LINGUISTIC CRITIQUE OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN FICTION: A SOCIO-PRAGMATIC STUDY

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Candidate of **Doctor of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **Linguistic Critique of African-American Fiction: A Socio-Pragmatic Study** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of PhD degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

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DEDICATION

To my wife and children

Uzair, Hashim, Manahil and Maha

ABSTRACT

Title: Linguistic Critique of African-American Fiction: A Socio-Pragmatic Study

This research explores the use and functions of N-word linguistic choice in African-American fiction in the socio-pragmatic context. The study sets out to explore the relationship between language choices and social contexts in which meanings are communicated within literary texts. Studying the use of N-word linguistic choice and functions it performs within the co-text and context of its utterance is the main objective of this study. It also focuses on how words, such as *nigger*, have different and diverse meanings within the overall texture of a given context and situation. In addition, this research explores the socio-cultural aspects of African-American fiction under the theoretical framework of Tuen van Dijk's theory of context (2009), which lead to the selection of N-word choice. It draws upon the conceptual frameworks developed by Roger Fowler (1996), Michael Halliday (1989) and Lisa Cohen Minnick (2004). Three African American fiction works – namely *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston, *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker – are selected for separate analyses. With the help of corpus tools, all the instances of N-word linguistic choices have been collected from the selected texts. They are analyzed and interpreted within the co-text and context of utterances, context of situations and context of culture. Each instance of the use of N-word utterance, its functions and effects within the socio-pragmatic situations are discussed in detail. Besides focusing on who utters the N-word, in what situation and with what purpose in mind, the study also focuses on the perlocutionary effects N-word choice create on the immediate audience or listener(s) of the utterance involved in the discussion. N-word use and function within the texts under study yields interesting results. The study demonstrates that N-word is not only used as a racial and social slur to dehumanize and demean the person for whom this word is uttered but also as a term of endearment among the black Americans. The position and race of the utterer not only contributes to the meaning of the N-word choice but may also leave an indelible imprint on the person for whom the N-word is uttered and with what intentions and relations. The study acknowledges the sensitivities of N-word use in its local and global context and what havoc it plays if one is ignorant of its use in intercultural communication.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the study of linguistic choices focusing on the use of N-word choice by African-American writers. First, it explains the basic concepts of language and language use, language as a text and discourse, and also the function it plays within the context. It also deals with the concept of linguistic criticism and systemic functional linguistics and their relevance with the present study. The chapter also includes the description of statement of the problem, research questions, delimitations, key terms, rationale and significance of the study.

Language is socially constructed. It is socially constructed in the sense that it deals with linguistic choices and their organization, which perform certain social functions. The purposes or functions of a text or discourse depend on many factors, including choice of language, or selection of vocabulary items, which carry certain meanings. Another important factor is the syntactic or grammatical construction, pattern or organization of the linguistic choices in the form of sentences to communicate specific meanings. In addition to these, it also depends on the organization of the text, as the particular organization builds a certain situation or context in which an event takes place. Moreover, although the medium of communication is responsible for the kind of impact it creates, context of utterance, context of situation and context of culture also play significant roles in interpreting and determining the function and meaning of a language. According to Halliday and Hassan (1989), it is language that is functional where being functional is doing something in a particular context.

When a text is written, it appears to be made of words and sentences in a logical manner but in the real sense, it is made of meaning and meanings are expressed and encoded in words and structures. Halliday and Hassan (1998) are of the view that a text is both a product and a process of the environment of the society the writer or author lives in. It is a product in the sense that it is an output, something that can be represented in systematic terms. It is a process in the sense of a continuous process of semantic choices, “a movement through the network of meaning potential, with each set of choices constituting the environment for a further set” (Halliday & Hasan, 1989, p. 10).

Text is a form of exchange; and the fundamental form of a text is that of dialogue or of interaction between and among speakers. A literary text employs creative use of language between and among characters who people the text and fit in the immediate context of utterance, situation and culture. A literary text is both an object and instance of social meaning within a particular context of situation and culture. Linguistic criticism focuses on language by also looking beyond words and structures to interpret a literary text both as a product and a process that relates to language as a whole.

A creative writer also uses language to communicate different meanings and functions depending on the theme, social or historical background or the culture they live in. The purpose of literature is not only to entertain but also to construct and reflect an aspect of reality in fictionalized form. In literature, language is used in its manipulative form(s) to communicate the best suited ideas conceived by the writer. An author writes using the society prism and picks up a specific shade to communicate, adding imaginative coloring to a piece of literature.

Different discourses have their own impacts. Literature is fabricated in its own domains to communicate implicit or explicit directions through discourse. The discourse of newspapers communicates the subjective or the objective truth directly. The discourses of different genres of literature convey their own truths about different aspects of life and the readers are left to interpret the truths or constructed realities independently in multiple ways within diverse contexts.

Language of fiction is also discursive (Wodak, 2001). By discursive, I mean the contextual meaning of the discourse especially when it is linked with real life situation. In this study, it is not used as a social discourse but with reference N-word choices within selective African American fiction. Use of certain linguistic choices than others not only provide the readers with thoughtful insights into the author's life but also reflect the dominant socio-economic conditions and political trends of the time. It is generally argued that writers living in an age of political upheavals absorb the attitudes and dominant trends of their time. Literary writers, sensitive to the themes and happenings of their time, try to reflect those elements in their narratives. Themes and concepts related to sensitive and political issues also need conscious efforts of the authors to reflect an aspect of fictionalized reality of their time and the setting of their characters' lives and some interesting interpretations for the reader. This phenomenon

is reflected in an author's preference or choice of certain linguistic items over others, which they have to make during the creative process to communicate what they intend communicating.

1.1 Linguistic Criticism and Language

Linguistic criticism is a linguistic approach to the study of literature. It is a refined blend of literary criticism and linguistic analysis. "Linguistic criticism", says Kirsten, "is text analysis which concentrates on the connections between language choices and the social world" (Malmkjaer, 2010, pp. 417-418). This research tries to connect the N-word linguistic choices with the social world they are used in. Language choices are the result of lifelong processes of communities living and thinking in different social contexts. Every society has its own belief systems or ideologies constructed through the long but complicated processes of dispositives. This discursive reality is constructed through the lifelong processes of cultural habituation and linguistic manifestation. According to the linguistic critics "the members of any (sub)culture subscribe to particular belief systems or ideologies which largely determine their conception of reality" (Fowler, 1981). Any text type is open to linguistic criticism, but a major interest of linguistic critics remains the linguistic analysis of literary texts (Fowler, 1981). The job of a linguistic critic, thus, is to study literature in order to unearth the different social, philosophical and historical factors responsible for making certain linguistic choices over others. The literary criticism of the 1960s and 1970s is considered more objective as it is based on objectivist assumptions of many literary critics under the wave of new criticism, whereas, linguistic critics hold that "although literary texts are accorded special value, there is nothing intrinsic to their language that distinguishes them from other text types. Furthermore, literary texts "mean" only within a certain cultural context, to readers/analysts who have their own ideological position. No reading of any kind of text is ever objective, so no text can have any objective meaning" (Fowler, 1996).

Fowler is equally critical of structuralist linguists' efforts to carry out linguistic analysis of (literary) texts. He objects in particular to the assumption that the analysis should treat every linguistic aspect as equally significant. What makes linguistic analysis into linguistic criticism is that the selection of features for the analysis to focus

on is informed by the analyst's awareness that extratextual factors influence linguistic choices. “Such extratextual factors are traditionally studied by scholars in other disciplines, such as sociology, philosophy, and history, but linguistic criticism and literary criticism must take account of these disciplines, and of each other” (Malmkjaer, 2010, pp. 417-418).

M. A. K. Halliday explains the importance of functional linguistics, which “respects the integrity and individuality of texts, rather than absorbing their contents into some grander, more abstract scheme” as cited in (Fowler, 1996, p. 11). Fowler argues, “For every text, a description of its patterns of language can be provided, but the structure revealed is not left as it is: the functional linguist always seeks to understand *why* these particular linguistic patterns are found, in terms of the social and communicative needs which the text is called on to serve. I take it that this curiosity about reason and function is entirely compatible with the explanatory inquisitiveness of literary criticism, so is a natural associate and source of ideas” as cited in (1996, p. 11).

Fowler (1996) also draws attention to the Hallidayan linguistic theory which “focuses on the three functions of language— the textual, the interpersonal and the ideational” (p. 31). In Halliday’s view, it is through the ideational function that “the speaker or writer embodies in language his experience of the phenomena of the real world” (p. 31). Moreover, it is also through the ideational function the speaker or writer represents his view of the world to himself and to others. In Fowler’s opinion, “The speaker’s view of the world, of how it is structured and divided into systems of separate ‘things’ and ‘processes’, is obviously carried largely by *vocabulary*: the way ‘things’ are named and classified” (p. 31). Due to this reason, their lexical choices construct a different reality in a more discursive way. A creative writer’s use of linguistic choices in a particular manner gives new meaning and perspective to an already existing phenomenon. It is not only lexical choices that matter, but how these lexical choices are used within the syntax to function differently and to communicate a “defamiliarized” meaning.

Fowler believes that meanings are constructed holistically not only by focusing on the vocabulary or lexical choices but also by combining the words into sentences and sentences can further be interpreted within the context of their use. He further

argues that although vocabulary is an integral part of language, which most obviously sorts experience into concepts and systems of concepts, "other aspects of language have this effect, too. Especially, *syntax*: the arrangement of words into phrases, clauses, and sentences. Different syntactic arrangements encode different meanings even though the words may remain the same, even though the 'statement' is the same" (1996, p. 31).

Literary authors create novel utterances by picking up certain linguistic expressions from the stored linguistic items of a language. Usually, it is done in accordance with the exposure one has of their society and culture. Therefore, it makes better sense to the readers who share the same language and culture. Moreover, meaning of a text is habitual and a result of lifelong processes within its culture. These habitual meanings of a language bear different shades and sources and are best interpreted and understood within a given context. It is so thickly puttied that it is almost impossible to interpret it without its context. This context could be historical, sociocultural, and psychological (Fowler, 1996).

1.2 African American Fiction and Linguistic Choice

Literature is considered to be the most creative form of language use. It is believed that literary writers make theme superior to the use of language and style. Different stories about the theme of racial nature have been written by the canonical African American writers, such as Zora Neale Hurston, Ralph Elision, and Alice Walker. Their literary works are an effort, conscious or unconscious, to write about the problems of social, cultural, and ethnic nature and they use language in line with the nature of the subject and theme of the narrative.

African-American fiction is a sub-genre of fiction produced in American society, which is an amalgam of hybrid and diverse cultures. Being a post-colonial society, American history is full of socio-political movements, such as independence movements, slave trade, civil rights movements, etc., which have contributed to making it more diverse, and complicated. Africans have made the most of it and African-American literature is a very significant part of the American society and culture. As African-American culture is diverse and indigenous in its traditions so is the case with the African-American literature, as it deals with different themes in different styles

using different linguistic choices specific to the society they are living in and the culture they carry.

African-American fiction is replete with different themes of socio-political struggle of African-Americans and the kind of life they lived during pre-slavery, slavery and post-slavery times and the nature of treatment they received. A creative writer uses language to suit the themes and characters s/he creates. He/she manipulates and exploits language to an extent that it suits the idiolect of every character and the role they play within the text differently. The authors, then, have to make certain lexical choices to suit the character who play their specific roles within the text. African-American authors have written their literary works during different time periods in different socio-political and cultural contexts. Use of certain linguistic choices during those times with varied frequencies and shifting meanings also depends on the socio-political, cultural and psychological situations of the time and the author. Different African-American writers have used N-word in their works in different situations by different characters at different times/occasions.

1.3 Race in Literature

Both Wilson and Thiong'o approach the concept of race in literature in a quite different yet similar way. Charles E. Wilson Jr.'s (2005) book on *Race and Racism in Literature* traces the seeds of race and racism in the novels written during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly in North America. The focus is on the racial oppression in the United States. He talks about two types of racism – overt racism and institutional racism. Overt racism works at a personal level where one individual hates another individual because of his or her racial origins. Overt racism is at work when an individual or entire group of people is denied access to rights and privileges. Institutional racism, on the other, is more subtle and it exists in the very structure and culture of the organization. Wilson sees race as a cultural bias. He argues in favour of his view that "individuals exhibit racist behaviours when they encounter cultural traits different from their own" (2005, p. xiii). According to him, individuals do not consciously confront racism as these cultural biases are so habitually ingrained in one's conscious that it becomes nearly impossible to give it a serious thought. He further explains the culture that makes it habitually possible. In his view, culture comprises of

deep and surface structure. The deep culture is the core culture, which includes "beliefs, values, the quality of human interactions, and the ritual practices of a cultural group" (2005, p. xiii). The surface culture includes "emblems such as dress, language, food, art forms, or any trait that an outsider notices in an immediate encounter with another cultural group." In his view, usually the culture of surface qualities is quite significant and easily observable by the members of other groups, and they devalue it simply because they are different from what they know. Wilson argues that "every individual, as a member of some cultural group, in fact has a culture" (2005, p. xiii) even if he dresses, eats or speaks differently. He believes that "understanding culture and the danger of cultural bias is key in gaining a more comprehensive understanding of race and racism" (2005, p. xiii). In Wilson's opinion, by confronting cultural bias, we confront racial prejudice and by doing so we "initiate the process of snuffing it out" (2005, p. xiv).

Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1993) presents a quite different view of racism and calls it a form of ideology, which is based on "an economic system of exploitation and social oppression and today this is imperialist capitalism" (p. 139). He strongly believes that the victims of racism "live its effects hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, all the year around on their bodies, in their bellies, in their minds, in their houses and in their streets" (1993, p. 140). He further argues that "Racism is a psychological, cultural, political, and economic reality and not some disembodied abstraction" (1993, p. 140). Thiong'o, therefore, takes a strong position on the fact that "The economic, political, cultural and psychological empowerment of the social victims of racism as part of the overall struggle against the roots of racism is the only way of defeating it. In his view, any other way to (the alternative of) the overall struggle against the roots of racism is the continued threat to the peace of mankind" (1993, p. 140). Wilson's concept of covert racism and Thiong'o's concept of ideological racism are based on two similar yet different approaches through which racism is exercised. This covert approach leads to the selection of certain linguistic choices not only in socio-political and cultural documents but also in literature.

1.4 Race and Linguistic Choice

In American history, Jabari Asim (2007), deputy editor of *The Washington Post Book World,* smells the seeds of racism even from the Declaration of Independence where blacks were not mentioned in the declaration and "consciously removed". He refers to Ralph Ellison who called the act of removal from the declaration a "failure of nerve." Asim further quotes Ellison who wrote that the Founders committed "the sin of American racial pride. They designated one section of the American people to be the sacrificial victims for the benefit of the rest … Indeed, they [blacks] were thrust beneath the threshold of social hierarchy and expected to stay there," as cited in (2007, p. 2). In Asim's view, the seeds of racism were finally planted when George Washington spelled out a typical desire in a 1778 letter to his plantation manager. He wrote, "To be plain, I wish to get quit of Negroes" as quoted in (2007, p. 2). But Ellison sees the exclusion of blacks from the declaration as "a new principle or motive in the drama of American democracy" (2007, p. 3). In his view, race "was to radiate a qualifying influence upon all the nation's principles and become the source of a war of words that has continued to this day" (2007, p. 3).

This war of words gave way to the inclusion of N-word into English vocabulary with its different forms and functions. It has penetrated deep into the American society, culture and literature to the extent that it has now become very difficult to limit its usage even after the passing of the law prohibiting its use. Although the severity of language and language choices has decreased considerably in the modern world, "language continues to convey formidable and occasionally savage force" (Asim, 2007, p. 3) and the use of N-word is no exception. Throughout the historical background of N-word use and its functions, it becomes apparent that the N-word is the liveliest negative word in the lexicon of English language (Kennedy, Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word, 2003). It is so diverse in its meanings and connotations that it becomes difficult to understand it without its contextual use. Randall Kennedy, Jabbari Asim and others point out that the N-word provokes "strong reaction whenever it is encountered" (Asim, 2007, p. 4). Langston Hughes once observed, "The word *nigger* to a colored person is like a red rag to a bull" as cited in (2007, p. 9). In his book, *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word*, Randall Kennedy (2003) narrates his personal experience when one day he asked his parents for advice on "how best to

react to a white person who called me “nigger.” He says that his parents gave contradictory advice. His father was of the view that he should fight by responding with “fists, bottles, sticks, or bricks” whereas, his mother was of the opinion that he should not pay any attention to racial slurs and bullies and thereby “let bigots stew in their won poisonous prejudices.” Her more practical advice was that while “sticks and stones may break your bones, words need never harm you” (Kennedy, 2003, p. 4).

Asim (2007) disagrees with the neutral use of N-word and that every variant – “nigger,” “niger,” “negur,” and “negar” – used to refer to black Africans was not “devoid of negative connotations” (p. 4). In his view, “Long before the Revolutionary War, black people fought against efforts to dehumanize them through language, but the notion of black inferiority spread as rapidly as the spirit of indepence that enlivened the new nation” (2007, p. 4). Emily Bernard (Bernard, 2007) reviews Asim’s work and says that Asim does not believe “the word can or should be expunged form out language” (p. 101). She argues that “Determining when use of the n-word is permissible – even constructive – and when it is harmful is a delicate and subjective matter. She believes what Asim considers that “every utterance of the word is accompanied by a history to which we must all be held accountable” (Bernard, 2007, p. 101).

Vocabulary and grammar being the most important linguistic choices of a creative work reflect the traces of socio-economic situations and political happenings of African Americans and their struggle against the dominant and socio-economic conditions of the time. In African-American fiction, majority of the word choices associated with race reflect the socio-political, economic and psychological situations of American life in general and African Americans in particular. Racial linguistic choice, such as the use of N-word, despite its sensitive nature and use as a racial slur within an American society, mirrors the prevalent racial sensitivities and attitudes of general Americans especially black Americans. Use of N-word by African-American writers within their works makes it a more sensitive yet interesting study as who is talking to whom, what relation they have and what intention they carry. To truly connect people with Vitkor Shklovsky’s (1917) idea of “defamiliarization” (1965), Joice E. King’s (1991) idea of “dysconsciousness” or any “uncritical habit of mind that justifies inequality and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things” (p. 135), we must explore extra-textual factors alongside contextual use and function of N-word.

1.5 Statement of the Problem

People use language to communicate since language, being the most integral part of any society, helps in constructing social reality. Creative writers use language to construct the reality they live in and want their readers to perceive that reality through the effective use of language and the way they construct it. The world is a social construct, and a major part of the structuration takes place through language. Linguistic analysis of a literary text unfolds the hidden structures and patterns not only of the text but also of the society and culture, which help in shaping those structures and patterns. It is, therefore, necessary to conduct a systematic analysis of the literary texts through which the writers construct the social discourse of N-word, which is suitable and necessary for interaction within the society. Linguistic critique studies "the processes through which language users attempt to uphold or oppose any given status quo" (Fowler, 1981).

There are various studies on African-American fiction, although the available records show that they have not gone beyond the level and analysis of literary critique. Language in the African-American community has been widely studied over the years but the major share has gone to examining the phonological and grammatical features (Wolfram, 1969); (Baugh, 1983); (Purnell, Idsardi, & Baugh, 1999); (Rickford, 1998); (Green, 2002); (Minnick, 2004). This research enters the relatively less studied area of lexicon in African-American fiction by examining N-word use and the different functions it plays within the context of its use. While there have been brief discussions of N-word use in larger works, such as, N-word and its troublesome history (Kennedy, 1999) and (Kennedy, 2003); forbidden words (Allan & Burridge, 2006); N-word in its contextual determinants (Asim, 2007); N-word within hate crime law (Parks & Jones, 2008); historical and contextual use of N-word in school (Watson, 2009); N-word history and context in African American community (Rahman, 2012); Reconsideration of N-Word in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (Sloane, 2014); N-word and its contextual determinants (Allan, 2016), racialized and non-racialized use of N-word in Canadian society (Adegbembo & MacQuarrie, 2017); reappropriation of N-word as a term of endearment (Smith, 2019), there have been no known studies focusing on N-word use and function within its literary context in African-American fiction.

The present study therefore attempts to explore the use of the N-word choice and the functions it performs within the context of situation and culture of the utterance and the syntactic structure of the given discourse among the characters of a literary work. It also explores the influence of extra-textual factors, such as socio-cultural, economic, political, historical or psychological on the N-word lexical choice of the characters/authors.

1.6 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

1. To investigate the use of N-word by African-American authors to communicate different functions
2. To explore the influence of extra-textual factors on the N-word linguistic choices
3. To draw forth patterns of N-word use within the selected fictions and, in so doing, explore the way they affect the general discourse of the characters

1.7 Research Questions

1. How does N-word function differently in varying contexts of its use in African-American fiction?
2. How do extra-textual factors influence the choice of N-word in African-American fiction?
3. How does context help in interpreting the N-word function within the context of situation, utterance and culture?

Additionally, I would also discuss how the N-word linguistic choices made by Hurston, Ellison and Walker communicate the theme of race, how the N-word utterances reflect the socio-cultural, political and psychological nature of the various characters in the selected works, how the N-word linguistic choice affects the discourse of these characters and what perlocutionary effects do N-word utterances generate in the literary works of Hurston, Ellison, and Walker.

1.8 Research Gap

Although a considerable amount of work has been done on the themes and content of the African-American novels from literary perspectives, there is room for research in the domain of linguistics, since the texts selected for this study occupy significant place in American literature, in general, and African-American literature in particular. The significance of the study lies in the fact that it seeks to bridge the gap between linguistics and literature by taking canonical literary texts as material for the linguistic analysis. It will also help in exploring different sociological, psychological and historical reasons for shaping a particular text by using N-word linguistic choice. In addition, it will help the readers understand a literary text through the linguistic prism in a more critical and reflexive way.

1.9 Significance and Rationale of the Study

An overwhelming amount of research on the N-word has been within American context and perspective associating it with American history and slave trade. The present study was conducted in order to discover how N-word functions differently within the co-text and context of its utterance. This study is significant in tracing the relationship between the N-word linguistic choice and the functions it performs within a literary text and also in tracing the effects of extra-textual factors, which influence the N-word linguistic choice of the writers. In order to fully understand a text (literary or non-literary), there is need to understand it in its context. This context could be local (person, time & place, and purpose) as well as global (social, political, historical and psychological). The context of literary language use has usually been ignored, taken for granted or studied as isolated "variables" of the social situations. It is therefore the aim of this research to study and analyze the selected texts taken as social discourse within the framework of Fowler's linguistic criticism and Halliday's functional approach.

This study analyses the use of N-word within the selected literary texts, its contextual use and the function it plays within the context and sequence of events. The N-word, which is considered highly sensitive in American society especially in the context of the African Americans, is analyzed within the immediate context of event and situation in which characters are engaged, depending on who is talking to whom, when and where, and with what purpose in mind. The entire communicative event of

the N-word is also placed within the global context to fully situate the event and locate the function of N-word within and outside the literary text and its use and interpretation in global contexts. A careful search, of accessible resources, has shown the absence of research conducted on the highly sensitive N-word for the purposes of linguistic analysis by focusing on its form, meaning, and use within the local and global contexts.

The study is equally significant in local and global contexts. It is significant in the Pakistani context since it informs and educates the reader about the sensitive use of certain linguistic choices in the global context. Certain choices may not have local implications but when spoken within the global context, they might result in embarrassment or worse. Moreover, certain linguistic choices which are acceptable in one society or culture may not be tolerable in others. It can be argued that they may not be perceived sensitive in another society and, hence, be either ignored or not taken seriously. But choices related to racial slurs which are not acceptable in one society cannot be acceptable globally. In intercultural communication, certain linguistic choices are preferred over others and some are avoided at all costs. The Pakistani cricket team captain faced a ban of four matches when he uttered the racial word "kaalay," which means "black" in English, to an African origin player at an international event. Not being aware of the sensitive nature of the word landed him in an embarrassing situation wherein he had to apologize publicly and face a ban of four matches from International Cricket Council (ICC). The word in the Pakistani context may not be taken as seriously and is often used as a nickname for children who are very fair – in an attempt to ward off the evil eye. Therefore, this research is also an attempt for raising awareness in the Pakistani academia regarding the sensitivity of lexical choices in intercultural communication.

1.10 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The linguistic model that I plan to use for this study, makes a serious attempt to include pragmatic, social, and historical dimensions of language. Pragmatics is the study of language use in context; society provides that context and the meanings of a text are interpreted in their historical settings. This interplay of three aspects of linguistic analysis becomes effective for meaning making and making sense of the use of N-word within a literary text. van Dijk's (2009) theory of context provides the

theoretical framework for present study. According to Fowler (1996), "the significance of linguistic structures in literature is a function of the relationships between textual construction and the social, institutional, and ideological conditions of its production and reception. Thus history, social structure, and ideology are major sources of knowledge and hypotheses in the framework of linguistic criticism" (p. 16).

My purpose, in this research, is to trace the linguistic features - the way the text is structured, for example, around the N-word lexical choice - and what function(s) it performs in the overall context of the given situation within an event by the writers. Moreover, it also collects and discusses the N-word racial lexical choice of different African-American authors and discusses it within the framework or context of the text as well as in comparison with other texts. This directs my research into the area of sociolinguistics and pragmatics where meanings are interpreted in relation to the society and the given context. These contexts could be, as Fowler (1996) points out, context of utterance, context of culture or context of reference.

Fowler (1996) further elaborates this concept in the light of Halliday's use of register in the social context: linguistic characteristics and situation types. He describes three situation types – field, tenor and mode. Field refers to the subject matter of the text and the use of language. Tenor describes the relationship between the people involved in the speech act. Whereas, mode refers to the way the text is organized. Each of these situation types corresponds to the Halliday's three 'functions of language' and to each relates a range of linguistic features to which the critical analyst pays attention. In the words of Halliday and Hassan (1989) "A text is an instance of the process and product of social meaning in a particular context of situation. Now the context of situation, the context in which the text unfolds, is encapsulated in the text, not in a kind of piecemeal fashion, not at the other extreme in any mechanical way, but through a systematic relationship between the social environment on the one hand, and the functional organization of language on the other" (p. 12).

1.11 Delimitation

This study is delimited to three African-American novels.

1. *Their Eyes were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston

2. *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison
3. *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker

The focus of this study is to explore the use of the highly sensitive and racial N-word and the functions it performs within the texts of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, *Invisible Man* and *The Color Purple*. The reasons for the selction are: first, the selective works are written by African American writers and the use of N-word within the texts would be with some purpose. No white writer is selected to avoid any biased position. Secondly, all the three works are canonical and are seen as modern classics and their selection for present study is significant in that their use and exploration of the N-word is informed and suggestive of various racial behaviors on part of their characters. I make no claim for inclusiveness in the selction of these texts; rather, other texts could also have been chosen. Finally, all of the three works were selected with a timeline of almost a score gap which makes it possible to study the change in the nature of the use of the N-word with changing extra-textual factors. It is also important to mention here that during this timeline, significant socio-economic, political and psychological changes took place and are reflective of the key historical developments of the time. These changes have a direct impact on the choice of language not only of the characters but also of the authors.

Further, this study is delimited to finding the lexical patterns of N-word. Besides focusing on the frequencies of the selected N-word instances, I'll be looking for the patterns of N-word use in relation to the contextual clues about the society, culture, politics and historical background in which N-word instance takes place.

1.12 Positionality of the Researcher

My positionality as a researcher is also important as I am researching a highly sensitive word in the lexicon of English language, particularly to the African-American group and also the society they are living in. I have no specific agenda to work for any group except that it will contribute to the existing knowledge of study from a different perspective. In addition, researching the use and functions of N-word within a literary text gives it a new perspective. Moreover, I intend spelling out plainly at the very outset of the current research that the use of N-word occurrence in this research does not imply

at all insulting or slurring any group or community. Rather, it is done purely for academic purpose.

1.13 Key Terms of the Study

i. N-word

From N-word, I mean *nigger*. *Nigger* is a highly offensive term for a black person, in the US. It is used as a racial slur to dehumanize and devalue a black person socially, economically, culturally, and racially. Because of its derogatory and sensitive use, it is termed the N-word to avoid any chance of its misuse or misinterpretation.

ii. Utterance

"An utterance is any stretch of talk, by one person, before and after which there is silence on the part of that person" (Hurford, Heasley, & Smith, 2007, p. 16). An utterance, they argue, is a piece of language that could be comprised of a single word, a phrase, or a sequence of sentences uttered by a particular speaker within a particular situation.

iii. Context

The context of an utterance is defined by Hurford, Heasley and Smith (2007) in their book as: "The context of an utterance is a small subpart of the universe of discourse shared by speaker and hearer, and includes facts about the topic of the conversation in which the utterance occurs, and also facts about the situation in which the conversation itself takes place" (p. 71).

iv. Linguistic choice

Linguistic choice refers to the selection of lexical and morphological items of language used to communicate a particular message. From this phrase, I also mean use of the N-word in various linguistic contexts.

1.14 Chapter Breakup

The first chapter introduces the topic, theoretical & conceptual framework, research questions and objectives and the significance of present research, besides the researcher's positionality. It presents the discussion of linguistic criticism and systemic functional linguistics and provides a platform for the use and function of N-word within a literary text. It specifically focuses on the use of N-word within African-American fiction.

The second chapter provides the review of the related literature focusing on the discussion of sociolinguistics, and literary sociolinguistics. It then talks about pragmatics and literary pragmatics and how these concepts are relevant to the meaning making process of a text. It then delves into the discussion of literary language and the language of literature with specific focus of linguistic choices. N-word linguistic choice in literature, its use as a racial slur, its historical development in shifting meanings and different contextual usage are discussed.

The third chapter deals with literary linguistics in the first section focusing on the relationship between literary language and the authors' choices of the lexical use within their morphosyntactic structure for communicating themes of their choice. A great deal of critical effort has produced extremely modest results and has not, as yet, presented a compelling argument that linguistic analysis enables us greater insight into the novel or into the techniques that constitutes its present form for communicating certain themes.

Next section advocates that there is much to be gained from adopting linguistic theories and methods when it comes to writing themes of racial nature. But it cautions that the conclusions we can support by those methods and the evidence we can produce cannot answer any questions that adhere to binary result; rather their function must be to reveal open-ended questions about how textual history, cultural criticism, linguistic analysis, and computational tools can work together to clarify the interdisciplinary concerns that literary texts crystallize.

The fourth chapter deals with the analysis of N-word choice. All the instances of the N-word are collected and interpreted within their contextual use. Society and history provide the broader contextual clues for the use of N-word within the specific events.

These were the major driving forces within which the characters brought up and experienced the racial behaviour. Their conscious and unconscious use of the N-word reflects the age-long traces of racial treatment and behaviour (by the hands of whites) within an American society and culture. Slave trade, slavery, unjust and inhuman treatment, social, political and cultural segregation, and economic deprivation were some of the many factors that contributed to new vocabulary building, especially the racial slur word *nigger* and its shifting meanings.

The final chapter concludes the discussion in response to the research questions set in the beginning of the research. Moreover, it categorizes N-word functions by depending on the context of its use.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

After considering the twofold nature of language as a natural and social object of study, this chapter explains the position of sociolinguistics and pragmatics in the language sciences. It then discusses the general implications of the fact that languages are the collaborative products of their speech communities; how languages spread and affect each other; and that human utterances in a language could mean differently depending on the context they occur within. Languages are constantly recreated by being used and handed down from one generation to the next. During this process, everyone must make choices from the structural possibilities of language in general and the expressive potential that their linguistic environment offers in particular. Hence, all celebrated writers tend to exercise these choices commensurate with their social, cultural and historical background. The notion of choice is introduced as the most basic concept of linguistic variation within the domain of sociolinguistics, which studies how different factors, such as social, political and historical, affect these choices, particularly the N-word linguistic choice within literature. It then talks about the language (particularly the language of literature) in relation to context and how certain sensitive lexical choices are interpreted and understood within their immediate social and historical settings in which they are produced, and what functions they play within its co-text and contextual use. In addition, it follows a detailed discussion about N-word. After defining N-word and its probable social use, it deals with the basic concepts and meanings attached to the N-word in American society depending on the context of its use.

The latter half of this chapter deals with the language used in literary texts, focusing on linguistic perspectives in literature and how literature provides rich linguistic data for analyzing linguistic variation across social and historical settings. It then talks about the concept of linguistic analysis of literature differentiating between stylistics and linguistic criticism in detail by focusing on Roger Fowler's theory of linguistic criticism — a combination of linguistic analysis and literary criticism. It then goes on to explain how linguistic application and literary texts should be conceptualized for purposes of socio-pragmatic investigation. At the outset of every socio-pragmatic

study, it is necessary to determine the relevant parameters of society and context and how society and linguistic choices relate to each other. Literary corpus is briefly introduced as an analytic tool and as providing theoretical basis to the present study respectively. It also briefly discusses about the corpus-based linguistic analysis of literature and deals with the concept of literary corpus in general and specialized corpus of African-American fiction in particular. Finally, it concludes the discussion about African-American literary study from linguistic perspectives and how the present study of N-word linguistic choices is different from previous critiques of African American fiction.

Language as the most effective and creative tool for human communication is subject to both natural and social object of study (Coulmas, 2013). It is so because human behaviour is subject to change according to the social, economic, political, historical and psychological conditions of their environment and individual experiences. These external factors and individual experiences color their thought patterns to a greater extent and restrict them for acting as "free agents". Florian Coulmas (2013), the German sociolinguist, refers to the idea of being "free agents" as "fundamental to our self-deception" (p. 1). According to him, whatever we say and write "reinforces this conviction" as "whenever we speak we make choices", which is "basic to intelligent life" (2013, p. 1). But this ability to consider choices is restricted by the physical nature as being limited to choose the colour of our eyes, our IQ, or whether we are beautiful or ugly. Language, both spoken and written, is the reflection of many external factors and individual experiences through lexical choices and syntactic structures. "Language", says Coulmas, "plays a peculiar role" in making choices suitable to a specific speech community, time and place. He further says that "the exploration of language, therefore, is indispensable if we want to understand our own nature" (2013, p. 1). Coulmas contradicts with Steven Pinker, a cognitive scientist, who holds that language "is a distinct piece of the biological makeup of our brains" (Pinker, 2007, p. 18). Despite the biological nature of the language phenomenon existing in the brain, it is "the society" which makes one learn the language of the same community (Coulmas, 2013, p. 1).

The language use in relation to society strengthens the idea of Coulmas that "the language has two sides, the biological and the social" (2013, p. 2). Humans are

"genetically equipped" to acquire language. Human offspring are born with a "special capacity for language". It is "innate, no other creature seems to have it, and it isn't tied to a specific variety of language" (Yule, The Study of Language, 2010, p. 6). Noam Chomsky refers to it as "the innate capability of a child" as cited in (2010, p. 6). He also suggests that the underground rules are "universal and innate". Coulmas echoes the same when he says that "All babies acquire language quickly because they have the ability to do so and because all societies use language" (Coulmas, 2013, p. 2). This innateness hypothesis points to human genetics, which is biological. All infants come into the world with "linguistic skills" (Pinker, 2007, p. 263). But it is the society which puts this innate capability into practice. R. A. Hudson (2001), a sociolinguist, says socialization of a child occurs when he/she interacts with parents, peers, teachers, his/her age mates, and adults in a social environment and different settings. Hudson refers to these as different stages of socialization—babyhood, childhood, adolescence and adulthood (Hudson, 2001, p. 15). But this socialization of a child occurs within a specific "speech community—a community based on language" (Hudson, 2001, p. 24). "Every language", says Coulmas, "must be learnt, and it is the society that teaches its new members how to use it properly, how to conform with established conventions" (Coulmas, 2013, p. 5). The same idea is also forwarded by Roger Fowler. According to him:

> The meanings of the words in a language are the community's store of established knowledge. A child learns the values and preoccupations of its culture largely by learning the language: language is the chief instrument of socialization, which is the process by which a person is, willy-nilly, moulded into conformity with the established systems of beliefs of the society into which s/he happens to be born. Language gives knowledge, and allows knowledge to be transmitted from person to person. (Fowler, Linguistic Criticism, 1996, p. 30)

Fowler's quote refers to the idea of shared belief system among members of the same speech community. Words carry meanings according to the society's "store of establish knowledge". Fowler's idea of shared linguistic knowledge intends that words carry not only a set of semantic loads but also different strands of meanings attached to it like putty within and in relation to the cultural norms of the society.

Coulmas also believes that “Society is built on language. There is no society that does not speak and use language as its central instrument of organization” (2013, p. 4). Ferdinand de Saussure, a twentieth century linguist, defines language as a “social fact” (Saussure, 1959, p. 6). Language is a social fact in that every language is a collective product, an artifact created by its speakers which, at the same time, enables higher forms of social planning and cooperation to evolve. Social facts can be studied only if we look at how “people associate to form groups, how they communicate and how they act collectively” (Coulmas, 2013, p. 5).

Coulmas also supports the view point of de Saussure when he says, “Social facts are historical facts. They have many contingent features. Biolinguistics ignores the historicity of language because it is interested in invariance, but to sociolinguistics the historical dimension of language is central” (2013, p. 5). Coulmas relates both “the historical character of language” and learnability of a language within its social and cultural context. Although it is true but human beings also have different abilities for language learning and acquisition. Coulmas argues, “There are good learners and not so good learners” (2013, p. 5). Similarly, no two speakers and writers have the same choice and expression even they are exposed to the same environment and experience.

2.1 Language and Choice

The philosopher Karl Popper and the neurologist John Eccles have studied the relationship of language and language use and the intricate process of choice. According to them, “We could say that in choosing to speak, and to take interest in speech, man has chosen to evolve his brain and his mind; that language, once created, exerted the selection pressure under which emerged the human brain and the conscious of self” (Popper and Eccles: 1977, p. 13). Popper and Eccles argue that language is the most integral phenomenon of human existence and “man has chosen to evolve his brain and his mind”. They further say that, once in the brain, language exerts its “selection pressure”, which then leads to the choice of specific words in their specific and unique combinations. It is this combination which makes one’s speech and writing distinct and unique from others. Society is the most important factor for making choices in relation to the community sharing the same language, culture and social norms. It is in this community where “human brain” nourishes and so emerges “the conscious of self”

distinct and different from other members of the same community in their theme and style.

Every language is restricted in one way or another in its ability to communicate ideas and feelings. According to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, human beings dissect nature along the lines laid down by their native language. The hypothesis reflects the linguistic limitation for communicating certain thought patterns in certain specific ways. These thought patterns are specific to one's society where he/she is living. Despite the criticism on Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, it is believed that language determines thoughts to a great extent. Some sociolinguists and anthropologists reject this belief because of free will and creativity that one has and evolves with his "conscious self". Coulmas believes, "The central theme of sociolinguistics is variety. To the observer, language presents itself as a seemingly infinite variety of form, but this variety is patterned. That is, there are restrictions on choices between coexisting varieties" (Coulmas, 2013, p. 13). "Restrictions on choices" means that every language has its own specific grammar system, which allows the speakers and writers to choose certain lexical combinations in a specific way and in relation to the speech community they belong. Coulmas talks about the principle task of sociolinguistics when he says:

> Everything can always be formulated differently. It implies that every speaker has the ability to change the way he or she speaks. The choices speakers make in this regard are not made in a vacuum but are constrained in many ways. The principal task of sociolinguistics is to uncover, describe and interpret the socially motivated restrictions on linguistic choices. (2013, p. 14)

The choices speakers and writers make are not made without being a part of a society. It is the society that provides the platform and the speech acts one is exposed to. These choices are "constrained in many ways". As a member of a speech community, a speaker is influenced by many factors. These factors could be social, political, ethnic, religious, and historical. Every speaker's speech act and every writer's written record is a "manifestation of choice". However, "the individual act of choice does not reveal the social nature of language". The social nature of a language becomes apparent only if "individual choices add up to form collective choices" (2013, p. 14) by incorporeating similar themes in their text and talk and reflecting the use of language in accordance

with the social, cultural and political environment of the time. Consistant use of certain linguistic choices indicates the prevelent and overwhelming talk about a topic or theme of social, political or economic imporatance.

For a speaker, it is also believed that "choice is based on judgment but it is not fully controlled". But for a writer, use of certain vocabulary or structure is a matter of choice and fully under the control of the writer to communicate the most suited themes according to the nature of the subject. Writing is under the control of the creator in terms of linguistic choices, organization of theme, and structure/plot of the text. A narrative is also under the similar control of its author. A narrative, says Michael Toolan, is the "conscious effort" of the writer and fully "under control". In addition, Edward Finegan (1994) observes that a writer's linguistic choices reveal certain patterns in a more significant way. He believes that the use of specific lexical items more often than not in speech and writing have some social significance. According to him, "Linguistic patterns reflect the intricacies of social structure and mirror the situational and strategic influences that shape discourse" (Biber & Finegan, 1994, p. v).

In Steven Pinker's (2007) opinion, if one reads a piece of literature or listens to a story, words do wonders with our imagination. He is of the view that the next time we think of something we read or listened before makes us see the world the way we read and thought before. A creative writer builds up the characters in accordance with his experience and his/her stretches of imagination but in relation to the community's store of shared knowledge. Pinker believes that a writer "shares with millions of other people that secrets of protagonists in the world that is the product of some stranger's imagination" (2007, p. 2). By "stranger" he means the writer and speakers we don't know but believes due to their stretches of imagination, the power of words and word choices. He further explains this phenomenon by explaining that our "demonstrations depended on our ability to read and write, and this makes our communication even more impressive by bridging gaps of time, space, and acquaintanceship" (2007, p. 2).

2.2 Language and Society

Linguistics may be broadly defined as the study of language and the scientific and systematic study of language. But it is still unclear where those scientific and systematic boundaries of linguistics lie. Ronald Wardhaugh (2006) perceives language

as “a system of arbitrary vocal symbols” used for human communication. By arbitrary he means that the signifier and signified have no direct relationship and this phenomenon of arbitrariness varies from language to language and there is no systematic connection between the form of a word and its meaning. Language is a social phenomenon produced and practiced in a speech community. Therefore, it is seen, discussed and interpreted in relation to a society.

The term sociolinguistics is used generally for the study of the relationship between language and society. It relates to anthropology— “the study of language and culture”— and with sociology— “the investigation of the role of language plays in the organization of social groups and institutions” (Yule, The Study of Language, 2010, p. 254). Sociolinguistics (Ammon et al. 2006; Bratt-Paulston and Tucker, 2003; Chambers, 2009; Coulmas, 2006; Couplan and Jaworski, 2009a, 2009b; Figueroa, 1994; Halliday, 2007; Mesthrie et al., 2009; Meyerhoff, 2006; Romaine, 2000; Trudgill, 2000) is a research area with shifting shades of meanings (Mesthrie, Swann, Deumert, & Leap, Introducting Linguistics, 2009). The term “sociolinguistics” has many meanings to sociologists, sociolinguists and people from other disciplines. Sociolinguistics places emphasis in “the study of language in social context”. Ronald Wardhaugh (2006), a modern linguist, defines it as “the relationship between language and society … the various functions of language in society” (p. 1). Bloom and Green focus on the dialectical nature of sociolinguistics and say, “A sociolinguistic perspective requires exploring how language is used to establish a social context influences language use and the communication of meaning” (2002, p. 396). The study of sociolinguistics is also tied to “social psychology” which focuses on the “attitudes, perceptions” (Yule, The Study of Language, 2010, p. 254) and identification of behaviors of the speakers in relation to a specific speech community. According to Biber and Finegan, “Sociolinguistics examine language as it is constructed and co-constructed, shaped and reshaped, in the discourse of everyday life, and as it reflects and creates the social realities of that life” (1994, p. v).

2.3 Language and Context

The notion of “context” is “notoriously vague and ambiguous” (van Dijk, 2009, p. 1). As a non-technical term, it means geographical, historical or political “situation,”

"environment" or "background". But in the study of language and discourse, it refers to "verbal context" also called "co-text", which sees text as a part of "sequential or global structures of text or talk itself" (2009, p. 2). The term "context" also refers to the "social situation of language use" and "specific situation of a given text or talk". In the foreword, Finegan echoes the importance of context dependence of the text when he argues, "While some linguists study the structure of sentences independent of their context…, sociolinguistics investigate language as it is embedded in its social and situational contexts" (Biber & Finegan, 1994, p. v).

There may be "personal, social and political influences" that affect any writer's work, may it be creative or political. Contexts defined as "the relevant environment of language use" may feature many types of properties of social situations which may "influence the production, the structures and the comprehension of discourse, whether or not the participants are always aware of them, or we as analysts are able to observe or detect them" (van Dijk, Society and Discourse: How Social Contexts Influence Text and Talk, 2009, p. 3). van Dijk seems to echo Halliday and Hassan's views. For them meaning is understood in the form of text using language, which is "shaped or patterned in response to the context of situation in which it is used" (Halliday & Hasan, Language, context, and text: aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective, 1989, p. vii). Moreover, Fowler also talks about the "inseparability of two concepts 'language' and 'society'. He argues that a text can be understood better if it is studied in "relevant experience of discourse and of context". He further believes that "linguistics is not a discovery procedure" but a way to understand and interpret text in different relevant social, historical, economic and institutional circumstance (Fowler, 1996, pp. 9-10).

van Dijk further extends and elaborates his discussion on the notoriously vague and ambiguous notion of context. He talks about text and its global and local contexts and argues that critical goal of discourse analysis can only be better understood and analyzed if the text is placed in local and global contexts (van Dijk, 2001, p. 108). He distinguishes between local and global structures within discourse. He also differentiates between local and global contexts. According to him, "Global contexts are defined by the social, political, cultural and historical structures in which a communicative event takes place" (2001, p. 108). He further argues that these structures "often form the ultimate explanatory and critical rationale of discourse and its analysis"

(2001, p. 108). On the other hand, local context is "the immediate, interactional situation in which a communicative event takes place" (2001, p. 108). This immediate situation takes into account different "domains, an overall action, participants in various communicative and social roles, as well as their intentions, goals, knowledge, norms and other beliefs" (2001, p. 108). van Dijk further argues, "Such contexts are said to constrain the properties of text and talk. That is, what we say and how we say it depends on who is speaking to whom, when and were, and with what purpose (person, time & place, and purpose)" (2001, p. 109). In his view, context models help in explaining "the social situation for the speech participants", which is relevant for making sense of the events.

van Dijk believes that "context models are crucial because they are the interface between mental information (knowledge, and so on) about an event and the actual meanings being constructed in discourse" (2001, p. 110). Defining what is context, van Dijk says, "Contexts come in different *sizes* or *scopes*, may be more or less *micro* or more or less *macro*, and metaphorically speaking seem to be *concentric circles* of *influence* or *effect* of some state of affairs, event or discourse" (van Dijk, 2008, p. 4). In his view, "There seems to be a mutual relationship of conditional influence between events and their contexts" (2008, p. 4).

van Dijk argues that "Context models have the same cognitive status and schematic structure as other mental models" (2001, p. 109). He emphasizes that "context models are the mental representations that control many of the properties of discourse production and understanding, such as genre, topic choice, local meanings and coherence, on the one hand, but also speech acts, style and rhetoric on the other hand" (2001, p. 109). He further refers to style as a function of context models, which have lexicalization, word ordering and intonation as its formal properties which constructs discourse.

