



RESEARCH ARTICLE



A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF WOLE SOYINKA'S PLAY *THE LION AND THE JEWEL*: A DISCOURSE ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE

Dr. ANTHONY AYODELEOLAOYE

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, NIGERIAN TURKISH NILE UNIVERSITY,
NIGERIA



Dr. ANTHONY
AYODELEOLAOYE

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ABSTRACT

This is a sociolinguistic study of Wole Soyinka's play - **The Lion And The Jewel** - from a discourse analytical perspective. Speech Act Theory is used as the theoretical framework of this paper to identify and illustrate the discourse features in the text. The three main aspects of the speech act locution, illocution and perlocution are copiously exemplified in the language use of the key characters in the play. The paper describes these characters as archetypals who, in their language behaviour or speech events, manifest different aspects of the ethnography of communication among the Yoruba. The key characters performed some acts through the use of certain words, phrases and expressions in order to command, warn, persuade, threaten or even intimidate minor characters. These illocutionary intents had certain perlocutionary effect on the minor characters. This is an exemplification of the type of political linguistics in the ethnography of speaking in Yoruba culture. This is an example of power and authority in the discourse of Yoruba Traditional Institution. The paper then illustrates how the acronym SPEAKING is relevant to discourse or the speech events in Wole Soyinka's play.

KeyTerms: Sociolinguistics, discourse, ethnography, speech act, illocution, perlocution.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is on the sociolinguistic analysis of a literary text, Wole Soyinka's play: *The Lion and the Jewel*. The objective of this paper is to show how Soyinka has made use of discourse in the ethnography of speaking of the Yoruba to portray political power and authority of the traditional institutions. The Playwright himself is a Yoruba man from Ogun State of Nigeria. Soyinka's style is distinct and fascinating. The persistent question

arises as to why he writes the way he does and what he hopes to achieve by the style. His style of presentation and language use are informed by his knowledge of the Yoruba culture. In *The Lion and the Jewel*, the general setting is the primitive Yoruba village Ilujinle, where all the actions take place, within a day divided into morning, noon and night. Some of the names of the characters are typical Yoruba names, such as Sidi (Sidikat), Sadiku, Lakunle, etc. In the ethnography of communication amongst the Yoruba, culture is an important variable.

The title, *The Lion and the Jewel*, depicts a relationship between two objects - "The Lion on one hand and the Jewel on the other hand. Lion is an animal regarded as great in Africa. The Yorubashare this belief too. The Lion is thus portrayed as the King of the jungle. The Jewel (Iyun or Segi) is valued among the womenfolk in Yoruba Society. The Yoruba use the names of some animals, like the Lion, to depict totemism in the "OrikiOrile", that is, praise names of a clan or a community to show a person's origin or lineage. The Jewel is a weaker totem meant for women. The language use of the characters in the play too is a reflection of the manner of speaking among the Yoruba Kings or the royalty.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Discourse Analysis

The review of literature is very necessary at this juncture as it will shed some light on the fundamental concepts which form the pillar of this paper. Linguistics has emerged as a descriptive tool for analyzing human language, with Bloomfield - a structuralist - being the first exponent. Linguistics then was just phonetics - the description of the sound system and how these sounds are produced by the speech organs. Chomsky (1957) dissatisfied with just the scientific description of human sounds, proposed a syntactic analysis of human utterances. Later he discovered that semantic consideration was fundamentally important in the analysis of sentences. Hitherto the preoccupation of the structuralists was with the analysis of the internal constituents of a sentence. Later in the 1960s with the entry of Katz (1964) and Postal (1967) into linguistic inquiry, the preoccupation became that of how to derive meaning from utterances (Lyons,1977). To these semanticists, including Lack of (1965), utterances which do not tell anything about the speaker, place, time and situation do not mean much in linguistics; meaning lies in the context of situation (Lyons, 1977).It was the search for discourse meaning - a linguistic revolution in the analysis of spoken and written text - pioneered by Austin and Searle(1962), and continued by Grice (1975) and Coulthard (1979), that gave birth to Discourse Analysis as a discipline and as an analytical tool (Brown et al.1983).

