A PRAGMATIC ANALIYSIS OF "IF I WERE OLÓDÙMARÈ" IN BAYO LAWAL'S *MELODREMS*

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Abstract

Literature-based English language curriculum especially where the literature content is diverse, robust and vibrant is bound to enhance the English Language competence by learners because man as a social animal deploys language in every day situation and affair. The notion that language is employed to do things, and that the meaning and forms used to achieve such task is largely premised on the social-cultural context has made it worthy of thorough investigation, discussion and interpretation. This is premised on the manifestation of man's social-cultural beliefs and thoughts. The study therefore pragmatically analyses the poem "if I were Olódùmarè" to reflect the goings in the society and how some individuals would have dealt with recalcitrants, and the wicked souls in the society. The poem "If I were Olódùmarè" is written in line form, and it serves as the primary source of data using pragmatics tools such as assertives, commissives, declaratives, directives and expressives. The finding of the study indicates that the use of commissive and expressive speech acts have 15 frequencies representing 30% each, next to the commissive and expressive acts in ratio of occurrence are assertive and expressive acts with 8 frequencies representing 16% each while directive speech act has 4 frequencies representing 8%. Inferences are drawn from the discussion of the study thus concluding that the poem shows a set of heterogeneous illocutionary acts of commissives, expressives, assertives, declaratives and directives in order of frequencies. It could therefore be concluded that the pragmatic analysis of the poem checkmates and shows the excesses and tyrannical nature of people (rulers) and the would-be-consequences that would be meted out to the wicked if human beings were to be like Olódùmarè, the Supreme God.

Keywords: "Olódùmarè", Cosmology, Socio-cultural, Minstrelmorality, Prodigy, Glimpse and Vengeful face

Introduction

Learners in schools and colleges must be equipped with English language competence and strong awareness if they are to effectively and efficiently use English for oral and written communications within and outside the school system (Onukaogu, 2002). Onukaogu admits further that English language competence gives students mastery of the English grammar i.e. linguistic competence and competence in the appropriate use of English grammar i.e. communicative competence. This implies that English language awareness would enable students to intellectually reason regarding English grammar or system and enhance their effective evaluation of oral or written communication in order to see whether it is in line with standard usage (Thomas in Onukaogu, 2002). Thomas opines that besides, English language competence would enhance their reflective and critical thinking so that they can be effective in that creative and be effective in their creative and critical use of English. Onukaogu (2000) contends that a literature-based English language curriculum especially where the literature content is diverse, robust and vibrant is bound to enhance the English language competence. In line with the above assertion, Olaleye (2015) affirms that man as a social animal deploys language in every day situation and affair. The notion that language is employed to do things, and that the meaning and forms used to achieve such task is largely premised on the social-cultural context has made it worthy of thorough investigation, discussion and interpretation. This is premised on the manifestation of man's social-cultural beliefs and thoughts.

Olaleye contends further that it is quite impossible to divest man of his thoughts, beliefs and the milieu in which he lives and finds himself. By implication, all these have effects on what man is, and what he eventually becomes in his milieu. Reflecting man in his milieu has as its main drive towards the reflections and happenings in his society. It is therefore very imperative at this point to stress that literature cannot be divorced from man, his culture and language, knowing full well that whenever a discussion is made about man, literature, language and culture are always involved.

Literature could be a drama, poetry or prose piece, and in whatever genres any literature work is written, it essentially captures the reality of human experiences via its employment of various aesthetics, such as language, plot, and characterisation, among others. This statement affirms that all the genres of literature are appendages of

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literature, and literature is a sub-set of language. Thus, literature does not exist in the absence of a language and it is also significant to the growth of language due to the strategic role it plays in the society as a whole. According to Ayeleru (2012), poetry, the thrust of this study is a work of art which is characterised by the presence of imagination, emotion, truth, sense of expression and concrete language expressed rhythmically. Ayeleru stresses further that it is a tool that is employed by man to express feelings and thoughts, divided into stanzas, lines or verses to concretise ideas using figurative language, among others. Similarly, Bala (2011) affirms that poets often have different things to say and they use language skilfully, artistically and aesthetically to convey their messages. The form of artistic language used by poets has often repelled the interest and attitude of some people in societies generally.

