

## **New Trends in Language Revitalisation: The Example of a Southwestern Nigerian Minority Community**

**Esther Senayon, PhD**

*Department of Languages and Literature*

*Lead City University, Ibadan*

*esthersenayon@gmail.com*

*+2348028525725*

### **Abstract**

*This study, hinged on Giles et al's Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory, examines new revitalisation strategies among the Ogu of Southwestern Nigeria. Ogu, a West-Benue Congo language, is a minority language spoken specifically in Ogun and Lagos States. Due to a decline in the number of speakers, as its youths continue to shift to Yoruba, the language of wider communication, the language is currently disappearing and in serious need of revitalisation efforts. Data from Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews reveal that language loss is the result of the socio-political marginalisation, economic deprivation and inferiority complex that Ogu speakers suffer. Perceived socio-economic benefits, which they stand to gain by identifying with the dominant language, such as job opportunities, scholarships, political appointments, etc. constitute some of the reasons why Ogu people, especially the younger generation, are now shifting to Yoruba. They deny their Ogu identity, and adopt Yoruba names, among other indices of language shift. However, some elite members, whom I call Cultural Police, have started a linguistic renaissance aimed at revitalising the language. Interventions range from the mobilisation of cultural elements, informal use of subtle policing strategies, incentives, and psycholinguistic analyses of denying members. The study submits that the revitalisation strategies have worked for Ogu and could be tested with similarly endangered languages.*

**Keywords:** Revitalisation, Ogu, Southwestern Nigeria, Language shift, Cultural Police

### **Introduction**

Language revitalisation involves the restoration or strengthening of a particular language in regions where it prevailed before being displaced by other, more powerful or prestigious languages (Comajoan-Colomé and Coronel-Molina 2021). Language revitalisation has attracted much attention in sociolinguistics in recent times due to the increasing incidences of language shift, language loss and language endangerment, not only on

the African continent but on a global scale. Minority languages continue to face threats from more prestigious languages, thereby leading to the loss of their speakers and their culture (Campbell and Muntzell 1989, Fishman 1991, Nettle and Romaine 2000, Coluzzi 2015, Bastardas-Boada 2019). The revitalisation also refers to activities and efforts aimed at reversing language shift and saving endangered languages from becoming extinct.

### **Literature Review**

Linguists agree that language shift and death do not only constitute a serious threat to the world's languages but call for urgent cause for revitalisation strategies (Nettle and Romaine 2000; Fishman 2001, Grenoble and Whaley 2021). UNESCO (2003) estimates that approximately 90% of the languages of the world are in danger of extinction as speakers of minority languages continue to shift, for numerous reasons, to more languages of wider communication to the detriment of their languages. Krauss (1992) gives an even more scary revelation that half of the languages of the world are likely to disappear in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The majority of linguists posit that the main reasons for language shift are political, cultural, socio-ideological and economic. They also acknowledge that shift can either be voluntary or forced (Fishman 1991, Nettle and Romaine 2000, Batibo 2005, Coluzzi 2015, Chikasha and Beukes (2021). Revitalisation strategies become expedient in the face of language endangerment and the imminent extinction of the world's languages, peoples and cultures. Grenoble and Whaley (2021), to emphasise the urgent need for revitalization efforts, expanded the import of endangered languages to include their potential link to the environmental health of the planet (P.912).

Several strategies have been advanced by linguists for the revitalisation of dying languages. Some of such strategies include intergenerational transfer (Fishman 1991); personal family efforts (Juan-Garau 2014; Senayon 2016); making an endangered language a medium or subject of teaching (Potowski 2004); use in the media (Cormack 2007); government attention (Lewis 2013); standard orthography (Apari 2014); extended family members' intervention (McCabe 2016); endogamous marriage (Igboanusi and Wolf 2009), amongst others. Another strategy suggested by Grenoble and Whaley (2021) involves seeing language revitalisation as part of community wellbeing. This study, however, examines a unique language revitalisation strategy, which I have termed *Cultural Policing* and its efficacy in reversing language shift among the Ogu people (Senayon 2017). The study also investigates, amongst others, new strategies being employed by native speakers in revitalizing the language.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory, first developed by Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977), is a framework calculated to assess a linguistic group's ability to hold its own in an inter-group situation. Their definition of the theory goes thus: "that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and collective entity within the intergroup setting" (Giles, Bourhis and Taylor 1977: 308). According to them, demographic, institutional and status factors combine to affect in one direction or the other the overall strength of ethnolinguistic groups. An ethnolinguistic group is more likely to survive as a distinctive group in a multilingual and multicultural setting if its vitality is high, as it is more likely to maintain its language, and not be assimilated by the higher linguistic group. However, a linguistic group with low vitality is more likely to get assimilated by the higher linguistic group since it will not be able to assert itself as a distinctive and collective entity in a bilingual or multilingual context. "Given the rise of ethnic revival movements across the world in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the group vitality framework was developed to analyse more systematically the relative socio-structural position of language groups in contact" (Bourhis 1979:2).

Factors such as the numeric distribution of group members; the number of group members, *vis-a-vis* the speakers of the other prestigious language in the territory; their birth rate, their marriage pattern – whether exogamy/endogamy- and their immigration and emigration patterns make up the demographic variables. Demographic variables are part of the structural variables that are likely to influence the vitality of ethnolinguistic groups. An examination of Ogu in the light of these variables will show that Ogu speakers, about 1.5 million in Nigeria, are numerically disadvantaged compared to their Yoruba neighbours, who constitute about 22 million out of the estimated 150 million people in Nigeria (Senayon 2017, 2019). The difference in numerical strength alone has caused a sort of intimidation on the part of the Ogu people so much so that their low vitality has pushed them to embrace the language of prestige which is Yoruba. Group members are not usually concentrated in their territories as they have intermingled with the Yoruba – especially the Awori stock – who presently are fighting to usurp landed property owned by the Ogu because of their minority status. Coupled with this are exogamous marriages, which usually result in Ogu spouses getting assimilated into the more attractive linguistic group of their partners. However, the new revitalisation strategies being employed by the *Cultural Police Team* are gradually increasing the group's ethnolinguistic vitality of the people.

### **The Ogu-speaking People of Southwestern Nigeria**

The Ogu people are found around the borders between Nigeria and The Republic of Benin. They form a minority indigenous group in the Yoruba-dominated Lagos and Ogun States. Precisely, they are in Lagos, Badagry, Abeokuta, and other towns in both states. According to Asiwaju (1979), the geographical location of Ogu speakers in Nigeria includes the Badagry Local Government Area of Lagos State as well as the Ado-Igbesa and the Ipokia districts of Egbado South Local Government Area of Ogun State. The language, however, has been experiencing a widespread shift by its speakers to Yoruba and English due to the socio-economic and political marginalisation as well as deprivation that they suffer (Akere 2002; Onadipe-Shalom 2013; Senayon 2016, 2017 2021). The shift manifests mainly in the denial of Ogu identity, privileging of Yoruba over Ogu and bearing of Yoruba names (Durodola 2004, Onadipe-Shalom 2013, Senayon 2017). As a minority language that is not only facing threats from one of Nigeria's national languages but is also on the verge of endangerment, there is an urgent need for revitalisation strategies. While various attempts have been made at engaging with issues around language shift and strategies for language revitalisation, concerning Ogu in particular, available literature still leaves much room for further explorations. Grenoble and Whaley (2006: ix) explain that "although many similarities can be found in the causes of language loss around the world, this does not mean that similar approaches to language revitalisation can be taken". This study, therefore, investigates a previously unacknowledged strategy in mainstream revitalisation scholarship, which involves the informal application of non-forceful, non-coercive and subtle policing strategies by native speakers in revitalising their language and culture. These strategies constitute what I have termed *Cultural Policing*.

### **Methodology**

This study is the outcome of fieldwork carried out in the Badagry local government area of Lagos State and Ado-Odo/Ota in Ogun State where Ogu people are found in relatively large numbers. The study employed a qualitative method of data collection. Semi-structured respondent interviews were conducted with purposively selected key informants, from both local government areas, who have been using the strategy of *Cultural Policing* to revitalise Ogu. The interviews were carried out to investigate their mode of operation. They included male and female informants from different works of life who fell within the young, middle-aged and old groups. Data were also elicited from discussants in Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to investigate the new revitalisation activities of the

team which I term *Cultural Police*. Interviews were also held with The Ogu *cultural police* team is made up of men and women of high social status: lecturers, accountants, medical doctors, engineers, high school teachers, civil servants, university undergraduate and postgraduate students, etc. speakers of Ogu who have been persuaded to embrace Ogu through the efforts of the *Cultural Police* team to ascertain the efficacy of the strategy. Participants were asked to answer structured interview questions verbally or in written form. A recorder was also used to record the discussions. In all, 16 key informant interviews and 4 FGDs, involving six people each, were carried out. This brings the total number of people who participated in the study to 40. Data collected from both interview sessions and FGDs were complemented with relevant library materials. They were then subjected to content as well as descriptive analyses.

### **The Strategy of Cultural Policing**

*Cultural Policing* is a terminology which I created in my doctoral thesis to describe the informal native speaker-to-native speaker strategy adopted by an elite and influential group, among Ogu-speaking communities, in a bid to reverse the widespread language shift and language loss being experienced in the socio-linguistic milieu (Senayon 2017). It is not the application of force. This clarification is needful given the tendency to associate policing with the use of force and violence. The activities and advocacy are exclusively predicated on native speaker agency, through the mobilization of cultural elements such as facial scarification, food and music preferences, Anglicised and Yorubaised Ogu names, accent, etc. Invariably, this study focuses on the systematic policing techniques, which include observation, suspicion, tip-off, questioning, investigation, evidence, confession, etc. that a group of Ogu people has adopted in identifying Ogu speakers who have shifted and encouraging them to return to the patronage of their language. The group is an informal one and so does not have any formal criteria for membership. It started with a few educated and elite Ogu speakers who live in the city, and on paying visits to their ancestral homes discovered a massive shift from Ogu to Yoruba, even among adults. They decided to start sensitising their kinsmen on the dangers of losing their language, their identity and their culture. Gradually many people have keyed into the ideals of this team and have enlisted into it by carrying on the linguistic renaissance wherever they find their people.

Usually, when Ogu *Cultural Police* members find themselves in any environment, they employ the tool of *observation* as they are often on the lookout for any denying kinsmen of theirs. This may be at a party, a place of work, a school, a market, a hospital, a religious centre, etc. *Suspicion*

then follows as soon as they sense that a particular Yoruba speaker may be denying Ogu. They can deduce this from facial scarification, Youbaised Ogu names, Ogu accent, and food or music preferences. *Suspicion* further leads to *an investigation* to find *evidence* or *clues* to confirm the *suspicion*. Sometimes the *Cultural Police* may act on a *tip-off* that may lead them to deny Ogu speakers. The next stage is that of questioning. The *police* may approach a suspected denying kinsman and politely ask them questions about their nativity based on some *proofs*, *clues* or *evidence* at hand. This is done in a most friendly and relaxed manner to avoid being accused of intruding into people's privacy. *Questioning* often leads to *confession*. The *cultural police* then use the tool of *persuasion* to encourage them to return to the patronage of Ogu. *Persuasion*, therefore, is a key strategy employed in *Cultural Policing*. This way, many Ogu speakers who had shifted to Yoruba and lived in denial have been encouraged to return to speaking their heritage language. This is the stage I call *reformation*. The italicized words above are typical of policing, and since they resonate with the systematic way in which elite Ogu speakers mobilise cultural elements to reverse language shift, I choose to call them *Cultural Police* and their strategy *Cultural Policing*.

#### **Data Presentation and Analysis from Key Informant Interviews**

Data from key interview sessions, with purposively selected members of the *Ogu cultural police* team, revealed their modus operandi. Informant A from Badagry LGA revealed how he was able to identify an Ogu speaker who had shifted. In his words:

I once had an encounter with a certain gentleman who came to my office to enquire. As soon as he wrote down his name on the visitor's book, I realised that he was Ogu. Immediately, I got talking with him and that was how a relationship that has helped to heal the wounds he suffered emotionally because of loss of identity started. (Informant A).

The informant further revealed that the man had been an Ogu living under a Yoruba identity. However, he had been going through the emotional pain of losing his identity due to his inferiority complex and the privileges he was often denied for being in the minority. *The cultural police* explained that he had established a relationship with the man which eventually led him to reveal his true identity and resolve to speak Ogu again. Informant B from Ado-Odo/Ota LGA revealed how she was able to fish out a denying Ogu speaker in her lecture room:

I teach linguistics at a higher institution in Nigeria. In a particular lecture on language shift and endangerment, I used Ogu as a case study. I *observed* that a particular student who answers a Yoruba name was very enthusiastic about the topic and confirmed everything I was saying about the Ogu people. I immediately became suspicious. I later engaged her in a long discussion in my office during which she broke down in tears and revealed the emotional torture she had been suffering in a false identity (Informant B).

The job of the Ogu *cultural police* is sometimes made easy because of the emotional state of some denying members at the time of their meeting with them. For instance, some of them already suffer from what I call 'linguistic nostalgia' due to years of losing their identity. In the next section, I discuss linguistic nostalgia.

### **The Concept of Linguistic Nostalgia**

In this study, I have coined the term "linguistic nostalgia" to describe the strong feeling and longing for one's native language in the face of the shift to another language. It also entails a desire for home, the cultural heritage as well as values that are associated with home. There is thus an implication of exile, at least metaphoric exile, to the way I engaged the discourse of linguistic nostalgia here. As is normatively acknowledged, there is a strong implication of nostalgia in the apprehension of exile (Valis 2000; Gillespie 2013). Conceived as dispersal against one's wish, exile, even when it offers an initial liberatory feeling from the dystopia of homeland (Ndebele 2016), eventually leaves the dispersed distraught. The realisation of the undesirability of separation from one's homeland, in the manner of exile, often obtains from knowing that even at its best, the actualities of exile resonate with ignominy (Gillespie 2013). The shift from Ogu to Yoruba is therefore a form of exile, which initially leaves native speakers with a feeling of liberation given the socio-political and economic leverage they imagine to draw upon their identification with Yoruba. Ultimately, they realize that the imagined linguistic liberation is either short-lived or unrealizable, hence their regret over their shift and the longing for a return to Ogu, especially with the intervention of *cultural policemen and women*. It is this longing for the re-appropriation of Ogu, like the longing for homeland associated with physical exile, that I have termed linguistic nostalgia.

Denying Ogu speakers usually refuse to identify, in any way, with their people. However, deep down in their hearts, they feel lost, especially

when they find themselves amid other Ogu speakers who speak the language with pride. However, some of them still long so much for their language and culture that they need only a little persuasion from a kinsman, who understands that peculiar feeling, to draw them out of their shell, for them to return to their roots. The feeling of nostalgia finds expression in some of the policed confessing to their shift and resolving to patronise the language again. This accounts for why, rather than getting offended by the policing approach of the Ogu *cultural police*, they warm up to them, instead, seeing them as models to emulate. The two cases above are examples of linguistic nostalgia. The *cultural police* in the excerpts succeeded in winning their kinsmen back to speaking of Ogu because they had been experiencing linguistic nostalgia.

The feeling of nostalgia is sometimes very strong among some of the Ogu who have shifted to Yoruba as their shift will be more correctly regarded as forced and not voluntary. The Ogu *cultural police* are aware of this feeling, on the part of their kinsmen, having been through nostalgia before. They discovered that nostalgic feelings for their language gave them a pedestal for an easy and determined return to the patronage of Ogu that encouraged them to set out on the task of getting back their 'lost' kinsmen. Armed with this knowledge, members scout for fellow kinsmen with the same feeling and the task of revitalising Ogu is made easier. For some of the *policed*, returning to the language gives them freedom from the emotional strain of long years of false identity, which has translated into the feeling of being neither here nor there.

The feeling of nostalgia is expressed and manifested among denying Ogu people in one, several, or all of the following ways:

- the inclusion of an Ogu name among their children's names even when such names are often only on paper and the Yoruba names emphasised as first names;
- the readiness and willingness with which they respond to the revitalisation efforts of the *cultural police*;
- their tactical way of associating with other Ogu kinsmen, whom they admire for the pride with which they identify and speak the language, even while still hiding their true identity;
- their stylish way of identifying with Ogu culture, especially in their culinary preference, dressing, music, etc.
- their rising to the defence of fellow Ogu in times of danger or maltreatment from the Yoruba even when they do not disclose their true identity; and
- their speaking of French and other related languages such as Ewe as a make-up for the loss of Ogu.



Many Ogu has been discovered by the *cultural police* by their choice of Ogu dishes at parties or other events. The momentary forgetfulness of their pretended identity during moments of celebrations, where they give vent to their true cultural heritage and dance to Ogu music – in such a way that reveals their true identity – is often a useful pointer to their Ogu identity. Ogu *cultural police* are often suspicious of persons who are unusually attracted to them or their families; fascinated by their patronage of the language or ask personal questions about their language and people. From experience, such persons are, often, Ogu people who suffer from linguistic nostalgia and need help. Once the *cultural police* talk with them, they usually give vent to their frustration to the extent of even breaking down in tears, betraying their mental health. Little wonder then that Grenoble and Whaley (2021) have linked language endangerment with the environmental health of the planet.

### **Social Status and Ogu Language Maintenance**

The Ogu Cultural Police Team is made up of people who are educated and understand the value of language and identity so much so that when they preach the message of language shift reversal, the commoners want to listen to them. These men and women are the people that the community looks up to ordinarily for direction, counsel and guidance in matters about politics, government and community development. They champion the cause of the people in other areas apart from language maintenance as their people see them as icons. Thus, their iconic status endears them to other members of the community who are not that endowed since people generally like to emulate icons. They encourage their people to be proud of their language and their culture by speaking Ogu. Due to their elite status, resulting from their level of education and experience, they are respected by their people who believe that they cannot be led astray by their blood. They are challenged by the fact that such highly read and enlightened sons and daughters of theirs, who have travelled far and wide, can return from the city with their families speaking Ogu.

Ordinarily, one would expect city people to be the ones shifting from their heritage language because of language contact and distance from their homeland, but the reverse is the case here seeing that it is the city people that are reversing the language shift. Their agitation for the maintenance of Ogu is having an impact on the Ogu people because of their status in the society. Members of the *cultural police* formation who are university undergraduates and postgraduates have also been of great influence to fellow Ogu undergraduates and other youths at home. The

students who disguise themselves as Yoruba on campus are being discovered by their Ogu brothers and sisters who showcase their Oguness everywhere. Again, these undergraduates can influence other young people who aspire to get a university education seeing that their acquisition of higher education has not affected their loyalty to the language. And because this elite group has the habit of returning home at festive periods, they can relate with the people back home who have been experiencing massive language shift. This resonates with McCabe's (2016) advice of regular visits to ancestral homelands as a revitalisation strategy. When a language is no longer enjoying much patronage in its ancestral home, then there are dire consequences for it as it is already threatened. That the *cultural police* team comes home with their families, who also speak Ogu, has been of great inspiration to parents back home whose children are more fluent in Yoruba than in Ogu. The excerpt below from Informant C attests to this:

I was inspired by the fact that a kinsman of mine who lives in the city answers an Ogu name, which tells his identity unlike I that answer a Yoruba name. I was also motivated by the pride with which he and his family identify with the language and the people. I mean he tells anyone who cares to listen that he is an Ogu man with so much pride that can be described as infectious (Informant C).

The Ogu *cultural police* team lead by example. They have broken free from the shackles of shame, inferiority and interiority complex. They are the epitome of the Ogu, who though are marginalised and unrecognised, are proud of their language and their ethnic identity. They are a source of inspiration to their kinsmen who hitherto had thought that being Ogu was a thing of shame due to the ridicule they suffer from speakers of more prestigious Yoruba. For those who have shifted, their mentality is that if their educated and influential kinsmen could speak the language with pride, they too are persuaded to do so. Even though some countries, such as Namibia, Senegal and Nigeria, have enacted supportive language policies that promote minority languages, such policies are usually not implemented as they exist on paper only. The languages concerned are denied the respect, attention and value that they need (Batibo 2005; Senayon 2017). As a result of the marginalisation and privileges denied them, minority language speakers often do not see any gain in speaking their language. However, Senayon (2017) advises Ogu speakers to develop pride in speaking their language as no other person can revitalise a language more than the speakers themselves. The revitalisation activities of the *cultural police* team are helping to improve the ethnolinguistic vitality of the Ogu people.

### **Data Analysis from Focus Group Discussions**

Data collected from FGDs reveal that the revitalisation activities being carried out by the Ogu *cultural police* Team are already producing positive results, albeit gradually. Discussants explained how they were encouraged by their kinsmen to return to the patronage of Ogu. Here is an excerpt:

I used to tell people that I am Yoruba because anytime I reveal my true identity, Yoruba people will ridicule me by calling me a worthless person. But I became ashamed of this act when a particular educated kinsman of mine in the city would visit home at Christmas and speak Ogu with pride, together with all members of his family. I was surprised because I expected those in the city to deny the language more. He kept talking to me to change my attitude and thank God, all my family members have finally returned to speaking our language. I have also now joined in spreading the message to others. (Forty-five years old Discussant 1 from Ado-Odo/Ota LGA).

The discussant above is very grateful for the intervention of the *cultural police* which has helped him to regain his ethnic identity and pride. The scenario in the excerpt above is a common one in Ogu communities where Yoruba is spoken in almost every domain of language use. Parents and their families seem to compete to speak Yoruba (Onadipe-Shalom 2016, Senayon 2021). What is more, children are taught in Yoruba in Ogu-speaking communities, a practice that is against the National Policy on Education (Senayon 2021). Some discussants claimed they shifted out of shame, fear and ignorance. Others traced the shift to some of their kinsmen who had left the ancestral communities to seek greener pastures in the cities in Southwestern Nigeria, which are dominated by the Yoruba. On their return visits to the ancestral homelands, especially during festive periods, they no longer spoke Ogu. Instead, they spoke Yoruba and even chided folks at home for speaking Ogu. Before long, people began to emulate them since they were regarded as cosmopolitans and been-to. A legend even spread among Ogu's ancestral communities that people got killed in the cities for speaking Ogu. As a result of that legend, people stopped speaking the language even in the ancestral communities and hid their identity, for safety reasons as soon as they migrated to the cities. Though the language shift was said to have been orchestrated by the cosmopolitans in the 1970s, it is noteworthy that it is another set of present-day Ogu cosmopolitans that are championing the linguistic reawakening in their communities.

It is pertinent to note here that the task of persuading denying speakers to embrace Ogu again is not automatic. It often takes a long time of persistence, tact, persuasion, resilience and labour for the *cultural police* to achieve their aim. For those denying Ogu who has stopped speaking the

language for a long time, attaining proficiency in it again is a gradual process of relearning. Some have already experienced language loss but by sheer determination, they can regain their linguistic competence. Granadilo (2022) advises that what is most important in language revitalisation is being able to convince the speakers of what the language means to them. Thus, they should speak whatever little of the language they can daily.

The excerpt above from Discussant 1 again typifies the peculiar circumstances that some Ogu people face, which leads them to identify with Yoruba as a more prestigious identity. Many have been robbed of certain benefits that were supposed to accrue to them. Sometimes, it is just at the crucial moment when they are about to enjoy the socio-political or economic benefits for which they had shifted to Yoruba, that someone would raise an objection and the Ogu would be denied access. It is often a double tragedy for these folks as they realise that, after countless years, they belong nowhere, neither Yoruba nor Ogu. They are just used and dumped by the same people they call their kinsmen. Unfortunately for some of them, they have no more link with home or family, in the African sense of the word. Thus, the denying Ogu is already in a state of emotional and psychological imbalance that makes them receptive to the *cultural police* who come to encourage them to return to their language and the people. Findings from another discussant attest to this:

I grew up in Lagos under the impression that I was Yoruba since my father did not tell us otherwise. It was not until I decided to vie for a counsellorship position that my opponents accused me of being Ogu. To say I was shocked is an understatement. I confronted my father and other relations with the allegation and was told that it was true. I couldn't believe that I was not who I thought I had been. I lost the election. (Discussant 2)

The excerpt above is just one of many cases where Ogu people are denied access to the perceived socio-political benefits that informed their shift to Yoruba. Some have lost jobs, scholarships, political positions, etc. Some have even lost their spouses who married them under the belief that they were Yoruba only to discover later that they were Ogu (Senayon 2017). Such losses are usually traumatic for them and often make them regret shifting, thereby causing them to be receptive to the *cultural police*.

A third discussant, however, revealed to me how his knowledge of Ogu had helped him to secure a job. He attributed his proficiency in the language to the activities of the *cultural police* team who had encouraged him to speak Ogu with pride.

I was once involved in an interview for a job with the Lagos State Government. On the day of the interview, several questions were asked including what LGA I am from. I told them Badagry. The interview

continued and suddenly in the middle of things, one of the members of the interview panel blurted out in Ogu "Na a no yin?" meaning "What is your name?" In shock, I replied also in Ogu and the section ended. I got the job! Well, I later found out that there are sometimes job vacancies that are meant for Lagos State indigenes and are shared by quota, although the quota for the Ogu is usually very small. Sometimes, some Yoruba who are aware of this claim come from Badagry LGA to secure such appointments. So, during interviews for a vacancy that is meant for Badagry, such sudden questioning in Ogu often arises and many Ogu people have failed due to their inability to speak the language. Of course, those Ogu who bear Yoruba names are usually not shortlisted for such interviews as their names suggest that they are Yoruba. Even if their credentials show that they are from Badagry, the fact that they bear Yoruba names makes them suspected impostors. (Discussant 3).

When asked how the incident above had affected his attitude to Ogu, he explained that he was very happy he could speak the language at that interview as he needed the job desperately. He even confessed that he would not have ever forgiven himself if he had lost that chance because he could not prove his Ogu identity. Since then, he had resolved to continue speaking the language. He had also been telling his relations about the experience and the need for young people in the main to have some level of proficiency in Ogu. At least, there are some benefits from speaking the language, which he enjoyed. The introduction of Ogu during job interviews is evidence of the linguistic renaissance going on in the communities currently. And this is not unconnected with the revitalisation activities of the *cultural police* team. Many had lost certain opportunities because they could not prove their Ogu identity due to their inability to speak the language.

Incentives play a major role in inspiring people to speak their language. In the excerpt above, we see a lady who got a job because of her competence in her language, Ogu. This is part of the social economy of *cultural policing*. Elements of policing at play, in this case, include suspicion as it was suspected that the lady was an impostor. Then there was questioning which was expressed in Ogu. Her ability to speak the language brought about confirmation and then reward. Those who failed the interview realised that their lack of proficiency in Ogu was not in their best interest. Many young Ogu have taken a cue from this incident to gain proficiency in their language since they have realised that there are some gains accruing from it. Again, this aligns with Batibo's (2005) submission that minority language speakers should be made to patronise their language by making the speaking of the language attract some socio-economic benefits. Ogu families, especially of the *cultural police* team, in their little

ways, have been giving material gifts to their children who make efforts to speak Ogu as a way of motivation (Senayon 2017).

In one of the FGDs in Ado-Odo/Ota LGA, a 47-year-old high school teacher revealed how he has keyed into the vision of *Cultural Policing*. He has been making efforts to preserve and maintain Ogu, in his little way, by using his vantage position as a teacher who can reach out to many Ogu students at a time. As a teacher of French, he has been preserving French and its culture by teaching it to Nigerian students. Meanwhile, his own Ogu is gradually heading for the doldrums even when the majority of his students are Ogu and the school is located in an Ogu community. He took a personal decision to also do something to save his heritage language by translating the Nigerian national anthem to Ogu. Having done that, he embarked on the task of teaching all the students the anthem at the assembly ground, with the permission of the principal of the school. Not stopping there, he convinced him to permit the singing of the Ogu version of the national anthem on Wednesdays. This has continued till date at Toyon High School in Ado-Odo LGA in Ogun State. Here is the Ogu version of the anthem as translated by my informant (Informant D):

**National Anthem in Ogu (First Stanza)**

*Mi fon tovi leh, mi wa sio Naijiria*  
*Na tho sen ayiten lo*  
*Po yise wanyina huhlon po*  
*Na'zon suka mi ton leh po*  
*Nigba yi tho vo gbe*  
*Mi sen bo wa zon ganji*  
*Blonde yiten gbenopo ton, Jomio, konthopo*

Arise, O compatriots,  
Nigeria's call obey  
To serve our fatherland  
With love and strength and faith  
The labour of our heroes past  
Shall never be in vain  
To serve with heart and might  
One nation bound in freedom,  
peace, and unity

**National Pledge in Ogu**

*N tho pagbe na ayiten se Naijiria*  
*Na tho yi home dopo tho do nugbo*  
*Na tho sen Naijiria po huhlon po*  
  
*Na tho go alo na gbenopo mi ton*  
  
*Na Okluno ni go alo na mi.*

I pledge to Nigeria, my country  
To be faithful, loyal, and honest  
To serve Nigeria with all my  
strength  
To defend her unity and uphold  
her honour and glory  
So help me God.

### **Additional Complementary Revitalisation Strategies Employed by the Ogu Cultural Police apart from Cultural Policing**

The major style of operation of Ogu *cultural policemen and women* is the use of policing strategies to discover kinsmen who hide their identity and speak Yoruba. Realising the grave consequences that this trend, if not mitigated, may have on the survival of the Ogu, the *cultural police* have been using suspicion, tip-off, questioning, persuasion, etc. to win back the loyalty of denying Ogu people to their language. However, for more people to be aware and key into this new linguistic renaissance, members of the team also employ other avenues to showcase Ogu and its rich cultural heritage. These other strategies are carefully and specially aimed at making the language attractive to its speakers in line with the submissions of linguists such as Juan-Garau (2014) and Coluzzi (2015). Some of them are discussed below:

**Ogu Traditional Music:** It has become the habit of Ogu *cultural policemen and women* to play Ogu music in their homes and offices. As they drive around during festive periods, they strategically allow loud Ogu music to boom out of their car stereos to the entertainment of everyone around that vicinity. Sometimes, they even leave their cars parked in front of their compounds with choice, Ogu music blaring from them. Previously, youths danced to the music of Yoruba Fuji musicians such as Saidi Osupa, KWAM I and others. But now, Ogu youths enjoy the music of Ogu legends such as Sagbohan, Letriki, Joel Yotonyon, Jean Nouvette, Anice Pepe, etc. which celebrates the Ogu people as a unique group, rich in culture and tradition. Such music gives people some sense of self-pride as well as a sense of belonging. This awareness about Ogu music has even translated into other domains where Yoruba music had taken over before now. For instance, more Ogu songs are now being rendered in churches than Yoruba songs. Traditional ceremonies such as funerals, marriages, child naming, etc. now engage Ogu traditional musicians to perform. This, in no small way, is helping to attract people back to their language.

**The Revival of Ogu Names:** The Ogu *cultural police* and their ‘converts’, so to speak, are making conscious efforts to revive Ogu names that had been existing only on paper over and above Yoruba and English names. Many families are changing their Yoruba names back to their Ogu names. An example of this new trend is Maupe Ogun of Channels Television, who, up till her master’s training in the UK, answered Esther Ogun. However, on getting employed by Channels Television, she decided to showcase her Ogu identity by answering Maupe (God be Praised). Through this singular act, other Ogu youths are challenged to take pride in their language and identity

seeing that such a celebrated TV star can showcase her Ogu identity to the whole world. Maupe's decision to revert to her Ogu name on the screen is her way of using her vantage position to establish the reality of the presence of her people in Nigeria. Some other individuals, who are unable to change their Yoruba surnames, due to the intricacies involved in the change of names on certificates, make sure that their children answer a different Ogu surname from theirs. The importance of names, as a marker of identity in African countries, cannot be overemphasised (Raheem and Akande 2019). The shift from Ogu to Yoruba is first evident in the speaking of Yoruba and then in the bearing of Yoruba names. Thus, the Ogu *cultural police* believe that their people patronise Ogu names as a way of entrenching their identity.