Before this revolution linguistic analysis of literary text was limited to the internal analysis and the internal functioning of the verbal code, without any consideration for the circumstances surrounding the utterances. Discourse analysts are now interested in such sociolinguistic issues as who the speaker is, who the listener or hearer is, why the utterance was said, how it was said, where and when it was said (Fishman, 1968). Discourse Analysis as Applied Linguistics or a branch of Sociolinguistics is a relatively new discipline. It is the linguistic analysis of stretches of a language longer than the sentence (Coulthard, 1977). It is interested in the external functioning of the verbal code. Its emphasis is shifting from mere grammar to function or from linguistic competence to communicative competence. In analyzing *The Lion and the Jewel*, from discourse perspective, one has to understand the sociolinguistics of Yoruba community, especially their ethnography of speaking.

Ethnography of speaking

'An ethnography is a written report or record on the beliefs, attitudes, norms...and values of a group' of people (Ogwuche,2001:112).The ethnography of speaking, according to Hymes (1972), is concerned with the situation and uses, the patterns and functions of speaking as an activity in its own right. In certain situations, the utterance that is produced is highly determined by factors which we may describe as contextual.

Edmonton (1981) posits that formalization and stylization of speech situations are extensive and elaborate, suggesting ways in which the uses of language are conditioned by culturally distinctive conceptions of situational appropriateness. The study of people's language behaviour has revealed that no individual is free to behave as he feels; speaking is not simply a matter of an individual free will (Fishman, 1968). There are social sanctions that go with language misdemeanor. Communication therefore depends on conventions which are unconsciously agreed upon by all the parties involved.

It is important to take a close look at the linguistic interaction or the communicative events in the text. The focus is on who made the utterances, and to who, what is the situation that gives rise to the utterances and the effect that the utterances have on the interlocutors. The concept of ethnography of communication is encapsulated in Hymes' (1962) acronym "**SPEAKING**" which stands for Setting, Participants, End, Act Sequence, Key, Instrumentality, Norm and Genre. Our discourse analysis of the play will be centered on this concept of SPEAKING.

FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

Speech Act Illocution

The text is set in a Yoruba socio-cultural milieu, and in a highly sophisticated ancient feudal kingdom. It has well defined criteria of rhetoric and logic, and well developed ideas about uses and interrelations. The "Setting" is a Yoruba village of Ilujinle, with a traditional cultural setting, where there is a ruler called Bale named Baroka, the lion of the village, who has a retinue of subordinates, harem of wives and courtiers. The "Participants" are the characters in the play. They include speakers, listeners and audience, what Hymes (1972) calls interlocutors.

The "End" in the acronym SPEAKING is the aim or objective of speech making. It is the desired or expected outcome of a speech. This objective includes illocutionary intent and perlocutionary force. People make speech in order to persuade, dissuade, warn, advise, direct, mock, tease, invite, praise, abuse, propose, inform, command, interrogate, declare, etc. (Edmonton, 1981). The perlocutionary effect may be the change of behaviour that accompanies any of these illocutions. Baroka, for instance, speaks to Sadiku commanding her to go and woo Sidi for him. Sadiku's discussion with Sidi is a response to the command illocution. "Act sequence" deals with how the speaker intends or plans to carry out the act of speaking, using the right language to transmit the actual information or message. The topic of discussion sometimes determines what variety or form to be used. For instance any discussion on traditions and customs always irritates Lakunle and this often makes him pour scorn on his people's value system and belief. He thus uses the most ribald of language as shown in his outpouring.

Lakunle: "A savage custom, barbaric, rejected, denounced, accursed, excommunicated, archaic, degrading, humiliating, unspeakable, redundant, retrogressive, remarkable, unpalatable".

In discourse analysis the "Key" refers to the tone, manner, mood or spirit in which an act is performed. The tone may be harsh, friendly, serious, light hearted, hilarious, sad, teasing, mocking, sarcastic, racy, ironic, perfunctory, laconic, pedantic, elaborate, bookish, ridiculous, complex, humorous, satiric, etc. "Instrumentality" refers to the channel of communication or the medium of expression. It could be oral or written discourse, formal or informal method, standard language or dialect. The socio-political and economic status of a character's language determines what variety of language he uses. This explains Lakunle's bombastic language which makes him a caricature of a westernized, educated person.