In his preface to the book *Discourse and Context*, van Dijk (2008) talks about the concept of situation and its sociologically based theory of context models that are still relevant. He argues that "Such a social theory of "local" situations and "global" social structures as modeled by language users during the production and understanding of text and talk also needs to account for the important cultural variations in the construction and use of cultural models" (2008, p. x). He further expands on his theory

of local situational context and argues that it is necessary "to examine the study of communicative events in the tradition of ethnography of speaking and contemporary approaches in linguistic anthropology that have a long tradition of accounting for the specific cultural conditions of discourse" (2008, p. x).

Keith Allan also talks about the importance of context and how it plays a significant role in the interpretation of the data/text. In his view, "Linguistic data arises when speaker S makes an utterance U in language L to hearer H in context C" (Allan, 1986, p. 36). Allan describes three aspects of context, any one of which or more play key role in understanding the given text. The first aspect is "the physical context of SETTING of the utterance U" (1986, p. 36), which includes the time and place of the utterance, which help the speaker and hearer to utter and understand the utterance. In Allan's words, setting is "the spatio-temporal location of the utterance" (1986, p. 36). The second sense of the context is "to describe THE WORLD SPOKEN OF" in the utterance "familiar to all of us". The world W includes the setting of the utterance. But both categories of settings are different in the sense that the first describes "the world spoken IN whereas W is the world spoken OF" (1986, p. 36).

The third sense of context is "TEXTUAL ENVIRONMENT" that is provided by the text in which utterance appears. Different utterances together "constitute a cohesive semantic unit" which contribute to the understanding of the utterance under study. In Allan's view "Text should not necessarily be thought of as a static, perfected unit; in conversational interaction it is a dynamic ongoing construction. … In the written medium a text can be thought of as the paragraph containing U, the episode containing that paragraph, the chapter containing that episode, or the book containing that chapter. Corresponding expansion in the notion of text can be imagined for an utterance which occurs in conversation. The text in which U occurs will usually help define the world spoken of in U" (1986, p. 36).

2.4 Pragmatics & Literary Pragmatics

In the latter half of the twentieth century, pragmatics was seen as the integral part of discourse-related studies, especially where context is given more importance. In pragmatics, language is seen as "an agentive, active, and dynamic object which operates

between people in particular activity patterns (the interactional dimension), where such patterns are socially, culturally, and politically constituted" (Blommaert, 2011, p. 123).

Pragmatics is not concerned with sets of rules (syntax) or meanings of signs (semantics), but with how language is used in communication. Aijmir and Ruhlemann argue that pragmatics involves "language use and language users in interaction" (2015, p. 2). They further argue, communication is much more than "coding and decoding of signs": It involves "complex processes of inferences and interpretation, based not only on what is said but also on what is *not* – and need not be – said because it is situationally, socially or culturally 'given'" (2015, p. 2). In this way, pragmatics is, as Yule (1996) says is the art of the analysis of the unsaid. Thus, it can be classically defined as "the study of the use of context to make inferences about meaning" (Aijmir & Ruhlemann, 2015, p. 2).

Richard J. Watts (1991) also defines pragmatics as the study of meaning beyond that which is encoded in the linguistic structures themselves. By linguistic structures he means the lexical and syntactic choices of the speaker and hearer. For him pragmatics "involves the relationship between utterances and their users and contexts of use." Utterance refers to the message a speaker/writer tries to communicate with the listeners/readers within a specific context. The message makes sense within the context in which it is spoken or written. This opens up "pragmatics towards the fields of sociolinguistics and anthropology" (Sell, 1991, p. 26). Pragmatics deals with "actual language use" (1991, p. 26). Gunter Senft argues that language use is not only dependent on linguistic, that is grammatical and lexical, knowledge but also on "cultural, situative and interpersonal context and conversation", and one of the central aims of pragmatics is "to reach how context and conversation—in their broadest sense – contribute to meaning and understanding" (Senft, 2014, p. 2). Gazdar defines pragmatics to be "the study of meaning minus the truth conditions of the sentences uttered" as cited in (Senft, 2014, p. 3). But such definition relies crucially on an understanding of semantics as the statement of the truth condition for the sentences of a language. Gazdar's definition also implies that "there are ways of formalizing pragmatics in order to maintain it as a component of linguistic theory" as cited in (Senft, 2014, p. 3).

Nils Erik Enkvist, a professor of English language and literature, talks about "linguistic stylistics" and emphasizes the "relationship between language use and context" and developed a "text linguistics". He sees the "entire processes of production and reception as specific to particular sociocultural, situational, and interactional circumstances" as cited in (Sell, 1991, p. xiii). He emphasized the "contextualization" of language and linguistics. Roger D. Sell argues that "the literary text's circumstances of publication" were brought into the very "centre of the interpretative arena" (1991, p. xiii). By center stage of the text's circumstances of publication, the linguists and literary scholars came on to speaking terms with each other and thus developed "literary pragmatics" (1991, p. xiii).

Drawing on Enkvist's (1991) account of contextualization of text, Bakhtin's "sociological poetics" and Fowlers account of "literature as social discourse" (Fowler, 1981), Sell argues that "the writing and reading of literary texts" are seen as "interactive communication processes" (Sell, 1991, p. xiv). Literary writing and reading, he says, are "inextricably linked with the particular sociocultural contexts within which they take place" (1991, p. xiv). And language processing involves "syntactic intelligibility, semantic comprehensibility, and pragmatic interpretability" (1991, p. xiv). By "pragmatic interpretability" he means the reader or interpreter's ability to situate a text in a society in which it makes sense. Differences in the interpretability arises due to the interpreter's position in different circumstances and at different times. New historians such as Stephen Greenblatt (1980) and Louis A. Montrose (1986) are of the view that literary texts can be best understood in the cultures in which they are written and read.

Sell believes that literature is a "relative and social concept", which makes better sense to the readers in the context in which it is written or produced. He further argues that "feelings about the value of texts arise" not only because of the "characteristics of the text" (1991, p. xv) but through the incorporation of these characteristics within the particular social and historical system of the community which produces it. Literary pragmatics, he concludes, "entails a process aesthetics, which all trace the dynamic reciprocity of text and interpreter within a given historical situation" (1991, p. xv).

Enkvist also talks about the "sociocultural circumstances of text production and reception" (1991, p. 7). He asserts that literary pragmaticists are strongly concerned with the diachronic perspectives:

> The terms I shall propose for a discussion of interpretability are similarly three: intelligibility, comprehensibility, and interpretability proper. A piece of text is intelligible to those who can recognize in it phonological, lexical and syntactic structures. Intelligibility thus presupposes pattern recognition, the correct perception of structures. A text is comprehensible to those who can assign to it a definite meaning, a semantic structure. And a text is interpretable to those who can build around that text a scenario, a text world, a set of states of affairs, in which that text makes sense (Enkvist, 1991, p. 7).

Thus, even for African-American text, a specific "scenario, a text world, a set states of affairs" (Enkvist, 1991, p. 8) are required for the understanding and interpretation of the text. Due to this scenario, the text makes sense to the reader and the positionality of the reader what Enkvist believes is crucial for the interpretation of the text. He further argues that interpretability has three components: intelligibility which, is the syntactic component and includes phonology, lexis and syntax; comprehensibility which is the semantic component and includes syntax and semantics; and interpretability with pragmatic totality which involves pragmatics, semantics and syntax. When he suggests that a text is interpretable to those who can build around it a "text world" or "scenario" in which that text makes sense, he uses several phrases, which are "global problems", that need more explanations. Enkvist believes that there are three areas— the interpreter, purpose, and the situational context of the text— required for the interpretation of the "message producer and his environment" (1991, p. 8).

Enkvist also talks about three important parameters for a receptor, which the producer of discourse reckons with—politeness, relations between old and new information, and information density. These factors can be regulated by specific linguistic mechanisms and in terms of systems of choice. "Typical regulators of politeness," says Enkvist, "are the choice of speech act, the choice of mode of address, the choice of level of style and thus the regulation of the situational appropriateness of the utterance, paralinguistic features, gestures and body language and movement, and the like" (1991, p. 18). The relation between old and new information and the regulation of information structures take place through "theme-rheme or topic-comment or

presupposition structure". In fact, discourse linguists regard "syntactic and lexical choices as tactical solutions of information-organization strategies" (Enkvist, 1991, p. 18).

Richard J. Watts, like Enkvist, very much stresses the "social relativity of literariness" (1991, p. 26). He argues that a person's judgments about literature develop as part of the larger process of "education and socialization within a particular community" (Sell, 1991, p. xvi). He believes that narratives are social discourses and are best realized and interpreted within a set of communicative purposes in historical situations. Watts argues that two different kinds of approach are in order:

> Literary pragmatics must concern itself with textual meanings beyond the linguistic structure of the literary text itself, either in the inward-looking way … (i.e. 'the study of deixis …, implicature, presupposition, speech acts, and aspects of discourse sturcture' …), or by looking outwards towards aspects of the sociocultural affiliation of authors/readers and the complexities of literary communication beyond simplistic assumptions of message transference by means of a code through channel … from a sender … to a receiver (Watts, 1991, p. 27).

In order to explore the relationship between the linguistic structures of the literary text, its users and the contexts in which the texts are produced and interpreted, Watts (1991) believes, that literary pragmatics must incorporate both methods. This approach of literary pragmatics, like other approaches such as post-structuralist and deconstructionist theories of literature, focus on the common principal to literary discourse: "the number of possible readings of a literary text must be open-ended, potentially infinite, and the readings themselves open to new reader reactions" (1991, p. 32). Watts further argues that "The study of literature was perceived as a necessary part of the reality set into which the educated individual had to be socialized." (1991, p. 32). Watts believes that with the change of time and socio-political events in history, attitudes towards life and literature also changed. These changes can be reflected in the lexical and syntactic variation in the works of literary writers. Change in the socio-political history of African-American struggle can be seen in the writings of African-American writers of that time. Their use of certain linguistic items within African-American texts contributes to the meaning making process within the context of their

production. Watts echoes the same idea when he says that “Every time a literary writer puts pen to paper, he certainly does create personae, both for himself and his reader, and these are not conterminous with either him or them as they ‘really’ are” (1991, pp. 32-33).

Roger Fowler also talks about pragmatics as the relationship between language and its users. According to him, pragmatics include “the interpersonal and social acts” of speakers by speaking and writing. It also includes the diverse relationships between “language and social context and their historical development” (1996, p. 15). He believes that if language is the study of meaning and meanings are socially acquired and interpreted, then “it becomes natural to refer to social structure, history and the development of ideas as essential parts of linguistic criticism” (1996, p. 16).

2.5 Literary Studies and Linguistic Criticism

Bernstein (1994) also talks about the controversy between literary studies and linguistic criticism. She offers two presumptions for this controversy. On the one hand, linguists have “presumed literary language to be unnatural language” and thus does not fall in the domain of linguistics. For linguists, natural language means speech. But now linguists have come to realize that “literature, too, is a natural use of language and that the study of literature lies properly within the bounds of linguistics” (1994, p. 1). On the other hand, literary theorists believe that “linguistics lacks the tools needed to examine anything but features contained within a text”. But “linguists have been developing the tools to study precisely those cultural and psychological features of language that concerns literary theorists today” (1994, p. 1) . Bernstein goes on to say, “Without the contribution of linguistics, the postmodern study of literature is incomplete” (1994, p. 1)

This controversy, excluding literature from linguistic study, can be traced back to Ferdinand de Saussure (1959) who focused more on speech than writing. For him “sound is the natural bond, the only true bond” between signifier and signified. Saussure further argued, “the linguistic object is not defined by the combination of the written word and the spoken word: the spoken form alone constitutes the object” as cited in (1994, p. 2). Saussure’s view was also supported by the speech-act theory in the 1960s by John L. Austin (1962) and John Searle (1969). For them the “utterance in literature

cannot be said to have the same relation to the world that ordinary utterances do" (Bernstein, 1994, p. 4).

But this view of excluding literature from linguistic study was challenged by Roman Jakobson (1959). He argues for the inclusion of "literature into the linguistic fold", calling it the "right and duty of linguistics" to take charge of the "investigation of verbal art in all its compass and extent" as cited in (Bernstein, 1994, p. 4). Jacques Derrida also refuted Saussure's concept by asserting that "there is no linguistic sign before writing" and that "language is a possibility founded on the general possibility of writing" as cited in (Bernstein, 1994, p. 52). Bernstein echoes the same notion that "Literature has the power not only to represent the speech acts of everyday life but also to be a channel of expression for the concerns of the social context in which it is produced" (Bernstein, 1994, p. 5). Bernstein further argues that:

> Today literary theorists ask whether a reader can, in fact, perceive unchanged a writer's message. If a text cannot be regarded as transmitting meaning, if words are not the arbitrary conveyers of that meaning, then Saussurian linguistics would seem irrelevant to the study of literature. But other areas of linguistics do address the same questions asked by literary theorists. Discourse analysis, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and psycholinguistics are all concerned with meaning as it derives from the context of language. Applied to literature, those disciplines can help explain the contribution of context to the understanding of text (1994, p. 5).

Linguistic criticism helps in seeking meaning outside the text and, what Bernstein calls, "complements the aims of literary theory" (1994, p. 2). Bernstein argues, "Modern linguists have begun to appreciate the value of the literary text in supplying linguistics data" (p. 5). She is of the view that linguists have come "to accept literature as part of their domain". Also, many literary theorists have come "to realize that linguistic approaches have much to offer" (1994, p. 5). Jakobson's (1959) discussion also focusses on "discourse-centered criticism" that aims at text and context. He explains the concepts of both poetics and linguistics. In his view, "poetics deals with problems of verbal structure, just as the analysis of painting is concerned with pictorial structure" as cited in (1994, p. 5) He further argues that "linguistics is the global science

of verbal structure", so "poetics may be regarded as an integral part of linguistics" as cited in (1994, p. 5). Verbal structure, then is what Jakobson supposes to be the common ground of poetics and linguistics.

Jakobson's (1959) communication model focusses on six factors, each performing specific function(s). The most important is the communicative message, which performs the poetic function. "Poetic function", says Bernstein, "focusses not on the poet's selection of words from among possible ones (i.e., paradigmatic choices), but on the organization of those words into sequences within the text (i.e., syntagmatic choices)" (1994, p. 7). The job of a linguist is to make explicit the specific (paradigmatic and syntagmatic) linguistic choices that link the text with its context and social and historical settings. Linguistic criticism focusses on "the relation between the language of a text and its social and discursive contexts" (1994, p. 7):

> Linguists have come to approach the literary text not so much as "the message for its own sake," but to use the definition of Robert Scholes (1982), as "the product of a person or persons, at a given point in human history, in a given form of discourse, taking its meaning from the interpretive gestures of individual readers using the grammatical, semantic, and cultural codes available to them." "A text," Scholes adds, "always echoes other texts, and it is the result of choices that have displaced still other possibilities" (Bernstein, 1994, pp. 7-8).

A text, thus, is a product of a writer, written in a specifically patterned way with specific choices to communicate messages or themes, and simultaneously depends on the interpreter's positionality.

Linguists today see meaning within context. Without context, a text is unable to communicate the message its author intends to communicate. Bernstein refers to Colin MacCabe (1985) who sees "the relations of the meanings of a text to its socio-historical conditions (of both production and reception)" and refers to them "not secondary but constitutive" as cited in (1994, p. 8). He further argues, "There is no such thing as meaning in so far as the term assumes an entity independent of the inform language and the different institutional conditions of utterance. It is not that a word has different meanings for different speakers but that the same lexical item appears in different

discourse" as cited in (Bernstein, 1994, p. 8). It is the discourse itself that depends on the context within which it is produced. Similarly, Roger Fowler (1986) considers it "fundamental" to linguistic criticism to see the text in relation to "the social, institutional, and ideological conditions of its production and reception". Meaning itself depends upon what Fowler calls the pragmatic dimensions of language. Bernstein also echoes the same when she says that "To incorporate pragmatics, in its broader sense, into a model of linguistic criticism is to relate language to the social, historical, cultural, political, and psychological contexts of writer and reader" (Bernstein, 1994, p. 8).

Linguistic criticism is a term coined by Roger Fowler as a combination of linguistic analysis and literary criticism. It is an approach that studies literature from a linguistic perspective. Fowler argues that, for linguistics, like any other discourse, "literature *is* language". Fowler's argument does not reduce language to a mere medium, since "the meanings, themes, larger structures of a text, 'literary' or not, are uniquely constructed by the text in its inter-relation with social and other contexts" (1996, p. 14). He further argues that a novel or a poem is "a complexly structured text". Its structural form constitutes "a representation of a world, characterized by activities and states and values. Also, it is "a communicative interaction between its producer and its consumers, within relevant social and institutional contexts" (1996, pp. 14-15). Fowler (1996)believes that these characteristics of the novel or poem are like that of other non-literary discourse that functional linguistics is looking for. So, in that sense, what applies to any "non-literary" discourse, such as conversation or official documents, etc., also applies to literature.

Roger Fowler's (1996) view differs from Roman Jakobson (1959) who sees linguistics as a mere "mechanical technique" for explaining and detailing the construction of text. Fowler holds that the linguistic model "makes a serious attempt to include pragmatic, social and historical dimensions of language" (Fowler, 1996, p. 15). As mentioned earlier sociolinguistics deals with the language in social context and meanings are socially based (pragmatics). It, then, becomes imperative to study a text within its social structures and history. Fowler argues that social structure, history and the development of ideas are "the context of literature", which have been ignored by other literary critics. He further argues that it is fundamental to his approach that "the significance of linguistic structures in literature is a function of the relationships

between textual construction and the social, institutional, and ideological conditions of its production and reception. Thus history, social structure, and ideology are major sources of knowledge and hypotheses in the framework of linguistic criticism" (1996, p. 16).

> The important thing that is created is new knowledge. Readers come away from a novel or a poem feeling that they have been given some knowledge which they did not possess before, or, very often, that they have experienced a new insight into some familiar problem or theme. (Fowler, 1996, p. 21)

According to Fowler, the meanings of the words in a language are the community's store of established knowledge. Lexical and structural linguistic choices reflect and express it in relation to the society and culture. Moreover, the creative use of language also exploits the existing store of semantic knowledge to generate another aspect of reality in a different way and helps in transmitting it from person to person. Fowler argues that "not even the most familiar ideas are 'natural', but they are in fact the result of a process of cultural coding" (1996, p. 32). He believes that everyone does not know everything about "the language and ideas of a culture"; rather they are "the fields of knowledge greater than the experience of any individual" (1996, p. 32) and are the result of socialization and circumstances in which an individual is born into and brought up with. Fowler suggests that "linguistic expressions 'package' experience of the world and encode different views of the way objects and events are organized" (1996, p. 32). According to him, "When we speak or write about something, the words we choose, and the structure of our sentences, convey an implicit analysis of the topic, an attitude to it. These attitudes relate to the way we were brought up with language, and to the purpose for which we are using it—these are social, even political, factors" (1996, p. 34).

In his book *Linguistics and the Novel*, Fowler (1989) puts forth that it is sheer "prognostication" to believe that the novel was dead or dying. Rather, he strongly holds that fiction writers use different techniques to make the narrative different from others in theme and style. Fowler argues that "there has been much creative theorizing and criticism on the technique of fiction". He stresses the notion of technique for several reasons. First, attention to the technique is basic for the understanding of a fiction.

According to him, works of fiction are "inescapably artefacts, man-made objects with a place in culture's technology and an individual's work-manly productivity" (1989, p. 3). He further argues that the 'world out there' of "the novel is an artifice constructed through the novelist's techniques" to make it some verisimilitude/credible. He also stresses the need to critically and skeptically analyze "the means by which this shaping takes place" (1989, p. 3). Second, Fowler holds that "a writer's technique is immediately and ultimately, a craft in language" (1989, p. 3). Be it the structure of the novel or themes presented with specific verbal choices by the author, everything is "under the direct control of novelist's manipulation of language". The same idea is echoed by Lodge who holds that "the novelist's medium is language; whatever he does, *qua* novelist, he does in and through language" as quoted in (1989, p. 3). Thus, according to Fowler, "it would seem natural and desirable to submit the language of fiction to any of the processes and terms of linguistic analysis which appear appropriate to the tasks of criticism" (1989, p. 3). He stresses the need "to interpret a writer's linguistic structures in relation to the values and preoccupations of the community for which he writes" (1989, p. 4). Another reason Fowler gives for approaching novel by linguistic techniques is that it has become "the major medium of technical innovation", which are directly expressed in "linguistic creativity". He also argues that although "experimentalism in not a novelty in the history of fiction" but these "new techniques … are a stimulus to structural criticism" (1989, p. 4).

Norman Denzin (2001) argues that culture and themes related to a specific community, race and society cannot be described. They can very artistically be inscribed according to the nature and need of the society with the help of the writers' independent artistic prowess over the language as well as choice of lexical linguistic items suitable and accepted within that speech community. Every writer inscribes different themes differently. The details about different themes and ideas specific to a society or group of people give the novel or story some verisimilitude, which makes them believe certain events and incidents happened the same way. Norman Denzin refers to Richardson who believes that it is the writer's "creative analytical perspective," (2001, p. 98) which gives different shades and depths to the themes within a text. Fowler echoes the same idea somewhat differently when he says that "Linguistic codes do not reflect reality neutrally; they interpret, organize, and classify the subjects

of discourse. They embody theories of how world is arranged: worldviews or ideologies" (1996, p. 40).

Literary writing is considered register of a literary discourse. A register is a specialized variety that differs according to the use of language. The term 'register' was introduced by T. B. W. Reid (1956) when he says that no individual has uniform linguistic behaviour. In different "social situations" he differs in his/her speech (or writing) and uses different registers according to the social occasions. By social situations, he means, the church service, textbook, sports, education, to name a few social settings. In his book *The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching*, Michael Halliday further explained and developed the idea of 'register'. He argues that registers are part of an individual's 'communicative competence' in the sense that s/he can write or speak a number of such varieties (Halliday, McInosh, & Strevens, 1973, p. 87).

Fowler sees this variety in the form of a dialect. In Fowler's view "Dialect is a social or occupational variety; idiolect is the personal variety" (Fowler, 1996, p. 188). In his view the dialect consists of a bundle of distinctive speech features which allow us to recognize an individual. These varieties reflect "who we are". Registers are varieties which differ according to "how we use language" (1996, p. 188). According to Fowler, "A register is a distinctive use of language to fulfil a particular communicative function in a particular kind of situation, but the text need not be saturated with consistent use of a typical vocabulary and syntax. It exists for language users as a model or schema, a package or sociolinguistic knowledge which can be activated by relatively slight textual cues" (1996, p. 191). In the words of Fowler, "Literature is a creative use of language" (1996, p. 21). The language of literature does not construct reality in an objective way but constructs different "worldviews or ideologies" in a specific but unique way as "one aspect of literature's creativity is the production of discourse that seems to be 'new' in a special sense" (1996, p. 21). Fowler refers to this variety of language as a literary register. African-American dialect is also another variation of literary discourse. This research aims at focusing on N-word linguistic choices by literary writers to communicate certain themes sensitive and critical of that age, society or within a specific historical time period.

Language changes with the change of society and so is true for the expression of a writer, as s/he is the product of that society and the culture s/he lives in. This effect

could be seen in the phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical choices of the speaker and the writer. Lexical choices or vocabulary is the major area, which is affected by this change. Just as the word 'terrorist' has undergone considerable change in its meaning and context, so is the case with other lexemes related to race, slavery, identity, family and community in the lives of African-American people.

African-American writers' use of language and linguistic choice of certain words reflects their bent of mind and popular notions about the strands of meaning attached to the words. If meaning is one part, variation in the use of lexical choices over the period of time is another way for communicating certain themes. William Labov (1969) sees variation as "an inherent part of language". (Labov, 1969, p. 728). It is not a nuisance but is a universal and functional design feature of a language. Sali A. Tagliamonte argues "a linguistic variable is the alternation of form" or as Labov says "layering of form", in language. Tagliamonte gives the basic definition of linguistic variable as "two or more ways of saying the same thing" and it should be structural and, as Labov says, "integrated into a larger system of functioning units" (Tagliamonte, 2012, p. 2).

Tagliamonte contends, "linguistic variables in a given speech community, whether morphosyntactic, phonological, lexical, or discursive, do not vary haphazardly but systematically" due to which this behaviour can be quantitatively modeled. "Analyses of heterogeneous structures within the speech community rest on the assumption that whenever a choice exists among two (or more) alternatives in the course of linguistic performance, and where that choice may have been influenced by any number of factors, then it is appropriate to invoke statistical techniques" (Sankoff 1988a: 2) as quoted in (Tagliamonte, 2012, p. 2). Tagliamonte defines a linguistic variable as "two or more ways of saying the same thing" (p. 4). He further argues that different studies, such as Sankoff 1988a, and Labov 1963 see variation and change in language use. But he believes that descriptive component requires detailed, critical observation of variation and change. Different patterns emerged from earlier studies demonstrate that "linguistic change is not only the result of universal principles but is also shaped by the social context in which it occurs" (pp. 2-3). Moreover, this linguistic change or choice of variant is systematic. "There is difference, but there is structure to it" says Tagliamonte (p. 4).

Variables that have social meaning are called sociolinguistic variables. Sociolinguistic variables, says Tagliamonte, are those which can be correlated with "some nonlinguistic variable of the social context: of the speaker, the addressee, the audience, the setting, etc." (p. 6). These nonlinguistic variables could be social, cultural, ethnic or historical. Language being the most integral part of a society reflects different shades of meanings depending on the context in which it is use. According to Tagliamonte, "Language use is a reflection of the society in which it is embedded and the time period in which it occurs" (p. 6). However, he further argues that "there is an absolutely insidious view that certain ways of saying things are better than others. This comes down to the social interpretation of language use" (Tagliamonte, 2012, p. 5).

Analysis of authorial representation of written language variation in literary works constitutes an important linguistic application to literature as well as a literary approach to language study. The study of linguistic choices in general and literary representations of themes in African-American fiction in particular, offers opportunities to go beyond traditional readings of African-American-fiction and apply the important theories and methods of empirical and corpus linguistics, particularly those of linguistic choices. Empirical exploration of how African-American writers perceive and use social and ethnic variation for lexical choices as influencing and projecting the theme of race. Employing empirical methods thus offers not only new approaches to the analysis of literary texts using linguistic tools, but these methods also make it possible to use the rich resource of literary texts as data to help understand variation and change in, as well as attitudes towards, different themes over the period of social, political and historical change in American society in general and African-American struggle in particular. Such application challenges the widely held belief that literary representations of themes have little or nothing to offer to a study of lexical variation.

Earlier, the works of literature and arts used to be studied and interpreted for pleasure but later on this interpretation of the literary work took more "isolationist" or "autonomous" position. The focus of these positions was to study literature or works of art and their structures "in their own right," and "to ignore the social context of psychological conditions of the author" (van Dijk, 2008, p. 5) besides the death of the author. The purpose was to conduct the objective analysis and interpretation of the work without any influence or direction. But these positions were also "rejected in favor of a

more “contextual” approach that accounts for many properties of works of art in terms of psychological, social, cultural or historical “circumstances”” (2008, p. 5). For van Dijk, this does not mean that a critic “should be less precise and systematic in describing the structures of a poem or a novel,” but he argues, “our understanding is purely more complete when we are able to describe and also explain many more properties of such literary texts in terms of their various contexts” (2008, p. 5). He further argues, “Contextualization is a fundamental part of our understanding of human conduct, in general, and of literature and other texts and talk, in particular. Indeed, *con-texts* are called that way, because etymologically they come with “texts” (2008, p. 5). In 1960s, semiotics, one of the paradigms of the structuralist movement in the humanities, also took the same direction and almost similar observations were made. In van Dijk’s opinion, “few semiotic studies paid attention to social or cultural contexts” because of the complexity of the “abstract concepts of “sign” as applied to other forms of discourse and communication, such as literature, narrative, film, dance, the arts or design. These studies were “inspired by the structuralist linguistic ideas of Saussure, Jakobson, Hjelmslev, Martinet, Barthes, Greimas, and others. He further argues that “with the emergence of more explicit social semiotics and the critical analysis of multimodal messages” in 1990s, “semiotics took a more social direction of research” (2008, p. 6).

van Dijk asserts, “language and language use are of course social phenomena, and need to be studied in their social and cultural contexts” (2008, p. 6). In his view, it was until late 1960s that new interdisciplines, such as pragmatics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and the ethnography of speaking emerged. The interdisciplinary research then began “to provide some insight into the cognitive, and especially the social and cultural “contexts” of language and language use” (2008, p. 6). It is then the role of social action in language use that was emphasized and also “accounted for the (formal) contextual conditions of the *appropriateness* of utterances, as one of the characteristics of the new cross-discipline of *pragmatics*” (2008, p. 6). Under this framework, “the notion of “context” received analysis in its own right” (2008, p. 6). For some linguists, contextual structures are “too chaotic” and “too idiosyncratic, to be characterized systematically”. In van Dijk’s view, when some linguists began “to identify variable rules, the separation of the variable from the obligatory or categorical was obvious and unavoidable” (2008, p. 6). He further argues that variationists

gradually introduced the role of context for language use and change as well as for linguistic analysis.

The understanding of individual style is clearly present in the works of literary authors. Researchers in the variationist tradition of William Labov have treated different social factors for language variation. Typically focusing on a single phoneme, morpheme or lexical item, it is claimed that literary writers use language in accordance with the social, political and broader cultural aspects of the society they are part of. Fowler further advances the idea and relates the linguistic choices and writing styles with the writers' social role: that is, writers' social role, social and economic status, personal and political affiliations affect their choices of linguistic features and styles of writings.

Robyn Lakoff (1990, p.257) points out that "Language is an intrinsic component of personality. Linguistic style is an outgrowth of psychological style, and a diagnostic of it as well. We assume that the way people talk tells us the truth about them" as quoted in (Culpeper, 2001, p. 13). Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985, p. 181) argue, "The individual creates for himself the patterns of his linguistic behaviour so as to resemble those of the group or groups with which from time to time he wishes to be identified, or so as to be unlike those from whom he wishes to be distinguished" as cited in (Culpeper, 2001, p. 16).

As Fairclough and Wodak (1997, p. 258) point out that the critical discourse analysis perspective, a literary discourse, which is like other discourses, is not only "shaped by situations, institutions and social structures, but also shapes them." For them a discourse "constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people" (Culpeper, 2001, p. 18). Thus, in this view, the identity as a writer is a matter of how he/she positioned by other literary discourses constructed in relation to the time and society the text was produced. In other words, van Leeuwen aims to provide a set of sociological categories for representing social aspects and reality and to show how it is realized linguistically. Van Leeuwen's (1996, p. 38) primary representational distinction concerns inclusion versus exclusion. For him, representations include and exclude different linguistic features to suit the interest and purposes of the readers for whom they are intended. According to

him, “Representations include or exclude social actors to suit their interest and purposes in relation to the readers for whom they are intended” as cited in (2001, p. 18).

van Dijk’s theoretical framework includes cognition, while analyzing discourse critically. He applies this approach for better understanding and communication of ethnic prejudices and racism. Fairclough and Wodak (1997, p. 265-6) neatly summaries van Dijk’s argument: “[van Dijk] argues that no direct relationship can or should be constructed between discourse structures and social structures, but that they are always mediated by the interface of personal and social cognition. Cognition, according to van Dijk, is the missing link of many studies in CL and CDA, which fail to show how societal structures influence discourse structures and precisely how societal structures are in turn enacted, instituted, legitimated, confirmed or challenged by text or talk” (Culpeper, 2001, p. 21).

For developing links with broader social and cultural aspects of selective texts, critical social context is used. Norman Fairclough in his book *Language and Social Change* describes his critical social theory of discourse. He argues that individuals started recognizing “the ways in which changes in language use are linked to wider social and cultural processes, and hence are coming to appreciate the importance of using language analysis as a method for studying social change” (Fairclough, 2006, p. 1). Therefore, he developed an approach to investigate change in language besides studying social and cultural changes. He believes that “it is necessary to draw together methods for analyzing language developed within linguistics and language studies, and social and political thought relevant to developing an adequate social theory of language” (2006, p. 1).

Fairclough argues that “Changes in language use are an important part of wider social and cultural changes” (2006, p. 5). He believes that there is a “significant shift in the social functioning of language, a shift reflected in the salience of language in the major social changes” over the last few decades. He argues, “Many of these social changes do not just involve language, but are constituted to a significant extent by changes in language practices; and it is perhaps one indication of the growing importance of language in social and cultural change that attempts to engineer the direction of change increasingly include attempts to change language practices” (2006, p. 6).

Fairclough argues that the main objective is to develop an approach to discourse analysis which could be used as one method amongst others for investigating social changes. It would need to be a method for multidimensional analysis. Also, it would need to be a critical method. Relationships between discursive, social and cultural changes are typically not transparent for the people involved. He says by critical he implies showing connections and causes which are hidden. Fairclough's social theory of discourse talks about language change in "relation to social and cultural change" (Fairclough, 2006, p. 96).

Van Dijk (2009) also supports Fairclough's critical social theory when he says that sociopolitical structures, cognitive structures as well as discourse structures each have their own historical dimensions. He argues that each structure also has a specific local dimension, for example North America. The theoretical framework sketched here is therefore a more general study in preparation on social movements, discourse and cognition.

2.6 Linguistic Perspectives in Literature

Jonathan Culler's words present a good example of the tendency "to underplay the role of language in literature" and "to assist linguistic competence too modest a function in the reading of literature". Ching, Haley and Lunsford argue that "To read a text as literature is not to make one's mind a *tabula rasa* and approach it without preconceptions; one must bring to it an implicit understanding of the operations of literary discourse which tells one to look for" (1980, p. 6). Ching, Haley and Lunsford further opined, "Anyone lacking this knowledge, anyone wholly unacquainted with literature and unfamiliar with the conventions by which fictions are read would, for example, be quite baffled if presented with a poem. His knowledge of the language would enable him to understand phrases and sentences, but he would not know, quite literally, what to make of this strange concatenation of phrases" (1980, p. 6). They stress the need of a comprehensive reading theory for better literary criticism. They argue, "You have to be able to read the words in order to understand literature; therefore reading theory is vital to literary criticism" (1980, p. 9). They further argue that "Of course, the rationality, creativity, characterizations of experience, and need to communicate are not 'ordinary' competencies in the case of literary artist." But they

believe that "the extraordinary dimensions of a work of literary art are often the result of an artist's novel selection and manipulation of what is common to ordinary experience" (1980, p. 9). Ching, Haley and Lunsford further believe that the possibility of some of the literary artist's mastery "might be formally and critically accessible through the analysis of how his language selects and manipulates the features of ordinary language" (1980, p. 9). In their views, "When these features are understood through the powerful models of modern language theory, new insights about the way language functions in the poet's vision, or about the way it functions in the reconstruction of that vision by an ordinary reader, may well be gained for the first time in literary research" (1980, p. 9).

The following section focuses on some salient aspects of the African-American literature. After dealing with the historical background of the selected texts, it focuses on the socio-political, cultural and economic conditions of the era when these texts were produced.

2.7 Socio-political and Economic Factors Affecting Literary Traditions: African-American Art and Literary Themes

This research does not ponder over the construction and deconstruction of literary history, but deals with different historical events in conjunction with social and cultural aspects, which shaped the linguistic choices of the authors about certain themes over a period of time. Moreover, because this is a very complex area of scholarship with countless works published since 1920, this research does not offer detailed discussion of all the movements and works. It does, however, cover selective but representative authors (especially Hurston, Ellison, and Walker in this case) influenced by different socio-political events, outlining the historical and political development shaping those events in African-American literary history. As Graham and Ward argue "What is involved when writers turn the facts of history into fiction" (2011, p. 13) so, there needs to be a comprehensive exploration of the historical conditions governing the African-American traditions. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss some of the key social, economic, political and historical events and movements of twentieth century America which shaped African-American life and history especially of Zora Neale Hurston, Ralph Ellison and Alice Walker and affected their N-word linguistic choices.

American history is replete with socio-cultural, economic and political struggle of African-Americans. This economic and political struggle against the backdrop of broader cultural and social traditions was also augmented by the literary front producing different genres of literature by many African-American authors. Bernard W. Bell, professor of English, believes "approaches to the Afro-American novel that reduce the rich complexities, paradoxes, and ambivalences of different human experiences, especially creativity, to economics, politics, psychology, or linguistics are, at best, incomplete" (1987, p. xi). Graham and Ward's book *The Cambridge History of African American Literature*, and Bernard W. Bell's book *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition* (1987) are frequently cited as a landmark work in the field. Bell's book provides a comprehensive account of African-American literary history. It is also "a comprehensive sociopsychological and sociocultural interpretive history of Afro-American novel" (1987, p. xi).

The reflection of socio-cultural and political struggle and socio-economic conditions on the lives of African-American people is seen in the writings of the African-American authors of their origin. In the words of Graham and Ward, "African-American authors began to look at their present and recent past as sites of irony and occasionally caustic satire" (Graham & Ward, 2011, p. 291). The sociocultural and literary milieus of this research are provided by the specialists, such as Graham and Ward (2011) and Bell (1987), for drawing relationship between black American culture and white American society and also between the nature and function of the novel with all its allegiances to reality, romance and the ideal, and also between the N-word choices and the socio-pragmatic context.

Graham and Ward (2011) argue that in the twenty-first century, African-American literature is seen and interpreted in the light of literary histories, which have attained to some extant "comprehensiveness" for the "vast amount of literary and cultural data". African-American literary history is intimately related to sensitive matters such as slave trade, slavery, ethnic identity, struggle for emancipation, literacy, race, and changing ideologies that "support the American domestic experiment" (2011, p. 1). Graham and Ward refer to Mario J. Valdes and Linda Hutcheon who suggested in their book, *Rethinking Literary Histories: A Dialogue on Theory*, that "the literary past" – that is, the past of both literature's production and its reception – is unavoidably

interpreted in the light of the present and that literary historians create meaning by ordering and shaping stories about texts and contexts; in short, "economic, political, and broader cultural and social perspectives on issues like race or gender must be brought to bear in the constructing of any literary history today in a different way than in the past" (2011, p. 1). Graham and Ward also suggest that "literary history is always a work-in-progress. No matter how logical their arrangement parts, their explanations of interconnections among forms, public events, and creative choices, and their configuration of tradition, literary historians conduct unfinished quest for order. Nowhere is this vexed search greater or more necessary than in the field of African-American literature" (2011, p. 1).

In Graham and Ward's opinion, "writers are not the sole shapers of literature" but attention must be given to "the roles of publishers, editors, academic critics, common readers, and mass media reviewers in shaping textual forms, literary reputations, and literary tastes" (2011, p. 2). These factors contribute to the writer's selection of linguistic features, such as phonological, lexical, grammatical, etc. in order to communicate certain themes of the work especially in relation to the boarder social, political and cultural traditions of that time. They further argue while quoting from Stephen Henderson's theorizing in *Understanding the New Black Poetry* and from Elizabeth McHenry's claim in *Forgotten Readers* that "to recover more fully the history of African-American cultural production… we must be open to replacing our notion of a singular black literary tradition by attending to the many, diverse elements that form the groundwork of any tradition" (2011, p. 2).

In Graham and Ward's views, new research and scholarship in the field of African-American literature "gave substantial attention to individual authors, genres, and movements, and it incorporated varying degrees of literary history in explaining how writers, generic transformations, and moments of unusual artistic productivity (the New Negro or Harlem Renaissance, for example) have shaped a literary tradition" (2011, p. 5). They further argue that comprehensive explorations of the historical conditions governing the African-American literary enterprise also help in understanding the literary work and its significance within the mainstream American literature. According to them, "This literary history establishes the validity of engaging a people's expressions over time by accounting for the simultaneity of aesthetic,

political, spiritual, and religious dimensions in their works. It makes a case for what might be called liberated readings by orienting readers to the ways that African-American writers, or creators if you will, have used principles of over determinacy in shaping situated responses, the emotive and intellectual traces of their being-in-the-world" (2011, p. 6).

Talking about the US political system which was also seriously affected by the Great Depression, Graham and Ward argue that "the politics of at least some writers shifted demonstrably to the left, with the various publications and organizations founded or dominated by members of the Communist Party USA influencing the content and direction of African American Art" (2011, p. 291). In their views, "African American authors began to look at their present and recent past as sites of irony and occasionally caustic satire" (2011, p. 291).

Graham and Ward believe, "The history is never totally objective". They consider the text "as necessary responses to the affairs and conditions that at any given time serve as catalysts for literary interpretations and discourses" (2011, p. 6). In their view "it is use of language and multiple forms of literacy that give shape and substance to a literary tradition" (2011, p. 6). This in turn affects the use of language, which is considered as one of the objects of "historical science". Moreover, they "foreground the importance of human consciousness and will in the creation of literature" and highlight "moral, political, and aesthetic concerns of texts with varying degrees of emphasis, fully aware of the extent to which these are often determined by specific critical schools and preferences" (2011, p. 7).

The purpose to discover change in the use of language is to find out, interpret and understand "a convincing balance" between the texts and the contexts. A text emerges from the broader social, political and historical contexts, and bears the reflections of linguistic features of their time. So, it could be best interpreted in relation to the contexts of its emergence. In Graham and Wards opinion "history…demands sensitivity to how a given work might have provoked or otherwise engaged an audience in the past and to how the same work engages the modern mind". They further state, "The conditions that impact various forms of cultural production affect writers, and writers expand and explode the very boundaries we may claim they define" (2011, p. 7).

In Graham and Ward's (2011) views, the years between 1820 and 1865 are as critical as they are ironic in the development of African-American writings. Dealing with the theme of slavery and representation, "virtually all American literature is black". Wheelock pays attention to the literature of those who incorporated themes of self-empowerment, resistance, and spiritual reforms. Literature of both free and enslaved people created richness and diversity in the theme and language use of pre-Civil War literature depending on the "coexistence of different language traditions" (Graham & Ward, 2011, p. 9). Kimberly Blockett and Joycelyn Moody discuss some new directions in the writings and readings during the time of freedom and independence that "challenge conventional notions of literary and cultural production, distribution, and audience in some the most crucial decades of the nineteenth century" (2011, p. 9).

Graham and Ward maintain, "From militant activism and radical abolition to expressions of national, cultural, and linguistic identity, African-American literature began to consolidate a complex racial and cultural identity well before Emancipation" (2011, p. 9). They hold that the central theme of African-American literature was slavery and generally negative view of African Americans. In their view "What all the literature shares, whether antislavery or pro-black, is a belief in the freedom to speak for oneself" (2011, p. 9).

Postbellum America, the years between 1865 and 1910, was considered as an era of the "dawn of freedom," which "presented new conditions for forging an entirely new literature of necessity" (2011, p. 9). But during reconstruction (1865-77) new debates started discussing "the possibilities of a fully realized freedom and the threat of new forms of oppression and discrimination" (2011, p. 9). After the Civil War, African-American literature begins "to shift its racial discourse in order to (1) promote racial and moral uplift, social progress, and solidarity; (2) gain an identifiable, if not authoritative presence in main-stream America; and (3) exercise greater control over the representation of self" (2011, p. 9). This racial uplift and social progress could be seen in the writings of African-American writers. After the Civil War, it became imperative to write about themes of race and slavery and discrimination within the white supremacist society to make themselves heard and understood and to make their presence felt within the mainstream America, if not openly but in writings.

Graham and Ward further talk about the rapid growth of educational institutions, print technology and growing desire to overcome economic oppression rapidly increased even after reconstruction and entrenchment of segregation, which most of the African-Americans took as freedom. They argue, "The institutional and organizational life of blacks took highly visible forms and created important roles for women in churches, businesses, and self-help societies. This, in turn, inspired autobiographies, biographies, and anthologies of achievement, and the fictional focusing on domesticity, racial violence, and empowerment. These forms of writings were profoundly impacted by the changes in demography, the increase in literacy, the activities of women's and literary clubs, and the revitalization of an independent black press" (2011, p. 10).

Graham and Ward keep this view that a significant number of African-Americans migrated to the North, Midwest, and West which created more opportunities for them to work and to be influenced by different cultures and traditions then was possible during slavery. Farah Jasmine Griffin in her book *Who Set You Flowin'?* talks about Great Migration and narrative written during migration. She says that "Given the impart of migration and urbanization of African-Americans in particular and American society in general, it is not surprising" (1995, p. 3) that twentieth century has witnessed the emergence of migration narratives. She further argues, "The representation of the migration experience depends on the genre and form of the narrative as well as the historical and political moment of production" (1995, p. 3). In her view "each artist's conception of power is directly related to the construction of his or her text" (1995, p. 3).

In the beginning of twentieth century, African-Americans' life, identity and social cohesion began to change, which Graham and Ward term African-American modernism. Specific ideologies of race became absorbed into an emergent black literature between 1910 and 1940. In Craig H. Warner and Sandra G. Shannon's views the New Negro Movement or Harlem Renaissance, a period usually limited to the decade of the 1920s, brought new scholarship as different imperatives which came from "the growing acceptance of the literary representations of blacks by blacks and were facilitated by the commercialization and commodification of African American expressive culture, all of which made for new aesthetic possibilities" (Graham & Ward,

2011, p. 11). The period between 1920 and 1950 is critically important for shaping the literary expressions as it has witnessed "two major wars, a depression, the transformation of black people from rural to urban, immigrations, and the rise of Cold War sensibility" (2011, p. 11). Darryl Dickson-Carr and Nicole Waligora-Davis describe "the shift toward social realism in literary expression, on that, while different from the New Negro Renaissance in style and emphasis, demonstrates a continued and highly influential period of literary productivity, which manifested itself in a Chicago Renaissance and also became far more global following the Great Depression" as cited in (2011, p. 11).

Graham and Ward (2011) comment on Zora Neale Hurston's personal life and its impact on her works. In the late 1920s, during the New Negro Movement or Harlem Renaissance, Hurston was working for Mrs. Charlotte Osgood Mason for "research into black folk cultures for the sake of her own interest in theories regarding primitivism or the notion that non-white peoples were closer to humanity's truer, primitive levels, and therefore relatively unsullied by the corruptions of civilization" (p. 292). Hurston's publication in the 1930s were largely the product of the work she did for Mrs. Mason, which later developed into different "ideas and narratives" for her works especially the classic novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in 1937, that she couldn't publish before because of the contract she signed with Mrs. Mason for their project. Until then "the African-American literary scene had adopted new tones and foci" (2011, p. 292). Despite "Hurston's determination to write and publish what interested her from her unique perspective" it (theme and delay) harmed her literary career as Alain Locke and Richard Wright "disparaged her work in their contemporary reviews" (2011, p. 292).

Graham and Ward hold that with some exception, "a similar misfortune befell the majority of writers who began their careers in 1920s" (2011, p. 293). They argue that besides failing to find publishers, they turned towards the "more of journalistic writings or efforts on behalf of the Federal Writer's Project (FWP) within the Works Progress Administration (WPA)" (2011, p. 293). WPA also sponsored many arts projects which "allowed artistic expression to flourish, rather than decay under the worst economic crisis in US history to date" (2011, p. 293). According to Graham and Ward, although Hurston "benefited greatly from the FWP" than most of other writers

of her time, she died at the age of 69 in 1960 in South Florida in "comparative obscurity" (2011, p. 293).

