



## A Lexico-semantic Analysis of the University Anthem of Lagos State University of Education, Lagos, Nigeria.

ADENIYI Kikelomo Olusola PhD

Department of English, Lagos State University of Education, Lagos, Nigeria

Email: [victoriakadeniyi@yahoo.com](mailto:victoriakadeniyi@yahoo.com).

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-1774-3414>

EHIBOR Oremire Judith PhD

Department of Languages and General Studies, Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria

Email: [Oremire.ehibor@covenantuniversity.ed.ng](mailto:Oremire.ehibor@covenantuniversity.ed.ng)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-8151-1402>

Corresponding Author : ADENIYI, Kikelomo Olusola (PhD) ( [victoriakadeniyi@yahoo.com](mailto:victoriakadeniyi@yahoo.com) )

### ABSTRACT

*Anthems have been written and sung over the years to project and celebrate the entity being portrayed. In a bid to effectively convey the needed information and messages on the object being portrayed, word choice and meanings associated with and their collocations are expected to perform the task at hand. Using Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Linguistic theory because it lays emphasis on both the context and the function of language, this paper does a lexico-semantic analysis of the anthem of the Lagos State University of Education (LASUED). Our analysis amongst others reveals that the words in the anthem are not chosen at random; they are carefully selected to evoke a sense of pride, unity and shared identity among members of the university pride, unity ideology and values of the institution are beautifully conveyed.*

**Keywords** Lexis, Semantics, Anthem, Lagos, Lagos State University of Education

**Copyright** Provided that the author(s) and the source are credited, noncommercial use of the article is allowed, including printing and distribution.

### AUTHORS' BIO



ADENIYI, Kikelomo Olusola, PhD, is an Associate Professor at the Department of English Education, Lagos State University of Education, Oto/Ijanikin, Lagos, Nigeria (LASUED). Adeniyi has authored and co-authored materials in books and journal outfits with both national and international coverage in areas of Sociolinguistics and Applied English Linguistics. A two-time winner of TETFUND Institution Based Research (IBR) and the Lead Researcher in both instances, Dr. Adeniyi is a former HOD(English), Dean School of Languages, Dean School of Part Time Studies and Chairman Committee of Deans of Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, one of the legacy Colleges that transmuted to LASUED. She is a teacher and teacher trainer of more than three decades, a one-time Resource Person of the Commonwealth of Learning, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Longman Nigeria PLC (now Learn Africa) and a contributor to the British Council, Teaching English Africa platform. She is currently on sabbatical at the Department of Languages and General Studies at Covenant University, Nigeria



EHIBOR, Oremire Judith, PhD, holds Bachelor, Master, and Doctorate degrees in English Studies, obtained from the University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. She has passion for teaching, research and language editing. She has over 5 years teaching, research, and language editing experience. She specialises in Morphology, Syntax, and Applied English Linguistics. Oremire is part of the Faculty team of the Department of Languages and General Studies at Covenant University, and a language editor at Chartered Institute of Personnel Management, Lagos State, Nigeria. She has held some leadership positions, and is currently the coordinator of final year students' project at the Department of Languages and General Studies, Covenant University.

## Introduction

Okafor (2020) states that an anthem is a song, a musical composition composed for a group of people, community, organisation or society that express the ideals, love, commitment and patriotism for that group and is sung on special occasion. Moreover, Oxford Dictionary defines an anthem as 'a rousing or uplifting song identified with a particular group, body or cause'. Cambridge Dictionary also sees it as 'a song that has special importance for a particular group of people, an organisation, or a country, often sung on a special occasion'. These definitions reveal some characteristics of an anthem which include the fact that it eulogises a particular group; it is much important to the group and it is sang at special events. In addition, they may be created for nations and institutions. Anthems are said to have developed in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century and started initially without musical accompaniment. However, the growth of the verse anthem (involving soloist and later choir), encouraged the use of instrumental accompaniment, either by the organ or by instrumental groups such as wind instruments and viols (Encyclopaedia Britannica). Bristow & Reed (2002), explain that, the concept of a national anthem was first popularised in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Europe and the Wilhelms, the national anthem of the Netherlands, is the world's oldest one written during the Dutch revolution. A national anthem, to Oishimaya (2019) is a patriotic song or musical composition that is either recognised officially by a nation's government and constitution or is accepted as such by convention through popular use.