The Bale - the lion of the village - speaks the grand language of the sages; his speeches are couched in proverbs and witticism, characteristic of elders and the royalty. "Norms" are conventions - or expectations about loudness, taciturnity, volume, hesitation, pause, gaze, turn-taking, silence, etc. All rules governing speech have a normative character. Norms obviously imply analysis of social structure and social relationships in any speech

community. Sadiku, for instance, has to allow Baroka to end his talk before she talks. Courtesy or reciprocal respect requires just that between a husband and a wife. The King talks to his subordinate in a high tone or loud voice while the subordinates reply in low tone or low voice. Violation of societal language norms attracts social sanctions or reproach. "Genre" means speech type such as the use of proverbs, adages, figurative expressions, idioms, prayer, or the other forms that speeches may take, such as sermon, lecture, oration, campaign, curse, tale, etc.

Another very important discourse feature in the play is the Soyinka's use of powerful speech act illocutions such as abuse, command, warning and persuasion:

ABUSE: Lakunle uses abusive language to scorn Baroka:

Lakunle:

"What? The greedy dog.
Insatiate camel of a foolish, dotting race
Is he at his tricks again?"

This shows that Lakunle has little regard for Bale. Lakunle also disparages Sidi's beauty when she fails to accept his hand in marriage:

"For that, what is a jewel to pig?
If now I am misunderstood by you
And your race of savages. I rise above tames
And remain unruffled".

Sadiku also abuses Lakunle whom she regards as worthless. Sadiku says:

"You less than man you less than
The littlest woman, I say begone!"

Abuse is therefore a common speech act illocution which is used in the ethnography of speaking of the Yoruba to pooh-pooh an idea, condemn an ignoble act or to denigrate a person who is morally bankrupt or who is irresponsible. The perlocutionary effect is expected to be a positive change in behaviour.

COMMAND: Baroka as a village Bale commands his subordinates. He commands the wrestler to go and get palm-wine as Sidi enters.

PERSUASION: Sadiku tries to persuade Sidi to accept Baroka's hand in marriage.

Sadiku:

"Sidi, have you considered what bliss awaits you?
Baroka swears to take no other wife after.
Do you know what it is to be the Bale's wife...?"

The perlocutionary effect is Sidi's eventual acceptance of Baroka as her husband.

WARNING: Lakunle warns Sidi not to go to Baroka:

Lakunle:

"He must have beaten her
Did I not warn you both?
Baroka is a creature of the wilds

Untutored, manner less, devoid of grace”.

There are other illocutions like dissuading, appealing, teasing, mocking, wooing, questioning, cursing, etc. in the play.

Political Linguistics

The language use of Yoruba traditional rulers, political stalwarts and wealthy people is a good example of power and authority in political linguistics. In *The Lion and the Jewel*, language behaviour of the Yoruba is typified. The norms governing the use of speech are explicitly differentiated according to sex, position, status and age, so that the relations of speech behaviour to social structure are easily grasped by observers. Men of valour and integrity, in Yoruba land, describe their deeds using the imagery of animals with which bravery is associated. An elephant, for instance, is associated with wealth or power, a tortoise cunning, a lion bravery. Moreover a lion is called the King of all animals. These totemic values are well portrayed by Soyinka in the play. He calls Baroka, the Lion, to signify his royal title. Baroka in his own characteristic chest-beating prowess, says of himself:

Baroka:

“...did I not at the festival of rain defeat the men in the leg - tossing match?
Do I not still with the most fearless ones, hunt the leopard and the boa at night
And save the farmers’ goat from further harm
Did I not announce the harmattan,
Climb to the top of silk – cotton tree
Break the first pod, and scatter tasselled seed
Do any of my wives report
A failing in my manliness?”

Baroka is speaking to type. Yoruba Kings are known for their boastful utterances, which many at times go unchallenged. He is respected by all, and feared by his wives. His wives call him “Lord”

Favourite:

“Do I improve my lord?
I’ll learn, my lord”.