**Educational Empowerment of the Ogu:** The Ogu *cultural police* are aware of the value of education and the role it has played in their ability to extricate themselves from the shackles of inferiority and interiority complexes. They, therefore, as part of their strategies to help their kinsmen regain confidence in themselves, embark on conscious efforts to advise and encourage their people to embrace western education, especially at the graduate and post-graduate levels. To this end, they assist their youths materially, financially, morally and otherwise. Their commitment to their people is not only expressed in words but also in action as they sacrifice their funds to assist in the educational development of their youths. The crucial role of education in the revitalisation of minority languages cannot be overemphasised (Potowski 2004, McCarty 2021). The Akran of Badagry is known to give scholarships and bursaries to deserving Ogu students. Part of the criteria for getting the bursary includes the ability to speak Ogu during the interview to prove the originality of the Ogu identity of the candidates. This is in the bid to encourage the speaking of Ogu among children and youths in whose hands lies the future of the language.

**Awards and Recognition:** Some Ogu *cultural policemen and women*, on their own, give awards to eminent Ogu sons and daughters who have contributed immensely to the maintenance of Ogu either financially or morally. Such awards of recognition go a long way to sensitising the people that the maintenance of Ogu is a worthy task that must be done and for which members stand to be rewarded. Some job appointments are even now being tied to proficiency in Ogu especially when the job vacancies fall within the catchment of Ogu-speaking communities. Again, political appointments are also now tied to the ability to speak the language, as anyone interested in any political position must exhibit a fair knowledge of the spoken language to be accepted as a son or daughter of the land. Gone are the days when so-called Ogu sons who could not speak the language



held any worthwhile political position. The political aspirant does not only have to show some proficiency in the language but must be known to be conversant with the culture of the people and he is a regular visitor to the home. During political meetings and campaigns, Ogu is insisted on as the language of communication against the use of Yoruba, which had been the norm before the activities of the Ogu *cultural police team* gained ground. The consciousness of the necessity to speak Ogu everywhere has gradually gained ground in the entire community such that people are quick to caution their kinsmen who, in momentary forgetfulness, speak Yoruba around them. It is not uncommon to hear people say to their kinsmen: "Tho Gugbe!" ("Speak Ogu!"). This phrase has become such a refrain that even children also join in cautioning their parents when they try to speak Yoruba. One such parent told me that his four-year-old daughter had become the *cultural police* in his house. She acts as the linguistic monitor of the language of interaction in the home. The little girl is the one who reminds the entire family of the "Tho Gugbe" refrain to sustain the speaking of Ogu. Once intergenerational transmission of a language is sustained, the language is less likely to die (Fishman, 1991).

**Youth Recruitment:** Perhaps the winning tool of the Ogu *cultural police* is the enlistment of members of their immediate families into the *cultural police* formation. An informant told me how his daughter caused a scare at her University International School, in the Southwest when her teacher called her a Yoruba girl. She held down the teacher to such an argument that eventually involved her parents and the school management. Eventually, the school had to tender an apology to the girl and her parents. In time past, an average Ogu child would feel privileged to be called Yoruba. However, the activities of the Ogu *cultural police* are now an eye-opener to the Ogu people. They are currently very conscious of their identity and would not tolerate anyone addressing them otherwise. Many have developed self-confidence and can hold their own amid Yoruba speakers, without fear or cringing. Batibo (2005), maintains that one sure way to reverse language shift is for speakers of minority languages to develop self-confidence and not allow any intimidation from speakers of the dominant or prestigious language.

### **Conclusion**

The Ogu people of Southwestern Nigeria are applying new strategies in revitalising their language which was experiencing a widespread shift to Yoruba. However, the people have decided to take up the task of reversing the language shift and revitalising their language by adopting a native-

speaker-to-native-speaker approach. The strategy, championed by educated and elitist members of the community, involves the informal mobilisation of policing, cultural and linguistic elements in identifying denying Ogu speakers to persuade them to speak their language again. So far, the activities of the Ogu *cultural police* team revolve around, but are not limited to the following: the translation and singing of the Nigerian National Anthem in Ogu at Toyon High School in Ogun State; speaking of Ogu at home and other domains e.g., church, traditional ceremonies, etc. and systematic native speaker-to-native speaker sensitisation for intergenerational transmission. Currently, there is a proposal, which has reached an advanced stage, for the development of a curriculum for the Diploma in Ogu Studies at Lagos State University and Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education in Lagos State. Workshops have been held by linguists who are Ogu to standardise the orthography of the language. Revival of Ogu names e.g. Esther Ogun (of Channels Television changing to Maupe Ogun) is now being undertaken by Ogu speakers. There are also now on-site and online Ogu forums e.g. Gunuvi Online, Ogu Concern Forum, Ogu General Assembly, etc. for the promotion of the language and its rich cultural heritage. The new trends in the revitalisation of Ogu have also resulted in renewed confidence in and positive attitude to the language; production of children's cartoons in Ogu; educational empowerment (scholarships, grants and aids), as well as promotion of Ogu food, music and dressing. All these have been possible through the deployment of the elite agency of *Cultural Policing*, which is currently enhancing the group ethnolinguistic vitality of the Ogu people.

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## **Negotiation for the Yoruba Female Inclusion in Economic and Political Spaces in Sefi Atta's *Swallow***

**Muhammad Dahiru, PhD**

*Department of English Language*

*Yobe State University, Damaturu*

*mohdahiru@yahoo.com*

08133654548

### **Abstract**

*A major concern of the global feminist academia and literature has invariably been agitation for gender equity and equal opportunities in economic, social, cultural, and political spheres. While all strands of feminism view inclusion in these spheres the same, they also view the privileges within them differently. This paper examines instances, nuances, and the manner in which Sefi Atta negotiates the socio-economic and political privileges, and the options available for the Yoruba female in *Swallow* (2010). The examination is done through the aesthetic lens of M.M. Bakhtin's dialogical concept of heteroglossia and the postcolonial notion of hegemony. The paper argues that the authorial position of Atta on the Yoruba female's economic and political privileges and inclusion are revealed through the ideological languages in the novel. The paper concludes that through the underpinnings of heteroglossia and postcolonial hegemony, Atta suggests that although the traditional sphere of the Yoruba female is more favourable to her than the modern sphere, the merger of the two spheres is the ideal means for her social, economic and political inclusion.*

**Keywords:** Socio-economic, Socio-political, Inclusion, Space, Heteroglossia, Hegemony

### **Introduction**

The dialogue on cultural, political, social, and economic gendered spaces has been a central motif in postcolonial and western feminist discourse in academia. The discourse on western feminism largely focuses on suffrage and equality in wages in economic spaces. Caroline Pateman reveals that due to the globalised economic order, Western women find themselves economically excluded in the paid workplace. They are only placed on "feminised" and "sexualised services" such as secretaries, domestic workers, salespersons, attendants, and prostitutes and receive wages below what the males earn (Pateman, 1985). Furthermore, the first wave of

western feminism was built on the basis of political suffrage. Lots of the so-called western feminist academia and writers agitate for these economic and political privileges for the White Female, which the White Male already enjoys.

The postcolonial African feminists, however, are more concerned with privileges in the socio-cultural spaces imbricated in patriarchal hegemony. They are also concerned with gender roles as there are cultural, social, economic, and even political spaces that are exclusively reserved for males and those reserved for females accordingly in different cultures. For instance, in the past culture required that Yoruba women were responsible for taking the farm produce to the market to sell. E.D. Babatunde states that except in the case of cash crops, the social expectation and etiquette had forbidden the man to take the farm produce to the market (Zeitlin et al, 1995). The market, as a traditional public domain, is majorly the domain of the Yoruba woman (Lloyds, 1974). This puts the woman at an economic advantage by allowing her to sell farm products cultivated by the man. And if the man opposed this requirement, he would be regarded as a miser (Zeitlin et al, 1995). The wife that sells the farm produce is at liberty to declare the sales profit, which the man must invariably accept, and she can use some of such funds to begin petty trading (Zeitlin et al, 1995).

In analysing the Yoruba trickster tradition, Ropo Sekoni examines the marketplace as the Yoruba women's sphere and "the dynamics of interaction" within it. He reveals that the way haggling and bargaining in the market is conducted shows that any social phenomenon is open to negotiation (Sekoni, 1994, p. 35). In this paper, the manner in which Sefi Atta negotiates the economic and political spaces of the Yoruba woman is examined through the different interactions of languages, ideological and linguistic, in *Swallow* (2010). The discussion focuses on the process of dialogue between various socio-economic ideological languages in the traditional pre-colonial space and time, and the political language of hegemony in post-independence Nigeria. In other words, the paper explores how Atta orchestrates various ideological languages on Yoruba females' socio-economic and political realities in Nigeria in the traditional and modern spaces, and how she pulls the utopic features of these spaces together to negotiate the sublime Yoruba woman's agency in the novel.

### **Heteroglossia and Hegemony in the Novel**

Two ways in which heteroglossia enters a novel, according to David Lodge, are through the characters' speech and their interactions, and through the refracted authorial voice and intentions of the author (Lodge, 1990). According to M.M. Bakhtin, "the dialogic" is the basic distinguishing

feature of the stylistics of the novel. He states that in a novelistic discourse, 'dialogisation reveals the movement of the theme through different languages and speech types, its disposition into rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 263). These "droplets of the social heteroglossia" in the novel are noticeable in *Swallow*. In a study within African-American Literature, Dorothy Hale compares the plight of the African Americans to Bakhtin's "hypothetical peasant", who speaks different languages in different contexts through the heteroglossia in the novel (Hale, 1984). Hale investigates how slave narrators with distinctly African values come into conflict with other American values and dialects and are consequently torn between the American experience and their African heritage. This paper similarly examined Atta's representation of the postcolonial Yoruba woman's dilemma from Nigeria in *Swallow*, who is torn between tradition and modernity and the opportunities each space provides for her social, political, and economic inclusion.

Elements of postcolonial hegemony through the ideological languages that "exclude" or "include" the Yoruba woman within political spaces are also obvious in *Swallow*. The paper examines the ideological political language of hegemony, as it relates to the broader category of "postcolonial feminism", which according to Robert J.C. Young is a 'collective work, developed by different women in different directions [and whose] projects have been directed at a whole range of phenomena of injustice' (Young, 2003, p. 5). As Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin further reveal, 'women in many societies have been relegated to the position of the "other", marginalised and, in a metaphorical sense, "colonised", and thus make 'the history and concerns of feminist theory have strong parallels with postcolonial theory' (Ashcroft *et al.*, 1989, p. 174-175). Both Young and Ashcroft *et al.* identify parallels between postcolonial discourse and feminism in the struggle against hegemony and exclusion, which this paper also extrapolates.

Although a number of literary critical studies examined female spaces in the postcolonial novel, what is relatively new is examining the social function of language in relation to the economic and political-cultural exclusion of the female through the novel's heteroglossia and postcolonial hegemony. In his study of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, for instance, Kwadwo Osei-Nyame examined the power struggle between gender and tradition in the construction of the Igbo female character. Two ideological languages in Achebe's novel, as Osei-Nyame reveals, engage in a power struggle. So, the language of patriarchal tradition in the narrative voice is challenged by another language that glorifies the female figure over the male authoritative figure in the discourse of the novel (Osei-Nyame, 1999).

Similarly, Zoreh Sullivan explored the centripetal and centrifugal power struggle between the authoritative language of the 'privileged masculine narrative voice and the speech and languages of the female' in *Things Fall Apart* (Sullivan, 1991, p. 105). Sullivan argues that the female language subverts the male authoritative language through the various forms of ideological languages in the novel.

Rita Nnodim's study is an examination of how Atta narrates the survival of female characters in the city as a public social space in *Swallow* (Nnodim, 2015). The argument of the paper is that the motifs presented by Atta are mainly seen 'through the lens of gender, mirroring the emplaced, embodied, and engendered character of humanness' (Nnodim, 2015, p. 99). The paper largely argued about the "humanness" of women as subjects as a theme, rather than how the images of this humanness are recreated through social heteroglossia. Another study by Shalini Nadaswaran also revealed that *Swallow* is 'a form of female in justice dialogue [that] focuses on the forces that create circumstances for women to indulge in national destruction such as drug trafficking' (Nadaswaran, 2015, p.157). The study disapproves of justifying all means possible that women do to survive and considers the actions of the female in *Swallow* as "national destruction and indulgence" (Nadaswaran, 2015). The study views the Nigerian government's economic and political policies as the main reasons that push females into crime in order to survive. Looking closely, however, Atta's *entendrà* in the novel may suggest multiple views that show forces and circumstances that objectify the Yoruba female through different features of heteroglossia and speech types in the novel.

*Swallow* is a two-part novel set in Lagos and fictional Makoku in Nigeria. The space of the Yoruba woman is outlined by two narrators in these places. The first part of the novel is a prolepsis, beginning *in medias res* with Tolani and Rose coming back from work as secretaries in the Federal Community Bank. Their struggles to survive life in Lagos form the focus of this part of the novel, which ends with the sacking of Rose and Tolani. While Rose becomes a drug mule, Tolani eventually returns to Makoku, to her mother. Within this part also, another plot is revealed in eight sections of analepsis written in italics. These sections recount the life and experiences of Tolani's family in the traditional Makoku village, narrated through a retrospective account from her mother, Arike.

Tolani narrates the stories in both sections of *Swallow*. By positioning her as the narrator of her story and that of her mother, Atta deploys a stylistic device that Gerald Prince calls an "anachrony", a 'discordance between the order in which events occur and the order in which they are recounted' (Prince, 1987, p.5). This technique keeps



Tolani's omniscient point of view and the reader sees and hears about all the characters through her. Her mother, Arike, only becomes the second and internal narrator who narrates her experiences in a monologue to a character that in the end turns out to be Tolani. Arike's consciousness is the lens through which the reader is granted access to the traditional economic, political, and social spaces of Yoruba life. This is put into dialogue with the modern consciousness narrated by Tolani within the city and modern space. Without Arike, Tolani's narrative may become a one-sided perspective that is not substantiated by another character-narrator at the scene and, therefore, not dialogic. So, the multiplicity of voices and consciousness make *swallow* a dialogic novel due to the elements of heteroglossia therein.

It's in the second part of *Swallow* that the author reveals Tolani's decision to return to Makoku, to her mother and to the traditional space. This part is already introduced to the reader through the analepsis in the first part. According to Gérard Genette, two factors that enter narrative order through analepsis or prolepsis are "reach" and "extent". Reach is the temporal distance through which 'an anachrony can reach into the past or the future, either more or less far from the "present" moment [in the story] when the narrative was interrupted to make room for the anachrony' (Genette, 1987, p. 48). When an anachrony covers 'a duration of story that is more or less long' it is known as the story's "extent" (Genette, 1987, p. 48). Based on this, the "reach" of the story stretches back to Tolani's mother's life and childhood, who the reader is told got married at the age of twenty (p. 188) and the novel opens when Tolani is twenty-eight years old (p.128). So, the narrative order of the story has a reach of over fifty years but an extent of just a few months in the life of Tolani - from the sacking of Rose to her return home. The reach in the story of Tolani's mother is significant in diachronically exploring the traditional space from the pre-colonial and colonial to the postcolonial periods.

The narrative extent of the story is set in Nigeria's early 1980s. From the late 1970s to the early 1980s, Nigeria experienced corrupt military and civilian governments that were economically burdened by external debt. The social effects of these on Nigeria and Nigerians as described by Shalini Nadaswaran are 'poverty, scarcity, and destitution [...] as the elite continue to siphon and line their pockets with the nation's fund' (Nadaswaran, 2015, p.159). As a result, crime burgeoned in the country. The title 'Swallow' stands for the act of swallowing drugs by female drug mules for transportation into or out of Nigeria, caused by the different economic, social, and political factors in the country. This setting of the novel reflects Archille Mbembe's theorisation about the socio-economic realities of sub-Saharan African countries (Mbembe, 2015).

### **The Socio-economic Space of the Yoruba Female in *Swallow***

In negotiating the socio-economic inclusion of the Yoruba female in the traditional space, the ideological dialogue between Tolani and her mother, as the two narrators, is adopted through the means in which heteroglossia enters the novel. At times through the dialogue their voices and actions become the refracted voice of the author. Tolani's mother rides a Vespa scooter through the village to gather the *esusu* contribution. Although the venture is a woman's domain, for riding a scooter, Iya Alaro tells her there is a 'woman's business and men's business' (p. 129). The ideological perspectives of Tolani and her mother as narrators, therefore, are presented as two different discourses with regard to the limit of the females in the choice and process of their professions within the economic space.

According to B.B. Lloyds, traditional Yoruba women are both economically autonomous and subordinate to men. They are traditionally independent of their husbands in matters of commerce or trading as they are not bound by culture to operate a joint account of their earnings with their husbands (Lloyds, 1974). But the husband is required to provide his wife with capital to start her trading or establish her craft and he is not sanctioned to supervise her. She is free to manage her business on her own and to spend her income from the trade on herself and her children. She may share in the purchasing of food, clothing, and other sundries if she so desires. What is required of husbands is to provide an enabling economic environment for their wives' trade rather than confine them at home as full housewives. (Zeitlin, *et al*, 1995).

So, rather than waiting for her husband cater to her craft, Tolani's mother establishes herself in the dye business and leads other women in the *esusu* contribution. The Co-op of her Aunt, Iya Alaro, in Makoku also runs the local economy of the women in the community through the local thrift banking of *esusu* or *ajo* contribution. While Tolani and Rose occupy a subordinating role in the modern banking space, Iya Alaro and the women in Makoko occupy a coordinating position in managing their economic independence in the *esusu* or *ajo* thrift enterprise.

Strong female characters in *Swallow* do not look up to a male for their survival but fend for themselves. As single mothers, Mrs Durojaiye and Mama Chidi never fail in their duties as mothers. Mrs Durojaiye abandons her gambling husband because he loses all his money in English Premier League "pools" (p. 134), and she takes care of her children so well that when Ayo, her son, goes to live with his father, she tells Tolani, 'he's already begging to come back to me [...] complaining that his father's new wife rations food' (p. 135). Mama Chidi also takes care of a large family

such that Tolani observes she emaciates ‘because she was looking after so many children, all under the age of eleven, and she always smelled of burned beans’ (p. 97). When Sanwo disappears with Tolani’s savings, which she gives him to invest and establish himself for their marriage, she concludes that she will live her economic and social life independent of man. She eventually drops the idea of getting married and proposes a business plan based on her mother’s dye business and experiences. She dreams of being an independent businesswoman with her own staff and of living a life devoid of the support of any man.

Incorporating genres to demonstrate all these ideological languages and the consciousness of the characters is a fundamental stylisation form through which heteroglossia enters *Swallow*. While language is revealed through the insertion of words and speech, consciousness is revealed through the insertion of “unverbalised” thoughts of the characters. Atta employs the language of the newspaper and television, as incorporated genres, to negotiate the decision taken by Tolani and other strong women to stand independent of their men. Their actions contrast with the decision taken by other female characters that choose drug trafficking and prostitution to survive the harsh economic realities under the military government in Nigeria.

As Bakhtin states, the history of the novel reveals that it constantly attracts and assimilates other genres and takes different forms throughout its history and development. He states that ‘the novel permits the incorporation of various genres, both *artistic* (inserted short stories, lyrical songs, poems, dramatic scenes, etc.) and *extra artistic/everyday*, rhetorical, scholarly, religious genres and others’ (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 320). When any of these genres enters the novel, it retains its linguistic and stylistic features thereby becoming an “object” in the novel discourse. This is because the novel easily ‘utilizes these genres precisely because of their capacity, as well as worked out forms, to assimilate reality in words’ (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 321). The story of the drug mules in *Swallow* is revealed through the newspaper read by Mama Chidi to Tolani: ‘It’s here. Raheem or something. Sidi Raheem. Yes. The bags bursts inside her. She perished on a plane last night’ (p. 247). By representing the information as being “reported” in the newspaper and by making Mama Chidi refer to an indefinite, general source - the newspaper, Tolani as the narrator is made to assimilate the discourse of others and make it her own. Although Atta does not directly replicate the newspaper extract in the novel, she reflects the newspaper’s language in ‘its linguistic and stylistic features thereby becoming an “object” in the novel discourse’ (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 321).

Through the speech of the characters, Atta comments on the social and economic realities that affect women's agency and push them to become drug mules, mainly because they depend on men. As Tolani reveals, 'most smugglers were women like Rose and me' (p. 207) and cites the example of the 'three women [...] killed through firing squad' (p. 138). It is the men such as OC who organise such drug trafficking, but they use women as the vehicle. Colonel Daodu also made his money through 'a girlfriend who smuggled Indian hemp after the civil war and ended up dying in a Bangkok jail [...] and had been imprisoned twice in England' (p. 83). O. O. Fayomi argues that women are trafficked as prostitutes or for drug peddling due to 'gender inequalities and the failure of the State to guarantee women's human rights [and so they lack] capabilities and potentials for seeking' better jobs, making them vulnerable to trafficking (Fayomi, 2009, p. 65). But Mama Chidi does not agree that gender or the government's economic austerity with its attendant hardship is enough reason to make the women allow themselves to be drug mules. She asks rhetorically, 'What do these two smugglers want to tell me? That they've suffered more than Mrs Durojaiye? And they are both mothers. Can you imagine?' (p. 240). Mama Chidi shows how, as single mothers, she and Mrs Durojaiye take care of their families. Despite all the challenges they face, they never think of venturing into crime and activities that will cost them their lives. The questions Mama Chidi raises are also refraction of Atta's views, as the author, on the better and lawful decision women should take to survive the economic and social exclusion rather than succumbing to the economic and social pressures to indulge in crimes.

### **Socio-political Space of the Yoruba Female in *Swallow***

By incorporating the language of nationalism, Atta introduces a new dimension to the dialogue on socio-political exclusion of the female in the private and public spaces in *Swallow*. The discourse opposes authoritative interaction and favours dialogical interaction that supports internally persuasive dialogue. According to Bakhtin, a novel's 'semantic structure [...] is not finite, it is open in each of the next contexts that dialogises it' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 345). This can be illustrated in the politically ideological languages of the characters in *Swallow*. Rose does not seem to blame herself for becoming a drug mule, as Mama Chidi wants mules to understand. She rather blames the government's economic policy, by stating that 'Nigerians follow blindly [and] the whole system is a mess because not everyone agrees and when we follow without thinking, we all enter the same black hole' (p. 204).

This “black hole” is what Achilles Mbembe is critical about as the consequence of the global economy managed by the West, which excludes postcolonial African countries economically. He argues that sub-Saharan countries, such as Nigeria, imbibe neo-colonial economic policies and the leaders continue to exploit the citizens making the public institutions their private domains to do whatever they want, even if this breaks the law. It is this form of governance that continues to exclude and further pauperise the citizens. Some African governments blindly imbibe foreign economic and political systems without cognisance of their peculiar circumstances. With this mentality still in the older generation that is still alive, they blindly follow political and economic policies which are poorly executed (Mbembe, 1992). While Rose goes with the current of *this* river into the *blackhole* and loses her life by transporting drugs (p. 248), Tolani and other strong women seek other options. Tolani sees such ideals of blindly following the Western political and economic policies in Sanwo, which are never fruitful. She calls him “Mr Monetary and Fiscal” because he was ‘full of economic theories by Keynes and Galbraith, talked about boosting national export, utilising national resources, diversification and feasibility studies’ (p. 76). But he has never so far established himself economically in any viable business despite the plans he has dreamt.

In addition to this postcolonial diatribe on post-colonies destroying the economic and political privileges of the Yoruba female in Nigeria, Atta also incorporates the stylisation features of both “the artistic and extra artistic genres” (Bakhtin, 1981) to negotiate female spaces in the novel. One of such stylisations as a feature of heteroglossia is the newspaper report about ‘*mago*, the rituals with female private parts’ (p. 136). The newspaper ‘carried so-called true accounts about people in Lagos who went around slapping other people’s chest [and the] stories claimed the slaps could make people’s private parts disappear or put them under a spell to make them hand their money out [which] only men like Salako would be afraid of them’ (p. 136). The use of verbs common in reportage such as “so-called”, “accounts”, and “claimed” are indicators that a newspaper’s linguistic and stylistic features are incorporated to make the newspaper a genre that M.M. Bakhtin calls ‘an object’ (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 321) for political discourse in the novel. It may eventually become a propaganda tool to keep the citizen in perpetual fear. And by Tolani bringing in Salako into the discourse, Atta makes the discourse of the newspaper her own, as the author, as well as Tolani’s, as the narrator, and the character on the scene, to consequently subvert the male authoritative position. Earlier on, Tolani has threatened Salako with the *juju* calabash in his office, and so his fear is tied to the fear the newspaper put in the hearts of people. The newspaper report is also tied

to the emasculation of Salako in the statement, as ‘Only men like Salako would be afraid of them’. The authorial intentionality is revealed through the blurring of boundaries between the two different speeches and contexts by making reference to them in a single utterance. So, by appropriating the scenario of fear and *juju* on Salako through Tolani, Atta achieves a “double-voiced discourse”, which according to Bakhtin, ‘serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author’ (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 324).

As Tzvetzan Todorov states, one significant aspect of Bakhtin’s concept of the dialogical theory is the manipulation of the discourse of the character by the author: ‘the author can also use the discourse of the other towards his own ends, in such a way that he imprints on this discourse, that already has and keeps its own orientation, a new semantic orientation’ (Todorov, 1984, p. 71). So, the semantic orientation is tied to the inner speech of Tolani as the narrator which is intruded upon by her inner speech as a character in order to express Atta’s authorial position.

Another incorporated genre to make a political utterance is the language of propaganda broadcast via television in the modern space. It is through Atta’s representation of the television that the political and economic programmes of the Nigerian government are revealed to the reader. The government’s advert on the War Against Indiscipline, a programme introduced by the military government in 1984, uses a drama sketch of a character named Andrew who returns from America, and who feels he cannot stay in Nigeria and is “checking out” of the country. This advert becomes a household slogan about nationalism in Nigeria in the mid-1980s. The narrator states that Andrew has become the ‘national nickname’ for those who leave the country to live overseas. Through an ironic tone, the narrator reveals that those who leave ‘were not good citizens like us who stayed and suffered’ (p. 58). The irony is in the statement “stay and suffered”. Although Andrew is blamed for leaving the country, those praised for staying back are rewarded with suffering. It is in this irony that Atta’s authorial intention and voice also reside.

Moreover, the Nigerian military head of state of the period in the novel, Muhammadu Buhari, created an axiological language that became the symbol of his government: “This generation of Nigerians and indeed future generations have no other country but Nigeria. We must all stay and salvage it together” (Siollum, 2013). The idea that Nigerians have no other country than Nigeria may be a fact, but salvaging it together is what is not practicable, giving the atmosphere of economic austerity and political

suppression by the junta. Atta, therefore, reveals how television becomes a tool of propaganda through the insertion of the media genre.

Songs as generic features of heteroglossia are also employed to negotiate axiological languages in the modern space. Tolani parodied Robert Shafto's famous North East English Folksong and nursery rhyme in order to present a double discourse on patriarchal hegemony on the socio-cultural and political space of the female: 'Bobby Shafto's gone to sea, silver buckles on his knees, he'll come back and marry ...' (p. 76). The *hopes* in the song reflect the hope of Tolani and many other girls of being married, something which is made impossible by the economic and social circumstances in the country. The song is also employed in relation to choosing a profession, which is presented as a dialogue between modernity and tradition for the womenfolk. Tolani reveals that there is a song sung as a morning chorus in her Baptist Missionary School as a child, where those who attended the school were not interested in becoming farmers or traders like their parents:

*Education alone*  
*Without a cutlass of a hoe*  
*Isn't good enough*  
*Farming is the work of our land*  
*He who doesn't work will steal.* (p. 39)

The refracted intention in the song is tied to nationalism and upholding traditional values. Tolani as the narrator brings up the song when, upon her return to Makoku, she discovers 'the farming settlement my mother grew up is shrinking [...] there were more goods traders than food traders in the market place' (p. 40). Her mother tells her further, 'No one grows food here. You should see the farming settlements, what is left of them, and how little they produce. We are all traders now, or business people in town' (p. 287). This is the period in Nigerian history, after the oil-boom era, when its economy entered recession. The period was a consequence of people abandoning the rural areas and moving to the cities to enjoy "the oil money" they all believed was in the urban streets. The effect was zero agricultural output that made food scarce and zero industrialisation. It was the time also that the military government tried to encourage people to return to the rural areas for self-sufficiency in food through its programme Operation Feed the Nation (OFN). Muhammadu Buhari, who was the then military head of state that spearheaded OFN in the early and mid-1980s, reintroduced the programme as a civilian head of state in 2020. Atta's authorial voice suggests that Agricultural production is one of the means Yoruba female has been widely empowered in the

traditional space, but which is slipping out due to the socio-political circumstances in the modern space of the country.

### **Conclusion**

Atta succeeds in negotiating the economic and political agency of the Yoruba female in the traditional and modern spaces in *Swallow*. Her choice of the title “Swallow” significantly depicts the dilemma and location of a workable space between the modern and traditional spaces. While the title denotes the act of swallowing drugs by mules, it could equally connote swallowing pride as Tolani does at the end of the novel, by identifying with both the political and economic privileges in the traditional and modern spaces. It also connotes to her choice to move away from the modern space to the traditional one and eventually concludes to merge the two by producing her mother’s art and craft in the traditional space, and marketing it in the modern space to achieve her economic and socio-political independence as a Yoruba woman. It’s this “swallowing” of one ideology to form a two-in-one “object” that rests Atta’s authorial position. This final position is revealed following a negotiation of the different agencies of the Yoruba woman in the modern city and traditional village spaces, and under socio-economic and socio-political conditions through the heteroglossia and ideological languages of hegemony in *Swallow*.