Amongst others, Waterman (2019) states that national anthems have unique power over people, singing and listening to them as they generate feeling of pride and patriotism, unite people and serve as a rallying point for expressing personal and group identities. They therefore are very important symbols like flags and currencies. No wonder why they are sung at very important occasions. For example, at Olympic Games, players feel a form of pride for their country when their anthems are sang especially when they win medals. Aside national anthems, as seen from the definition, there also exists school/institutional anthems and songs. A school or institutional anthem may be defined as a song specifically created for an educational institution, which celebrates its mission and values with the aim of projecting them and it is rendered at special occasions associated with the institution. Edwards & Pender (2003) gave some information on what should constitute a school song (and by extension anthems) and how to compose. To them, they are songs that have a message delivered through lyrics, and such messages can be derived from the institution's value/mission statement or that of the (Educational)

district. Furthermore, keywords and phrases are expected to communicate the messages clearly and consideration should be given to legacy by capturing the school as a whole so that the song would have a timeless effect to ensure legacy and that it lasts throughout time. Also, the song should be sing able by everyone. Their rhythm and melody should be manageable for the ages of students. Moreover, the rhythm should be interesting but not overtly complex and the song should be well crafted and interesting. In sum, their description of what should constitute an effective school anthem deals with content, structure and lyrics.

People have stated importance of school or university anthems. Edwards & Pender (2003) stated that a school song is a signature piece that unites staff and students, create an identity, impress school visitors and serve as a lasting legacy. Okafor (2020) stated that it talks (celebrates) the tenet of the institution, it is used as an advertising agent and it also possesses great powers of communication. Institutional anthems are also very powerful tools to convey to the audience the ideals of the institution which when sang frequently get registered in the minds of the participants aside the fact that they are to enhance the sense of dedication and belonging towards one's Alma Mater. It thus creates a sense of loyalty and devotion in the minds of students (Wright's Educational Blog).

## LAGOS STATE UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, LAGOS, NIGERIA

The Lagos State University of Education which came into existence in the year 2022, is an amalgam of two legacy institutions, Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Oto/Ijanikin, which commenced in 1958 as Lagos Teacher Training College, Ebute-Elefun Lagos Island as a Grade 11 teacher training institution and Michael Otedola College of Education, Noforija, Epe which also opened gates in 1994 as Lagos State College of Primary Education (LACOPED). Situated at Oto/Ijanikin with a campus at Noforija, Epe it is located in Lagos State, the former capital of Nigeria and the economic headquarters of the country. Lagos is a cosmopolitan state comprising people from the other thirty five (35) states of the country and Abuja, the capital of Nigeria, aside citizens of several other countries from Africa and other continents.

### *The mission and vision statement of the institution are:*

**Vision:** To be a great and dynamic University focused on the attainment of excellence in producing exemplary education and other related discipline professionals who are not only competent in their discipline, but also critical

thinkers and information technological compliant capable of playing key roles in the laying of solid foundation for lifelong teaching, learning and provision of specialised services across all sectors of the economy with particular reference to educational industry and management educational system.

**Mission:** To produce outstanding globally acceptable education and related discipline professionals, using innovative and creative approach through relevant action research and most sophisticated technology, with high moral standards and values that enhance their potentials to develop and transform the education industry in particular and the larger society, in general. The motto of the university is, *Knowledge and Professional Excellence* (Lagos State University of Education website).

At present, the university runs sixty seven (67) programmes, spread over seven (7) colleges-College of Humanities Education, College of Science Education, College of Information and Technology Education, College of Vocational and Entrepreneurship Education, College of Management and Social Sciences Education, College of Specialised and Professional Education and College of Language and Communication Arts Education.

