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Linguistic stigmatisation and identity negotiation in Nigerian film discourse: A sociolinguistic analysis of bimbo Ademoye 's *Sibe*

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Abstract

This study examines linguistic stigmatisation and identity negotiation in Nigerian film discourse, using Sibe as its primary text. It investigates how language constructs and reinforces negative social identities, how individuals respond to imposed stigma, and how linguistic interaction facilitates resistance and identity reconstruction. The study adopts a qualitative research design, employing textual and discourse analysis of purposively selected dialogue extracts that represent derogatory labelling, social devaluation, stigma management, supportive communication and self-assertion. The analysis is guided by Goffman's Stigma Theory as the primary theoretical framework and Bucholtz and Hall's sociocultural linguistic approach to identity as a complementary framework. Findings reveal that derogatory expressions and repeated negative labels are used to construct Sibe as socially inadequate and discredit her identity. The symbolic references to her repeated dismissals as numbers 22 and 23 further reinforce this stigmatised positioning. However, supportive interactions, particularly Natasha's affirming expressions, provide alternative interpretations of Sibe's identity and contribute to her growing self-confidence and agency. The analysis also demonstrates how English, Nigerian Pidgin and Yoruba-derived expressions function as resources for cultural identification, interpersonal positioning and self-expression. Sibe's eventual assertiveness and recognition illustrate the negotiation and reconstruction of an identity initially shaped by social devaluation. The study concludes that language functions not only as an

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instrument of stigmatisation but also as a resource for challenging imposed identities and negotiating alternative social positions. It contributes to sociolinguistic research by bringing linguistic stigmatisation and identity negotiation together in the analysis of Nigerian film discourse.

Keywords: Linguistic stigmatisation, Identity negotiation, Nigerian film discourse, Nigerian Pidgin, Sociolinguistics.

Introduction

Human interaction extends beyond the exchange of information, it is a social process through which individuals construct identities, express attitudes and negotiate relationships. In social interaction, linguistic choices can establish belonging, reinforce social differences and position individuals positively or negatively. [4]Capture this relationship by arguing that "identity is the product rather than the source of linguistic and other semiotic practices." This perspective highlights the role of language in constructing and negotiating social identities.

One way language influences social identity is through linguistic stigmatisation, which involves the use of expressions and labels that discredit, devalue or marginalise individuals. Such practices can shape how people are perceived and how they understand their social positions. Goffman's Stigma Theory (1963) provides a useful framework for examining how socially discrediting attributes affect an individual's identity and interactions. Similarly, [5]demonstrate the significance of language in generating social meanings, shaping perceptions of identity and producing discriminatory outcomes. Stigmatising expressions therefore do not merely communicate personal disapproval, they can also reinforce unequal social relationships.

In the context of this study, linguistic stigmatisation refers to the use of derogatory labels, negative descriptions and other discrediting expressions to construct an individual as socially undesirable, inadequate or inferior. It is examined through Baba Olode's repeated verbal attacks on Sibe, which position her negatively and associate her identity with failure and disgrace. Social devaluation, on the other hand, refers to the process through which an individual is assigned diminished social worth, respect or recognition through negative evaluations and discriminatory expressions. In *Sibe*[6], this is reflected in Baba Olode's descriptions of Sibe as "a disgrace" and "not useful for anything," as well as his use of the numbers 22 and 23 to emphasise her repeated

[4]Bucholtz, Mary, & Hall, Kira (2005). Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach. Discourse Studies, 7(4–5), 585–614. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445605054407

[5]Craft, Justin, & Wright, Kelly, & Weissler, Rachel & Queen, Robin (2020). Language and discrimination: Generating meaning, perceiving identities, and discriminating outcomes. Annual Review of Linguistics, 6, 389–407. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-linguistics-011718-011659

[6]Ademoye Bimbo. A3 Studios. (2026, July 25). *Sibe (*Film). Bimbo Ademoye TV. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/@bimboademoyetv

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dismissals. These expressions reduce her social worth and reinforce her marginalised position within the family.

Identity, however, is not necessarily fixed by negative social evaluations. Individuals may negotiate, resist or challenge identities imposed on them through interaction. The Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) sociocultural linguistic approach explains how identities are constructed relationally through linguistic practices, positioning and interaction. This perspective is particularly relevant to examining how supportive expressions and self-assertive language can challenge negative labels and provide alternative representations of individuals. Identity negotiation in this study refers to the interactional process through which individuals respond to, accept, resist or redefine the identities assigned to them by others. It involves the use of linguistic resources to challenge negative social positioning and establish alternative representations of the self. In Sibe, this process is reflected in Sibe's responses to Baba Olode's derogatory descriptions, her interactions with Natasha, and her eventual expressions of confidence and self-assertion. Her declaration, "I am now a star," illustrates an attempt to move beyond the socially imposed identity of failure towards a more positive self-representation.