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## **Pandemic, Technical Theatre and Security Challenges in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions**

**Okugya Osumanyi**

*Department of Theatre and Cultural Studies*

*Nasarawa State University*

+2347036969968

*osumanyiokugya@nsuk.edu.ng*

### **Abstract**

*Corona virus, security challenges and Technical Theatre are enemies in view of the current situation in the world vis-à-vis theatre practice and technical theatre. Pandemic in this context is not restricted to Covid-19 but banditry, insurgency, ritual killing and kidnapping that halted educational, economic, social, religious, political activities and threatened existence of theatre and the society. Theatre suffered similar stagnation from the early period due to attacks similar to the current pandemic but survived inseparable from the audiences. For theatre to survive in view of the current situation, others advocate its transfer to digitalised media. If achieved, theatre loses its originality. This study attempts to expose the implication of pandemic and the porous security architecture of Nigeria tertiary institutions vis-à-vis its effects on Technical Theatre practice. The article adopts observant methodology as a research tool. Security in Nigeria is politicised and compromised, the country and institutions' borders are poorly secured. This poses danger to the inhabitants and their properties. The study concludes that the survival of theatre and the country is a communal fight that involves all stakeholders. It is recommended that government and management of private institutions should prioritize security in their institutions. Government must refrain from playing politics with the citizenries' lives and should not treat any form of illegality with kid's gloves. Digital documentation of immigrants and citizens and proper defense of the country's border is required. For there to strive in such epoch, there must be attitudinal and behavioural change in our ways of thinking.*

**Keywords:** Pandemic, Technical Theatre, Security, Insurgency

### **Introduction**

The pandemic of Corona virus and Technical Theatre are enemies in view of the current situation in the world vis-à-vis theatre practice and technical theatre in particular. Corona virus known as Covid-19 due to its year of

outbreak has created a new dynamics in the way of doing things especially that which deals with crowd. According to Effiong, et al., (2020) 'Corona virus is a large group of virus that resemble *sic* a crown. The Word corona is a Latin word, which means crown (p.131).' It is a contagious disease; consequently, large gathering is discouraged to minimise the number of spread. The pandemic outbreak halted a lot of social, economic and religious activities in Nigeria and around the world. Markets, churches, mosques, clubs, events centres, stadia, cinemas, theatres etc. were forced to close to avoid crowd. The impact is felt all over.

However, the decision to lockdown the country and some states spelt doom for some businesses that depend on selling tickets and audience participation such as sports, cinema and theatre etc. It brought unspeakable hardship leading to some organisations laying-off some of their workers as they could not afford to pay their salaries while the underprivileged masses could barely afford a decent meal. To ensure sustainability, the affected ventures re-strategise on how to deliver their services or better improve their production output even in the face of the challenges without having physical contact with clients. For instance some religious houses introduced tithe and offering collections through mobile banking applications. Theatre is not left out of the challenges facing the world at the moment. Theatrical activities were equally halted in an attempt to curb further spread of the pandemic. One could only imagine the hardship such a prolong period could cause on the beneficiaries of such ventures. The quest for survival of the industry becomes a thing of concern for scholars.

### **Pandemic and Theatre**

Pandemic in this perspective is not limited to outbreak of diseases that spread globally or geographically only, but it centres on issues and problems that threatened the existence of theatre and the society such as wild fire outbreaks, religion etc. that led to closure of many theatre companies in time past and banditry, insurgency, ritual killing and kidnapping in the present. Brockett (2011) notes that:

In other time, theatre has been forbidden, as it was in England between 1642 and 1660 when the Puritans then in power considered it not only morally unacceptable but also an activity that tempted people away from honest work. During its long life, theatre has as often been denounced as praises, and its value even its right to exist has frequently been questioned (p.5).

Theatre has suffered setbacks from even the church that used it as a means of spreading its gospel in the medieval period. The same church threw it out

to the street. In the midst of all these crises, theatre managed to survive and adapted the new condition it found itself. However, in addition to the pandemic, in the contemporary society, the existence of theatre is further threatened by constant destructions of lives of innocent citizens by bandits, terrorists, ritual killers, kidnapping to mention but a few. A case at hand was the intrusion of bandits into the Plateau State University Theatre complex where students had to scamper for safety. Such example discourages gathering which in the long run affects the business of theatre that thrived in the patronage of audiences. The contemporary content creators are also putting the survival of Theatre and entertainment industries generally in jeopardy by promoting lot of immoralities in the media space. The integrity and morality of theatre had been put to test in the past as noted above. Hence, this has shreds the morality and integrity of theatre practitioners in the light of its current negative portrayal in the media.

### **Corona Virus and Technical Theatre**

Theatre from the early period suffered from pandemic that threatened its existence. Pandemic as established is seen as virus, disease and anything that threatened the survival or existence of theatre, it could be religious as experienced during the medieval period, fire outbreak in the theatre, Ebola, malaria etc. In recent time, security challenges ranging from *Boko Haram*, banditry, terrorism and kidnapping have posed great challenges to lives and properties in Nigeria and other parts of the world. People do not feel safe even in their homes as they could easily be kidnapped. This menace has caused rapid decline of patronage in theatre and cinemas. The country is bedevilled with all manners of atrocities. The circumstance is further aggravated by the political polarity in the country where, for one to get a position is no longer on merit but on religious, ethnic, regional or party affiliation. These and other issues constitute the slow and gradual decline of theatre activities as experienced during this global crisis which discouraged large gathering as such affects theatrical performances negatively.

The splendour of technical theatre can be more treasured when the designers unleash their creative ingenuity before the audience, getting feedback and reactions from them directly without any interference as traditionally known to be in theatre. With consistent and constant practice, the designers' skills and talent greatly improved. This can only be achieved when there are regular productions to task their imagination and creativity. It was practically impossible to stage productions during the lockdown. Therefore, designers lack the platform to showcase their creativity.

Lockdown period was a trying moment to especially the theatre practitioners who can only feed from entertainment and sales of tickets. The lockdown period was a period of reform, self-assessment and discovery for others. People tried to live to tell tales with great difficulties. For this reason, others dared new skills and discovered other means of livelihood. One cannot imagine the consequences of a prolong lockdown on theatre practitioners. That could lead to a natural extinction for the industries. The prolong effect of this could lead to decline of interest and subsequently change of profession forcing practitioners to seek alternative means of income and survival therefore, threatening and endangering the future of theatre and design while creating a negative reference point for the society.

### **Technical Theatre in Nigeria**

The aesthetic of Technical theatre could be appreciated better if the audiences saw and felt directly such designs alongside the performance. The quality and texture of the design is a determinant factor for audience appreciation. When performance meets the standard of the audiences, it gives room for more patronage and popularity. Visual elements of theatre like costumes, scenery and light can be best appreciated when the audiences experience it in the confine of the theatre building. Likewise, in sound design, the placement of speakers and how the designer sets his sound to appeal the aural sense of his audiences is of enormous importance. The designer must be able to balance his sound and ensure a good synchronization between larger instruments like drums and smaller ones like flutes and guitars. To buttress this Oni (2017) argues that:

Theatre performances in contemporary Nigeria have always been influenced by design elements in various aspects of the performances. This is because even the traditional African performances thrived on the use of costumes, makeup, props, sound, and scenic designs... Designing for the theatre is particularly abstract art because the theatre is a live and unpredictable medium, and the designer's work is before each audience for a period of the performance (p.211).

Theatre is for the people, the content is targeted at educating, entertaining and informing them. So the beauty would be achieved when it spurs the expected reaction, criticism from the audience, while appreciating all the visual and aural components of the production. However, because of Covid-19 pandemic, play productions and its technical activities were suspended. Gatherings such as weddings, clubbing, and sports which would have given room for the practice of technical theatre designs were

prohibited. The audience are completely alienated or distanced from the textual aesthetics of Technical Theatre Designs (TTDs). In wrestling sport, football and other sports for instance, the audiences are confined to watching them Online using different mobile applications. This attained a high level of success to the Western countries where there is stable light and Internet facilities compared to low income countries lagging with most of these facilities. The rural areas that lack such basic and social amenities are completely out of the question.

The experience might not be effective in African countries especially Nigeria due to number of factors such as epileptic electricity supply and inadequate network connectivity. Hence, the African audience were left with frustrated images and bad cracking sounds as a result of inadequate network services and poor Internet as they pay higher to subscribe and enjoyed little services. With this scenario, the implication is that such business owners in Africa can be tempted to propagating that Covid-19 does not exist in Africa and therefore continue to break Covid-19 protocols just to ensure continuity in their business. Such experience was witnessed during the first phase of the lockdown where religious bodies stood tooth and nail to ensure that they congregate against the government wish. The government were not sincere to its citizenry; it makes them questionable even when their actions are intended for the betterment of the people. This disbelief in leadership at some point made Students' Unions of schools to agitate for reopening of schools.

Sincerity in leadership is paramount to gain and sustain trust from the masses. In such circumstances, it is ideal that the society works together for the common goal of all. Since theatre is an interactive institution threaten by pandemic and other factors including security, a synergy between the actors and the participants (audiences), securities and the government to restore the belief system of the society to ensure smooth running of political, social, educational, financial and religious activities is paramount.

### **Theatre Performance and Audience in Covid-19 Period**

Congregating has been discouraged as preventive measures to restrain the spread of Covid-19 pandemic. The repercussion to theatre is that, one of her key features which involve the interaction between her and the audiences has been restricted. The art form is left with no choice but to strive to survive no matter the situation. One may be tempted to say that theatre should be recorded and streamed live to other media so that it can be kept alive Online like World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) and football sports etc. for audience to watch online. However, applying this in theatre

means downplaying the role of one of the major elements of acting, which is the audience. Ayakoroma (2012) likens the audience and performer relationship to a lecturer teaching without students in the class. 'Passer-by will say such a lecturer is a mental case' (p.526). Theatre performances rely a lot in the participation of audience and their reactions and contributions to its success especially in African performances where the audience at some point can stop the play to effect corrections in certain aspects that are wrongly captured. The communal nature of living in African society and unique way of life are the basis and thematic preoccupations of our arts. The audience presence and participation is thereby restricted, limited and *faked*. Barranger (2015), buttresses this:

Theatre's essential difference is the *physical presence* of actors and audience together within a space arranged for seeing and being seen. Although plays are filmed and seen by millions of people (for example, the now-classic film of Tennessee Williams's play *A Streetcar Named Desire*) the theatre itself, its aliveness and distinctive artistic quality is lost in the transfer to another medium.

The contribution and participation of audiences is lost when the medium is changed. Without audience in the theatre the aesthetics of interaction, the African context of performance is completely vanished because the performance is staged for them. The presence of the audience in the theatre is what gives credibility to the performance especially in the African context of acting where there is performer-audience relationship that exists during acting. The sustainability of this partnership is paramount to stage performance. The attendance of the audiences boosts the morale of the actors onstage. Brockett and Ball as cited in Barclays (2012) state that:

The theatre is characterised by psychological immediacy; the living presence of the actors and audience in a performance environment. This is one major advantage the theatre has over the screen-Television/Film. The actors and the audience have the capacity of influencing the other, positively or negatively- a good response from an audience spurs the actors on stage, just as negative reaction may demoralise the actors and hinder the production (p.527).

Wilson and Alvin (2002) reiterate the significance of audience in a production:

The dynamics and excitement of being in the presence of a living person are as old as time and has not changed despite the

many technological advances of the past hundred years. People still wait for hours or stand in the rain to see a rock star or a hip-hop performer in person, although the same performer is readily available on CD, video, or DVD. The same is true of film personalities and charismatic political figure-people eagerly throng to see someone 'in person.' This same chemistry is possible at every stage performance when the actors and actresses and the members of the audience are in the same place at the same time (p.20).

African performances are based on our unique cultural practices, religious belief, political and social way of life that form a conglomerate or consortium known as Africa. These differences are enshrined and respected for a peaceful coexistence. Africans are receptive and communal beings from time immemorial until religion, politics and greed crippled the system. African theatre is collaborative effort and can only occur when it takes place in the presence of audience as one of the major stakeholders. The audience interacts with performers onstage. This aesthetics cannot be overlooked. Theatres from the past continue to witness variation in terms of size and number of audience participation. This is a period to work on the population of audience in the theatre. Few audiences can be admitted in batches to watch performances, observing social distance, sanitizing hands and the environment and while adhering to all other stipulated protocols.

### **Theatre Building in Nigeria Institution**

Poor structures are threats to our existence. Mostly, theatre buildings in Nigeria institutions are intended mainly as lectures theatres and afterward rehabilitated to performance theatres. The theatre halls are deficient in basic structures and foundations to be used as performance theatre. Reconstructions of such theatres are quite expensive to beat down cost and budget, the available resources can be dedicated to other equipments such as light, scenery and sound which are equally expensive. Though, African performances are unsurpassed in outdoor theatres, institutions with the vision to practices theatre arts courses can pan to have both outdoor and indoor theatres as alternatives in event of any eventuality.

Indoor theatres are built in form of dark room and sound proof like the cinemas for use in the event that performances cannot be staged at night for security reasons. This is to enable productions to be staged in the daylight with the full component of Technical Theatre with light all-encompassing as an alternative for night performances. With this, the audience can watch performances and go back home without fear of the



dangers of happenings at night. Hence, from the foundation of the building, the master architectural plan for the construction of every performance theatre is a preconceived idea not an afterthought as mostly obvious in many theatre practicing institutes.

### **Security Challenges and Theatre Development**

The primary function of any government is the protection of lives and property of its citizenry. Security is very essential in sustainable development. Insecurity causes constraint in development and investment. Investors would not risk investment in a country or community where there are constant security threats. Without security, a country suffers overwhelming impact not just instantaneously but also in the long run. For a society to attain its desired political, social and economic development there must be peace in that society. The security challenges experienced in Nigeria for over a decade now as a result of attacks by *Boko Haram*, banditry and kidnapping is progressively crippling the economy and social activities in the country as well as consuming lives of innocent citizens. To elucidate this claim, Anugwom (2019) notes that:

*Boko Haram*, apart from over 20,000 estimated deaths and far-reaching humanitarian crisis approximating that occasioned by the Nigerian civil war, has become the most daunting challenge to Nigeria's nationhood and development in the last decade (p.1).

There is a soaring rate of death evidence roughly on a daily basis resulting from terrorism, kidnapping, ritual killing, banditry attacks etc. Hence, people do not freely socialise or travel for fear of these vices and unexpected crises that can erupt in any part of the country. For instance, the Kaduna-Abuja railway attack on the 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2022 was one of the most catastrophic incidences that befell the country in recent time amongst many other attacks. Imagine the unrecovered lives wasted and the resources to revamp the damages done. Needless to say, the exaggerated amount government would claim to fix the railway. These are some of the occurrences that can cripple the belief system of a country thereby making people to lack confidence in the leadership.

Schools, worship centres, recreational centres and motor parks are not exempted in the security threat. One cannot be wronged to infer that they are the worse hit in the crisis especially with the continuous abduction of students in schools. Most borders' security systems of Nigeria institutions are porous. There is high influx of people into schools without valid means of identification. These include strangers, hawkers, herders and

beggars. In most institutions cattle are allowed grazing without restriction in the campuses even during lectures. An important question to ask is how did they gain access in the first place? Who owns them? If this went unchecked, it therefore means that the security architecture of the institutions guilty of such has been compromised while the environment is a time bomb waiting to be triggered. For this, someone needs to be held responsible for any eventuality that befalls students in the institutions.

### **Security and Politics**

It is disheartening to imagine the level of security degradation in Nigeria currently. Sadly, sometime the security operatives charged with the duty to protect communities are secretly involved in the massacre of the same people they are meant to protect. This is usually to create fear and anxiety so as to retain their peace keeping mission in the community. This is akin to what is experienced in the Abba Kyari (Economy and Financial Crime Commission) saga of corruption and drug trafficking labelled against him by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA). It is ironical to note that the Commander of the Inspector General Response Team (IRT) is accused of drug trafficking and corruption. Those meant to protect the law are the same breaking them. The security outfits of the country are extremely politicised. Security architectures of Nigeria are compromised. For this reason they are used for witch-hunting and intimidating political rivals, as well as innocent citizens. Needless to mention, how convicted politicians found guilty by the securities after serving short jail terms are granted presidential pardon which qualify them to contest political offices in their various constituencies and the country in general.

If the nation's security can be compromised, it indicates that those in the institutions can easily be bought. Security is very expensive venture; most institutions Management like the Nasarawa State University, Keffi employs internal security as permanent staff and compliment them with contract and company security. Internal securities go to training and step down the training to the contract and company security. However, if the salaries of the contract and company securities outfits are poor it automatically affect their stability and therefore, experience become a problem. This can compromise the security architecture of any institution. In Ahmadu Bello University Zaria for instance, it was alleged that a school security masterminded the kidnap of a staff of the institution.

### **Conclusion**

Ensuring the survival of Theatre and the country by extension is not an individual but a collective struggle and fight. Theatre and the society are

the reflections of each other. Theatre revolutionises and inspires by portraying what could become of society and what has become of it hitherto takes us away into a different world of imitation being performed on stage which explains the painful disparity between our ideas and actual disparity. Theatre is so intertwined with societal and cultural values to be relevant, as it moulds the society it exists. This demonstrates to the audience the situation they are in. It explains how important society is to people in the eye of theatre in things they would have not been aware in their society. These are the privileges that the pandemic denies the society. Therefore, all stakeholders must synergize to keep it alive to serve the society. However, theatre can be sustained by improving the security architecture of the country, schools borders, and engaging; community, students, staff and the management in a collectively fight against external intrusion and reporting possible threats and dangers in and around their vicinities. Without security, a country suffers devastating impact if not immediately, on the long run. The impact include dislodging of the affected community, rendering them wanderers in neighbouring communities, refugees camps or congesting nearby cities thereby, leading to over population, high dependency ratio and more crimes in a struggle for survival.

More so, resources that could be used to develop theatre and other sectors such as education, agriculture and electricity that need urgent attention would be wasted and channelled to reconstruction of the destroyed communities. Once such an opportunity presents itself, it opens a means of empowerment, embezzlement for some individual as political compensation. Contracts are awarded to few political allies for self aggrandizement. The monies end up not been used for the right purpose as the project never sees light of the day. Such efforts destroy the security structures of the institutions and the country.

### **Recommendations**

Since one of the cardinal objectives of the government is to secure the people, maximum priority should be given to recruit permanent security in their intuitions. Security is very expensive to manage, so the management of institutions should employ internal security as permanent staff and grant them autonomy. They should avail them the opportunity to go for trainings and retraining to meet up with the global security practices and tactics of handling crime and violence. They should be placed on good salaries to encourage their stability so as to explore their wealth of experiences, as poor salary can compromise the security architecture of any institution. Managements of private institutions should equality not sleep on this in

order to secure the lives of students entrusted to them, as well as their properties.

Government should refrain from playing politics with the citizenries' lives. Bandits, terrorism, kidnapping, Internet fraudsters, ritual killing and any form of illegality should not be handled with kid's gloves. Most of the aforementioned crimes are regarded as child birth of politics. Government and individual should ensure they desist from any form of negotiation with them as so doing would empower them the more. Resources should be injected in flushing them out and finding a permanent remedy to this menace.

Though downsizing the number of audience may increase the cost of productions and more expenses to the company, while plays become expensive to watch for the people it is meant to serve. Theatre must diversify means of sourcing income through partnership with public and private sectors for promotion. Government should equally invest in theatre and utilise it to promote and propagate her agenda to the public in both rural and urban settlements. This would serve as a means of reaching out to the masses as it reduces the financial burden on them.

There must be proper digital means of identification and documentation for immigrants and citizens of this country. Our borders must be properly secured against intruders. The government should take advantage of this digital era to ensure update documentation of her citizenry from birth to death. The management can afford to have database of all her workers including students for record as well. Also, schools and theatres should ensure people coming to watch productions should have a valid means of identification. This can be availed to the security units of the institutions for screening at every level. Identification card with security seal and barcode should be given to staff and students to assess their data as part of the screening process at the gates and to admit audiences to watch performance. If the country and institutions' border are properly guarded and managed, it would restore peace and development in Nigeria and further improve the productions of theatre performances.

For theatre to strive and persist in such epoch there must be attitudinal and behavioural change in our ways of thinking. We must be ready to accept moral responsibility of our welfare, personal hygiene, security and health individually cum collectively. To eradicate pandemic audience must oblige to restrain the spread of the virulent disease by observing the rules guiding further spread of the virus and future outbreak of new possible diseases. People have the predisposition to exhibit tepid mind-set and laxities towards rules set by constituted authorities, and tend to give more credence to news Online which are mostly fake. Online

contents must be carefully scrutinized and verified before sharing. Fakes news should quickly be discredited by individual and thereby uphold the principle of health is wealth. Through this survival instincts and ideals, one would be able to take pleasure in a great deal of wealth and a healthy lifestyle.

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## **Variations and Functions of Modal Operators in President Muhammadu Buhari's Speeches on Coronavirus**

**George Abiodun Olaleye PhD**

*General Studies Department*

*The Oke-Ogun Polytechnic, Saki, Oyo State*

*Email:olaleye.ga@gmail.com*

### **Abstract**

*The relationship between leaders and their subjects cannot be undermined. For leaders to get the utmost cooperation and commitment of their citizens, communication is essential. Communication is non-existent without effective deployment of language. This paper, therefore, undertakes an analysis of the variations and functions of modal operators in President Muhammadu Buhari's speeches during the COVID-19 lockdown in Nigeria. The data for the study are sourced online from the website of The Guardian Newspaper. The scope of the study covers the three speeches by the President. For ease of identification, each of the speeches is labelled. The theoretical framework for the study is interpersonal function which is one of the metafunctions in M.A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). Findings in the texts showed that modal operators vary from one another in that they express intention, obligation, certainty, possibility, among others, by speakers. The paper concludes that President Buhari employs modal operators as linguistic devices to reflect the actions and programmes of his government and expectations of his government from Nigerians.*

**Keywords:** Modality, Modal operators, Interpersonal function, SFG

### **Introduction**

Communication is a key component that people all over the world use to relate with one another. Events are basic feature of the human life and such events should not go unaddressed. From time to time, people have to be informed on developments in their domains. Such developments usually require their inputs. More importantly, political, traditional, religious and community leaders and those who are saddled with the responsibilities of governance and administration have no option, but to relay information to their citizens or followers.

Towards the latter end of 2019, the entire world woke up to the reality of the emergence of the deadly coronavirus. It is a virus that was presumed to have emerged in Wuhan in China and which has continued to

ravage most countries of the world. The outbreak of the killer disease which the United Nations called a pandemic has not only destroyed the economies of nations but has also claimed a lot of human lives. COVID-19 as it is referred to in some quarters has changed the narrative in virtually all the countries of the world.

Based on the negative impact of COVID-19 on individuals and organisations, nations and leaders have taken proactive actions and measures to control and contain its scourge. To address the negative effect occasioned by COVID-19, President Muhammadu Buhari addressed Nigerians on March 29, 2020; April 13, 2020 and April 27, 2020 respectively. The speeches were meant to acquaint Nigerians with the steps taken by Government, the roles Government wanted the citizens to perform as well as the measures that Government intended to adopt.

An address by the President of a nation carries communicative weight. It is not an everyday speech. Hence, whenever such an address is composed, attention is usually paid to choice of words and mode of delivery. Citizens accord the addresses from the office of the President prominence in that they are not only authentic but also loaded with a lot of messages. Hence, they are not expected to be trivialised.

### **Empirical Studies**

A lot of researches have been conducted on presidential speeches in Nigeria. The studies are premised on diverse linguistic aspects such as pragmatics, speech acts, and stylistics.

Adetunji (2009) investigated the deployment of speech acts and rhetoric in the second inaugural speeches of two past civilian presidents: Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and President George Bush of United States of America with a view to comparing the speeches. The speeches were examined through five basic speech acts, that is, commissive, verdictive, assertive, expressive and directive. The study showed that Obasanjo's speech was more explicit than that of Bush in that his audience comprised users of English as a second language. President Obasanjo placed attention on Nigerians who were his target while President Bush addressed the entire globe due to the foreign policies of the United States of America.

Uchegbu-Ekwueme and Okongor (2016) did a stylistic analysis of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's inaugural address. Attempts were made to know how well President Yar'Adua had employed linguistic and stylistic features in the address to inform, sharpen the opinion and win the support of the citizens. The thrust of the research were the rhetorical devices which examined the figurative expressions employed in the inaugural address.

Osisanwo (2017) researched the inaugural speech of President Muhammadu Buhari. The speech was read on May 29, 2015. The study had Mey's 2001 pragmatic acts as its theoretical construct. Nineteen pragmatic acts were presented for the realisation of the objectives. The objectives comprised proposing, promising, stating, assuring, acknowledging, thanking, remarking, saluting, appealing, reminding, instructing/calling, advising, hoping, charging, informing, extending, identifying, describing and defining. The findings of the study were that pragmatic devices were employed to affirm acts as shared situation knowledge, relevance, reference and inference.

Attah and Ojukwu (2020) investigated the process types of the inaugural address of President Buhari in 2015. The thrust of their paper was the identification of the process types that featured prominently in the speech using M. A. K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar. The findings of their research indicated that five out of the six processes; namely, mental process, behavioural process, verbal process, existential process and material process were deployed, with the material process being the most used.

Anyanwu (2020) did a stylistic analysis of President Muhammadu Buhari's addresses to Nigerians in the face of COVID-19 pandemic. The thrust of the paper was that the President employed linguistic elements to address Nigerians. Her research also showed that to accomplish pragmatic effect of his speeches, lexical devices such as transitional markers, repetition, alliteration, assonance and pronouns were used to project the theme/subject matter of the discourse.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for the study is Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). SFG is a theory that views language not only as an embodiment of system but function. Hence, "system" and "function" are the premises on which the theory thrives. SFG is also a theory that acknowledges the context in which specific linguistic elements exist and as being important for the explication of meanings.

SFG has three metafunctions: Ideational, interpersonal and textual. Ideational metafunction deals with how language is employed to construe, organise and express human experience (Kupolati & Oladipupo, 2018). The ideational function of language is further classified into two sub functions: experiential and logical. The experiential sub function is mainly connected with content or ideas while the logical sub function is connected with the relationship between ideas. The interpersonal metafunction concerns meaning exchanged between people during communicative events (Eggins



& Slade, 1997) cited in (Jegede, 2018, p.186). The inference to be drawn from this is that language affords human beings the opportunity to participate in a communication encounter with other people. It also allows people to take communicative functions, express and understand feelings and emotions, attitude and judgements. The textual metafunction involves how texts are created (Ogungbe, 2013). Thus, language is employed to connect what is expressed to the rest of a text and other linguistic occurrences.

Of essence in this paper is modality which is subsumed in interpersonal metafunction. Modality like some other concepts may not be easy to define simply because it is often viewed from different perspectives by scholars. However, Halliday and Matthiessen (1999, p.526) cited in Fontaine (2013, p.120) affirm that:

Modality is a rich resource for speakers to intrude their own views into the discourse: their assessments of what is likely or typical, their judgements of the rights and wrongs of the situation and of where other people stand in this regard.

With the above claim, it can be deduced that modality provides the platform on which the actions, behaviour, attitudes, beliefs, etc. are relayed and understood. It is also important to state that modality is realised through modal operators (verbs). Modality is also expressed through mood and it reinforces mood in the construction of interpersonal meaning (Olaniyan & Adeniji, 2015).

According to Alo (2013, p.128), modality has two classifications. These are epistemic modality and deontic modality. Epistemic modality relates to the degree to which a speaker is committed to the truth of an expression. Thus, epistemic modality is often employed to express a speaker's attitude to propositions. Deontic modality has to do with a speaker's attitude and his/her active involvement in events. Therefore, it takes into consideration diverse functions like giving permission, performing an obligation, giving an undertaking, making a request, among others.

Deontic modality is relevant to President Buhari's speeches in that the speeches were premised on the roles that the Government and the citizens were expected to perform and so on. These roles were dictated by modal operators, also called modal verbs or modal auxiliary verbs. A modal operator is a kind of modal that is employed in English to indicate modality, that is, likelihood, ability, certainty, permission, obligation and much more. Hence, they possess a wide variety of communicative functions.

Examples of English modal operators are “can,” “may,” “will,” “shall,” “must” and do. Their morphological and syntactic analogues are “could,” “might,” “would,” “should.” Fakuade (2012) notes that semi-modals such as “dare,” “used to” and “need” exist in English. However, in this study, attention is on the aforementioned types of modal operators because they were mostly employed in the speeches of President Buhari.

### **Methodology**

This study adopts an analytical approach. Three addresses were read by the President. The first one was presented on March 29, 2020 while the second one was relayed on April 13, 2020. The last one was read on April 27, 2020. For ease of identification, each of the speech was labelled. The first speech was tagged Speech A; the second Speech B and the third Speech C. Examples of the data used were serially numbered for easy references.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

#### **Use of *Will*: Intention**

**Example 1:** We *will* use this containment period to identify, trace and isolate all individuals that come into contact with confirmed cases. We *will* ensure the treatment of confirmed cases while restricting further spread to other States (Speech A).

**Example 2:** Many State Governments have also made provisions for isolation wards and treatment centres. We *will* also build centers near our airports and land borders (Speech B).

**Example 3:** The proportion of cases imported from other countries has reduced to only 19% of new cases, showing that our border closures yielded positive results. These are mostly fellow Nigerians returning through our land borders. We *will* continue to enforce land border arrival protocols as part of the containment strategy (Speech C).

The use of the modal operator in the example above was to convey to Nigerians what the Government intended to do to stem the tide of coronavirus. This includes identification, tracing and isolation of affected persons. The President also stressed that Government would not only treat them, but also restrict movement of people so that the virus would not spread further. In Example 2, President Buhari disclosed that State Governments had taken some steps in addressing the coronavirus. The essence of stating this was to inform Nigerians that State Governments were

partnering with the Federal Government in the war against the virus and that they (State Governments) were worthy of commendation. He also revealed that the Federal Government was unrelenting because it had the intention of building centres around airports and land borders. The President stated in Example 3 that because there had been an appreciable reduction in the number of confirmed cases concerning the movement of immigrants, the borders of the country would remain shut so that the gains that had been recorded could be sustained. All the above examples reflect the good plans and sincere intentions of governments.

#### **Use of *Will*: Certainty**

**Example 4:** We are fully aware that such measures *will* cause much hardship and inconvenience to many citizens. But this is a matter of life and death, if we look at the dreadful daily toll of deaths in Italy, France and Spain (Speech A).

**Example 5:** As your democratically elected leaders, we made this very difficult decision, knowing fully well it *will* severely disrupt your livelihood and bring undue hardship to you, your loved ones and your communities (Speech B).

**Example 6:** Today, I *will* present the facts as they are and explain our plans for the coming months fully aware that some key variables and assumptions may change in the coming days or weeks (Speech C).

The act of locking down the entire country means that movement of majority of Nigerians would be restricted. It also indicates that activities would be put on hold pending its relaxation. All categories of Nigerians would need to bear the situation. The President asserted that it was not arguable that Nigerians would be negatively affected in one way or another. He also stated in Example 6 that it was his responsibility to avail Nigerians of what the plans of the government were because the plans would be actualised in the period ahead. Hence, it was an act that was inevitable on his part and which Nigerians should be duly informed of.

#### **Use of *Will*: Future Commitment and Obligation**

**Example 7:** Furthermore, all vehicles conveying food and other essential humanitarian items into these locations from other parts of the country *will* also be screened thoroughly before they are allowed to enter these restricted areas (Speech A).

**Example 8:** I *will* take this opportunity to recognise the massive support from our traditional rulers, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) during this pandemic (Speech B).

**Example 9:** I *will* also recognise the support we have received from our traditional rulers, the Christian Association of Nigeria, the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs and other prominent religious and community leaders. Your cooperation and support have significantly contributed to the successes we have recorded to date (Speech C).

In Example 7, the President hinted that Government would screen all vehicles that would convey food and essential services to restricted places. The import is that people that were involved in such activities were expected to play their roles by complementing the efforts of Government. In Examples 8 and 9, the President showed that he had a duty to perform: appreciation to stakeholders in the fight against the coronavirus. The obligation was a tacit means of seeking more of their support and for them to know that the President was conscious and appreciative of them.

#### **The Use of *Will*: Request**

**Example 10:** I *will*, therefore, implore you again to strictly comply with the guidelines issued and also do your bit to support the Government and the most vulnerable in your communities (Speech A).