#### **LAGOS STATE UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION ANTHEM**

The anthem was written by Oludaisi David Aina of the Music Department of the Lagos State University of Education in 2022. He is a versatile Nigerian musicologist, composer, organist and music teacher. Indeed as an accomplished composer, he is principally well respected and experienced in the choral music industry. Many of his choral works have been performed extensively in Nigeria and abroad (phamoxmusic.com).

#### **LEXICO-SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF THE ANTHEM.**

Lexico-semantic analysis deals with internal semantic structure of words or the semantic relations that occur within the vocabulary (Stringer, 2019). It is the study of word meaning. It also entails the analysis of linguistic meaning among words. It entails questions of larger chunk of meaning than those of individual lexical items. In essence, it deals with semantic relationship between words in sentences or text. Thus, in an attempt to do a lexical-semantic analysis, one would have to examine word collocations, lexical field, connotations of word, nature and structure of words used among others.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

The theory used here is Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). This theory opines that the meaning of any linguistic expression, be it word or sentence is determined by the context in which it is used. In most cases, the meaning of a word is its 'use'. Words are how you use them. The meaning of words hinges on its usefulness in context not its ideal referent outside of all possible contexts. So what gives a word meaning is the conventional social discourse within which it is employed. The context of usage makes it easier for us to untie knots in language and understand what is really being said. Other theorists of context include Malinowski (1935), Firth (1957) and Lyons (1977).

#### **THE STRUCTURE AND MESSAGE OF THE ANTHEM**

The anthem follows a typical traditional structure of a hymn with a refrain. It has three stanzas with a refrain, and each stanza has five lines with a sum total of one hundred and thirty four words (134). The anthem is a highly rhythmical-song coupled with alternate rhyme pattern: fortress/express, imparting/hart, spectacle/obstacle, past/last, teachers/leaders, aright/light. They all reveal unity and coherence in the anthem. (see Appendix 1). It starts with what appears to be a call to passers-by to take a look at the university followed by a listing of the attributes of this citadel of academic excellence viz. a place where learning and culture is impacted and where young ones have enough opportunity to excel from the beginning of their study. The second stanza tells more about lagoons and creeks that surround the institution (and that exist in Lagos) that are virtually striking. It also states that the institution is a creation of great leaders who had thought in their mind eyes about the institution where people become highly knowledgeable without any hindrance as they also learn about tradition and culture. The third stanza is a supplication to the almighty God, qualified as the greatest of teachers who is called upon to lead all including the leaders as they are humans and therefore need His guidance and direction to succeed.

The refrain emphasises the university name and encourages pride in being associated with it. It exalts the university by hailing her as being great and being the 'first among the best'. All members of the institution are said to be at alert marching with their torch, a symbol of knowledge, learning and excellence to make there to be an improvement in their own little sphere. These pieces of information are followed by key terms associated with the motto of the institution which is to ensure professional excellence to all humanity. An in-depth look at these words reveal a preponderance of content words. The collocations comprise combinations of adjective/nouns/verbs. Content words are preferred to non-count words to project the ideas for example, 'beautiful fortress', 'burning desires', 'great minds', 'no obstacle', 'professional

excellence' which are highly superlative terms used to exalt the institution. The anthem starts with the verb phrase 'Come and behold' a phrase that makes it (the anthem) dramatic, calling on people to come and see, like advertising, listing the attributes of the university. It is an imperative one which urges or advises. This is followed by what should be beheld-'a beautiful fortress'! This goes to show the depth of the attractive nature /quality of the institution. 'Beautiful' refers to 'being attractive, of a very high standard ;excellent'(Oxford Dictionary). 'Fortress' according to Collin's Dictionary is 'a military stronghold, especially a strongly fortified town'. This metaphorical description of the institution goes to show that she is not only beautiful but highly fortified against all odds and attacks! The attributes of the university listed are, "A place of learning" 'and of mores to impart' '... 'a room for youngsters to express' "burning desires for the best". Of course as an academic institution, "learning" the act or process of acquiring knowledge or skill' or "knowledge acquired by systematic study in any field of scholarly application'(Dictionary.com) should be the first or main mission and no wonder, this is placed at one of the very first place! Aside this, the institution also desires to "impart" (to communicate, give, bestow, Collins dictionary) 'mores'- a noun which means- 'the essential or characteristic customs and conventions of a society or community". Hence, this shows amongst others that in the institution, not only will the students and the graduates be knowledgeable- cognitively, they would also get to be informed of the customs and conventions of the society which would not only enhance peaceful co-existence in the society, but also ensure a remodelling or modification of untoward behaviours.