Pragmatics

The term pragmatics according to Thomas (1995) and Adegbija (1999) came into being as a reaction to the polemics from the inadequacies of semiotics, semantics and sociolinguistics in handing meaning related philosophies. Morris (1938)says pragmatics deals with the biotic aspects of semiotics i.e. with all the psychological, biological and sociological phenomena which occur in the functioningof signs. Lawal (2003) avers that pragmatics is the study of how context influences our interpretation of utterances i.e. the linguistics of utterances. In another development Adegbija (1999) succinctly sees pragmatics as the study of language use in particular communicative contexts or situations. Allan (1986) sees pragmatics as the study of interactional meaning, while Adegbija (1999) views it as the study of linguistic acts and the contexts in which they are performed, to mention but a few definitions. However, among the several definitions of pragmatics, we shall employ the one that defines pragmatics as the study of deixis (at least in part), implicature, presupposition, speech acts and aspects of discourse structure. This definition has a broad scope and thus appears suitable for an analysis of poetry.

Theoretical Perspective of the Study

Yule (2002) posits that language users employ language in diverse ways to achieve different objectives and goals, and that the use of language is dynamic. Based on this assertion, it is the dynamism associated with language that gives poets the opportunity to make the utmost use of poetic license. Poetry is an aspect of literature that creates the platform for the manipulation and domestication of language. In their own contributions, Crystal (1987) and Odebumi (2006) submit that context is the spine of meaning and the environment in which communication takes place. Similarly, Lawal (1995) identifies contexts is terms of linguistic, situational, psychological, social, sociological and cosmological. The linguistic context is the relationship that exists among words in an utterance; situational context relates to the topic of the discourse and the factors of the physical event which include concrete objectives, persons and locations; psychological context refers to the background of the mood , attitudes and personal beliefs of the language user; social context is connected with interpersonal relations among interlocutors; sociological context explains or describes the socio-cultural and historical settings of environment; while the cosmological context seems to be the broadest because it refers to the language users worldview and the implicit references to the world or aspect of it, and certain universally established facts (Ayodabo, 2012).

In the light of the above, it is germane to emphasise that pragmatics cannot be discussed without recourse to context, since the former is the study of the way utterances are used and how they are related to the context in which they are expressed. Similarly, Austin (1962) avows that language is deployed for diverse uses such as rebuking, warning commending, commanding, etc. Austin categorises speech act types into locution, illocution and perlocution. Also, Searle (1969) contends that speakers/writers of utterances/expressions are always elastic and ambivalent in meaning. It is also true that there is mutual socio-cultural, linguistic and religious background knowledge in the form of mental structure of the participants which is referred to as "speech act schemata" that has been hitherto referred to as mutual contextual beliefs (MCBs).

Methodology

The poem "If I were Olódùmarè" is written in line form, and the poem serves as the primary source of data.
The "Olódùmarè" (Olódùmarè is the Supreme Being in Yoruba cultural belief)
"If I wereOlódùmarè"
Truth would be constant
And justice instance,
Liars would bleed to death
Through their mouth
And corpses would be revived,

Armed with the butcher's sward
To hack down the murdering maniac

I would fling gates wide-open
To let out villagers
From cages of fear and illusion,
Mount in village squares
Giant screens
On which the secrets of savage cults
Would be unveiled
To bear to rustic eyes
To private sins of pious chieftains

Before casting them into bonfires
Fuelled with the spoils of plunder
They would be stripped nude
Dragged along bumpy–dusty reads,
On which they flaunt their sleek horses,
Their crowns and costumes
And the props of their palaces
Heaped into the furious flame.
Their queens,

Emergency minstrels of morality,
Would be shocked into trance
And self-confession of treachery
Before they would be forced to follow
The tragic trial of tyrants.