These processes are significant in Nigerian film discourse, where characters' language choices often represent social relationships, cultural values and struggles over identity. Nigerian films provide a context for examining how language reflects and constructs social realities, including power relations and social evaluations.[7][8]The multilingual nature of Nigerian communication also makes film dialogue relevant to sociolinguistic investigation. The use of English, Nigerian Pidgin and indigenous-language expressions can contribute to the construction of character identities and the expression of social meanings.[9][10]

Against this background, this study examines linguistic stigmatisation and identity negotiation in the Nigerian film Sibe. The film represents the stigmatisation of its central character through Baba Olode's repeated derogatory descriptions, including "You are a disgrace to this family" and "You are not useful for anything". His reference to Sibe's previous dismissals as "22" and his warning that another dismissal will make it "23" further symbolise the negative identity imposed on her. Sibe's response to these experiences is represented through shame and concealment, particularly when she admits that she hid her dismissal because she feared being judged again.

[7]Adedun, Emmanuel Adedayo. (2010). The sociolinguistics of a Nollywood movie. *Journal of Global Analysis,* 1(2), 111–138.
[8]Osoba, Joseph Babalola &Oluwamusanmi, Sola Grace (2016). Genderlect as discourse in Yoruba movies. Crossroads: *A Journal of English Studies,* (12), 31–47. https://doi.org/10.15290/cr.2016.12.1.03
[9]Ofulue, Christine Iyetunde (2012). Nigerian Pidgin and West African Pidgins: A sociolinguistic perspective. *Legon Journal of the Humanities, Special Edition,* 1–42.
[10]Affia, Precious (2023). Nigerian Pidgin English: The identity of a Nigerian away from home. Working Papers in Applied Linguistics and Linguistics at York, 3, 69–84. https://doi.org/10.25071/2564-2855.23

Nevertheless, the film also portrays attempts to challenge this imposed identity. Natasha reassures Sibe that "I don't think you're useless you're just unlucky", offering an alternative evaluation of her character. Sibe subsequently demonstrates greater assertiveness through expressions such as "I no fear you" and "with my full chest". Her declaration, "I am now a star", further signals a shift in how she presents herself and is recognised by others. These interactions provide a basis for examining the relationship between derogatory labelling, supportive communication, resistance and identity reconstruction.

Although existing scholarship has examined language and discrimination, identity construction, Nigerian Pidgin and Nigerian film discourse, further attention is needed to how linguistic stigmatisation and identity negotiation operate together within a single Nigerian film narrative. In particular, this study investigates how derogatory expressions construct a stigmatised identity and how supportive communication, multilingual expression and self-assertive language contribute to its negotiation and possible reconstruction.

The study adopts Goffman's Stigma Theory as its primary theoretical framework and Bucholtz and Hall's sociocultural linguistic approach to identity as its complementary framework. Using qualitative textual and discourse analysis, it examines selected dialogue extracts from Sibe, focusing on linguistic labelling, social devaluation, stigma management, identity positioning and resistance. It argues that language functions not only as an instrument of social stigmatisation but also as a resource through which individuals negotiate and reconstruct socially imposed identities.

Literature Review

The literature review examines existing scholarship on the relationship between language, stigmatisation and identity construction in Nigerian film contexts. It discusses how linguistic practices produce social devaluation, shape interpersonal relationships and facilitate identity negotiation. It also considers the roles of verbal aggression, supportive communication and multilingual expression in challenging or reinforcing socially imposed identities. These discussions provide the scholarly foundation for identifying the research gap addressed by the present study.

Language, Stigmatisation and Social Devaluation

Language is central to the construction and reproduction of social identities, relationships and inequalities. It does not merely communicate information, it can also classify individuals, reinforce stereotypes and establish social hierarchies. [11]explain how language contributes to the generation of social meanings, the perception of identities and discriminatory outcomes. Similarly,

[11]Craft, Justin, & Wright, Kelly, & Weissler, Rachel & Queen, Robin (2020). Language and discrimination: Generating meaning, perceiving identities, and discriminating outcomes. Annual Review of Linguistics, 6, 389–407. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-linguistics-011718-011659

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[12]demonstrates the relationship between linguistic profiling and discrimination, while [13]highlight the complex ways linguistic differences become grounds for unequal treatment. These perspectives establish language as an important resource through which social stigma and exclusion are produced.

Goffman's concept of stigma provides a useful explanation of how individuals become socially discredited through attributes perceived as undesirable. Although stigma is not exclusively linguistic, derogatory labels and negative descriptions can communicate and reinforce the social devaluation of individuals. In the Nigerian context, attitudes towards particular language varieties also demonstrate how linguistic practices become associated with social judgments.[14]examines the status and social implications of Nigerian Pidgin, while [15]discusses attitudes towards the language. Such attitudes reveal how language varieties can attract social evaluations that extend beyond their communicative functions.