**Example 11:** At this point, I *will* remind all Nigerians to continue to take responsibility for the recommended measures to prevent transmission, including maintaining physical distancing, good personal hygiene and staying at home (Speech B).

Examples 10 and 11 were premised on request. In Example 10, the President solicited the cooperation of Nigerians in respect of the guidelines that had been issued by the Government. He disclosed that they should conform strictly to them and also appealed for assistance from comfortable and wealthy Nigerians to the weak, less vulnerable and downtrodden in their environment. In Example 11, the President demanded that Nigerians should see themselves as partners with Government in the business of tackling the menace of the virus. He asserted that it was not only the Government that would take responsibility for lapses but everyone. The President stressed that all the measures that had been stated by Government would have the desirable impact if they conformed with them appropriately.

### **The Use of *Will*: Assurance**

**Example 12:** Using our resources and those provided through donations, we *will* adequately equip and man these centres in the coming weeks (Speech B).

**Example 13:** As we focus on protecting lives and properties, we *will* not tolerate any human rights abuse by our security agencies. The few reported incidences are regrettable and I want to assure you that the culprits will be brought to justice (Speech C).

In Example 12, the President revealed that Government would be accountable regarding the deployment of resources and donations that had been received from individuals and organisations. The essence of the disclosure was to assure the masses that Government would not be reckless in the use of resources. In the wake of the pandemic, it had been alleged that some security agencies that were saddled with the responsibility of protecting lives and property as well as ensuring that Nigerians complied with the guidelines by Government acted beyond their bounds. In other words, the rights and privileges of Nigerians were wilfully infringed upon. Based on allegations of infringement on the rights of the citizenry by security personnel in some quarters, the President apologised and assured that Government was mindful of them and would do everything possible to curtail the unwholesome incidents.

### **The Use of *Can*: Possibility and Ability**

**Example 14:** As individuals, we remain the greatest weapon to fight this pandemic. By washing our hands regularly with clean water and soap, disinfecting frequently used surfaces and areas, coughing into a tissue or elbow and strictly adhering to infection prevention control measures in health facilities, we *can* contain this virus (Speech A).

**Example 15:** Today, the cessation of movement, physical distancing measures and the prohibition of mass gatherings remain the most efficient way of reducing the transmission of the virus. By sustaining these measures, combined with extensive testing and contact tracing, we *can* take control and limit the spread of the disease (Speech B).

**Example 16:** Based on your feedback, Lagos State Government and the FCT with support from NCDC have established several sample collection centres. They are also reviewing their laboratory testing strategy to further

increase the number of tests they *can* perform including the accreditation of selected private laboratories that meet the accreditation criteria (Speech C).

*Can* is a modal operator that indicates ability and possibility. In Example 14, the President opined that if the aforementioned duties were strictly adhered to, there was a possibility that coronavirus could be reduced to the barest level, if not eliminated completely. The President in Example 15, remarked that restriction of human movement, social distancing and prohibition of mass gatherings were the surest and possible means of preventing coronavirus. He expressed confidence that it was what Nigerians could do. In other words, he believed that Nigerians were capable of executing the aforementioned roles. Example 16 revealed the efforts of the Lagos State Government in conducting tests for its citizens. A review of its laboratory testing strategy was to enhance and increase the aforementioned operations. Hence, it was a pointer to what existed and what was expected to be achieved.

### **The Use of *Must*: Obligation and Compulsion**

**Example 17:** However, we *must* all see this as our national and patriotic duty to control the spread of the disease (Speech A).

**Example 18:** I *must* also thank the media houses, celebrities and other public figures for the great work they are doing in sensitizing our citizens on hygienic practices, social distancing and issues associated with social gatherings (Speech B).

**Example 19:** We have also procured insurance cover for 5000 frontline health workers. At this point, I *must* commend the insurance sector for their support in achieving this within a short period of time (Speech C).

*Must* is a modal operator that has the tone of finality on an individual or a group. The examples above indicated that Nigerians, individually or collectively, had significant roles to play in taming COVID-19. The President employed the modal operator “must” to establish protocol by according recognition to those who played key roles since the outbreak of the virus. He was under compulsion to acknowledge them because that could make them give their cooperation at that critical time. Unlike the modal operator “will”, *must* was an indicator of compulsion and obligation in the texts because the concerned parties had no option but to do the needful.

### **The Use of *May*: Wish**

**Example 20:** I thank you all for listening. *May* God continue to bless and protect us all. (Speech A).

**Example 21:** I thank you all for listening and *may* God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria. (Speech B).

**Example 22:** I thank you all for listening and *may* God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria. (Speech C).

The use of the modal operator “*may*” was scanty in the three speeches. Perhaps, the reason that could be attributed for this is because of the critical situation and government did not want Nigerians to handle coronavirus with levity. *May* was employed in the above examples to wish Nigerians well. It is an attestation that the President believed that human efforts were insufficient in the fight against coronavirus and that God is the ultimate. It was also a tacit reference that health is a blessing that comes from God and which he (the President) desired should be the portion of every Nigerian.

### **The Use of *May*: Possibility and Permission**

**Example 23:** We also call on all Nigerians to take personal responsibility to support those who are vulnerable within their communities, helping them with whatever they *may* need (Speech A).

**Example 24:** In respect to the above guidelines, State Governors *may* choose to adapt and expand based on their unique circumstances provided they maintain alignment with the guidelines issued above (Speech C).

The President was not ignorant of the situation that Nigerians were passing through. He was aware that in such a situation they would be in a state of want. He also admitted that Nigeria had limited resources to cater for the numerous needs of the masses. The possibility of need was what prompted him to seek the assistance of those that had the wherewithal to assist the less privilege and the downtrodden in the society. In Example 24, the President emphasised that the guidelines by the Federal Government were not mutually exclusive. This is a reference to the peculiarities that each of the States in Nigeria possesses. Such differences were the bases on which he gave the State Governments the benefit to make their inputs. The modal operator is thus a reflection of the permission that had been given to them by the supervising and coordinating authority (Federal Government).

### **The Use of *Shall*: Obligation and Insistence**

**Example 25:** To date, we have introduced healthcare measures, border security, fiscal and monetary policies in our response. We *shall* continue to do so as the situation unfolds (Speech A).

**Example 26:** The previously issued guidelines on exempted services *shall* remain (Speech B).

Example 27: With regards to Kano, I have directed the enforcement of a total lockdown for a period of two weeks effective immediately. The Federal Government *shall* deploy all the necessary human, material and technical resources to support the State in controlling and containing the pandemic and preventing the risk of further spread to neighbouring States (Speech C).

The use of *shall* buttresses what is to be done or what is already in operation and which should not be discontinued. The reality is that some services are essential to human existence and no matter the circumstance, some people have to render them. This is why the President disclosed that the lockdown would not be total but the guidelines that had been put in place should be strictly adhered to. This means that those that were on essential services should take precaution. On social and religious activities, he maintained that the ban subsisted and on no account should anyone flout the directive.

### **The Use of *Shall*: Intention**

**Example 28:** For residents of satellite and commuter towns around Lagos and Abuja whose livelihoods will surely be affected by some of these restrictive measures, we *shall* deploy relief materials to ease their pains in the coming weeks (Speech A).

**Example 29:** To support our businesses and traders, the monetary and fiscal authorities *shall* deploy all the necessary provisions needed for production to continue and thus, jobs restored (Speech C).

Locking down the entire country means that movement of most Nigerians would be seriously affected. This means that their activities would be put on hold pending its relaxation. Workers in offices, business men and women, artisans and other category of people would suffer inconveniences. The President asserted that Nigerians would be negatively affected in one way or another. He also stated that he was duty bound to avail Nigerians of what the plans of government were because the plans



would be operational in some months to come. Hence, it was an act that was inevitable on his part and which Nigerians should embrace.

### **The Use of *Should*: Advice and Appeal**

**Example 30:** Some of these measures will surely cause major inconveniences to many citizens.

But these are sacrifices we *should* all be willing and ready to make for the greater good of our country (Speech A).

**Example 31:** All citizens in these areas are to stay in their homes. Travel to or from other states *should* be postponed. All businesses and offices within these locations *should* be fully closed during this period (Speech A).

**Example 32:** As we remain ready to enforce these measures, we *should* see this as our individual contribution in the war against COVID-19. Many other countries have taken far stricter measures in a bid to control the spread of the virus with positive results (Speech A).

It was the only syntactic and morphological analogue of the modal operators in the speeches. The admonition of the President in Example 30 borders on the need for the masses to endure the measures introduced by Government. It was also an appeal that it was just a matter of time for the pains or hardship to end. In Example 31, the citizens were advised in their interest to stay in their home since it had been established that movement of people was one of the major causes of the spread of coronavirus. Aside from this, owners of businesses and operators of offices were advised to take a break off pending the lifting of the ban on the lockdown. Example 32 was an appeal to Nigerians to see the step of Government in a good light and it should not be viewed as punitive. To affirm the appeal, the President made reference to happenings in other countries that had taken similar decision.

### **Conclusion**

This study is a demonstration of the effectiveness of language use in text. The analysis has shown that linguistic elements transcend what is written as evident through the utilisation of graphological features in the correspondence. The study has also revealed that there is interconnectivity between linguistic elements and the meanings they convey as evident in the lexico-semantic features. This is an attestation that words cannot be divorced from meaning as they are mutually dependent. The study has further shown that linguistic elements cannot be used haphazardly. The linguistic elements in the text are indicators that language affords its users the opportunities of choice in terms of selection of what should be used and

what should not be used. Language is a veritable tool of functionality and this is what the study has unveiled.

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## **The Challenges of Teaching Practicality of Technical Theatre in Covid-19 Era: Case of *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrel* Performance**

**BADEJI, Adebayo John**

*Department of Performing Arts and Film Studies  
Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State  
badejiadebayo@gmail.com,  
08074110562*

**Atteh, Femi Yinka**

*Department of Performing Arts  
University of Ilorin, Kwara State  
Atteh.fy@unilorin.edu.ng  
08138379211*

### **Abstract**

*This work explores the challenges of teaching practicality of technical theatre in Covid-19 Era, using *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrel*'s production as a case study. It draws its fact through participant observation method of research as the researcher was part of the making of *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrel* performance. This work establishes the need for collaborative effort in technical theatre and the necessity of physical contacts and team work is unavoidably necessary in order to make an aesthetically pleasing theatrical performance. It then states the challenges faced by teaching practicality of technical theatre during the Covid-19 era. We conclude that the current state of technical theatre cannot happen in isolation, creative collaboration is essential in creating a theatrical set. The collaborative efforts of the carpenter, designer, painter and builder are the hands behind every stage design in a production. It also concludes that, not all practical based courses in Nigerian Institutions are ripe for virtual teaching of which technical theatre is one because technical tools will be needed on both end to make virtual teaching effective.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Technical Theatre, Performance, Practicality

### **Introduction**

The collaborative effort of theatrical performance makes the total uniqueness communicative, as theatre may not necessarily communicate the essence of its subject in fragment and isolation, communicating meaning and aesthetics in theatre is best achieved when all elements of

theatrical performance are in accordance. Thus, the necessity of physical contacts and team work is unavoidably necessary in order to make a healthy statement in theatrical performance.

One of the theatrical elements that explore and communicate with theatrical space is technical theatre. This element brings beauty and understanding of the settings of the performance, it gives information of where what is taking place. It enhances artistic and performative communication to its full meaning. This element had the picture of performance space and the picture of the settings way before the rehearsal begins. Technical theatre requires to start working before the actors ever take the stage, Morey (2005) once said:

The work required for a theatrical production to materialize starts well before the actors ever take the stage. There are typically many people involved, hundreds of hours put in, and countless meetings held along the way. Though every production and every theater works differently, there is a general progression of steps needed to produce a play.

What Morey called general progression is first individual before collaborative, it is in its collaborative state that performance is made, every units of performance are very deliberate in working towards the same goal. However, the interest of this paper is to explore the effect of pandemic on technical unit of theatrical production, as we all know that anything that involves more than two people or crowd is an advantage for the spread of covid-19.

The data collection of this paper is limited to Abiodin Akinsiku's *Esu and the Vagabond minstrel* performance. Akinsiku directed Osofisan's *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrel* during the Covid-19. This paper explores the challenges faced as relates to the rules of Covid-19 that is not friendly to teaching and executing the practicality of technical theatre. The study adopt qualitative method of research and its discuss is centered on how practicality of technical theatre was taught to the point execution during covid-19 era in Lead City University, Ibadan. The researcher is an academic staff member in Lead City University, and a lecturer of technical theatre in department of Performing Arts and Film Studies. Thus, the source of data for this work is through participatory and eye witness. The relevance of this research is therefore an asset to the body of knowledge and its field of study.

## **The Challenges of teaching the practicality of technical theatre in Covid-19 Era**

Performative language is adopted in this section for a proper communication. Therefore, the word *teaching* would be considered to be *execution* since the subject of this research is Practicality and the researcher seems to prefer execution because the driven question of this analysis is *how did the technical director of Esu and the Vagabond Minstrel execute set design for the production with the fact it is Covid-19 Era*.

The need for set and scene designer in film and stage suggest that technical theatre as a course is a gold well that should be adequately mined. The different areas of focus show ample of opportunities especially for students that undergo the process of teaching. Therefore, there are viable prospects in the practical teaching of technical theatre which can be explored by the teachers, the students, even our society. However, teaching practicality of technical theatre take a different turn in a time when the world is faced with pandemic. Covid-19, a newly discovered illness caused by the Corona Virus was first announced by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in December 2019. By March 2020, the same organisation declared the outbreak as a pandemic that has spread across most nations of the world. The resultant effect of this outbreak affected the general cosmos of the world. The outbreak has required the need for several institutions to close down physical business and trainings. Obviously, education won't be left out especially in a developing country that has not taken advantage of digital learning in education. Nigeria educational system couldn't survive the fierce of Covid-19 and this would not have been an advantage for practical course base like technical theatre. The study of Tari, Selfina, and Wauran, (2020) noted that:

Several measures have been put in place by educational institutions in order to forestall the spread across the world. These measures coupled with the government declaration of lockdown and isolations have affected teaching in many ways.

The havoc caused by pandemic to general learning process, how it freeze the formal educational goal and practical based course were stereotyped. Ali, (2020) posit that:

Many educational institutions are left with no other choice but to adopt different online and virtual means of training and teaching students across the world. However, this

initiative been a new experience for both teachers, students, guardians and all major stakeholders in the educational sector comes with a number of barriers militating against its assurance of delivering quality education. Practical oriented courses that require physical or face-to-face trainings are more adversely affected.

Technical theatre falls within the purview of courses that require physical trainings because it is practical based. Though, Udenze, & Oshionebo, Balogun, (2020) asserts that:

The major barrier to teaching practical aspect of technical theatre in Covid-19 era is the weakness of online teaching infrastructure. Many online teaching platforms including different new media platforms like WhatsApp, Zoom have been adopted to facilitate learning during the Covid-19 era.

However, in response to the above thought, these forms of platforms may not accommodate the full aims and objective of practical based courses. For instance, teaching lighting, set design or sound management through a virtual platform may not capture the total apprenticeship experience that is the bedrock of professionalism in practical courses. Since the whole idea of practical teaching is for the students to execute the idea under a low supervision or no supervision. It can as well be assumed that only the theoretical aspects of such training can be successfully taught virtually.

Also, it is important that we note the importance of students' participation under the supervision of the instructor or the lecturer in teaching the practicality of technical theatre as it would help student understanding of handling and operating equipment, tools and props used in designing. The presence of the lecturer or the supervisor may serve as serious motivation and concentration for the students in workshop.

The gathering of students in workshop may be used as a tool for focus for other student while in the case of online teaching an individual may decide to be doing many things while teaching is going on and this make the attention of the person is divided.

Avoidance of physical teaching is a major setback in teaching practical technical theatre in the Covid-19 era. This is because the total objective of practical teaching in theatre is not for perfection alone but also to incur character and discipline of the profession. If Doctor cannot be made via virtual teaching for the sake of the integrity of the profession, in

this regard Theatre Profession cannot be obtained via virtual teaching for the sake of the nature of the profession.

### **Teaching the practicality of Technical Theatre in Nigerian Universities: A mirror of Lead City University**

Technical theatre involves building complex skills that transcends the usual sole theoretical education. Teaching technical theatre entails preparing graduates for an unprecedented world. Achieving this then involves teaching the common skills like effective communication, problem analytic, team work etc. This is in addition to developing new sets of skills as required by the advent of modern technology needed to effectively function in professional practice.

This view is well supported by Abe (2016). Opines that:

The teaching of Technical Theatre calls for the ability to develop creative skills in students. Coupled with theoretical aspects of the course, students are expected to develop a new meaning for themselves through collaborations and team works. Hence, the practical aspect of technical theatre exposes student to mining new information. They are able to connect what is been thought to solve practical problems in the field.

It is then worthy of note that teaching practicality of technical theatre would produce combinations of different professional practice, embedded in a body of knowledge or a discipline that is called technical theatre. Meanwhile, Olaniyan (2015) gave the list of possible combinations that can be generated through the practical teaching of technical theatre, Olaniyan posit that:

There are several aspects of practicality of technical theatre in which students and teachers can decide to specialise on. The core subjects in technical theatre include lighting, props, costumes, make up, sound, designer etc. The combination of these different aspects is to ensure that teaching technical theatre exposes student to all practical aspects and also to provide the experiences they may need to be a professional.

Therefore, teaching technical theatre requires an all rounded professionalism to be in display by the tutors. The course being a high skilled based requires top notch quality teachers to guide and impact the

high end competencies and skills required for students to function maximally in practice. In relation to this, the study of Osarenren-Osaghae, and Irabor, (2012) states that “teachers’ quality in skill based courses like technical theatre is germane in engendering impactful teaching.”

In consonance with the above fact, teaching technical theatre practical does not only require excellent teachers, the nature of the course also requires that materials or resources in terms of equipment and tools are also readily made available. Bane (2007) asserts that:

The teaching environment for practical learning must be conducive. More importantly, the author opines that facilities put in place in workshops and theatre for practical training must be in synchronisation with what obtains in the industry.

Hence, teaching the practicality of technical theatre requires that training facilities are upgraded and updated from time to time in order to meet the present technological demands. Moreover, teaching the practical aspect of technical theatre is a collaborative effort between the teachers and learners. They must both see value in creativity and by extension, students are also expected to key into such values, question the authenticity, reflect and suggest ways of making concept taught more valuable. When this is done, the situation in practical classes becomes an avenue of sharing knowledge and information between the teachers and the students.

The curriculum is another fundamental factor that must be considered in teaching the effective practicality of technical theatre. Rantimi (2010) posit that: “practical theatre arts curriculum must be designed in such a way that dynamism is embedded in order to ensure that current and future realities are well taken care of.” In consonance with Rantimi, Oghuna (2014) assert that:

Teaching the practical aspect of the technical theatre must be geared towards the development of students’ logical abilities such that it fits practice in the current time and the future. Theatre art curriculum must be dynamic in nature. This is to ensure that as changes are being recorded in the field of practice, teaching pedagogy is also fine-tuned to meet the demands in practice.

This then reflects the notion that teaching technical theatre practical and indeed education in its entirety must be geared towards influencing student ability to enhance development in the society through their chosen academic discipline. Therefore, teaching practicality of technical theatre is



expected to equip students with skills that guarantee them financial independence.

An earlier study by Kaposi (2009) also suggests the importance of ensuring that technical theatre is not taught in isolation from current or foreseen future realities. According to Kaposi:

Practical teachings must incorporate the social, economic, cultural and educational reflection of the present. This encourages innovative ideas to be birth in student even before getting into professional practice. Students are able to stay on course with realities surrounding them.

This suggest that teaching practicality of Technical Theatre in respect to the curriculum must therefore be organised and systematic. Hershey, (2015) study proves the importance of organisation and systematic in teaching technical theatre. Hershey suggest that:

The need to ensure that teaching technical theatre practical curriculum accommodates technical production calendar. The classroom teaching should align with the technical calendar which will ensure that the theoretical aspect of the study precedes the practical aspect. This way, teaching is organised in such a way that students have already learnt in advance all they need to put into practice in the practical classes.

Findings from the study of Miller, (2016) project the potency of practical class as it involves many hands and many contributions. Miller submit that:

Students are more active in practical classes which involve working together in order to achieve a set goal. This way, lesser mistakes are made and students have the opportunity of generating new ideas and practicing such ideas.

These submissions present factors necessary to engender excellent teaching of practicality of Technical Theatre. That is, a presentation of ideal modalities necessary for teaching and learning the practical aspects of technical theatre. However, in meeting the demands necessary for the teaching of practicality of technical theatre in Covid-19 era, the major barrier militating against successful teaching of practicality of technical theatre is contact factor. Since the practicality of technical theatre is not possible without collaboration of two or more people, anything lesser may limit creativity. It is on this premise that this research derives its statement of problem and it focusses at looking into the challenges of teaching the

practicality of technical theatre. Also, if physical contact barrier can be controlled or guided against, this could be an attractive prospect towards the 21<sup>st</sup> century of teaching the practicality of technical theatre.

**How did the technical director of Esu and the Vagabond Minstrel execute set design for the production with the fact it is Covid-19 Era?**

This section consist of fact that were built on participatory method of research, the researcher was the Technical Director of the production and below are the pictures from building to performance. As it has been established earlier that technical theatre demands physical strength and collaboration of creative hands which is not Covid-19 friendly, one of the major challenges we faced during construction was timing; with more creative hands, we could have achieved the set construction in two days, but it took us a week because we tried to adhere to covid-19 measures.



**Figure 1:** The front view of Esu and the Vagabond Minstrel complete set



**Figure 2:** The side view of the Esu and the Vagabond Minstrel complete set

### **The design process phase**



**Figure 3:** Making and arranging the flats and roundabout for the production.

One can see the distance kept by the people working, we have just only two people working at a time after the use of hand sanitizer. This makes the work sluggish and didn't give room to explore creativity as we were running out time and the limitation of human power makes the process hectic for people working.



**Figure 4:** The Construction Process

Teaching was made difficult because students have to come in sessions and the maximum of them were four per day which only two can work at a time. So teaching and communication was very difficult, hectic on the part of the instructor because we have to repeat the same thing for every students. This method almost made us a theoretical based as all of them were not able to see the process from the beginning to the end. We were limited to basic and

we couldn't go advance because Covid-19 demanded that we be few at a time.

As we then subjected or limited by Covid-19 it is a suggestion and a reminder that Nigerian institution is not ripped for teaching practical courses in a virtual platform. Technical Theatre demands that you execute what you have as a model or in paper, when we remove executing and engagement part from Technical Theatre then it is more of an architectural and building work. This is to say the work of technical director doesn't stop at designing the set, the construction process must also be his concern.

There is absolutely no aspect of theatre that doesn't have to do with engagement, every theoretical thought must be applied and it involves human collaboration.

### **Conclusion**

This research has made attempt in exploring the challenges of teaching practicality of technical theatre in Covid-19 Era. The research thrives on exploring the set design process of *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrel* performance in Covid-19 Era. This research then concludes that the current state of Technical Theatre cannot be creatively seen without collaboration. The collaborative efforts of the carpenter, designer, painter and builder are the hands behind every stage production. It also concludes that, not all practical based courses in Nigerian Institutions are ripe for virtual teaching of which technical theatre is one because technical tools will be needed on both end to make virtual teaching effective.

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## **Print-Rich Environment and Creative Dramatics as Predictors of Early Literacy Development: Appraising the Film *Like Stars on Earth* and *Sesame Street* Programme**

**Oguejiofor V. Omeje<sup>1</sup>, Okonkwo Juliet Amaka<sup>2</sup>, Cindy Anene Ezeugwu<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> *Humanities Unit, School of General Studies  
University of Nigeria, Nsukka*

<sup>2</sup> *Dept. of Early Childhood Care and Education  
Alvan Ikoku Fed. College of Education, Owerri*

<sup>3</sup> *Department Theatre and Film Studies  
University of Nigeria, Nsukka  
cindy.ezeugwu@unn.edu.ng*

### **Abstract**

*This paper appraises the role of print-rich environment and creative dramatics models as predictors of early literacy development for children. Print-rich environment is a visual and hands-on-activity packed learning classroom, designed for effective cognitive development of the child. It provides children with opportunities to use the elements of literacy, drama and communicative skills in functional ways. Creative dramatics involves using children's imagination and creativity to improvise play scenarios from their experiences with their environment to reinforce learning. The study examines the role of the two models and how they can be adopted as predictors of early literacy development, in an attempt to provide better alternatives to the conventional classroom setting. Findings show that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has continued to witness a motley technological advancement in education, rendering the conventional classroom and its procedures banal and no longer effective in producing the desired result especially on the child's development. It is believed that the procedural dynamics of its delivery through improvised drama, texts, prints, paintings and stories among others are indeed necessary to all round education and development of the child. Its dramatic mode of teaching improves mnemonics and also increases children's attention retention span. Thus, these learning aids are seen to be crucial in enhancing early perceptive ability and the desired learning outcomes. Leaning on the Television programme *Sesame Street* and Aamir Khan's film *Like stars on Earth*, the paper is able to establish that creative dramatics have a great role to play in child development. The study adopts Piaget's Cognitive Theory of Development which holds that children are not simply passive recipients of knowledge; rather, they are continuously investigating and experimenting as they build their understanding of the world.*

**Keywords:** Print-rich classroom, Creative dramatics, Early literacy development, Children.

## **Introduction**

The world has progressed into a global society where advanced technologies and inputs have made great impact. Educators watch this development with kin interest especially as it concerns children. The quest for the child's enhanced intelligence, creativity and good thinking faculty thus becomes the preoccupation of many renowned children psychologists who have spent so many years studying children's intellectual development and have written many volumes on the subject, through observation and in depth study. A major finding of this undertaking is that children undergo a series of developmental steps from birth to age eighteen, though the age bracket for each stage differs according to each psychologist. Children require special methods of teaching and learning in order to adapt depending on the mental and social balance of the child. Piaget's Theory of Sensor motor Stage sets the motion for other stages of development and one of the giant breakthroughs in early child's literacy education has been children's television program. The television programme, *Sesame Street Production* (1969) was one of the earliest children's programmes that toed the line of the Print-rich environment and creative dramatics. Farounbi's (1998) observation that "children's programme are required to fascinate and interest children", became a focal point as it was argued that *Sesame Street* production was more of adult production for the children. (Farounbi, 1998:5), added that the "programme must be aimed at children's intellect – it could be as entertaining as possible; it could appeal to their imagination, but it must convey information and knowledge".

The impact of children's TV programmes on early child's literacy development is usually impactful. Wilson (2003), describes "becoming literate as a dynamic process, through which literacy-related competencies grow and change" (p.77). The researchers added that the path to literacy is multifaceted and involves far more than learning to encode and decode print on the page and to paint. A richer description of literacy development is offered by Britsch and Meier (1999). They refer to children's literacy development as "a dynamic, developmental process involving language, thought, and social interaction". With time, debate on the demerits and negative influences of children television gained public attention. It was alleged that children's TV programmes are limited only to rich urban dwellers that have access to electricity and the required appliances, that the mode of television delivery is ephemeral, thus, its impacts on the children are easily lost and among other things, that children's TV programmes do not offer the children maximum opportunity to actively participate in the activities. In view of the negative influences of TV programmes on children, Alexandra, *et al.* (1979), submit that, "public figures, popular press and

many individuals believe that the television is the root of almost every form of declining test scores to the loss of family value. “Some educators attacked the medium of television as fundamentally superficial in thinking” 118. This assertion is considered correct when we consider that popular TV programmes like *Tom and Jerry* (1940) and *Scooby Doo* (1969) are replete with violence. (Omeje, 2002:2), submits that “ in order to strike a balance between the interpersonal relationship between the television and the child, and to bridge the parent/guardian censorship gap between the television and the child and so on, there is need for alternative programmes which have promises of more positive impact in the all-round early child development” (p.2). The researchers are of the view that this line of thought among pundits about the impact of TV programmes on children may have given birth to the idea of print-rich environment and creative dramatics.

### **The concept of Print-Rich Environment in Early Childhood Classroom**

Literacy rich environment is a learning setting that encourages and supports speaking, listening, and writing in a variety of authentic ways – through print and digital media. Print-rich environments, hereafter referred to as PR-E in early childhood classrooms include two main areas: the physical environment and the social environment. It is also important to keep in mind that print-rich environments may be sufficient for some groups and inadequate for those groups that do not see themselves or their social literacy practices as reflected in the environment (Hall, 2003). PR-E are sometimes described as being full of print, as printed labels are often pasted on doors, windows, bookcases, walls and chalkboards among others. Printed signs are also used to designate the theme or purpose of different learning centres. Books, magazines, calendars and other print materials are also provided for this. Creating a PR-E requires more than simply ‘littering’ the places where children play with prints. Play environment must be carefully planned by informed adults” (Neuman & Roskos, 1994:264). They must also address both the social, academic and physical dimensions of the environment.

### **The Physical Learning Environment**

The physical environment comprises of the layout of the classroom, resources available to the students, written language activities and access to use of materials within the classroom. Collectively, literacy-rich physical environments also include structural components, language opportunities, and classroom management strategies (Ball, 2009). The teachers’ activities include: encouragements, guidance, demonstration, spreading literacy-



related materials around the classroom and periodic eating re-arrangement, re-designation of work spaces, books, and writing materials. All these allow children to independently and routinely incorporate literacy activities and use their creative, reading and writing skills in many situations and allow them to feel comfortable engaging in literacy-related activities (Ball, 2009).

### **The Social Learning Environment**

The social learning environment includes interactions among the students, their peers and their teachers within the learning environment. Oftentimes, interactions are directed at the students and not the parents or teachers. Human interactions such as sharing of picture books, telling stories and talking about experiences are central to emergent literacy' (Wilson, 2003:77). Children learn best through creating plays or drama scenarios using their imagination. It offers them the opportunity to engage in meaningful first-hand learning which makes the need for language real and necessary and to use language to manage themselves, convince others of their point of view, control their social and physical environments and to develop awareness of the purpose and use of print. The social learning environment brings us to the next predictor for early literacy learning which is Creative Dramatics.

### **An Overview of Creative Dramatics**

Creative Dramatics is a flexible process of developing the imaginative thoughts and creative ability in children through the use of improvisation, mime, pantomime, movement, storytelling, group activities and dramatization. Through improvised play or drama, children engage each other creatively and learn to interact with their immediate environment. They find the need through their imagination to use both spoken, unscripted plays and (for the deaf and dumb), sign language to communicate. Omeje, (2002) added that "creative dramatic is a subject that is brought to the child at an early age to guide the child on how to communicate effectively with people through sign language, and through pictorial concepts"(106). The child's perception is enhanced and with the use of hand signals, objects or actions are represented both dramatically and diagrammatically. This helps the children to acquire communication skills, social awareness, problem solving ability and self-concept enhancement. The role of creative dramatics in enhancing literacy is captured in the study film *Like Stars on Earth* (2007) which shall be analysed below.

### **Synopsis of *Like Stars on Earth* (2007)**

In the film *Like Stars on Earth*, Darsheel Safary (Ishaan Awasthi), an eight year old boy is repeatedly criticised and insulted by many including his teachers, father and schoolmates who do not understand his lifestyle, especially his continuous poor performance in school and his lack of social skills. No one is willing to understand why he keeps failing and why he abhors going to school. Even in his new boarding school, he is known not to be getting any subject right until a new arts teacher Aamir Khan (Ranbir Kapoor) joins the school. The teacher adopts an unconventional approach to teaching and asks the students to use their imaginations and creativity to learn and conquer their environment. Upon finding out that Ishaan has dyslexia, the teacher helps him discover his hidden talents and potentials through the use of improvised drama and drawing. Tapping from his imagination he is able to learn to communicate through painting, drawing, singing and the use of colours and prints. He ends up reading and writing better and turns out as the overall best in the whole school in painting competition.