"Hurston hailed from the small, all-black town of Eatonville, Florida" (2011, p. 295) and presented a sympathetic view of black folk life and culture for community building in general and freedom and love of black woman in particular. Her themes were more about family, love and woman emancipation than race and slavery. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is Hurston's most celebrated novel. It deals with the story of a proud, independent and passionate black woman who in searched for her dreams and true love, a desire "derived from a blooming peach tree, a metaphor for her sexual development and the possibilities of mutually satisfying love and communication" (2011, p. 303). She married thrice in search for true love but only attained true love with Tea Cake who died early due to the stray dog bite incident during flood. Alice Walker defined Hurston's strength as "racial health—a sense of black people as complete, complex, undiminished human being" (Kort, 2007).

Civil Rights Movement and the Black Arts/Black Aesthetic phenomenon era (1950-1976) are considered as "critical historical markers", which changed the language and theme of African-American writers and their role in the mainstream American politics. Graham and Ward (2011) contend "the radical innovation in artistic expression and a certain occupation with the exchanges between America and Europe have shaped a peculiar notion of Renaissance." But the dynamics of African-American literary culture could be better understood "by looking at an interior domestic context" (2011, p. 303).

The decade of the 1950s is considered "a golden age in African American literature" (2011, p. 303). Literary critics started criticizing the works of African-American authors, which suggested that "African American literature by the late fifties not only found an audience, but also had declared itself a rhetorical battleground, capable of generating ideas, metaphors, and myths that were undeniably American" (2011, pp. 11-12). This period evokes both the most important and the most radical changes in black literary practice. Graham and Ward continue, "With increased educational and social opportunities, a new generation of writers emerged whose careers would take full shape after 1970, all intent on rethinking the conceptual boundaries for African-American literature and the literary imagination" (2011, p. 12).

According to them “In general, African American writings drew its strength from an ability to master the themes and conventions of traditional American writing, while simultaneously engaging in a new “literary archeology,” as Toni Morrison suggests” (2011, p. 12).

The following two decades saw some epoch-making events and occurrences – the Civil Rights Movements, and the dismantling of legal segregation, the Black Power Movement, the Vietnam War, and the Feminist Movement – and a close examination of these socio-political events and their influence on the African-American literature is required for better understanding of the relationship between the literary themes and extra-textual aspects which influenced the linguistic features of the texts. Graham and Ward discuss the changing body politics of American society and culture “as a result of well-funded federal and private programs to advance social justice and promote equality, especially those in higher education that resulted in the institutionalization of Black Studies” (2011, p. 12) on the one hand. On the other hand, they refer to Emmett Till’s lynching in Mississippi and race riots in Newark, Detroit, and Chicago. The two sides reflected the paradoxical nature of the period. They argue that “Determining the relationship between the literary works and the period thus requires paying careful attention to the way in which African American literature engaged these contradictory cultural forces” (2011, p. 12).

The year 1970 is significant in the history of African-American literary production as major works were published by Toni Morrison, Ishmael Reed, Meriweather, Alice Walker, Toni Cade [Bambara], Mari Evans, Michael Harper, Audre Lorde, and Maya Angelou. There were different reasons for the increased demand for and reception of black literature. African-American literature was “marked by a reinvestment in storytelling and orality”. Moreover, it also “redefined the meaning and function of art as an aesthetic and social force”. Since the 1980s, African-American literature “has placed a greater importance upon performance-based modes of expressions”. Graham and Ward further explain the situations of African-American writers who “confronted race, directly, obliquely, or not at all, and they examined or reexamined issues of class, gender, sexuality, and intragroup relations to a far greater extent than ever before” (2011, p. 14). Due to this, different genres were produced in new ways, which “draw their fundamental strength and energy from the social/political

context of various cultural origins." It was of more concern to majority critics and historicists that "how texts "rediscovered" now reshape views of their past "significance"" (2011, p. 14).

In order to address the segmented market themes, such as race, sex, gender, class etc. African-American writers wrote stories of the past and reflected upon "the operations of literature in the marketplace and forms of scholarly practice" (2011, p. 14). Modern technologies changed the ways of reading and interpreting the work of art so do they affect the ways of constructing texts too. Different writers have produced works which are considered "insufficiently literary" and "represent a sizeable component of African American literary production" (2011, p. 14). Graham and Ward argue that "Just as modern technology makes possible the interface between words, sound, and rhythm creating new "texts," the interface between new readers and black literature has redefined the role and importance of reading and writing in a postmodern age" (2011, p. 15). Popular fiction and children's literature "pose questions to readers and viewers about race, power, and social change in innovative and effective ways that have generated lively discussions about textual, ideological, and aesthetic concerns" (2011, p. 15). The African-American theatre, on the other hand, contributed to building new audience by changing the language according to the popular notions of society and politics and also by engaging them in the matters of history and culture. In this way, "market forces", which define both the audience and the form, not only affected the literary production but also added "range and complexity" that changed "the terms of literary discourse altogether" (2011, p. 15). These "popular fictions must therefore be seen on a continuum … that meet specific cultural and ideological needs of dedicated audiences" (2011, p. 15).

The relationship of African-American culture and white American society in the historical contexts explicitly explains the nature and function of the novel and also the techniques of the writers reflecting reality, romance, etc., within the broader sociocultural and literary histories. Bell quotes Fredric R. James who talks about the role of culture and the importance of its study and analysis without being defensive about it. James believes that the reason for not defending the role of culture is because of the purpose of narrative through which realities of time are apprehended and "under which synchronic and analytic thinking is itself subsumed and put in perspective" (Bell,

The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition, 1987, p. xi). According to Bell, "Social and cultural boundaries are therefore as important as social and cultural changes in shaping the form and content of Afro-American novel" (1987, p. xii). Therefore, tracing the history of the African-American novel from its sociopolitical perspective largely depends on the factors and movements mentioned above. However, there are some key points which shaped the theme, subject matter and language of African-American novel.

2.8 Vocabulary as a Mirror of Social Realities

Elaine Chaika asserts, "All languages can say the same thing, although many people imagine that others cannot say what theirs does" (1989, p. 263). She argues, "The vocabulary of a language reveals underlying attitudes of the society that produced it" (1989, p. 263). She believes that "one must also consider how words change overtime, especially sets of words relating to the same things" (1989, p. 263). In Chaika's view, "the vocabulary of a language indicates what is important to its speakers" and "how certain aspects of culture or society are valued, whether favorably or unfavorably" (1989, p. 290). She believes that vocabulary "does not shape" but reflects the idea that it is an integral part of a society and "mirrors" the attitudes of the speakers of that speech community.

Writers also use certain lexical choices (vocabulary/language) and grammatical structures available within the linguistic store to communicate certain themes and ideas to shape the views of their readers. Molefi Kete Asante (1992), an African-American professor, sees language in a standardized code. For him, "language is a regularized code" agreed upon by the members of the same speech community. Moreover, he finds no issue with the regularized code of the language. In his view, language "involves grammatical rules, nuances, words, and deep structures". He strongly believes that "if we concentrate on one aspect of language, word, for instance, we can obtain a fairly good assessment of where a writer is located" (1992, p. 15). Therefore, choice of vocabulary and structure reflect any writer's socio-economic conditions of the time, ethno-political affiliations, and psychological though process consciously and subconsciously.

Fowler claims that individuals have very little choices in inventing new words or changing the meanings of existing words. Also, it is very difficult for them to break away from the set and established patterns of discourse of a community or society. What all they can do is to reproduce novel utterances and make choices from the store of language available in accordance with the social norms and social dialects. These choices could be phonological, lexical, syntactic or grammatical. Fowler further argues that individuals' language is "social and conventional both in its origin and the rules, which govern the practices of speaking and writing. Language is a social practice which is manifested, or realized, in the actions of individuals" (1996, p. 40). In this statement, Fowler suggests, "All languages, not just political uses, constantly drift towards the affirmation of fixed, and usually prejudicial, categories. Criticism, and literature itself, have roles in combating this tendency" (1996, p. 48).

"Criticism," says Fowler, "is conscious analysis of the relationship between the signs—words, phrases, etc. — which people produce, and the meanings they communicate". Every word communicates a specific meaning and it becomes significant when it is structured differently. Also, the selection of words to communicate certain meaning becomes significant when dealing with issues of sensitive nature within certain socio-cultural and historical contexts. He believes that the "Analysis of this relationship is necessarily an exploration of the social origins of meanings and the social purposes of spoken and written language" (1996, p. 50). Fowler argues that "Criticism is a form of social *practice*… And this practice is also *reflexive*" (1996, p. 50). In his view, "The particular aim of linguistic criticism is demystification and self-examination" and that "Literary texts use deliberate devices for defamiliarization" (1996, p. 50). The goals of a critical linguist are in general terms "defamiliarisation" or "consciousness-raising". What is it and how is it created are the questions that Roger Fowler intends answering.

Fowler (1996) further differentiates between the roles of a writer and a reader. He says that both "writers and readers are constituted by the discourse that are accessible to them". According to him, "A writer can make texts only out of the available discourses, and so, *qua* writer, is socio-culturally constituted. Authors are writers 'who own their own texts' (Kress, 1985, p. 49), but this does not make them any less discursively constructed. Texts construct 'reading positions' for readers, that

is, they suggest what ideological formations it is appropriate for readers to bring to texts" (On Critical Linguistics, 1996, p. 7). He further argues that a reader, on the other hand, is not a passive recipient of fixed meaning, but is "discursively equipped prior to the encounter with the text, and reconstructs the text as a system of meanings which may be more or less congruent with the ideology which informs the text. In modern literary theory, this discursive activity of the reader is known as 'productive consumption' (On Critical Linguistics, 1996, p. 7)".

The following section describes the etymology and historical background of the N-word. Besides exploring the N-word linguistic choices in relation to the context and society of its use, it also deals with the history of this troublesome word. It then deals with the sensitive issue/nature of defining N-word, its changing meanings over a period of time in American history and the probable functions it plays according to the context of its use. This section also traces the social and historical links and developments between N-word use and the function it plays within a literary text.

2.9 N-word and its Historical Background

The online Cambridge dictionary defines the N-word *nigger* as "an extremely offensive word for a black person". The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language defines *nigger* as a noun under the sub-heading of "offensive slang" as 1.a. Used as a disparaging term for a black person. b. Used as a disparaging term for a member of any dark-skinned people. 2. Used as a disparaging term for a member of any socially, economically, or politically deprived group of people" (2019). Besides first definition, the second definition is also significant in meaning and broader interpretation. Randall Kennedy also invested energy in this endeavor because "*nigger* is a key word in the lexicon of race relations and thus an important term in American politics" (2003, p. 15). He believes, "To be ignorant of its meanings and effects is to make oneself vulnerable to all manner of perils, including the loss of a job, a reputation, a friend, even one's life" (2003, p. 15). This shows the significance of the use of this word in any situation or circumstances particularly in American culture and society.

Randall Kennedy (2003) also defines the word *nigger* and its etymology and about its changing spellings and shifting meanings in his book *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word*. He says, the word *nigger* is derived from the Latin

word for the color black, *niger*. But it keeps on changing its meaning over a period of time and is also spelled in a variety of ways to mean differently. According to the *Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang,* "it did not originate as a slur but took on derogatory connotation over time. *Nigger* and other words related to it have been spelled in variety of ways, including niggah, nigguh, niggur, and niggar". Randall Kennedy further argues that "no one knows precisely when or how *niger* turned derisively into *nigger* and attained a pejorative meaning." But he believes that people knew "that by the end of the first third of the nineteenth century, *nigger* had already become a familiar and influential insult" (2003, p. 16).

Jabari Asim (2007) traces the origin and history of N-word in his book, *The N Word: Who Can Say It, Who Shouldn't, and Why*, and goes back to 1619 when the Jamestown colonist John Rolf mentioned it in his diary about captive Africans as "Twenty negars". In Asim's view, most of the lexicographers relate "negars", which is a Latin word and means "black", closer to the word "niggers" than "negroes". For some, "nigers" was "intended initially as a neutral term" but it acquired a negative and "derogatory character over time with various spellings along the way" (2007, p. 10). Explaining the historical use of the N-word, Asim says that in 1637, the merchant Nicholas Crisp described one of his ships as equipped to "take nigers and carry them to foreign parts". In 1651, two British traders specifically requested the Guinea Company to provide them the shipments of "lusty negers" (2007, p. 10).

Asim argues that the most modern spelling of the N-word was used in the poem "The Ordination" by a Scottish poet Robert Burns, in 1786.

> Come, let a proper text be read,
> An' touch it aff wi' vigour,
> How graceless Ham leugh at his dad,
> Which made Canaan a nigger.

Asim argues, "by the time Burns got around cranking out his verse, black people had no doubt became accustomed to hearing the N word as an insult – regardless of how it was spelled" (2007, p. 11). Asim further writes in his book, "Twenty years before "The Ordination," the Afro-British memoirist Ignatius Sancho wrote to a correspondent, "I am one of those whom the vulgar and illiberal call '*Negurs*'." Asim believes that "By

then it was reasonable for Ignatius Sancho and his dark-skinned fellows to hold in low regard anyone who chose to use the term in any form – nigger, niger, negus, negar – especially since "Negro" (as a term for black Africans) had been part of the English vocabulary as far back as 1555" (2007, p. 11).

In the historian Winthrop Jordan's words, "Blackness had become so thoroughly entangled with the basest status in American society that at least by the beginning of the eighteenth century it was almost indecipherable coded into American language and literature" (2007, p. 12). In Asim's words, "From the outset, the British and their colonial counterparts relied on language to maximize the idea of difference between themselves and their African captives." (2007, p. 12)

Jacquelyn Rahman (2012) also talks about the origin and historical development in the meaning of N-word, which "has undergone various processes of change over time" (p. 142). These changes, Rahman argues, "are tied in with the social, economic, and cultural factors that have contributed to the development of the African American community" (2012, p. 142). She further argues, "The historical development of the term has resulted in variants representing two major strands of meaning, consistent with oppositional meanings regarding African American identity" (2012, p. 142).

But she refers to the origin of the word way back in 1574 when Oxford English Dictionary cites it as "relatively neutral, despite the fact that the term found use within the context of the slave trade". The earliest examples provided by Kennedy, Asim, Rahman, and Allan suggest that the N-word use refers to African Americans as "less social, intellectual and cultural development". Rahman's further argues that gradually this underlying social behaviour and treatment towards blacks became mildly disparaging which later on developed as a racial slur. "As social, economic, and political events unfolded," says Rahman, "*nigger* moved from its relatively neutral usage among whites to gain usage as an overtly hostile and abusive word meant to intimidate Africans in America and highlight their ascribed moral and intellectual inferiority" (2012, p. 143). Rahman's statement provides clear insight to understand how N-word got its pejorative and degenerative meanings. Allen (1990) also echoes the same when says "Ethnic slurs appear in response to social and economic conflict during historical periods of rapid social change. The coinage of most slurs may be associated with great events in our social history, particularly waves of immigration,

urbanization, war and its aftermath, depressions, and massive migrations of labor" as cited in (2012, p. 143).

In Rahman view, two factors— free African Americans and the abolition of slavery, contributed a lot to the N-word's pejorative use and its dysphemistic meanings. The major factors for N-word dysphemistic use against blacks was due to increased job competition with whites (Milroy & Milroy 1991; Kennedy 2002; Asim 2007). According to Rahman, "An ideology developed that highlighted and intensified existing racist views; as a means of blocking African Americans from competing economically, *nigger* became a convenient term for indexing the subhuman characteristics being ascribed to African American through this ideology" (2012, p. 143). He refers to Frederickson (1987) who describes the same idea as "an articulate and aggressive racism which excluded the Negro form the society of competing equals without deporting him, by the simple and brutal mechanism of formally defining him as subhuman" as quoted in (Rahman, 2012, p. 143). Charles E. Wilson Jr.'s (2005) describes the ideas similar to Rahman (2012) and Frederickson (1987) as an institutional form of racism, which is subtle form of racism and is quite different from the overt form of racism.

He explains the differences between overt racism and institutional form of racism. In his views, overt racism operates at a personal or individual level, which largely depends on the racial origin. Wilson Jr. further elaborates that one group despises the other group and develops some sort of prejudice and stereotypical beliefs against them. On the other hand, "institutional racism is synonymous with subtle racism" (2005, p. xiii). Within organization, the sort of opportunities a privileged man is exposed to, the underprivileged or minority groups cannot access due to lack of information, and oftentimes are not exposed to until its too late. On the surface, the system looks flawless but to the deeper level, certain individuals made "privy to information". Wilson Jr. also explains another form of racism which is culturally biased and includes "concepts such as beliefs, values, the quality of human interaction, and the ritual practices of a cultural group" (2005, p. xiii).

2.9.1 N-word as a racial slur

N-word is used as a racial slur in American society and abroad. A slur is "an expression of disparagement that discredits, slights, smears, stains, besmirches or sullies what it is applied to" (Oxford English Dictionary) as quoted in (Allan, 2016, p. 2). "A slur" Keith Allan believes, "is not, as it is often taken to be, the lexical form (forms) in a language expression e, instead the perlocutionary effect of expression e as a constituent of utterance u; the said perlocutionary effect can only be determined from context k, the context — i.e., e's co-text and the situation of its utterance and of its reception" (2016, pp. 3-4).

Jacquelyn Rahman also supports the N-word origin and its use as a racial slur since mid-1800. But in her view, due to the "increases sensitivity to the sensibilities of former targets of racial and other types of dysphemism (Allan & Burridge 2006), it has fallen into extreme disfavor in the broader society" (Henderson 2003; Allan & Burridge 2006) (Rahman, 2012, p. 137). In Allan's view, "Taboos arise out of social constraints on the individual's behaviour where it can cause discomfort, harm or injury" (Allan & Burridge, 2006, p. 1). In their views, use of N-word is such a sensitive social act that it can "breach constraints of polite behaviour". (2006, p. 1).

Allan and Burridge generalize the use of words with increased sensitivity when they argue, "Language is used as a shield against malign fate and the disapprobation of fellow human beings; it is used as a weapon against enemies and as a release valve when we are angry, frustrated or hurt" (2006, p. 2). Allan and Burridge further argue, "People constantly censor the language they use (we differentiate this from the institutionalized imposition of censorship). We examine politeness and impoliteness as they interact with orthophemism (straight talking), euphemism (sweet talking) and dysphemism (speaking offensively)" (2006, p. 1).

2.9.2 N-word (*Nigger*) and its contexts of use

Randall Kennedy discusses the different uses of N-word *nigger* in his book *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word*. In his view, the word *nigger* "could be said in many ways, put to many uses, and mean many things" (Kennedy, 2003). He learned it from his early childhood experiences from his grandmother, father

and friends around and how it can be used for different purposed and reasons. He refers to his Big Mama and how she uses the word *nigger* in her talk. He recalls, Big Mama peppered her speech with references to "niggers" by which she meant discreditable Negroes, a group that, in her view, constituted a large sector of the African-American population. If Big Mama saw blacks misbehaving she would often roll her eyes, purse her lips, and then declare in a mournful tone, "Nigguhs!" According to Big Mama, "niggers can't get along, not even in church" and "are always late, even to their own funerals" (2003, p. 12). She swore that she would never allow a "nigger doctor" to care for her and repeatedly warned that "if you see a bunch of niggers coming, turn around and go the other way." (2003, p. 12).

Being himself as a lawyer, Rondall Kennedy knows about the sensitivity of the use of the word *nigger* and writing a whole book on it. That's why he named his book *The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word*. The title itself refers to the sensitive use of the word and more sensitive when you are dealing with it to explain it. He describes the trouble he took to undertake this project when he says, "I have invested energy in this endeavor because *nigger* is a key word in the lexicon of race relations and thus an important term in American politics." (p. 15). Kennedy explores the history of the sensitive and controversial N-word in his book and concludes that the meaning varies according to the person using it and the context in which it is used. In an interview to Daniel Smith in *The Atlantic*, he admits the sensitive and controversial nature of the N-word when he says, "I'm not saying that any particular instance of using the N-word is any more horrifying and menacing than any other such word. I'm saying that from a broad sociological view, the word is associated with more havoc in American society than any other racial slurs" (Kennedy, That Word, 2002).

Kennedy further refers to the use of the N-word in different "color" and "content" by referring to his father's shifting use of it in different situations and contexts. He refers to Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes who once observed that "a word is not a crystal, transparent and unchanged," but is instead "the skin of a living thought [that] may vary greatly in color and content according to the circumstances and time in which it is used" (2003, p. 14).

Kennedy refers to different uses of the word *nigger* in different contexts and situations by referring to some other observers. For them, "the only legitimate use of

nigger is as a rhetorical boomerang against racists." But for others, there are "a wide range of additional usage" of the word *nigger*. He refers to Professor Clarence Major who says when nigger is "used by black people among themselves, [it] is a racial term with undertones of warmth and good will—reflecting … a tragicomic sensibility that is aware of black history" (2003, p. 36). He further refers to the writer Claude Brown who describes *nigger* as "perhaps the most soulful word in the world". A journalist Jarvis DeBerry calls it "beautiful in its multiplicity of functions." Deberry writes "I am not aware of any other word capable of expressing so many contradictory emotions" as cited in (2003, p. 36).

In Kennedy's view, "*Nigger* is fascinating precisely because it has been put to a variety of uses and can radiate a wide array of meanings" (2003, p. 35). He further talks about the different references of the use of the word *nigger* and its changing and shifting meanings over the period of time. He says, "Traditionally an insult, *nigger* can also be a compliment, as in "He played like a nigger." Historically a signal of hostility, it can also be a salutation announcing affection, as in "This is my main nigger." A term of belittlement, *nigger* can also be a term of respect, as in "James Brown is a straight-up nigger." A word that can bring forth bitter tears in certain circumstances, *nigger* can prompt joyful laughter in others.80" (2003, p. 36).

According to Kennedy, "Over the years, *nigger* has become the best known of the American language's many racial insults, evolving into the paradigmatic slur. He argues, "It is the epithet that generates epithets" (2003, p. 30). He gives different instances where the N-word is used as an epithet. On the ethnic and regional ground, Arabs are called "sand niggers," Irish "the niggers of Europe," and Palestinians "the niggers of the Middle East". Whereas in social and cultural context "black bowling balls have been called "nigger eggs," games of craps "nigger golf," watermelons "nigger hams," rolls of one-dollar bill's "nigger rolls," bad luck "nigger luck," gossip "nigger news," and heavy boots "nigger stompers." (2003, p. 30)

Kennedy argues that different people in American history "have made strong claims on behalf of the status of *nigger* as a racial insult" (2003, p. 30). He quotes the journalist Farai Chideya who describes it as "the all-American trump card, the nuclear bomb of racial epithets" (2003, p. 30). He also quotes the writer Andrew Hacker who asserts that "among slurs of any sort, *nigger* stands alone [in] its power to tear at one's

insides." Kennedy further refers to the Judge Stephen Reinhardt who deems "*nigger* the most noxious racial epithet in the contemporary American lexicon." He further quotes the prosecutor Christopher Dar who famously branded "nigger the filthiest, dirtiest, nastiest word in the English language" (2003, p. 30).

Blackshire-Belay (1992), a professor of African-American studies, terms language "a regularized symbolic code that connects its users in a symbiosis of substance" (p. 3). She argues:

> We are produced and produce through language. Language is, in essence, a fascinating phenomenon. Because of its unique role in capturing the breadth of human thought and endeavor, we utilize it as a vehicle of communication of many different levels. Thereby we are capable of expressing a multiplicity of worldviews, literature, and lifestyles. As we look back at the thoughts of our ancestors we find that we can only see as far as language (both written and oral) allow us to see. We look forward into time only to realize that we can propose, plan, and organize our dreams and our aspirations through language. We look outward into the cosmic sphere and send symbols of communication of both to allow the astronaut to communicate with the man on the moon. Thus it is through language that we produce and develop meaning. (1992, p. 3)

Talking about language of literature, she writes in her book *Language and Literature in the African American Imagination*, "Literature in its most profound sense, is the most complex use of language to create meaning. African-American language and literature are the twin generators of a productive cultural thrust into American literature" (1992, p. 3). She strongly believes, "Language is the means by which we understand ourselves and the societies in which we play a part. Language is also pertinent to resolving some of the problems and tensions that arise from human interaction" (1992, p. 4). She understands/believes that "Linguistic problems rarely admit simple solutions" (1992, p. 4). However, it is this very elementary observation about N-word linguistic choice in literature that has led to the present study.

Blackshire-Belay holds, "The African American has had an abundant linguistic, communication, and literary history. There is a strong need "to understand it in the

context of our own lives" (1992, p. 4). She argues convincingly that if there is a genuine desire and need to understand the work of African-American art, "All criticism has to respond to the political, social, and cultural milieu of the people" (1992, p. 4).

In her view, every aspect of African-American writing must be taken into consideration by the critics "in the nuances of language, style, and the behavior of African Americans" (1992, p. 4). This gives holistic view of the text and the purpose it serves. Different African-American women critics "explored the meaning of culture in the writings of black women" (1992, p. 4). She argues that women writers such as Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Gloria Naylor, Toni Cade Bambara, and others "wrote novels and short stories depicting areas of African-American life that had gone untouched by many male African-American writers" (1992, p. 4). But she argues that by that time the standards of novelist traditions were set by John A. Williams, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, and Ralph Ellison and critics used to evaluate African-American work through those standards. Women writers shifted the narrative to the more basic human problems and issues related to community, love and humanity. Social and cultural aspects started receiving more understanding and acclaim.

As the literature shows, multiple studies have been conducted on the historical account of N-word, N-word as a racial slur, and as a bad words. Asim (2007) and Kennedy (2003) have pointed out that there is a need to dig deep into the use of the N-word. However, no known study is available to explore the use and function of this word in African-American literature. It was therefore imperative to do so.

The next chapter explains the theoretical framework of the study and methodological implications for the linguistic critique of N-word choices. A single method could not encompass the holistic view of N-word use and function within a literary text. Therefore, a collage of different methods and their limitations have been discussed in detail before finalizing the principles and procedure for N-word analysis.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the frameworks in which the present research was conducted. First, it discusses the methodological framework in its broader context, specifically focusing on Roger Fowlers' concept of linguistic criticism. Second, it deals in detail with the conceptual framework, which I used to conduct this research. It then discusses the linguistic and literary models linking the aspects of linguistic choices, especially N-word choice with my research questions. In doing so, it also provides the justification of these models and their application to the selected texts.

In this chapter, the theoretical and methodological principles developed and advocated have been informed by several interdisciplinary and interconnected approaches. Experimentation with quantitative methods borrowed from empirical and corpus linguistics, in conjunction with qualitative critical analysis, has made it possible for me to develop a unique approach to analyze linguistic representation of literary themes. In this research, I have used software programs that allow for rapid, efficient, and accurate analysis of data. This chapter focuses on the technologies and strategies implemented in the analysis of literary data that constitutes the analysis chapter. Additionally, it outlines the principles informing my text and corpus selection, analysis of the data, and application of the result to a discussion of each literary text under consideration.

3.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The N-word in African American fiction examines the function it performs within the context of its utterance. The N-word use as a derogatory slur and phrase in literature serve many purposes depending on the context in which it is used. A theory of context best explains the semantic uses of N-word in varing contexts. According to van Dijk "The crucial function of context model is to produce discourse in such a way that it is optimally *appropriate* in the social situation". van Dijk's theory of context provides "the basis of an empirical pragmatics of discourse, accounting for the way discourse adapts its structures to communicate situations" (2009, p. 7). He argues that

the theory of context "accounts for the conditions of discourse variation, that is, for discourse style defined as the variable and unique way text and talk adapt to its context" (2009, p. 7).

According to van Dijk "A context is what is defined to be relevant in the social situation by the participants themselves" (2009, p. 5). He argues, "contexts are not "objective," but "subjective"" (2009, p. 5). He supports this view by arguing that "The fundamental theoretical and empirical advantage of this approach is that participants' subjective "definitions of situation" are *cognitive* objects". He argues that it is cognitive representation, and "not the objective social situation, that influences the cognitive process of discourse production and comprehension" (2009, p. 5) Traditional conception of context fail to account how "participants understand and represent the social situation" (2009, p. 5). He argues that it is not always that "social situations" influence discourse directly.

If contexts are subjective they may be named as "mental model" as Johnson-Laird (1982) say or "situational model" as van Dijk forwards. van Dijk argues that "subjective mental models of episodes account for the fact that people form their own personal representations of an event, with their own perspective, interests, evaluation, emotions, and other elements based on their unique personal history or their current subjective experience" (2009, p. 6). It is both pragmatically and semantically true. It is pragmatically "true for the communicative situations in which people are ongoingly participating" and semantically true "for the events they observe and talk about" (2009, p. 6).

This context model not wholly subjective but also carries "social and intersubjective dimensions. This link is crucial "to reject the common misrepresentation that a cognitive approach to discourse and context implies individualist reductionism in a theory of discourse" (2009, p. 6). van Dijk argues that on the one hand "context models are the missing link between situational and social structures" and on the other, "discourse structures and their production and understanding" (2009, p. 7).

As a social basis of the theory of context, van Dijk stresses on the need of a detailed examination of the notion of social situation in several disciplines (2009, p. 23). He argues that "the (social) identity of participants is a topic that is central in the

theory of context, and the way contexts control talk and text" (2009, p. 23). He defines contexts as "mental models of communicative situations and text-context units in terms of communicative episodes" (2009, p. 23). In his view, "social situations of actions may also be seen as some kind of social "environment" of talk and text". On the other hand, in a theory of context, "the choice of categories may be obvious for Time and Place (forming part of the Setting category), as well as the Role or Identity of Participants, not all aspects of social situations or environments need to become part of the context" (2009, p. 23).

van Dijk argues that the notion of situation plays a key role in the analysis of social structures. He believes that "social situations may well be taken as meaningful building blocks of society" (2009, p. 24).The approach to situation and action talks about "the relation between social microstructures and macrostructures" (2009, p. 26). Following a sociopragmatic approach, van Dijk thus able "to construe the necessary bridge between interaction, discourse and situational context, on the one hand, and societal and political contexts on the other hand" (2009, p. 26). He argues that "social (macro) structures can be linked to talk and text because language users, as social members, know them and can think of them while speaking, writing, listening or reading" (2009, p. 26).

van Dijk also argues that "not only grammars and rules of discourse but also contexts are culturally variable" (2009, p. 26). In the ethnography of communication, Dell Hymes stresses on the analysis of the components of contexts. van Dijk supports this view and says "the notion of "context" is used in different cultures" (2009, p. 26). Malinowski and Firth and later Halliday made a distinction between the notions "context of situation" and "context of culture". Context of situation is "local and involves participants face-to-face, and within a specific setting" (2009, p. 154).. Context of culture is usually "more global, and involving members of a whole community, as well as many of their fundamental properties, such as their knowledge, norms and values" (2009, p. 154).

In the social and cultural approach to context, I bring in discussion of literary discourse and racism by focusing not so much on the features of racist text and talk but on N-word lexical choice within textual social contexts. This leads the discussion to critical linguistics where Fowler and Halliday present the theory of context in relation

to systemic-functional linguistics. Later systemic functional grammar integrated the notions of actions or speech acts – that is, the pragmatic component. For van Dijk's theory of context, situational conditions of speech act theory "enter the systematic description of language use such as the intension, knowledge and social position of the participants" (2009, p. 14). In speech act theory "the focus on utterances as (social) acts and their situational conditions was an important step in the direction of a broader concept of language use" (2009, p. 14). Grice further introduced the notion of implicature which are less strict inferences based on contextual conditions. van Dijk argues that "In order to make such inferences, "language users need not only knowledge of the world or the issue at hand" (N-word, blacks, African-Americans, American society etc. in my case) but "more specific knowledge" about society, culture, politics and racism. Sociolinguistics has always had a more empirical basis but the focus of this research in on language use. The main idea is that specific aspects of language use, such as lexical choice vary as a function of independent social variables such as the class, age, gender, ethnicity or race of the language users. (Labov, 1972). Thus, we have different syntactic, lexical or semantic variation of the N-word use in literature. And at the same time such variation is functional in some communicative situations. These variations are not free or arbitrary. For any participant each N-word semantic variant is associated with a different context model.

3.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the present study is the linguist Roger Fowler's (1996) linguistic critique and his assertion that literature is a well-crafted creative piece of work by the writer. He further states that the novelty of literature is due not only to its themes but also to the way the same themes are presented differently using different linguistic techniques and choices. Using different linguistic techniques and choices in different situations and contexts communicate different functions and the text serves different purposes depending on the sensitivity of the subject in a specific context. What Fowler (1996) thus asserts is that linguistic critique can very appropriately and revealingly be applied to literature but that, for this application to work, a model must be capable of dealing with the text within the literary and social contexts it is produced. The procedure is to theorize literature as language using the richest and most suitable model. Roger Fowler (1996) states,

> A linguistic model should possess the following broad characteristics. It should be **comprehensive** in accounting for the whole range of dimensions of linguistic structure, particularly pragmatic dimensions. It should be capable of providing an account of the **functions** of given linguistic constructions (in real texts), particularly the thought-shaping (Halliday's 'ideational') function. It should acknowledge the **social** basis of the formation of meanings (Halliday's social semiotic') (p. 16).

Being comprehensive in all respects, the model must be capable of encompassing all the dimensions of linguistic structures, particularly pragmatic dimensions. Being capable of focusing on the functionality of 'linguistics construction', a linguistic model requires an in-depth analysis of the lexical choices and syntactic construction and their function within a given social, historical and psychological context where meanings are interpreted and conclusions drawn.

Paul Baker also talks about the limitations of any method for complete and comprehensive language analysis. He argues, "No method of linguistic analysis is ever 'complete' in that it alone can provide the answer to every research question about language that is asked. Instead, I believe that it is useful to be aware of the benefits and limitations of a range of methodologies, so that we are equipped with a good sense of when a method should be utilized (alone or in conjunction with others) or abandoned for the moment" (Baker, 2010, p. 12). Jonathan Culpeper (2001) talks about different linguistic approaches for the analysis of literary texts and says that it is an interdisciplinary research and "obviously, the particular combination of disciplines for any one approach lends it its particular flavor" (p. 12). He argues that "Language attitude research has combined language research with social and cognitive psychological research" (2001, p. 12). Therefore, specific features of different methods are selected in order to suit the framework of this study. A model comprising all the relevant areas is not available. Therefore, a collage work of different methods has been used and adapted to the nature of the present study.

The linguistic model which I plan to use for this study, makes a serious attempt to include "pragmatic, social, and historical dimensions of language". Pragmatics is the study of language use in context; society provides that context and meanings of a text are interpreted in their historical settings. This interplay of three aspects of linguistic

analysis becomes effective for meaning making and making sense of the use of N-word within a literary text. According to Roger Fowler (1996), "the significance of linguistic structures in literature is a function of the relationships between textual construction and the social, institutional, and ideological conditions of its production and reception. Thus history, social structure, and ideology are major sources of knowledge and hypotheses in the framework of linguistic criticism" (p. 16).

J. R. Firth is regarded as the founder of modern British linguistics. He proposed an approach to the description of social contexts which bears a close resemblance to Fowler's text and context model. In his view the "context of situation" is best used as a suitable schematic construct to apply to language events. Fowler took the idea of context of situation from Firth's description of the situation which focuses on the four aspects of the text – the participants, the action, the relevant features of the situation and the effects. The detailed description of the four aspects is as follows:

3.2.1 Firth's description of context of situation

Firth's headings as cited in (Halliday & Hasan, 1989, p. 8) are as follows:

1. The PARTICIPANTS in the situation: what Firth referred to as persons and personalities, corresponding more or less to what sociologists would regard as the statuses and roles of the participants;
2. The ACTION of the participants: what they are doing, including both their verbal action and their non-verbal action
3. OTHER RELEVANT FEATURES OF THE SITUATION: the surrounding objects and events, in so far as they have some bearing on what is going on;
4. The EFFECTS of the verbal action: what changes were brought about by what the participants in the situation had to say.

Firth's description of context of situation is significant in developing Dell Hymes's ethnography of communication and Halliday's three features of context of situation.

3.2.2 Dell Hymes and the ethnography of communication

Dell Hymes (1967) further developed Firth's idea of the context of situation and proposed a more detailed model for linguistic analysis of the text. His work focusses

more on the ethnography of communication. In his work, Dell Hymes proposed a set of concepts for describing the context of situation, which were in many ways similar to that of Firth. Like Firth, he seizes first on the persons participating in the speech event. He abstracts the roles of the addressors and addressees. The addressor is the speaker or writers who produces the utterance. The addressee is the hearer or reader who is the receipent of the utterance. In a given communicative event, the knowledge of the addressor and addressee makes it possible for the analyst to imagine what is said. Hymes identified:

1. The form and content of the message
2. The setting
3. The participants
4. The intent and effect of the communication
5. The key
6. The medium
7. The genre
8. The norms of interaction

Hymes' work led to a renewal of interest in different ways in which language is used in different cultures – the value placed on speech, the various rhetorical modes that are recognized, and so on as cited in (Halliday & Hasan, 1989, p. 9). Lewis (1972) introduced the co-ordinate to take account of sentences that include specific reference to what has been mentioned before. The words that occur in text are constrained by what we call their co-text. The interpretation of utterances within a text is also contrained by co-text. Co-text refers to the relations between different parts of the text. It helps in the interpretation of the text even in the absence of certain information. In general, the more the co-text, the more secure the interpretation. Text creates its own context.

Firth's delineation of context states that the linguistic study which integrates schema, relevance and appropriateness as well as the polarites of attributes is called contxt. Firth's theory of meaning hinges on the notion of context. Although he consistently refers to semantics, Firth's sole concern is pragmatics. He refuses to accept that words and sentences can have meanings in and by themselves and firmly believes that "the complete meaning of a word is always contextual" (Firth 1957, p. 7). Firth

(1968) further argues that no text should be considered meaningful unless it can be referred to some generalized context of situation. He insists on recognizing contextual meaning as a key source for linguistic theory where context is a prerequisite for its interpretation.

3.2.3 Halliday's three features of the context of situation

M. A. K. Halliday (1989) elucidates the description of text within the context of situation in which it functions. In his words, "the description is in terms of simple conceptual framework of three headings, the field, the tenor, and the mode" (1989, p. 11). He believes that these three concepts "serve to interpret the social context of the text, the environment in which meanings are being exchanged" (1989, p. 12). These concepts are as follows:

Field: It refers to what is happening, to the nature of the social action that is taking place: what is that the participants are engaged in, in which the language figures as some essential component?

Tenor: It refers to who is taking part, to the nature of the participants, their statuses and roles; what kind of role relationship obtained among the participants, including permanent and temporary relationships of one kind or another, both the types of speech role that they are taking on in the dialogue and the whole cluster of socially significant relationships in which they are involved?

Mode: It refers to what part the language is playing, what it is that the participants are expecting the language to do for them in that situation; the symbolic organization of the text, the status that it has, and its function in the context, including the channel (is it spoken or written or some combination of the two?) and also the rhetorical mode, what is being achieved by the text in terms of such categories as persuasive, expository, didactic, and the like (Halliday & Hasan, 1989, p. 12).

Fowler (1996, p. 193) represents these three aspects of situations in the tabular form as follows:

Aspects of Situation	Linguistic Function	Features of Linguistic Structure
Field	*Ideational*	Vocabulary

Associated activity, subject-matter	Representation of experience, categorization, and other structuring	Transitivity
Tenor Relationships between participants: power, solidarity, roles and purposes	*Interpersonal* Expression of roles, purposes, and relationships, Linguistic construction of addressor and addressee	Deixis: personal pronouns, Modality, speech acts; mental processes Vocabulary as technical/formal/colloquial Syntax (e.g. hypotaxis v. parataxis)
Mode Type of channel, and organization of text within it	*Textual* Construction of text as medium: cohesion, development, emphasis, foregrounding Genre	Cohesive ties (anaphora, etc.) Thematization, parallelism, Typography, voice qualities Genre-markers (e.g. rhyme)

3.2.4 Roger Fowler's text and context model

Roger Fowler builds on the Hallidayan concept of functional linguistics mentioned above. He also explains three types of contexts in his book *Linguistic Criticism* (Fowler, 1996, pp. 112-115) as follows:

1. *Context of utterance*, the situation within which discourse is conducted.
   a. The physical surroundings or 'setting'.
   b. The distribution of the participants vis-a-vis one another, whether they are two people talking face-to-face, one person addressing a large audience, two people speaking on telephone, a group of informal conversationalists scattered through a large room, or whatever.
   c. The channel employed, whether aural, visual, electronic, etc., which will determine the 'mode' as some variety of speech or writing.
   d. Participants are together at the same time and in the same place, and all 'split' contexts of utterance.
   e. Personal deictics - as 'I', 'you', etc. – depending on whether the participants are identifiable individuals or not.
   f. The regularities of contexts of utterance. Although every utterance (or reception thereof) is a distinct historical event with its own 'idiosyncrasies,

there are strong and recognizable recurrent features which group distinct utterance contexts under clear categories or *situation types*.

2. *Context of culture*: the whole network of social and economic conventions, all the institutions, familiar settings and relationships, constituting culture at large, especially in so far as these bear on particular utterance contexts, and influence the structure of discourse occurring within them.
3. *Context of reference*: the topic or subject-matter (*field* or *domain*) of a text.

Firth's model of the context of situation is important as it helps in explaining the context of utterance and situation. Particularly, only two aspects of Firth's context of situation are important and relevant to the current study. The first aspect refers to the participants in the situation. Who is talking to whom and who utters the N-word to whom? What is their immediate relationship with each other and how does the use of N-word reflect the personal and situational traits of the participants? The second important aspect is the effect of the verbal action. What perlocutionary effect the use of N-word creates within the situation of utterance? how the behaviour of the other participant changes to whom the N-word is uttered? and what impact does the use of N-word make/create depending on the relationship of the participants? The perlocutionary impact reflects the function of the N-word use among the participants.

3.2.5 Lisa Cohen Minnick's Principles

Lisa Cohen Minnick (2004) also presents the similar views as of Roger Fowler's about the limitations of a single linguistic method when applied on a literary text. Moreover, different linguistic methods are used in conjunction with literary approach for better analysis and it also gives a new perspective to the texts under study. She argues, "Literary researchers wary of linguistic methods as appropriate means for approaching literature may eventually come to appreciate the linguistic methods upon realizing that there need not be (and should not be) a one-size-fits-all approach and that the approach need not (and, again, should not) reduce a work of art merely to a list of numbers and percentages, even though these numbers can provide a useful new approach to considering a literary text" (Minnick, 2004, p. 46). A socio-pragmatic study of the racial linguistic choices in the selected African-American novels requires a hybrid approach – linguistic and literary – using corpus tools for data collection and presentation, Hallidayan approach for its functional analysis, its pragmatic use and the

perlocutionary effect it creates within the van Dijk's concept of local and global context. In Minnick's views, corpora are used as tools for bringing new insights into the literary work under consideration. A methodological aim of corpus-based analysis of literary text is also to advocate the application of linguistic theories and methods to bring richer understanding of the text.

For the present study, the methods used across the three individual text analyses are based on a set of shared principles borrowed from Lisa Cohen Minnick's study of African-American speech representation in fiction. They are:

1. comprehensive analysis,
2. selection of comparable data across the three analyses,
3. use of sociolinguistic methods for interpretation of data and pragmatics for contextual analysis, and
4. acknowledgement of the creative nature of the literary texts by employing qualitative methods in the experimental design and application of results.

To conduct a comprehensive literary analysis of the selected African-American texts, all N-word lexical choices used by the characters and authors of the selected texts are collected and analyzed. AntConc and LancsBox are used to analyze a literary corpus of selected African-American texts. These softwares are used to collect more accurate data and data presentation in the form of graphs and charts for comprehensive analysis.

The next principle is the selection of comparable data from each of the selected texts for this study. There are three reasons for developing comparable corpora for each text. First, the data collected and analyzed for each of the selected literary texts is limited to fictionalized works of African-American authors. The rationale for this selection is to divide the timeline according to the literary and socio-economic struggle of African Americans for literary representation within the mainstream of American literature; their socio-economic conditions and political struggle for their rights; love, identity and freedom of African-American women and their rights; and psychological struggle to break away from the harsh memories of the past. These aspects—Harlem Renaissance, Civil Rights Movement, Social and Psychological racial struggle—have much to do with the significant influence of the American socio-economic, political and broader cultural aspects on Afro-American writings, especially the racial lexical

terms used to represent the actual situations of their time and settings of their stories. Another component of the comparable data principle is to limit analysis to N-word choices only from each text. These N-word lexical choices are an important aspect of each author's artistic and linguistic strategies for presenting the theme of race and racial slurs in their works. But lexical aspects are also treated as crucial components of social and cultural representation and literary construction of historical events because of extensive authorial reliance on N-word choices to denote the particular aspects of American society in all the selected texts. Finally, there is a considerable overlap with respect to the N-word racial terms selected for investigation. Every text's use of these terms overlaps and differ in many ways, so that each text is seen within the time of its production or publication and also the settings of their plot within the broader social, cultural and historical settings.

The third principle is to bring reliability to my analysis in the current study by interpreting N-word choices in accordance with / according to the biographical influences of the writer and the prevalent socio-economic conditions of their time. One of the goals of this study is to draw the relationship of language use within a text with broader socio-cultural and political situations of the society in which that text is produced. In other words, the N-word lexical choices of literary texts in relation to the society in which they are written provide foundation for evaluation and interpretation of the literary data. The sources for socio-economic and political situations include African-American literary representation, socio-economic conditions, and political struggle from 1920s till today by leading literary historians Graham and Ward in *The Cambridge History of African American Literature* and Bernard W. Bell in *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition*. These sources are discussed in greater detail in the literature review chapter.

The fourth principle is about the artistic quality of the literary text. Corpus tools and systematic linguistic critique are based on employing systematic means of investigation. In order to apply these tools and approaches for the analysis of literary texts, there is a strong need for tailoring an individual study according to the demands of the text under study. While corpus methods are excellent for linguistic critique, there is also a strong consideration for taking the literary texts as works of art rather than simply as sources of data. The unique quality of a literary text is basic to the lexical

choices count and their interpretation within the context of their production. It is also important to highlight the fact that literary texts are not devalued but used to represent language use and change in accordance with the prevalent socio-political scenarios of the time of their production. As Lisa Cohen Minnick observes, “Artistic success in terms of language use, characterization, or development of theme, for example, is not the inevitable result of strict linguistic accuracy, or authenticity, as some researchers term it, which can in fact raise artistic problems for a literary text. That is, it is possible for a linguistically valid representation to have unintended literary consequences in terms of readability, believability, and aesthetic value” (2004, p. 45). Use of N-word utterances, pre- and post-modifiers to further explain and elaborate the head words, the utterers, the settings, or the contexts within which they occur, for example, could further explain the valuable literary work. A literary author must take into account these concerns, and therefore the researcher and interpreter must take care of these concerns, besides the purpose and the situational context of the text. As Cynthia Bernstein observes, "some inaccuracies reflect prejudice or ignorance on the part of the writer, [but] it is fair to say that accuracy is constrained by the very nature of the creative process. A writer uses dialect to convey a message about character or setting in the very limited space of the text" (1994, p. 340). However, it is also important to note that an artistic representation of different events within a text that communicate certain themes about the socio-political struggle lack “believability” if the writers’ linguistic choices do not suit their characters and fail to achieve the artistic achievement through linguistic representation. Such theoretical positioning requires attention to the lexical choices as one aspect of literary representations of language, especially in relation to the socio-political struggle of the time and the writer’s artistic goals (Minnick, 2004).