Language, Identity Construction, and Social Positioning

Identity is not fixed but continually constructed and negotiated through social interaction. Bucholtz and Hall argue that "identity is the product rather than the source of linguistic and other semiotic practices." This position emphasises the role of language in producing, maintaining and transforming social identities. [16]similarly examine how language ideologies contribute to social positioning, demonstrating the relationship between linguistic practices and the construction of social distinctions.

Within Nigerian sociolinguistic scholarship, [17]explores the linguistic and cultural construction of Nigerian identity, while [18]consider the relationship between Nigerian Pidgin, Creole and language identity.[19]also examine Nigerian cultural diversity and the place of Pidgin among students. More recently,

[12]Baugh, John (2023). Linguistic profiling across international geopolitical landscapes. Daedalus, 152(3), 167–177. https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_02024

[13]Drożdżowicz, Anna & Peled, Yael (2024). The complexities of linguistic discrimination. Philosophical Psychology, 37(6), 1459–1482. https://doi.org/10.1080/09515089.2024.2307993

[14]Igboanusi, Herbert (2008). Empowering Nigerian Pidgin: A challenge for status planning? World Englishes, 27(1), 68–82. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-971X.2008.00536.x

[15]Obi, Edith Ifeyinwa (2014). Language attitude and Nigerian Pidgin. AFRREV IJAH: *An International Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 3(4), 34–46. https://doi.org/10.4314/ijah.v3i4.3

[16]Spitzmüller, Jurgen & Busch, Briggita, & Flubacher, Mi-cha (2021). Language ideologies and social positioning: The restoration of a "much needed bridge." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language, 20*21(272), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2020-0094

[17]Aboh, Romanus (2017). The lingo-cultural construction of Nigerian identity. AKSU *Journal of English,* 1–2(1), 37–47.https

[18]Muo, Ifeanyichukwu Daniel & Onuoha, Eugene & Uyanne, Michael (2017). Language identity:A study of Nigerian Pidgin and Creole. *Interdisciplinary Journal of African and Asian Studies, 1(*3), 121–129.

[19]Akinkugbe, Abiola Idowu & Adetola, Adesegun Samson (2023). Nigerian cultural diversity and the place of Pidgin language: A study of LASUSTECH students. *International Journal of Contemporary Research in Humanities,* 1(1), 149–157.

[20]considers the relationship between language and identity in Nollywood dialogue. Collectively, these studies establish the importance of language in expressing cultural affiliation and negotiating social identities. However, the connection between negative social labelling and the subsequent reconstruction of identity through interaction in Nigerian film narratives requires further attention.

Verbal Aggression, Face-Threatening Acts and Nigerian Film Discourse

Insults, derogatory expressions and verbal aggression can undermine an individual's social standing and shape interpersonal relationships. [21]examines face-threatening acts and politeness strategies in a Nigerian quasi-judicial hearing, while[22]investigate impoliteness and face-threatening acts as conversational strategies among Nigerian undergraduates. [23]also examines politeness strategies and address systems in Igbo and Isoko. These studies demonstrate how linguistic choices can communicate hostility, disrespect, power and social distance.

Nigerian film discourse provides a useful context for examining such practices because dialogue represents social relationships, cultural expectations and power differences. [24]investigates the sociolinguistics of a Nollywood film, while [25]examine genderlect in Yoruba movies. [26]consider language impediment and polyglot actors in Yoruba films, and [27]discusses the representation of African narratives in Nigerian cinema. More recent studies by[28] and [29]extend film-related linguistic inquiry to the discourse of proverbs, power and gender.

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[20]Umar, Shema'u Abubakar (2025). Language and identity in Nigeria's Nollywood dialogues. Savannah *Journal of Language, Literature and Communication Studies,* 6(1), 89–102. https://gombesavannahjournal.com/upload/Vol%2006%20No.%2001%2009.pdf

[21]Unuabonah, Folake Olayinka (2018). Face-threatening acts and politeness strategies in a Nigerian quasi-judicial public hearing. *Journal of the Linguistic Association of Nigeria*, 22(1), 79–91. https://jolan.com.ng/index.php/home/article/view/207

[22]Kamalu, Ikenna, & Fasasi, Khabyr. (2018). Impoliteness and face-threatening acts as conversational strategies among undergraduates of state universities in Southwest Nigeria. Language Matters, 49(2), 23–38. https://doi.org/10.1080/10228195.2018.1467478

[23]Ezechukwu, Marcel Afam (2024). Politeness strategies and address system in Igbo and Isoko. *Journal of Linguistics, Language and Culture,* 11(1), 105–121.

[24]Adedun, Emmanuel Adedayo. (2010). The sociolinguistics of a Nollywood movie. *Journal of Global Analysis,* 1(2), 111–138.