### **Synopsis of *Sesame Street***

*Sesame Street* is a segmented serial children's programme that features live characters, puppets and cartoons. Each segment has different programme for the children. Its major focus is to teach the English alphabet, rhymes, Arabic numerals, arithmetic, crafts and logical reasoning. All these are done dramatically through role-play. As a result that it is produced in series running into thousands, it is not possible to summarize *Sesame Street* but to state its major aims which are to educate the child on decision making, tolerance, self reliant and confident. It is also created to enable children explore their environment with a view to awaken their creative imagination and ability create play scenarios from their everyday interactions.

### **Benefits of a Print-Rich Environment and Creative Dramatics on Early Literacy**

While print-rich environments benefit all students, it particularly benefits early literacy learners by laying in them, a strong foundation for survival in a world governed by specialized pursuits. Prior & Gerard (2004) discovered that environmental print is one of the first sources of reading materials for young children and it serves as veritable soil for the roots of literacy. A literacy-rich environment does more than provide visual exposure to students. A well-prepared literacy-rich environment invites children's active engagement in at least two different modalities in the practice of integrating visual and imaginative literacy to foster creative skills. Edwards

and Willis (2000), advises to “select one or two unusual ‘literacies’ for the classroom, such as photography or drama, and entwine them throughout the curriculum for the school year” (p. 263).

### **Implementing Print-Rich Environments to enhance Literacy**

There are a variety of ways to implement the PR-E in the early childhood classroom. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), “the most effective way is through the various centres implemented within a classroom, which is through labeling of centres and all materials within each centre”. They added that there are a variety of other methods to embed such print environments with more thoroughness, which include literacy and writing centres. These centres should be done in a way that provides “many opportunities to explore books, drawings, acting, writing, and to begin to recognise familiar words and names” (Carter & Pool, 2011). This method also encourages children to place a variety of magazines and student-produced books on low laying accessible shelves with available access.

### **Implementing the Model of Creative Dramatics to enhance Literacy**

As Hilderbrand (1986), a renowned child educationist suggests, creative dramatics is a spontaneous imaginative role-playing, taking place in the schools for young children” (6). While Abone (1990), view it as a phase of improvised dramatic situations, a process of developing and acquiring artistic skills which in turn enhances the child’s creative ability through effective drama. Creative Dramatics allows students the opportunity of using scenarios they are familiar with alongside their imaginative skills and with the help of guardians, or teachers to create improvised didactic dramas to aid them in their learning. In creative dramatics, children can also use the familiar print models to create role play scenarios for themselves. Placing food labels or snack boxes in the drama area is also a great way to integrate print into the drama arena. Students are oftentimes familiar with these prints and they recognise the fact that they have meaning and miming them often helps them to remember faster.

Copeland and DiLuzzio (2009), in looking at literacy instruction for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, emphasised that not only for this particular demography of children, but for all children, creative dramatics is the best model to adopt in teaching them to understand.

### **Classroom Labeling as part of Print-Rich Environment**

One feature of a print-rich classroom is labeling where kids are exposed to reading in classrooms. Labeling helps to create an enabling atmosphere that puts pupils at ease and contribute to their independent learning habit. It also helps to improve the concentration ability of children. Labeling also helps perception which primary function is recognition of objects/shapes. In the film, it helps Ishaan to master words which he initially could not identify.

Labeling also helps kids to:

identify words, their meanings and differences in the shape of the letters. In every written symbol (alphabet or numeral), there is something about the shape which contributes to its recognition. There are some principles of perception developed by three psychologists namely: Marx Wertheimer, Wolfgang Kohler and Kurt Koffka. These are known as Gestalt or Psychology of Form. They are:

- i) the principle of figure and ground. It states that in perception, a primary target is selected as the figure against a background. In most visual precept, a part of the picture is considered as the figure (the primary interest) and the rest, background.
- ii) the principle of closure. This indicates that if a drawing is incomplete, the child is made to bring it to a complete precept by filling (tracing) the missing element. This idea can also be represented in alphabets and numerically by simply asking the child to 'put the missing alphabets or numerals, example: A, -, C, -, E, F, -, - J, K or 1, 2, 3, -, 5, -, -, 8, -, 10.

Labeling helps kids also to

- infuse the environment with print for instant, perception
  - develop responsibility as they care for the materials they use
  - turn clean-up time into an important learning opportunity
- Also,
- it gives visual clues to the place of items

The teacher would in turn:

- discuss pictures and captions with children.
- encourage children to dictate their labels for their own artwork.
- ensure that children's works are displayed throughout the room.

The following by Neuman (2004) are suggested ways child-care providers can enhance print-rich environment for young children. Print-rich environment Centers should include:

- Writing tables, functional signs, and symbols that stimulate children to use literacy signs that have meaning for children (not mere decoration), would help to communicate the important message, 'that is, that literacy is an integral part of daily activity'.
- Literacy-Related Play Areas. Props, such as memo pads, recipes, and cookbooks, help children incorporate print in a very natural way.
- Interactive Circle Times. In contrast to being read to, children could actively participate in reading aloud. Teachers would stop, ask questions, encourage discussion of ideas, raise new questions based on children's comments, and generate participatory roles in reading with children.
- Small-Group Activities. Teachers could engage children in reading, writing, play improvisation activities in small groups.

### **Findings**

Some of our findings about PR-E and the use of creative dramatics for teaching have shown that:

Print-rich early literacy operates along the line of some theorists' postulations which are methods that have been tested and found useful especially in the areas of child's training and development. For example, the psychological method by Edward Segune, accounts for the imperfections of sensorimotor stage which is supplemented by educational and occupational trainings like crafts Print-rich applies the method of delivery by John Duncan. It utilizes 'learn by doing' concept and also emphasises individual instruction. It also incorporates Alicia Gracia-Holgado's 'project method' system of transfer of knowledge. This means that it explores many activities that correspond with the academic subject matter, which is, reading, writing and arithmetic. Other activities include drawing, painting and so on. Creative dramatics offer the children the ability to achieve self-realisation and early development of human relationship through creating things from the environment. Creative

dramatics as reflected in the movie, *Like Stars on Earth* provides the platform for physically and academically challenged children to rediscover themselves through songs, drama, and painting.

### **Conclusion**

Having examined the print-rich environment and creative dramatics models as predictors of early literacy development and creativity, the paper concludes that the models provide better alternative for conventional classroom teaching and is essential for the overall development of the child as depicted by its physical and social environment. This is also very visible in *Sesame Street* and *Like Stars on Earth* where the arts teacher dramatically entered the physical classroom and urged the students to do away with physical structures and move around their environment and make use of their imaginations and in doing this, Ishaan and his classmates are able to create different things including a floating boat. How the environment is arranged and what it contains plays an important role in the development of the imaginative and creative skills of children. It provides the children the opportunities to deploy their ability to create improvisational plays using their experiences, imagination and environmental influences with the help of guides or teachers. In this instance, the Arts teacher organises an arts competition for the entire school outside the classroom and Ishaan emerges the overall best. The outcome of improvisations helps to bring about desirable changes in the behaviour and creative life of the children and also in the assessment of the extent to which these changes have taken place. The models also guide and nurture children to become competent team leaders. It is considered that at certain level of interaction and exposure, children are left on their own to carry out certain actions themselves while the teacher or guide supervises, sometimes from a distance. This is captured in the study movie where the Arts teacher gives each student drawing materials and allowed them to draw and paint using their imagination. Through this scenario, the dyslexic Ishaan Awasthi under the guidance of his Arts teacher is able rediscover himself through painting and creative dramatics and emerges the best student in Arts in his school and improved tremendously in other subjects.

### **Recommendations**

With our conviction that PR-E and creative dramatics provide a better alternative to the conventional classroom, which is procedural dynamics of delivery through texts, plays, music, prints, murals, pictures, stories and so on are necessary for all round education and development. Its dramatic

teaching method, improves mnemonics and children's attention span, thus enhancing early perceptive ability and the desired learning outcomes, the researchers therefore recommend as follows:

That both the Federal and State Governments should take necessary steps towards converting all nursery and primary schools to print-rich literacy environment, incorporating creative dramatics as a method of engaging the children.

That owing to the huge financial implication involved in converting the affected orthodox schools, the federal government should financially assist the schools to affect the change.

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## **Complementarity of Dance and Music in Femi Osofisan's Dramatic Action: *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels***

**Akinwumi Olutola Olafisayo**

*Department of English and Literary Studies*

*Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State*

*olafisayo49@gmail.com, olutola.akinwumi@fuoye.edu.ng*

*08136671873, 08034636335*

### **Abstract**

*Dance is a performance art form consisting of purposefully selected sequences of human movement. Music, on the other hand, is an art form, social or cultural activity whose medium thrives on sounds. This paper examines how the development of music complements the dramatic action in the performance of Femi Osofisan's drama. The paper studies the expressive poise of oeuvres vis-a-vis how they contribute to the action on stage. The paper shows how dance, through songs in the selected text, enriches and enlivens drama in democratic Nigerian society. The paper argues that the combination of the key elements of dance and song become methodically intertwined in Femi Osofisan's drama and they are means through which the audience is involved and partake in the action on the stage. The paper submits that the dance in *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* serves as a healing therapy for people which is done through grounded theory methodology. It concludes that, in the play, dance does not only entertain, but also indicates strong and vital social messages.*

**Keywords:** Dance, Music, Theatre, Song, Osofisan

### **Introduction**

According to Sondra (1987: 49), dance is a performance art form consisting of purposefully selected sequences of human movement. The movements have aesthetic and symbolic value and are acknowledged as dance by performers and observers within a particular culture. Meekums (2002: 29) opines that, dance can be categorized and described by its choreography, its repertoire of movements, or by its historical period or place of origin. An important distinction is to be drawn between the contexts of theatrical and participatory dance. Although these two categories are not always completely separate, both may have special functions, whether social, ceremonial, competitive, erotic, martial or sacred/liturgical. Other disciplines of human movement are sometimes said to have dance-like

qualities, as evidenced in martial arts, gymnastics, figure skating, synchronised swimming and many other forms of athletics.

### **Literature Review: Dance and Music**

Dance is performed with the accompaniment of music, and was created for each other and is frequently performed together. According to Payne (2006: 45), dance in Africa, especially Nigeria, is deeply integrated into society, and major events in a community are frequently reflected in dance and can be performed for births and funerals, weddings, rituals, celebrations and wars. Traditional dances impart cultural morals, including religious tradition and sexual standards because it is related to theatrical performance. It gives vent to repressed emotions, such as grief; motivates community members to cooperate, whether fighting wars or grinding grain; enacts spiritual rituals and contributes to social cohesiveness.

According to Hanna in *African Dance, the Continuity of Change*, dance in contemporary African cultures still serves its traditional functions in new contexts. Dance may celebrate the inauguration of a hospital, the building of communities for rural migrants in unfamiliar cities, and be incorporated into church ceremonies.

Music is the written or printed signs representing vocal or instrumental sounds combined in such a way as to produce beauty of form, harmony and expression of emotion. According to Merriam-Webster, music is the science or art of ordering tones or sounds in succession, in combination, and in temporal relationships to produce a composition having unity and continuity. He continues, music is a vocal, instrumental or mechanical sounds having rhythm, melody or harmony or an agreeable sound with a musical accompaniment. It can also be the art of producing pleasing or expressive combinations of tones especially with melody, rhythm and usually harmony or a musical composition set down on paper. The common elements of music are pitch, rhythm, dynamics and the sonic qualities of timbre and texture. Different styles or types of music may emphasise, de-emphasise or omit some of these elements. It is performed with a vast range of instruments and with vocal techniques ranging from singing to rapping and there are solely instrumental pieces, solely vocal pieces and pieces that combine singing and instruments. The creation, performance, significance and even the definition of music vary according to culture and social context.

In many cultures, music is an important part of the people's way of life, as it plays a key role in religious rituals, ceremonies, social activities and cultural activities. People may take music as a hobby, as in a youth orchestra; or as an occupation, as does a professional musician or singer.

Music is composed and performed for many purposes, ranging from aesthetic pleasure and as an entertainment product for the marketplace religious or ceremonial purposes. A distinction is often made between music performed for a live audience and music that is performed in a studio so that it can be recorded and distributed through the music retail system or the broadcasting system. However, there are also many cases where a live performance in front of an audience is also recorded and distributed.

One usually associates dance with clarity and beauty, a performing art that is pleasing to the eye. People go to theatres, concert halls, and outdoor venues to watch dance and appreciate the magnificence that lies in the technique and musicality of the dancers as well as the choreography itself. Most of the people fail to realise, however, that dance goes beyond aesthetics. Dance is as powerful a therapeutic art as it is a performing art. Dance can heal and cure people. It can provide a healthy and comforting environment for individuals suffering from psychological disorders, mental retardation, autism, cancer, and other conditions.

Dance can set people free on a physical and, especially, a psychological level. It is a means of expressing oneself without any boundaries. This paper will focus on Osofisan's *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* as a case study whereby the use of dance/movement therapy is emphasised to deal with major depression, another term for clinical depression. Today, depression is believed to be one of the most common and distinctive mood disorders; yet, people continue to look at depression as a temporary psychological state of mind. People suffering from depression are either too embarrassed to talk about it or remain silent in the hope that someday the heavy load of disappointment and grief they bear will somehow disappear. It is important to understand, though, that depression is not a condition that people can successfully overcome themselves. Depression is a real medical disorder, like anorexia, epilepsy, and autism. It is strongly recommended that people who suffer from depression for long periods of time get professional help. To date, relatively few studies have focused on the effects of dance/movement therapy on people with depression. However, the results have pointed in a positive direction. The down-mood of patients seemed to improve on days they were in therapy as opposed to days they were not. Even if past studies have not closely examined the long-term effects of dance/movement therapy on depression, number of sources verifying its impact on the lives of people with major depression has been discovered. If movement therapists as well as psychotherapists pay close attention to this condition, there will be a significant increase in research on using dance to reduce severe depression

and melancholia. Dance and music is recommended to be the best option that is very glaring in the text.

Most of the traditional performances are embedded in music and dance. However, we have decided to discuss them separately because they on their own are forms of traditional performances. Also some dances contain some re-enactment of stories. A good example is the Ohafia War Dance, some dance dramas from northern Nigeria like *dodorido koroso* or the *Egwu Amala* from Delta State. Dance is usually accompanied by music. In traditional Nigerian society, dance is a form of entertainment during festivals and other traditional ceremonies and rites. Some of the dances are for mere entertainment while many of them are re-enactment of feats/incident or the dance is usually used to communicate or promote dramatic intention. Music is while according to Meki Nzewi, "dance is stylized and structured movement in time and space. Dance involves or at the marginal, implies music" so both are somehow inseparable "Dance includes mime gymnastics and acrobatics, structure to, or orchestrated by music. Many people conceptualise dance as mere entertainment or what has come to be called dance-drama.

### **Comparing Drama with the Auditory Art: Music**

How does drama differ from a musical performance or show? A musical performance is similar to drama in a number of respects. To begin with, it involves human beings who sing and/or perform musical instruments before an audience, producing sounds which combine in unique ways to delight an audience or listeners. As in drama, the audience in a musical show can see and hear the performers, if the performance is presented live. Yet, a musical performance is not drama, because the musicians or singers are not actors. They are not pretending to be other people, things, ideas, etc. But if musicians and/or singers decide to act out what they sing, which has become a practice these days, their performance can be regarded as drama, depending on the extent of their roles as actors. Drama is not meant for entertainment primarily, we acknowledge the importance of entertainment, for as Eric Bentley explains, "it is because art is fun that it can succeed in being didactic, for there is no true teaching except in eagerness, amusement, delight, inspiration" (228). A glance at some traditions of theatre reveals the transformational and radical impact of drama. The main aim has always been to improve and stabilise society. These objectives are manifested in different forms and styles worldwide.

### **Methodology**

In this paper, the play text will be subjected to Grounded Theory Methodology (Martin and Turner: 1984; Strauss and Corbin: 1994) approaches. Both the context of situation and culture as well as the status/identity of the interlocutors will be put into consideration in discussing the texts. Grounded theory methodology explicitly involves generating theory and doing social research as two parts of the same process (Glaser, 1978). Grounded theory methodology is one of the most widely used approaches to collect and analyze data within qualitative research. It can be characterized as a framework for study design, data collection, and analysis, which aims at the development of middle-range theories. The final result of such a study is called a “grounded theory,” and it consists of categories that are related to each other.

### **Result and Discussion: Dance Therapy in *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels***

Dance has been used as a healing ritual in curing of infertility, sickness and in some cases, madness. Omele uses his magic opportunity to help a poor pregnant woman and heal a leprous couple. Although, he contracts the disease from them but he is found truly worthy to be related with. He truly shows compassion and heals without demanding for excess material to accumulate wealth from his patients. He is eventually rewarded for doing good, like we have here:

[...] I sing to end all your pain,

My song commands your relief

My friend, dance along with abandon,

And that will cure your disease. (34)

*Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* is about a group of out of work minstrels who are offered magical assistance that will reverse their fortunes. The only clause is that they must use the power to help only those in need. Osofisan develops characters based on the politicians who were in power during the civilian regime that ruled in Nigeria between 1979 and 1983. As variously documented, the politicians were notorious for the high level of corruption and forfeiture of the mandate they were elected to defend. *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* captures the panic that ensued in the country after the military coup d'état of December 1983.

Femi Osofisan's *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* is analysed as an authentic African play. Osofisan uses music, song and dance to enrich the

play. Music and song used do not only entertain, but also pass strong socio-political messages to the audience. It gives a desirable pleasure that human beings cannot do without. Music is part of the dialogue form from the playwright for he pours out his mind through the lyrics of his music. It plays an important role in Nigerian drama.

Osofisan fuses the elements of music, song and dance with dialogue in the play. Songs are used to break the flow of performance, to comment on the current action and to distance the audience from the action on stage. Through the songs, the playwright tries to conscientise the masses: that they must rise and exercise their rights to denounce corrupt post-independence leadership. This is because there is power in collectivity and with that, the masses will be able to protest against bad leadership. He sees music and songs as essential ingredients of his drama, since they capture his political mission which is the dislodgement of an oppressive and unjust political system. According to Awodiya in *The Drama of Femi Osofisan: A Critical Perspective*, "Songs also react to events and characters on stage as the playwright would like his audience to respond." It is also to remind the spectators that they are in a theatre watching an enactment of reality instead of reality itself. For instance, the song 'I sing to end your pain' reacts to the events and characters on stage as the wounded man is being nursed of his bullet wound. The healing through singing and dancing is central to the action in the play:

[...] I sing to end all your pain,  
My song commands your relief  
My friend, dance along with abandon,  
And that will cure your disease. (34)

Music and song in the above instance magically ease the pain of the affected person. It is also the means through which the audience is involved and partakes in the action on stage. It comments on the action on stage, expressing opinion on the event that surrounds the wounded patient. The song "*Khaki and Agbada*" comments on the unstable political environments in which economic and social activities cannot flourish. The belief in Èsù is challenged in the song 'Èsù Does Not Exist'. The song is quite explicit in its questioning of traditional beliefs:

[...] And so we end our show  
And we about to go  
But don't take our story light  
Like some tales on moonlight night:

All this magic we've shown  
All this miracle of healing  
They're devices that you've known,  
Spices to our narration-  
But though it's fascinating  
Till your mind can't resist,  
Èsù does not exist  
Save in your imagination ... (72)

Osofisan employs the devices of indigenous performance mode in this play in order to create a popular theatre form with which the masses can easily identify, according to Isabella (2011). The desire for a new social order in which the masses are supposed to be free from the existing oppression and domination of the rulers is carefully articulated. There is unemployment and underdevelopment in Nigeria. The vagabond minstrels are unemployed. After the military seize power, the minstrels take to the streets travelling from town to town in search of fortune. The issue of bad governance and failure in leadership is properly highlighted while the minstrels parade various towns in search of food. Their experience captures that of other citizens in the new dispensation.

The trial scene is central to Osofisan's message in the play. The scene presents the conflict between the personal and the collective in human aspirations. For instance, the first encounter with the rich man who has lost his sexual potency shows the lust for wealth and profit. By portraying such characters, Osofisan ridicules the desire for material acquisition by post-independence African leaders. For example, Jigi, who has been given power by Èsù, ridicules people who glorify rogues and thieves of common wealth. Redio, another minstrel, is empowered by Èsù, but he is one of those who collude with politicians to bring the nation's economy to ruin. Omele represents the spirit of concern, of compassion and hope in humankind. He is the man of tomorrow, the embodiment of hope.

Osofisan sees togetherness and communal experience as quite desirable for the people, especially the masses who are the victims of political oppression, economic exploitation and social injustice. The masses are urged to cooperate through collective struggle in order to achieve genuine liberation. It is seen as the willingness to sacrifice and accommodate the individual differences of opinions, views and beliefs in the overall interest of the group. The collective action of the minstrels in their singing is what makes the magical power efficacious in healing their clients. Osofisan recognises that the English Language could be made to blend with the local environment to produce a literary work that is appealing

and satisfying to the audience. He localises English Language by using proverbs, metaphors, riddles and storytelling, taken from Yoruba cultural experience. He is therefore able to reach a larger audience and keep his message simple through this manner of language use in the text. This shows the playwright as an advocate of accessible diction. On the whole, Osofisan makes sense of the past in his projection of the future so that mistakes of the past will not be repeated by both the government and the governed.

### **Conclusion**

Osofisan gives the plays substantial attention as traditional elements are the major communicative tools. He also uses riddle, an element borrowed from Yoruba oral literature, to communicate with the audience who share the same political and historical experience with him. The traditional storytelling form is adopted in *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*, aesthetic and ideological purposes. The role of *Èsù* in the play agrees with his image in Yoruba traditional beliefs. Osofisan also explores the belief in the efficacy of mysterious powers, effected through magic and incantations.

The paper affirms that Osofisan understands drama as a valuable traditional tool in attaining mass awareness towards socio-political change. It examines the integration of music and song into drama. These are indigenous elements of performance which have also been associated with Osofisan's indebtedness to Bertolt Brecht. The effect of this blending of drama with music and song is that the audience becomes participatory in the action of his plays. This shows how dance through songs in the selected text enriches and enlivens drama in Nigerian dramatic performances. The combination of the key elements of dance and song become methodically intertwined and they are means through which the audience is involved and partakes of the action on the stage. The paper submits that, the dance in *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* is both intricate and therapeutic; and concludes that in the play, dance does not only entertain but also indicates strong and vital social messages.

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## **Historical Background and Performance Practice of “Kúlumbú” in Owode-Ketu, Ogun State**

**SONEYE, Oluwaseun Oluwafemi**

### **Abstract**

*This article explores the historical background and performance of “Kúlumbú”, a music and dance performance among the people of Owode-Ketu in Ogun State, Nigeria. This study is important because of the lack of documentation on the performance, and the need to contribute to existing literature on musical practices among the Yoruba people of south-western Nigeria. This study also opens a new discourse among scholars of Yoruba music, on indigenous musical practices of the Owode-Ketu people and other Yoruba societies. Oral interview and focus group discussion were employed in gathering research data. The study was anchored on Tajfel and Turner’s Social identity theory. “Kúlumbú” is an energetic dance which is accompanied with both drumming and singing. It requires a lot of work on the knees, waist and shoulders and is performed by energetic youths. Although “Kúlumbú” took its roots from “Ponse”, another musical practice which does not belong to Owode-Ketu, the people of Owode-Ketu have developed and use it to project their cultural identity through collective efforts. The performance which combines singing and dancing is accompanied by a set of hollowed drums which are played by male drummers. Apart from being intended for aesthetics and cultural projection, the structure of “Kúlumbú” performance demonstrates team work which is a vital ingredient of societal organisation and existence. The use of panegyric songs to encourage good deeds within their society, pray to God and also enlighten their listeners, demonstrates their cognisance of the relevance of music in social order and societal well-being.*

**Keywords:** Kulumbu, Owode-Ketu, Ponse, Yoruba music, Traditional music.

### **Introduction**

Having existed long before the incursion of the colonisers which occurred in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Music is a symbolic fragment of the culture of the indigenous people of Nigeria. It plays a vital role in their daily life, as it features in their sociocultural, religious, educational and occupational activities. Asides from all these outlined functions of music among the indigenous people of Nigeria, it also serves as a means of communication, knowledge repository, historical documentation, identity creation, among others. The Yoruba, being a major ethnic group in Nigeria, have high level of interaction with music and a large amount of this interaction has been

widely explored by scholars from the field of musicology, anthropology, political science, religious studies, performance studies and African linguistics to mention a few.

Among the Yoruba, music accompanies almost every aspect of life of an individual. A young individual is exposed to music the moment he or she is delivered. Celebration songs which may be accompanied with musical instruments are sung to felicitate the parents of the newly born child, as well as to welcome the new born into the society. This is coupled with the use of music in rites of passage, royal courts, as well as in the upbringing of children using various educational folksongs. Music among the Yoruba is a trilogy, consisting of singing, drumming and dancing. One of the basic characteristic features of the music of the Yoruba people is that they employ intensive use of drums and as a result, have varieties of drum ensembles such as *Bàtá*, *Dùndún*, *Bèmbé* and *Gbèdu* (Adegbite, 1988; Samuel, 2005; Owoaje, 2014; Durojaye, 2020).

Various studies have been conducted on the various musical performances of major and sub-ethnic groups among the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria. To the best of my knowledge, there has not been any notable scholarly documentation of “*Kúlumbú*” music and dance, which is performed among the people of Owode-Ketu of Ogun State, Nigeria. It is this identified knowledge gap that this paper intends to fill. The aim of this article is to explore the historical background and musical practice of “*Kúlumbú*” among the people of Owode-Ketu, Ogun State. The exploration of “*Kúlumbú*” music of the Owode-Ketu people is important in various ways. Firstly, it will add to the existing literature on musical practices among the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria. Secondly, the exploration of “*Kúlumbú*” music will open a new discourse among scholars of Yoruba music, thereby triggering more researches on indigenous musical practices of the Owode-Ketu people and other sub-ethnic Yoruba communities.

Data was collected through ethnographic methods such as focus group discussion, participant observation and key informant interview with Mr Salami Akan, a leading custodian of “*Kulumbu*” performance. During the field investigation, the researcher requested for a staged performance of “*Kulumbu*” and participated in singing while the performance went on. The purposive sampling method was used to select participants for this study, which includes the key informant who is a descendant of one of the originators of “*Kúlumbú*” in Owode-Ketu, as well as a group of seven (7) experienced individuals who have been involved in the performance of “*Kúlumbú*” at their prime, but have now become teachers and mentors of the art. Content analysis was employed in analysing collected data for the

study, with focus on the historical background and performance practice of “Kúlumbú”.

### **Theoretical Anchorage**

This study is anchored on Tajfel and Turner’s (1979) social identity theory. The theory posits that social identity is how the self-concept of people is deeply rooted in their membership in social groups. The theory addresses how social identity influences the behaviour and attitude of people towards their in-group and out-group. According to Leaper (2011), social identities have more influence on individuals when they consider their membership of a group as being crucial to their self-concept. They therefore, develop strong emotion with the group. In the light of the discourse about “Kúlumbú”, it is important to note, that the Owode-Ketu people are a sub group of the Yewa sub-ethnic group which forms one of the major geopolitical zones in Ogun state. Although they are disadvantaged in population compared to other groups within the state, they employed “Kúlumbú”, being a shared cultural and artistic material, to create an image of themselves to the rest of the state to which they belong, and the nation at large.

The people of Owode-Ketu have showcased their artistic heritage to the rest of the Nigerian population over the years. They achieved this by developing strong collective emotion with which they were able to develop “Kúlumbú” to the extent it could compete with other regions of Ogun State who are believed to have more advantage over them, in terms of dominance and visibility. Although the ideas surrounding the performance of “Kúlumbú” did not originally start among the people of Owode-ketu, they have been able to develop “Kúlumbú” out of *Pònşé* and popularize it so much than *Pònşé*, from which it took its roots. With this, this people of Owode-Ketu have been able to create an identity for themselves through “Kúlumbú”.

### **Literature Review**

Music is no doubt, an important aspect of many African cultures. As noted by Vidal (2002), music is part of the essential arts which man has cultivated for the purpose of growth, nurture and the transfer of cultural values to younger generations. African music combines various cultural elements which are compressed and packaged in the form of performances that are presented before indigenous audiences. The digestion of this performance therefore enriches the minds of participants and listeners with a considerable amount of African value. As noted by Jayeola (2015), music is “one of the cultural indices that make Africans Africa. It is a cultural

identity that has to do with singing, playing of instruments, dancing and using various artifacts”. Although the use of music in several African societies has shifted from indigenous music to contemporary and imported popular and art music, it is safe to say that imported music and other non-traditional music all enjoy the natural appetite of Africans to interact with music.

Furthermore, Jayeola described indigenous music in Africa and especially Nigeria, as a complete institution, which is rooted on the experience of the people whose society it represents. This could explain the reason behind the use of the language, costume and ornamentation usually taken from the immediate culture of the originators of any musical art. Africans therefore, place musicians in high esteem, based on their vital roles within the society. Isaac (2009) observed that music is rated very importantly among Africans, with musicians sharing part of the reference given to music. Among the Yoruba for example, musicians enjoy certain privileges since they are considered as professionals whose service cannot be easily discounted. A Yoruba singer has the privilege to call a monarch by his name without being penalised for doing so, or seen as disrespecting the king, as long as he is in the middle of a musical performance. Samuel (2009) also noted that court musicians are considered as the king’s wife and do not have to pay homage to the king whenever other people do so.

Given the global attitude to cultural and economic exchange which comes as a result of the established links between various races and colours of people, music is one of the major materials and cultural elements which Africans share with the rest of the world. As noted by Agawu (2003), the music of Africa has continued to find a place in global music consumption, drawing converts, devotee and adherents. This is evident in the manner in which music of African descent have continued to remain relevant in the international scene. Agawu further noted that African music features in various venues and events such as concerts in parks, various school activities, community gatherings and museums. In addition, Agawu added that African music features in workshops and clinics, where African drumming is introduced to amateurs and beginners. This is in addition to musical performances by African superstar singers, drummers, saxophonists, dancers and bandleaders, who are featured in festivals, ceremonies, public and private gatherings, as well as radio and TV broadcasts of World Beat. All of the cited examples are signal that African music has continued to thrive both home and abroad (Agawu, 2003).

The ability of music of African descent to find a space in the global scene is not by coincidence or chance. According to Agawu, part of the uniqueness of African music, which makes it appeal to global audience, is

its communal nature which enables participation by both young and old members of the community where such music is being played. This in other words, connotes that African music is devoid of acting. In addition, music in Africa allows for expression of emotion and is engraved in social life. As noted by Agawu, music in Africa “is integrated with social life rather than set apart, natural rather than artificial, and deeply human in its material significance. Its themes are topical and of sharp contemporary relevance, sometimes humorous and satirical, sometimes sad and affecting, often profound” (Agawu 2003: xi).