Linguists are concerned with the study of language, whereas, sociolinguists study language use in relation to the society it is produced. A text, literary or non-literary, is also a product of a society and bears the marks of social, economic, political and cultural aspects of that society. A literary text is also a thematic and artistic discourse, which not only reflects the imagination of the author but also echoes the prevalent socio-political and cultural aspects of the characters and the settings through the use of language and linguistic choices. A literary text and its thematic and artistic textures also carry some of the biographical and autobiographical features of the writers and their socio-economic conditions within a society they were writing in and the

people they were struggling for. For the literary analyst, the thematic and artistic concerns are of great value but for the linguists the language and language use is of central importance.

The methods for literary-linguistic analysis discussed in this chapter can be of greater importance to linguistic researchers for analyzing corpus-based analysis of language, especially if they are interested in language variation and change, linguistic choices, and other linguistic studies of the literary texts. Additionally, sociolinguists, variationists and pragmatists might be interested in what literary texts offer as rich data for language change, literary language and society relationship, language and culture relationship and the co-text within which a literary text can be interpreted and analyzed. Further, the analysis chapter offers a perspective on how critical reaction to literary language representation and lexical choices can help illustrate attitudes within and outside the text. It also illustrates how different characters are interpreted in terms of their choices and how their use of language is perceived and evaluated based on other socio-political and cultural components.

Literary linguistic and corpus analytic methods and tools have been used to explore the contextualized narratives of literary texts. With the use of these methods and tools, it is also believed that these can help reveal and identify the textual patterns a researcher is interested in. Moreover, in narrative sentences, racial lexico-phrasal patterning plays an important role in shaping the readers' expectations about the theme of race and the writer's linguistic choices. This makes the specificity of a text's lexical choices more relevant to the narrative. Additionally, corpus methods become more helpful when lexical, morphological, and sequential aspect of a text are the focus of interest. Corpus software is used to collect the N-word lexical choices and identify textual patterns, particularly if the genre of text is narrative as change or development can be expected anytime in the situation and contexts could be different for different situations. It helps lay bare the patterns in a language or genre.

In order to conduct corpus-driven analysis, I have applied corpus tools, such as AntConc and LancsBox, which are freely available on the internet. With this selection, I also bear in mind the limitations and problems of some standard tools we use for the analysis. There are four reasons in which corpus-assisted methodology is helpful for sociolinguists. First, both approaches require the collection and analysis of language-

in-use data and emphasize on the social context of its use. Teubert (2005, p.8) points out that "Corpus linguistics looks at language … from a social perspective" (Baker, 2010, p. 8). Second, both make use of quantitative methodologies in order to carry out comparison of different population and differences and similarities in their use of language. Third, both approaches examine variation and change and both consider a wide range of linguistic features (phonetics, morphology, lexis, grammar, discourse and pragmatics). Finally, where possible, both approaches provide explanation of the choices and linguistic patterns.

Generally, a corpus should be large enough to represent what it ought to represent. According to Baker "sampling, balance and representativeness are key theoretical concepts in corpus linguistics" (2010, p. 96). He further argues that usually, a "corpus ought to be representative of a particular language, language variety, or topic, the text within it must be chosen and balanced carefully… So corpora may not contain whole texts, instead utilizing parts of texts" (2010, p. 96). A detailed discussion about corpus linguistics is given in the literature review chapter. AntConc is used to collect N-word instances and its concordances in a tabular form. Besides copying data from AntConc and presenting it in tabular form, the study also includes its screenshots of each novels N-word concordances are presented to support the data. In order to explore a range of collocation statistics, visualize collocation and see how collocations interconnect, GraphColl feature of LancsBox is used.

Three African-American texts of twentieth century are selected for the analysis. Focusing on the objectives of research, this research investigates how the use of N-word linguistic choices by African-American authors performs different functions depending on the context of the N-word utterance. Therefore, for linguistic criticism, corpus linguistics has been used as "an aid to interpretation of literary texts" (Louw, 1997) as quoted in (Baker, 2006, p. 3). Depending on the set of questions, the textual basis of an analysis is a compilation of texts or text fragments in electronic form. As there is no hard rule regarding how large a corpus should be, this study takes three African-American novels electronically stored in the form of *.txt files. *Their Eyes were Watching God* comprises of 62971 words, *Invisible Man* consists of 182034 words, and *The Color Purple* consists of 67698 words.

The reasons and justification for using corpus tools for developing N-word frequency table are many. Dawn Archer, professor of linguistics, advocates for frequency and keyword analysis. She argues, “Frequency and keyword analysis involves the construction of word lists, using automatic computational techniques, which can then be analyzed in a number of ways, depending on one’s interest(s). For example, a researcher might focus on the most frequent lexical items of a number of generated word frequency lists to determine whether all the texts are written by the same author” (Archer, 2009, p. 2).

On the other hand, the researchers “might wish to determine whether the most frequent words of a given text (captured by its word frequency list) are suggestive of potentially meaningful *patterns* that they might have missed had they read the text manually. They might then go on to view the most frequent words in their word frequency list *in context* (using a concordance) as a means of determining their collocates and colligates (i.e. the content and function words with which the most frequent words keep regular company)” (Archer, 2009, p. 2). She further argues, “The researchers who are interested in keyword analysis may also be interested in collocation and/or colligation, but they will compare, initially, the word frequency list of their chosen text (let’s call it text A) as a means of identifying both words that are frequent and also words that are frequent in text A, *statistically speaking*, when compared to text B” (2009, p. 2).

There is persistent controversy among linguists regarding the value of literary text as linguistic evidence. The focus could be different such as, historical linguistic evidence, language use, or language variation. But it is important to consider here that the literary evidence cannot replace other types of linguistic data and evidence. Rather corpus-based linguistic criticism can add new perspective to the analysis by adding depth and dimension to the literary texts. Especially in cases in which other types of evidence are scarce or nonexistent, specific linguistic choices used by literary authors can be of great value. Additionally, it is also important to point that using corpus approach for literary studies can also help in making linguists maybe less skeptical as corpus approach is considered more systematic and mathematical for the analysis if applied even to literary studies.

The following chapter analyzes the texts by sharing the basic methodological and theoretical principles mentioned earlier. Each of the text-analysis begins with the short biographical note of the author and the socio-political situations of the time the text was written besides the settings of the text. Since my primary interest is in the N-word linguistic choices within African-American fiction, there is some commonality among the corpora created for the three texts understudy. From all the three texts N-word choices are collected and presented in the form of tables and charts. These choices are also shown in comparison to each other and their percentages have also been compared. Separate analysis of each text is done in relations to the socio-economic and political situations of the time of their production. Broader cultural aspects and traditions are also brought in focus while critiquing the author's use of N-word phrases by concentrating the head word along with its specifier(s) and complement(s).

3.3 Procedure

Step-I: As the first step, all instances of N-word syntactic structures were collected from the selected text. I have used corpus tool by employing AntConc software to collect all instances of N-words used within the selected text. This is done to minimize the chance of missing any N-word from the text.

Step-II: Second, I have analyzed the whole N-word event and incident in the light of van Dijk's theory of context, i.e. within the context of situation, utterance and culture. I have provided both the co-text and context of the utterance and event where the N-word is used by the characters that populate the text.

Step-III: Finally, I have interpreted the use of N-word choice within the socio-pragmatic and cultural contexts. For this purpose, greater help is taken from the seminal work of Randall Kennedy on the N-word, since he made a great effort to define and interpret the term *nigger* as used within American society and politics for different reasons and purposes. These situations of N-word use/choice were then linked with the choice of the literary characters' use of N-word by placing the event/incident within its social and cultural context and interpreting it under the umbrella/framework of van Dijk's theory of context and Hallidayan concept of systemic functions that language plays by preferring certain linguistic choices over others in order to communicate more realistic and historical narrative.

Step-IV: The analysis chapter is organized in three sections. The first section deals with the African-American literary tradition of 1920s to 1930s focusing on the linguistic critique of N-word choices in Hurston's work *Their Eyes were Watching God* (1937). It begins with a short biography of Zora Neale Hurston precisely focusing on the socio-political and cultural dimensions of that time. Before doing functional analysis of the use of N-word occurrences, the second section talks about *Invisible Man* (1952), seminal work of Ralph Ellison and the writer's age, literary traditions and socio-political background of the time in relation to the work. The final section talks briefly about the socio-political and psychological aspects of the1970s and later in relation to the novel, *The Color Purple* (1982) by Alice Walker. The socio-political, economic and cultural perspectives help in developing the broader cultural context of the text and interpreting the use of N-word within the co-text and context of the utterance. In Graham and Ward's views, "economic, political, and broader cultural and social perspectives on issues like race or gender must be brought to bear in the constructing of any literary history today in a different way than in the past" (2011, p. 1).

CHAPTER 4

LINGUISTIC CRITIQUE OF THE TEXTS

This chapter deals with the linguistic critique of the novels selected for the study. The division of this chapter into three parts is consistent with my intention to present fairly complete linguistic analysis of N-word use in three novels and reflect the development of N-word racial slur and socio-political trends in African-American literature from 1930s to the present. Each part is organized into sections with novels in chronological order. It is to be expected, therefore, that these sections will refer to and discuss writers and texts that appear in the timeline of their coverage. This discussion also allows a certain degree of overlap among the three sections considering it appropriate to relate these authors' use of lexical choices about the "economic, political, and broader cultural and social perspectives" on issues of race especially focusing on the N-word linguistic choice.

4.1 Analysis

In order to carry out linguistic critique of the selected African-American fiction corpus, this section deals with the critical discussion about the use and function of N-word linguistic choices within van Dijk's concept of co-text and context of the N-word utterances. Many forms of corpus-based analysis are based around the concept of frequency. The most basic aspect of frequency analysis simply allows us to derive frequencies of particular words (or phrases or tags), or lists of all the words in a corpus, presented alphabetically or in order of frequency. Table 1 shows the N-word frequency occurrences in the selected African-American Novel corpus. I have also presented their frequency percentages in the Table 2 below. Presenting frequencies as percentages is useful, particularly when making comparisons between multiple corpora especially of different sizes. All selected texts are presented and compared according to the timeline of their publication.

Table 1 shows the total word count and the word count of each novel. The total word tokens of *Their Eyes were Watching God* is 62,971, of *Invisible Man* is 182,034, and of *The Color Purple* is 67,698. The total word count of all the three novels are

312,703 whereas, the overall N-word occurrences in all three novels are 57. The N-word occurrences in *Their Eyes were Watching God* is 31 times, in *Invisible Man* is 16 times, and in *The Color Purple* is 10 times.

Table 1

N-word (nigger) Frequency use in three African-American Novels

Sr. No	**Word List**	**TEWWG**	**IM**	**TCP**
1	**Total Word Count**	62,971	182,034	67,698
2	**N-word Count**	31	16	10

Note: This table demonstrates the frequency count of N-word occurances in three African-American Novels

Table 2 shows the frequency differences in the use of N-word lexical choice in all three novels. Among the selected novels, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is having a high frequency percentage of N-word use which is 0.049%. The table also shows that *Invisible Man* incorporates lowest frequency of N-word which is 0.009%, whereas the frequency of N-word use remains 0.015% in *The Color Purple.* It is also clear from Table 2 that, in terms of N-word frequency, at least there is no great deal of difference between the selected texts. The ordering of fiction's word count in all the columns in the table is identical in order to represent and reflect the frequency differences over the period of time of publication. It is made so in order to see and understand the use of racial word frequency differences over the period of time.

Table 2

N-word frequencies and percentages in three African-American Novels

Sr. No	**Fiction/Novel**	**Year of Publication**	**Total Words**	**N-word *nigger***	**Percentage**
1	*Their Eyes were Watching God*	1937	62,971	31	0.049
2	*Invisible Man*	1952	182,034	16	0.009
3	*The Color Purple*	1982	67,698	10	0.015

	Total Word Tokens		**312,703**	**57**	**0.018**

The N-word linguistic choices in African-American fiction project the theme of race and racial linguistic choice of black Americans during The New Negro, Harlem Renaissance, Civil Rights Movement, and civil war periods. It also reflects the time of the setting of the texts. These linguistic findings demonstrate the link between the lexical choices and the black community and also help in exploring different linguistic patterns which constitute history. Majority of the word choices associated with race reflect the socio-political situations of American life in general and black Americans in particular.

Tables 1 and 2 show the frequency of N-word use in the selected African-American fiction from 1930s till 1980s. It is reflected that the use of N-word drastically deceased in the works of Ralph Ellison in 1952 owing to many reasons. One of the most important reasons is of increased sensitivity among African-American people/writers due to more political nature of struggle for equal rights. Moreover, its use gradually increased in 1980s in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. The reason for the increase of N-word is the use of narrative style and the settings of the fiction, which were set during 1930s. The authors use of language reflects the socio-political and cultural change of their time as well as of the settings. However, the analysis will elaborate on the use and function of N-word utterances by the selected authors in their selected works within the context of utterance, situation and culture. No attempt has been made to differentiate and categorize characters based on who speaks the racial comment/dialogue using N-word choices. Rather, their N-word utterances, have been analyzed and interpreted as if it is simply their own normal speech within the context of situation, culture and reference.

4.2 SECTION-I Use of N-word in *Their Eyes Were Watching God (1937)*

This section deals with the context of the novel, use and functions of each N-word linguistic choice and its contextual discussion in *Their Eyes were Watching God.*

4.2.1 Context of the Novel

The work was written in 1937 by Zora Neale Hurston, who was also influenced by, as Bell argues, the socio-cultural and literary movements of the time. This reflection can be seen in the themes of her works, especially focusing on love, romance storytelling and black women. Bell argues, "In the twentieth century, Zora N. Hurston's rewriting of the sentimental romance celebrates the liberating possibilities of love, storytelling, and autonomy for black women" (Bell, The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition, 1987, p. xv). Zora Neale Hurston wrote against the backdrop of "Harlem renaissance, segregation, and community building". According to Graham and Ward, "Specific ideologies of race became absorbed into an emergent black literature between 1920 and 1960" (2011)

Lisa Cohen Minnick argues, "For all literary authors, it is axiomatic that their linguistic choices create plot, evoke setting, and define character. In Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), the author's linguistic choices are particularly striking, especially in terms of the language and speech production by the characters who people the text" (Minnick, 2004, p. 122). Minnick's definition of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as strikingly linguistic in terms of linguistic choices helps point out to the linguistic criticism—a way to combine linguistic and literary approaches—to analyze the N-word choices and their linguistic and artistic components within the socio-pragmatic context (2004).

Henry Louis Gates Jr. in his book *The Signifying Monkey* describes that "Hurston's text not only cleared a rhetorical space for the narrative strategies" but also that Hurston's text is the first example in our tradition of "the speakerly text" (1988, p. 188). Gates refers to *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as "a text whose rhetorical strategy is designed to represent an oral literary tradition, designed "to emulate the phonetic, grammatical, and lexical pattern of actual speech" (1988, p. 188). In his view, a speakerly text is "a text in which all other structural elements seem to be devalued, as important as they remain to the telling of the tale, because the narrative strategy signals attention to its own importance, an importance which would seem to be the privileging of oral speech and its inherent linguistic features" (1988, p. 188). This also reflects another aspect of Huston's mastery of linguistic choices and their phonological variation depending on the character's background and role within the text. It was also

observed that Huston's setting of all-back-town was a conscious effort to bring the black community in the spotlight. In Hurston's works, Gates Jr. further argues, "Race pride was seen as essential to uplifting the black race—emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, and socially—and accurate and favorable depictions of the folk were seen as essential to establishing a Black Aesthetic" (1988, p. 189).

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, different linguistic choices are used for communicating different themes, create artistic plot, and evoke the historical and cultural background and settings of the narrative. In this approximately 62,971-word novel, certain words appear or recur consistently over the canvas of the narrative to reflect the author's use of linguistic techniques to communicate certain ideas and prefer some over others. It is believed that this has been done keeping in mind the socio-economic and political situations of the characters and their place within the society they belong to and live in. Broader cultural setting of the plot also reflects the key traits of Eatonville community. People sitting in the porches of their houses and shops and discussing about the domestic chores and politics reflect the behaviour of the town people. Black women talking about Janie when she returns to Eatonville after the death of Tea Cake also reflects the social and cultural traditions they were engaged in.

Hurston's literary work – short stories, essays, and fictions center around the themes of identity, love, sex, and freedom of black women, besides focusing on the need for building black community. Her seminal work *Their Eyes were Watching God*, reflects these themes and issues in a different way. In the novel, Janie, a black woman, is struggling in search of freedom and true love and her identity within a "colored town" she lives in and the American society in general. Her use of language and the narrator suits the socio-economic, political and broader cultural aspects of their society they live in and against what they are struggling for. Jennie's linguistic choices, especially "lexical", also reflect her bent of mind and attitude towards the existing social system and society she was brought up in and against what she revolts. The major setting of the novel is a small-town Eatonville. Eatonville, which is a black town established by the free blacks and where Janie spends most of her time as a mistress, also reflects the culture and socio-economic conditions of black folks. The choice of language in accordance with the theme, setting and characters are also reflected through the prevalent use of certain linguistic choices Hurston made during the writing. Hurston

represents the socio-economic conditions and plight of African people within an "all-black town" by referring to "socially, economically, or politically deprived group of people" (Harcourt, 2019).

4.2.2 N-Word Occurrences in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

N-word: nigger*

Frequency: 31

Table 3

N-word (nigger) frequency and concordance in Their Eyes Were Watching God*

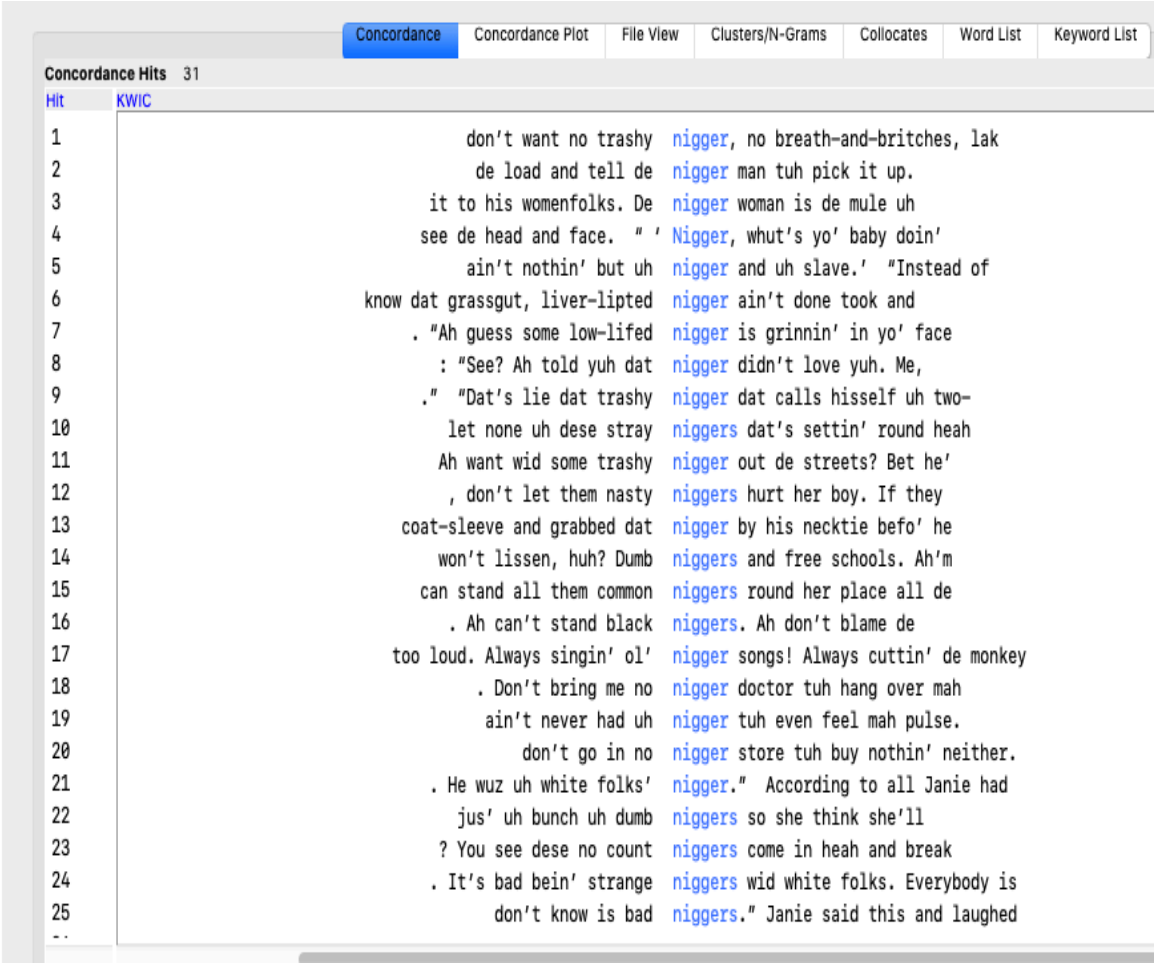
1	for me, honey, Ah don't want no trashy	nigger,	no breath-and-britches, lak Johnny Taylor
2	white man throw down de load and tell de	nigger	man tuh pick it up. He pick it up
3	tote it. He hand it to his womenfolks. De	nigger	woman is de mule uh de world so fur
4	enough for her to see de head and face.	" 'Nigger,	whut's yo' baby doin' wid gray eyes and
5	tuh do, 'cause Ah ain't nothin' but uh	nigger	and uh slave.' "Instead of pacifyin' her l
6	fussin'? Lawd, Ah know dat grassgut, liver-lipted	nigger	ain't done took and beat mah baby already!
7	and half a cry. "Ah guess some low-lifed	nigger	is grinnin' in yo' face and lyin' tuh yuh.
8	Jim: "Twenty yeahs!" Dave: "See? Ah told yuh dat	nigger	didn't love yuh. Me, Ah'll beg de
9	is in mah heart." "Dat's lie dat trashy	nigger	dat calls hisself uh two-headed doctor brou
10	. You know what tuh let none uh dese stray	niggers	dat's settin' round heah git de inside tra
11	him cold. Whut do Ah want wid some trashy	nigger	out de streets? Bet he's livin' wid some

12	her husband! Please, Jesus, don't let them nasty	niggers	hurt her boy. If they do, Master Jesus, gr
13	other arm in mah coat-sleeve and grabbed dat	nigger	by his necktie befo' he could bat his eye
14	on it." "So yuh won't lissen, huh? Dumb	niggers	and free schools. Ah'm gointuh take and te
15	lady like Mis' Woods can stand all them common	niggers	round her place all de time." "They don't
16	'se different from me. Ah can't stand black	niggers.	Ah don't blame de white folks from hatin'
17	much and dey laughs too loud. Always singin' ol'	nigger	songs! Always cuttin' de monkey for white f
18	'? Ah don't know. Don't bring me no	nigger	doctor tuh hang over mah sick-bed. Ah done
19	but dat one—and ain't never had uh	nigger	tuh even feel mah pulse. White doctors alwa
20	gits mah money. Ah don't go in no	nigger	store tuh buy nothin' neither. Colored folk
21	us, dat's whut. He wuz uh white folks'	nigger."	According to all Janie had been taught t
22	She figgers we'se jus' uh bunch uh dumb	niggers	so she think she'll grow horns. But dat'
23	man is you, Turner? You see dese no count	niggers	come in heah and break up mah place! How
24	down dere knows us. It's bad bein' strange	niggers	wid white folks. Everybody is aginst yuh."
25	folks. De ones he don't know is bad	niggers."	Janie said this and laughed and Tea Cake
26	boy. He had been good to that woman. No	nigger	woman ain't never been treated no better.
27	word out of you, out of any of you	niggers	back there, and I'll bind you over to

28	no white man she kin kill jus' as many	niggers	as she please." "Yeah, de nigger women ki
29	jus' as many niggers as she please." "Yeah, de	nigger	women kin kill up all de mens dey wants
30	know whut dey say 'uh white man and uh	nigger	woman is de freest thing on earth.' Dey do
31	thing, but de very first day dat lap-legged	nigger	come back heah makin' out he wuz lookin' fu

N-word concordances in *Their Eyes were Watching God*

Figure 1: N-word concordances in *Their Eyes were Watching God*



Continued…

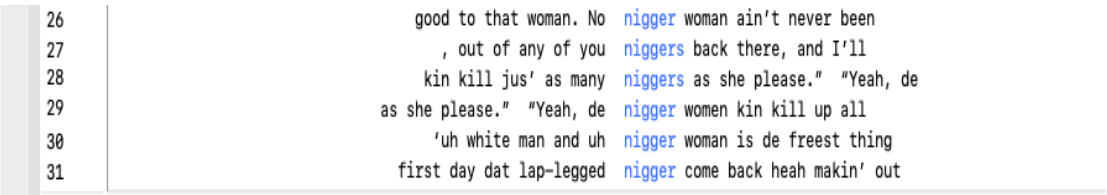


Figure 4.1 N-word concordances in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

4.2.3 Use and Function of N-word in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Utterance 1

> "Whut Ah seen just now is plenty for me, honey, **Ah don't want no trashy nigger**, no breath-and-britches, lak Johnny Taylor usin' yo' body to wipe his foots on." (p.

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black woman (Nanny) to a black woman (Janie) about another black man

Relationship: Grandmother - granddaughter

Setting: Nanny's home

Context: Johnny Taylor is a passerby and stops to see Janie in the garden under a blossom tree. Janie is living with her grandmother. Both come closer to each other and kiss passionately. At the moment, Janie's grandmother sees her granddaughter with a stranger. She shouts at her and calls her inside the house. Both conversate on the incident and during this talk the N-word is used by Nanny for a passerby like Johnny Taylor.

Discussion: After Johnny Taylor and Janie's incident under a blossom tree, Janie's grandmother couldn't stop herself to intervene and teach Janie the lessons of her life. Nanny, Janie's grandmother and a former slave, is presented as a strong and seasoned black lady who reflects the social and historical changes of her time and the lurking danger in any action similar to Jonny Taylor and Janie's being under the tree. Being a black woman slave, she knows her and her granddaughter's position in the white dominated society. She also knows the danger for a young black woman in the

society dominated by free black male's chauvinistic behaviour. Her past compels her to come up with a strong argument by using N-word for any black passerby who tries to indulge in any sort of relationship with Janie, her real beloved child. "Ah don't want no trashy nigger" says Nanny to Janie. The whole context of the situation can be seen and interpreted within the overall context of the text where it appears and who speaks to whom. Nanny utters the N-word to generalize the kind of behavior black men like Johnny Taylor adopt to advance their relationship. She scolds her granddaughter for her trivial action. The anger in the words of Nanny could be seen as a social reflection. She tries to refrain her granddaughter from the prevailing danger and her position in relation to a society where whites dominate and black men exercise more power over black women.

She represents the social and cultural harsh realities of the black women even at the hands of black men. Nanny knows the harsh realities and her use of N-word reflects her strong worldview. However, she did not use the N-word for racial purpose but for a person who has no social and economic position and could be of no worth to society.

The latter half of the sentence reflects the overall context of the use of the N-word. She is in strong love for Janie and is reprimanding her for her social action and lurking danger in being involved in love for a passerby. Her use of the word *trashy* with the head noun *nigger*, refers to any kind of black man who doesn't have any roots and stable family background. For Nanny, any black man like Johnny Taylor, can use any black woman for his momentary pleasure and will bear no responsibility for anything toward her, her child and family. She must stay cautious about these "trashy niggers", who are seeking momentary pleasure.

Nanny has a particular referent in her mind when she uses the referring expression "no trashy nigger" in a generalized way. But towards the end of the clause she compares Johnny Taylor as one of the referents of the referring expression. The overall function of the N-word utterance appears more social and historical than being racial and political. The usual tendency in American society during 1930s seems more similar to the conditions in which Nanny and Janie lived and were living.

Utterances 2 & 3

> "Come to yo' Grandma, honey. Set in her lap lak yo' use tuh. Yo' Nanny wouldn't harm a hair uh yo' head. She don't want nobody else to do it neither if she kin help it. Honey, de white man is de ruler of everything as fur as Ah been able tuh find out. Maybe it's some place way off in de ocean where de black man is in power, but we don't know nothin' but what we see. So de white man throw down de load and tell **de nigger man** tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don't tote it. He hand it to his womenfolks. **De nigger woman** is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see. Ah been prayin' fuh it tuh be different wid you. Lawd, Lawd, Lawd!" (p. 19)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black woman (Nanny) to a black woman (Janie)

Relationship: Grandmother - granddaughter

Setting: Nanny's home

Context: Nanny's love for her granddaughter, Janie, is quite visible in these lines. Nanny is consoling her granddaughter after the pear tree incident. They are talking about the incident of blossom tree. The conversation than turns to Janie's marriage with Killicks who is an old man and hangs around for Janie as he owns sixty acres of land. Sitting together, they both are reflecting on the harsh realities of slavery and racial attitude towards blacks especially for black women. Nanny being an old woman, talks about her experience and lifelong lessons of her life. She tells Janie the bitter realities of black people's life in white America, where only the white man is in power. Throughout her life, what she has been able to find out is that the white man is in power everywhere. It is in this situation she describes the poor, pathetic and dilapidated conditions of blacks and uses N-word as adjective to refer to the general traits of blacks and their socio-economic and political conditions of the time.

Discussion: Use of N-word phrase in the sentence "So de white man throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up" reflects the social and political place of black man in American society. Socially and economically, a black man is subservient to white folks. He works for white people and is considered a slave or a

servant. Using the word 'load" also reflects on the kind of treatment black men used to face at the hands of their masters. In general, the phrase "the black man" collocates with "the white man". Use of the highly racial N-word in the context reflects Hurston's worldviews on the highly sensitive relations of black and white and their social, economic and political positions of the time.

On the other hand, the N-word phrase, "De nigger woman," in the sentence "De nigger woman is de mule uf de world so far as Ah can see," is an extension of the discussion between Nanny and Janie. The phrase is used as an active and definite noun phrase and reflects the social reality of the world to the extent of universal truth. Nanny's view point reflects her age-old experience and the hardships she underwent throughout her life. She knows what it costs to be a woman, and what it takes to be a black woman. She could have used the term "black" with woman but using "nigger" instead reflects the more social and economic conditions of blacks and their role in the American society and history. Comparing a woman with a mule not only shows the type of work usually associated with woman but also the treatment black women face at home, and as their social position.

Explaining the universal truth by reflecting on the social and cultural position of whites (men and women), black men and women show Hurston's command over language and especially the selection of the use of N-word choice. Nanny's N-word utterances used in the above instances reflect the social position and economic conditions of blacks and their relationship with each other. White man is the in-charge or ruler of the world who "throws down the load" and commands the black man "to pick it up". The whole sentence is reflective of the social positions and hierarchal structures both of whites and blacks if seen in van Dijk's concept of context. Moreover, use of N-word as an adjective also adds pragmatic meaning to the text. The N-word choice is reflective of the social position of black men and their relationship with the whites. The hierarchal structure does not stop here, it goes on to another level. In Nanny's words, the black man hands the load to his woman. Here Nanny reflects the treatment black women receive even from their male counterparts of the black origin. She is pointing out to the fact that black women are double marginalized – first by their white masters and then by their own black men. Nanny uses N-word with the head noun "woman" to describe the situation and condition of black woman in the American

society. Being herself a seasoned black woman, Nanny served as a slave servant to a white family. Here use of the N-word is not directed towards anyone present in the context but she is talking to her granddaughter about the harsh realities of black-white dichotomy and the vulnerability of a black woman. Nanny's use of N-word is not directed to any particular referent but reflects her experience in a generalized statement. So, the perlocutionary effect could be sensed from the context of the utterance. It depends on the reader who reads the text from the position he/she is situated.

Utterances 4 & 5

> **'Nigger,** whut's yo' baby doin' wid gray eyes and yaller hair?' She begin tuh slap mah jaws ever which a'way. Ah never felt the fust ones 'cause Ah wuz too busy gittin' de kivver back over mah chile. But dem last lick burnt me lak fire. Ah had too many feelin's tuh tell which one tuh follow so Ah didn't cry and Ah didn't do nothin' else. But then she kept on astin me how come mah baby look white. She asted me dat maybe twenty-five or thirty times, lak she got tuh sayin' dat and couldn't help herself. So Ah told her, 'Ah don't know nothin' but what Ah'm told tuh do, 'cause Ah ain't nothin' but **uh nigger and uh slave.**' (p.23-24)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a white mistress to a black woman (slave) and vice versa

Relationship: Master-slave

Setting: Master's land but slave's home or place

Context: Describing her past experience to her granddaughter, Nanny says that she spent a difficult life during her slave days. Nanny describes her past by talking about Janie's mother and how come she became so loving for her. She gave birth to a child with "grey eyes and yallar hair". This could have made her mistress angry and she visits her to express her feelings about the relationship between her husband and Nanny.

In the utterance, the mistress is inquiring about the child's birth and about her expected father despite the fact that the mistress (the white woman) knows that her

husband could have sex with the black woman slave or raped her to fulfill his lust. She cannot do anything but to take revenge from the black slave woman for the sin she was forced to do. Besides social and economic conditions, there could be other reasons for Nanny's survival, which could have forced her to remain silent to the sins done against her. This is what she later says in the same paragraph that she is "nothin' but uh nigger and uh slave."

Discussion: The N-word used in the above instance reflects the derogatory and racial attitude of the white mistress towards Nanny, a black woman slave. N-word is used by the mistress as an address term for Nanny to ventilate her anger in a highly derogatory and humiliating manner. Out of her sheer hatred, disgust and anger, the mistress addresses the black woman by calling her "Nigger" as if she has done something very bad or committed an irreparable offence that she cannot undo. The mistress is sceptic about the birth of the child and its parentage due to its grey eyes and yellow hairs. Although, it appears from the mistress attitude that she knows that her husband might have had sex with this black slave woman or raped her to satisfy his lustful desire.

Instead of taking name of the black woman, or calling her by any other generic name, she is addressed with N-word as a slur, which is considered highly offensive. Nanny's social position as a slave, her economic condition as a poor and her psychological condition after being raped or giving birth to her master's child are all reflected in the above instance. She seems helpless at that moment and the only thing she could do was to protect her child from the mistress. So she did.

Use of N-word by the white mistress clearly reflects the racial nature of the utterance which Nanny felt and the only reaction she could do to protect her child. She even didn't care for the first slap that her mistress planted on her as she was trying cover her baby.

Nanny believes that black women were being double sinned both by whites and black men and that they were so miserable to change their plight. Nanny's case was no exception either. She was not even allowed to complain or speak aloud against the sins she braved. She gives birth to her white Master's daughter and is forced to remain silent against her will to satisfy the lustful desires of her master.

Nanny's final remarks clearly represent the socio-economic position and conditions of black woman slaves. She would always confide her ordeal in her granddaughter. Once she relayed to her that at one occasion she verbatim told her mistress that she was nothing but what she was asked to be. She was a slave and a nigger. Her final remarks clearly reflect her position as a slave and a nigger, which means she is "nothing". Her use of N-word for her situation reflects the state of mind she was in and by narrating the event to her granddaughter makes her feel the same again.

The word "nigger" used in the fifth utterance communicates a state of helplessness and of nothingness. Nanny's position as "a slave and a nigger" was nothing but an entity against what different sins were committed. The N-words used in the fourth and fifth instance reflect the socio-economic conditions of black and their place in society as a slave and also as a black woman slave who is victimized and marginalized not only by Whites but men of their own race. It further reflects that she cannot protect herself against them and has to submit even her body against her wish and will. These socio-economic conditions of Hurston's time are reflected in the character of Nanny.

The functions of N-word in both instances are different. In the first, it is used as a racial slur, while in the second, it is used to describe the conditions of black woman, especially a slave black woman especially a black woman slave in those times. In the first instance, the N-word is uttered by the mistress for a black slave woman in anger. The perlocutionary effect could be seen in her later comment about blacks and especially about black women and their conditions. In the second instance, the perlocutionary effect could be felt by the reader of the text as Nanny narrates what it costs to be a slave and a nigger.

Utterance 6

> "You and Logan been fussin'? Lawd, Ah know **dat grassgut, liver-lipted nigger** ain't done took and beat mah baby already! Ah'll take a stick and salivate 'im!" (p. 30)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black woman (Nanny) to a black woman (Janie)

Relationship: Grandmother - granddaughter

Setting: Nanny's home

Context: Janie visits her grandmother after a few months of her marriage and remains silent for quite some time. Her grandmother inquires about the situation and reason for her silence. Janie then comes up with a complaint about her husband, Killicks, and his behaviour towards her. Janie's grandmother consoles her and utters the aforementioned words, which reflect not a trace of racism but her artificial anger towards Janie's husband as she knows her granddaughter and her complaining attitude. Janie is not happy with Killicks and demands love and affection from her aged husband than domestic chores and field-work.

Discussion: Nanny's utterance not only shows her anger towards Janie's husband but also her love for her granddaughter. She loves her granddaughter so much that she cannot even listen to any of the complaints about her married life. Moreover, she knows what she has done by getting Janie married to an aged person but consoles herself as she has tried to secure her future. Economic conditions of blacks and their role in America are quite visible from her words and concerns. Nanny is more concerned about the socio-economic conditions of her granddaughter than love that Janie desires. In Nanny's views, social and economic conditions can be improved further by working hard as she did in her life than by simply making love but nothing to eat. It is this reason that she married her beloved granddaughter off to a man who is old enough to be of her father's age. Calling Logan, a "liver-lipted nigger" by a black woman, does not reflect racial drive against him but out of Janie's love she comes up with such a strong word. Her use of negative adjective "liver-lipted", which also reflect the social and economic conditions of blacks, makes the effect of N-word more negative and socially low. It further debases and humiliates the character of Logan. In addition to, using "liver-lipted" adjective with the noun "nigger", Nanny uses another adjective "grassgut" and separates it with a comma from "liver-lipted". This compound adjective contributes to the image of Logan in a more negative and socially devalued way. Logan is a kind of a man who always seems complaining about his social conditions and bowed back. It appears that Nanny is referring to his bowed back as "grassgrut" and his

poor physical health as “liver-lipted” with the social condition of a black man as “nigger”.

Here the N-word functions not as a racial slur but to show anger towards fellow black person of some association. The setting of the utterance is family and during family talk between a grandmother and a granddaughter, there could be a talk on family issues. The N-word is used for a person who is not present at the time of utterance but is associated with one character in a husband relationship. Hence, there could not be any perlocutionary effect on Logan but could be sensed through Janie’s behaviour. Calling Logan as “a liver-lipted nigger” besides other social slur consoles Janie and her inner desire that her grandmother listened to her complaint against Logan. It could also be interpreted that the N-word is seen here as a replacement for any other social slur used just to devalue, demean or humiliate others. So, the function of N-word in this instance is of more social nature than racial.

Utterance 7

> “Don’t you change too many words wid me dis mawnin’, Janie, do Ah’ll take and change ends wid yuh! Heah, Ah just as good as take you out de white folks’ kitchen and set you down on yo’ royal diasticutis and you take and low-rate me! Ah’ll take holt uh dat ax and come in dere and kill yuh! You better dry up in dere! Ah’m too honest and hard-workin’ for anybody in yo’ family, dat’s de reason you don’t want me!” The last sentence was half a sob and half a cry. “Ah guess some **low-lifted nigger** is grinnin’ in yo’ face and lyin’ tuh yuh. God damn yo’ hide!” (p. 42-43)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black man (Logan Killick) to a black woman (Janie)

Relationship: husband-wife

Setting: Logan Killick’s Home and Farm

Context: Logan is talking to his wife in anger. Janie resists working quickly and invites her husband’s anger. Logan is a farmer and needs to do work on time. Being

a conventional farmer and a husband, he gets up early in the morning, ploughs his fields and demands the same from his wife. Being black and free, he knows how hard it is to earn livelihood in those times. He works hard to make his place in the society dominated by white supremacy. He warns his black wife about her place and position in the society. As mentioned earlier in the novel that blacks were marginalized but black women were double marginalized. A black woman's place depends on how hard she works at home and in the field and keeps the things clean and in order besides taking care of her children. Killick expects the same from Janie and demands her active involvement in the house and in the fields.

Discussion: The N-word is used in a family exchange between husband and wife over the matter of domestic chores. Janie doesn't give any heed to Logan commands and does the way she likes. One of the many probable reasons is the age difference between her and her husband. Her husband is of her father's age. Certainly, she had no interest in him and in his land at this stage of her life. She aspires for a life just like the blossom tress incident some years ago. When Janie does not give any heed to what Killick says, Killick gets infuriated and utters the N-word to refer to himself as "a low-lifted nigger" who is crying in face of Janie and speaking lies about his hard work and the talk. In his earlier remark Killick compares himself with any of the family member in Janie's family and says that no one is comparable with him.

Uttering of N-word phrase might have been the reason of Janie's behaviour and can be taken as a perlocutionary remark in response to Janie's probable careless attitude. The N-word functions here to refer to a person who is socially of low value but works hard to make what Logan could manage to do. The N-word phrase "Low-lifted nigger" also refers to a person of no social value and position in society and whose words do not matter, no matter what important stuff he is talking about. Therefore, the N-word is not used as a racial slur but a social slur to refer to a kind of person of very poor or low background.

Utterance 8

David said, "Jim don't love Daisy. He don't love yuh lak Ah do."

Jim bellowed indignantly, “Who don’t love Daisy? Ah know you ain’t talkin’ ’bout me.”

Dave: “Well all right, less prove dis thing right now. We’ll prove right now who love dis gal de best. How much time is you willin’ tuh make fuh Daisy?”

Jim: “Twenty yeahs!”

Dave: “See? Ah told yuh **dat nigger** didn’t love yuh. Me, Ah’ll beg de Judge tuh hang me, and wouldn’t take nothin’ less than life.”

There was a big long laugh from the porch. Then Jim had to demand a test. (p.92)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black man to black man

Relationship: neighbor/friends/porch sitters

Setting: Porch of a store

Context: Daisy is a beautiful black girl. She is a dancer and black men are enticed by her beauty complemented by her dance. All the black boys “acting out their rivalry” for Daisy to impress her. In a social setting some black people are sitting in the porch of a store and talking to each other. This time the point of talk shifts to impress Daisy by the extent of love that black boys have for her. David and Jim are also bragging about their love for Daisy and indulge in a conversation to impress her. Their talk becomes a source of amusement for the listeners. All are taking interest in all what David and Jim have to say in the praise of Daisy.

Discussion: As it is a social setting, both David and Jim’s remarks could be taken as a source of amusement for all spectators sitting at the porch. By acting and performing a play like situation, both are showing their love for Daisy and try to show off their love for materialistic gains. In order to brag about their preferred behaviour and love for Daisy, they are also trying to belittle each other. In this war of words, David comes up with a very strong word for a very trivial situation by calling Jim “dat

nigger". He uses N-word for his fellow black young man for just indicating that Jim doesn't love Daisy as much as he does. He can even sacrifice his life for Daisy. As it is reflected in the morphological construction of the noun phrase "dat nigger" the use of diexis "dat" points towards Jim and N-word use as the head noun "nigger" demean and devalue Jim and his position in from of Daisy.

The impact of this phrase and sentence is reflected in the lines followed where people sitting on the porch laugh to appreciate the validity and impact of Dave's argument. This appreciation is felt by both and they came up with more strong arguments in the lines to follow. Hurston used a highly sensitive word for a very trivial theme. Or there could be different situations where black people can go highly informal and use this word to belittle each other. In the above utterance, the N-word performs a social function than racial. Socially, all are blacks and are together in a public gathering. Uttering of N-word not only devalues Jim but also creates humorous effect for the audience.

Utterance 9

> **Janie:** "Tuh think Ah been wid Jody twenty yeahs and Ah just now got tuh bear de name uh poisonin' him! It's 'bout to kill me, Pheoby. Sorrow dogged by sorrow is in mah heart."
>
> **Pheoby:** "Dat's lie **dat trashy nigger** dat calls hisself uh two-headed doctor brought tuh 'im in order tuh git in wid Jody. He seen he wuz sick—everybody been knowin' dat for de last longest, and den Ah reckon he heard y'all wuz kind of at variance, so dat wuz his chance. Last summer dat multiplied cockroach wuz round heah tryin' tuh sell gophers!" (p.110)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black woman (Janie) to a black woman (Pheoby) about two-headed doctor (who is absent)

Relationship: friendship (Janie and her bosom friend, Pheoby Watson)

Setting: Pheoby's home

Context: Janie and Pheoby are talking to each other about Jody's illness and his behaviour towards Janie. After their fight at the store, Jody is keeping himself aloof from anything Janie does, and anyplace, Janie visits. He does not allow her to interact with him and avoids her to the maximum. "He made new alliances too" and started depending on the root-doctor whom he hated the most. Janie visits her bosom friend, Pheoby Watson, to share her feelings of being ignored by Jody. Janie feels for Jody and wants him to be healthy again. While talking to Pheoby, Janie believes that her feelings are true about Jody and she feels sorry for him.

Discussion: Pheoby tries to explain the kind of two-headed doctor who is trying to make his way to Jody and in extreme anger she calls him "dat trashy nigger". Pheoby knows that Jody doesn't like the doctor. But after Jody and Janie's fight, he is getting very close to Jody and making his way to the house without even interacting with Janie. Pheoby, in extreme anger and disgust, calls him a "trashy nigger". Pheoby's choice of N-word is consistent with her anger and she knows that even for blacks this is a highly offensive word. Use of N-word with highly negative adjective "trashy" not only reflects Pheoby's anger for the doctor but also the type and character of two-headed doctor. The deictic word 'dat' points to the man Pheoby refers as she has a particular referent in her mind. The negative adjective "trashy" further contributes to the menaing of N-word. The referring expression "dat trashy nigger" reflects the intensification in her feelings for the person whom Janie hates the most. Moreover, it also reflects her bond with her friend Janie. Hurston's choice of using N-word with a highly negative adjective suits Phoeby's position and her feelings for her friends. Being her best friend, she is very loyal and sincere to Janie and feels for her.

Moreover, the function of N-word used in the instance above, reflects the social nature of a person of mean nature and no value. The two-headed doctor appears to be an opportunist in case of his growing intimate interaction with Jody, the mayor of the town. He took advantage of Janie and Jody's "variance" in relationship and succeeded to an extent. Knowing his character, Pheoby's choice of N-word for him in addition to the adjective "trashy" clearly justifies her use of N-word for the root doctor. The N-word is used here as a social slur. However, the perlocutionary effect of the N-word phrase could be sensed through Janie's behaviour. After discussing his problem with Pheoby, she feels somewhat satisfied and consoled. During the conversation, the two-

headed doctor is not present but the phrase refers to him by using deictic expression "dat" and the context of utterance.