I would transform into cold statues
The stooges and siblings of misrule
For offspring born and unborn
To learn and recall forever
The course and cost of complicity
I would even make royal children,
Grandchildren,
And great grandchildren
Relive the agonies of forebears!

But in His own Benevolence
Olódùmarè judges silently
And allows mortals to tug ceaselessly
At the lasting rope of His patience.
Ubiquitous but unseen,
Aged but undying
The supreme is the Fullness of Excellence.
Pardon me Olódùmarè,
The sacrilege of seeing You
Through this labyrinth of blasphemy

Just our passionate plea,
Prodigy:
Adjourn reason,
The rule less
Suspend no more
Judgment for the just

Those monsters and their minstrels
May glimpse your vengeful face
And drift less to doom deferred.

Interpretation of the Poem "If I were Olódùmarè"

Olódùmarè, God, the Supreme Being in Yoruba belief, if the writer were the Supreme Being, lies would not be allowed anywhere in the entire universe, while the tenet of justice will reign supreme. But conversely, where liars show their recalcitrant intent, they would be made to pay the supreme price. And that the innocent dead ones shall be revived and be made to avenge their killing using dreadful killing machetes. If the writer were Olódùmarè, the Supreme Being, he would cause complete freedom for all against lies, fears, corruption, misdemeanor; he would make open the secrets of the oppressors and tyrants. If the writer were Olódùmarè, he would nicked, humiliate and disgrace the oppressors and tyrants before he puts them in the hell fire for torture and condemnation without considering their affluence and personalities, all their belongings, powers, charming wives and prides would be valueless and would be all gone, the action which would appear to them as magic or impossible adventure. A dream as they would assume the whole handiwork of the writer who assumes if he were Olódùmarè, the oppressors and tyrants would then tend to regret and confess their misdemeanors, but it would have been too late for such an act, and so, would have to go the doom way. If the writer wereOlódùmarè, the Supreme Being, he would make the images of the oppressors and tyrants and their sycophants mockingly for generations to see as deterrent for generations. By so doing, the writer, if he were Olódùmarè, would make the children of the pious ones to have good living as against the lives of the children of the wicked.

But, the Supreme Being, the Omnipresent, the Omniscience (and other attributes), judges and deals with man with patience, sympathy and empathy, for He is ever forging. However, when the writer realises that he is just an ordinary immortal, and that his overzealousness makes him ruthless in judging other fellow man, he then shows remorse, tenders apologies to the Supreme Being. Pleading to the Supreme Being for his ruthlessness, the writer became sober and very remorseful, as such, relying on God, Olódùmarè, TheSupreme Being for supreme judgment for people especially the righteous.

Pragmatic Instruments

Kempson (1977) espouses that pragmatics is expected to be the explanation of how it is that speakers of any language can use the sentence of that language to convey messages which do not bear any relation to the linguistic content of the sentence . In line with the above, the speech act theory developed by Austin (1962) is very relevant because it deals with how to do things with words. This speech act theory was a reaction against ordinary language of philosophers who uphold the semantic "truth condition" that is inadequate for explaining speaker or utterance meaning. Austin is usually reported to have distinguished between causatives and performative in his work. In lending a voice to Austin, Thomas (1995) is of the view that statements too are seen to have a performative aspect, and what is now important is distinguishing between the truth condition aspect of any statement and the action it performs between the meaning of the speakers' words and their illocutionary forces.