Being a people within Africa and having shared cultural traits with other various African societies, the importance of music in traditional Yoruba life cannot be underestimated. Music is an important art among them, since it is employed in a number of daily activities and as well, used in accompanying the life of every individual from birth to death. Music is part of the cultural heritages of the Yoruba people, which is treasured as they pass their cultural values over to the younger generations. Music features in kings’ courts, where it serves various functions, such as heralding the king’s presence at both traditional and social functions, waking the king, entertaining the king’s guests and performance of rites and rituals. In respect to music in kings’ courts, Odunaike (2016) maintained that music featured regularly in the palaces of Yoruba kings during the pre-colonial era and it served as tool of entertainment whenever the kings had special guests. Music was also used to welcome the chiefs to the palace of the kings. This practice has however, survived through post-colonial times and can still be found in palaces of prominent Yoruba kings today.

As Okunade and Ozah (2020) note, court music in the palace of OsileOke-Ona in Egbaland, includes a trumpeter who plays the bugle (a replacement for heralding trumpet known as Kakaki), dundun drummers as well as the traditional *Dundun* ensemble. It also includes non-traditional music groups such as the Lads and Lasses of the African Church who have the Osile Oke-ona as patron. The use of non-traditional music in the palace of Yoruba king is an indication that cultural dynamism which accommodates change, has effect in Yoruba musical tradition.

Apart from the kings’ courts, another important aspect of Yoruba life where music is featured is in the upbringing of young individuals. As part of their life’s experiences, several songs are taught to children, through which they have a grasp of cultural and moral knowledge. Yoruba folksongs are, therefore important tools in the attainment of the desired individual which is generally referred to as *Omoluwabi*. According to Abayomi (2016), the aim of the *Omoluwabi* philosophy among the Yoruba is to build in the people, the virtues of hard work, self-reliance, diligence, and the

acquisition of character traits such as honesty and social responsibility. According to Abimbola (1976), the traits intended by the *Omoluwabiphilosophy* also include respect, loyalty, devotion to one's parents and truthfulness. All of these are taught to Yoruba children through the use of folksongs and children play songs which are composed to entertain young individuals while also educating them. Children therefore do not just sing for pleasure; they educate themselves and also ingest various aspects of their culture, even as they have fun.

### **History of “Kúlumbú” Music**

Information from field experience revealed that “Kúlumbú” is a combination of music and dance which is performed among the people of Owode-Ketu in Yewa area of Ogun State. “Kúlumbú” takes its roots from Pònşé, a dance that shares similarity with “Kúlumbú”. They both make use of the same musical instruments, songs and even dance steps. It is important to note, that “Kúlumbú” did not originate from among the dwellers of Owode-Ketu. From an historical perspective, it was revealed that the late Chief N. G. Fabiyi who was the Akinrogun of Owode-Ketu, imported “Kúlumbú” and Pònşé from a place called Igbunta, and took it to Owode-Ketu. Igbunta was once a large settlement where the earlier generation of Owode-Ketu people lived before migrating to their present-day settlement. The participants of “Kúlumbú” maintained that Igbunta still exists today, but has only a few houses and lots of farmland which are cultivated by dwellers around the place.

In another historical account, “Kúlumbú” is said to have emanated from a dance which was used by the people of Igbunta as tool of conquest during the times of Dahomey war. The people of Igbunta would perform the dance to their god named “Agbota” during sacrifices and worship. It is said that Agbota in return helped them in disbanding the enemies, so that they were not consumed by war. This source however, did not dispute the link “Kúlumbú” has with Pònşé and Igbunta.

The late Chief Fabiyi had learnt to perform “Kúlumbú” music and dance while he stayed with the people of Igbunta. Having developed so much interest in the art, he imported “Kúlumbú” to Owode-Ketu in the early 1950s and started teaching young people. Together with the assistance of his brother who was the father of the key-informant, Pa Akinbiyi gathered young individuals of between age eight (8) and twelve (12) and started teaching them the dancing steps, songs and drumming. They learned to perform “Kúlumbú” and Pònşé the same way it was performed by the people of Igbunta and took it seriously, so much that “Kúlumbú” and Pònşé became popular among the people of Owode-Ketu.

The earliest performances of “Kúlumbú” which were series of rehearsals and mock performances, were held in front of All Saints Anglican Church in Owode-Ketu. Investigation revealed that Chief Fabiyi would gather the children somewhere opposite the church and make them rehearse regularly in the evenings after the day’s works. David Taiwo who is popularly referred to as “Sango”, was the first drummer of “Kúlumbú” among the people of Owode-Ketu. He was a professional drummer and also played drums for the worshippers of Obatala who are referred to as *Olorisa*. Being in possession of Orisa drums, David Taiwo would bring along some of the drums to the rehearsal venue of “Kúlumbú”, in order to accompany the dance.

Chief Akinbiyi at the beginning of “Kúlumbú” music and dance among the people of Owode-Ketu, was said to have tried to borrow drums from the people of Igbunta, but had to give up because of the various rituals associated with the use of the drums, hence the resort to David Taiwo. In the end, the “Kúlumbú” performers got their own set of drums and David Taiwo groomed a set of young drummers of same age range as the dancers. According to Mr Salami Akan, the first set of drummers of “Kúlumbú” who were trained by David Taiwo include SalakoKusita, Jobi Oduntan and JimohTayese.

Despite the similarities between “Kúlumbú” and *Pònşé*, they both possess distinguishing features. According to Mr Salami Akan, a key informant who understands the historical development of “Kúlumbú” among the people of Owode-Ketu and a first generation “Kúlumbú” dancer, there are distinguishing features which differentiate “Kúlumbú” from *Pònşé*. They are as follows.

### **Costume**

Although the two dances make use of similar costume, their difference lies in their ornamentation. For *Pònşé*, the dancers, both male and female, put on skirts, antique skirts that allow them dance freely without any disturbance. In addition to the long skirt, is an artificial bum made from cloth, which is worn around the waist. This makes the dancers waist shake so easily and creates aesthetic effects during dancing. Men also wear artificial breasts. For “Kúlumbú”, there are two main dancers among whom the lead singer emerges. While one of the lead dancers leads the singing, the other dancers double as chorus during the performance. These two leading individuals, regardless of gender, are costumed to represent the male and female gender. There are only two main dancers who stay in the front during performers. The others maintain their position at the back, as supporting performers. For *Pònşé*, the dancers tie *iko* (straws that are used



in making mats) to their legs and also ornament their appearance with *yeri*, a Caribbean-like skirt. They also make use of cowry shells which are used to make bracelets.

### **Performance Structure**

While only two dancers perform the main dance in “Kúlumbú”, *Pònşé* involves not less than six dancers, all of whom are as important as the rest of the group. While only the two main dancers are in front in “Kúlumbú”, all the other dancers line themselves up to give equal recognition to every performer during the dance. “Kúlumbú” and *Pònşé* dances are both energetic, but a distinguishing feature of *Pònşé* is the skilful rounds of turning done by the dancers without disorganising their stage arrangement.

Both “Kúlumbú” and *Pònşé* in Owode-Ketu have no religious affiliation. As noted by the study participants who have participated in “Kúlumbú” and are knowledgeable about its historical development, the performers only approach *Obatala* worshippers for blessing whenever they are setting out for a competition. This is because the performers once employed the use of their drums before the group acquired its own set of drums. “Kúlumbú” is purely a social dance which only serves aesthetic functions among the people of Owode-Ketu. A lead singer is chosen among the two lead dancers, usually a female. The individual takes the lead, while the others respond to her directives. The second lead dancer plays assisting role during the performance, helping the lead singer with a new song in case she does not remember the next song to sing. She introduces the song by singing the first phrase and then leaves it for the lead singer to continue playing her leadership role.



**Dancers’ arrangement showing the position of the lead dancers who also act as lead singers during a demonstrative performance in Owode-Ketu  
(Photo taken by the researcher)**

### **Performance of “Kúlumbú”**

“Kúlumbú” dance is performed by individuals of youthful age. It is not a kind of dance meant for the aged, due to its energetic nature. It involves a lot of leg movement and bending of the waist which can only be endured by young and strong individuals. Although the aged and elderly ones do not perform “Kúlumbú”, they function as teachers and moderators for the performers, having performed it while they were in their prime. The Owode-Ketu people hold aesthetics in high esteem, especially in their musical and performative arts. The young individuals are trained to put on bright smile during performance, even as the dance saps their energy.



**Study participants demonstrating “Kúlumbú” dance steps  
(Photo taken by the researcher)**

“Kúlumbú” is accompanied by a set of hollowed membranophonic drums, usually three in number-Iyailu (mother drum), Ako and omele. “Kúlumbú” performance features in social functions among the people of Owode-Ketu. Such events include naming ceremony, house warming, coronation, marriage and funerals.



**“Kúlumbú” drummers during a performance staged at the field  
(Photo taken by the researcher)**

It was noted by Mr Salami Akan and confirmed by the focus-group participants, that “Kúlumbú” songs are sub-divided into three categories based on their characteristic features. First are songs of enlightenment. These songs are used to educate their listeners and get them acquainted with events and happenings around them. These songs also perform the advisory roles to members of the audience. The second category of “Kúlumbú” songs are those that are satirical songs used to snitch on individuals who have secretly committed atrocities. This may include men who had secret affairs with someone else’s wives. They may avoid direct attack on such individuals, but will try and give a clue as to who they refer to in their song. Here, the songs are used as tools of social control, which makes other people who may not want to be snitched upon, to tread carefully in their daily dealings. The third category of “Kúlumbú” songs are the ones used to praise people whose impacts have been positively felt within the society. This is in order to reinforce and motivate them to continue in their honourable lifestyle. Shown below is a panegyric song used to praise the king during “Kúlumbú” performance.



K'a wo-le k'a k'o-ba, O-ya k'a k'o-ba o eh,\_\_\_ a e e. K'a wo-le k'a kó-ba,  
O-ya k'a k'o-ba. 'To-ri a-je-ji l'a je,\_\_\_ E w'o-ba l'o - po jin - gbin-ni, E w'o-ba l'o-  
po jin - gbin-ni. A - de ye t'o - po o - ba i wa A - de ye t'o -  
po o - ba i wa. O - ri lo gbe e de - 'be, Tè-we - ta - gba mu i ke maa wo - le  
e, A-wa n wo-le fo - ba o o o e, I-be-re la n gbe a e.---

Let us bow down and greet the king  
Let us bow down and greet the king  
For we are strangers (subjects)  
Behold the king in his majesty  
The crown on his head makes him our king  
Destiny has brought you (the king) to the throne

Young and old, bow down and greet the king  
We bow to worship the king  
We humble ourselves before the king

Performance of “Kúlumbú” is divided into three stages. The first stage in the performance is the salutation. During this phase, the performers render songs with which they pay homage to the gods of the land, the king, the chiefs and the elderly ones present at the venue of the performance. The next phase is the performance proper, where the attention of the performers is focused on entertaining their audience, while the third phase contains songs of prayer and self-assurance. All of these are characteristic of Yoruba performing arts as exemplified in the *Alarinjo* theatre.

The people of Owode-Ketu do not only learn to perform “Kúlumbú” and “*Pònşé*”, they took it to a great height such that they represented Ogun state on many occasions, showcasing the dances to the world, as a cultural heritage of the people of Ogun state. According to eye witness account, the people of Owode-Ketu performed “Kúlumbú” so well, that it caught the attention of the Ogun state government in the 1970s and became a major cultural attraction in the state. During the focus group discussion, it was revealed by Akinrogun Adekunle Agboola that by the time former President Olusegun Obasanjo was ending his tenure as military head of state in 1979, “Kúlumbú” was performed at the welcome ceremony which was held to welcome him home in Lafenwa, Abeokuta.

### **Conclusion**

This article discusses the evolution of “Kúlumbú” among the people of Owode-Ketu in Yewa area of Ogun State. Despite taking its roots from another musical tradition, the people of Owode-Ketu have been able to develop and use “Kúlumbú” to project their cultural identity to other communities within their geo-political enclave and the Nigerian nation entirely. They have been able to achieve this through their collective efforts. Apart from being intended for aesthetics and cultural projection, the structure of “Kúlumbú” performance demonstrates team work which is a vital ingredient of societal organisation and existence. The use of panegyric songs to encourage good deeds within their society, pray to God and also enlighten their listeners, demonstrates their cognizance of the relevance of music in social order. In addition, the songs used in “Kúlumbú” serve as instruments of social stability and control. The use of “Kúlumbú” songs by

“Kúlumbú” artistes, to address socio-political issues pertaining to their society, emphasises the use of music as instrument of social control.

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## **Bondage and Burden of being Female in Selected African Literary Texts**

**Iwabi Abraham Modahunsi**

*Department of English Language*

*Federal College of Education, Kontagora*

*An Affiliation with the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria*

*iwadahunsi@gmail.com*

**Ademola Michael**

*Department of French Language*

*Federal College of Education, Kontagora,*

*An Affiliation with the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria*

*wolemike002@gmail.com*

### **Abstract**

*Many women have been victims of underage marriage, forced marriage, proxy marriage, levirate marriage, denial of education and male-child preference against their wish. These unwholesome practices have hampered the utilisation of the intellectual endowment of a number of women to their own advantage, and have subjected them to untold trauma and deprivations. These plights are reflected in some female-authored works, and works by men who empathise with women. This study is an exegesis of some African literary texts discountenancing the highlighted antiquated practices, within the ambit of feminist literary theory, with a view to explicating how the practices can be jettisoned. It is discovered, in the course of the exegesis that under-age marriage, forced marriage and levirate marriage are still rampant in Africa. Also, male-child preference is still an accruing phenomenon in many African countries. Marriage is a union that should be contracted on mutual agreement, entangling consents and love between would-be spouses. The conclusion arrived at in the study is that no gender is superior to another. Marriage is a matter of choice, preference and mutual agreement between would-be spouses. It should not be imposed on anyone nor should anyone be forced into it. Rather than putting women in bondage, cultural practices which unburden their plights should be encouraged.*

**Keywords:** Underage marriage, Forced marriage, Levirate marriage, Male child preference

## **Introduction**

Bondage is troped in this context to signify encumbrances to the exertion of women's potentials in a male-dominated society and burden implies the herculean tasks which being born a female entails. The subject matter is the plight being born a female brings on the female folk in some cultural settings following some cultural practice(s). In other words, the crux of the study is how being born a female translates into bondage and burden. The female children are born like the male children but – often times – they do not enjoy equal rights with men. The limitations to the exertion of their rights and potentials are not divine; they are anthropogenic. This study, therefore, explicates the bondage being born a woman brings on some women in selected African literary texts.

Often time, African literature mirrors autochthonous African lifestyle, colonial and postcolonial events, as well as the impacts of modernism on African culture. Indeed, modern African literature interrogates some cultural practices within the ambits of their social acceptability, psychosocial effects and civility in contemporary time. Under-age, forced and levirate marriages as well as the denial of the girl-child education are antiquated practices which are still commonplace in African, and reflected in some African literary works. Many female African writers, and their male counterparts that empathise with women, portray the cataclysmic images of these cultural practices in their works. The authors who thematise these cultural practices discountenance them and canvass for change. Underage marriage, also known as child marriage, is a marital union, formally or informally contracted, between a child who has not attained the statutory age of eighteen and above and an adult or another child. Gordana and Anamarija aver that a child, according to UNESCO's declaration in 2008, "is every human being below the age of eighteen years...." It is a marriage in which one of the (or both) spouses is legally considered as a minor. Often time, child marriage is forcefully imposed and conducted. The girl-child has often been the unfortunate victim of underage marriage. Masculinity has made the girl-child to be considered as a burden and she is being objectified as an income generating commodity, whose proceeds are used to train and better the life of the male-child.

Underage marriage and forced marriage go together often times. In some occasions however, forced marriage takes place independent of child marriage. Forced marriage occurs when one of the parties involved in a marital union is married off without his/her consent or against his/her will. It also takes place when one of the parties of a marital union who wishes to quit is forced to stay in the marriage, against his/her will. Hence, underage marriage may not necessarily be a forced marriage.

Adefarasin (2018) notes that, in a number of places in Nigeria, girls are given out in marriage at the age of twelve or thirteen, to men who are old enough to father them, or possibly be their grandfather. Adefarasin (2018) cites the example of a thirteen-year old girl given out in marriage to Ahmed Yerima, a Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in 2017. The marriage can best be described as one between a minor and a Senator. Girls given out early in marriage, according to Adefarasin (2018: 26), “do not only have their education aborted, or future truncated, but are also additionally exposed to early pregnancies and Vesicovaginal Fistula, a disease which leaves its victims deformed and unable to control urination”.

Levirate marriage is a marriage in which the wife of a deceased man is obliged to marry the brother of the departed husband. In levirate marriage, exogamous marriage is frowned at. A wife of a deceased man is expected to remarry in the husband’s clan, preferably the brother of the widow’s husband. In this wise, the woman become part of the property of the deceased, which is inherited by the men in the decease’s family.

Underage and forced marriages are human right violations that rob a girl of her childhood and education and, by so doing, hamper her potential for intellectual growth and stability. It is also a violation of parts of her inalienable rights – in the choice of marriage. Risks in underage, forced and levirate marriages include violence, abuse, assault, early pregnancy, morbidity and maternal mortality. The root causes of underage and forced marriages are gender disparity and draconian norms, devaluing and restricting women in many spheres of life.

### **Methodology/Theoretical Framework**

This study is premised on qualitative research methodology. It involves an analytic and/or textual analysis of literary texts used for the study within the ambits of feminist literary theory. The analysis covers eight representative texts from Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Egypt, namely: El Saadawi’s (2007) *Woman at Point Zero*, Dangarembga’s (1988) *Nervous Conditions*; Fakolujo’s (2002) *Girls are Jewels*; Onyemelukwe’s *Beyond the Boiling Point*; Sofola’s (1972) *Wedlock of the Gods*; Wood’s (2013) *Indigo*; Yerima’s (2006) *Aetu* and Ari-Ajia’ (2005) *Women at Crossroads*. El Saadawi’s (2007) *Woman at Point Zero*, from Egypt, represents North Africa. Dangarembga’s (1988) *Nervous Conditions*, a Zimbabwean text, represents East Africa. Fakolujo’s (2002) *Girls are Jewels*; Onyemelukwe’s *Beyond the Boiling Point*; Sofola’s (1972) *Wedlock of the Gods*; Wood’s (2013) *Indigo*; Yerima’s (2006) *Aetu* and Ari-Ajia’ (2005) *Women at Crossroads*, from Nigeria, represent West African. The texts are selected



on the basis of their relevance to and suitability for the subject matter, as well as their availability.

Feminism has no consensus definition, because its focus is usually determined by specific experiences of women in specific cultural settings. However, Lois Tyson (2015:79) avers that “feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women”. Akorede (2011) sees feminism as a theory which highlights issues like violence, discrimination, sex stereotyping, sexual objectification, patriarchy and oppression as they concern women. In other words, feminism projects the image of women in the society and highlights the negative and positive experiences of women in patriarchal society. Therefore, a feminist is a man or a woman who identifies inequality among the roles of men and women in the society and seeks fair play between the sexes. Hence, a good literary text, in the view of the feminists, is one that exposes the plights of women and advocates their emancipation from the shackle of oppression and patriarchal hegemony.

### **Girl-child Abuse, Forced and Levirate Marriages in Selected African Texts**

A number of writers explore and highlight despicable cultural practices noticed in their locales in their writings, in order to educate while entertaining their readers. Girl-child abuse, forced and levirate marriages are some of the nubs of such works. Zulu Sofola’s *Wedlock of the Gods*, for instance, is a tragic play which revolves around its tragic heroine, Ogwoma, who is denied her right to marry Uloko, the preferred man, but forced, by her parents, to marry Adigwu, against her wish. Ogwoma is forced into marriage with Adigwu by her parents because, “they needed the money from her bridewealth to cure their son who was very sick” (p. 1). In a feminist voice, Sofola brings the plight of women to the fore, using Ogwoma as an archetypal character. Ogwoma becomes a first-choice commodity available to raise money to settle the hospital bill of her ill brother. This also borders on male-child preference. Ogwoma’s brother’s health is prioritised over her own wellbeing and healthy marriage, thereby becoming a victim of nervous condition and trauma.

Ogwoma’s case has intertextual link with Aramide’s in Molar Wood’s “Girl on the Wall” – the eighth short story in *Indigo* (2013). It is a pathetic story of a woman who is used, at a tender age, as collateral for the money borrowed to train her younger brother. The text is set in a patriarchal society, where male-child education is prioritized over the education of the girl-child. Aramide’s mother had gone to Ilemo, “a town in the hinterlands

to borrow money from a Merchant there. A huge sum as collateral. She left her daughter behind to serve as bonded labour” (p. 84). The money borrowed is used to sponsor her younger brother from primary school through to university. Although her mother’s plan is to defray the money she borrowed within two years, she is unable to raise the money. Only a sepia image of the girl is hung, in her mother’s apartment, as a remembrance of her existence. Aramide’s case is that of servitude. She is made to slave in order that her brother becomes “the first educated man” (p. 85) of his generation. Her prime age and education are sacrificed for male-child preference. She suffers filial disconnection and (psychosocial) alienation from her sibling.

In Sofola’s *Wedlock of the Gods*, Ogwoma loathes Adigwu but loves Uloko passionately. Unfortunately however, Uloko cannot afford the money required by Ogwoma’s parents to treat their male child. The marriage between Ogwoma and Adigwu does not last long. Adigwu dies untimely and Ogwoma considers herself freed from the entanglement of the forced marriage. She defies the tradition that requires a widow to observe mourning rites and be inherited by the brother of the deceased husband, within the tenets “of leviration... became pregnant by her lover who eternally holds her heart” (p. 1).

The institutionalisation of taboo, in a patriarchal setting, against the exertion of women’s rights becomes the conflict on which *Wedlock of the Gods* hinges. That Uloko impregnates Ogwoma during the mourning rites is one way in which an institutionalised taboo is broken in the play, on one hand. On the other hand, Sofola’s motif is that such cultural practice should be got rid of. Again, the rite to inherit a widow by the late husband’s brother, against her will, is desecrated in the tragic play.

From the tenor and the creative style of Lanre Ari-Ajia *Women at Crossroads* it cannot be gainsaid that the playwright, though a man, sympathises with the female folk for being discriminated against and subjugated by the male folk. The setting of the play reflects the Yoruba traditional society where male child preference is given primacy. The playwright develops the dramatic movement around Ogungbemi’s polygamous home in which the first wife, Mama, is pregnant and consults the oracles to appease them to grant her a male-child. The male child is usually called “Arole” (P.3) – the one who takes care of the home, when the female child is given off in marriage. It chronicles women’s woes altogether. Male child preference over the female child comes to fore. While Mama moves from one soothsayer to another Ogungbemi, her husband, is seen praying “fervently to *Obatala* to let his wife beget a baby boy” (P.5). Prior to Sewa’s birth, the parents’ expectation is to have a male-child,

because four girls – Adetutu, Omolabake, Fadeke and Omolanke – had been born and given out *forcibly* in marriage when they were minors. Dejected seeing Sewa a girl, Ogungbemi could not but purge out his mind by saying that: “another man’s property well... She will go the way of her sisters before her... Victim of early Marriage of course” (P.8). By providence, Sewa’s formative years are heartening – unlike her elder siblings’. She is brave, courageous and graciously beautiful like Ezinma, in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo expresses disappointment in his son, Nwoye, believing he would be more enthused, if his daughter, Ezinma, had been a boy: “if Ezinma had been a boy, I would have been happier. She has the right spirit” (p.46).

Sewa’s burden is similar to Ogwoma’s in Sofola’s *Wedlock of the Gods* and Ezinne’s in Onyemelukwe’s *Beyond the Boiling Point*. While Ogwoma is being forced by her parents to marry Adigwu because they need the bride-price to cure their son of sickness, Ezinne is almost withdrawn from school and forced into marriage of convenience with a man she has never seen, by her greedy uncle. Ogwoma hates Adigwu with passion, but has sheer love for Uloko “whom she could not marry because he did not have the money that her parents needed” (p 1). Ezinne’s discontent is contained in the excerpt below:

Imagine the bull’s call, to bring me out of school only to be sold into marriage. Is it not the exorbitant dowry that entices them? No one deems it fit to seek for my consent. Nobody cares a hoot if a girl is at the ripe age for marriage or not and what would happen to the unfortunate girl after being sold into marriage (7).

This predicament is called “violence against women” in Ari-Ajia’s *Women at Crossroads*, and according to the playwright; “it is a criminal offence” (p.13). Women are perpetually subjected under patriarchal hegemony in the guise of submissiveness to their husband as the custom demands. This is a societal construct. The maltreatment meted out on them is likened to that of football kicked about without complaint. Football is ever submissive to the players. When the players like, they blow it out. When they like, they leave it to deflate. Sometimes it is played with hand and at another time they play it with legs. The sun beats it; the rain falls on it, but it does not complain. Mama succinctly captures it thus in *Women at Crossroads*:

That is submission, my child. And that is tradition. A woman must be submissive to her husband in time of good. And also, when the other time comes she must not

be barren. Never... Never must she. Because to be barren or to pretend to be, is to invite the wrath of our gods and our ancestors (p.14).

It is obvious, in the quote above, that women have been under societal construct of traditional values and are psychologically subsumed under irrational stoicism in the face of tyranny.

While the tradition grants the man the liberty to marry a second wife, it denies the woman the freedom to date another man to fulfil her own expectation. This is what happens when, without prior notice and the consent of his wife, Ogungbemi brings in a new wife to co-habit with Mama, promising himself that 'she is going to give "... him a precious son" (29-30). To worsen the situation, the new wife is put under Mama's care with strict instruction that: "she must know no pain. She must feel no suffering also" (p.30).

Sewa traces the problem of gender inequality and the impossibility of changing the status quo to the primordial time. Admonishing her contemporaries on the right path to tread; she cautions that as long as her friends continue to think that the best a woman can do is to play hide and seek game or play with dolly, the longer they will continue to be enslaved. In her words, "when a boy carries a toy guns, you too, play with a toy gun not a dolly. When they carry guns, you too learn to shoot a gun. If you don't learn it now while you're young, they will use it against you in the future" (p.34). In semiotic analysis, the toy-gun symbolises valour associated with masculinity—the phallus—while the baby-toys epitomises the feminine psychic disposition towards fecundity.

### **Bloody Forced Marriage and Cursed Leviration in Ahmad Yerima's *Aetu***

Ahmad Yerima is a male playwright who empathises with women and uses his work to rebuke underage, forced and levirate marriages. A gothic reflection of forced and levirate marriages is the thrust of Ahmad Yerima's *Aetu*. In the play, Yerima dramatises the commodification of women as object of erotic satisfaction and inheritance in a male-dominated society. The play is about the spirited fourteen-year eponymous central character, Aetu, and her herdsman lover, Atiba, who are not allowed to get married. Aetu's father sacrifices her daughter's agape love for Atiba on the altar of marriage of convenience. Her father betroths her to Oke-an old man – against her wish. Oke is described in the dramatic text as a "sinister big man of about seventy years (p. 27). His devilish inclination manifests in his

coordination of the gruesome killing of Atiba, in the bush, and the forceful (barbaric) manner he has carnal knowledge of Aetu.

In the opening scene, one encounters Kande, in Suara's herbal consultation room. He brings his father, Obajimi, who suffers from a mysterious illness, which has defied medication for two years, to Suara, the priest of Esu, for possible cure. Obajimi manifests the symptoms of psychotic delusion, which is characterised by acute visual and auditory hallucination. Suara discovers, having consulted Esu (the divination god) that Obajimi's sickness is as a result of an ancestral curse put on his family by his grandmother, Aetu. Not until she is being appeased will solution come. In a state of anger, humiliation and undignified treatment, Aetu puts generational curse on Oke and his descendants, because she is forced into marriage without her consent, and also meant to be victim of levirate marriage, which she detests strongly.

Aetu's spirit is invoked through necromantic procedure, and she appears. It is revealed, in the course of the conversation that ensued, that Aetu is not only forced into marriage with Oke, Obajimi's father, but she is also raped by the old man, in the presence of his sons, who help their father to tie her to a wooden bed. The playwright depicts the horrible scene of the defilement thus:

**Aetu:** (*in tears and anger*) I was raped, Baba. Defiled!

**Suara:** Abomination! Lalu Ogirioko! Raped! By who?

**Aetu:** By an old fool who calls himself my husband.

**Saura:** Your husband? Why would a man forcefully take what is his? What madness would seize a man that he will rape a girl with...er... a tongue like yours?

**Aetu:** A madness propelled by greed. An old fool who desires what is not his. A mad old buffon... glutton who desires the tender flesh of a fourteen-year old child. (p. 17).

**Aetu:** ...He tied my legs to each side of the wooden bed, and two of his sons held each hand so that I will not have hands to pull at his grey beard, and scratch his lecherous old face. With his breath burning my chest like the panting of a bull, he forced his way in...bringing me to the edge of life... (p. 18).

The heinous treatment Oke metes out to Aetu prompts her to curse him and his unborn generation, without sparing even the child the marriage produces. Through the use of flashback, the playwright shows Aetu, in a

state of agony and distress, seriously embittered as she pronounces the curse. According to the author, Aetu recounts that:

They have killed Atiba,  
Then they raped me.  
Let the fool, Oke, who calls himself my husband not find  
peace till he dies.  
Let my child that I carry dies the same way.  
Let any man who decides to sleep with me suffer the  
same fate. For both my passage and womb belong to no  
one but Atiba.  
Before they die, let them be sick in the head ... one leg  
here on earth and one leg in the land of the dead. Let them  
remain haunted by the death of Atiba... (p. 20).

Aetu's curse has an instant efficacy which lingers on in Oke's family. Everyone in Okediran's family, who takes Aetu as his wife in levirate marriage, dies mysteriously. Oke and two of his younger ones die in the same circumstance. His children and grandchildren suffer psychotic conditions and paralysis before they die.

### **Marriage and Education of the Girl-Child in African Texts**

A proxy marriage is one in which one or both individuals being united in marriage are not physically present. The absentee(s) is usually being represented, by a close ally, when the marriage is contracted. In *Beyond the Boiling Point*, Ifeoma Onyemelukwe features a planned proxy marriage which the central character of the work thwarts. Written in the first person narrative technique, the novel is set in an imaginary town of Obodonwe, Southeastern Nigeria. It portrays a premeditated proxy marriage which Ezinne's uncle wants her to accept without her consent. Ezinne is the protagonist of the text. She is a young lady of sixteen, who David is sent to fetch from school, "in the heat of terminal examinations" (p. 3), in order that she may be given out in marriage, by her uncle, Ideji, to a man she has never met.

In this feminist text, Onyemelukwe narrates the plights of women in a patriarchal society. Like Ogwoma in Sofola's *Wedlock of the gods* and Aetu in Yerima's *Aetu*, Ezinne strongly resists her Uncle's sinister plan. She is not like her timid and passive mother who is caught up in the web of chauvinism and does nothing to resist the untoward plan of Ideji. Ezinne's mother has no genuine explanation to give to her daughter when the former asks her the reason she accepts Ideji's decision to withdraw her from school

and be given out into proxy marriage. All the older woman can say, according to the narrator, is that:

... Have you forgotten that I am only a woman? And a woman in our land is only to be seen and not to be heard. A woman has no say. She plays no role in decision making even when it concerns her own life. Has she any life of her own in the first place? (p. 6)

The excerpt above portrays the objectification and subjugation of women in male-dominated society. In the social milieu the novel reflects women do not have a say in decision making, even when it concerns them. The patriarchal structure explains the reason Ezinne is withdrawn from school and is about to be given out in marriage without her consent and her mother's. The protagonist sees the practice as an attack on the female folk, as well as an encumbrance to the exertion of their rights, which must be stopped. She decisively vows to change the cultural practices that make women a mere puppets and household accessories of men. In her words:

... Woman must be set free from this and other forms of bondage, from all forms of violence perpetrated against her in our patriarchal society.