Utterance 10

> **Ike Green:** "But you will. You'se too young uh 'oman tuh stay single, and you'se too pretty for de mens tuh leave yuh alone. You'se bound tuh marry."
>
> **Janie:** "Ah hope not. Ah mean, at dis present time it don't come befo' me. Joe ain't been dead two months. Ain't got settled down in his grave."
>
> **Ike Green:** "Dat's whut you say now, but two months mo' and you'll sing another tune. Den you want tuh be keerful. Womenfolks is easy taken advantage of. You know what tuh let none uh **dese stray niggers** dat's settin' round heah git de inside track on yuh. They's jes lak uh pack uh hawgs, when dey see uh full trough. Whut yuh needs is uh man dat yuh done lived uhround and know all about tuh sort of manage yo' things fuh yuh and ginerally do round." (p.122)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black man to a black woman about other black men

Relationship: neighbors (Janie's lover or suitors)

Setting: Porch of Janie's store

Context: Ike Green wants to marry Janie after the death of Joe Starks. He knows that Janie is still young, energetic and suitable for him as a wife. He tries to inform Janie about the dangers of being alone as lots of other "stray niggers" want to exploit her for being a widow. Also, the social context of women' life has been communicated directly and indirectly.

After Joe's death, Janie remains single and the sole owner of his house and business. People from different areas are approaching her and offering help in any matter she wants. Actually, she is aware of the fact that all these "well wishers" have eyes on her land and business and are trying to win her attention and consent. Ike Green is also one of those young men who are trying to approach Janie as a next suitable

husband. One day he finds Janie along on the store porch and gets an opportunity to talk to her about marriage.

Discussion: Ike Green picks up the discussion by using social and societal pressure and warns her about other men who are trying to get benefit of her present condition. It could be sensed from Ike's remarks that a woman's place without her man was nothing but a farce in those times. Only a man can provide social and economic protection for a woman being a father or a husband. Being a pretty and single woman means lots of responsibilities and difficulties in performing social and economic duties besides being the part of a community. So, Ike Green exploits that sensitive and weak social and economic aspect to make Janie think about him as the only possible best match. On her regret, Ike Green further comes up with another strong argument by exploiting her of being a woman and how careful she has to be in finding a good match for herself. In his opinion, women are taken advantage of in such a situation in which Janie is, being a widow and a young pretty woman all alone to take care of her home and business. In this situation of hot debate, Ike Green comes up with a very strong and sensitive linguistic choice about other fellow black men by calling them "dese stray niggers". He is trying to get the upper hand by belittling other fellow black men as being opportunist and not true lovers.

The whole sentence goes as "You know what tuh let none uh dese stray niggers dat's settin' round heah git de inside track on yuh." It reflects Ike Green's warning about other fellow blacks to get the advantage of Janie's present situation. The noun phrase "dese stray niggers" shows Ike Green's position that he is trying to establish in front of Janie and that he is not a stray black man and has a family and could be somewhat established in the town. The phrase not only belittles and humiliates other fellow black men but also shows other's social positions and economic conditions too. It can be interpreted from the context that in 1930s, people used to exploit others' social positions and economic conditions to achieve their goals. Ike Green represents the kind of man who used to exploit a woman's position for his secret designs. A woman would be in dire straits if she is alone and especially a widow. Other people around try to get benefit of her situation and exploit it to the maximum. This is what Ike Green is exploiting and trying to make her vigilant about other folks who are trying to "git de inside track" of her.

The function of his phrase is quite evident from the overall context that its bit more of a social nature than of racial or hatred. To strengthen his position before Janie and to belittle other suitors' characters, Ike Green couldn't find a better choice than to use the N-word phrase. He could have come up with some other replacement by using a less sensitive word, but his objective of impressing Janie and to convince her for marriage may have demanded strong use of words even of a very sensitive nature for his fellow black men. This is also reflected from his next sentence where he portrays them as "jes lak uh pack uh hawgs". These are also strong words but not as sensitive as the racial N-word, which is considered highly offensive in American society.

In the phrase "dese stray niggers", the referent is absent from the context but it refers to those black boys who are interested in marrying Janie. The adjective also describes the nature of those "niggers" who have come from somewhere just like stray dogs. No one owns them. Moreover, the N-word is used in the utterance for someone who is not present within the situation, the perlocutionary effect cannot be determined. However, Janie remained unmoved to Ike Green's advances.

Utterance 11

> All next day in the house and store she thought resisting thoughts about Tea Cake. She even ridiculed him in her mind and was a little ashamed of the association. But every hour or two the battle had to be fought all over again. She couldn't make him look just like any other man to her. He looked like the love thoughts of women. He could be a bee to a blossom—a pear tree blossom in the spring. He seemed to be crushing scent out of the world with his footsteps. Crushing aromatic herbs with every step he took. Spices hung about him. He was a glance from God.
>
> So he didn't come that night and she laid in bed and pretended to think scornfully of him. "Bet he's hangin' round some jook or 'nother. Glad Ah treated him cold. Whut do Ah want wid **some trashy nigger** out de streets? Bet he's livin' wid some woman or 'nother and takin' me for uh fool. Glad Ah caught mahself in time." She tried to console herself that way. (p.142)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black female's thoughts about a black male

Relationship: Janie's lover Tea Cake

Setting: Janie at her home

Context: Janie and Tea Cake are in love with each other. Janie is trying hard to make herself realize that he is in true love for her or not as she is almost twelve years older than him. He is a nice black boy, who knows no strings attached to him. After spending almost a considerable portion of night together at Janie's home, Tea Cake left the home leaving Janie to think about him and his behaviour. Janie's thoughts make her sceptic about Tea Cake. Janie is feeling for Tea Cake. Lying in bed, she is thinking about him and his probable absence for so many days. She tries to resist her thoughts for Tea Cake even at work or home but unable to do so.

Discussion: Janie is battling with her thoughts of Tea Cake. She is divided within. At one moment, she starts thinking good about him. But on the other, she casts doubts on his personality and behaviour. The next night she is thinking about her behaviour in a rightful way and justifies her cold behaviour with him. This thought makes her think of more negative feelings for him. In her thoughts, she comes up with a highly sensitive word "nigger" to ventilate her anger over his absence. It seems that she is also in love with him or has a soft corner for him in her heart. The feelings about him for not being there that night, irritates Janie and she scornfully thinks about him and comes up with N-word phrase "some trashy nigger". This noun phrase reflects the use of nonspecific deictic word "some" for referring to the identified object "Tea Cake" who has preoccupied Janie thoughts and their reflection. The adjective used here with the noun "nigger" is also indicative and instrumental to make sense of the sentence within the context in which the phrase has been uttered or thought out. As "trashy" is derived from the noun "trash" which means of no value and a useless thing or object. Here Tea Cake, like any other suitors, has no significance for Janie and seems a momentary impact on Janie for his love for her.

The impact of this sentence is quite evident that Janie is at the height of her anger for Tea Cake and thought of not being there that night also fuel her negative emotions about him. Besides she is trying to catch herself over her thoughts for Tea

Cake, she is trying to justify his absence with strong thoughts about him. The interrogative sentence also questions her behaviour and her sceptic attitude towards Tea Cake. It also reflects her inner state of mind that she is not even sure whether she is thinking right or wrong about him. “Whut do Ah want” reflects her feelings to shed off thoughts of Tea Cake, who has occupied her mind the major portion of that day. The function of N-word phrase “some trashy nigger” seems bit more of social and economic context than racial. Both, Janie’s anger and upsetting behaviour of Tea Cake, make her think about Tea Cake by using N-word phrase. It seems that Janie does not want to pay any attention to the even thoughts of Tea Cake. She refers to him as “some trashy nigger”. Her feelings are combined with love and anger.

Utterance 12

> Janie waited till midnight without worrying, but after that she began to be afraid. So she got up and sat around scared and miserable. Thinking and fearing all sorts of dangers. Wondering at herself as she had many times this week that she was not shocked at Tea Cake’s gambling. It was part of him, so it was all right. She rather found herself angry at imaginary people who might try to criticize. Let the old hypocrites learn to mind their own business, and leave other folks alone. Tea Cake wasn’t doing a bit more harm trying to win hisself a little money than they was always doing with their lying tongues. Tea Cake had more good nature under his toe-nails than they had in their so-called Christian hearts. She better not hear none of them old backbiters talking about her husband! **Please, Jesus, don’t let them nasty niggers hurt her boy**. If they do, Master Jesus, grant her a good gun and a chance to shoot ’em. Tea Cake had a knife it was true, but that was only to protect hisself. God knows, Tea Cake wouldn’t harm a fly. (p.168)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black woman’s thought about some black men

Relationship: Janie’s husband Tea Cake’s gambling competitors

Setting: Tea Cake’s rented home

Context: After spending Janie's two hundred dollars, Tea Cake is planning to get them back to her by winning through gambling. He discloses to Janie that he is a gambler. Janie doesn't react and waits to see what he does with the remaining twelve dollars. The whole week, Tea Cake practices how to throw dice and other gambling tricks by using cards skillfully. He left for gambling after saying goodbye to Janie by cutting nine strands of hair from her head as good luck sign.

Discussion: Janie is left alone at home and she is thinking about the possible situation Tea Cake could be in. After midnight, Janie starts worrying about Tea Cake. She is not willing to accept the fact that Tea Cake could be in a difficult situation. Little bit criticizing so-called hypocrite Christian people, she focuses on her prayers for Tea Cake. It is in her prayers, Janie comes up with N-word phrase by calling all other gamblers as "them nasty niggers". For her, other gamblers are not just niggers but bad and nasty as well. Whereas, Tea Cake is her boy who is too young to deal with such a difficult situation if other gamblers turn against him or harm him in anyway.

The function of this phrase is quite evident from the context that out of sheer love for Tea Cake, Janie comes up with such a strong word for other gamblers even in her prayer addressing Jesus in the same sentence. The use of the word "nigger" could have been replaced with some suitable choice, but the intensity of her love for Tea Cake, leave no choice for Janie to pick any other word except "nigger". It also reflects that use of the word "nigger" is also made as a suitable choice out of love and to consider all other inferior to his/her lover. No slang could have served the purpose as N-word did. When Janie came to know about Tea Cake's gambling habit, she was not shocked and didn't mind. She even goes to the extent that if it gets out of Tea Cake's control, he could have pick up gun and shoot them. She is even thinking to the extent to justify Tea Cake's behaviour of killing other gamblers. It reflects that N-word is uttered more out of love for Tea Cake than hatred for other men. Within the phrase "them nasty niggers" refers to all the probable men could be present at the time of gambling. But there is no specific referent in Janie's mind for the N-word but whoever will hurt her boy would be a "nasty nigger".

Utterance 13

> "Baby, Ah run mah other arm in mah coat-sleeve and grabbed **dat nigger** by his necktie befo' he could bat his eye and then Ah wuz all over 'im jus' lak gravy over rice. He lost his razor tryin' tuh git loose from me. He wuz hollerin' for me tuh turn him loose, but baby, Ah turnt him every way but loose. Ah left him on the doorstep and got here to yuh de quickest way Ah could. Ah know Ah ain't cut too deep 'cause he was too skeered tuh run up on me close enough. Sorta pull de flesh together with stickin' plaster. Ah'll be all right in uh day or so." (p.170)
>
> Janie was painting on iodine and crying.

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black man (Tea Cake) to a black woman (Janie)

Relationship: Husband and wife

Setting: Tea Cake's rented home

Context: Tea Cake is narrating his sad incident of two sharp cuts at his back to Janie. while she is busy painting iodine on the cuts and crying for Tea Cake. After winning the money in gambling, Tea Cake is returning from the bar and approaching the outer door when another looser in the gambling attacks him and tries to grab the money he lost. The Double-Ugly mans cut him twice in the back with his razor but soon Tea Cake overcomes him and grabs him by his necktie. Both Tea Cake and Double-Ugly man fight to knock each other down. Later, Tea Cake survives and manages to escape.

Discussion: In his fight with the Double-Ugly man, Tea Cake is narrating the incident in pain and anger to his wife. After the razor attack on him, when he was in pain and trying to grab the Double-Ugly man by his necktie he calls the man "dat nigger". The context for uttering the same word is best interpreted by realizing the whole situation when Tea Cake is narrating the incident to Janie while laying on his belly in pain and Janie is applying medicine on his cuts. He is trying to show his reaction to Janie how he overcame the situation and got control on the Double-Ugly man. It reflects that N-word use instead of Double-Ugly man here is situation bound. Tea Cake

calls him as Double-Ugly man before the fight begins but during the fight he calls him "dat nigger". This not only shows his reaction to the incident after he receives two sharp cuts from the hands of Double-Ugly man but also, he is in pain and trying hard to recall the actual situation while narrating the event to Janie. The whole sentence goes as "Baby, Ah run mah other arm in mah coat-sleeve and grabbed dat nigger by his necktie befo' he could bat his eye and then Ah wuz all over 'im jus' lak gravy over rice." In this sentence, Tea Cake is able to narrate the whole event and his advantage over the Double-Ugly man. The deictic expression "dat" refers to the particular referent mentioned earlier in the talk as Double-Ugly man. Use of the referring expression as "nigger" refers to the same Double-Ugly man which Tea Cake narrates in the previous sentence.

The overall function of the N-word phrase "dat nigger", as it is perceived from the context, is social. In pain and anger, the possible linguistic choice Tea Cake could use for the Double-Ugly man was "dat nigger", which means to refer to a kind of person of bad and criminal nature and ill will. Moreover, the person addressed as "dat nigger" is not present within the context of utterance and the situation described is a few hours earlier. So, the perlocutionary effect on the person could not be reflected. However, the N-word statement effect could be seen on Janie who is busy in applying iodine on Tea Cake's razor cuts. A few moments earlier in the last N-word utterance Janie herself referred to the people as "nasty niggers".

Utterance 14

> … Ed looked around and saw Gabe standing behind his chair and hollered, "Move, from over me, Gabe! You too black. You draw heat! Sop, you wanta pick up dat bet whilst you got uh chance?" "Naw, man, Ah wish Ah had uh thousand-leg tuh put on it." "So yuh won't lissen, huh? **Dumb niggers and free schools**. Ah'm gointuh take and teach yuh. Ah'll main-line but Ah won't side-track." Ed flipped the next card and Sop fell and lost. Everybody hollered and laughed. Ed laughed and said, "Git off de muck! You ain't nothin'. Dat's all! Hot boilin' water won't help yuh none." Ed kept on laughing because he had been so scared before. "Sop, Bootyny, all y'all dat lemme win yo' money: Ah'm sending it straight off to Sears and Roebuck and buy me some clothes, and when

Ah turn out Christmas day, it would take a doctor to tell me how near Ah is dressed tuh death." (p.181)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black male to a black male

Relationship: Friend/ gambling competitors

Setting: Tea Cake's home in the Everglades

Context: Every night, almost all black men and women used to gather at Tea Cake's home to eat and play dice. Tea Cake's home becomes the focus of entertainment at night. Passers-by would stop there to listen to Tea Cake, while playing guitars. Tea Cake's home becomes the best gambling place where different people come to play, some to see and some to enjoy whatever is going on there. People there knew that everything was for fun and laugh, not to fight and shoot. It is in this situation, Ed Dockery, Bootyny and Sop-de-Bottom throw dice and everyone else is trying to listen to during "a skin game" and enjoying.

Discussion: Ed Dockery looks at Sop-de-Bottom's cards, while Ed was dealing one night. After having an advantage over Sop, Ed tries to take advantage of the situation and persuade Sop to place a bet with him that he would win. Tea Cake intervenes and asks Sop not to place a bet with him. In the meantime, Ed sees Gabe, another black man, standing behind Ed. When Ed tries again to persuade Sop to bet, Sop turns down his offer by using a far-fetched idea of putting his foot on the bet. In this situation Ed comes out more forcefully and refers to him as a "dumb nigger", besides generalizing the situation in the whole sentence in the form of a maxim, *Dumb niggers and free schools*. Ed's comments about Sop are specific as well as general. It is also believed that in those times, blacks were encouraged to attend schools by giving scholarships, distributing free books and waving off the school fee. This also reflects the social positions and economic conditions of blacks in general. But taking advantage of this situation, Ed calls Sop as dumb nigger as if he is not ready to learn and needs a tough lesson to be taught to make him believe the way things are happening in the real world.

The function of the N-word collocating with "dumb" is apparent from the context: it is not used in a general way but for a single person. Moreover, it is used as a plural to generalize the effects of the meaning and the context. The statement is made to refer to Sop but it is made in a stereotypical way to refer to all black people who attended free schools. Certainly, Ed Dockery did not use this word in a racial context but the maxim like statement reflects its use to a general group of black people. Use of the word "nigger" is bit more social in a social context while in a social gathering. A black man using racial word for another black man while generalizing the whole context is quite significant.

The adjective used with the word "niggers" is also performing a specific function of not just classifying or adding more meaning but further devaluing the already negative noun "nigger". It is made to incite the hearer to get in a bet. The perlocutionary effect of the statement could be seen from the events that follow as Sop is tempted to the bet. But this could also be interpreted that Sop could have accepted the offer to remove the N-word tag and that he is not "dumb". But he lost the game and all people laughed at him. The N-word phrase moved him to accept the bet to prove Ed wrong. In addition, the N-word is used as a stereotypical statement in social context. But this could also be interpreted that the N-word maxim statement could have been the result of racial slur statement earlier used both by blacks and whites.

Utterance 15

> "Mis' Woods, Ah have often said to mah husband, Ah don't see how uh lady like Mis' Woods can stand **all them common niggers** round her place all de time." (p.187)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black woman to a black woman

Relationship: neighbours in Everglade

Setting: Janie's home in Everglade

Context: Janie and Mrs. Turner are visiting friends. Mrs. Turner visits Janie's home quite often. She is "a milky sort of a woman" and is of a mixed race. She is quite unhappy about blacks and their company. Being a milky woman, she is quite conscious about her race and appearance. She tries to behave like whites, whiter than the whites themselves. She observes Janie and her house being the center of all activities for black folks and Janie serving them all and laughing with them. She can forgive Janie for her appearance but forgiving her for "marrying a man as dark as Tea Cake" was not possible. So, she tried to persuade Janie to break away from Tea Cake and marry her brother. In this situation, Mrs. Turner comes up with the above argument and calls all black folks as "all them common niggers". She cannot stand by all the black niggers and expects the same form Janie.

Discussion: Being of the mixed-race origin, Mrs. Turner is more white in her attitude than white folks themselves. She says to Miss Woods, about her being very close to all black folks at home and talk and laugh with them in a carefree manner. Mrs. Turner starts the argument by referring to her husband with whom she talks about Janie and Janie's company. Thinking about Janie, Mrs. Turner comes up with the racial terms by referring to all black folks as "them common niggers", including Janie's third husband Tea Cake. The overall meaning of the sentence gives more smell of hatred and race then social and economic. Tea Cake's home was the center of all activity during the muck season for all black folks at night and a gambling place to spend the time somewhat purposefully. From the sentence, "Ah don't see how uh lady like Mis' Woods can stand **all them common niggers** round her place all de time", the phrase "I don't see" refers to Mrs. Turner's inability to understand the phenomenon or logic behind "a coffee-and-cream complexion" woman, Janie. Mrs. Turner is full of white in her flesh and blood. Her whiteness is quite visible in her racial argument using a very racial linguistic choice. Moreover, she wants to see Janie like her. But quite unlike her, Janie loves to laugh and listen to all black folks present at her home. The phrase "all the time" shows consistency in Janie's behaviour and attitude towards all black folks that Mrs. Turner does not like and takes it as a surprise. The racial phrase "them common niggers" shows black English vernacular expression for referring to a group of less important or not important black people. Moreover, the adjective "common" has been used with already negative word "nigger" to show the impact of Mrs. Turner's attitude as if she

herself belongs to a group of "important niggers" for the reason of being mixed raced and milky complexion.

It is quite apparent from the context of situation and culture that the nature and function of N-word remarks in the above utterance is not social but racial. Besides the reasons mentioned above, the most important reason behind Mrs. Turner's N-word remark is her milky complexion and her inability to digest the phenomenon how Janie having coffee-and-cream complexion can mix up with all "them common niggers".

Utterances 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 & 21

> **"**You'se different from me. (16) **Ah can't stand black niggers**. Ah don't blame de white folks from hatin' 'em 'cause Ah can't stand 'em mahself. 'Nother thing, Ah hates tuh see folks lak me and you mixed up wid 'em. Us oughta class off."
>
> "Us can't do it. We'se uh mingled people and all of us got black kinfolks as well as yaller kinfolks. How come you so against black?"
>
> "And dey makes me tired. Always laughin'! Dey laughs too much and dey laughs too loud. (17) **Always singin' ol' nigger songs**! Always cuttin' de monkey for white folks. If it wuzn't for so many black folks it wouldn't be no race problem. De white folks would take us in wid dem. De black ones is holdin' us back."
>
> "You reckon? 'course Ah ain't never thought about it too much. But Ah don't figger dey even gointuh want us for comp'ny. We'se too poor."
>
> " 'Tain't de poorness, it's de color and de features. Who want any lil ole black baby layin' up in de baby buggy lookin' lak uh fly in buttermilk? Who wants to be mixed up wid uh rusty black man, and uh black woman goin' down de street in all dem loud colors, and whoopin' and hollerin' and laughin' over nothin'? Ah don't know. (18) **Don't bring me no nigger doctor tuh hang over mah sick-bed.** Ah done had six chillun—wuzn't lucky enough tuh raise but dat one—and (19) **ain't never had uh nigger tuh even feel mah pulse**. White doctors always gits mah money. (20) **Ah don't go in no nigger store tuh buy**

nothin' neither. Colored folks don't know nothin' 'bout no business. Deliver me!" (pp.188-189)

"He didn't do nothin' but hold us back—talkin' 'bout work when de race ain't never done nothin' else. He wuz uh enemy tuh us, dat's whut. (21) **He wuz uh white folks' nigger.**" (p.191)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a mulatto woman (Mrs. Turner) to a black woman (Janie)

Relationship: neighbours in Everglade

Setting: Janie's home in Everglade

Context: Mrs Turner at Janie's home is talking too loud about her thoughts for black folks. She does not like Janie's attitude with other black folks. She is quite different from Janie and does not like black folks hanging around her home unlike Janie. She wants Janie to feel the responsibility to "lighten up de race".

Discussion: The sentence "Ah can't stand black niggers" reflects Mrs. Turner's attitude and approach towards other black folks. She considers herself "class off" and acts like other white folks who do not want to get themselves mingled up with black folks. She is acting too racial in her words and gestures. Her choice of linguistic expression "Ah can't stand black niggers", not only shows her verbal hatred but also reflects her feelings and attitude towards black folks. Using "black" as an adjective with highly racial N-word reflects her view that only "blacks" could be "niggers" but not mulatto like her. Her milky skin becomes the core source of her prejudice and racial attitude towards other black folks for "class off".

The word "black" has been used as an adjective with a highly racial noun word "nigger". The elements of hatred are reflected in the first half of the sentence "Ah can't stand". It shows Mrs Turner's inability to bear even the presence of black folks. She could have made a linguistic choice of "folk" instead of "nigger" to make her statement less racial. But the use of N-word choice instead of "black" reflects her inner state of mind and emotions.

Mrs. Turner then talks about other common black folks' characteristics and the reasons why she dislikes them so much. Besides talking about black folks behaviour, she comes up with another reason and argument that they are usually associated with nigger songs. She says, "Always singin' ol' nigger songs!" In the words of Mrs. Turner singing old "nigger songs" makes her hate black folks. In her view, all black folks should behave like more of white folks to earn respect and position in society.

Here the actual understanding of Mrs. Turner is not that they sing songs but they sing "ol'nigger songs!", which is unbearable for her. Here the word "nigger" has been used as an adjective of head noun "songs". Songs have different genres and forms, such as classical songs, rock songs, etc. but singing "old nigger song" undermines the overall culture of black people and people of African origin. Black folks are known for their folk culture and folk music, which is being denied here by Mrs. Turner's remark. It is as if white people are not as against black people and culture, as black themselves. People of their own race do not want to see their fellow beings to excel in different fields. They are the most severe critics of their own culture by undermining it when comparing it with white culture. The argument is that black people have their own language and culture and ways of living and thinking, but when looked at it through white prism if compared it with white culture, then one culture looks secondary to the other one. Mrs. Turner tries to justify whites' behaviour with black folks by criticizing black people and their resistance for not being white in their behaviour and attitude.

Janie then tries to balance the situation and argues that it is poorness that matters for whites. Mrs. Turner denies the fact that it is not poorness that does not let black and white people go together but "it's de color and de features". But at the same time, she argues about her own behaviour against black and comes up with very strong and taboo word "nigger" again and again. Her attitude towards black folks is reflected in her talk when she does not even want a 'nigger doctor" to examine her for her sickness. She further argues that she didn't let any "nigger" to feel her pulse. She paid money only to white doctors for her diagnosis and treatment there after. Mrs. Turner's remarks show not only her attitude towards blacks but general attitude of the people belonging to mixed race and whites. In the eighteenth N-word utterance instance, the word "nigger is used as an adjective with the head word "doctor". It is as if we use a gender specific doctor when we use the word "lady doctor'" by separating both. Here race specific

modifier has been used to identify the race of the doctor. But this could have been done by referring them as "black" instead of "nigger". The word "nigger" here not only reflects Mrs. Turner's hatred but also race conscious attitude against the people of their own race. Moreover, the use of N-word serves the function it intends to communicate. Besides communicating about race specific doctor, the N-word also adds social and racial meaning to the utterance by making the doctor low grade and less expert as compared to the white doctor.

In the nineteenth instance of the N-word, Mrs. Turner uses it generically to refer to the pervious N-word instance as a "nigger doctor". Here the N-word "nigger" is being used as a noun whereas the modifier could be understood from the context of the previous sentence where she refers to a black doctor as "no nigger doctor". The whole sentence "…ain't never had uh nigger tuh even feel mah pulse" reflects Mrs. Turner's attitude within the overall context of the argument. The last phrase of the sentence clarifies the meaning of "uh nigger" that it is not just a common noun but a specific one and is referring to not just any nigger but a nigger doctor. Moreover, not even allowing a black person to feel her pulse reflects her racial attitude based more on the color and appearance than of origin. Her repeated focus on her appearance in the form thin lips and pointed nose, and of her brother's appearance in the form of having straight hairs is reflective of her reaped struggle for class off.

The twentieth instance of the N-word is used within the same context as a modifier to refer to a kind of store owned and run by a black man. The expression "no nigger store" refers to any store owned and run by any black person. Mrs. Turner's reason for not visiting any such store is quite apparent from the previous context that she hates to mix-up with blacks and tries to behave like whites. The major reason for such behaviour is her skin color and more white features. The arguments for not visiting black stores come in the lines to follow.

This also shows and reflects the overall attitude of the black people and their ways of dealing with customer and doing business. In Mrs. Turner's words, black people do not know how to do business and behave being a store organizer. The whole sentence reflects her attitude towards blacks and her feelings of being superior to black people. Her argument "Ah don't go in no nigger store tuh buy nothin' neither" reflects the general attitude of people of her appearance. But Janie feels quite different and

never even thinks in such a way. In the phrase “no nigger store” the N-word is used as a modifier to the head noun “store”. But this referring expression does not refer to any particular store run by a black person. The utterer does not have a specific referent in her mind by the referring expression “no nigger store”.

Mrs. Turner is conscious of her race and features. It’s her white-like features that do not let her come out of the superiority complex over other black people. She thinks that she is a “class off”. In the twentieth utterance, the N-word use could be taken as a reaction for her being ignored by the whites. So, she has to stay with people of her own race – black. Also, she does not want to be identified as a black and, like whites, does not want to mix-up with black people. But she cannot do anything to avoid this situation except living with them. Her frustration is reflected in the repeated use of N-word in her speech. She hates black people so much that she could not control her use of N-word linguistic choices for them. It seems quite apparent from the social context of the whole argument that the N-word not only has negative connotations but elements of hatred and anger to the extent of being highly offensive and thus also have social significance of being a taboo word.

In the twenty-first instance of the N-word use, Mrs. Turner is shifting the direction of her argument towards her brother intentionally. The reason for her intention is to offer Janie a good match if she is not married to Tea Cake. In the wake of her argument and anger of not being included in a different class than the other black people, she presents her brother as a severe critic of Booker T. Washington. Janie tries to present Booker T. as “a great big man” that Mrs. Turner does not like. Mrs. Turner presents Booker T.’s character as a slave working for whites and doing all the herculean tasks to please his masters. It reflects Mrs. Turner’s anger for being not included in a separate race as she says that Booker T. was the one who held them back. In her view, Booker talked more about work but did nothing to uplift the race. In Mrs. Turner’s words, he “was uh enemy” to them. In the height of her argument, she comes up with a highly racial word “nigger” for Booker T. in the following words “He wuz uh white folks’ nigger.” Referring to Booker T. as a “white folks’ nigger” reflects her approach towards other fellow black folks or people of her own race. Here the N-word is used as a noun but in a possessive case. Instead of phrasing her structure as “a nigger of white folks”, she comes up with a possessive case – “uh white folks’ nigger”, which also

functions as more close association with whites. The N-word is already negative and using it with the white folks in a possessive case also makes it more negative as it does not only carry its own trait features but also supplementing it with more negative traits of white folks. This highly racial talk in anger and disgust also places Mrs. Turner's character and purpose in the limelight.

The overall function of Mrs. Turner's whole argument is more racial than social. Her use of N-word linguistic choices and their contextual meanings are quite apparent in the social settings for the home and town where people have nothing more to do but to earn livelihood and talk. Certainly, they have to pick up topics of their own choices and use language accordingly in relation to the race, class, age, gender and social settings. Mrs. Turner's age, gender and arguments suits to the class and race of her own people.

Her use of N-word linguistic choices such as "common niggers", "ol nigger songs", "no nigger doctor", "uh nigger", "no nigger store" and "uh white folks' nigger" clearly reflects her state of mind and her hatred and anger towards other fellow black people. She represents a class that does not exist and she wants it to exist so she can exist. Within a single setting, she uses six N-words in a series and other racial remarks about black folks. The use and functions of these words by Mrs. Turner are reflective of the kind of people she is and their general attitude towards fellow black people in an effort to get "class off". The character of Mrs. Turner is best understood and interpreted in the words of Tea Cake when he is talking to Janie about Mrs. Turner. He says "Her look lak uh white woman! Wid dat meriny skin and hair jus' as close tuh her head as ninety-nine is tuh uh hundred!"

Looking at Mrs. Turner's racial views through a linguistic lens yields interesting results. Mrs. Turner produces only about 750 words of direct speech in the novel. But even within this relatively small sample, her frequency of six N-word uses are significant. All of the six N-words are used as a racial slur and function racially to communicate Mrs. Turner's behaviour towards the people of her community. Later, it is this community, which finally rejects her for her overt racism. It is also reflected from Mrs. Turner's speech. For her, class is more important with subtle shades of skin than social inequality with wealth and influence.

Utterance 22

> "Sop, Ah don't think it's half de money as it is de looks. She's color-struck. She ain't got de kind of uh mind you meet every day. She ain't a fact and neither do she make a good story when you tell about her."
>
> "Ah yeah, she's too smart tuh stay round heah. She figgers we'se jus' **uh bunch uh dumb niggers** so she think she'll grow horns. But dat's uh lie. She'll die butt-headed." (p.198)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black man (Sop-de-Bottom) to a black man (Tea Cake)

Relationship: Friends

Setting: Tea Cake's home or the fields

Context: In the fields, Tea Cake hits Janie many times in front of other people working in the fields to show that he is the boss. The strong reason or logic behind this beating is to let Mrs. Turner know about the strong relationship between Tea Cake and Janie, which she wants to spoil by baiting Janie for her brother. Mrs Turner believed that Janie would be a good match for her brother. Tea Cake became reactive over Mrs. Turner's brother's introduction speech and whip Janie many times in the same week. After the incident, Tea Cake and his friend Sop-de-Bottom are discussing the whipping incident and Tea Cake clarifies his position and intention of beating Janie. Sop-de-Bottom is praising Janie for her being calm and Tea Cake being so lucky to have Janie as his wife. The whole discussion then shifts towards Mrs. Turner's attitude and behaviour towards Tea Cake, Janie and other black folks living in the town besides her being so racial and race conscious to exclude herself from the rest of the black town.

Discussion: The phrase "uh bunch uh dumb niggers" is uttered by Sop-de-Bottom as a reaction to Tea Cake's argument about Mrs. Turner's attitude towards other black folks. He is quite angry at Mrs. Turner's attitude and behaviour and tries to teach her a lesson. In the wake of his anger, Sop utters the N-word phrase to refer to his fellow

black folks and himself through Mrs. Turner's meta perspective. This meta-perspective and other aspects of Tea Cake's talk trigger him and he utters the N-word.

In the wake of his anger, Sop loudly words Mrs Turner's thoughts towards other fellow black folks by using N-word, which gives strong feelings of Sop and the kind of lady Mrs Turner is. Mrs. Turner considers herself "too smart" and a "class off". The N-word phrase uttered by Sop reflects the general understanding of black folks about Mrs. Turner and what she thinks about them. Sop utters N-word phrase as Mrs. Turner's thought who considers herself "too smart". In the words of Sop, the N-word utterance goes as "She figgers we'se jus' **uh bunch uh dumb niggers".** The deictic pronoun "she" refers to Mrs. Turner and her trains of thoughts in the words of Sop and what she considers and thinks of other black folks. The plural second person pronoun "we'se" refers to the whole black folks in the town including Sop and Tea Cake. "uh bunch" refers of a group of people and things usually associated with similar characteristics which is "uh dumb niggers". Both "dumb" and "niggers" are used as qualifiers to qualify the whole group – "a bunch of".

The N-word phrase "a bunch of dumb niggers" reflects Sop-de-Bottom's inner state of mind and his anger towards Mrs. Turners. The undercurrent/implied meaning of this phrase can also be understood by the remark itself. It is apparent that the N-word is used for black people of very low origin or parentage, besides having very poor social and economic conditions. In addition, it also refers to a group of black people of having bad character and negative attitude with no sign of whiteness. Moreover, N-word is also used as an insulting term among black people for their fellow black folks and they feel it because they know its negative implications. Adding a further negative qualifier with the already negative term makes the N-word phrase effect more negative and insulting.

Based on the N-word use and its effects, the later half of the phrase also contributes to the meaning of N-word in more detail. By saying "… so she think she'll grow horns" because of other black folks being "dumb niggers" is what Sop questions and tries to defends his position, besides defending other black folks' feelings and self-esteem. It can be interpreted that Mrs. Turner will grow enmity with other black folks by considering others as "**uh bunch uh dumb niggers".**

In experiential meaning, the N-word is used as a phenomenon or value as if Mrs. Turner is describing a state of affairs. At interpersonal level, the N-word functions as a complement. In addition, the N-word also functions as rheme at the thematic level as everything is said about "uh bunch of dumb niggers", which serves as a rheme.

The overall function of the N-word is quite clear. In the twenty-second utterance, it is used to refer to a group of black people of low race, social class, poverty and low characters who can do nothing but watch and suffer. Had here been another choice of words, the function of the whole phrase could have been different. All being blacks and talking about black folks in a social context, the N-word serves the most appropriate purpose for the idea under discussion and social attitude.

Utterance 23

> "What kinda man is you, Turner? You see **dese no count niggers** come in heah and break up mah place! How kin you set and see yo' wife all trompled on? You ain't no kinda man at all. You seen dat Tea Cake shove me down! Yes you did! You ain't raised yo' hand tuh do nothin' about it." (p.203)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black woman (Mrs. Turner) to a black man (Mr. Turner) about other black folks

Relationship: wife-husband

Setting: Mrs. Turner's home

Context: A group of drunken black people storms into Mrs. Turner's home on one Saturday night. It seems that they did it with design to teach Mrs. Turner a lesson —not to mess with other black folks on the muck. After storming into the house, they started eating whatever was ready for the dinner. Coodemay and Sterrett started eating while standing up, all drunken and wild. They all were messing up things over there to tease and teach Mrs. Turner a lesson as she thinks too high about herself and her race. Coodemay tried to sit and tried to make Sop standup from his seat by spilling coffee over him. Sop in turn threw a saucer at him but it hit Bootyny. Bootyny then retaliated

by throwing coffee over Coodemay. All this was happening when Mrs. Turner entered the room and was shocked to see the situation and condition of her house. In the meantime, Tea Cake caught Coodemay by his collar and tried to settle down the situation in the presence of Mrs. Turner. But Sterrett took Coodemay's side and asked Tea Cake to let Coodemay loose. As a result, the situation worsened and there became two sides and they started to topple over each other anything they saw. Mrs. Turner's house became a scene of war and almost everything was broken. On Mrs. Turner's request, Tea Cake let loose Coodemay and after sometime they depart leaving Mrs. Turner in anger and shock.

Discussion: Mrs. Turner's anger and shock makes her speak out loud about her feelings towards the black folks who broke everything in her house. She is addressing her husband and complaining about his inactiveness towards all black folks who created mess in her house. Her racial sentence goes as, "You see **dese no count niggers** come in heah and break up mah place!" It is quite apparent from Mrs. Turner's talk that she hates all black people, especially the ones who made a mess out of her house. She calls them "no count niggers". The N-word itself is highly racial and negative. But she adds a negative compound adjective "no count" to further ventilate her anger towards other black folks. The adjective "no count" adds further meaning to the head word "nigger". Here, she means to refer to all those black people who broke almost everything in her house. She does not care at all for them and nobody cares also. She is very angry at both her husband for not doing anything to prevent the loss and the loss that she faced after the other drunken black people's visit.

The N-word is uttered in anger and disgust and its function is highly racial. As Mrs. Turner feels herself quite white and different from the rest of other black folks due to her brown skin color. She considers herself superior to them. Her attitude towards other fellow black folks is more of racial nature than of hatred.

Mrs. Turner's comment could also be interpreted in the light of her character and her talk with Janie. As she is color struck and thinks too high for herself because of her mixed race, she does not consider any other black folk. Due to this nature, other black folks planned to tease her. Mrs. Turner's N-word remarks "no count niggers" clearly reflects her and others positions. She considers other black folks as if they do not exist or do not matter if they do.

Utterances 24 & 25

> "Yeah, Ah know, Janie, but it couldn't never be lak it 'tis heah. In de first place dey been bringin' bodies outa dere all day so it can't be but so many mo' tuh find. And then again it never wuz as many dere as it wuz heah. And then too, Janie, de white folks down dere knows us. **It's bad bein' strange niggers wid white folks.** Everybody is aginst yuh."
>
> "Dat sho is de truth. De ones de white man know is nice colored folks. **De ones he don't know is bad niggers."** Janie said this and laughed and Tea Cake laughed with her. (p.229)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black man (Tea Cake) to a black woman (Janie) and vice versa

Relationship: husband-wife

Setting: Home in Palm Beach

Context: Both Janie and Tea Cake after struggling for their life in the hurricane reached Palm Beach and took shelter someone's house. Both are dead tired and do not know where to go and what to do. Tea Cake, after being bored for three days, couldn't resist himself for going out and was caught by the two white men with rifle. They were hunting black people to bury the dead bodies spread all around the fields. Tea Cake started to flee but was caught by the white men. He started helping the people who were digging and burying up the dead bodies. They were asked to dig two ditches, one for whites and the other for blacks to bury them separately. After quite some time, all the blacks were asked not to bury the whites in the ditch. The government has decided to provide coffins for them but not for coloreds. Tea Cake reacts to this situation as if God doesn't know about Jim Crow law. But after some time, thoughts of Janie disturb him and Tea Cake succeeds in fleeing from the place to meet Janie. Both Tea Cake and Janie then talk about their plan to go back to Glades but Janie resists and considers it a foolish idea.

Discussion: In discussion with Janie, Tea Cake argues that they should go down to Glades to start over again as they know the people and place there. He is of the view that even white people know them there and would not react to them as hard and in a racist way as they are here. It is this situation and context in which Tea Cake utters the N-word. In his view, it is really bad for any colored person for being unknown to the white people in an unknown area. He believes that they might take them for nothing and be always sceptic about their behaviour and attitudes. In the sentence "**It's bad bein' strange niggers wid white folks",** Tea Cake is quite direct in his argument about white people's treatment as he is a colored man and faces the segregated and racial attitudes at the hands of whites. This sentence gives the almost overall feelings of universal truth about racism particularly in the United States**.** The phrase "being strange niggers" refers to a general aspect of racial treatment in the United States. Besides other things, the utterance also reflects that blacks were not treated equally and the whites were more sceptic about any black person they do not know and "it's bad". Tea Cake does not have a particular referent in mind when he utters the N-word but he is referring to all blacks of common or low origin and unknown identity. Tea Cake's following statement concludes his point of view when he says "Everybody is aginst yuh."

In the twenty-fifth instance, the N-word is used within the same context when Janie says "**De ones he don't know is bad niggers."** Janie's statement comes soon after Tea Cake's argument. The use of the third person pronoun "he" refers to the anaphoric reference for the "de white man" mentioned in Tea Cake's statement. After accepting and acknowledging Tea Cake's statement as a truth, Janie refers to the white men's attitude towards the known colored folks as "nice colored folks", but the one's they don't know are "bad niggers". This reflects the overall attitude of the whites in the United States in those times. Mentioning of the word "bad niggers" is not only racial but social and political as well.

If we combine both Tea Cake and Janie's arguments in the context in which they are uttered then it would go as "being strange niggers are bad niggers". It would sure serve the actual purpose of the arguments between the two. Janie and Tea Cake's laugh at the end is also significant as both are trying to justify their decision for going back to the muck and start all over again, besides accepting the hard truth of their life and existence in the society. Use of the linguistic choice "nigger" in both instances is

significant in relation to the attitudes' of the white men and their usual treatment and attitude towards black people.

This, in fact, also reflects black people's unconscious acceptance of the use of the word "nigger" for them. They are conscious about the sensitive nature of N-word and its pejorative meaning and use it for drawing attention towards the fact how white people think about them. It is also evident from the utterances that they are also aware of the taboo word used for their fellow black people of low parentage and economically poor background, but unconsciously accept it that white people think the same about them. Within the context of the utterance, the N-words are used to refer to the racial and social distance between the two races. At interpersonal level, the N-word is used as a complement for the ones' white men don't know. At textual level, it is serving as the rheme of the N-word utterance. The N-words aptly server the purpose of their use in the context they are spoken by the characters keeping the situation of both Tea Cake and Janie. The actual pragmatic meaning is more social and racial than economic or political.

Utterance 26

> So it was all ready after a while and they wanted people to talk so that they could know what was right to do about Janie Woods, the relic of Tea Cake's Janie. The white part of the room got calmer the more serious it got, but a tongue storm struck the Negroes like wind among palm trees. They talked all of a sudden and all together like a choir and the top parts of their bodies moved on the rhythm of it. They sent word by the bailiff to Mr. Prescott they wanted to testify in the case. Tea Cake was a good boy. He had been good to that woman. **No nigger woman ain't never been treated no better.** Naw suh! He worked like a dog for her and nearly killed himself saving her in the storm, then soon as he got a little fever from the water, she had took up with another man. Sent for him to come there from way off. Hanging was too good. All they wanted was a chance to testify. The bailiff went up and the sheriff and the judge, and the police chief, and the lawyers all came together to listen for a few minutes, then they parted again and the sheriff took the stand and told how Janie had come to his house with the doctor and how he found things when he drove out to hers. (p.249)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: Black people

Relationship: black people gathered in the courtroom and share the same skin and thoughts

Setting: Courtroom

Context: After killing Tea Cake for he being out of control after the stray dog's bite, Janie was in the court and facing her trial in the presence of almost the whole town. Both white and black people were there to listen to the court's decision about Janie. Janie was thinking about the judge and the twelve white men who were there to listen to Janie's case though they knew nothing about her and Tea Cake. White women also came to listen to Janie's case and the court's judgment. All the white men and women were seated in the front rows whereas, all the colored people were "standing up in the back of the courtroom". Almost all of them were talking against Janie and pelting her with their "dirty thoughts". In Janie's thought the tongue was the "only killing tool they are allowed to use in the presence of white folks". The jury and the white men were quiet to let other black folks talk so that they could know their thoughts about Janie and take the decision. "They sent word by the bailiff to Mr. Prescott they wanted to testify in the case." It is this context and situation in which the N-word is used to communicate other black people's thoughts about Janie.

Discussion: Discussing Tea Cake's treatment with Janie, the N-word used in the utterance refers to all black women in general. In the views of colored people, Tea Cake had been very good to Janie to the extent that "No nigger woman ain't never been treated no better." The whole sentence reflects other black people's thoughts and their approach to see and analyze the couple's life. In their thoughts and understanding, black people think that Janie had been treated so well in such a way that no other black woman had been treated. The N-word statement is uttered within the co-text of Tea Cakes. The co-text of the situation reflects that people were speaking high of Tea Cake and his treatment with Janie. In their views, Tea Cake was a good boy and very good to Janie. He worked like a dog and saved her from the terrible flood. The N-word statement comes within this context. All were talking very high of Tea Cake and the N-word

statement comes among those comments to heighten the effects of both of the characters – how was Tea Cake in his behavior and what end he met at the hands of Janie.

It is obvious from the context that the use of N-word is more social than racial. All the black people listening to Janie's case listen to the N-word in a generalized social sense than racial. It is used as an adjective with the head noun "woman" to refer to all women in general who are black and men's treatment towards them. They are all-praise for Tea Cake's treatment of his wife, making it synonymous with that of a lover. Indirectly, they are approving the just treatment of Tea Cake with Janie and condemning her for her act of killing Tea Cake. In the eyes of colored people, Janie's killing of Tea Cake is not at all justified at any cost. The thoughts of the black folks were with Tea Cake not because he was their town fellow, but also because he was the center of all activity and was their friend too.

Use of the word "nigger" also reflects the mindset of the colored folks who use the word. There could have been a substitute in the form of "no black woman" instead of "no nigger woman" but the use of the word "nigger" reflects black people's anger towards Janie who killed their friend and a black folk. The social use of the word "nigger" instead of racial or disgust is more out of hatred and anger. The court situation is well jam-packed and both white and black people are there to listen to the decision of white jury set for Janie's fate. Use of the word "Negroes" for all blacks by Hurston also reflects Hurston's thoughts towards other blacks who fail to understand love and feelings of Tea Cake and Janie. Hurston uses the image of Negroes' "tongue storm" with that of "wind among palm trees."

The function of N-word is more of a comparative nature than racial. Within the social setting of the court, Tea Cake and Janie's love story, Tea Cake's treatment towards Janie, and the act of killing him by Janie help build up this context for the use of N-word for Janie. Had there been some other alternative or lexical choice, the effects of the utterance could have been different. Using N-word as an adjective with the head word translates black folks' feelings. The phrase "no nigger woman" is used as a goal, subject of the sentence and theme at experiential, interpersonal and textual level respectively. Moreover, the perlocutionary effect couldn't be determined for the person the N-word is used but it helps create an environment for heated discussion among other

black folks about Janie. This is manifest in the comments by one of the black folks who goes on to the extent of hanging Janie. “Hanging was too good”, s/he said.

Utterance 27

> “Yassuh, Mr. Prescott.”
>
> “We are handling this case. Another word out of you, out of **any of you niggers** back there, and I’ll bind you over to the big court.”
>
> “Yassuh.” (p.250)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a white man to common black men and women listening to Janie’s case

Relationship: Mr. Prescott (State Lawyer) and the black audience but specially to Sop-de-Bottom (Tea Cake’s friend)

Setting: Courtroom

Context: The whole town is listening to Janie’s case in the courtroom. Whites are seated in the front rows, whereas “all of the colored people standing up in the back of the courtroom”. Janie is thinking about what other black people are thinking about her. She thinks that “they” know nothing about her situation and love for Tea Cake but are here to listen and discuss about her. Their interest is not in what she has done and for what but what she gets as punishment.