The verb flank(ed) which starts the second stanza a past simple tense means 'to be at the side of someone or something' (Cambridge Dictionary), is used to situate the university's geographical surrounding in "flanked by lagoons...and Creeks". In the first place, this shows Lagos geographical surrounding and those of the institution. The institution is revealed as a place 'wrapped' by these features. Indeed, Lagos is said to have about ten lagoons, some of which are Lekki, Badagry, Ológè, Iyagbe, Kuramo, Apese, Epe and Mahin Lagoons (lagoonnetwork.org) and the two campuses Oto/Ijanikin and Epe have Ológè and Epe Lagoons respectively, which are tourist attractions. Hence it can be stated that school or university anthems are used to reveal the geographical locale of institutions. The "Lagoons and Creeks" which flank the institution are said to be 'in spectacle'. This means the Lagoons and Creeks are a wonder, they are things presented to the sight or view, especially something of a striking or impressive kind. This description further goes to show the outstanding nature of the institutions and its superiority over others. The lexical items are also action packed and imaginative.

They connote deep search for knowledge and dramatic- 'we march'-a formal parade with a salute point. This is added with the mental image created by 'March with our torch'- which depict light, fire, freedom/ liberty a symbol of knowledge, learning and enlightenment. Another verb 'envisioned' a formal usage which means "Imagine as a future possibility and also implies conceiving or imagining that is especially clear or detailed"(Oxford Dictionary) is a reference to the founding fathers tagged "great leaders of the past'. Noticeable is the contraction of the auxiliary verb 'will'to'we'll' in the first and last stanzas. These ellipted items make the anthem 'crisp', effective ,quick and direct!

"No obstacle" another Adjective/Noun combination in the second stanza reveals the fact that students in this institution are made to develop 'great minds'(another adjective noun combination) without any form of hindrance. Developing 'great minds' without any form of hindrance depicts the fact that the institution is a citadel of academic excellence that gives opportunities without any obstruction, handicap or impediment. Another is 'professional excellence'- a combination of an attributive adjective 'professional' and 'excellence'. The word professional according to the Oxford Dictionary refers to "expertise, of in accordance with the standards of profession'. 'Excellence' on the other hand, refers to outstanding, extremely good, extreme, superiority (Collin's Dictionary). The pronoun 'our' is used severally in the song like "our great Lagos State University of Education", 'March with our torch". 'Our' is a plural possessive pronoun which shows something is belonging to or connected with one (Cambridge Advanced learners Dictionary). The 'our' here is used to specify the owner of the institution and shows pride of ownership especially when combined with 'great' and attributing the institution to all in the system would make all to put in their best.

These lexical items are words that reveal the institution as unparalleled, outstanding and magnificent. What more would a world class institution desire more than to achieve professional excellence and not just for a few set of people but "all humanity" (another collocation) that depicts the fact that the sphere of influence of the institution would be for every and all human race, including everyone on earth (Vocabulary.com). Indeed, these words are not just ordinary ones, they are specifically and beautifully chosen and crafted to reiterate the desires of the founders of the institution. In the words of Korneeva, Koracheva and Parpura (2019) "Language is a means of expressing the inner person's world, it not only transfers an informational message, but contains the attitude to the statement, in which the speaker manifests his feelings, experience and emotions". More so, singing them over and over would make both students and staffers work towards fulfilling these terms. They encapsulate what everyone should work

towards attaining. The terms are positive ones, implying adulation. This encapsulates the vision of the management of the institution and a tall order for all to try and attain.

