25 showcases the playwright ideology.

Extract 25

NFORMI: You don’t know? Song did not tell you? The cunning, fawning monkey! Well, our monarch is a vampire king. There is... there used to be a vampire cult in this kingdom whose main function was to maintain some kind of balance of power between the king and council. **Our monarchy is rotative so that no family in the land should feel alienated or marginalized.**

ALBINO: Very interesting system of governance. (pp.44-46)

Bole Butake envisages a rotative power in traditional kingdoms; power should not be concentrated in the hands of a single-family lineage. All families must govern in turn to avoid alienation and marginalization: “Our monarchy is rotative so that no family in the land should feel alienated or marginalized.” Albino, a businessman, highly appreciates this governing system: “Very interesting system of governance,” he said. In short, Bole Butake promotes inclusive governance.



FUTURE RESEARCH

The current paper has studied power dynamics in a contemporary African political text. Future research could be done on speeches of political parties' leaders of the African continent.

CONCLUSION

The study of power dynamics, resistance and manipulation in the context of politics identity in Bole Butake's *Dance of the Vampires* is a sociolinguistic enquiry that purported to explain power variations in top-bottom and bottom-up relationships in political discourse. The conclusions emerging from the study confirmed Foucault's ideology that power is dynamic; no position of power in discourse is fixed since it shifts from one person to another in social relationships. Psaul Roi in the examined play influences his subordinates through influential instruments such as authority, critiques, honorifics, humilifics, warnings, threats, power symbols, questioning, disapproval, corruption, and gaslighting that he uses to subdue his entourage or manipulate them to control them and ensure authority over his subjects. However, the monarch who claimed to have absolute power was challenged at the end of the play, where he was arrested and destituted as a form of resistance to hierarchy. Butake's ideology, filtered from the characters' discourse, enhances an inclusive political system based on social contract, collectivism, and egalitarianism, an alternative to tyrannic governance. This research contributes to critical studies on power resistance and manipulation. Future directions may tackle power dynamics.

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