Baroka’s wife also calls him lord:

Sadiki:

“My lord, what did you say?
My Lord, I do not understand”

She also accepts her husband’s move to marry Sidi, and agrees without any grudge to woo Sidi for Baroka.

Sadiku:

“The lion sent me. He wishes you well”
“Well, will you be Baroka’s own Jewel?
Will you be his sweetest princess, soothing him on weary nights?
What answer shall I give my lord?”

The man, in Yoruba culture, is the head of the house as shown by Baroka who controls and directs home affairs. Every society has taboos. There are linguistic taboos in Yoruba culture. There are certain words which are forbidden to be nakedly uttered or used in conversation. In the play there are some words which Lakunle refuses to mention during his discussion with Sidi. Sidi is seen tying a wrapper round her chest. Lakunle, despite his westernized posture, sees this as "nakedness":

Lakunle:

"How often must I tell you Sidi, that
A grown - up girl must cover up her ???
Her shoulder? I can see quite a...
Quite... A good portion of that..."

From the above quotation, we know what Lakunle is referring to (i.e. Sidi's breast) but because Yoruba custom forbids pornographic words, Lakunle uses a more civil and acceptable word. Since the society depicted in the play is Yoruba, the language use of the characters is characteristically Yoruba. There are, however, more relative variations in language use. This implies that Yoruba ethnography of speaking has an influencing force. Elders speak in riddles, adages and proverbs. Educated persons too speak in proverbs. Lakunle, whose dress depicts Western culture, speaks not a deep-rooted language. But because of his village background, he still uses one or two adages. He says:

"That is what the stew pot said to the fire
Have you no shame - at your age?
Licking my bottom..."

Sidi is a typical African lady. She also often uses proverbs typical of the Yoruba. She, however, sometimes speaks good English. Sadiku is an illiterate woman who struggles to pronounce the word "barbarian". She says:

"...Just what I said but she only laughed at me and called me a... a...what is it now a bra ...braba...brabararian."

Baroka looks educated; he speaks in proverbs like a typical African Chief. He also uses language more maturely compared with Lakunle or Sidi. In the play, we have the following examples of the use of proverbs or wise sayings:

"What is a jewel to pigs" (p. 3)
"Romance is the sweetening of the soul" (p. 10)
"Shame belongs only to the ignorant" (p. 5)
"A man must live or fall by true principles" (p. 61)
"It's a human failing never to accept the worst" (p. 29)

When Barokais explaining to Sidi that as a King he also has problems (that is, uneasy lies the head that wears the crown) he says:

"Those who know little of Baroka think
His life is one pleasure - living course
But the monkey sweats, my child,
The monkey sweats,
It is only the hair upon his back
Which still deceives the world"

While admonishing Sidi that he is entitled to some privacy, he asks her:

“Is a man’s bedroom
To be made naked to any flea
That chances to wonder through?”

And later, Baroka asks:

“Do you think The Lion has such leisure that he asks
The whys and wherefore of a woman’s squint?”

One of the discourse features which make the language use of the characters distinctively African is the use of Yoruba vernacular. During Sidi’s marriage to Baroka, the musicians sing Yoruba songs :

“Moteni Moteni
Moteni Moteni
Sun mo mi, wamo mi
Yarabilo m’ eyi o le d’ omo”

This can be interpreted thus: I spread the mat, come closer to me, draw closer to me, hold me tight, only God knows which will turn into a child. There are other Yoruba songs and words in the play.

Code – switching: In *The Lion and the Jewel*, code-mixing and code-switching are two important discourse features that play prominent roles. For instance, Baroka speaking to Lakunle says:

“Akowe, Teacherwa. Misiter Lakunle” (p.16)

Baroka goes on to say:

“gurumorin gurumorin ngh-nn!
This is all we get from beer, but all you is
gurumorin, will guru morin wet throat?” (16)

Sadiku, speaking to Sidi, admits:

“Not me alone girl, you too Every woman oh my daughter,
That I have lived to see this day... To see him
fizzle with drabbest puff of a misprimed ‘Sakabula”.

Baroka says to Sidi:

“...I grew to love Tanwiji — with a good dose of pepper”.