Janie’s case proceeds and the jury is listening to both the doctor Mr. Simmons and the State’s lawyer Mr. Prescott. Dr. Simmons tells the jury about Tea Cake’s sickness and the danger for Janie and the whole town for him being in that situation. He further tells the court about Janie’s concerned attitude and love for Tea Cake. And finally, he says that he saw Janie “sitting on the floor and patting Tea Cake’s head when he got there.” All of his arguments are in favour of Janie and are justifying her act of killing Tea Cake out of necessity.

On the other hand, Mr. Prescott leaves no stone unturned to make the jury believe that Janie is the sole culprit and must be hanged for what she did to her husband. Having no further evidence to present, Mr. Prescott concludes with the phrase "The State rests." After this, the black people start talking to each other in the louder voice. In the meantime, Sop-de-Bottom spore out anonymously to take permission from Mr. Prescott to speak before the court. This put the whole court and courtroom in silence and Mr. Prescott coldly refuses him to speak before the court. And then addressed all the black folks in more racial tone than anger and disgust and utters the highly racial word for them.

Discussion: The N-word is used by a white man who is presenting the case of Tea Cake's murder on behalf of the States. He is serving as a state lawyer and seems to have the sense of superiority over other black men and women to present the case and also to maintain the order in the courtroom. But the responsibility of maintaining order in the house is of the court, not his. Use of the N-word sentence "Another word out of you, out of any of you niggers back there, and I'll bind you over to the big court" not only shows his disgusted and angry racial attitude but also reflects his sense of superiority over others especially the black folks. Using the phrase "any of you niggers" refers to all the colored folks standing at the back of the courtroom. Use of the sentence, "We are handling this case" reflects that no one else is needed for any talk and comment. It reflects that they are in full command to decide the case of Janie on the presumption that they are the best to discuss and decide it. Use of the phrase "and I'll bind you over to the big court" shows the threatening tone of Mr. Prescott. His words are giving a strong smell of racism and superiority rather than merely telling them not to talk. He addresses them using the N-word in a more direct and racial way. He is directly addressing them as "nigger" and not using any other less pejorative linguistic choice (or a euphemistic term) to pacify the situation avoiding the direct confrontation. The racial treatment is also reflected through the event that follows when a white woman makes "a little applause" over the act of Mr. Prescott to justify both his act and talk.

The function of N-word is clearly racial. It is used as a direct term to address all black people standing at the back of the court, already an unprivileged position. It is uttered by a white man directly attacking the people of less privileged race and rights.

The white man represents the government which is also significant in the sense that he publicly speaks the N-word. Using N-word in a private conversation could have different connotative and denotative meanings but using it in the court in front of whites, blacks, and the jury, reflects the open treatment met by all blacks as well as their position and socio-economic conditions of the time.

Utterances 28, 29 & 30

> "She didn't kill no white man, did she? Well, long as she don't shoot no white man she kin kill jus' **as many niggers** as she please."
>
> "Yeah, **de nigger women** kin kill up all de mens dey wants tuh, but you bet' not kill one uh dem. De white folks will sho hang yuh if yuh do."
>
> "Well, you know whut dey say 'uh white man and **uh nigger woman** is de freest thing on earth.' Dey do as dey please." (p.253)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a group of black men

Relationship: same skin and thoughts

Setting: Boarding house

Context: After the court's decision in favour of Janie, she became the talk of the town. Everyone was discussing her case but was unable to understand her and her feelings towards Tea Cake. The Court termed Janie's action "entirely accidental and justifiable". All the black people in the court were eager to listen to what the jury says against Janie but when the decision comes out, some of the black men and women get disappointed, terming the decision racist on the grounds that it is just because of Janie's parentage and her color of skin and hair. She looks more close to whites than blacks. For them, her interracial birth becomes the source of her acquittal form the murder of her black husband. Different people give different views. For others, it is a concession handed over to Janie for her color and the reason that she didn't kill any white. Had there been any white, the decision could have been against Janie for whatever reason

behind the murder. During this short conversation, the N-word is uttered three times by different characters.

Discussion: The unknown people/speakers are discussing about Janie's case in the court and court's decision. When one of the men says that white men will "do nothin' tuh no woman dat look lak her", he is referring to the decision in favour of Janie. Picking up the same thought, the other man replied using the racial linguistic choice "as many niggers" in comparison to the white man's killing. The use of the racial linguistic choice is quite apparent from the context in which they are uttered. Racism being the most havoc ghost, was seen differently by both whites and blacks. The social context in which Hurston was writing was full of racial prejudice and segregated behaviour. Colored people were treated differently and this mistreatment was quite common in America during 1930s. For many colored people, the jury's decision in favour of Janie's reflects the same approach. For them, Janie looks different and it is the sole reason for her acquittal from the case. As long as she does not kill any white, she can kill "as many niggers as she please." The elements of racial treatment are quite apparent in the argument and to justify his or her view point.

Here in the twenty-eighth instance, the use of "as many niggers" refers to any of the black men for killing. In this N-word referring expression, there is no particular referent in his/her mind (as many nigger) but of black color. The twenty-ninth instance, "de nigger women", is gender specific and refers to all black women who can kill anybody but white. There seems a particular referent (Janie) in the mind of the speaker due to the case but the statement reflects no particular referent. The statement is uttered in almost a generalized way. The circumstances of the utterance show that it is a definite noun phrase using definite article "de". Moreover, in their view, the whites will react to the killing of a white, no matter whatever the reason is. In the thirtieth N-word utterance, the utterer generalizes the whole argument and says by quoting someone else as "uh white man and uh nigger woman is de freest thing on earth." Probably, s/he wants to heighten the generalized effects of the statement by using N-word with "woman". This also reflects the social situations of the time where only black woman of mixed race could be compared with whites. In other black people's opinion, Janie's mixed-race position makes her "a class off" from the rest, a statement used by Mrs. Turner in her discussion with Janie about the skin color. But from the linguistic context

of the utterance, it can be interpreted that both the noun phrases are indefinite (uh white man, ah nigger woman) and there is no particular referent in the mind of the speaker, but reflect the socio-political and historical conditions of the time in a more truthful and generalized way.

Utterance 31

> "Naw, Ah ain't mad wid Janie," Sop went around explaining. "Tea Cake had done gone crazy. You can't blame her for puhtectin' herself. She wuz crazy 'bout 'im. Look at de way she put him away. Ah ain't got anything in mah heart aginst her. And Ah never woulda thought uh thing, but de very first day **dat lap-legged nigger** come back heah makin' out he wuz lookin' fuh work, he come astin' me 'bout how wuz Mr. and Mrs. Woods makin' out. Dat goes tuh show yuh he wuz up tuh somethin'." (p.255)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black man (Sop) to other black men (friends, neighbours) about a black man (Mrs. Turner's brother)

Relationship: neighbours

Setting: Social gathering in the town

Context: After the death of Tea Cake, Janie's trial and acquittal, and Tea Cake's burial ceremony, all other Tea Cake's friends are sitting and discussing the event and probable motive behind the killing. They were hostile towards Janie for killing Tea Cake. The reasons behind this hostility was the love and respect that they had for Tea Cake. This made them believe that Janie was the real culprit to destroy their feelings and game. But after listening to the Jury's decision of Janie's acquittal and seeing her love for Tea Cake and the way she performed Tea Cake's funeral, made them realize about their mistake and now they want Janie to forget their hostile feelings towards her. Now their attention diverts to the probable propositions behind the strains in the relationship between Janie and Tea Cake. They recall that Mrs. Turner's brother was back in the muck and asked about Mr. and Mrs. Woods. They communicated it to Tea Cake and the real purpose behind Mrs. Turner's brother's visit. This news made Tea

Cake mad and he became sceptic about Janie and Mrs. Turner's brother. It is in this situation, Sop utters the N-word for Mrs. Turner's brother.

Discussion: Tea Cake's friends are discussing the sad event of his death and possible reasons behind Tea Cake's murder. Now, in order to pacify the feelings of hatred towards Janie, they are discussing the role of Mrs. Turner's brother and his possible intention behind the visit. It is in this situation that out of extreme anger Sop-de-Bottom utters a slur on Mrs. Turner's brother. He says that "And Ah never woulda thought uh thing, but de very first day **dat lap-legged nigger** come back heah makin' out he wuz lookin' fuh work, he come astin' me 'bout how wuz Mr. and Mrs. Woods makin' out." Sop's purpose to use the N-word is reflected from the whole linguistic context of the utterance. Using deixis "dat", adjective "lap-legged" for further adding negative meaning and his deformed posture with highly racial choice "nigger", refers to Mrs. Turner's brother out of disgust and anger. Sop has a particular referent in his mind when he utters the definite noun phrase. The utterance might be taken as a perlocutionary effect of Tea Cake's killing event. This makes Sop's argument and use of racial linguistic choice valid and justifiable. Use of the racial linguistic choice is also justifiable in the background circumstances of the events, which happen from Tea Cake's killing till his burial. In addition, the function of the N-word's use is more of social nature than of racial but reflects the mean and malicious nature of Mrs. Turner's brother.

4.3 SECTION-II Use of N-word in *Invisible Man (1952)*

This section deals with the context of the novel, use of each N-word linguistic choice and its contextual discussion in *Invisible Man.*

4.3.1 Context of the Novel

Ralph Ellison wrote *Invisible Man* in 1952, at a time when the socio-political struggle had taken strong roots within American culture. Black authors started getting their voices heard through literature, speech and dialogue, and by holding forceful demonstrations. During the mid-forties, a strong forceful political struggle had taken

its roots within the mainstream American society to gain freedom and rights from the hands of supremacist indoctrinate system of white society. It was the time when black struggle was at its peak and was of more physical and political nature. Black people were actively involved in the physical struggle and were demanding their rights by holding demonstrations in major cities of the United States. It was the time when literary movement had taken its strong roots within the American society and socio-political struggle started to attain economic independence from the whites. These aspects could be seen in the works of Ellison especially in *Invisible Man*. The black boy who was searching for his identity and livelihood joins one of the most popular and active organizations of brotherhood, which was fighting for the rights of blacks. He became the best orator and spokesperson to convince and motivate black audience. On the other hand, Ras the Exhorter also represents another form of struggle. He believed that the only way to get rid of white domination is to fight back instead of becoming good in their eyes. The language of the protagonist and others also reflect the socio-political roles and situations of the time and the kind of struggle they were involved in. Linguistic choices by different characters also reflect the nature and role they play within a narrative. In short, *Invisible Man* focusses on the psychological and cultural life of black Americans "so intimately and thoroughly" that no other American writer could do so in their works.

Graham and Ward argue that two decades from 1950 till 1970 saw many significant changes in the socio-political scenarios in general and African-American situations in particular: the fifties brought "hopefulness of integration", whereas the sixties resonated for "the death of US capitalism" (2011). It was until then "little attention had been given to solving the nation's most pressing social and economic problems" (2011). During these decades, riots erupted in the major American cities after the deaths of a host of leaders – John Kennedy, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr. – which generated complete unrest and major socio-political and ethnic problems. In their words:

> It is not insignificant that the two decades seemed to be diametrically opposed to one another: the fifties bringing about the hopefulness of integration within the USA, the sixties calling for the death of US capitalism. Whatever ideological orientation one takes, until then, little

> attention had been given to solving the nation's most pressing social and economic problems. (Graham & Ward, 2011, p. 12)

Writing in this scenario was an uphill task and directly affected some of the major writers of those times. They incorporated themes of political struggle, racism and identity in their works and picked up linguistic choices, consciously or unconsciously, reflecting the socio-political scenario, and broader cultural and literary traditions. Ralph Ellison was no exception. He was an active member of black movements both literary and political. His careful selection of themes, language and linguistic choices are reflected in his major works, especially in *Invisible Man*. He also used N-word linguistic choices to communicate and reflect the actual social situation, cultural norms, characters' relations and their purpose or intensions for using it. There are total sixteen N-word instances in the novel. Following is the list of sixteen N-word instances and their immediate co-texts.

4.3.2 N-Word occurrences in *Invisible Man*

N-word: nigger*

Frequency: 16

Table 4

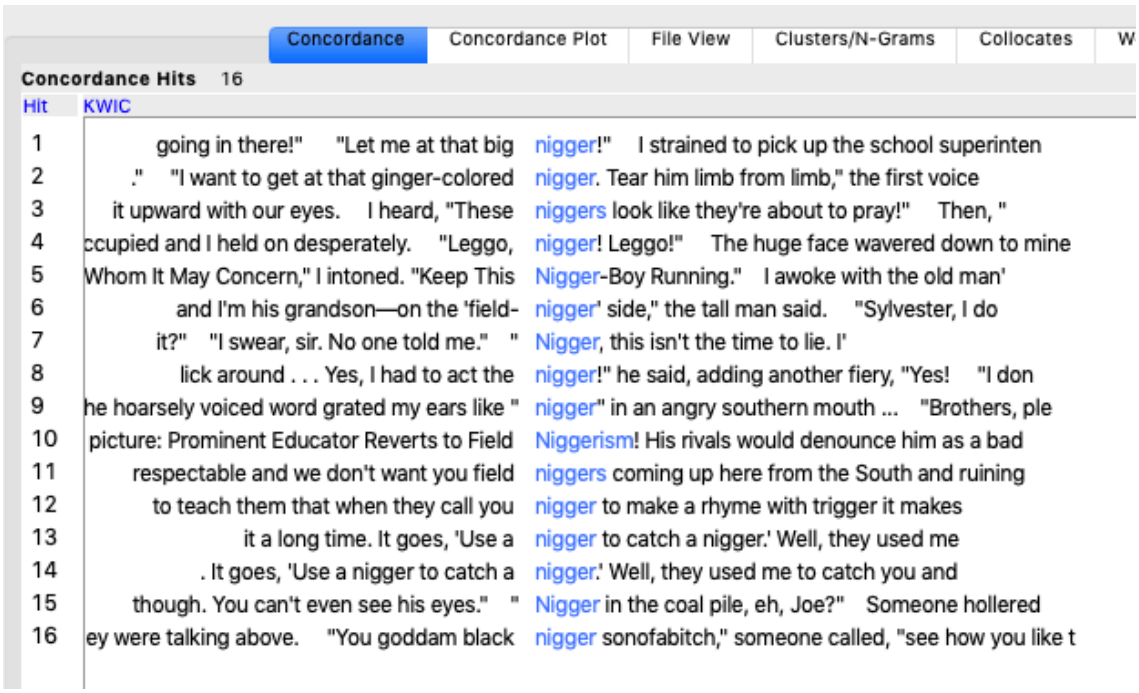
N-word frequency and concordance in Invisible Man

1	in there!" "Let me at that big	nigger!"	I strained to pick up the school
2	want to get at that ginger-colored	nigger.	Tear him limb from limb," the first
3	upward with our eyes. I heard, "These	niggers	look like they're about to pray!"
4	occupied and I held on desperately. "Leggo,	nigger!	Leggo!" The huge face wavered down to
5	It May Concern," I intoned. "Keep This	Nigger	-Boy Running." I awoke with the old

6	I'm his grandson—on the 'field-	nigger'	side," the tall man said. "Sylvester,
7	?" "I swear, sir. No one told me."	"Nigger,	this isn't the time to lie.
8	around . . . Yes, I had to act the	nigger!"	he said, adding another fiery, "Yes!
9	hoarsely voiced word grated my ears like	"nigger"	in an angry southern mouth ... "Brother
10	his picture: Prominent Educator Reverts to Field	Niggerism!	His rivals would denounce him as a
11	and we don't want you field	niggers	coming up here from the South and
12	teach them that when they call you	nigger	to make a rhyme with trigger it
13	a long time. It goes, 'Use a	nigger	to catch a nigger.' Well, they used
14	goes, 'Use a nigger to catch a	nigger.'	Well, they used me to catch you
15	. You can't even see his eyes."	"Nigger	in the coal pile, eh, Joe?" Someone
16	. They were talking above. "You goddam black	nigger	sonofabitch," someone called, "see how you

N-word Concordances in *Invisible Man*

Figure 2: N-word concordances in *Invisible Man*



4.3.3 Use and Function of N-word in *Invisible Man*

This section presents the linguistic critique of N-word choice in *Invisible Man*. There are sixteen N-word occurrences in the novel. The use and function of all N-word utterances are different depending on the co-text and context of its use. It is quite interesting that all sixteen N-word instances fall under different categories of use.

Utterances 1 & 2

"Let me at **that big nigger**!"

I strained to pick up the school superintendent's voice, as though to squeeze some security out of that slightly more familiar sound.

"Let me at those black sonsabitches!" someone yelled.

"No, Jackson, no!" another voice yelled. "Here, somebody, help me hold Jack."

"I want to get at **that ginger-colored nigger.** Tear him limb from limb," the first voice yelled. (p.21)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a group of white people about a group of black boys

Relationship: unknown (White-black color / master-slave relationship)

Setting: in the main ballroom of a hotel

Context: All the black school boys are gathered in a large hall for "battle royal" to be fought first "as part of the entertainment" and to win the prize. The narrator is conscious of his appearance visualizing himself as "a potential Booker T. Washington". Moreover, he is different from rest of the other black schoolmates for they have "no grandfather curse worrying their minds" to disturb them as he has. In the presence of "the town's big shots", they first watched dance of a naked white girl before going for battle royal. All the black boys were ordered to get into the ring and were "blindfolded with broad bands of white cloth." They were also encouraged to fight with each other and kick them as hard as they could. The narrator, a black boy, was not used to blindness and was trying hard to remember the speech he wanted to deliver in front of the white audience. Blindfolded, he listened to the voices of the whites who were yelling for the battle royal to begin. And it is in this situation, he listened to the N-words uttered for them by the whites. They (whites) were struggling to get on the black boys and beat them to death.

Discussion: One of the unknown white men gathered at the ballroom was yelling to fight and kill one of the black boys present in the ring for battle royal. In anger and disgust, he uttered the N-word in a highly racial way by saying "Let me at that big nigger!" By using the highly racial word in a highly racial tone, he appeared to have wanted to get hold of the black boy and beat him to death. Use of the didactic words "me" and "that" take their meanings from the context and make the referring expression clear about the referents physical position. The utterer has a particular referent in mind when he utters the deictic word "that" who can be identified while being in the situation of the utterance of the referring expressing. But from the overall context the referent is a particular black boy present there at the time of battle royal. Moreover, the adjective "big" also helps in understanding the referent's physical stature and that he is a "nigger" referred to a black boy.

The use of phrase “that big nigger” also reflects that he also wanted to brag about his power over the black boy by using the adjective “big” for that “nigger” and that he can overpower that big nigger. Use of the word “nigger” as a noun underlines white man’s racial tone and anger for blacks and even for young black boys who were apparently not involved in any political struggle. Also, the word “schoolmates” suggests that the young black boys were struggling for their future to study in a school. But they were called to the dance party to entertain the white gentry of the town.

The second instance of the N-word comes just after a few lines from the first instance in the same situation. One of the white men yells, “Let me at those black sonsabitches!” and soon after, the other second one’s utterance in response is “No, Jackson, no!”, which reveals the identity of the first man. Jackson then went on to pass another harsh and abusive comment about the black boy he wants to get on. He further says, “I want to get at that ginger-colored nigger.” Here, again the utterer has a particular referent in mind and uses the two deictic words to refer to himself with the first-person singular pronoun “I” and to the particular black boy he is pointing towards with “that”. Moreover, the adjective “ginger-colored” also adds meaning to the head noun “nigger”.

Use of the highly racial word “nigger” for one of the black boys further reflects the white man’s racial attitude and treatment towards blacks. His next sentence supplements his racist behaviour when he says, “Tear him limb from limb.” Tearing limb from limb a black school boy, who is there to fight battle royal to entertain the whites and do nothing simply reflects the white man’s attitude and treatment towards blacks. It shows that even the presence or sight of blacks disturbs whites’ ego and their sense of superiority.

Both N-words are uttered in a highly neutral situation in the sense that both blacks and whites have done nothing wrong to each other. The setting of the event is also important and reflective of the socio-political situation of the time, blacks’ position and place in the society and the treatment blacks get from the hands of whites. Schools boys are being asked to provide entertainment for them during whites’ smoke party at “a leading hotel” ballroom. Use of the highly racial word is quite significant here as it lays bare the unusual treatment of blacks and disgrace in the hands of whites for no other apparent reason except the color of skin and social position. Race and social

position of a black person makes him/her more vulnerable to the inhuman treatment and injustices in the hand of whites in those days. The function of N-words in the utterance is also significant here. N-words clearly identify the social and economic differences among whites and blacks. Moreover, Ellison's use of N-words speaks of the social position of the whites and the situation of blacks within the American society of the time.

Utterance 3

> As told, we got around the square rug on our knees. Slowly the man raised his freckled hand as we followed it upward with our eyes.
>
> I heard, "**These niggers** look like they're about to pray!"
>
> Then, "Ready," the man said. "Go!" (p.26)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a white man to another white man about a group of black boys

Relationship: unknown but could be colleagues or friends or big wigs of the town

Setting: in the main ballroom of a hotel

Context: After the fight, all the black boys are asked to gather around an electrified carpet and participate in a game for the reward of their presence. All the boys are ready and are asked to sit on their knees. The narrator of the story relates, "As told, we got around the square rug on our knees". The phrase "As told" is significant as it reflects the position of the people by focusing who is the master and in-charge of the situation. The utterance in which N-word is used comes from the mouth of the narrator as he overhears one of the white men talking to another white man as "These niggers look like they're about to pray!"

Discussion: The N-word used in the utterance reflects the social and political situation and position of black boys within a dominated situation. The utterance is significant at two levels. First, it addresses the black boys with a derogatory term "nigger", which devalues and humiliates them in front of themselves. Second, it makes

fun of their religious activities, which is the only hope for them to get rid of racial discrimination in the contemporary American society. Both racial hatred and religious gestures are used together to demean the black boys and their religious activities.

Moreover, so far as the function of the N-word in the utterance is concerned, it is used to communicate the socially deprived group of people from even their basic rights of being humans. The N-word phrase “these nigger” refers to the group of black boys who are asked to gather around the electrified carpet to amuse the white gentry. The deictic word “these” refers to the black boys and shows their position where the white men are in complete power. “These” also points to the fact that they are in control of the black boys and enjoying a comfortable position in the specific situation in which the statement is spoken. If we also go back to the time of the text, we realize that the social and political condition of blacks in the context are in accordance with the social and political environment of the time where whites were the masters and blacks were the slaves, and slaves were treated inhumanly. Use of such expression by Ellison seems parallel with the socio-political and economic condition of the time.

Utterance 4

> "Get the money," the M.C. called. "That's good hard American cash!"
>
> And we snatched and grabbed, snatched and grabbed. I was careful not to come too close to the rug now, and when I felt the hot whiskey breath descend upon me like a cloud of foul air I reached out and grabbed the leg of a chair. It was occupied and I held on desperately.
>
> **"Leggo, nigger! Leggo!"** (p.28)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a white man to a black boy

Relationship: unknown

Setting: in the main ballroom of a hotel

Context: The black boys were asked to kneel down around an electrified rug for some "good hard American cash" as a reward. The coins were scattered all over the rug and the black boys were asked to jump to pick up coins using "ready" and "go" command as if their behaviour was in control of whites to amuse the whites. All the black boys were picking up the gold coins as a reward for entertaining white gentry but were shocked to get electrified. "The rug was electrified." All the black boys got electrified while picking up the "hard American cash". As they started moving away from the rug, the men yelled at them to pick up the coins. For their entertainment, the men started pushing the black boys onto the rug again. The black boys managed to slip out of their hands courtesy their sweat and slippery body. A boy, however, was lifted by a group of white men and thrown over the electrified rug. His helpless plight on the electrified rug amused the white men. When the boy finally rolled off, "he ran from the floor amid booming laughter". Now, the narrator, received the attention of the white men by trying not to get too close to the rug. He grabbed the leg of an occupied chair desperately. It is in this situation when a white man used N-word for him in a more commanding way.

Discussion: The white man tried to get hold of the black boy (the narrator) who grabbed the leg of an occupied chair desperately. The white man uttered the N-word in a commanding way to address the black boy. His tone can be sensed from the overall context of the situation. He utters "Leggo, nigger! Leggo!" He was drunk and this could be visible from the word "Leggo" which could actually be uttered as "Let it go" or "let's go". The N-word "nigger" refers to the black boy who is now a source of entertainment for whites. The whites even feel amused by teasing the black boys to the extent of violating their basic rights of being humans. The referring expression "nigger" is used as a noun here to address the black boy as a referent. The use of exclamation mark with the word "nigger" also reflects the command a white man is giving to the socially, politically, and ethnically deprived black boy. These boys are only the subject of ridicule for the whites against their will.

Here, the function of the use of N-word is to address the black boy who does not match the position and place white men enjoy. Although the undercurrent use of the term is racial but it appears more social and is based on race and class distinction.

Utterance 5

"Read it," my grandfather said. "Out loud."

"To Whom It May Concern," I intoned. **"Keep This Nigger-Boy Running."**

I awoke with the old man's laughter ringing in my ears. (p.33)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black man (grandfather) to a black boy (the narrator)

Relationship: Grandfather –grandson relationship

Setting: In a circus in the dream of the black boy

Context: The black boy after delivering a great speech in the ballroom in front of the city's big wigs, received prize in the form of a calfskin briefcase and a scholarship of the state college for Negroes inside that briefcase. He was very excited and left the place in extreme joy to share the success with his family. The boy then felt safe from his grandfather's curse. That night he had a dream. In the dream, he was in a circus with his grandfather. His grandfather asked him to open the briefcase, which he did and took out an envelope. He opened the envelope and it had "another and another, endlessly". He kept opening those one by one. When he opened the last one engraved with a state stamp "document containing a short message in letters of gold." He read out loud as per his grandfather's instruction as "To Whom It May Concern," I intoned. "Keep This Nigger-Boy Running."

Discussion: The use of the N-word is spoken in general context by referring to the black boy who wins scholarship for the state college. It reflects that the whole sentence is significant in developing the major theme of struggle in the novel. But the use of N-word for the black boy reflects the undercurrent tone of the writer for socially and politically deprived class/race of America. The word "nigger" is used as an adjective for the head word "boy". Moreover, the N-word "nigger" refers to the overall social behaviour and attitude of socially and politically established group of people towards/against the group of black people who are socially and politically deprived even the basic rights of being human. The N-word adjective "nigger" with the head

word “boy” reflects the use of derogatory racial slur for the socially and economically deprived boy who wants nothing but to study.

The use of the referring expression “This Nigger-boy” refers to the black boy who is holding the letter and it appears that the hearer or reader also has a particular referent in mind, the narrator. The deictic word “This” refers to a particular person in mind and is the person holding the letter. The word “running” is the predicate that adds meaning to the referring expression. The function of the use of N-word instead of other alternate adjectives such as black, refers to the social and political place and condition of blacks in the society. The message is in a declarative tone and carries many meanings, which the narrator does not want to understand for being excited about the college admission. He says “I had no insight into its meaning.

Utterance 6

> As we carried him toward the Golden Day one of the men stopped suddenly and Mr. Norton's head hung down, his white hair dragging in the dust.
>
> "Gentlemen, this man is my grandfather!"
>
> "But he's *white*, his name's Norton."
>
> "I should know my own grandfather! He's Thomas Jefferson and I'm his grandson—**on the 'field-nigger' side,**" the tall man said.
>
> "Sylvester, I do believe that you're right. I certainly do," he said, staring at Mr. Norton. "Look at those features. Exactly like yours—from the identical mold. Are you sure he didn't spit you upon the earth, fully clothed?" (p.76)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black man (unknown) to the school-boy and others holding Mr. Norton

Relationship: Unknown (stranger or could be of very close relationship)

Setting: at Golden Day bar and game house

Context: The school-boy (the narrator) is looking for some water or whiskey for Mr. Norton as he becomes unconscious due to heat-stroke, while listening to Trueblood's dream. The black boy was trying hard to look for something for Mr. Norton but couldn't except taking him to the Golden Day bar unwillingly. Big Halley refused to give the black boy some bear for take away and insists to bring the man inside if he wants any drink. The black boy is holding Mr. Norton with the help of Sylvester, a vet at the Golden Day. When they were bringing him close to the Golden Day bar, a tall man who is probably a black man, stopped suddenly and said while looking at Mr. Norton, "Gentlemen, this man is my grandfather!" But the black boy replied, "But he's white, his name's Norton." The remark comes from the black boy as a counter argument and his use of the word "white" refers to the fact that he is different from what the big man is thinking. The big man then comes up with another argument to confirm and prove that Mr. Norton is his grandfather.

Discussion: The use of N-word in the argument of the big man is to prove that Mr. Norton is his grandfather even though he is white. He uses assertive tone to make the black boy and Sylvester realize that he is the grandson of the man. The tall man uses the phrase "I should know", which refers to the argument that he knows much better than any other man about his grandfather. He also tells his identity when he says "He's Thomas Jefferson and I'm his grandson." But he also explains about the most troubled relationship when he says "on the field-nigger side". This could have been interpreted in a way that the tall man could have served Mr. Norton on his land. He could have been working in the field for Mr. Norton. The use of N-word as a noun and the word "field" as an adjective to specify the type of a nigger. The compound word with a hyphen refers to the type of job usually black men used to perform. This could have been one of the job, which black men used to do in the fields. It appears from the argument of the tall man that he might have served the white man and his job would have been in the field or to take care of filed related matters.

The function of N-word here does not reflect any racial slur but simply identify the relationship of a black man with the white man by focusing the type of job the black man was doing for the white.

Utterance 7

"But I was only trying to please him . . ."

"*Please* him? And here you are a junior in college! Why, the dumbest black bastard in the cotton patch knows that the only way to please a white man is to tell him a lie! What kind of education are you getting around here? Who really told you to take him out there?" he said.

"He did, sir. No one else."

"Don't lie to me!"

"That's the truth, sir."

"I warn you now, who suggested it?"

"I swear, sir. No one told me."

"Nigger, this isn't the time to lie. I'm no white man. Tell me the truth!" (p.137)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: A black man (Dr. Bledsoe) to a black boy (Invisible Man)

Relationship: College Principle - Student

Setting: Dr. Bledsoe's office

Context: After listening to Mr. Norton and the events that took place on the way to the recreational trip around the campus, Dr. Bledsoe is determined to punish the black boy. For him, its necessary to punish the black boy for committing negligence for the task he was assigned. Even after listening to Mr. Norton's kind remarks about the black boy when he says, "nor was the boy responsible". Mr. Norton's remark was in support of the black boy but Dr. Bledsoe doesn't want to let it go unpunished. He comes up with a strong argument, "Don't be kind, sir. You can't be soft with these people. we mustn't pamper them. An accident to a guest of this college while he is in the charge of a student is without question the student's fault. That's one of our strictest rules!" These remarks disclose Dr. Bledsoe's personality and attitude towards the black boy in order

to please a white trustee. Afterwards, Dr. Bledsoe asked the black boy to see him after the event. It is in this context Dr. Bledsoe is meeting with the black boy in his office and trying to know the truth about the events on Mr. Norton's recreational trip. It is in this context the N-word is uttered by Dr. Bledsoe.

Discussion: The N-word used here is the direct attack on the competence and capabilities of the black boy who is a student and is being inquired about his negligence by the principal of the Negro College. After inquiring consistently about the truth that the black boy said, he got infuriated on the consistent reply of the black boy. In complete anger and frustration, he calls him "Nigger". It is used as an address term to humiliate the black who does not possess enough rationale or wisdom even of an average level to act and behave in a social situation. Here, the N-word refers to the characteristics, which a below average black man possesses and demonstrates at times. Dr. Bledsoe's remark brings to light his attitude towards his own black fellows. He is quite aggressive. Being himself black, he seems taking more liberty by calling a black boy *nigger* than a white man. For whites, it becomes racial and more objectionable if the N-word is uttered in such a direct way. But Dr. Bledsoe being a black man with authority is enjoying more power over other black fellows than whites. In the use of the N-word in his argument, the elements of racial slur are missing but the elements of hatred, social inequality and moral and political superiority are reflected. His use of the N-word as an address term refers to the social, political and psychological battle, which is fought among blacks and their positions in relation to the society they are part of. From the context of the situation or event, it can be inferred that the function of the N-word is more about social and common sensibility that almost every black lack. "Nigger, this isn't the time to lie" shows as if the black boy is consistently telling a lie about the events occur on a visit with Mr. Norton. The next sentence "I'm no white man" reflects the overall attitude of some blacks that they used to tell a lie in front of whites to win their favour when they enjoy power over their own fellows. The undercurrent message is that had Dr. Bledsoe been a white man, the boy could have told a lie to save himself. The N-word refers to the black boy who does not use his common sense to act with a white man but at the same time is behaving like a smart boy who is hiding the truth by telling a lie. Earlier Dr. Bledsoe's remarks also help in understanding the meaning of N-word he uses when he says, "the dumbest black bastard in the cotton patch knows that the only way to please a white man is to tell him a lie!" It is reflected in the overall contextual argument

of Dr. Bledsoe that by calling the black boy a *nigger* carries even worse attributes than a "dumbest black bastard in the cotton patch" carries. For Dr. Bledsoe, if a black man cannot tell a lie to a white man than he does not possess even the basic level of rationale and also does not use his education he is getting to exploit the truth. He does not expect from the black boy to tell the truth to a white man but at the same time he does not expect the boy to tell the lie in front of him.

In this utterance (7) the experiential meaning of the utterance refers to the verbal process in which the N-word is uttered and is also the target of the utterer. The phrase *this isn't the time to lie* refers to the circumstance as matter which can further be explained as mentioned above. The interpersonal function of the utterance clearly identifies the use of N-word as an address term who is being addressed about the situation. *This* is used as a subject and *isn't* is a finite verb, whereas *the time to lie* is the complement of the sentence. The N-word *Nigger* is serving the thematic function of theme, whereas the rest of the utterance is serving as rheme.

Utterance 8

> "I mean it, son," he said. "I had to be strong and purposeful to get where I am. I had to wait and plan and lick around . . . Yes, **I had to act the nigger!"** he said, adding another fiery, "Yes! (p.141).

Analysis/Critique:

Race: A black man (Dr. Bledsoe) to a black boy (Invisible Man)

Relationship: College Principle - Student

Setting: Dr. Bledsoe's office

Context: Dr. Bledsoe is reacting on the remarks of the black boy who threatens him to approach Mr. Norton for his rustication. Dr. Bledsoe is building his argument on the rationale of who holds the power and who is in-charge. He also brings forth another aspect of social reality of the then American society that truth is what whites tell and those who hold power and have access to media. Whatever whites say becomes the truth. He calls the black boy "a black educated fool" as the boy is trying to disturb

the hierarchal structure of power and influence by speaking out "the truth". But Dr. Bledsoe's arguments reflect his position and approach towards his being in the current position and how and what he does to maintain it. He tries to justify every move, foul or fair, to maintain his current position in the college. He argues that "it's a nasty deal" that he doesn't like it himself. Here, he tries to shift the responsibility of making the rules of this nasty game when he says "I didn't make it, and I know that I can't change it. But I've made my place in it and I'll have every Negro in the country hanging on tree limbs by morning if it means staying where I am." Though it was as if Dr. Bledsoe was "uttering confession" and making a "fantastic revelation" which nobody can deny, the black boy also couldn't accept and deny it. It is in this context the N-word 'nigger' occurs in Dr. Bledsoe's argument.

Discussion: Although used as a common noun, the N-word carries the tone of behaviour characteristic of a below average black man, in every sphere of life. His earlier remarks about power and the means to hold and maintain a powerful position, his act of manipulating the truth by foul or fair means, and the kind of behaviour required such as "to wait and plan and lick around," to maintain his position or status include in the use of the word *nigger*. It transpires that all what Dr. Bledsoe said about power, politics, diplomacy, truth and lie includes in the meaning of the word *nigger*, which seemingly has more meanings/connotations than any other word in the history of English language.

The N-word phrase is quite reflective within the linguistic context of its use. Dr. Bledsoe is justifying his behavior of using irrational move to retain his power. He means to behave in an irrational and illogical way when it comes to save himself and his position. He describes this feeling by using the N-word phrase, "Yes, I had to act the nigger!" Moreover, the utterance can also be interpreted at another level. He also means to say that in order to elicit information from the black boy, he has to act in an irrational and illogical manner. At the experiential level, "the nigger" is used as a behavior for the behaver "I" who is involved in the behavioral process of "had to act". At interpersonal level, the N-word phrase is serving as an adjunct whereas, at textual level it is the rheme. The perlocutionary effect cannot be determined from the phrase as the boy is not in a position to say something or show his anger. The N-word is used to reflect social behavior of a below average person who does what he thinks and believes.

Utterance 9

> I inched backwards, hearing the little man bang on the table for order. "Men, brothers! Give the brother a chance . . ."
>
> "He looks like a dirty fink to me. A first-class enameled fink!"
>
> The hoarsely voiced word grated my ears like **"nigger"** in an angry southern mouth ...
>
> "Brothers, please!" The chairman was waving his hands as I reached out behind me for the door and touched an arm, feeling it snatch violently away. I dropped my hand. (p.215)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: Thought of the black boy (Invisible Man) about a black man in the brotherhood meeting

Relationship: Unknown (Black brotherhood)

Setting: Paint factory office

Context: The above-mentioned utterance took place when the black boy (The Invisible Man) opens the door into a meeting room of the 'democratic' union of the paint factory. His unsteady behaviour and skeptic nature of the union members, both created an environment not suitable for him. The union members addressed him with highly offensive terms and showed physical advancement towards him intending to beat him. But the chair of the union intervened and prohibited them for using highly offensive terms, such as *fink*. On inquiring about his being there in the meeting room, the boy replies that he was not sent into the meeting but he happened to be there on the way to get his lunch from the locker. The voice and comment of one of the union members about him irritated the boy and it is in his thought that he considered using the of N-word as if it was uttered "in an angry southern mouth".

Discussion: The black boy does not utter the N-word but the narrator describes the thoughts of the boy about the person who calls him "a dirty fink … A first-class

enameled fink". The person does not use the N-word towards his fellow black boy but another possible alternative to ventilate his anger. There could have been possible interpretations about the rash and angry behaviour of the person, one of which could be not to trust anyone unknown who might lead you to the backward position within an organization. The person being the member of a brotherly union set to fight for the cause of black people rights where the black boy first time heard the address term "brother" he was not used to and quite surprised. The behaviour of the person also makes us recall the behaviour of the Dr. Bledsoe who tries to maintain his position at any cost. For whatever reason the person calls the black boy a fink, the boy relates the voice of the person with one of the angry southern mouth. The use of N-word in the thoughts of the boy is a reaction to the man's argument who calls him a fink. The thought of N-word term is the perlocutionary effect of the previous impolite term *fink* used by the person. This perlocutionary effect, reflects the overall situation and immediate context of the use of the N-word. The use of N-word is described not as a racial slur here but as a situation in which an angry person utters the N-word. Usually, the N-word is uttered as a slur and its perlocutionary effects moves the hearer to behave in a certain way. But in this utterance, the N-word describes a far-fetched memory of the boy about the angry southern person.

Utterance 10

> "I let out a wild laugh, almost choking over the yam as the scene spun before me. Why, with others present, it would be worse than if I had accused him of raping an old woman of ninety-nine years, weighing ninety pounds . . . blind in one eye and lame in the hip! Bledsoe would disintegrate, disinflate! With a profound sigh he'd drop his head in shame. He'd lose caste. The weekly newspapers would attack him. The captions over his picture: ***Prominent Educator Reverts to Field Niggerism!*** His rivals would denounce him as a bad example for the South. Editorials would demand that he either recant or retire from public life. In the South his white folks would desert him; he would be discussed far and wide, and all of the trustees' money couldn't prop up his sagging prestige. He'd end up an exile washing dishes at the Automat. For down South he'd be unable to get a job on the honey wagon." (p.259)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: The black boy thinking about another black man(Dr. Bledsoe)

Relationship: Student – Principle

Setting: On one of the roads of Harlem taking yam on his way home.

Context: The black boy is recovering from illness in the chilled weather and stops by a food van for eating yam. He buys sweets and delicious yam from an old man and is moving towards his abode in the Men's House. Walking and eating in the streets of Harlem, he is struck by a strong feeling of freedom. This sense of freedom gave him more confidence for what to choose and liberty for choosing what to eat. His words were, "I no longer had to worry about who saw me or about what was proper". Different ideas come to his mind and one of the strongest thoughts was "What a group of people we were". It was a sort of self-discovery about him and about the people of his race.

He starts complaining about people of his own race when he thinks loudly "Why, you could cause us the greatest humiliation". Then he discovered himself advancing towards Dr. Bledsoe, the principal of the college, who causes him irreparable damage not just by sending him packing from the school but also by hurting his future prospects by spoiling his reputation in the form of reference letters. The thought of Dr. Bledsoe makes him really angry as if he was in front of all the people in the Men's House and throwing a bowl of chitterling soup over him, which he was eating. He further thinks that it would have been even worse had he spoiled Dr. Bledsoe's reputation in front of all by accusing him of raping an ugly and bulky old woman. This would cause more damage to him and his reputation than just throwing a bowl of soup over him in front of others. By spoiling the reputation, Dr. Bledsoe would not only lose his job but find no place to live. Weekly newspapers would also attack him by posting his picture with the caption "***Prominent Educator Reverts to Field Niggerism!"*** It is in this context the N-word occurs.

Discussion: The context of the utterance reflects that the N-word used as a caption for a black man's portrait in the newspaper who commits rape of even an ugly, bulky and old woman. The woman who does not even have the slightest glimpses of beauty would help in spoiling the reputation of a college principal. This would make him lose his job and the favours of the trustees and the people of his town. People would

not give him any job in the town or even in the South. He would be left with no choice but to wash dishes at the Automat. The caption of the weekly newspaper also reflects two interpretations or functions of the N-word use. First, it refers to the general behaviour of the blacks who work in the field and how low they behave. Dr. Bledsoe who is a prominent educator loses his position due to an act which is mostly committed by the people of very low rank black workers. Second, it refers to the current situation of Dr. Bledsoe who was once at the highest prestigious seat now comes to the level of a person with no future prospects but a mere worker. Both interpretations of the N-word refer to a set of general behaviour, which is believed to be present in those times and was exploited to defame and refrain black community to come into the main stream American society. van Dijk supports this view as he believes that the "link between personal and social cognition in model building and languae use is crucial" (2009, p. 6).

The N-word used in the above utterance is a thought of a black boy who thinks about Dr. Bledsoe's behavior towards him. The referring expression "prominent educator" refers to Dr. Bledsoe as the boy has a particular referent in his mind. Whereas the expression "filed niggerism" is the predicator of the argument "prominent educator". The boy has a particular referent in his mind so the predicator qualifies for Dr. Bledsoe. Adding a bound morpheme or suffix "–ism" makes the phenomenon more general and a set of attitudes of a particular group of black people.

Utterance 11

> "We keep our place clean and respectable and **we don't want you field niggers coming up here from the South and ruining things,"** she shouted with blazing hate. (p.321)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black woman to a black boy (the Narrator)

Relationship: An unknown mulatto woman (a little yellow woman) to a passerby (black boy)

Setting: Morning time in front of the mulatto woman's house

Context: After paying hundred-dollar bill to Mary, the black boy leaves for the new abode and to meet brother Jack. On the way, he tosses over the package in one of the trash-cans placed outside the houses in a street. But the moment he moves ahead, he listens to the harsh sound of a little woman who is calling him back to get the package back from the trash can. In anger, she orders him to come back and get his trash and never do the same again. It is in this situation and anger, she utters the N-word to the black boy by posing herself far superior to the race and region he belongs to.

Discussion: The N-word is used as an address term to refer to the kind of behaviour usually black people are associated with and so is the term used by the little yellow woman. Her use of N-word for the black boy reflects the kind of hatred she carries, which is usually collocated with the black living in Southern states. It can be inferred from the utterance that Southern states were less developed and people from there used to migrate to big cities for their livelihood. The little yellow woman uses N-word to refer to those in a more general way. It can be sensed from the N-word utterance that Southern blacks do not know how to behave in sophisticated ways inherent among the New York City people. The woman is a mixed-race woman and belongs to the same community of black people who moved to the city some years ahead of the black boy and are now well settled compared to the majority of the people of same race. For her, this behaviour is intolerable to the extent that she would not even shy away from calling the police to make the black boy learn a lesson. For the boy, a trash is a trash. It doesn't matter where it is placed and whose place it is. The things he takes lightly, the mulatto woman takes them seriously. Her utterance reflects that she is appearing more whitish than the color of her skin. Her use of the term "field niggers" is justified in the sense of the overall behaviour of the blacks who are just slaves or mere field workers devoid of the basic civic sense and etiquette. The term could have more appropriately been replaced with some other slurs but the racial slur incorporates the general behaviour of the kind of black people from South though this is a clear example of over generalization. Moreover, her keeping of the place clean and respectable is also significant in the sense that the racial slur is used to describe uncivilized and ill-mannered behavior of blacks in a highly general way. The N-word seems clearly opposite to the traits she describes of civilized people. It is used as a referring expression for the black boy and the kind of people of similar origin. The perlocutionary effect

could be sensed from the behavior of the black boy who thinks that a trash is a trash no matter where it belongs.

The contextual discussion reflects that the N-word is also used to refer to a typical behavior of the black people from Southern states who do not know how to think, behave and act in a civilized way, who do not think someone's property a personal property, and who are difficult to handle with.

Utterance 12

> "Such was the short bitter life of Brother Tod Clifton. Now he's in this box with the bolts tightened down. He's in the box and we're in there with him, and when I've told you this you can go. It's dark in this box and it's crowded. It has a cracked ceiling and a clogged-up toilet in the hall. It has rats and roaches, and it's far, far too expensive a dwelling. The air is bad and it'll be cold this winter. Tod Clifton is crowded and he needs the room. 'Tell them to get out of the box,' that's what he would say if you could hear him. 'Tell them to get out of the box and go teach the policemans to forget that rhyme. Tell them to teach them that **when they call you *nigger* to make a rhyme with *trigger* it makes the gun backfire.**' (p.451)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black man (the narrator) to the black audience gathered for Tod Clifton's funeral.

Relationship: brotherhood, blackness, same skin

Setting: Mount Morris Park

Context: After the death of Tod Clifton, the narrator double-up his efforts to organize a respectable funeral of Tod Clifton. Tod Clifton "had to be buried" but the narrator was giving himself enough justification "for giving him a public funeral." In his thought, the purpose was to make Tod Clifton's death known and "that the meaning of his death was greater than the incident or the object that caused it." So, they publicized and organized his funeral and gathered at the Mount Morris Park. The park

was selected “to attract the largest number”. The narrator mounted at the lookout tower near the platform. When all the people gathered in the park and the song ended, they were standing silently to listen to the narrator. But the narrator was caught between the thoughts of Tod Clifton’s past life and present death funeral. Then, he began his speech and it was towards the end of his speech when he became provocative and shook the people from inside with his emotional words and arguments. During this, he also explained the use of N-word and then later uttered the N-word to rhyme with the (white) policeman’s word *trigger*.