## LEXICAL FIELDS

Jacson(2002), defines lexical fields as referring to a set of lexemes that are used to talk about a defined area of experience. They reveal the subject matter of the anthem. A major field in the anthem is that of supplication which is essentially found in stanza 3; it entails a prayer to the almighty God to ensure 'success'. A deep desire that God should assist is also revealed. The almighty is called upon to 'strengthen us as leaders', 'guide with your light' This faith in the almighty is corroborated by stating that success will be assured as God guides with his light. Knowledge/ learning is another lexical field as seen in 'a place of learning' and... to impart'. Interestingly, to ensure success in this teacher training institution, the 'greatest of teachers', the Almighty is called upon to assist. Calling the greatest of teachers becomes more apt in this context, in a bid to achieve this height. Another lexical field is that of transfer of tradition. This we see in the use of words like -'mores'-the essential or characteristic customs and conventions of a society or community, 'tradition'. 'culture'. These words therefore reveal the focus of the institution. Lexical field related to historical reference is seen in 'envisioned by great leaders of the past'. This of course is a reference to the 'founding fathers'. It is a way of appreciating their noble deeds of establishing a citadel of learning of such calibre. Finally, the lexical field of geographic location is seen in 'a beautiful fortress', 'lagoons and creeks'.

Repetition, the use of same word or statement in two or more places to secure emphasis is another device that should be highlighted-'hail'- a cry of greeting, an archaic usage but much apt to elucidate height of exaltation is mentioned five different times. The fact that the university is being hailed and in a high tone as seen in the exclamation marks shows that its being exalted. The acronym 'LASUED' which stands for Lagos State University of Education is to be repeated six times and highly sounded too as seen in the exclamation marks used. 'Professional excellence to all humanity' which is to be chanted thrice reveals the -international status and eternal relevance of the institution. It is also a part of the motto. These repeated items which are hence foregrounded, are used to register deep impression in readers' minds. The exclamation marks louder in pronouncing than the others used in the vocative, addressing or invoking a thing or person or expressing emotion, exclamation done with strong emotions of love and fondness. These repetition will make the ideals implanted in the minds of all students, staffers and all associated with

the place to strive for greatness. This is further seen in the repetition of 'best', the beauty of this is seen in the context of 'the first among the best', naturally, everyone should wish to be the best.

## Syllable Structure of Words

A close look at the words in the anthem reveals we majorly have more of one syllable words like- come, and, a, of, more, room, for, their, the, best, start, all, hail. Our, great, first, best, march, with, our, possession, torch, all, where, creeks, by, those, past, note, great in leaders, past, minds, to, make, no, last, oh- note under lexis, God, grace, we, look, you, us, all, frail, all, we, are, us, as, sure, we'll, as, you, guide, with, your. Some two syllable words in the anthem are- behold, fortress, learning, impart, there's youngsters, express, burning, desires, Lagos, brighten, corner, LASUED, humanity, flanked, lagoons, spectacle, leaders, obstacle, tradition, culture, embrace, greatest, teachers, direct, aright, strengthen, succeed and a few multisyllabic words like beautiful, university, education, professional, excellence and tradition, also exist in the anthem.