[25]Osoba, Joseph Babalola &Oluwamusanmi, Sola Grace (2016). Genderlect as discourse in Yoruba movies. Crossroads: *A Journal of English Studies,* (12), 31–47. https://doi.org/10.15290/cr.2016.12.1.03

[26]Ademuyiwa, AdejojeAdetoun &Uwadinma-Idemudia, Eunice (2021). Language impediment and polyglot actors in Yoruba native film. Linguistics and Literature Studies, 9(3), 73–83. https://doi.org/10.13189/lls.2021.090301

[27]Apejoye, Esther Frank (2015). Challenging the African narrative in film: A study of Nigeria's Nollywood. Lwati: *A Journal of Contemporary Research,* 11(1), 206–215.

[28]Akpati, Chibuzor Franklin , Adegboye, Janet Abimbola, Soyinka, Felicia Oluwaseun, &Ogaraku, Peace Ngozi. (2025). A socio-critical discourse study of select proverbs in a Nigerian Nollywood movie, The King of Boys. Beyond Babel: *BU Journal of Language, Literature and Humanities,* 9(1), 2–13. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15383283

[29]Okokor, Violet Omojan& Essi, David &Chukwuemeke, AnyiraKingsley (2026). Linguistic justice for women: A critical discourse analysis of gendered power in selected Nollywood films. Creative Artist*: A Journal of Theatre and Media Studies,* 19(2), 158–186.

Although these studies demonstrate the value of examining language in Nigerian films, the specific relationship between derogatory labelling, social devaluation and identity negotiation remains an important area for further investigation. The present study therefore examines how verbal aggression constructs a stigmatised identity in *Sibe* and how subsequent interactions challenge or reproduce that positioning.

Supportive Communication, Stigma Management and Identity Reconstruction

Communication can also provide resources for challenging negative social evaluations and supporting alternative understandings of identity. [30]examine the relationship between supportive communication and interpersonal emotion regulation, while [31]explore supportive communication in the context of stigma and emotional distress. [32]investigate supportive communication when responding to older people's emotional distress in home care. Similarly, [33]examine disclosure decisions and interventions intended to reduce the impact of stigma. Although these studies largely address interpersonal support and distress in contexts different from fictional film discourse, they offer useful perspectives on how supportive communication may counter negative social positioning. In *Sibe,* this contrast is represented through Natasha's affirmation that Sibe possesses "audacity and grace" and her assertion, "I don't think you're useless you're just unlucky." These expressions challenge the negative labels attached to Sibe and offer an alternative interpretation of her identity. Sibe's eventual declaration, "I am now a star," further represents her changing self-positioning. Her statement, "I no fear you," and the expression "with my full chest" also illustrate her movement towards a more assertive identity.

The film's multilingual expressions contribute to this representation. Expressions such as "I never chop life," "I dey toilet," "sabi work," "baa mi" and "omoadugbo" demonstrate the use of Nigerian Pidgin and Yoruba-derived forms within character interaction. These expressions communicate cultural and interpersonal meanings that are significant to the construction of identity in the film. They are therefore examined in relation to context, character relationships and the social meanings attached to language choice.

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[30]Nozaki, Yuki., & Gross, James (2025). Bridging supportive communication and interpersonal emotion regulation: An integrative review. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 42(8), 2231–2262. https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075251335816

[31]Bishop, Rachael & High, Andrew (2025). Stigma and supportive communication in the context of mental or emotional distress: An extension of the paradox of support seeking in close relationships. Communication Research, 52(8), 1007–1034. https://doi.org/10.1177/00936502231189811

[32]Hafskjold, Linda., Sundling, Vibeke., van Dulmen, Sandra, & Eide, Hilde. (2017). The use of supportive communication when responding to older people's emotional distress in home care: An observational study. BMC Nursing, 16, Article 24. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-017-0220-8

[33]Rüsch, Nicholas, &Kösters, Marcus (2021). Honest, Open, Proud to support disclosure decisions and to decrease stigma's impact among people with mental illness: Conceptual review and meta-analysis of program efficacy. Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, 56, 1513–1526. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-021-02076-y

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Synthesis and Research Gap

Despite these contributions, an important gap remains in the integrated examination of linguistic stigmatisation and identity negotiation in Nigerian film discourse. Existing discussions address language discrimination, identity construction, multilingualism, verbal aggression and supportive communication, but further attention is needed to how these processes interact within a single film narrative. In particular, there is a need to move beyond identifying derogatory expressions to examining how negative labels establish social identities, how individuals manage imposed stigma, and how supportive communication, multilingual expression and self-assertion contribute to identity reconstruction.