Discussion: The N-word is uttered by the narrator while delivering a speech at Tod Clifton’s funeral. The purpose of his N-word utterance is not just to explain the cause of Tod Clifton’s death but his philosophy of life. A white policeman fires three bullets at Tod Clifton, which results in his death. While narrating the incident, he first talks about the policeman who was “a good citizen” but with “itching finger”. In his view, the policeman also has an eager ear to listen to the rhyming word “nigger” with the word “trigger”. His gun and itching finger, and his ear and rhyming word make him fire. The narrator is trying to communicate Tod Clifton’s message of struggle to the people gathered there for his funeral. In his words, the message was “to get out of the box and go teach the policeman to forget the rhyme.” In the context of Tod Clifton’s funeral, the narrator utters the N-word to convince and motivate the audience for teaching a lesson to the policemen if they dared to make the N-word rhyme with “trigger”. They must react and backfire if anyone called them the N-word.

This utterance also mirrors the social and political scenario of the time when there were different movements for the rights of black people and it was a time of racial sensitivity. van Dijk argues that “there are more social dimentions to context” (2009, p. 86) The N-word is uttered by the narrator to make the people understand the sensitivity of the word and the meanings it carries when uttered with a racial purpose. The purpose of the utterance of the N-word here is not racial but to make people realize and understand its racial sensitivity and the meanings it carries, which can lead to a repulsive action even of physical nature. The narrator is alarming the black audience about the reaction of using the N-word and what insult it brings to them and all people of their race. The referring expression “you” and “nigger” refers to the black audience and black people in general. The utterer has a particular referent in his mind and the

perlocutionary effect may be sensed from the reaction of the audience. They are moved by the speech and are determined to take action rather than make conversation. In the overall context of the utterance, the N-word functions as a matter, a complement and rheme for experiential, interpersonal and textual meaning respectively.

Utterances 13 & 14

> "Grab him!" Ras shouted.
>
> Three men stepped forward and I reached up without thinking, actually a desperate oratorical gesture of disagreement and defiance, as I shouted, "No!" But my hand struck the spear and I wrenched it free, gripping it mid-shaft, point forward. "They want this to happen," I said. "They planned it. They want the mobs to come uptown with machine guns and rifles. They want the streets to flow with blood; your blood, black blood and white blood, so that they can turn your death and sorrow and defeat into propaganda. It's simple, you've known it a long time. It goes, **'Use a nigger to catch a nigger.**' Well, they used me to catch you and now they're using Ras to do away with me and to prepare your sacrifice. Don't you see it? Isn't it clear . . . ?"
>
> "Hang the lying traitor," Ras shouted. "What are you waiting for?" (p.549)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black man's thoughts about black men (usually the whole race)

Relationship: Thinking aloud about the whole race

Setting: During the riot night in the streets of Harlem

Context: The narrator is running in the streets of Harlem to protect himself from the blind shooting and getting caught by the white police. On his way to Mary's place, he faces Ras the Destroyer and his men. Ras is "dressed in the costume of an Abyssinian chieftain." He asks the narrator to join him and become part of his armory. The narrator tries to hide his identity by putting on his green glasses, but fails to do so. Ras identifies him as a "brother" and calls him a "betrayer". Both exchange harsh words and blame

each other for the current situation. Ras orders his men to grab him and hang him to teach a lesson to all other black people for being a traitor to his own people. The narrator tries to be invisible by being Rinehart but fails and exchanges argument with Ras to convince him of the situation black people are in and for being the facilitator for those who will use his emotional adventure against the whole race. It is in this situation that the narrator utters the catch phrase carrying N-word twice.

Discussion: While explaining the propaganda of the people who hold power and authority, the narrator utters the frequently-used catchphrase "use a nigger to catch a nigger". This phrase carries a long history of the black people and their condition during slavery times: when a slave would run away from his masters and from the torture incurred on him/her by his/her master, they were traced back not only by the master but the master's men, who would recruit black people to hunt black slaves. In their view, black people had contacts among themselves and it became easy for them to track runaway slaves. It is also used as a strategy of war in which one side uses power, money and other benefits to influence a group of opportunists form the other side to get information in tracking people.

In the utterance, the use of the N-phrase appears to carry a universal and historical message of war tactics and strategy. The narrator is getting more philosophic in his argument when he fears that the men of Ras will hang him on the road to teach other blacks a lesson out of his betrayal. Whatever could be the possible reason for the killing of their fellow black men, the only thing that makes sense is that the black men are becoming instruments for the most powerful.

The use of N-words in the utterance is also reflective of those blacks who have fewer rational and analytical faculties and become instruments without thinking of the repercussions for the whole race. The use of N-words is also significant as they refer to both sides: that of Ras and the Narrator. In killing the narrator, Ras becomes an instrument and helps the whites for not taking the blame for his killing as they did in the case of Tod Clifton. Everyone blamed white policemen for Tod Clifton's murder. But in the current situation, a black is killing a black. Ras uses power and believes in resistance; the narrator uses his eloquence and serves his race through mutual cooperation. But the narrator is about to be hunted down by a group of people who believe in resistance and become instruments. In the argument of the narrator, this will

only serve the purpose of the people who are against the whole race and would do no good to the people of their own race. As long as this works, the ones in power would be able to get benefit and take advantage.

In the utterance, the first N-word refers to a man (or a group of people) who has limited rational and analytical power to analyze the situation, whereas, the second N-word refers to the ones who try to get out of the troubled situation without carefully planning and brooding over the whole event. But the second N-word also refers to a person who has shown enough courage to become a fugitive but does not have enough social and economic resources to depend on himself. He has to depend on someone who can exploit his faculties and his identity by offering him something in reward. Neither side acts wisely but is swept away by their emotions. The perlocutionary effect of the phrase is also quite visible when Ras orders his men and shouts “Hang the lying traitor.” Both are considering each other instrumental and traitor whereas both are black and both are fighting for their fellow black people. The N-word here refers to the universal behaviour of such people and the universality of the entire phenomenon.

Utterance 15

> "You see the way he went down, zoom! I was just fixing to slug the bastard."
> "You hit him?"
> "I don't know."
> "Say, Joe, you think the bastard's dead?"
> "Maybe. He sure is in the dark though. You can't even see his eyes."
> **"Nigger in the coal pile**, eh, Joe?" (p.556)

Utterance 16

> "You sonofabitch!" one of them called, outraged. Then the match went out and I heard something fall softly upon the coal near by. They were talking above.
>
> **"You goddam black nigger sonofabitch,"** someone called, "see how you like this," and I heard the cover settle over the manhole with a dull clang. Fine bits of dirt showered down as they stamped upon the lid and for a moment I sent coal sliding in wild surprise, looking up, up through black space to where for a

> second the dim light of a match sank through a circle of holes in the steel. Then I thought, This is the way it's always been, only now I know it—and rested back, calm now, placing the brief case beneath my head. I could open it in the morning, push off the lid. Now I was tired, too tired; my mind retreating, the image of the two glass eyes running together like blobs of melting lead. Here it was as though the riot was gone and I felt the tug of sleep, seemed to move out upon black water. (p.557)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: Two black men (Ras the Destroyer's men) to another black man (The Narrator)

Relationship: Unknown but Blackness

Setting: During the riot night in one of the streets of Harlem

Context: The narrator was running for his life from Ras and his men. On his way to reach Jack and to escape from Ras and his men, he fell in what he thought was a manhole whose cover had been removed by someone. It was actually a coal cellar and was used for coal storage. Ras' men try to catch him but fail as he gets out of their reach. They exchange harsh and abusive language to communicate with the narrator and inquire about the briefcase and what was inside it. During this conversation, the black men utter the N-word twice.

Discussion: In the fifteenth instance, the N-word is uttered by one of Ras' men when the narrator lands in the manhole. He is inquiring about the probable death of the narrator. During this conversation, the man utters the N-word. He describes the narrator's situation as "Nigger in the coal pile". It is quite apparent from the context of utterance and situation that he utters the N-word to give vent to his anger as he is unable to catch the narrator. His tone also mirrors his anger and contempt for the boy. The context reveals that the N-word is not uttered as a racial slur. It is used as a social address towards a fellow black man to express dislike and anger. The N-word carries its own history. It also describes a black man who is in trouble and cannot come out without other's help. It also reflects the socio-economic condition of blacks in general who work as coal-workers.

In the fifteenth instance, the N-word is used as a noun and a term of address for the black boy. It functions as a carrier, subject and theme within the context of its use. The perlocutionary effect can be seen from the narrator's calm reply. He knows that the man could not catch him and are frustrated and annoyed. He enjoys being out of their reach.

In the sixteenth instance, the N-word is used when they exchange harsh words with each other about the briefcase and what is inside it. Ras' men persistently inquire about what is inside the briefcase whereas, the narrator replies in a crazy and humorous tone. Being outraged, one of Ras' men utters the N-word as a social slur with other modifiers. The phrase "You goddam black nigger sonofbitch," refers to the highly abusive language of a black man towards his fellow black man who is out of reach. It is uttered in a helpless situation. Before the N-word, the modifiers *goddam* and *black* are used to show the outrage of the black man who is now unable to catch the narrator. Moreover, soon after the N-word a highly abusive phrase *sonofabitch* is also used to reflect the extreme outrage of Ras' men.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth instances, the function of both N-words is not racial. They are uttered in anger and helplessness for being unable to catch the black boy. But the utterances make plain that the N-word also functions as a social slur to ventilate one's anger and also to defame, degrade and insult others. It reflects that N-word is usually used as a slur and an abusive term to undermine the rational nature and human faculty of the individual and also collocates with another social slur "sonofbitch". It communicates the low rank behaviour of the blacks and their lack of ability to think rationally and act like most of the powerful groups.

4.4 SECTION III: Linguistic Critique of *The Color Purple*

This section deals with the context of the novel, use of each N-word linguistic choice and its contextual discussion in *The Color Purple.*

4.4.1 Context of the Novel

Alice Walker was born in 1944. Her father was a sharecropper and her mother was a housewife. These reflections of her childhood memories can be seen in her works. The life difficulties she faced during her stay at Sarah Lawrence College, made her more vocal as a writer. During 1960s, the time was hard for a woman to live without a husband and get along. Walker presents the true picture of the society in which Celie and Nettie were living and how hard it was for them to be black and woman. Black women, Walker reflects, were double marginalized. Black woman, as Hurston says, is the mule of the world. *The Color Purple* tells the story of two sisters and their love for each other. The story revolves round Celie and Nettie who are living their life but sharing their experiences and feelings through writing letters. After undergoing a very unfortunate experience of rape by her stepfather, she marries Albert who is also a father of six children. Celie finds it very hard to make her life with six children and stubborn attitude of Albert. She finds no one to talk but to write letters to God as she can divulge her ordeal to none but God. So, she writes letters to God and shares the life she is spending. She also writes letters to her sister Nettie who goes to Africa with a group of missionaries. Nettie brought up Celie's two children, which her stepfather sold to the missionaries. Celie also finds a good friend in the shape of Shug Avery and shares her feelings with her. Finally, Celie and Nettie reunite and starts living in their own house they receive in inheritance.

4.4.2 N-Word occurrences in *The Color Purple*

N-word: nigger*

Frequency: 10

Table 5

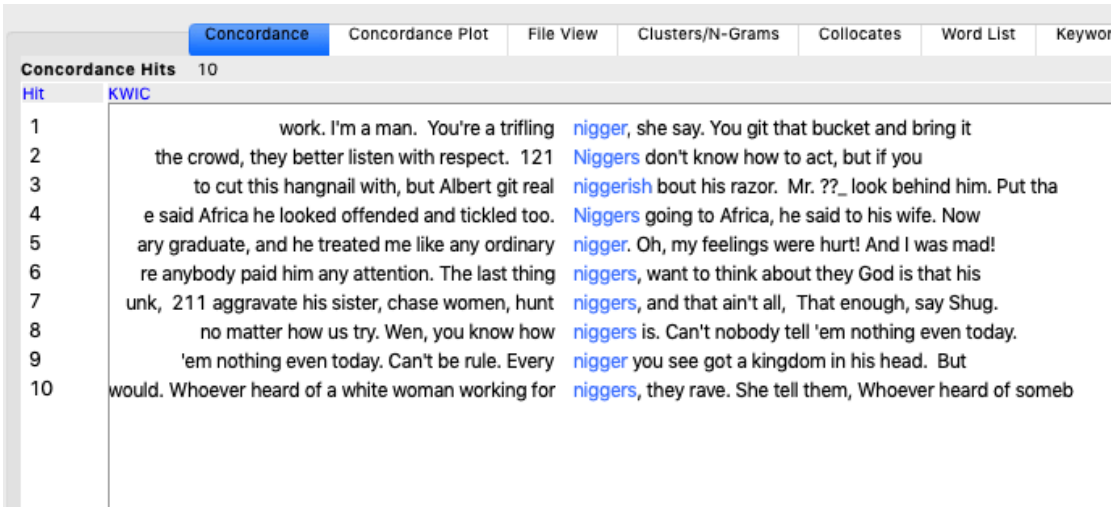
N-word frequency and concordance in The Color Purple

1	work. I'm a man. You're a trifling	nigger,	she say. You git that bucket and bring it
2	the crowd, they better listen with respect. 121	Niggers	don't know how to act, but if you

3	to cut this hangnail with, but Albert git real	niggerish	bout his razor. Mr. ??_ look behind him
4	e said Africa he looked offended and tickled too.	Niggers	going to Africa, he said to his wife. Now
5	ary graduate, and he treated me like any ordinary	nigger.	Oh, my feelings were hurt! And I was mad!
6	re anybody paid him any attention. The last thing	niggers,	want to think about they God is that his
7	unk, 211 aggravate his sister, chase women, hunt	niggers,	and that ain't all, That enough, say Shu
8	no matter how us try. Wen, you know how	niggers	is. Can't nobody tell 'em nothing even tod
9	'em nothing even today. Can't be rule. Every	nigger	you see got a kingdom in his head. But
10	would. Whoever heard of a white woman working for	niggers,	they rave. She tell them, Whoever heard o

N-word Concordances in *The Color Purple*

Figure 3: N-word concordances in *The Color Purple*



4.4.3 Use and function of N-word in *The Color Purple*

This section presents the linguistic critique of N-word choice in *The Color Purple*. There are ten N-word occurrences in the novel. The use and function of all N-word utterances are different depending on the co-text and context of its use. It is quite interesting that all the ten N-word instances fall under different categories of use.

Utterance 1

Women work, he say.

What? she say.

Women work. I'm a man.

You're **a trifling nigger**, she say. You git that bucket and

bring it back full. (p.22)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black woman (Kate) to a black boy (Harpo)

Relationship: Auntie – nephew relationship

Setting: Home of Mr. _____ (Albert)

Context: Both sisters of Mr._____ (Albert) are on a short visit to their brother's home. This time they see a different house – different from the one Annie Julia, Albert's first wife, used to keep. They are of the view that Celie keeps a clean house and is a good cook. She is also good with Albert's children. Both the sisters are also talking about Annie Julia, the first wife of Albert and Shug Avery, the love of the town. They like Celie because of her quite nature. Kate also goes out with Celie to buy clothes for Celie. Celie is happy because for the first time some clothes have been bought for her. She describes her feelings as, "I can't remember being the first one in my own dress. Now to have one made just for me." Kate appreciates Celie and says that she deserves more than this. It is in this situation, when Kate says to Harpo, Albert's

eldest child, that he must help Celie, their stepmother, in this situation to perform domestic chores by bringing water. To this Harpo replies, “Women work. I’m a man.” It is in this situation, Kate utters the N-word to refer to her nephew as a person who does not work and sit idle.

Discussion: The N-word uttered for Harpo reflects the tone and behaviour of his aunt Kate. She is using N-word in response to his argument that women work and that he is a man. This comment infuriates his aunt to say, “You're a trifling nigger.” The context clearly concedes that the N-word is used not as a racial slur but as a slur to socially devalue a person who sits idle and does not want to do anything good or productive for his/her self and for the family. Moreover, the context also reflects another aspect of social behaviour that the N-word is also used among blacks in informal settings as a term of endearment. It seems that Alice Walker is aware of the fact that besides having pejorative meaning, the N-word can be used as a gesture of endearment but among blacks only. This cannot be taken in the same sense had there been a conversation among people of different race. This top-down communication also gives room to Kate for using N-word for her nephew in a scolding manner. This also reflects from her tone that she also does not have any control over her nephew and that he is independent and does not care for anyone. Moreover, the N-word is used as a trait of a person who has their own mind and “kingdom” in their head. Although, the adjective “trifling” is used to lessen the more adverse effects of the N-word, it adds meaning to the head word.

In this situation, the function of the N-word is to highlight the role and behaviour of Albert’s children and their uselessness for Celie. In general, they are all “trifling niggers” – of no help to their stepmother. The N-word is uttered as a perlocutionary effect of Harpo’s remarks and argumentation with Kate. However, Kate’s remarks also trigger a reaction from Harpo. The perlocutionary effect of Kate’s utterance can be seen from the visible behaviour of Harpo towards Celie, which she describes as “He cut his eye at me. Stumble out. I hear him mutter something to Mr _____ sitting on the porch. Mr _____ call his sister. She stays out on the porch talking a little while, then she come back in, shaking.” The perlocutionary effect of the Kate’s utterance may not be due to the use of N-word but due to the sentences, which follow the N-word sentence. Kate says, “You git that bucket and bring it back full.” This is the kind of order usually

Harpo and other males are not used to hearing from a female. It might be the reason for Harpo to complain to his father, which results in their heated exchange and finally, Kate starts packing up stuff with tears in her eyes.

Utterance 2

> Shug say, What, too shamefaced to put singing and dancing and fucking together? She laugh. That's the reason they call what us sing the devil's music. Devils love to fuck. Listen, she say, Let's go sing one night at Harpo place. Be like old times for me. And if I bring you before the crowd, they better listen with respect. **Niggers don't know how to act,** but if you git through the first half of one song, you got 'em. (p.105)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black woman (Shug Avery) to a yellow woman (Squeak / Mary Agnes)

Relationship: friendship/ black community (blackness, same color)

Setting: in the front room at Odessa's home

Context: All are sitting at Odessa's home and enjoying each other's company. Shug Avery, a wealthy black woman singer, engages in conversation with Squeak, a yellow woman and wife of Harper. Shug is convincing her to go for public singing and start with her husband at his night club. She is reluctant and shy to sing in front of black audience and absorb their comments. Shug is convincing her by mentioning that people think of their singing as Devil's music and in that wake, they pass loud comments. Moreover, she believes that if she tries to bring Squeak with her in front of the crowd, they will listen her with respect. It is in this situation in which she utters the N-word for the rural black audience.

Discussion: Shug utters the N-word to refer to the uneducated and ill-mannered blacks who do nothing by themselves but sit and criticize others for the efforts they make to progress and improve their living. She believes that they do not know how to act in a social setting they are not familiar with as compared to the people of big towns or cities. By mentioning "niggers", she seems referring to the type of black people who

pass loud comments, give bad gestures and behave in an indecent way. In other words, they are the *paindoos* (uncivilized rural folks) of America. But Squeak can overcome their indecent behaviour and her feelings of nervousness only if she is confident about her singing. Shug believes that Squeak must show courage and confidence in singing to fight the social forces of society in the form of less-educated and ill-mannered blacks. Her comment "Niggers don't know how to act, but if you git through the first half of one song, you got 'em" reflects her personal experience as a successful black woman singer who now sings almost all over the country. She has seen success and knows how to behave in front of different kinds of audience. A place, such as like Harper's, can attract a specific kind of audience and Shug is aware of that. It is her confidence with which she is trying to convince Squeak to sing.

The function of N-word is quite apparent in this situation. It refers to some specific kinds of audience who do not behave in a decent way. It refers to the more social behaviour of such black people than their racial nature. Being used as a noun, the N-word directly refers to a group of people with certain traits, which do not suit a gentleman's persona. The referents of the N-word utterance are not there but the utterance is made to convince Squeak for singing. The perlocutionary effect of this statement cannot be determined through this event but Squeaks starts singing with confidence.

Utterance 3

> Then I hear Shug laugh, like something just too funny. She say to me, I know I told you I need something to cut this hangnail with, **but Albert git real niggerish bout his razor**. (p.110)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black woman (Shug) to another black woman (Celie) about a black man (Albert)

Relationship: both are black women but one is Albert's wife and the other is Albert's love

Setting: Albert and Celie's home

Context: After Shug finds Nettie's letter in Albert's pocket and shows it to Celie, they both talk about the real nature of Albert. Celie is quite surprised about the "mean" nature of Albert, which Shug also seconds. They both seal up the letter again and put it back in Albert's coat before his arrival. The scene changes and Celie is holding Albert's razor in her hand for shaving Albert. Shug asks for the razor and Celie hands it to her for trimming her hanging nail. Being Albert's love, Shug know his nature very well. She tells Celie in a louder voice about Albert's behaviour and his possessiveness about his things. It is in this situation the N-word is uttered by Shug about Albert's behaviour.

Discussion: The N-word uttered by Shug Avery describes the characteristic behaviour of Albert, her lover with whom she spends most of her time. Both know each other for a long time but Shug does not want Albert to be her husband. Their relationship is so intimate that Shug almost knows almost everything about Albert's past and his real nature. It is this intimate relation that she knows how Albert behaves if one tries to take his shaving razor. The N-word describes Albert's possessive nature about his things. The N-word is not used as a noun but as an adjective to explain the behaviour of Albert. Here "niggerish" seems referring to a kind of behaviour, which is only expected from an illiterate, uneducated, uncivilized and irrational person. Moreover, the word "niggerish" is used in the negative sense to talk about the negative and bad traits of a person, which others do not approve of. Just like the adjectives childish or girlish refer to a kind of behavior one does not expect from grownups, the word "niggerish" seems quite unmatching for a mature person having wife and children.

The function of the N-word here is quite apparent in the utterance of Shug. The perlocutionary effect of the use of N-word is also reflected through the statement of Albert that follows. Albert reacts to the Shug's comment and behaves in a *niggerish* way. He tells Celie to put down the razor and reacts to the comments of Shug in a more generalized way when he says, "Women, always needing to cut this and shave that, and always gumming up the razor." Shug holds the razor and examines it and disapproves it being sharp and not good for any use to her. She then puts it back in the shaving box. It is also quite obvious that Celie is a kind of woman who is passive and does not use such kind of hard and offensive words. But Shug is more of a free woman singer who enjoys money, status and fame in her life and is more aware of the use of such linguistic

choices, which are usually taboos in social familial settings and also in literature. Shug's use of N-word for Albert is not quite a surprise for the reader and the impact of the phrase not racial.

Utterance 4

> One white man on the platform in South Carolina asked us where we were going – we had got off the train to get some fresh air and to dust the grit and dust out of our clothes. When we said Africa he looked offended and tickled too. **Niggers going to Africa**, he said to his wife. Now I have seen everything. (p.121)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a white man (unknown) to his white wife about a group of black people (Nettie, Corrine, Samuel, Olivia and Adam)

Relationship: Unknown (white-black)

Setting: On the South Carolina railway station where Nettie and others got off the train to take fresh air and dust their cloths.

Context: Nettie is describing about her travel experience in one of her letters to her sister, Celie. She seems excited to narrate the travel incidents and her observations and experience on the way to New York. She describes about the train and segregated sections on the train for blacks. On the South Carolina railway station, Nettie and others got off the train to take fresh air and dust their clothes. On the platform, a white man asks them where they are going. When they reply, Africa, the white man gets offended and says N-word to his wife to show his feelings about blacks.

Discussion: From the utterance of the white man, it is quite clear that the phrase carrying N-word is uttered in a highly racial way to point out to a group of blacks travelling to Africa. The N-word phrase is not directly uttered to the blacks but to another white person (his wife) to show the contempt and hatred he has about blacks. It is said in such a loud voice that all hear it and Nettie describes it in her letter to her sister Celie as an incident worth recalling. Though it seems description of the Nettie's

travelogue but she truthfully and surprisingly describes her narrative. The sentence that follows the N-word phrase also reflects that Nettie has experienced the surge of racism.

The function of the N-word clearly indicates the smell of racism. Moreover, the N-word in the sentence has a direct referent (a group of black people) and is also able to communicate the sense of the utterance. The N-word used in the context it appears occupies a significant role for Nettie, which she views so important to describe in a letter to her sister, Celie. Certainly, Nettie cannot describe all the travel experience and episodes but the significant ones. The racial incident with a white man on the platform in South Carolina also indicates that the place (SC) is facing the perverse effects of racism at its peak. The way the white man got offended also reflects the kind of treatment blacks would have been facing in the city. The use of N-word seems quite realistic with the incidents Nettie and others were facing. In addition, the perlocutionary effects have been shown indirectly that Nettie feels and sees the event so significant to describe it in her letter to her sister.

Utterance 5

> She was so much like Olivia! she said. I was afraid she'd want her back. So I forgot her as soon as I could. All I let myself think about was how the clerk treated me! I was acting like somebody because I was Samuel's wife, and a Spelman Seminary graduate, and **he treated me like any ordinary nigger.** Oh, my feelings were hurt! And I was mad! And that's what I thought about, even told Samuel about, on the way home. Not about your sister – what was her name? – Celie? Nothing about her. (p.169)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black woman (Corrine) to her husband (Samuel) and maid (Nettie)

Relationship: wife to her husband and maid

Setting: Samuel and Corrine's home in Olinka, a village in Africa

Context: Samuel and Corrine adopted both kids of Nettie's sister Celie. The kids have close resemblance with their aunt, Nettie. All other women in Olinka village

think that Nettie is the mother both of Adam and Olivia. Corrine feels this and starts avoiding Nettie. But she also believes that her husband, Samuel must have some illegitimate relation with Nettie. Corrine even looks at Nettie's belly and traces the signs of pregnancy but does not figure out with certainty. On the other hand, Samuel also thinks that the kids are of Nettie's but tells the complete story of how he got both kids. Then, Nettie tells the truth and says that she is the aunt of Olivia and Adam. But Corrine does not believe her. Nettie tries to make her recall the episode on the grocery store when she met with a girl who asked about Olivia. Corrine couldn't recall or perhaps does not want to recall the whole incident. What all she can recall after tracing the patterns with her finger and looking at the flowered square and checkered bird pattern on the quilt that the girl (Celie) was very much like the baby Olivia and she might not take her back. So she tries to forgot the incident as soon as possible. Only what she can recall is that how the clerk on the store treated her. She was acting like somebody as she was a Spelmen Seminary graduate and Samuel's wife. But the clerk treated her like all other ordinary black woman of no importance. It is in this situation the N-word is uttered by Corrine to tell others about the kind of behaviour she faced from the store clerk.

Discussion: The N-word uttered in the context mentioned above clearly indicates the kind of treatment Corrine receives at the hands of the store clerk. The use of N-word is quite significant here to describe the kind of treatment usually a low and dumb black person receives at the hands of others. Keeping in mind her qualification, the institution from where she received her graduation and the person she married, she is trying to be "somebody". But the clerk treated her "like any ordinary nigger."

The function of the N-word used in the utterance of Corrine is rather descriptive than racial. It is descriptive in the sense that it tries to describe a kind of low and humiliating treatment towards a specific kind of group of a specific race. This could be taken as a stereotyping of behaviour towards people of black race or of African origin. The choice of N-word here cannot replace any other word such as black, because it carries with it deep rooted historical, social and racial meanings. The perlocutionary effect of the use of N-word cannot be seen but assessed from the use of N-word phrase by the person who received such treatment years ago. The incident takes place many years ago in the Tenth letter, Celie writes to God. When the clerk asks Corrine about

the purchase of cloth, his behaviour and attitude could be sensed from his utterance when he says “Girl you want that cloth or not? We got other customers sides you”. This clearly describes the clerks behaviour towards Corrine what she refers as “he treated me like any ordinary nigger”. Moreover, the behaviour of the clerk when he measured the cloth and gave it to Corrine also seconds Corrine’s statement about the clerk’s attitude. Celie describes it as “He snatch the cloth and thump down the bolt. He don’t measure. When he think he got five yard he tare it off. That be a dollar and thirty cent, he say. You need thread?” (p.16). This shows that the N-word uttered by Corrine is to express her feelings she received from the clerk. Moreover, Corrine’s thoughts at her death bed also reflect that while forgetting other things she could not forget the treatment of the clerk. This was such a bad experience that she described it as if she was treated like any other “ordinary nigger”.

Utterance 6

> I never thought bout that.
>
> Nettie say somewhere in the bible it say Jesus' hair was like lamb's wool, I say.
>
> Well, say Shug, if he came to any of these churches we talking bout he'd have to have it conked before anybody paid him any attention. **The last thing niggers, want to think about they God is that his hair kinky**.
>
> That's the truth, I say. (p.175)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black woman (Shug Avery) to another black woman (Celie)

Relationship: Friends

Setting: Celie’s home

Context: Both Shug and Celie are talking about God and their belief in God. Celie says to Shug that she stops believing in God as he does not answer her prayers. He is a man and only listens to whites. She thinks if “he ever listened to poor colored women the world be a different place”. Shug tries to convince her that don’t search God

but feel God. Then Shug asks Celie to describe God, what she thinks God look like? Celie says “He big and old and tall and graybeared and white. He wear white robes and go barefooted” (p.175). The description of God is more of an old white man than any other gender of different color. The conversation then shifts to “white folks’ white bible”. But Shug gives her argument that “God wrote the bible, white folks had nothing to do with it”. When Celie argues with Shug that sometime Nettie says that it is written in the bible that “Jesus’ hair was like lamb wool”. To this, Shug replies that black people always think that God has got curly hair. It is in this utterance the N-word is used by Shug to describe about the feelings of a lay black person.

Discussion: The N-word is used in the utterance to describe about a feeling usually all black people have about God. Shug believes that all black people think that God is like them, having their appearance and features. The way it is written in bible that Jesus’ hair were like lambs’ wool so is the case with God. Here it is also reflected in Celie’s statement if God is not more like them, at least he is having curly hair like them. At least they want something common in God and them. Shug’s use of N-word refers to the kind or type of black people who do not use reason. They just think superficially about God and His appearance. By N-word, she means to refer to any ordinary and common black person like Celie. Being herself a black woman, she thinks differently.

The function of N-word used in the above utterance is not racial but to describe a bent of mind usually lay people hold. It also refers to the group of people who do not use reasons and brood over to make sense of the bible and other texts, which have multiple layers of meanings. The N-word used here does not have a specific referent in mind but the place can be filled up by any one. It is generally accepted among the people of certain group to relate God’s appearance to the one they like and used to see.

Moreover, the perlocutionary effect of the utterance carrying N-word could be seen in the argument of Celie that follows. She says, “That’s the truth”. Celie’s use of such phrase also reflects that Celie also thinks like a *nigger* about God. Shug disapproves such reading of the bible and to think about God’s appearance.

Utterance 7

Odessa shrug. She always underfoot, she say.

A lot of drinking in that family, say Jack. Plus, they can't keep that boy of theirs in college. He get drunk, aggravate his sister, chase women, **hunt niggers,** and that ain't all.

That enough, say Shug. Poor Sofia. (p.184)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black man (Jack, Odessa's Husband) about a white boy of a white woman (Miss Eleanor)

Relationship: Strangers

Setting: Odessa's House on a get-together.

Context: The context of the utterance is limited. Miss Eleanor, a white woman visits Odessa's home and wants to talk to Sofia about the situation back at home. Sofia is on parole and she serves at Miss Eleanor's home as a maid. Miss Eleanor request Sofia to see her on the porch for a minute. Both Sofia and Eleanor go out in the porch to talk. After a few moments, all listen to Miss Eleanor sniffling and crying. Albert asks about the matter. Jack, husband of Odessa, replies that Miss Eleanor is worried about her son who is of trouble to her. It is in Jack's utterance, the N-word is used to describe the traits of Eleanor's son.

Discussion: The N-word uttered by Jack describes the bad traits and habits of Miss Eleanor's son. He uses the N-word to explain among other bad habits that the boy is also a "hunt nigger", which means he is doing the job that usually low grade white and some greedy blacks do. The phrase "hunt niggers" also refers to the kind of phenomenon most common in those days when most of the blacks were used for slavery and considered their master's property.

The function of the N-word here is neither racial nor social, rather it describes the phenomenon of nigger hunters who make money by capturing the run-away slaves. They also search other slaves for more money. There is no specific referent in the mind

of Jack when he utters the N-word in relation to a low graded job Miss Eleanor's son does. Moreover, the utterance does create a perlocutionary effect on the listeners such as Shug Avery who thinks about Sofia when she says "Poor Sofia."

Utterances 8 & 9

> So these Olinka people heard about Adam and Eve from the white missionaries and they heard about how the serpent tricked Eve and how God chased them out of the garden of Eden. And they was real curious to hear this, cause after they had chased the white Olinka children out of the village they hadn't hardly thought no more about it. Nettie say one thing about Africans, Out of sight, out of mind. And another thing, they don't like nothing around them that look or act different. They want everybody to be just alike. So you know somebody white wouldn't last long. She say seem tike to her the Africans throwed out the white Olinka peoples for how they look. They throwed out the rest of us, all us who become slaves, for how us act. Seem like us just wouldn't do right no matter how us try. **Wen, you know how niggers is**. Can't nobody tell 'em nothing even today. Can't be rule. **Every nigger you see got a kingdom in his head**. (p.248)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black woman (Celie) to a black man (Albert) about the thoughts of another black woman (Nettie)

Relationship: Wife-Husband

Setting: Albert's Home

Context: Both Albert and Celie are talking, while stitching pants. Celie is describing the Africans' habits and customs that Nettie told her in some of her letters. During the conversation, Celie is referring to Nettie time and again as if the thoughts are not of her own but of Nettie's. The discussion between Albert and Celie drifts to the racial theme and the rift between black and white dichotomy. This meta-meta perspective is quite interesting in the sense that Celie is describing the thoughts of Nettie, who was describing the thoughts and beliefs of Africans. The talk is about the religious beliefs of Olinka people. Quoting Nettie, Celie says that folks in Africa

"believe white people is black peoples children." The discussion between Albert and Celie then switches to Adam and Eve and the serpent who tricked Eve, and how God banished them from the heaven. White people believe that the serpent was black people, the way they chased white folks out of their village. As African cannot tolerate people around them who look different. This would be the most probable reason how Olinka people chased them out of their village for how they looked.

In the same context, Celie also shares another Olinka belief of being alike or different from the reset of other Olinka people. The same applied on the people of the same race who acted differently. Olinka people also threw "all us who become slaves, for how us act," says Celie. It is because that the people thrown out "wouldn't do right," no matter how hard they try. It is in this context the N-word is uttered to refer to the trait mentioned above.

Discussion: The N-word is used to refer to the capabilities of the black people who are the outcast of Olinka society and become slave. It is here the N-word is used by Celie to describe the limitations of the capabilities of black people who serve as slaves. The N-word is used to refer to a kind of man or woman who is stubborn enough to learn anything in the right way. They have their own ways of living, thinking and behaving and do the things in their own way, no matter how hard anybody works on them. The first instance of N-word is used in the utterance in a questioning way. The N-word is used to introduce the concept of limiting capability for learning but also of stubbornness. "Well, you know how niggers is." And then Celie gives argument that "Can't nobody tell 'em nothing even today." It reflects the limiting capabilities of the black people. Moreover, the short phrase that follows also underlines some of the other characteristic traits of *nigger* people, i.e., they "can't be rule". It is evident from the utterance that the people whom they call *nigger* have their own way of behaving and acting and have their own method to please themselves. This can be interpreted from the next use of N-word sentence, in which Celie talks about black people as slaves. She says, "Every nigger you see got a kingdom in his head." The sentence reflects another characteristic trait of black people that its hard to convince them if they believe in anything and that they are happy what they have and own. They "got a kingdom in his head" refers to the free mindset they have and without the influence of any external force.

The function of N-words used in the utterance of Celie is quite apparent from the context. The N-words are used to describe the behavioral traits of black people who resist learning new ways and find it difficult to act the way they are told. They act in their own idiosyncratic ways.

Utterance 10

> Do her peoples know? I ast.
>
> They know, say Sofia. They carrying on just like you know they would. **Whoever heard of a white woman working for niggers, they rave**. She tell them, Whoever heard of somebody like Sofia working for trash. (p.255)

Analysis/Critique:

Race: a black woman (Sofia) to another black woman (Celie) about the attitudes of white people for blacks

Relationship: Celie, Sofia and Harpo at a family gathering

Setting: At Sofia's home

Context: All are sitting at Sofia's home and talking about each other. Celie places Sofia at the store to look for colored as "they never had nobody in a store to wait on 'em before and nobody in a store to treat 'em nice." Celie also asks Harpo about Sofia's work at the store. He says that he is fine with this and that he is looking after the home and Henrietta. Sofia also helps Harpo when Henrietta is sick. Sofia says that Miss Eleanor Jane also helps them prepare special food for Henrietta and bring something special every other day. A few days ago, Sofia and Miss Eleanor indulge in a heated argument about her son's appearance. But now Miss Eleanor is doing odd jobs for Sofia and cook for Henrietta when she comes to know through her mother about Sofia's being their maid. At this, Harpo is quite surprised and says that it would not last long as it is hard to believe white people. When Celie asks whether Ms. Eleanor's family knows that she cooks for Sofia and Henrietta, Sofia replies, "They know". And she then describes the feelings for white people who come to know that some white is

working for black. It is in this description the N-word is used to heighten the impact of black and white relationship.

Discussion: The situation in which the N-word is used reflects the heightened effect of Sofia's utterance about the relationship of whites and blacks. It was hardly believed in those times that a white woman was working for a black woman with a free will. Ms. Eleanor does not need money but now that she knows about Sofia and the way Sofia works for them as a maid to end her twelve years jail and serve trial. She served many years for the mayor's family and won her freedom. During her maid days, Sofia did her best to serve the mayor's family and raise their children against her will. Now, Ms. Eleanor knows the truth about Sofia and serves them every other day by preparing different dishes of yam needed for Henrietta. It is within this context, Sofia utters the N-word saying, "Whoever heard of a white woman working for niggers, they rave". Here the pronoun "they" refers to the whole white race who could not even imagine any white person working for blacks. The N-word uses in the utterance refers not to the dumb and low-grade black people but the whole black race in general. Sofia's utterance also caries Ms. Eleanor statement that she tells to their people. Sofia says that Miss Eleanor told people that they have also not "heard of somebody like Sofia working for trash". Here the word *trash* refers to the white people who are spoiled and do not have social space in the society. Usually, this is referred to as "white trash" but the subject can be understood from the context of the utterance. Moreover, it is interesting that both the words *nigger* and *trash* are used to balance Sofia's statement. On the other hand, *nigger* refers to the highly low and spoiled group of blacks. Whereas, *trash* refers to the low and spoiled group of white people. The function of N-word here is quite significant and a conscious effort is made to balance the effects of both the sentences in Sofia's utterance.

The analysis is presented in a tabular form below to show the wholistic picture of the N-word use and functions. It is reflected through the analysis that the N-word utterances are used differently in different situations for different purposes by different characters. Out of ten N-word instances, only one instance (Utterance 4) is used for highly racial purpose and that comes from the mouth of a white person. Nettie describes this event when she is going to Africa for preaching. Another incident where one may smell racial hatred is in the Utterance 5 in which Corrine describes the event of a white

shopkeeper's treatment towards her. When she speaks about the shopkeeper, "He treated me like an ordinary nigger," reflects the seeds of racial hatred in the shopkeeper's gestures. But these are not uttered by the white shopkeeper. Rather, Corrine took the treatment in a highly insulting way and describes the event and extent of this racial hatred by using N-word phrase with no other alternative. It can be interpreted that, in her view, N-word use could best express her sense of this treatment towards her and the white shopkeeper's behaviour towards other blacks. Therefore, the N-word functions quite differently in this event.

The next chapter deals with the N-word discussion of three novels, their relationship with each other and summarises the key findings of N-word use and functions.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Critical Discussion

In the linguistic critique of African-American fiction, I have demonstrated the interdependence of literary and linguistic studies. It has been elucidated how pragmatics (language in context) and sociolinguistics (language in social use) can inform the reading of African American fiction: I explored the use and function of N-word utterances within van Dijk's theory of context i.e. the context of situation, culture and reference, the sequences and patterns of N-word lexical choices in the narrative, and expressions of themes of race in its prose. At the same time, I argued persuasively that literature is linguistic data and explored the contribution of literary data (African-America fiction in my case) to linguistic research, particularly to the sociocultural, historical and psychological perspectives and effects on linguistic choices of the writers.

Certain linguistic choices are more common and are preferred over others to reflect the true picture of a society. They also reflect a deeper aspect of social life the writers consciously engage in and are not aware of. In general, the N-word is used as a tag-term to demean and degrade the rational faculty of an individual or a group of people. The use of N-word in literature reflects the best possible social life of the individuals and the society in which it is written. It also bears the mark of the author's life and experiences. The usual associative and connotative meanings of N-word are highly racial and considered highly derogatory, especially in the American society. However, in fiction, it is used to serve multiple purposes depending on the situation – who utters it, to whom and with what purpose.

In this study, the first main research question was to trace the use of N-word linguistic choice that African-American authors make to communicate different functions. All N-word instances were collected and analyzed within the co-text and context of their use, and their functions were interpreted within the context of situation, culture and reference. The quantitative results presented in the Table 1 show that the

N-word use in fiction is in line with the writers' intention to portray the society and culture. Its use reflects the position of the characters and the role they play within the text. The N-word appeared thirty-one times in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, sixteen times in *Invisible Man*, and ten times in *The Color Purple*.

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, out of thirty-one N-word instances, two are uttered by whites, twenty are used by blacks for their fellow blacks, and nine are uttered by mulatto women. Out of thirty-one, only two N-word instances (4^{th} & 27^{th}) are used in a highly racial way. In the fourth instance, a white mistress utters the N-word to address a black slave woman who gave birth to an illegitimate child of her master. In the twenty-seventh instance, Mr. Prescott uses the N-word in a highly racial and insulting way to address a group of blacks in the courtroom setting. A detailed contextual analysis in the light of van Dijk's theory of context reflects that both of the utterances are used by whites holding superior positions within American society. The utterers – a white mistress and Mr. Prescott – use their social and political positions to vent their feelings giving a highly racial touch by using N-word. In the first utterance N-word is used as an address term to address Nanny serving as a slave. It was not Nanny's fault to give birth to a child with yellow hairs, but could have been raped by her master. In a reaction to this, the white mistress utters the N-word to ventilate her feelings of hatred and racism. In the twenty-seventh utterance, Mr. Prescott used N-word in a courtroom setting to get the black audience silent. Both of the utterances are used to perform racial function to further degrade and devalue the alredly subjected blacks. The social position and economic situation of the blacks are reflective their time through the depection of the characters and their linguistic choices. Using N-word as an address term and to put black audience in silence is also reflective of the social, economic and political superior position of the whites.

Both of the N-word referring expressions, **"Nigger"** and **"out of any of you niggers back there"** in the utterances "Nigger, whut's yo' baby doin' wid gray eyes and yaller hair?" (2011, p. 23) and "We are handling this case. Another word out of you, out of any of you niggers back there, and I'll bind you over to the big court" (2011, p. 250), respectively are referring to a particular referent who is present and the speaker knows them. In the first referring expression, the referent is known by the white lady, whereas in the second, the referrents are the general black audience sitting at the back

in the courtroom. Both of the N-word referring expressions are used in a direct and highly racial way to demean and devalue the people of other race based on their socio-economic conditions and political positions.

Out of twenty instances uttered by black folks to black folks, two N-word choices (24th & 25th) are used by Tea Cake and Janie about the behavior of whites with blacks in a more general way based on their life experiences. The analysis also reflects that there are eight N-word utterances (15th – 21st & 23rd) used by a mulatto woman, Mrs. Turner in a highly racial way. Her behavior and choice of words reflect that she is more white than her skin. The analysis shows that Mrs. Turner is race conscious and does not want to mix with blacks. On the other hand, Janie is also a mulatto woman but her attitude and behavior is based more on love and humanity than hatred and racial prejudice. In the whole novel, she utters the N-word only once to refer to the behavior of whites with blacks in a more general way. The rest of the nineteen N-word utterances are used by blacks for blacks in a more conversational way. Their tone with each other is more social and friendlier than racial or hatred.

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston's use of dialectal language tells the story of each character, which characterizes their behaviour and position within the text. Different men, women, slaves, free blacks, mulattos, wealthy white slave owners, and others pass comments of racial nature by using N-word. They make N-word choice in the context of their respective life experiences. Janie, the protagonist and central character of the novel, speaks the language of her time and her use of lexical choices reflects the broader social and political set up and scenario of Hurston's time. It is also interesting to note that she uses the N-word only once within the twenty-third utterance when she survives the flood with Tea Cake. Her use of N-word might have been the result of her characterization in contrast to Mrs. Turner who is also a mulatto woman. Both have milky features but quite different in their use of language and social and economic approach to life.

If we see the text in the light of van Dijk's theory of context, Zora Neale Hurston does not seem aware of consciously using N-words in her novel but her use of N-word linguistic choice to communicate the theme of race is in line with her true reflection of the society and culture she is born and bred in. Hurston might have used N-word deliberately both to appropriate lexical choice with that of characters' role as many of

the Harlem Renaissance writers did and to establish a kind of community building and collective cultural solidarity. This community building and cultural solidarity are major factors of Hurston's use of N-word in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

The analysis reflects that both, Hurston and Ellison, have artistically woven the social and cultural life of their characters and their linguistic choices in accordance with their role. Ralph Ellison appears more conscious about the choice and use of linguistic items, while writing the *Invisible Man*. The finding shows that the use of N-word instances in *Their Eyes were Watching God* and *Invisible Man* reflects different meanings within different situations. The N-words are used within different contexts and situations to communicate different meanings and serve different purposes as van Dijk's context model suggests. Moreover, the use of N-word could be taken as an art and craft of the authors to reflect the social and economic conditions of the society and also of the characters who speak the N-word and people the event and the text as augmented by Bernard W. Bell.

The N-word use and function when applied to *Invisible Man* leads to at least two possibilities to consider: one with respect to Ellison, and the other with respect to the black boy (invisible man). Ellison was very conscious about the socio-cultural and political scenario of the time and so his use of highly sensitive word comes in accordance with the social and political maturity of his age and experience. The black boy, on the other hand, reflects the developing understanding of the age and his shifting experiences of society and culture. Moreover, the economic condition of the boy leads him to explore society and culture more closely so far as to become a part of the political movements and experience physical fights with people of his own race in pursuit of livelihood and dreams. The use of N-word throughout these experiences gives a significant insight into the social and cultural attitude of the characters towards race and racism.

In *Invisible Man*, out of sixteen N-word instances, four (1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4th) are uttered by whites, one (11th) is uttered by a mulatto, and the remaining eleven are uttered by blacks. All of the four N-word instances uttered by whites are for blacks in a more direct and highly racial way. These N-word utterances occur in the beginning of the story almost in the same setting by white gentry. The setting mirrors the socio-political position, and cultural and racial superiority of the whites over black school boys.