Paralinguistic Analysis

Dialogue is one of the most prominent discourse features in the play. In the various dialogues, the culture of turn-taking, the use of appropriate pauses, voice modulation and some paralinguistic cues are respected and followed. Leering, gazing, head nod, pointing accusing fingers at somebody, gesticulating, frowning, etc. are all non-verbal ways of communicating one’s feelings to the listener or hearer. Dancing and miming are also discourse strategies in Yoruba land. These strategies convey vital information and message. There are dances of various types: dance of death (dance macabre) engaged in during funeral ceremonies, hunters’ saga and initiation rites. There is also a merry-making dance, jeering dance, dance of joy, promiscuous dance, courting dance, wedding dance, etc. Soyinka uses mime, dance, and songs to stimulate the audience emotion. The

musician's Yoruba songs during Sidi's marriage to Baroka are enchanting. The prisoners too sing their own songs which are very humorous and arresting.

Soyinka's portrayal of some characters like Lakunle is subtle. Lakunle according to Durosimi (1973) appears to be a comic character, but there is an underlying pathos arising from the recognition of the fact that Lakunle has a split personality, the two separate halves of which are exemplified in his linguistic behaviour. Soyinka's criticism shows both the real Lakunle which he(Lakunle) tries to hide and the pre-possessing, witty, westernized scholar which he poses to be. He openly denounces the Bale for his backwardness because the Bale is a polygamist, a position which Lakunle secretly envies as shown in his ambivalent utterances. With a startled frame, his mind wanders off in an unconscious admiration of Baroka:

Lakunle:

"Voluptuous beast! He loves his life too well to bear to part from it ...all those concubines Baroka has selective eyes, none suits him. But the best (His eye truly lights up) Yes. One must grant him that. Ah! I sometimes wish I led his kind of life. Such luscious bosoms make his mighty pillow. I am sure he keeps a time-table just as I do at school ...I don't know what the woman sees in him... He must possess some secrets ...No. I do not envy him! Just the one woman for me. Alone I stand for progress, with Sidi as my chosen soul-mates, the one woman of my life..."

Lakunle's style changes from a natural linguistic register to a more colloquial speech. His speeches reveal a potentially disastrous mental confusion. The defeating device is usually provided within Lakunle's speech which robs him of the validity, if any, of his utterances. Lakunle is not just a whimsical creation of the playwright; such cultural misfits abound in the society, and this is typical of the half-baked African personality who sees nothing in African culture, but who on his own is a caricature of the culture he stands for.

CONCLUSION

The Lion and the Jewel is a play which is anchored on Yoruba ethnography of speaking, where the culture of respect and speech norms are religiously observed. Most of the characters are therefore archetypes, representing different classes, educational standards, status, values and cultural ethos in any Yoruba speech community where people believe that "discourse is in the face". It is believed that a discursive rendition of this type will shed more light on the language use of the various characters in the play. The paper illustrated, with copious examples, the concept of Speech Act, and Hymes' acronym SPEAKING. The playwright is believed to be a difficult author, and this particular play is feared by students because of its complex diction and syntax. An understanding of the sociology of language, a good grasp of the ethnography of speaking and the rules governing speech norms in Yoruba culture will certainly help students in the interpretation of the text.

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Author's Biography: Anthony A. Olaoye was born at Okerimi-Oro, in Irepudun Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria on the 2nd April, 1949. The author has B.A. (Ed) English/Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria, 1978; M.Ed Curriculum and Instruction, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria, 1982; M.A. English Language, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria, 1986; Ph.D, English Language (Sociolinguistics) Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria, 1992. The author's major field is Applied Linguistics. He has taught English Language and Methodology in a College of Education, and has worked in six different universities in Nigeria, where he taught English Language and Applied Linguistics as a Senior Lecturer. He has 50 publications, with four books: *Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, 2002; *Aspects of Applied Linguistics*, 2008; *Linguistics in Language Education*, 2009 and *General Studies English: A Practical Guide for Tertiary Institutions*, 2009. His previous and current research interest is in Sociolinguistics and Ethnography of Communication. He is a member of ten Professional Associations.