This study addresses the gap through a sociolinguistic analysis of *Sibe.* It examines how characters use language to stigmatise and devalue Sibe, how she responds to and negotiates these imposed identities, and how supportive interactions and assertive expressions contribute to her changing social position. Goffman's Stigma Theory provides the primary framework for analysing social discrediting and stigma management, while Bucholtz and Hall's sociocultural linguistic approach explains how identities are constructed and negotiated through interaction. The study consequently brings these perspectives together to demonstrate how language functions both as an instrument of stigmatisation and as a resource for resistance and identity reconstruction.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Goffman's Stigma Theory and complemented by Bucholtz and Hall's Sociocultural Linguistic Approach to Identity. The two perspectives provide a framework for examining how linguistic expressions construct social stigma and how individuals negotiate identities within interpersonal interactions in the Nigerian film *Sibe*. Goffman's Stigma Theory explains how individuals become socially discredited when they are associated with attributes or characteristics that a society considers undesirable. According to Goffman stigma develops through social categorisation and the negative evaluation of individuals who are perceived as deviating from accepted social expectations. Such evaluations can result in labelling, devaluation, exclusion and the management or concealment of a stigmatised identity. The theory is therefore useful for examining how verbal expressions contribute to the construction and reinforcement of stigmatised identities in the film. On the other hand, Bucholtz and Hall conceptualise identity as a socially produced and interactionally negotiated phenomenon rather than a fixed personal attribute. Their approach emphasises how linguistic and other semiotic practices are used to construct, position, reproduce and challenge identities. It also recognises the role of agency in how individuals present themselves and respond to the identities assigned to them by others. This approach is relevant to the study because it enables an examination of how Sibe responds to negative social labels and gradually asserts a more positive sense of self through her interactions with other characters. The approach also supports the analysis of

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English, Nigerian Pidgin and Yoruba expressions as linguistic resources through which characters construct social meanings and identities.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to examine linguistic stigmatisation and identity negotiation in the Nigerian film *Sibe.* The qualitative approach is considered appropriate because it enables an in-depth interpretation of linguistic expressions, their contextual meanings and their roles in constructing and negotiating social identities. The data for the study comprise selected verbal interactions and dialogue extracts from *Sibe*. The film serves as the primary source of data, while relevant scholarly publications on linguistic stigmatisation, identity construction and Nigerian film discourse provide secondary materials. Data are purposively selected based on their relevance to the study's objectives, particularly utterances that express derogatory labelling, social devaluation, supportive communication, identity concealment, resistance and self-assertion. The selected extracts are subjected to qualitative textual and discourse analysis. The analysis examines the linguistic forms, meanings and interactional contexts of the utterances, paying attention to how characters use language to stigmatise, position and evaluate others, as well as how individuals respond to and negotiate imposed identities. Particular attention is given to the use of English, Nigerian Pidgin and Yoruba expressions in the interactions.

In addition to these, there are specialized words in the study, and these are explained in the context of the study as follows: These include:

Linguistic Stigmatisation: In this study, linguistic stigmatisation refers to the use of derogatory labels, insulting expressions and negative verbal descriptions to discredit an individual and construct an undesirable social identity. It is examined through Baba Olode's utterances, which portray Sibe as inadequate, unsuccessful and a disgrace to her family.

Social Devaluation: Social devaluation refers to the process through which an individual's perceived worth, dignity, respect or social recognition is diminished through negative judgements and discriminatory expressions. In this study, it describes how Baba Olode's derogatory comments and repeated references to Sibe's dismissals as numbers 22 and 23 reduce her perceived value and reinforce her marginalised position within the family.

Identity Negotiation: Identity negotiation refers to the interactional process through which individuals respond to, challenge, accept or redefine the identities attributed to them by others. In this study, it examines how Sibe uses verbal responses, supportive interactions and self-assertive expressions to resist her negative social positioning and establish a more positive representation of herself.

Discussion and Analysis of Data

This section examines how linguistic stigmatisation and identity negotiation are represented in selected interactions in the Nigerian film *Sibe*. The analysis

adopts a qualitative, context-sensitive approach, focusing on the meanings and social functions of characters' utterances. It is guided by Goffman's Stigma Theory and Bucholtz and Hall's Sociocultural Linguistic Approach to Identity. The discussion is organised around five interconnected themes: derogatory labelling and social devaluation; the internalisation and management of stigma; supportive communication and identity negotiation; multilingual expression and identity positioning; and resistance and the reconstruction of identity.

Derogatory Labeling and the Construction of a Stigmatised Identity *in Sibe*

One prominent feature of the film is the use of derogatory expressions by Baba Olode to construct Sibe as an individual who has failed to meet societal and familial expectations. This is evident in his statement "You are a disgrace to this family. You are not useful for anything." He further describes her as someone who is not a "complete human being" and compares her internal qualities to those of a domestic animal. These expressions go beyond ordinary criticism of Sibe's repeated dismissal from employment. They constitute verbal acts of condemnation through which her identity is negatively evaluated. The expressions "disgrace" and "not useful" attribute personal worthlessness to Sibe rather than simply identifying a particular failure or behaviour.