It is interesting to note that out of all five instances that occur in relation to the narrator of the story, the black boy, only once comes from his mouth; the other four are the thoughts of the boy. No one is the direct listener of these N-word utterances but the readers. Ninth and tenth instances are the thoughts of the narrator. He does not utter the N-words but thoughts of some wicked or crooked black person make him think through the prism of N-words. In the ninth instance, he used the N-word as a simile for "hoarsely voiced word" that does not appeal to the ear. In fact, he consciously makes the readers believe how it affects the hearer to listen to N-word and what perlocutionary effect does it create on the hearer. For him, the N-word utterance does not give a pleasant experience and so the voice of the person in the paint factory. In the tenth instance, the N-word is used as a philosophy using bound morpheme "-ism" for some people who are mean, ill-mannered, and low character. They deceive others, even the people of their own race. The black boy thinks of the N-word and its philosophy when he thinks of the school principal. He thinks, "Prominent Educator Reverts to Field Niggerism!" (p.259). The N-word is used twice within an utterance in the thirteenth and fourteenth instance. Here, again the narrator is thinking about the situation he is trapped in and the possible way out. He confronts another group of blacks who believe in physical struggle and fighting for rights and freedom. This situation makes him believe how easy they become victim of "their" trap. He makes the statement universal when he says "use a nigger to catch a nigger" (p.549). In the twelfth instance, the narrator is quite conscious about his use of N-word in front of the audience gathered for Tod Clifton's funeral. He is taking the N-word as a slur and an abusive term that degrades and humiliates the blacks in general. He calls for a very strong reaction to such a word when he says, "It makes the gun backfire" (p.451). This instance gives an interesting insight into the psyche of the people and society of that time.

There is only one instance in the novel where the N-word is used by a mulatto woman for the black boy, the narrator of the story. Racial superiority and extreme hatred can be sensed in the tone of the mulatto woman who by using the N-word calls the black boy, and in that guise the whole black community, uncivilized, irrational, poor and of below average intellect. It can also be interpreted that this is the worst kind of N-word use by any character within the text of the novel as strong feelings of superiority and racial whiteness prevails.

In *The Color Purple*, the analysis shows quite interesting results. The N-word is used ten times within the whole text. Out of all ten instances, only once (utterance 4) the N-word is used by a white person. In the fourth instance, Nettie recalls the incident while writing a letter to her sister Celie. On the South Carolina railway station an unknown white person says to his wife and comments "Niggers going to Africa" (p.121). This racial comment comes as a surprise for Celie. Except this instance, all other are used by blacks for blacks. The analysis shows that it is only twice that N-word is used directly for the person within the situation. In the first instance, Aunt Kate says to her nephew in a scolding tone: "You're a trifling nigger" (p.22) and in the third utterance, Shug Avery talks about the real nature of Albert and says to Celie in his presence: "Albert git real *niggerish* bout his razor" (p.110). Only one instance (5th) is used by a black woman to refer to a white shopkeeper's treatment towards her "like any ordinary nigger". She didn't like the treatment and speaks out many years after the incident in the company of her husband and Celie. The remaining instances are used for general purpose without targeting anyone. The analysis reflects that the N-word is used in a more general but careful way to reflect the feelings and psyche of the characters.

It is in the first instance, that the N-word is used as a term of endearment. The context and co-text refer to the evets where Kate and Harpo share the same skin colour and are in an auntie-nephew relationship. Kate's utterance is reflective of her love towards her nephew by using N-word as a term of endearment. But the perlocutationary effect of the utterance clearly reflects that Harpo is not reacting to the N-word but for doing work at home. This instance is reflective of N-word use as a term of endearment which Walker realizes and uses in her work to appropriate the context of its use in relation to the society which carries it multiple shades. In an interview to Daniel Smith, published in *The Atlantic*, Randall Kennedy says:

> I think we should take comfort from the idea that a word that has miserable, terrible, hurtful roots can be appropriated by folks and made into something very different, including an anti-racist word, including a term of endearment. It's well known now that within certain sectors of the black community a salutation that is meant to be totally friendly begins, "My nigger." The word takes on its meaning from the context in which it's spoken: tone of voice, who is saying it, where it is said, what the intention is of the saying. (Kennedy, 2002)

On the other hand, Hiram Smith argues that "the term *my nigga* does not function merely as a term of endearment, but it also seems to be a masculinizing discourse marker in male intimate conversation employed to establish and reaffirm in-group status" (Smith, 2019, p. 422). Although this might be true but Kate's use of N-word for her nephew challenges Smith's notion of endearment that it is only reflective of male intimate conversation. This study reveals that it depends on the level of relationship one has and how strong the bonding is between in-group or out-group communication.

Park and Jones argue that "Whites' usage of N-word suggests a certain leve of presumptive racial animus against Blacks" (2008, p. 1342). Their view contradicts with those of Smith's and Kennedy's when they argue that "Despite the assertion that Whites who are immersed in Black culture feel comfortable using the N-word, at least with Black friends, the data fails to support this" (p. 1342). Their study suggests that "even where Blacks use the N-word frequently, Whites do not" (2008, p. 1342). Moreover, "White subconscious racial animus towards Blacks is pervasive and predictive of White usage of racial slurs against Blacks" (2008, p. 1342).

It is quite interesting to mention here that out of total fifty-seven N-word utterances from all three texts, only seven are uttered by whites in different situations – two (4th and 27th) occurances in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, four occurrances (1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4th) in *Invisible Man* and one (4th) occurance in *The Color Purple*. The detailed analysis suggests that all seven N-word utterances are used in a highly racial way no matter what the context was. The data suggests that whenever the N-word is uttered by the White characters it is loaded with a highly negative meaning. An empirical analysis also suggests that N-word use in *Their Eyes were Watching God* and *Invisible Man* carries more pejorative menaing than in *The Color Purple*. Park and Jones's findings are closer to my findings. They also contradict with those of Smith's and Kennedy's view for using N-word as a term for endearment.

There is also a plausible argument that Blacks also use N-word for intra-racial hate purpose. The data suggest that N-word functions differently when uttered by the black characters in different situations. They take liberty in using N-word for serving different purposes depending on the contexts. It is used as a general term to devalue and demean other fellow black characters by attributing negative connotative meaning

to the word. It is used to describe and label stereotypical negative traits of other characters.

In *Their Eyes were Watching God,* twenty out of thirty-one, in *Invisibe Man*, eleven out of sixteen instances, and in *The Color Purple*, nine out of ten are uttered by blacks toward their fellow blacks to communicate certain functions. All thirty-six N-word instances function differently depending on the the contextual use. Their functions fall into three major categories – positive, neutral and negative.

The second main question was about the influence of extra-textual factors on the N-word lexical choices of the authors. A literary text is a reflection of a society, its culture and its people. People, society and culture may be seen and interpreted through the linguistic choices, which are more or less frequently used by the authors or characters within the texts. van Dijk also supports this point when he argues that "social situations are able to influence discourse only indirectly" (van Dijk, 2009, p. 5) If we look at the timeline of historical events, the N-word's use reduced considerably. In 1930, there could have been more frequent use of N-word within the American society, especially in the African-American communities. After the postwar period a wave of unrest overcame the major US states especially the South. It was a period of "urben unrest and racial war began in what James Weldon Johnson called the "Red Summer" (Bell, 1987, p. 93). This period also "marked an unprecedented upsurge of world and national interest in Harlem and black culture" (Bell, 1987, p. 93). Native writers like Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, e. e. cummings, Sherwood Anderson, Eugene O'Neill, and Waldo Frank, also led "the search for new American values and modes of expression". They also found the new vision and direction for white America's salvation" (Bell, 1987, pp. 93-94). It was the "birth of Afro-American culture, highlighting black music, dance, and literature" (Bell, 1987, p. 94).

Zora Neale Hurston's era was seen as the start of literary movement, such as The New Negro Movement and Harlem Renaissance. This can be interpreted that people were getting used to more literary style of writing and the reflection of their society and culture in a more explicit and truthful way. On the other hand, failing to cope with the urban environment and industrial society, African-American's "cling tenaciously to their folk roots" and revival of the New Negro movement. Talking about the social and racial consciousness of Hurston's time, Bell argues that "Seeking to

identify with the folk, race conscious intellectuals and writers began to tap the roots of their ethnic heritage with varying degrees of ambivalence" (Bell, 1987, p. 94). Alain Lock, a Howard University professor of philosophy, declares that:

> The Younger Generation comes, bringing its gifts. They are the first fruits of the Negro Renaissance. Youth speaks, and the voice of the New Negro is heard. What stirs inarticulately in the masses is already vocal upon the lips of the talented few, and the future listens, however the present may shut its ears. Here we have Negro youth, with arresting visions and vibrant prophecies; forecasting in the mirror of art what we must see and recognize in the streets of reality tomorrow, foretelling in new notes and accents the maturing speech of full racial utterance. As cited in (Bell, 1987, p. 95)

Talking about the effects of the New Negro movement, Bell argues that "when the New Negro novelist reconstructed the experience of blacks in America, he invariably highlighted those elements of the racial and national past that defined his personal identity and social vision. The result was a wide range of narrative forms and techniques: poetic realism, historical romance, genteel realism, folk romance, folk realism, and satire" (Bell, 1987, p. 96).

Hurston used N-word thirtyone times, the highest number among the three selected novels. Ellison's use of N-word restricts to sixteen times. This is quite apparent from the data and the analysis that his use of N-words is done skillfully to communicate specific functions. It can also be interpreted that he writes in an age when socio-political struggle of blacks gains momentum paving the way for securing the blacks' rights. After gaining some political success, blacks struggle for their rights, and this is quite visible in Walker's use of linguistic choices and frequency even though the story is set in the past. N-word is used ten times in *The Color Purple*. Moreover, it is apparent from the analysis, not only there is a decrease in the frequency of N-word use over a period of time but also about the sensitivities of its use by the characters within certain situations who people the events. The authors' use of N-word in their works is consistent with the social and political situations of the time.

In *The Color Purple*, first and fifth N-word instances describe nigger as "trifling" and "ordinary", respectively. Walker's use of N-words and adjectives is

aligned with the settings of the text and the characters who speak the language according to the role they are assigned. But they also reflect the social and political situations of the blacks of her time. It can be argued that she was living in a post-civil rights period when the majority of the African-Americans got their rights. Civil Rights Acts of 1964 banned discrimination based on race, color, religion, gender, or national origin. It also ended the unequal application of voter registration requirements; and prohibited racial segregation in schools, at the workplace, and in the public accommodation.

Text in literature is organized into lexical patterns, which can be visualized as networks of words that collocate with each other. It helps in understanding the relationship between the word and the text. Ultimately, it helps in understanding the relationship between the text and the discourse of the society. In doing so, it reflects the mind of the speaker or author.

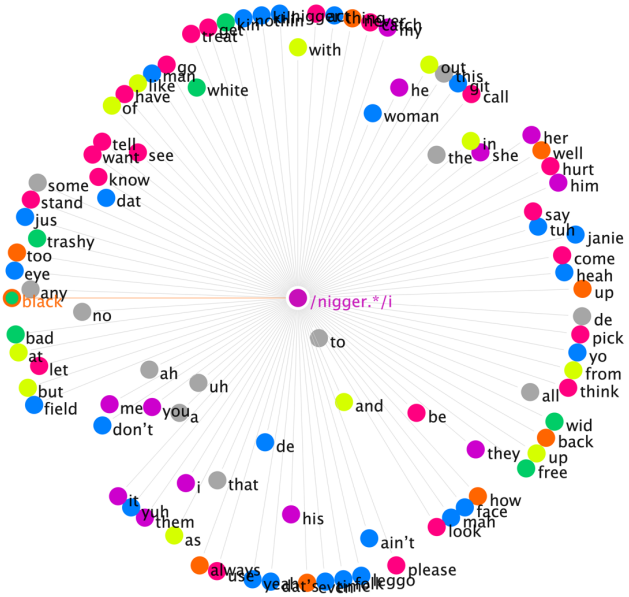


Figure 4: N-word Word Class GraphColl of Three African American Novels

The Figure 4 reflects the Word Class of different choices used to collocate with the N-words within all three novels. It reflects the use of adjectives such as black, trashy, bad, free, etc. used to add additional meanings to the N-word. The words around N-word reflect the semantic closeness between the N-word and other words (lexical or functional). The figure also shows the use and frequency of other category words with

the N-word and that collocation networks provide insight into meaning relationships in language with special focus on the text, the author and the society.

Walker's use of the language of her novel reflects the changing conditions of her time in the broader social and cultural perspective, if seen in relation to the time period of The New Negro Movement from 1920s to the 1930s. People became more sensitive towards the use of language, especially of racial nature as suggested by Bell. So, this could not be seen only in the frequency of racial terminologies but also of adjectives used to describe those choices for black people even by the African-American authors. Systemic functional analysis reveals that using adjectives such as "trifling" and "ordinary" does not in the real sense devalue the qualities of the noun "nigger" as we see in case of Hurston but they do add different connotative and associative meanings to the head word. Hurston's use of almost all negative adjectives with N-words also describe the prevalent conditions and situations of blacks of her time. Her use of highly negative adjectives, which collocate with "nigger" reflects the treatment of whites and even blacks with blacks. The overall socio-political situation and attitude towards blacks in the American society is unveiled through the works of different writers, especially of African-American origin.

It can be ascertained from the analysis that the N-word use gradually became less frequent but acquired more pejorative meanings. At present, its use is considered highly offensive and taboo in the current social system. Its associated meanings changed because of the change in society and people's attitude. Resistance from the people for whom the N-word is used helps change the meaning of the word. The stronger the resistance, the more sensitive its use becomes. In neo-historicist perspective, it is the cultural reflection that makes one use certain words and prefer certain terms over others depending on the social and cultural context of the society one is part of. Language within a society also reflects the attitudes of its users. The linguistic choices of Hurston, Ellison and Walker reflect the social and cultural situations of their age and their thought patterns.

The use and function of N-word in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is similar as well as different from the N-word use and function in *Invisible Man*. They are similar in the sense that they reflect social and cultural aspect of their time. Their use is dependent on the setting of the scenes and the characters who people the scene. *Invisible*

Man was written in the post-World War-II era which led to the integraration and civil rights movement of blacks to attain their due rights of representation. In 1954, the court announced its landmark desegregation decision and termed the doctrine of "separate but equal" as inherently contradictory and unconstitutional (Bell, 1987, p. 188). The narrator in *Invisible Man* also struggles for his identity and to resist the racial doctrine of "keep this nigger boy running". In 1957, the congress passed the first civil rights bill and the prediction could be seen in the struggle of the narrator in the paint factory and also in the arm movement against brotherhood. To end the divide and rule policy of the whites, the narrator's insight can also be sensed when he says "Use a nigger to catch a nigger". He was resisting the armed movement against whites to gain the due rights. The use of N-word goes in line with the socio-political and resistance movements of the time.

Hurston's use of racial linguistic choice is explicitly negative giving the N-word more pejorative meaning within the given N-word phrase utterance. In the first utterance, the adjective "trashy" is used with the N-word making the N-word phrase more negative. Whereas Ellison's use of the adjectives is politer and more different as compared with Hurston's. If we put on van Dijk's theoretical lense of context then it can be argued that Hurston was living in an age of socio-economic and political upheavals, which resulted in the reflection of the attitudes and dominant trends of her time. She wrote at a time when Harlem Renaissance, a black literary struggle was at its peak to at least make themselves heard and read by the wider audience. It appears that this was the only way to start their struggle and to make their voices heard by a larger audience. They also had issues of their publication of their literary work besides white editors. Therefore, black writers focus their themes more related to the struggle of community building, love, sex and identity as can be seen in the writings of other Harlem Renaissance writers. If we see Hurston's choice of vocabulary and different word frequencies within the context of the society, characters live in and narrators belongs to, then it comes to the surface that significant issues of that time are being presented in one way or another. Withing the context of culture, the choices of her use of adjectives with racial words such as like "nigger" with certain frequencies reflect Hurston's overall attitude of the people of that time.

"Rebellion or revolution – that was the burning question of the 1960s," (1987, p. 235) says Bell. The voice was raised in "protest against racism, poverty, war, corruption, sexism". In *The Color Purple*, racism, poverty, corruption and sexism are seen at their best when Celie and Nettie, Shug, Albert and others experience racial discrimination, their deplorable and dreadful state of living, moral and political corruption and sexism in varied forms. Bell further argues "Americans were deeply disillusioned by the moral bankruptcy of their political and economic system and took radical action to correct or to escape the social injustice of the decade in myriad forms of movements and cults" (1987, p. 235). Walker artistically intervowen all themes in *The Color Purple* when even she uses broken structure and phrases, pauses and ellipsis to reflect the mental state of every character epeciall of Celie. "Spearheading these radical changes and most significant for their impact on the Afro-American novel from 1963 to 1983 were the black power movement and, towards the end of 1960s, the wormen's rights movement" (1987, p. 235).

Walker's use of N-word linguistic choices is consistent with the time. There is only one incident where the N-word is used by a white man in a highly racial way. The other instances are more descriptive about the social and cultural behavior as well as the psychology of the characters who utter the word. Quite unlike Ellison, Walker's use of N-word is more prone towards the social and cultural depiction of the characters and their conditions and their relation with each other. Hurston's use of N-word is also similar with Walker's but she is more vocal in describing the race difference and character's conscious efforts to use and avoidance of N-word depending on the relationship with the utterer or the hearer. This makes the N-word function differently in different situations. In *Invisible Man*, the use of N-word for racial purpose is at its highest point. In *The Color Purple*, the use of N-word is more for comradeship and familiarity than for racial slur.

It is also apparent from the analysis that use of certain linguistic items over others indirectly creates different functions. But within literature, the linguistic choice is not interpreted as it is in the non-fictional work. Being critical of the linguistic choices of non-fictional work is more common as it is a well-crafted work to communicate an opinion and a point of view. Whereas, language of literature and especially of fiction cannot be taken strictly as a planned piece of work. It is also an art and art needs

creativity. So, the same rules, which are applied to a piece of prose and essay, cannot be applied strictly to a piece of literature. However, this does not entail that use of certain linguistic choices are without a conscious effort on the part of the author. But to be a good representor of the characters and their life and psychology, an author picks up linguistic choices most relevant to the times of the story and settings.

The use of N-word in American literature has evolved into complex array of functions, both linguistic and artistic, and those functions have rarely been without political and social underpinnings. This is especially true in the case of African-American fiction. African Americans differentiate culturally from the white norms. One important point I hope to make in this study is that in trying to unearth and understand patterns of N-word use, the authors have used N-word to represent social, racial and cultural norms and sensitivities of the people who populate the event. Moreover, the functionality of N-word use within the utterances of the speaker are interpreted not only from the speaker's perspective but also from the perlocutionary effects they create on the hearers.

The study also examines the regional and social factors affecting the linguistic choices within a literary text. Going beyond the usual topics of morphology, semantics and syntax, the current study of African-American fiction emphasizes the extra-textual factors' reflection on the literary discourse. Moreover, by applying van Dijk's theoretical lense of context and Fowler's critical linguistic approach, I have tried to illustrate the effectiveness of the novel in representing the socio-economic conditions of different characters who use the N-word linguistic choice and their strategies for representing and manipulating social and historical situations of the contemporary time. To interpret the racial aspects of the selected literary works in relation to the movements of their time of production and reception, my intention was to bring deeper understanding of the text. The study also helps rediscover patterns and a sense of balance between internal and external factors that directly or indirectly shape literary ideas and practices in the form of certain linguistic choices and their patterns at a given moment.

5.1.1 Language Sensitivities in Intercultural communication

Intercultural communication has also made writers/speakers conscious of the choices of even words (let alone language) when used to express feelings of anger against a group of people. In a recent incident, when Pakistani cricket team captain, Sarfaraz Ahmed uttered the phrase in Urdu language, "*Abay kaalay, teri ammi aaj kahan baitheen hain? Kya parhwa ke aya hai aaj tu?*" to a South African batsman Andile Phehlukwayo, a black batsman, who was playing a very risky shot, faces a ban of four matches from International Cricket Council for uttering offensive and racial remarks. Although, Sarfaraz publicly apologized for uttering "Kaalay", which means "black" and is synonymous with the N-word and formal forgiveness was granted by South African captain du Plessis. However, ICC made plain that they do not allow anyone to use discriminatory or foul language and racial slur against anyone. ICC's Anti-Racial Code for Participants states "Engaging in any conduct (whether through the use of language, gestures or otherwise), which is likely to offend, insult, humiliate, intimidate, threaten, disparage or vilify any reasonable person in the position of a player, player support personnel, umpire, match referee, umpire support personnel, or any other person (including a spectator) on the basis of their race, religion, culture, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin" (Dawn, 2019).

On the other hand, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) issued a statement on the "unfortunate incident" and expressed its "zero tolerance approach towards racist comment made; in whatever context" (Dawn, 2019). They also promised to pay more attention to "player education and training at all levels." Besides praising Sarfaraz's contribution as a team captain, PCB also resolved that "any hurtful remarks by any cricketer, let alone the captain, are not acceptable…" (Dawn, 2019).

It is also interesting to note that the word *kaalay* is not considered offensive under any circumstances in Pakistan. Different social and media personnels commented on the incident and the use of word *kaala* and *gora* in relation to Pakistani context. Sports journalist Taha Anis said in his tweet, "People are actually saying Sarfraz should get away with it because racism is acceptable in Pakistan. Shouldn't he get an even more severe punishment precisely because racism is so accepted that we need to do our best to curb out this menace?" Attiq-uz-Zaman commented on Taha Anis tweet as, "People are gonna exaggerate and gonna make him look racist. There is no way he

meant to be racist in his phrase. It's acceptable comment in our language and we often use Gora aur Kaala. He was just joking. Some people actually translating it". Attiq-uz-Zaman's comment comes in favour of Sarfaraz and his interpretation is more contextual than literal. Literally, if one tries to look at one thing in a specific way, others follow suit. People tend to see things regionally but ICC or any other international body or organization sees and interprets events from a global perspective both for redressal of grievances, if any, and accommodation of a larger audience from across the Continents. In addition to Attiq, Smita Parkash, Asia News International News Editor, pointed out to the problem that there is "little awareness that it is a racial slur" in the Indian subcontinent. Sarfraz might have been under the influence of his culture but picked up by a stump microphone. Not aware of intercultural communication and sensitivities of racial slur landed him in trouble.

In order to conclude intercultural discussion, I would use a script from Randall Kennedy's interview published in *The Atlantic* in 2002. In an answer to the question of Danial Smith about the right to use N-word with friends and white friends with no political, social or cultural purpose in mind, Randall Kennedy responded:

> I think people should be thoughtful. I think that people should know about the baggage that comes along with this word. I'm certainly against ignorant usage of the word. Say somebody's using a word. When you ask them, "Do you know anything about the history of this word?", and they say, "No, I don't." Well, then I think that's a problem, because they are using this very powerful provocative word—a word which if used in the wrong setting might cost them their lives. It's like somebody playing with a very powerful device and they don't know what the device is about. I want people to know what the device is about and if they play with it after they know about it, okay. But at least know what you are doing. (Kennedy, That Word, 2002)

Not knowing anything about the N-word and its history can land one in a difficult situation. African-Americans feel pain in the very word as strands of contextual meanings are attached to the N-word like a putty. They feel it even it is no longer in use or used occasionally. US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas Greenfield

expressed her views about racism by recalling her past and the use of N-word for her. Whatever may be the function of the N-word, but she feels pain till today. She said:

> I grew up in the segregated South. I was bused to a segregated school, and on weekends, the Ku Klux Klan burned crosses on lawns in our neighborhood. When I was in high school, I was asked by a little girl, for whom I babysat, if I was an N-word because her dad had used that word for me. (Greenfield, 2021)

She further said, "I know the ugly face of racism. I lived racism. I have experienced racism. And I survived racism" (Greenfield, 2021). She takes a universal position while talking at a UN General Assembly Commemorative Meeting for International Day for the Elimination of Racial Descrimination and says:

> Racism is the problem of the racist. And it is the problem of the society that produces the racist. And in today's world, that is every society. And in so many of our communities and countries, racism is endemic. It's built in, like a rot in a frame. And it remains, and it festers, and it spreads because many of those in charge allow it to. Others look away and pretend it's not there. But like a cancer, if ignored, it grows. (Greenfield, 2021)

The purpose to use these excerpts here is to highlight the importance of racial words' use and the functions they play not only in American society and culture but also worldwide. Although it may be termed as a politically motivated statement but her focus is not directed toward African-Americans only. She includes Native American tribes, xenophobia and discrimination against Asians, Asian-Americans, and Pacific Islanders for their sovereignty and respect.

Examining the N-word is beneficial for reconnecting Pakistani people to the Amercian past and revisitng currently held beliefs through new ideological viewpoints. In a related way, presentism, described by Davidson (2003) as "the view that only present is real" (p. 77), offers a useful perspective when discussing the N-word, since what we know today helps people understand society's dominant thinking during an earlier time. I hope to enable people to deconstruct the N-word and identify its context

of use. It is also important to note that people should also have to identify the function(s) – appropriate or inappropriate – within its contextual use.

5.1.2 Language Sensitivities in Pakistani Context

Societies are becoming language sensitive gradually. The language sensitivities come with experience and the external factors, such as the socio-economic and political developments of the time. It is also directly linked with different factors, viz education, age, gender and social class. The more the education, age and experience of a person, the higher the language sensitivity is. Gender and social class also reflect different streams of language sensitivities. Usually, women are more language sensitive than men. Moreover, the higher the social class, the higher the language sensitive attitude among its users. But this may be challenged on the ground that people belonging to upper-middle class are more sensitive than the lower and the elite class. It can be argued that lower class usually does not care much about the degree of formality under different situational contexts, whereas the elite class does not bother using sensitive linguistic choices. They take liberty of their position and use less refined language as they have no fear of any upper strata existing higher than them (Hudson, 2001).

Some words gain pejorative meanings over a period depending on the use in relation to religious practices, ethnic background, caste, profession, or political affiliations. In Pakistan, there are many sensitive words, which gained pejorative meaning over a period of time and are spread across different domains, such as religion (*musalman or muusla, esai or musalli, yahoodi, hindu*, etc.), ethnic (*Khan, Pathan, Sikh, Sindhi, Punjabi*, etc.), caste (*Shaikh*, *Arain, Jolaha, Mochi*, etc.), biological orientation (*khusra* etc.), profession (*fauji, kummi, bunia*, etc.), and political (*patwari, youthia,* etc.).

If one sees the choice of vocabulary and its frequency within the context of the society and culture, characters live in and narrators belong to, then it becomes clear that significant issues of that time are being presented in one way or the other. Choices of certain racial words like *black*, *nigger*, *negro*, etc. with certain frequency reflect the overall attitude of the people of their age. For them, these themes were of high importance as they were struggling against the most prevalent, dominant, and

supremacist indoctrinate attitude of white masters and it was difficult for them to speak openly against them even in private.

Moreover, sensitive word choices reflect one's attitude towards certain concepts and help one to ventilate his/her inner feelings. Certain words give explicit meanings and are very critical when used for a larger audience, especially for a group of different ethnic origin. They also change their meanings depending on the sensitivities of issues and strands of meaning attached to it. Certain words (become derogatory) used frequently in the past become offensive and taboo in the present social system. Their social meanings change because of the change in society and people's attitude towards them. Resistance from the people for whom the words are being used helps change the meaning of the word. The stronger the resistance, the more sensitive its use becomes.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The N-word analysis of the three novels reflect that the N-word is used for multiple purposes depending on the context of situation, reference and culture. Moreover, it is also observed that society and culture play an important role for its different functions. It is also reflected from the analysis that the N-word performs different functions depending on who the speaker is, their relationship with the hearer and the situation within which the N-word occurs. Moreover, besides using it for typical multiple purposes, the N-word use within fiction is more dominating and more vocal to represent the socio-economic situations of the time and psychological conditions of the speaker.

However, following the detailed analysis of selected three novels, some key findings are made as follows:

1. N-word function is dependent on the context of its use and may take varied forms.
2. N-word's function is dependent on the utterer's age and relationship with the hearer.
3. N-word's function is also dependent on the race and ethnic background both of the utterer and the hearer.

4. Its function also depends on the social position of the utterer and to whom the word is uttered.
5. N-word utterance is also dependent on the socio-economic conditions of the utterer and the listener.
6. Its function also varies depending on the culture of the society and the level of interaction one is involved in.

In addition to these findings, the key contribution of this research is decoding of the use of N-word for comradeship and familiarity, instead of its mere use as a racial slur. The N-word use is considered the most controversial in the history of African Americans and so does its functions. The study concludes that the use and functions of N-word in literature is multi-dimensional. It is used for social and cultural behavior, family and comradeship relationships, economic and political expressions, individual and group behavior (niggerish), philosophy of a particular mindset (niggerism), and racial purposes.

5.3 Recommendations

Language belongs to everyone regardless of the color of skin (white, black, brown, etc.) by virtue of its naturalness. No one can be blamed for appropriate usage of language in the right context. As the findings reflect, the N-word, used as a paradigmatic slur, can mean different things or convey different senses depending on the speaker, hearer and the context. It is a highly sensitive word in the lexicon of English dictionary. It has undergone multiple changes and has multiple uses, depending on the context and relationship of the utterer and hearer. Based on the above listed findings, it is recommended that the N-word use can be replaced by finding a better alternative having less pejorative meaning. It could also be minimized and restricted as in the cases of some nursery rhymes. Just as the children rhymes have replaced the lexical choice of N-word with that of another rhyming word “tiger”, which is although a different yet positive alternative of the word “nigger.”

Eeny, meeny, miny, mo,
Catch a tiger by the toe;
If he hollers let him go,
Eeny, meeny, miny, mo.

There could have been other choices of N-word use for less racial and better function. However, this could be done at the cost of one threat. Replacing the N-word for better alternative in literature would not communicate the purpose it used to communicate. Also, it would not be able to reflect the socio-cultural and historical aspect of the society of its use. However, in glossary, reading notes or preface may be provided for the lexically changed edition of N-word free literature. N-word free literature does not mean that it would lose the theme of race or racism and its linking themes. But it would make the reader more aware about the use of N-word choice and its sensitivities as a racial slur for a particular group. The reason behind this replacement is what Emily Bernard (2007) reflects in her review of Jabbari Asim's work, *The N Word: Who Can Say It, Who Shouldn't and Why,* that readers are "forced to reflect on the psychological effects of this constant confrontation with the word on the page. Each repetition compels us to revisit the awful history the word carries" (p. 101).

The use of N-word in society, literature, or otherwise can be minimized to the extent of its complete ban and be replaced with better lexical choices to construct the identity of the African Americans in a much better and constructive way. Moreover, what consequences its use within an utterance could lead should be accepted with a positive viewpoint or reappropriation. Sarfraz Ahmad faced a suspension of four matches not knowing the consequences it would bring and the trouble it would land him in.

Adegbembo and MacQuarrie (2017) talk about the reappropriation of the term N-word, instead of making it as a taboo. They say that "reappropriation occurs when a stigmatized group purposefully refers to themselves with the stigmatized label used by those in the out-groups" (p. 17). But they argue that self-labelling may be a manifestation of the ideologies of White supremacy instead. They, on the other hand, refer to Croom who believe that "linguistic expressions are open to semantic evaluation and renegotiation", (2017, p. 17) regardless of the word or term in question.

This study is a 'call to action' for broadening the study of N-word use and other sensitive lexico-syntactic choices within literature written in any linguistic code to minimize racial and social slurs, including linguistic features. In the light of current research, studies could be conducted on the use of abusive language in general. In cultures like Pakistan, abusive language is also used to denote familiarity and in certain

classes, evidence of power. Use of abusive language amongst friends and intimate social circles is also an evidence of frankness amongst individuals from similar and different strata of the society. These and many other ideas may be used for further studies, in a variety of languages and cultures. An in-depth study of any culture is incomplete until the study includes a critique of language from multifarious aspects. Studies like the ones recommended will, of course, entail a systematic study of the linguistic choices reflective of that age and period in which the work was written, as was the mandate of this study.

Future research in the area of lexical semantics focusing on racial, ethnic and other slurs in literature and society is imperative. As socieites are getting more and more language conscious, so does the use of different slurs. The origin, culture and social use of certain sensitive lexical choices not only reflect the culture but also people's attitude towards its use in different contexts. In applied linguistics, the teaching of literature as language is more technical and the teacher might be aware of the use of sensitive lexical choices which may directly or indirectly harm or target a particular group.

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APPENDIX-I

Contextual use of N-word in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

N-word Instances and its contextual use and function in Their Eyes Were Watching God

Sr. No	N-word Utterance	Race	Relationship	Contexts	Remarks/ Function
1	…no trashy nigger (p.17)	A black woman (Nanny) to a black woman (Janie) about a black man (Taylor)	Grandmother-granddaughter	Janie and Jonny Taylor's kiss under a pear tree. A family setting	Not racial but having social significance. Socio-economically poor and without roots.
2	…de nigger man (p.19)	A black woman (Nanny) to a black woman (Janie)	Grandmother-granddaughter	Nanny is talking about her life experience and somewhat universal truth about racism. A family setting but social context	Not a remark to anybody but explaining the general phenomenon of a slave black man and a poor black woman's position where white man is the ruler.
3	De nigger woman (p.19)				

4	Nigger, (p.23)	A white mistress to a black woman slave a black woman slave to a white mistress	Mistress - slave woman (Nanny) and A Slave woman (Nanny) - Mistress	The context is about a white baby girl born to a black woman, Nanny, as an illegitimate child. A family setting but social and racial context	Highly racial as white and black relationship. Not Racial, but more of a slang for poor socio-economic condition.
5	…uh nigger and uh slave (p.24)				
6	…liver-lipted nigger (p.30)	A black woman to a black woman about a black man (Logan)	Grandmother-granddaughter about granddaughter's husband	Janie is visiting her grandmother's home after marriage and talks about love after marriage. A family setting	Not racial but used as an address term towards fellow black men within family setting
7	… some low-lifted nigger (p.43)	A black man to a black woman	Husband (Logan)-wife (Janie)	Logan foresees that Janie will elope with some low-lifted nigger and will suffer, that she hides A family setting	Not racial but out of disgust and anger to refer to a very poor or low background black person. A social slur

8	… dat nigger (p.92)	A black man to a black woman about another black male	Dave to Daisy about Jim	Both Jim and Dave are showing their love for Daisy and trying to impress her. A porch talk! A social setting	Not racial but humorous to let each other down in front of Daisy Used as a social slur for somebody of no value
9	… dat trashy nigger (p.110)	A black woman to a black woman about a black man	Friends: Pheoby to Janie	At Pheoby's home, both Janie and Pheoby are discussing about two-headed doctor's advances for getting close to Jody. A private setting	Not racial but used to ventilate feelings of hatred and disgust. Used as a social slur for somebody of mean nature
10	… dese stray niggers (p.122)	**A** black man to a black woman about other black men	Neighbors (Janie's lover or suitors)	At Janie's store porch in the absence of others. A social setting but more of private nature	Not of racial nature but to belittle and devalue others' characters Used as a social slur for somebody of little value

11	… some trashy nigger (p.142)	A black woman's thoughts about black a black man	Janie's lover Tea Cake	Janie in bed at her home A very private setting	Used as a racial slur for someone of no trust and value
12	Please, Jesus, don't let them nasty niggers hurt her boy (p.168)	A black woman's thought about some black men (unknown)	A wife (Janie) for some unknown people out of love for her husband (Tea Cake)	Tea Cake's rented home where Janie is praying for her husband. Janie's husband could be fighting with gambling competitors A very private setting	Social: hatred and anger Used as a social slur to refer to a group of bad nature rascals.
13	grabbed dat nigger by his necktie (p.170)	Black male (Tea Cake) to black female (Janie)	Husband and wife	Tea Cake's rented home A very private setting	Social: feelings of anger and hatred Not racial but used as a social slur to refer to a kind of person of bad and criminal nature and ill will.

14	Dumb niggers and free schools.	A black man to a black man	Gambling friends	Tea Cake's house in Everglades and a gambling and entertaining place for all black men and women. A private-cum-social setting	Social and generalized to the whole black race studying at free schools Used as a social but stereotypical slur with some shades of racial slur
15	all them common niggers	A black woman (Mrs. Turner) to a black woman (Janie)	neighbours in Everglade	Janie's home in Everglade	More hatred and racial then social rather double racial. Used as a racial slur between a mulatto and a black
16	Ah can't stand black niggers	A black woman (Mrs. Turner) to a black woman (Janie)	neighbours in Everglade	Janie's home in Everglade	More of hatred, racial and economic than social Used as a racial slur

17	Always singin' ol' nigger songs!	//			Used as a racial slur with elements of cultural backwardnes s
18	Don't bring me no nigger doctor tuh hang over mah sick-bed.	//			Used as a highly racial slur
19	ain't never had uh nigger tuh even feel mah pulse	//			Used as a racial slur
20	Ah don't go in no nigger store tuh buy nothin' neither.	//			Used as a racial slur
21	He wuz uh white folks' nigger." (p.191)	//			Used as a racial slur with elements of hatred
22	She figgers we'se jus'	a black male (Sop-de-Bottom)	Friends	Tea Cake's home or the fields	In anger it is used to talk about the

	uh bunch uh dumb niggers	to a black male (Tea Cake) about someone's (Mrs. Turner's) thought			meta-perspective of Mrs. Turner which is used more as a social slur and racial. Functions as a linguistic choice for "stupid"
23	You see **dese no count niggers** come in heah and break up mah place! (p.203)	a black woman (Mrs. Turner) to a black man (Mr. Turner) about a group of black folks	Wife-husband	Mrs. Turner's home	In anger Used more as a racial as well as a social slur
24	It's bad bein' **strange niggers** wid white	a black man (Tea Cake) to a black woman (Janie)	husband-wife	Home in Palm Beach after surviving from the storm	Used both as a social and racial slur

	folks. (p.229)				
25	De ones he don't know is **bad niggers**. (p.229)	a black woman (Janie) to a black man (Tea Cake)	Wife-husband	//	Used both as a social and racial slur
26	**No nigger woman** ain't never been treated no better. (p.249)	Black people	black people gathered in the courtroom and share the same color of skin and thoughts	Courtroom	More social than racial
27	Another word out of you, out of **any of you niggers** back there… (p.250)	a white man to common black men and women listening to Janie's case	Mr. Prescott (State Lawyer) and the black audience but especially to Sop-de-Bottom (Tea Cake's friend)	Courtroom	Highly racial and social
28	Well, long as she don't shoot no white man she kin kill jus' **as many niggers** as	A group of black men	Unknown but of same skin	Boarding house after Janie's court trial	Out of hatred and anger in social than racial

	she please." (p.253)				
29	Yeah, **de nigger women** kin kill up all de mens dey wants tuh, but you bet' not kill one uh dem dey wants tuh, (p.253)				Social than racial
30	'uh white man and **uh nigger woman** is de freest thing on earth.' (p.253)				Social and political
31	but de very first day **dat lap-legged nigger** come back heah makin' out he wuz	a black man (Sop) to other black men about another black man (Mrs. Turner's brother)	Neighbours	Social gathering in the town after the funeral service of Tea Cake and Janie's trial	More of hatred, anger and disgust than racial

	lookin' fuh work, (p.255)				

APPENDIX-II

Contextual use of N-word in *Invisible Man*

N-word Instances and its contextual use and function in Invisible Man

Sr. No	N-word Utterance	Race	Relationship	Contexts	Remarks/ Function
1	Let me at **that big nigger**!	a group of elite white people about a group of black boys	Master (Whites) and servant (Black)	in the main ballroom of a hotel In the context of the royal battle, when all the boys were made blind, the narrator hears from a group of whites the use of N-word utterance.	N-word is used as a racial slur to dehumanize, degrade and belittle a group of black boys
2	I want to get at **that ginger-colored nigger.** (p.21)				
3	I heard, "**These niggers** look like they're about to pray!" (p.26)	a white man to another white man about a group of black boys	unknown but could be colleagues or friends or big wigs of the town	in the main ballroom of a hotel	Used as a racial slur to look down upon a group of black school boys, showing contempt and hatred

4	**"Leggo, nigger! Leggo!"** (p.28)	a white man to a black boy	unknown but could be of master and servant	in the main ballroom of a hotel all the black boys are asked to get the reward in the form of coins from an electrified rug. The boys are scared and terrified due to the shock they received and now they are trying to stand away from the rug. White men are dragging them back to the rug.	Uses as a racial slur to refer to a black boy of no importance and whose identity and feelings do not matter.
5	**"Keep This Nigger-Boy Running."** (p.33)	a black man (grandfather) to another black man (the boy)	Grandfather – grandson relationship	The boy has a dream and he is enjoying in a circus when his grandfather asks him to open the envelop which is in the	The N-word is used in a general context to refer to the black boy who keeps moving throughout

				briefcase and reads out loud the short message written in letters of gold.	the whole story and is struggling for life.
6	I'm his grandson— **on the 'field-nigger' side.** (p.76)	a black man (unknown) to the school-boy and others holding Mr. Norton	Unknown (stranger or could be of very close relationship)	at Golden Day bar and game house	N-word is used as a job descriptor rather than a social or racial slur
7	**Nigger,** this isn't the time to lie. (p.137)	A black man (Dr. Bledsoe) to a black boy (Invisible Man)	College Principle - Student	Dr. Bledsoe's office	Used as a highly racial slur to devalue an demean others even though both belong to the same race.
8	Yes, **I had to act the nigger!** (p.141)	A black man (Dr. Bledsoe) to a black boy (Invisible Man)	College Principle - Student	Dr. Bledsoe's office	The N-word is used to function as a typical behavior associated with irrationality and obstinacy.

9	The hoarsely voiced word grated my ears **like "nigger"** in an angry southern mouth ... (p.215)	Thought of the black boy (Invisible Man) about a black man in the brotherhood meeting	Unknown (Black brotherhood)	Paint factory office	Not used as a racial slur but as a descriptor of highly bad and hoarsely voiced sound.
10	***Prominent Educator Reverts to Field Niggerism!*** (p.259)	The black boy thinking about another black man(Dr. Bledsoe)	Student – Principle	On one of the roads of Harlem taking him on his way home.	The N-word functions as a philosophy of typical behavior associated with highly bad action. Used as a social slur
11	**we don't want you field niggers** coming up here from the South and ruining things. (p.321)	a black woman to a black boy (the Narrator)	An unknown mulatto woman (a little yellow woman) to a passerby (black boy)	Morning time in front of the mulatto woman's house	Used in a highly racial way to demean and devalue a person to the lowest level. Also used as a job descriptor and behavior associated with that job.

12	Tell them to teach them that **when they call you *nigger* to make a rhyme with *trigger* it makes the gun backfire.'** (p.451)	a black man (the narrator) to the black audience gathered for Tod Clifton's funeral.	brotherhood, blackness, same skin	Mount Morris Park	Used to function as an alarm and to make people aware of its sensitive use which is usually associated with blacks and their behaviours.
13 & 14	**'Use a nigger to catch a nigger.'** (p.549)	a black man's thoughts about black men (usually the whole race)	Thinking aloud about the whole race	During the riot night in the streets of Harlem	Used to describe a universal truth about the kind of people who become instrumental for the most powerful.
15	**"Nigger in the coal pile**, eh, Joe?" (p.556)	Two black men (Ras the Destroyer's men) to another black man (The Narrator)	Unknown but Blackness	During the riot night in one of the streets of Harlem	Used as a social slur to describe one's plight.
16	**You goddam black nigger sonofabitch**				Used as social slur in a highly negative and abusive way

APPENDIX-III

Contextual use of N-word in *The Color Purple*

N-word Instances and its contextual use and function in *The Color Purple*

Sr. No	N-word Utterance	Race	Relationship	Contexts	Remarks/ Function
1	You're **a trifling nigger.** (p.22)	A black woman (Kate) to a black boy (Harpo)	Aunt-Nephew Relationship	Harpo doesn't work and says it's the women's job to bring water buckets. To that comment, his Aunt replies in a scolding tone.	Used as a scolding term for family members in an informal setting to refer to an idle and lazy person
2	**Niggers** don't know how to act (p.105)	A black woman (Shug Avery) to another black woman (Squeak/ Mary Agnes)	Black community acquaintance (Blackness). But later on develops as friends	They are interacting in the front room of Odessa's home and Shug is convincing Squeak to go for public singing at Harpo's. She utters N-word to refer to uneducated, ill-mannered and dumb blacks who do nothing but criticize others for their	Used as a synonymous term for dumb, ill-mannered and uneducated black people

				efforts to progress.	
3	Albert git **real niggerish** bout his razor. (p.110)	A black woman (Shug) to a black woman (Celie) about a black man (Albert, who is present in the conversation)	Shug is Albert's friend/love and are in an intimate relationship, Celie is Albert's wife. Celie and Shug are also friends now.	After discovering the mean nature of Albert about hiding Nettie's letters, both Shug and Celie are at home and talking to each other in the company of Albert. Shug needs a razor to trim her nail but she utters the N-word to reveal the real nature of Albert.	Used as an adjective to describe the nature of usually a black person who is ill-mannered, uneducated, and irrational. A person having the characteristics of a nigger.
4	**Niggers** going to Africa, he said to his wife. (p.121)	a white man (unknown) to his white wife about a group of black people (Nettie,	Unknown (white-black)	On the South Carolina railway station where Nettie and others got off the train to take fresh air and dust their cloths.	Used as a highly racial slur to degrade people of colored race and show hatred and

		Corrine, Samuel, Olivia and Adam)		after knowing that they are going to Africa, the white man "looked offended and tickled too" and uttered the racial N-word slur.	contempt toward them.
5	he treated me **like any ordinary nigger.** (p.169)	a black woman (Corrine) to a black man (Samuel) and her black maid (Nettie) about a white shopkeeper	A wife to her husband and maid	Samuel and Corrine's home in Olinka, a village in Africa. Corrine is narrating an incident of a shopkeeper's behaviour towards her.	Used to refer to an unimportant person whose existence doesn't matter, rather their presence irritates them.
6	The last thing **niggers,** want to think about they God is that his hair kinky. (p.175)	a black woman (Shug Avery) to another black woman (Celie)	Friendship	Celie's home. Both Shug and Celie are talking about God and their belief in God.	Not racial but used for a lay and common black person who is innocent.
7	He get drunk, aggravate	a black man (Jack, Odessa's	Just an acquaintance but Jack	In response to Miss Eleanor and Sofia's talk	Not used as a racial slur but means to catch

	his sister, chase women, **hunt niggers,** and that ain't all. (p.184)	Husband) to other family members about a white boy's behaviour	seems knowing a lot about Miss Eleanor's boy and his behaviour.	in the porch, Jack tells others that Miss Eleanor is worried about her son who is a consistent source of trouble for his family.	slaves and dumb black people for money
8 & 9	Wen, you know **how niggers is**. Can't nobody tell 'em nothing even today. Can't be rule. **Every nigger you see got a kingdom in his head**. (p.248)	a black woman (Celie) to a black man (Albert) about the thoughts of another black woman (Nettie)	Wife-Husband at Albert's Home	The discussion is about one of the beliefs of Olinka people who cannot tolerate different people and behave in a certain way. Olinka people threw whites and some of the blacks who become slave out of their village for not looking and acting like them.	Not used as a racial slur but to refer to a fixed mindset of some black people that cannot be influenced and changed. Only thinking in a linear way.
10	Whoever heard of a white woman **working**	a black woman (Sofia) to another black	Celie, Sofia and Harpo at a family gathering	Sofia describes the foolings of whites if they come to know that a white	Not used as a racial slur but to refer to socially and economically

	for niggers, they rave. (p.255)	woman (Celie) about the attitudes of white people for blacks		woman is working for black people especially when the black is of very low social and economic position	low and very poor background and condition of blacks