I said it must change.

... Imagine the bull's call, to bring me out of school only to be sold into marriage. Is it not the exorbitant dowry that entices them? No one deems it fit to seek for my consent. Nobody cares a hoot if a girl is at the ripe age for marriage or not and what would happen to the unfortunate girl after being sold into marriage (p. 6-7).

How Ideji makes arrangement to give out Ezinne in proxy marriage, without her knowledge, beats readers' imagination. The text raises salient things a prospective wife or husband will like to know concerning the would-be spouse, such as his/her parental background, place of abode, level of academic attainment, health status, place and nature of work. No right-thinking lady will want to go into marriage with a stranger.

A scenario similar to Ezinne's is depicted in Nawal El-Saadawi's *Woman Point Zero*. In the text, which is premised on the first person narrative technique, Firdaus, the tragic heroine, is given out in marriage without her consent, by her uncle, to Sheikh Mahmoud, who is "over sixty, whereas" she "had not yet turned nineteen" (p. 45). Firdaus' brilliant academic performance is traded off for perceived pecuniary gain which her

uncle and his wife stand to receive from Sheikh Mahmoud. Firdaus' hatred for Mahmoud is as a result of the pus-oozing carbuncle on his chin, his old age and the reclusive lifestyle he lives. No one cares to seek the opinion of the protagonist about the choice of a man she will have as a spouse. Her husband is being chosen for and imposed on her. Firdaus's education is truncated on a flimsy pretext that sending her to the university will make her hobnob with men – a social life her uncle considers impious and the reason he wants her to be married off. Indeed, Firdaus' uncle denies her education in order to protect his own religious image and interest.

Instances of male-child preference and denial of a girl-child education in Zimbabwe can be found in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. Tambudzai (shortened as Tambu), the protagonist and heroine of the text, is almost denied education but for the death of her brother, Nhamo, for whom her education had been halted. Tambu's education suffers not because she is dull. Indeed, she is in Sub A class while her elder brother, Nhamo, is in Sub B class. For paucity of fund, she is compelled to sacrifice her education for the training of her brother whose intelligent quotient does not match hers. Nhamo is chosen to be educated instead of his brilliant younger sister, Tambu, because he is a boy. In a number of African communities, the needs and sensibilities of the girl-child are not always considered a priority, or essential. In such communities, women are denied education and brainwashed to prepare for marriage at a tender age. In *Nervous Conditions*, Dangarembga portrays Tambu as an archetypal African lady who could have been denied education. Her father once asked her if she could "cook books and feed them to her husband" and advises her to "stay at home with her mother. Learn to cook and clean. Grow vegetable" (p.15).

### **Depiction of Bondage and Burden of Women by Male-authors**

Aside from Yerima, some other male-writers have contributed immensely to this gynocritical discourse. Their writings are used to advance the advocacy for the jettisoning of draconian and superseded practices dehumanising women in patriarchal settings. The works negate male chauvinism and converse for the exertion of the potentials of women. The positions of some of the writers are captured in the titles of their works. Lanre Ari-Ajia's play is titled *Woman at Crossroads* and Debo Fakolujo's is headlined *Girls are Jewels*. Ari-Ajia's *Women at Crossroads* (2005) explores the aspect of male-child preference and the imperative of the education of the female child. It is a dramatic text about the birth of Adesewa (shortened as Sewa), its central character. She is presented in contrast to her mother who is chained down by (male) chauvinism, and



herself – an intelligently brilliant girl caught in the web of education and modernism. Her father refuses to send her to school because she is a girl. Her elder sisters Omolabake, Adetutu, Folake and Omolanke are given out in marriage before adolescent age and her father intends to give her out in the ways of her elder ones. While she is still in her mother's womb, her parents offer sacrifice to Obatala (the god of creation, in Yoruba mythology) and Ogun (the god of iron), in order that the expectant child could be a male child. As soon as Ogungbemi (her father) learns that his wife has given birth to another girl, he simply regards the baby, who would later become Adesewa, as "another man's property" who "... will go the way of her sister before her...victim of early marriage, of course" (p. 8). From the imagery dispensed in the dramatic text, there is no hesitation inferring that the playwright commiserates with women and seeks their emancipation from masculine oppression. The level of consciousness of the playwright is crystal, asserting without mincing words that "a married woman is like a bird in a cage. A bird in a cage does not like the cage but it cannot leave the cage" (p.38).

Like a cancerous dreaded disease, women's plight bears analogy "with leprosy" (p.58) in the play. The submission of the playwright is that gender inequality has been since antiquity. From the sensitisation talk Adesewa presents to the women at the village square, it is revealed that Aristotle and Hietzsche, "the best of the whites" (p.57) also held patriarchal world view of women. The former was of the opinion that "certain classes of human beings who were excluded from the full exercise of human reasoning were slaves and women" (p. 57-58), while the latter said that "woman was god's second mistake" (p.58). Adesewa tries to disentangle herself from patriarchal encumbrances by availing herself the opportunity Western education and civilisation offer. Against her father's parochial interest, she refuses to be given out in marriage prematurely like her elder siblings. She secures university admission and graduates after four years of an avid study. Arriving home, she helps settle her father's backlog debt accrued from unsettled palm-wine bill. That single act saves her father from being killed by Ogundare, the hunter, who is resolute on taking Ogungbemi's life should he fail to liquidate "seventeen pence" (p.54) owed him. Coupled with that, she brings honour and dignity to her parents.

The final words of the playwright epitomise optimism and unequivocally illuminate his stance. Rhetorically he asks: "will the women succeed?" (p.59). The question is self-answered. The narrator opines that women will get to their destination and find places in the realm of affairs of the world. They will move from the margin to the central of socio-political and economic mainstream.

Women, in history and in the play examined, are presented by patriarch as a symbol of erotic desire, positioned by race, class and gender as a subservient group of people lower and inferior to the male folk. Socially, women are perceived as culturally inferior (second-class citizens) and their identity is to be found in the desires to please, serve *others* and seek definition through submission to their men. The perception is that by the token of the *bride-price* paid on a lady by her husband, she is part of the man's property. Bride-price is one of the encumbrances to the exertion of women's rights, which feminists seek to annul. Why such payment is not called *groom-price* remains a serious concern to the feminists and a facet of the societal construct. Tess Onwueme reveals such plight in *The Reign of Wazobia* where the man who is guilty of wife-battering in the play asks:

...why a woman

A mere woman that I paid to get with my own hard-  
earned money should challenge me in my house?

Does she think I carry these balls between my thighs  
for nothing? (24)

There are inter-textual convergences in thematic preoccupation, motif, setting and general locale between Lanre Ari-Ajia's *Women at Crossroads* and Debo Fakolaju's *Girls are Jewels*. Both works deconstruct the erroneous perception of the education of the female child(ren) and demystify the stereotypes appertained. Like the former, *Girls are Jewels* reflects the polygamous home of Mr. Sanya, a business magnate who has money and other things money can buy except happiness. His depressive state is not unconnected to the domestic mayhem permeating his home. The atmosphere is tense, characterised by incessant squabble, jealousy and unhealthy conspiracy. He has close to two dozen children among whom only one is a boy. By the customary law of progenitor, the male-child is the heir (inheritor) of his chain of business and other possessions. The male-child factor brews contention and predisposes Kayode, the only son, to hazard and makes him a potential victim of circumstance. Mr. Sanya needs not a soothsayer to make revelation that should the domestic imbroglio continue, Kayode's life could be transient and his life (Mr. Sanya's) could be shattered. That is the psychogenesis of his mild bipolar disorder, a depressive and nervous condition emanating from uneasiness, fragmented thought, difficult dilemma and incessant anxiety. Such condition, if not properly managed, could snowball to hypertension, a stroke and an untimely death of the sufferer as likely experienced by the protagonist in

the text examined, but for Gbade's wherewithal which remedies the situation and installs normalcy and peace.

Mr. Sanya denies his female children education and gives them out in marriage at a very tender age. Mr. Sanya's business takes much of his time to such extent that he has little or no time to give his children informal education. Gbade makes him realise the trend in contemporary time, informing him that boys these days have no time to take care of their parents at old age due to their strive to meet ends meat: "but girls or ladies, even in their marital home will keep on remembering their parents" (p.10). Issue of forced and early marriage which feminist movement stands against also comes to the fore like it does in *Women at Crossroads*. The unfortunate situation of Mr Sanya's female children is tear-jerker. One of the daughters, Sade, could not but ask: "you realise that he disregarded us as his legitimate children. Is it a sin to be a female?" (p.23). Mr. Sanya has forgotten that death is not a respecter of sex; it knows neither sex nor age. Little wonder that Kayode is able to remark intelligently, telling the audience that: "I asked him-what if I die now? That means you keep your eggs in a basket" (p.25). In the short story, the novelist exposes a number of encumbrances to the exertion of female right: "young girls are exposed to marriage proposal at a tender age which... completely erode female education in the society" (p.48).

Ari-Ajia does not only expose male opposition to the education of the female-child but also suggests the ways women can exert their potentials positively and get educated. In Fakolujo's *Girls are Jewels* Mr Sanya denies his sixteen daughters western education and resolves to educate his only son, Kayode. These male-writers sympathize with women in their unfortunate predicament and advocate for the education of both male and female children. They see education as source of enlightenment and a means to get liberated from the shackle of oppression, as well as the gateway to economic independence and other opportunities.

### **Conclusion**

Literature is a discipline that explores different facets of life. It examines cultural practices from different ethnic backgrounds. More often than not, it portrays the status quo and suggests ways to improve on and jettison antiquated practices. The writers whose works are analysed in this study reflect marital issues which are prevalent in their vicinities and educate their readers on the risks inherent in such practices. Underage, forced, levirate and proxy marriages are not best practices, and so is male-child preference over the female-child. These cultural practices are discountenanced

altogether by the writers whose works are dissected in this study. Men and women are useful and both have the potentials to take care of their parents, their environment and contribute to the development of their societies. No gender is superior to another. Also, marriage is matter of choice, preference and mutual agreement between would-be spouses. It should not be imposed on anyone nor should anyone be forced into it. Rather than putting women in bondage, cultural practices which unburden their plights should be encouraged.

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## **A Pragmatic Analysis of Ahmed Yerima's Attahiru**

**Ibrahim Omolabi & Aliyu Uthman Abdulkadir**

*Department of English Language  
Kwara State University, Malete  
Ilorin, Kwara State*

### **Abstract**

*Most studies on the use of language reflect societal realities in literary texts. Thus, this study explores the various pragmatic acts performed in Ahmed Yerima's Attahiru, especially the construction of meaning in unveiling the cultural pattern in the society. This study drew insights from Mey's theory of pragmatic act as its theoretical framework. A total of eight (8) utterances were purposively selected from the text and analysed from the points of pragmatic acts, Searle's classification of speech acts, implicature and presupposition with a view to bring to the fore how language can be used to deploy active communication by its users at different strata of communicating thoughts and intentions. Result indicated that instantiated acts (practs) are pragmatically patterned to perform some acts of informing, stating and rejecting the interpretations of cultural patterns in the society as revealed in the text. The study also revealed that assertive allopracts occurred most in the text. This is observed in the instances where a character wants to dissuade, inform or assure the other. The study has also shown that the preponderant occurrences of existential and factive presuppositions were due to the fact that characters in the selected text were committed to the existence as well as presence of the entities were implied. The study concludes that the main thrust of contemporary writers in Nigeria is not only to identify the blights besieging the society, but also proffer solutions to them through their writings.*

**Keywords:** Language; Pragmeme; Pragmatic act; Pract; Allopract; Drama, Text

### **Introduction**

The process of generating meaning can only be achieved via the stethoscope of language. As a systemic resource for making and exchanging meaning, language is realised as text. By means of "text", it implies how interlocutors in a discourse use language to participate in an act of interpersonal exchange, communicating the sense of their own identity, their world view, and the interpretation of their experiences. With this in view, language unfolds mainly along two dimensional forms: the spoken and the written forms. The spoken form on the one hand is exhibited in conversation i.e.

face to face interaction; the written form on the other hand is demonstrated in the different genres of black and white literature. Together, they constitute the principal ways in which texts are produced (Zakariyah, 2018). Since language is realised as text, a text therefore may be loosely defined as *any piece of language in use*. This somehow tallies with Halliday and Hassan's (1985) definition. They describe a text as "language that is functional and is doing some job in some context." Meanwhile, the term 'text', technically, is generally used to refer invariably to written language. This view is further stressed by Sanders and Sanders (2009) who state that a text is a "monological stretch of written language." As a written discourse, a text has two attributes: firstly, a text is a semantic entity and secondly, a text is a form of exchange. As a semantic entity, it is a unit of meaning composed of sentences and linked by cohesive ties. In every instance of its manifestation there is an inherent meaning attached to a text, literally or non-literally. As an exchange on the other hand, a text is an interaction; an interchange between an encoder (the writer) and a decoder (the reader who sometimes is not only expected to decode what is written but also draw inference as to what is conveyed beyond what is stated). In this case, it manifests as an exchange flowing from one entity to another. To put it another way, a text is a product of interaction. When people interact, they use language and when this is codified a text is produced. When a text is analysed, it is the product of this process (of interaction) that is analysed.

What makes drama quite distinct, at least compared to other genres of literature, i.e. prose and poetry, is that drama is an inter-subjective text in which characters are perpetually involved in face to face interaction. It is archetypically written in the form of an exchange otherwise known as *dialogue*. The structure of a dramatic text is invariably in the form of dialogues, and these dialogues are used to project various actions in the text. Characters in a dramatic text at various times are immersed in the actions of the text (Mba, 2016).

Drama as a literary genre is realised in performance that is why it is called art. It is designed for the theatre because characters are assigned roles and they act out their roles as the action is enacted in stage. A Drama is the portrayal of fictional and non-fictional events through the performance of written dialogue. Drama is an adaptation, recreation and reflection of reality on stage. Generally the word dramatist is used for any artist who is involved in any dramatic composition in writing or in performance. Dyden (2021) defines drama as a lively image of human nature, representing its passions and tumors, the changes of fortune to which it is subjected for the delight and instructions of mankind. This is further argued by Simpson (2004) who believes that:

Whatever the precise characteristics of its embedding, verbal interaction in plays nonetheless requires for its understanding and interpretation the same rules of discourse that govern everyday social interaction. In other words, the assumptions we make about dialogue in the world of the play are predicated upon our assumptions about how dialogue works in the real world (p. 35).

But it is important to note that dialogue is not an exclusive feature of drama. There are dialogues here and there in the novel (but come compared to drama, they are just tit bits), and some poems e.g. 'Song of Lawino' by Okot p'Bitek and 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' by Samuel Taylor Coleridge also have 'conversations' within them. Nevertheless, it is dramatic texts that are typically thought of as giving more emphasis to the interpersonal function of language (poetry and prose are tilted towards the ideational functional of language: language used to convey experience and information about the context). This is because, unlike prose and poetry, drama is typically the literary genre which is composed almost entirely of face-to-face interaction between characters. As such drama is often perceived as a microcosm of or most similar to a naturally occurring conversation.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The paper adopts Pragmatic Acts theory as the theoretical framework undergirding the study. **Mey's Theory of Pragmatic Acts.**

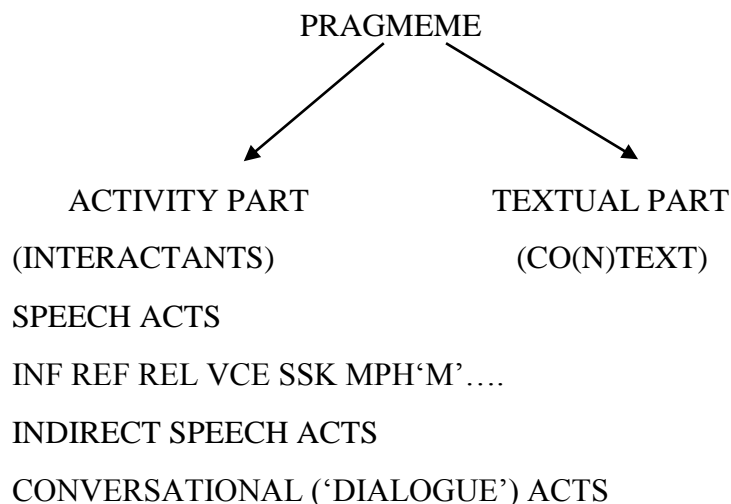
The theory of Pragmatic Act was introduced by J.L. Mey (2001). It is an extension and modification of J.L. Austin Speech Act theory (1962). The theory states that "meaning can only be recovered when the statement is properly situated in the appropriate speech context or environment" (Mey, 2001, p.209). Mey (2001) enlightens that Pragmatic acts theory is "an action theory that is anchored on the pragmatic view of language as it is used by people for their own purposes and within their own respective limitations and affordances".

Mey (2001, p.212) defines pragmatics act as an act which does not explain human language usage by starting from the words uttered by single, idealized speaker, rather it focuses on the interactional situation in which both speaker and hearer realise their aims that is instead of looking for what a word would mean in isolation, the situation in which the word is expressed is invoked to explain what is actually said. Mey (2001, p.221) exemplifies that the theory focuses on "the environment in which both speaker and hearer find their affordances, such that the entire situation is brought to bear

on what can be said in the situation, as well as what is actually being said". This perspective is captured as a **pragmeme**, a generalised pragmatic act regarded as the only force associated with making utterances".

According to Mey (2001), a pragmatic act is instantiated through an "ipra" or a "pract", which realizes a "pragmeme" as "every pract is at the same time an allopract, that is, a concrete instantiation of a particular pragmeme". In real meaning, what decide a pract are solely participants' knowledge of interactional situation and the potential effect of a pract in a particular context; thus, Odebunmi (2006) argues that "practicing resolves the problem of telling illocutionary force from perlocutionary force". "The explanatory movement is from the outside in, rather than from the inside out: Instead of starting with what is said, and looking for what the words could mean, the situation in which the words fit is invoked to explain what can be (and is actually being) said" (Mey 2001, p.751). The "implied identification" is central to Mey's pragmatic acts, in the sense that, the importance is not on the "said" but the "unsaid". The hearer is usually influenced (set up) to see the speaker's act, as no act is explicitly made. In particular, there is no speech act to indicate a pragmatic act. The only way to identify a pragmatic act, therefore, is to be on the lookout, or listen to it. Also Mey (2001) opines that pragmatic are based on language use as constrained by situation, not by defined syntactic use or semantics selection and conceptual restrictions. All speeches are in essence context-situated. In pragmatic acts theory, "a speaker may co-opt others, set them up, influence them through conversations, and deny certain claims without betraying such acts through lexical choices"

Figure below is a model propounded by Mey (2001) to explain pragmeme.





PSYCHOLOGICAL ACTS (EMOTIONS)

PROSODY (INTONATION, STRESS...)

PHYSICAL ACTS:

BODY MOVES (INCL.GESTURES)

PHYSIOGNOMY (FACIAL EXPRESSIONS)

(BODY EXPRESSIONS OF) EMOTIONS.....

PROSODY (INTONATION, STRESS ....)

PHYSICAL ACTS:

BODY MOVES (INCL.GESTURES)

PHYSIOGNOMY (FACIAL EXPRESSIONS)

(BODY EXPRESSIONS OF) EMOTIONS

O (NULL).

KEY

INF.....Inference

REF.....Reference

REL.....Relevance

SSK.....Shared Situational Knowledge

MPH.....Metaphor

‘M’.....Metapragmatic joker

In any speech event as shown by the model above, it shows that a speaker’s utterances alone do not reveal his or her intentions when speaking but other paralinguistic combined with the utterance will lead to the hearer successful realization of the meaning and the intention of the speaker. These utterances are always in two parts; textual parts and activity parts. The textual part in the role to the right is determined by the context as well as the utterance that is intended. This can be achieved through the use of various choices that range from INF stands for ‘Inference’, REF for ‘Reference’, REL for ‘Relevance’, VCE stands for ‘Voice’, SSK stands for ‘Shared Situational Knowledge’, MPH stands for ‘Metaphor’ and ‘M’ denotes ‘Metapragmatic Joker’ – an element that directs our attention to

something happening on the metapragmatic plane. Odebunmi (2008, p. 77) further explains that the metapragmatic joker points to particular metapragmatic activities. All these elements work together to enable the interlocutors to understand and reach their desired interactional goals. On the other side is the activity part. This is meant for the interactants. Adeniji and Osunbade (2014, p.13) explains that the activity part represents the options that are available to the speaker to perform the various functions he so desires. The options include speech acts, indirect speech acts, conversational (dialogue) acts, psychological acts (emotions), prosody (intonation, stress) physical acts, etc. They are non-verbal cues which come in form of body gestures, facial expressions, prosodies etc. If these non-verbal cues are adopted during any interaction, they further assist in relaying the speaker's intentions.

However, Mey (2001, p. 222) further explains that the activity part lists the various choices that the language user has at his or her disposal in communicating. He considers this part as a feature matrix and it can either be filled or empty. If all the cells are empty, the matrix goes to zero ('Ø'), representing the borderline case of 'silence' (which is the same as 'zero communication') (Mey, 2001, p. 222). Hence, interlocutors are allowed to make choices from one or more of the items on the left in order to realize their intentions, otherwise the categories are filled with null.

### **Methodology**

The analysis of the selected text focuses on dialogical exchanges with the intention of bringing intended meanings to the fore. In relation to spatio-temporal relevance, a Nigerian drama text: *Attahiru* Ahmed Yerima has been purposively selected for analysis. This is a recent Nigerian drama text published in (2008). However, only ten (10) dialogues have been purposively selected from the text. The dialogues analysed the first five and the last five dialogues in the text. This technique is partially not unrelated to the idea that these dialogues give a purview of what the play is about. The study used Mey's (2001) theory of pragmatic act), implicature and presupposition.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

Dark stage, spotlight on silhouette, as figure of man is seen raising his hands to his ears. Lone voice is heard calling people to prayers.

Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar

Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar

Ash hadu an la ilaha illal lah,  
Ash hadu an la ilaha illal lah,  
Ash hadu an-na Muhanmadar rasulul lah,  
Ash hadu an-na Muhanmadar rasulul lah,  
Hayya' alas salah,  
Hayya' alas salah,  
Hayya' alal salah,  
Hayya' alal falah,  
Hayya' alal falah,  
Allahu-Akbar,  
Allahu-Akbar,  
La ilaha illal lah

*As the call continues, lights slowly come on the stage to reveal big entrance gates to the mosque. By the gate are Ahmed the seller of date palms, Yakubu, the seller of Islamic books, prayer rosaries and other religious items. Abbas, blind beggar is also seated begging for alms at one side of the gate when lights come brightly, the three men are laughing as if sharing a joke.*

AHMED: 1. So tell us the joke Abbas, was the fat woman really a boy?

ABBAS: 2. A big fat boy who had followed my sisters and I from Kastina like a woman in a ploy to steal my collected and he did. He knew I had money with me. I had collected my own share of my uncle's inheritance, the day before, I sold all the items I was given.

AHMED: 3. What were you given?

ABBAS: 4. Two big gowns, a goat, and mattress made of straw. They all fetched good money.

AHMED: 5. Always, I warned you about women. Especially fat ones. (The men laugh.)

ABBAS: 6. I thought that she was a friend of one of my sisters, and that she needed help. I could not bear to see a poor innocent ... women ... Kai, I

swear, if only I had my sight ... I would have ... and to think I thought she was a ...

AHMED: 7. Fat women ... (laughing) ... in distress?

ABBAS: 8. Yes ... er ... I mean no. A friend of my sisters travelling alone on that dangerous road. I heard her speak with them. And he had the female voice and all the mannerisms of a woman. When I spoke with her while listening to her tales of woe. She told me that she was a widow and she was running from her wicked uncle-in-law. Safiyatu my sister look to her immediately and I felt she was her friend. But it was when we got to Gusau, that we discovered it must have been some sleeping charm, because we all slept like children. A very unusual thing to do only after a short distance into a long journey. He allowed me to sleep and he cut my money bag. A thousand curses on his young soul. Allah that boy was smart.

YAKUBU: 9. He must have followed you from Kano. He must have seen how much you all had. My advice remains that you should leave fat women alone.

ABBAS: 10. I swear ... (*morelaughter*)

## **Data Analysis**

### **Text 1**

AHMED: So tell us the joke Abbas, was the fat woman really a boy?

### **Pragmatic Acts**

**Pract:** "So tell us the joke Abbas, was the fat woman really a boy?"

**Pragmeme:** This is an instantiated *directive* pragmatic act of with the allopract of *asking*. In this pract, the speaker, Ahmed, intends to draw out information from Abbas. The information he is eliciting from Abbas is already (partially) known to him, hence the use of homophoric reference *the joke... the fat woman*. To understand the intended meaning inherent in this conversational act, the other participants in the discourse subconsciously invoke contextual features of Mey's pragmeme. These are *shared situational knowledge, reference, inference* and *metapragmatic joker*. The pract, performed by Ahmed, is undergirded under the shared situational knowledge that Abbas has been telling a joke prior, and that Ahmad and Yusuf are keen that Abbas should complete the story.

There are three referents in the discourse: Ahmed, Abbas and Yusuf. Both Ahmed and Abbas are merchants. Ahmed sells date palms, while Abbas sells Islamic books, prayer rosaries and other religious items. Yusuf on the other hand is a blind beggar. These three stay at the big entrance gates to the mosque: Ahmed and Abbas and selling their wares, while Yusuf begs for alms. The objective case of the pronoun “us” refers to Ahmad (the speaker) and Yusuf, who are present in that context, at that time. One can infer, from Ahmed’s pract that he, Ahmed, in particular, is so keen for Abbas to complete the story. He really wants to know whether the “fat woman was really a boy”. Apart from this, one can sense the symmetrical power relationship with use of first name i.e. Abbas, without any address term marked with respect. This indicates that the participants in this discourse of equal social status.

### **Presupposition**

**The expression:** “So tell us the joke Abbas, was the fat woman really a boy?”, is a *structural presupposition*. It presupposes that Abbas has initiated the joke prior to that moment, and did not complete it. Apart from structural presupposition, there is also lexical presupposition which is signalled by the proper noun: “Abbas”, which is the name of one of the participants in the context of the utterance. It is presupposed that both Ahmed and Yusuf know who Abbas is, without any further introduction.

### **Implicature**

**In the linguistic utterance:** ‘So tell us the joke Abbas, was the fat woman really a boy?’ the Gricean maxims of quantity and relevance are ostentatiously flouted. The maxim of quantity states that: “Make your contribution as informative as is required; do not make your contribution more informative than is required.”, while the maxim of relevance says that: “Be relevant. Make your contribution in relation to the topical discourse.” The maxim of quantity is flouted because Ahmed’s utterance does not provide adequate information to the reader as regards the joke he meant. In the other respects, the maxim of relevance is flouted because there is no preceding expression to link with what Ahmed just stated. However, this is a technique deployed by the playwright as well as writers of literary text, and it is known as *in media res*. It is used to put the reader in the middle of things right from the outset of the play, and help build suspense as well as tension in the mind of the reader.

## **Text 2**

ABBAS: A big fat boy who had followed my sisters and I from Katsina like a woman in a ploy to steal my collected and he did. He knew I had money with me. I had collected my own share of my uncle's inheritance, the day before, I sold all the items I was given.

## **Pragmatic Acts**

**Pract:** "A big fat boy who had followed my sisters and I from Katsina like a woman in a ploy to steal my money and he did. He knew I had money with me. I had collected my own share of my uncle's inheritance, the day before, I sold all the items I was given".

**Pragmeme:** This is an instantiated *assertive* pragmatic act with the allopract of *recounting*. This pract was precipitated by the pract performed by Ahmed in text 1 (an instantiated pragmatic act of asking). Abbas, via this conversational act, recounts his ordeal about an inauspicious event where he was a victim of theft. To understand this tale, his other interlocutors as well as readers will bank on the shared situational knowledge of Katsina—a state in northwest Nigeria, whose capital is also Katsina. This is very crucial for inference: as readers can then seamlessly infer that the event in that particular scene did not take place in Katsina state.

## **Presupposition**

To project intended meaning, Abbas, uses *existential presupposition* to create a vivid mental picture in the mind of the reader. For instance, the reference to Katsina, is an existential presupposition. Abbas presupposes that such a place exists, and that his other conversationalists as well as reader know this and they know where the place is located. Apart from this, the rest of the dialogue is practically devoid of assumptions. He made it clear how he got the money he claims he had on the day of the robbery without leaving his listeners and the reader assuming.

## **Implicature**

Abbas obeys the maxim of quantity because he gave adequate explanation and vivid description on how he got the money he had on him and how the money was stolen. His expression is also relevant as it is an answer or response to the question Ahmed asked him: "So tell us the joke Abbas, was the fat woman really a boy?" in the preceding dialogue. It also obeys the maxim of manner as he was perspicuous in his narration: his story was devoid of ambiguity. At any rate, one can presume that Abbas is telling the truth at this juncture. He does not need to lie to score cheap points or attract

sympathy from his fellow conversationalist. He therefore adhered to the maxim of quality which says: “Do not say what you believe to be false: do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence”.

### **Text 3**

AHMED: 3. What were you given?

### **Pragmatic Acts**

**Pract:** “What were you given?”

**Pragmeme:** This is an instantiated *directive* act with the allopract of *questioning*. The **voice** in this instantiated pragmatic act is that of Ahmed. Ahmed uses another interrogative pragmatic act to elicit more information from Abbas. It is however important to note that this directive allopract of questioning being used by Ahmed does not contain a face-threatening act: it is cordial. In any case, Ahmed banked on shared situational knowledge of the story that Abbas is narrating to ask this question. The **referent**, which is marked by the third person pronoun “you” refers to Ahmed, not Yusuf, who is also a participant in the discourse.

### **Presupposition**

The linguistic expression: “What were you given?” has an inherent *structural presupposition* which precipitates the assumption that the addressee, i.e. Abbas was given something. If this assumption is true, then Abbas is expected to accept the assumption and state, explicitly, what he was given.

### **Implicature**

None of the Gricean maxims was ostentatiously violated in the expression: “What were you given?” Ahmed adheres to the maxim of relevance. This is because his contribution is in relation to the topic in discussion. He also observes the maxim of manner, as he asked the question in a very direct and unambiguous manner. The maxim of quality was not flouted because Ahmed asked the question with the full knowledge that Abbas was given something. The question was informative enough: no more and no less words required. Hence it adheres to the maxim of quantity.

### **Text 4**

ABBAS: Two big gowns, a goat, and mattress made of straw. They all fetched good money.

## **Pragmatic Acts**

**i. Pract:** “Two big gowns, a goat, and mattress made of straw. They all fetched good money.”

## **Pragmeme**

This is an instantiated *assertive* pragmatic act with the allopract of *informing*. The voice in this pract is Abbas’s. At this point it is surprising that Yusuf is yet to make any contributory conversational act. At any rate, the shared situational knowledge what inheritance—money, property or a title that is received when somebody dies, in accordance with legal succession or the terms of a will—means is invoked. However, one can infer from Abbas’ conversational act that he did not inherit much from his uncle, despite his claim that what he got “fetched good money”. This is because either his uncle is not wealthy or because he was not one of his uncle’s legitimate child, he is only entitled to limited property.