From the perspective of Goffman's Stigma Theory, Baba Olode's utterances illustrate the social discrediting of an individual through negatively evaluated attributes. Sibe's employment difficulties become the basis for a wider judgement about her personhood and value within the family. The father's language therefore transforms a situational problem into a socially imposed identity.This pattern is reinforced when Baba Olode tells Sibe "as you're going to Lagos, always remember 22. What is 22? ... It means how far your life has been destroyed."

The number 22 refers to the number of jobs from which Sibe has been dismissed. By repeatedly invoking the number, Baba Olode turns it into a symbolic representation of her perceived failure. His statement that the next dismissal will make the number 23 further reinforces the negative identity assigned to her. The number is no longer used merely for counting; it becomes a linguistic instrument of ridicule and social evaluation. Through Bucholtz and Hall's approach, these utterances can be understood as acts of identity positioning. Baba Olode positions himself as the evaluator and Sibe as the unsuccessful daughter who must account for her actions. His repeated negative descriptions attempt to establish a particular identity for her within their family relationship. Thus, the film demonstrates how interpersonal language can be used to construct and reinforce stigmatised social identities.

Internalisation and Management of Stigma: *The Example ofSibe*

The consequences of repeated negative labelling are reflected in Sibe's emotional responses and attempts to conceal her experiences. After being dismissed from another workplace, she admits to her uncle, "they sack me from my working place and shame do not want me to come home and come and tell you so that you do not tell baba mi and baa mi will not count as number 23."

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This statement reveals that Sibe's decision to conceal her dismissal is connected to her anticipation of further condemnation. Her reference to "number 23" demonstrates how Baba Olode's repeated use of the number has become part of the way she interprets her own experiences. She fears that another dismissal will strengthen the negative identity already imposed on her.

Goffman's discussion of stigma management is relevant here. Individuals who anticipate negative social evaluation may attempt to conceal information that could expose them to further discrediting. Sibe's concealment of her dismissal can therefore be interpreted as an attempt to manage the information available to others about her employment history. However, this strategy does not remove the stigma; rather, it demonstrates how strongly the anticipated judgement influences her interaction with family members.

The depth of Sibe's negative self-perception is further illustrated in her prayer "I can't have anything good. ... The disgrace is too much." Her utterances suggest that the repeated negative evaluations have become central to how she understands her circumstances. The expression "the disgrace is too much" echoes the language of social condemnation previously directed at her by Baba Olode. Her questioning of her existence and worth in the prayer scene also illustrates the extent of her distress within the film's narrative.

Nevertheless, the analysis does not assume that Sibe's identity is permanently determined by these experiences. Rather, the scenes demonstrate the tension between an identity imposed through repeated negative evaluation and the possibility of negotiating a different identity. This tension provides the basis for examining the role of supportive communication in the subsequent interactions.

Supportive Communication and the Negotiation of Identity

A significant development in the film occurs through Sibe's interaction with Natasha. Unlike Baba Olode, who repeatedly describes Sibe in negative terms, Natasha offers a different evaluation of her abilities and personal qualities. She tells Sibe "when there is a will, there is a way. David didn't need armour to fight Goliath. All he needed was audacity and grace. And you Sibe, for the short while that I was with you in life you're the most audacious woman that I've ever met." Natasha's utterances function as encouragement and affirmation. Her biblical allusion to David and Goliath presents courage as more important than conventional resources or apparent strength. By describing Sibe as "audacious" and as possessing "grace," Natasha challenges the negative descriptions previously associated with her.

This interaction is significant within Bucholtz and Hall's approach to identity because it illustrates how identity is negotiated through interaction and the positioning of others. While Baba Olode constructs Sibe as useless, Natasha constructs her as courageous and capable. The contrast demonstrates that identity is not simply a fixed attribute but is shaped through competing social evaluations and interactional practices.

Natasha makes this alternative positioning more explicit when she tells Sibe "I don't think you're useless you're just unlucky. You have helped people." The

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expression "you're just unlucky" replaces the broader judgement of worthlessness with a more limited interpretation of Sibe's experiences. Natasha distinguishes between Sibe's circumstances and her personal value. This is important because it challenges the assumption that repeated employment difficulties make an individual inherently useless.

The interaction also illustrates the potential role of supportive communication in identity negotiation. Natasha does not merely comfort Sibe, she provides alternative interpretations of events in Sibe's life, reminding her of instances in which her actions have helped other people. In this way, the conversation creates space for Sibe to reconsider the negative identity imposed on her. From Goffman's perspective, Natasha's affirming language challenges the social discrediting associated with Sibe's identity. From Bucholtz and Hall's perspective, it provides an interactional resource through which Sibe can begin to negotiate a different self-representation.