These show that the lexical items are rich but simple ones. That we have more of monosyllabic words makes the anthem easy to learn, sing and memorised. The disyllabic ones are also such that can be easily pronounced and understood and indeed the six multisyllabic ones are words that should exist in the internal word dictionary of every individual that should have completed secondary education in the Nigerian context. These all contribute to a better appreciation of the anthem. Indeed, our interaction with the students reveal that aside from enjoying the lyrics, they are also easily able to decode the messages encapsulated in the anthem. Another fact that contributes to the ease of understanding is the use of stock phrases which may be referred to a collection of words which have been used overtime and convey same meaning. Some of these are 'first among the best' which means the person or thing has the highest status in a group-Like 'second to none', 'first among equals'. This usage may be interpreted to mean that the institution is bigger/better/more beautiful than such of its type. 'Brighten our corner' is another stock phrase with a biblical reference as found in Mathew 5:16 which in the context of the anthem means all in the university should in their little way, contribute to its success and the multiplier effect of this by all will ensure its quick development. 'Creeks and lagoon' is another. While 'creeks' refer to-a narrow, sheltered waterway', by lagoons we mean, a body of water cut off from the open sea by coral reefs or sand bars(Dictionary.com)-typify characteristics of Lagos and the geographic location of the institution also seen on the university logo.

**Conclusion**

Our analysis reveals that the anthem of LASUED is a powerful representation of the ideals and mission of the university. The words and symbols used create a powerful story and provide a clear view of the aspirations, values, historical and geographical settings of the institution. The anthem serves as an inspiration to individuals, encouraging them to strive for excellence and finally, it serves as a reminder of the university's mission, inspiring students and staff to uphold professional excellence to all and sundry.

## REFERENCES

- Alabi,V.(2020).A stylistic Analysis of the anthems of five Nigerian universities.Marang Journal of Language and Literature.33(152-166).
- Ballo, S. & Bonsfield, Derek " Talking in cliches, the use of stock phrases in Discourse and Communication (www.lippo.com)
- Bristow, M.J Reed, W.L (Eds). (2002).National anthems of the world (10th Ed.). London: Cassell.
- Edwards, K and Pendler, D. (2003). The school song: A unifying force. *Journal of General Music Education* 2(3)13-17
- Firth, J.R. (1957). Modes of meaning. In J.R. Firth, Papers in linguistics 1934-1951. Oxford University Press.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1978). Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning. Edward Arnold and University Park Press.
- Halliday,M.A.K.(1994). *An introduction to functional grammar*(2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Edward Arnold.
- Korneeva, Koracheva and Perpura (2019) Functions of Language in context.
- Jackson, Howard (2002). *Lexicography: An Introduction*. Routledge:UK
- Lyons, J. (1977). Semantics, Cambridge University Press
- Lyons, J. (1981). *Language, meaning and context*. Fontana.
- Oishimaya, (2012). A Stylistic Analysis of the Nigerian National Anthem and Pledge. Iyan Word Press.com Aug 7,2012
- Okafor, Justina Enoh. (2021). "Textual Analysis of College Anthem and It's Implications for sustainable development in Nigeria" (<http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ujleah.v2li3.14>)
- Stringer,D (2019). Lexico-Semantics: Relativity and Transfer in Waterman, S. (2019). *National Anthems and National Symbolism. Singing the Nation Living Reference work entry. A Handbook of the changing World Language* Map pp 1-16. Sponger International.Uk
- Wright's Educational Blog
- Pharmox music.com
- Vocabulary.com
- Anthem.org
- Collins Dictionary <https://www.collinsdictionary.com>
- The classroom. <https://www.theclassroom.com>

APPENDIX

**LAGOS STATE UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION ANTHEM**

**Lyrics**

1. Come and behold a beautiful fortress,  
A place of learning, and of mores to impart.  
Where there's a room for youngsters to express  
Their burning desires for the best, from the start.  
Refrain: All hail, our great Lagos State University of Education  
The first among the best.  
We'll march with our torch to brighten our corner.  
Hail! Hail! LASUED!  
Professional excellence for all humanity.  
Hail! Hail! Great LASUED!
  
2. Flanked by lagoons and creeks in spectacle  
Envisioned by those great leaders of the past  
Great minds to make, and with no obstacle,  
Tradition, culture to embrace to the last  
Refrain: All hail, our great...
  
3. Oh God of grace, the greatest of teachers,  
We look unto you, direct us all aright;  
Frail all we are; strengthen us as leaders:  
And sure we'll succeed, as you guide with your light.  
Refrain: All hail, our great...