## **Presupposition**

To project intended meaning, Abbas subconsciously invokes *existential presupposition*. “Two big gowns, a goat, and mattress made of straw.” all presupposes the existence of those three items which were given to him by his uncle. Furthermore, **lexical presupposition** is invoked in the word “fetched”. It presupposes that the aforementioned items has been sold and are no longer in the possession of the speaker. These existential and lexical presuppositions are the assumptions that Abbas had before making the linguistic expression. It is expected that Ahmed and Yusuf as well the reader understands this and make correct inference.

## **Implicature**

Abbas’ conversational act is informative: this is because it provides adequate information as regards the information that Ahmed requested for. It is devoid of ambiguity: this is because the information that Abbas provided as regards what he inherited is clear and vivid. Abbas stated that he got “Two big gowns, a goat, and mattress made of straw”, if this is indeed what he got (which in all likelihood was what he got), then he was truthful. His statement is in relation to the question that Ahmed asked him in the presiding conversational act, as such, it is relevant. Therefore, Abbas adheres to the four Gricean maxims of quantity, manner, quality and relevance.



## **Text 5**

AHMED: Always, I warned you about women. Especially fat ones. (The men laugh.)

### **Pragmatic Acts**

**Pract:** “Always, I warned you about women. Especially fat ones. (The men laugh.)”

### **Pragmeme**

This is an instantiated *assertive* pragmatic act with the allopract of *reminding*. The voice in this conversational act is that of Ahmed, one of the interlocutors in the discourse. One can infer that Ahmed and Abbas have been friends for some time. This informs his reference to a certain warning he gave to Abbas some time ago. There are references in the conversational act. The “I” refers to the speaker, i.e. Ahmed, while “you” refers to Abbas. However, “women” is the plural for woman who in that context is used offensively to refer to “a wife, female lover, or girlfriend in general. Another pragmeme foregrounded in the conversation is the physiognomy or bodily expression of laughter. This reflects the general prevailing mood, tone or atmosphere of their discussion, and extenuates the seriousness of what they are discussing.

### **Implicature**

Ahmed’s conversational act is hyperbolic and it violates the maxim of quality. The maxim of quality stipulates that one should not say that for which he does not have evidence. Ahmed, however, implies women in general, especially fat women, are dangerous. This cannot be truth, because Ahmed has not examined every woman on this planet to come about such conclusion.

### **Presupposition**

The verb “warned” instigates a *lexical presupposition*. It presupposes that Ahmed had once upon a time tried to tell Abbas about the dangers of relating with women, especially fat ones. Apparently, Abbas did not heed to Ahmed’s warning, and as such as led to the loss of proceeds of his inheritance.

### **Text 6**

ABBAS: I thought that she was a friend of one of my sisters, and that she needed help. I could not bear to see a poor innocent ... women ... Kai, I swear, if only I had my sight ... I would have ... and to think I thought she was a ...

### **Pragmatic Acts**

**i. Pract:** “I thought that she was a friend of one of my sisters, and that she needed help. I could not bear to see a poor innocent ... women ... Kai, I swear, if only I had my sight ... I would have ... and to think I thought she was a ...”

### **Pragmeme**

There are two pragmatic acts in this pract. First, there is an *assertive* pragmatic act with the allopract of *explaining*: “I thought that she was a friend of one of my sisters, and that she needed help. I could not bear to see a poor innocent”. Second, there is an assertive pragmatic but with an allopract of lamenting and regretting: “... women Kai, I swear, if only I had my sight ... I would have ... and to think I thought she was a ...”. The **voice** in this pragmatic acts is Abbas’s (it is interesting that after six conversational exchanges, Yusuf is yet to make any contribution). In the first pract, Abbas, explains how he gullibly fell into the trap of the thief that robbed him of his inheritance. There are references to people who are not within the immediate discourse, i.e. the woman who robbed Abbas and Abbas’s sisters. Both Ahmed and Yusuf highly likely knows about Abbas’s sisters, so they can infer who they are. In the second pragmatic act Abbas laments bitterly how he regrets the whole incident. His lamentation is foregrounded with the elliptical three dots “...” which indicates that he is angry and short of words to express his thought at the material time. This occurs five times, and it accentuates Abbas’s bitterness. Not only this, the **metapragmatic joker** “Kai”, which is a Hausa word for lamentation also foregrounds Abbas’s bitterness. He cannot express his exact feeling in English, hence the need for code-mixing.

### **Presupposition**

The word “thought” and “needed” invoke a *lexical presupposition*. They indicate that the event that Abbas was making reference to has already taken.

### **Implicature**

The elliptical dots (...) which were used five times in Abbas's conversational act indicate the omission of one or more words from Abbas's contribution. Although, the omitted words/expressions can be understood, it flouts the Gricean maxim of quantity by not providing adequate information. In the first ellipsis, the omitted word is "woman suffer" as in 'I could not bear to see a poor innocent woman suffer'. The second, third, fourth and fifth are not predictable in absolute terms, like the first. Nevertheless, Ahmed and Yusuf as well as reader can infer his communicative intention. Another Gricean maxim that was brazenly violated is the maxim of manner. The maxim is violated via the use of code-mixing, observed in the use of the Hausa word "Kai". Although it is used to reinforce Abbas's exasperation, and Ahmed and Yusuf can understand its meaning because they speak Hausa, readers who do not speak Hausa or are not familiar with the language may find it difficult to grasp.

### **Text 7**

AHMED: Fat women ... (laughing) ... in distress?

**i. Pract:** "Fat women ... (laughing) ... in distress?"

### **Pragmeme**

This is a *directive* pragmatic act with the allopract of *questioning*. Although it goes without saying that this more of making mockery than questioning. The mockery is accentuated with the laughing in bracket. Laughing is a physiognomy and bodily expression of emotion in Mey's pragmeme. The voice in this conversational act is Ahmed's. He seems to have found Abbas's contribution as funny and derogatory. The pragmatic acts performed in the beginning of the play are very important. This is because they help to douse the subsequent tension that would come in subsequent acts and scenes.

### **Presupposition**

Ahmed's conversational act is imbued with *existential presupposes*. By using the expression: "Fat women ... (laughing) ... in distress?", Ahmed assumes to be committed to the existence of fat women in distress.

### **Implicature**

Ahmed's conversational act: "Fat women ... (laughing) ... in distress?" obeys the maxim of relevance because it is in relation to the preceding statement made by Abbas. However, it flouts the maxims of manner and

quantity. The maxim of manner is flouted because Ahmed's question—which is not a question in the real sense but a mockery—was not expressed in a clear and perspicuous manner. A reader will have to refer back to preceding conversational act to make the correct inference. This non-clarity makes it less informative and lacking in detail. The implicature is that the question was asked to elicit mockery and derision, as a result its texture has to be structured in such a way to project intended meaning.

Fat women ... (laughing) ... in distress?

### **Text 8**

ABBAS: Yes ... er ... I mean no. A friend of my sisters travelling alone on that dangerous road. I heard her speak with them. And he had the female voice and all the mannerisms of a woman. When I spoke with her while listening to her tales of woe. She told me that she was a widow and she was running from her wicked uncle-in-law. Safiyatu my sister look to her immediately and I felt she was her friend. But it was when we got to Gusau, that we discovered it must have been some sleeping charm, because we all slept like children; a very unusual thing to do only after a short distance into a long journey. He allowed me to sleep and he cut my money bag. A thousand curses on his young soul, Allah that boy was smart.

### **Pragmatic Acts**

**i. Pract:** "Yes ... er ... I mean no. A friend of my sisters travelling alone on that dangerous road. I heard her speak with them. And he had the female voice and all the mannerisms of a woman. When I spoke with her while listening to her tales of woe, She told me that she was a widow and she was running from her wicked uncle-in-law. Safiyatu my sister look to her immediately and I felt she was her friend. But it was when we got to Gusau, that we discovered it must have been some sleeping charm, because we all slept like children; a very unusual thing to do only after a short distance into a long journey. He allowed me to sleep and he cut my money bag. A thousand curses on his young soul. Allah that boy was smart."

### **Pragmeme**

There are at least three instantiated pragmatic acts in Abbas's pract. These are: *assertive* pragmatic act with the allopract of *narrating* ("Yes ... er ... I mean no. A friend of my sisters travelling alone on that dangerous road. I heard her speak with them. And he had the female voice and all the mannerisms of a woman. When I spoke with her while listening to her tales of woe. She told me that she was a widow and she was running from her

wicked uncle-in-law. Safiyatu my sister look to her immediately and I felt she was her friend. But it was when we got to Gusau, that we discovered it must have been some sleeping charm, because we all slept like children. A very unusual thing to do only after a short distance into a long journey. He allowed me to sleep and he cut my money bag.”), *expressive* with the allopract of *imprecating* (“A thousand curses on his young soul.”) and *expressive* pragmatic act with the allopract of *exclaiming* (“Allah that boy was smart.”). Abbas uses assertive pragmatic act with the allopract of narrating to recount the gloomy tale of how he was outsmarted and robbed by a boy who disguised like a woman to perpetuate his evil act. References were made to an entity (Safiyatu) and a place (Gusau). Safiyatu is Abbas’s sister. She is not present in the immediate context where the conversation is taking place. The participants in the discourse, it is presupposed, have background knowledge about Safiyatu. This is also true of Gusau which is the capital commercial city of Zamfara State, northwest, Nigeria.

Expressive pragmatic act with the allopract of imprecating was used by Abbas to call down curses on his transgressors. This pragmatic act, *inter alia*, shows that Abbas is still embittered about the gloomy experience. The metaphor, “his young soul”, is used by Abbas to show that the con is a male and a young one at that (this is probably why he is still hungry). Elsewhere, expressive pragmatic act with the allopract of exclaiming was used by Abbas to show surprise, excitement as well as anger. He is baffled and befuddled by the incident, but he is still amazed at the dexterity of the criminal.

### **Presupposition**

There are litany of presuppositions in Abbas’s conversational act. There is *existential presupposition*, which can be observed in such expressions like “my sisters”, “that dangerous road”, “the female voice”, “her wicked uncle-in-law”, “her friend” and “my money bag”. By using such expressions, Abbas, subconsciously acknowledges that he has sisters, a particular road exists, there was a female with a voice, the con has an uncle-in-law, her sister has and friend and he had some money bag on him respectively. Though he presupposes these, the other participants in the conversation, break this down in order to make the correct inference. In other respects, “Safiyatu” and “Gusau” trigger **lexical presuppositions**. Abbas takes it for granted that Ahmed and Yusuf know his Safiyatu is his sister, and also that they know the particular city called Gusau.

### **Implicature**

It can be observed that Abbas narrated the incident in a very clear and perspicuous manner, devoid of any ambiguity. He was very informative and concise. He therefore adheres to the Gricean maxim of manner and quantity. As his narration is in relation to the prevailing topic of the conversation, he also obeys the maxim of relevance. Abbas did not exaggerate his tale. He seems to have given a vivid description of exactly what happened as someone that experienced it first-hand. Hence, the Gricean maxim of quality is adhered to.

### **Findings and Conclusion**

Pragmatics can be a very useful method for the understanding and interpretation of staged realisations. Indeed the theory of pragmatics can be of great help to playwrights, stage directors and theatre practitioners if it is presented lucidly and understandably. It could, even at the most basic level, lead them to think more clearly about what they are doing and by instinct. Unlike other linguistic theories, pragmatics offers a very inclusive theoretical framework for the analysis of drama. This is because since drama is essentially dialogical in nature, pragmatic theories such as pragmatic act theory (consolidated speech act theory), presupposition and implicature are essentially designed to account for language usage for participants in a discourse.

The types of allopracts identified in the analysis are: Assertive, Expressive Directives and Commissives allopracts. These represent a significant sample of the kinds of instantiated pragmatic acts performed in the text. Based on their propositional contents, assertive allopracts occurred most in the text. This is observed in the instances where a character wants to dissuade, inform or assure the other. Expressive allopracts also occurred. They are however chiefly manifested instances where a character laments, salutes, pacifies, appreciates or even derogates another character. Directive allopracts have the highest ratio of occurrence. They are mainly used whenever a character wants to ask question, give command, entreat and also to ask or make a polite request. Other instances include when a character wants to give an order or even information.

Secondly, two allopracts commissive and declaratives allopracts, were sparsely used. In datum 8, where Pere was threatening the captives of his daughter. Conversely, declarative allopract was not used in the text. This is not unconnected with the kinds of action performed in the text. None of these actions were performed along the diagonal of an institutional act. As such, declarative allopract which is chiefly observed in institutional acts was not observed in any of the data.

In other respects, the ability to make a proper dialogue and arrive automatically at interpretations of the unsaid is based on pre-existing knowledge structures. These structures function are like familiar patterns from previous experience that we use to interpret new experiences. Presupposition is a knowledge a speaker assumes to be the case prior to making an utterance. This knowledge can be in the form of background knowledge or mutual context beliefs between the speaker and his/her addressee(s). Every dialogical contribution by each character in each text is undergirded by certain presuppositions. Using Yule's (1996) taxonomy of potential presuppositions, six (6) kinds of presuppositions are identified as preponderantly used during dialogical exchanges in the two drama texts. These are: Lexical, Existential, Factive, non-factive, counter-factive and Structural.

One implication of this is that each dialogue has at least one inherent presupposition. Another implication is that a dialogue can have more than presupposition. This is observed in datum 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8. where the dialogues have more than one basic assumptions undergirding them, utterance can have more than one type of presupposition. This is noted in virtually all the datum apart from datum 7 and 8. Meanwhile, the discrepancies of ratio of occurrence and the sparse occurrence of non-factive and counter-factual presuppositions are informed by the kinds assumptions the characters take for granted while making a linguistic expression. Existential presuppositions, which is the most dominant is observed where a character is committed to the existence as well as the presence of the entities implied. Factive presuppositions are obtained where a character in a play presumes a situation/event! or a proposition is hitherto the case. In other respects, lexical presuppositions are manifested in the use of lexical entries (words/phrases) to imply basic assumptions, while structural presuppositions, observed five time, are inherent in the use of which words to make an interrogative remark.

Elsewhere, although mostly not ostentatious, there are few conversational implicature generated in some of the dialogues. These conversational implicature are generated when any of the expressions used by a character have implied meaning because he or she has broken one of the four Gricean maxims of quantity, quality, manlier and relevance. This is examined with the social principles that govern human interactions. From the eight (8) selected dialogues, the Gricean maxim that was flouted the most is the maxim of quality. This is chiefly observed in instances where the characters are being indirect, using figurative expressions and proverbs. This is distantly followed by the maxim of quantity. This is mostly noted instances a character provides less than or more than the necessary

information. In other respects, the maxim of relevance and manner were disobeyed. The reason is that maxim of manner is not connected with fact that playwright project the intentions of their characters in a clear, succinct and concise manner in a way that the readers will seamlessly comprehend them.

The study also revealed that assertive allopracts have the highest occurrences because they were used in the text by the characters to ask question or give command and also to make a polite request. The study has also shown that the preponderant occurrences of existential and factive presuppositions were due to the fact that characters in the selected text were committed to the existence as well as presence of the entities were implied.

### **Conclusion**

The study concludes that the main thrust of contemporary writers in Nigeria is not only to identify the blights besieging the society, but also proffer solutions to them through their writings.

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## **Linguistic Interference of Yoruba Numeral (Qkan) On Yoruba Leaners of French Language: A Case Study of Selected Universities in South West Nigeria**

**Ajani Akinwumi Lateef PhD**

*College of Language and Communication Arts Education*

*French Department*

*Lagos State University of Education*

*Oto-Ijanikin, Lagos State, Nigeria*

*ftcoed@yahoo.com/ajanilateef63@gmail.com/+2348033336465*

### **Abstract**

*One of the sources of the problem of grammatical errors in French class among Nigeria Yoruba learners of French Language is the interference from their mother tongue which is Yoruba Language. Against this background, the study took a look at the Yoruba Numeral system eyokan (one) on the use of French indefinite article un/une (one) among the Yoruba learners of French Language. Data were collected from undergraduate Yoruba learners of French language in some selected universities in the South West of Nigeria. And to solve the problem, the study put forward some recommendations with the aim of moving forward the Teaching and Learning of French Language in Yoruba speaking environment in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Language, Interference, Indefinite Article, Error, Didactic Approach.

### **Introduction**

In Nigeria, French as a Foreign Language teaching and learning began about sixty years ago through the Christian Missionaries who came to establish schools in the country Adeleke (2019). According to Simire (2001) and Ajani (2021), many observations, critical appraisals and recommendations have been made and still being made by Nigerian French Language Scholars with regard to the problems facing the Teaching and Learning of French Language in Nigeria and how to move its Teaching and Learning Forward. (Tijani 2007, Ajiboye 2010, Elaho 2015, Iyiola 2016, Adeleke 2019, Ajani and Odoh 2020 etc).

Despite series of recommendations put forward, we have a lot of problems face the Teaching and Learning of French as a Foreign Language in Nigeria and one of those problems is the problem of linguistic interference.

In this paper, attempt is made to look at the grammatical influence of Yoruba Numeral Systems *Eyọkan* (one) on the use of French indefinite article *un/une* (one) by selected Yoruba undergraduate learners of French as a Foreign Language in South-West Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study aims at finding out the grammatical impact of Yoruba Numeral ‘*Eyọkan*’ (one) on the use of French indefinite article *un/une* (one) by the Nigerian Yoruba learners of French language and offers some didactic approaches that could help in solving the problem among these learners.

### **Statement of the Problems**

Without any iota of doubt, majority of Nigerian Yoruba learners of French language find it difficult to differentiate between French indefinite article masculine singular ‘un’ and French indefinite article feminine singular ‘une’. (Source) This is because Yoruba Numeral *Eyọkan* is used for all Yoruba objects irrespective of their gender unlike in French language where indefinite article ‘un’ is used for masculine singular objects while indefinite article ‘une’ is used for feminine singular objects.

### **Examples**

Okunrin *Eyọkan* → un garçon

Obinrin *Eyọkan* → une fille.

The essence of this study, is to put forward some recommendations that will help Nigerian Yoruba French language learners in their ability to make appropriate use of French indefinite article ‘un/une’ to communicate effectively both in oral and in written forms.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided the focus of the study.

1. What are the possible causes of Nigerian Yoruba learners of French language on the indefinite article *un/une* (one)?
2. What are the possible effect of Yoruba numeral systems *Eyọkan* (one) on the use of French indefinite article by the Nigerian Yoruba learners of French language?
3. Are the Nigerian Yoruba learners of French language conscious of the gender difference between ‘un’ and ‘une’ which both means *Eyọkan* (one) in Yoruba language?

## **Theoretical Framework**

The Model on which this study is anchored is the theory of Contrastive Analysis. According to Fries (1945) and Lado (1957), contrastive analysis is the systematic comparison of two or more languages with the aim of describing their similarities and differences and it involves two processes namely description and comparison.

Furthermore, according to Crystal (2001:90), in a Contrastive Analysis of two languages, the point of structural difference are identified and these are then studied as areas of potential difficulties (Interferences or Negative transfer) in a Foreign Language Learning and thus govern the progress of the Learner.

And in line with Olubunmi and Olowofoyeku (2021:4), the objective of Contrastive Analysis includes among others:

- i. Providing insight to similarities and differences between languages.
- ii. Explaining and predicting problem in L2 learning.
- iii. Developing course materials for language teaching.

## **Definition of Terms**

Certain terms as employed in this article require clarification by definition.

### **Language**

Sapir (1963:8), defines language as human and non-instructive method of communication, ideas, emotions and desires by means of system of voluntarily produced symbols. Also Ilona (1991:71), sees language as not only a medium of communication by man but an instrument of learning and transmission of culture from one generation to another while Dom Anyanwu (2010:80) sees language “as not only a means of communication and instruction, it is also a mark of life, identify, dignity and a means of controlling reality”.

### **Linguistic Interference**

Lado (1957:2), states that “individuals tend to transfer the forms and meaning and distribution of forms and meaning of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture when attempting to speak the language”. To Olubunmi and Olowofoyeku (2021:4), linguistic interference is “the effect of transferring the habit associated with the

learners' mother tongue (MT) to the target language precisely a second language (SL)'. This interference can occur at the phonological level, grammatical level, lexical level and all other levels of linguistic description (Olubunmi and Olowofoyeku, 2021 Opcit).

### **Error and Linguistics Error**

The Oxford Advanced Learners' dictionary (2019:519), states that "error is a mistake that causes situation". On linguistics error, Crystal (2005:139) refers to it as a mistake in spontaneous speaking or writing attributed to a malfunctioning of neuromuscular commands from the brain". It is thus distinct from the traditional notion of error which is based on the language user's ability to conform to a set of real or imagined standard of expression. On the types of linguistic errors Crystal (opcit) opines that there are two types (a) Error of production involving difficulties with the timing or sequence of command leading to the addition, deletion or substitution of sounds and morphemes which is the focus of this study and (b) Error of perception such as when a child mis analyses state that an adult's sentence or sentences.

And based on Soetan (2013), states that in learning a second language, there is no way error could be avoided on the part of the learner. On error correction in the Second Language (L2) classroom, Soetan (2013:301) opines that this is a major intellectual debate from S.P Corler (1967), Andrew Cohen (1975), James Hendrickson (1978) to Debyser (1993) down to Shawn Loewen (2007) and many other ones.

### **Article and French Infinite Article**

According to Ade-Ojo (2002:50), articles are "the words used for presenting or identifying nouns which they precede immediately, except where there is an interfering adjective before the noun and so the article is placed before such adjective". In English language, articles are: 'the', 'a', and 'some' which can be classified into Definite article (the), Indefinite article (a, an), and Partitif article (some).

On French indefinite article, Lexus, Noël and Sabine (2019:19), stated that it is classified into three forms depending on the number and gender of the noun it accompanies. The French indefinite articles are....

- With a masculine singular noun (un) which means "a or an" in English language. Example: un garçons (A boy) un énie (an enemy) male.

- With a feminine singular noun (une) which means “a or an” in English language. Example: Une femme (A woman), une ennemie (an enemy) féminin.
- With a plural masculine or plural feminine noun (des) which means some in English. Example: Des garçons arrivent (some boys are coming). Des filles arrivent (some girls are coming).

### **Yoruba and French**

While Yoruba language has its origin traced to Ile-Ife Nigeria and presently one of the three major Nigeria languages and spoken as a mother tongue in seven states of Nigeria, five located in the South-west namely: Ondo, Ekiti, Qsun, Qyq and Lagos States and two located in the North namely; Kwara and Kogi states. Furthermore based on Capo (2004:19), Yoruba language is a mother tongue in Benin and in Togo. On French language, according to Ade-Ojo (2002), French language owns its origin to France where it was first adopted as an official language in 1539 and from France, it extended to other Francophone countries within and outside Europe including Africa. While it is a mother tongue in France and in the city of Quebec in Canada, it serves as an official language and language of education in Benin Republic and other Francophone countries in Africa.

### **Data Collection**

For this study, data were obtained from Nigerian Yoruba French learners in three Higher Institutions located in the South-west of Nigeria. The three High Institutions are: Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education now Lagos State University of Education, Oto/Ijanikin, Lagos State, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu Ode, Ogun State and Osun State University, Ikire Campus Osun State. Apart from the fact that the three Higher Institutions selected are all located in Yoruba environments, they have also been in existence for more than twenty years, therefore suitable for a study such as this. Hence their selection as the population sample.

A sample of sixty six students (66), forty six (46) females and twenty (20) males were randomly draw, using sampling replacement method from a total number of one hundred and twenty (120) student selected across.

The collection of data was done through a close observation of utterances of the speakers. Their utterance were recorded and later analysed to identify the use of French indefinite article un/une to form simple French sentences. The table that follows is the presentation of their productions.

**Table 1: Data Presentation**

S/N	Intended Expressions	Expressions realised from the Learners	Meaning of Expression realised in Yoruba
1.	Nous allons en ville pour acheter un portable	Nous allons en ville pour acheter une portable	À ní lq sí igboro láti ra èrọ alágbèéká
2.	Dans notre famille, j'ai un frère et une sœur	Dans notre famille j'ai une frère et une sœur	Nínú ẹbí, mo ní ẹgbọn kúnrin kan àti ẹgbọn binrin kan
3.	Il est une star parmi nous	Il est un star parmi nous	Ìràwò kan lo jé láàárín wa.
4.	Il ya un maché à côté de nous maison	Il ya une maché à côté de nous maison	Qjà kan án wà légbèé ilée wa.
5.	J'ai un stylo et une bible avec moi	J'ai un stylo et un bible avec moi	Mo ní gègè kan àti Bíbeli kan lówó
6.	Une voiture est devant notre classe	Une voiture est devant notre classe	Qkò ayókélé kan án wa ní iwájú kíláàsì wa.
7.	Nous avons un seau d'eau au foyer	Nous avons une seau d'eau au foyer	A ní garawa omi kan nínú ìyàrá ibùsun un wa.
8.	J'ai une éponge avec moi	J'ai un éponge avec moi	Mo ní kàin kàin iwè kan lówó.
9.	Derrière notre foyer se trouve une grande cour	Derrière notre foyer se trouve un grand cour	Agbo-ilé ñlà kan án wà léyìn ibùsun un wa.
10.	Le président a un mandat de quatre ans	Le président a une mandat de quatre ans	Ààrẹ ni agbára odún mérin
11.	J'ai un bon pagne et une bonne serviette	J'ai une bonne pagne et une bonne serviette	Mo ní aṣọ kan pèlú tawẹli kan
12.	Nous avons une classe le lundi	Nous avons un classe le lundi	Ani idánilékoò kan ni oṣo ajé
13.	C'est un problème à réglé	C'est une problème à réglé	Ìṣòro kan tá a ama yanju ni.

### Findings and Discussion

From the data collected from the informants, one could see that they have problems with the appropriate use of French indefinite article un/une which means 'one' in English Language and '*Eyọkan*' (kan) in Yoruba language and this makes them to get confused when it is to be used in forming sentences in French Language.

Let us take some examples based on the expression realised from our informants. In an expression like: 'Nous allons en ville pour acheter une Portable' which is (A lq si igboro lati ra erọ alegbeka kan). The correct expression is to be "Nous allons en ville pour acheter 'un' Portable" and the reason for the indefinite article "un" is that the French word

“Portable” is a masculine word, hence “un” is the correct indefinite article to be used instead of une. However because of their Yoruba background where eyọkan is used for any word irrespective of gender, the word ‘une’ was used instead of ‘un’ by the respondent.

Furthermore, in the expression: “J’ai un frère et un sœur dans ma famille”. What led to the use of un for both frère and sœur is their Yoruba background where eyọkan is used for both ẹgbọn (brother) and anti (sister). Ninu ẹbi wa, mo ni ẹgbọn kunrin kan ati ẹgbọn binrin kan, this has to further do with a linguistic interference of Yoruba Numeral system *Eyọkan* (kan) on French indefinite article un/une and this led to their inability to be able to properly use the French indefinite article ‘un’/‘une’ for the French phrase namely ‘frère et sœur’. To them, since in Yoruba language *Eyọkan* (kan) is used for both ẹgbọn kunrin (elder brother) and ẹgbọn binrin (elder sister), in French language “un” can be used for both frère and sœur without realizing that in French language, what determines the equivalence of Yoruba *Eyọkan* (kan) is the nature of the gender of the object. If the object is masculine singular, it will carry un, example un frère while if the object is feminine, it will take ‘une’, example ‘une fille’.

Furthermore, in the expression ‘Il est un star parmi nous’ (irawo kan ni oje lari wa) which means, ‘he is a star among us’. The correct expression is to use ‘Il est une star parmi nous’. The use of ‘une star’ on the part of our informant is due to a linguistic interference of Yoruba numeral system *Eyọkan* (kan) on French indefinite article un. The correct French expression is: “Il est une star parmi nous” because the word “star” in French which means “irawo” in Yoruba language is a feminine French word.

The word star in French is a feminine word and must carry a feminine French indefinite article “une” instead of French feminine indefinite masculine singular article “un”.

Furthermore French words such as Stylo (Pen), Mandat (Mandate), Pagne (Clothe), Problème (Problem), etc are all masculine nouns in French language and at the singular level, they must carry masculine indefinite article “un” when the need arises, hence it must be un stylo not une stylo, un mandat not une mandat while French words such as Voiture (Car), Cours compound, Fille Girl, Television, (Television), Table (Table), Bible (Bible), Soeur (Sister) etc, are feminine French words and they must carry feminine indefinite article ‘une’ when the need arises.? However, due to linguistic interference of Yoruba numeral system ‘Eyọkan’ on French indefinite article un/une (one), most Nigerian Yoruba French learners get confused with the use of French indefinite article ‘un/une’ and this in most cases lead them to the grammatical error by mistakenly use un for ‘une’ and ‘une’ for ‘un’.



## **Recommendations**

The big question is what do we do to find solution to this problem among Nigerian Yoruba learners of French language? We suggest the following:

### **i. The use of Conversational Approach**

According to Simpson (1994),

Everyone must have the opportunity to speak, No one should be monopolizing or constantly interrupting. And when mistake is made, the learners' attention should be brought to the mistake and correction made immediately to avoid the reoccurring of that some mistake from the learner.

Based on Sham and Loewen (opcit), in any French class especially where French language is been taught as a Foreign Language like the case of the teaching and the learning of French language in Yoruba, frequent conversations between French teachers and learners it is highly needed and must be encouraged and this is in line with Abdul (2000) that opines that "the acquisition of conversation skill is an important aspect of language development".

### **ii. The use of Contrastive Analysis**

In teaching French as a Foreign language, the use of Contrastive Analysis which according to Fries (1945), Lado (1957), Filipovi (1975) in Ajani (2015) and Olubunmi and olowofoyeku (2021) is a systematic comparison of two or more languages with the aim of describing their similarities and differences must be a strong teaching appear on the part of any French teacher especially our context. For example, a Yoruba learner of French language who has the intention of saying *j'ai un frère et une soueur* but says instead '*j'ai un frère et un soeur*', when taught using an contrastive Analysis of the speech will easily get to identify the source of the problem and eradicate such identify errors.

### **iii. Exposure to French Speaking Environment**

The Nigeria French Language Village, Ajara, Badagry Lagos as we all know as set up to offer immersion programme to French learners in Nigeria so as to compliment the effort of the teachers teaching French learners in their schools with the hope that their stay in the Village will improve their skills in both oral and written, while this

is a well laudable idea as the French Language Village has been encouraging teaching and learning of French Language in Nigeria, however French learners in Nigeria, Yoruba French learners inclusive, need expose to French speaking countries most especially the nearby French countries like Benin, Togo, Niger and Cameroun and this will assist in reducing Nigerian French learners persistent linguistic problem in French Language.

### **Conclusion**

It has been demonstrated in this paper that Yoruba learners of French Language have Mother-tongue Interference problem which adversely affects their use of French indefinite article 'un/une' to form simple French sentences in both oral and written forms. In an attempt to find solution to the problem, corrective measures were put forward with the hope that it will help Yoruba learners of French language to overcome the problem of interference of Yoruba numeral system Eyokan (kan) on the use of French indefinite article un/une in forming simple sentences in French language.

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