Multilingual Expression and Identity Positioning *in Sibe*

Another important feature of the film is the use of English, Nigerian Pidgin and expressions associated with Yoruba in the characters' interactions. These linguistic resources contribute to the representation of social relationships, cultural identity and personal experiences. For instance, when Sibe explains her employment difficulties to her boss, she combines English with Nigerian Pidgin "stomach upset nearly finish me. I shit, shit, shit yesterday I dey toilet. Ask Moji." The movement between English and Nigerian Pidgin reflects the informal and emotionally charged nature of the interaction. Sibe uses the expression to explain her lateness and appeal for understanding. However, her explanation does not change the boss's decision to dismiss her. The exchange illustrates the unequal interactional relationship between an employer and an employee, in which the employer exercises institutional authority over the employee.

A similar linguistic pattern occurs when Bobo defends Sibe "this woman sabi work. She is a very good person." The combination of Nigerian Pidgin and English allows Bobo to express his assessment of Sibe's competence and character. His utterance contrasts with the boss's negative evaluation, presenting Sibe as a hardworking and good person. Nevertheless, the boss dismisses Bobo as well, demonstrating how institutional power can override supportive interpersonal expressions. Sibe also uses expressions such as "baa mi" (my father), "omoadugbo" (neighbours), and "I never chop life" (I have not enjoyed life). These expressions demonstrate the presence of culturally situated linguistic resources within the film's dialogue. They contribute to the characters' representation as participants in a multilingual Nigerian social environment.

The significance of these expressions is not simply that different languages are used. Rather, their meanings emerge from the contexts in which they occur. For example, when Sibe says "I never chop life. I never chop life. Help me to win this war for baa mi, my brother (uncle), AIG, and for Natasha." Her expression "I never chop life" communicates her desire to experience a meaningful and fulfilling life before death. The reference to "baa mi" and her uncle also connects her personal ambition to family relationships. Her language therefore reveals a

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developing sense of responsibility that extends beyond her individual circumstances.

Through Bucholtz and Hall's approach, these linguistic choices can be understood as resources for expressing social relationships and positioning the self. They help establish Sibe's cultural and interpersonal identity while contributing to the meanings constructed in the film. However, the analysis does not assume that every instance of code-mixing automatically signals resistance or identity transformation rather its significance depends on the interactional context.

Resistance, Agency and the Reconstruction of Identity

The film further represents identity negotiation through Sibe's increasing willingness to challenge negative evaluations and act independently. Her decision to help Natasha obtain justice marks an important development in her self-positioning. Initially, Sibe is reluctant to participate in the mission, describing Natasha's ghost this "your own ghost is useless. Useless on earth and in heaven." This statement is particularly interesting because Sibe employs the same derogatory expression that has repeatedly been directed at her. However, as the interaction develops, Natasha's encouragement and Sibe's recognition of her own experiences influence her decision to participate.

Sibe eventually explains her motivation "I will do it. I will help you to bring Utomi down. Because, unlike you, if I to kpai (die) today. I didn't know if Baba Olode will have anything good to say about me, let alone miss me. So I didn't just want to do this for only you. But for me too." This utterance reveals that Sibe's decision is connected to her desire to demonstrate her worth and gain recognition from her father. Her motivation is therefore both interpersonal and personal. She wants to help Natasha, but she also wants to establish an identity that contradicts the negative descriptions associated with her.

Her developing agency becomes more evident when she refuses to abandon Bobo and Moji during the mission. When Natasha advises her to leave and get the police, Sibe responds "NEVER. I to leave my friends. My two omoadugbo. I can never do it." She further declares "but my friends I will never leave them." These utterances position Sibe as a loyal and responsible individual. This is significant because Baba Olode's earlier descriptions portray her as someone who has no value to the family. Her commitment to her friends provides a contrasting representation of her character and social relationships.

Bucholtz and Hall's approach is useful in explaining this development. Sibe's identity is negotiated through her decisions, interactions and linguistic expressions. Rather than passively accepting the identity assigned to her, she increasingly presents herself as someone capable of making decisions and taking responsibility for others.

Assertive Language and the Repositioning of the Self*in Sibe*

Sibe's confrontation with Utomi provides one of the clearest illustrations of her changing identity. In the film, she declares:

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> it is because you're bad. You are bad sir. You kpai Natasha and I no fear you, patapata you kpai all of us. You kpai Natasha and you leave her like a sacrificial ram. She asks me to come and collect revenge for her. It's why I'm here with my full chest.

The expressions "I no fear you" and "with my full chest" communicate courage, determination and resistance. They contrast with Sibe's earlier interactions in which she frequently apologises, seeks approval and expresses fear of further rejection. Her direct accusation against Utomi also positions her as someone willing to confront wrongdoing despite the potential consequences. The utterance can be interpreted as an act of self-positioning. Sibe no longer presents herself primarily as the unsuccessful daughter described by Baba Olode. Instead, she constructs herself as an individual with the courage to challenge a powerful antagonist. Her language reflects a shift from a defensive interactional position to an assertive one.

This development is reinforced when she picks up the two guns dropped by Utomi's men and commands "Anybody move, stay there. If you to move. Ha! Before I cannot hold one gun, but now I am holding two." The statement "before I cannot hold one gun, but now I am holding two" symbolically contrasts her earlier perceived inability with her present capacity to act. The gun functions within the film's narrative as a representation of her newly demonstrated competence and authority. More importantly, her verbal command positions her as an active participant exercising control in a situation previously dominated by powerful male characters.

From Goffman's perspective, this development challenges the stigmatised identity imposed on Sibe. From Bucholtz and Hall's perspective, it represents identity negotiation through assertive linguistic and social practices. Her transformation is therefore represented not only through what she says but also through the actions that accompany her utterances.

Recognition and the Reconstruction of Social Identity *in Sibe*

The final scene provides a significant conclusion to the film's representation of stigmatisation and identity negotiation. Following Sibe's success in helping to apprehend the criminals, Baba Olode reacts to the news by declaring "Sibe my child has become somebody." Sibe responds "I am now a star." These utterances represent a reversal of the negative evaluations that characterised their earlier interactions. Initially, Baba Olode described Sibe as "not useful for anything" and "a disgrace to this family." However, following her achievement, he recognises her as somebody of value.

The contrast between "not useful for anything" and "has become somebody" is particularly significant. It demonstrates how the father's evaluation of Sibe changes in response to her socially recognised achievement. Her identity is no longer represented through repeated employment failures but through courage, accomplishment and public recognition.

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From Goffman's perspective, the final scene illustrates a challenge to the discredited identity previously associated with Sibe. However, it is important to note that the film presents her acceptance largely through the recognition she receives after accomplishing something significant. This suggests that the narrative continues to associate social validation with demonstrable achievement.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of the linguistic materials above reveals five major findings. The derogatory expressions such as “useless” and “a disgrace” function as linguistic resources for constructing and reinforcing Sibe's stigmatised identity. Also, the repeated reference to the number 22 demonstrates how a particular recurring experience can become a symbolic marker of social failure through repeated interaction. Furthermore, supportive communication, particularly Natasha's affirming expressions, provides an alternative interpretation of Sibe's identity and creates opportunities for self-repositioning. In addition, the use of English, Nigerian Pidgin and Yoruba expressions contributes to the representation of cultural identity, social relationships and interactional meanings. Finally, Sibe's assertive language and actions demonstrate her increasing agency and resistance to the negative identity previously imposed on her.

A critical examination reveals that the protagonist's eventual acceptance by her father is largely associated with her achievements and ability to demonstrate usefulness. This suggests that the film challenges negative labeling while simultaneously reinforcing the social expectation that an individual's worth must be validated through success. Furthermore, Natasha's supportive communication provides an alternative to Baba Olode's derogatory language, but the narrative places considerable emphasis on individual resilience rather than critically examining the wider social structures that sustain stigmatisation. From a sociolinguistic perspective, the film therefore presents a tension between imposed identity and self-reconstruction. Its representation of English, Nigerian Pidgin and Yoruba-derived expressions also highlights the relationship between language, cultural identity and social positioning. However, as a fictional narrative, Sibe reflects constructed representations of social experiences rather than providing direct evidence of how all Nigerians use language or experience stigma. Its significance lies in illustrating how linguistic practices can reproduce social hierarchies while also creating possibilities for resistance, agency and identity negotiation.

Conclusion

This study has examined linguistic stigmatisation and identity negotiation in Nigerian film discourse through a sociolinguistic analysis of *Sibe*. It has explored how language constructs negative social identities, reinforces social devaluation, and provides resources for challenging imposed identities. The findings reveal that derogatory expressions, particularly “You are a disgrace to this family” and “You are not useful for anything,” position Sibe as socially inadequate. The repeated references to her dismissals as numbers 22 and 23 further reinforce her stigmatised identity, while her concealment of dismissal

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illustrates how stigma influences self-presentation and interpersonal relationships.

However, the study demonstrates that imposed identities can be challenged and renegotiated. Natasha's supportive expressions, including "I don't think you're useless you're just unlucky," offer an alternative interpretation of Sibe's identity. Sibe's increasing assertiveness, willingness to defend others and eventual declaration, "I am now a star," represent her movement towards agency, self-affirmation and identity reconstruction. The use of English, Nigerian Pidgin and Yoruba-derived expressions also contributes to cultural identification, interpersonal positioning and the negotiation of social meanings. The theoretical frameworks provide complementary explanations of these findings. Goffman's Stigma Theory explains the construction of social discredit and the management of stigma, while Bucholtz and Hall's sociocultural linguistic approach illuminates how identities are negotiated and reconstructed through interaction.

The study concludes that language functions both as an instrument of stigmatisation and as a resource for resistance and identity reconstruction. Through its analysis of *Sibe,* it contributes to sociolinguistic scholarship by demonstrating how Nigerian film discourse represents the relationship between linguistic practices, social devaluation and the negotiation of identity.

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