Austin's (1962) classifications are in the categories of verdictives, executives, commissives, behavitives and expositives, while Searle's (1969) categorisation is based on the deficiencies discovered in the Austin's classification. However, Ayodabo (2012) and Levinson (1983) contend that Searle (1969) came up with five classes of representatives, directives, commissives, expressive and declaratives,with other sub-categories and their definitions. Any utterance is either making assertion or performing actions, as such, Lawal's poem "if I were Olódùmarè" contains utterances that are germaned on constatives and performatives. All the constatives and performatives used in the poem give insight to what would have been the author's action "If he were Olódùmarè". Drawing intention and inference from the poem, the intention represents both the search procedure and justification used by the write thus making his listeners or readers to identify the writer's illocutionary intent, while inference from the poem represents the locutionary intent of the writer. The intention and inference of the poem led to the percautionary intent or response as evident in the poem.

Analysis of the Poem "If I were Olódùmarè"

The poem "If I were Olódùmarè" by Lawal's *Melodreams* is the source of data for the study. The poem is written in six stanzas from where twenty (20) utterances were picked for analysis because these utterances have at least one or more speech act forms.

Contexts

Departing from the surface structure of linguistic trends where illocutionary acts are examined, context is a level of deep structural interpretation of meaning. The study under context, examines the situational, psychological and social contexts related especially regarding their relevance to the analysis of the poem under study. It is pertinent to methodologically group them together for the purpose of situating the speech within a concentric nexus of meaning relations. In line with the above, Lawal (2003) agrees that language and contexts are intricately interwoven and that a piece of language can create its own context(s) and conversely contain contexts of social interaction which tend to predetermine their own language forms. A poetic intent such as one in this study has peculiar registers. These registers (linguistic choices) differ from other macro-speech act contexts such as a family setting, market scene, church/mosque worship service or garage scene. The context of the poem "If I were Olódùmarè" is socio-cultural. The writer mentions:

"If I were Olódùmarè"
Truth would be constant
And justice instance
Liars would bleed to death

"…corpses would be revived, armed with butcher's sward, …hack down the murdering maniac, I would fling gates wide open, to let out villagers from cages of fear and illusion, mount in village squares giant screens, to bear to rustic eyes to private sins of pious chieftains, before casting them into bonfire fuelled with the spoils of plunder, they would be stripped nude, dragged along humpy-dusty roads, on which they flaunt their sleek horses, their crowns and costumes and the props of their palaces heaped into the furious flame, would be shocked to trance, …before they would be forced to follow the tragic trails of tyrants, …his benevolence, Olódùmarè judges silently, and allows mortals to the tug ceaselessly at the lasting rope of his patience, ubiquitous but unseen, aged but undying, pardon me, Olódùmarè, the sacrilege of seeking You through this labyrinth of blasphemy, just one passionate plea, prodigy: adjourn less the rule of reason suspend no more, judgment for the judge."

The Cosmological and Socio-cultural Contexts of "If I were Olódùmarè"

The social context of the poem is said to be understood as explained earlier. But the cosmological context if thoroughly examined would justify the present socio-cultural trends in the entity we call Nigeria. Cosmologically, the country called Nigeria has socio-politico-cultural meted out to her citizens by her leaders, the corrupt leaders. This is evident in stanza III references made in the poem "…before casting them into bonfires Fuelled with the spoils of plunder, they would be stripped nude, dragged along humpy-dusty roads on which they flaunt their sleek horses, their crowns and costumes and the pops of their palaces".

Linguistic Context and Deixis

The poet's choice of words is based on the seeming trend of tyrannical ways of life of leaders. The poet uses such utterances as "truth would be constant, and justice instance, liars would bleed to death through their mouth in stanza I"; his use if "I" is a personal deixis used to perform commissive acts (commitments).

Speech Act Structure of "If I were Olódùmarè"

In speech act theory, Searle (1979) posits that any utterance is either making assertion or performing actions. The twenty identified utterances exemplify constatives and performatives. Searle further classifies speech acts into five broad categories as assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declaratives. Assertive speech acts according to Searle, is referred to as representative speech acts because they reflect the speaker's belief, and that the purpose of assertive class is to commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition. Assertive speech acts are statements of fact. Directive speech acts happen when the speaker wants the listener or reader to do something as a response to information. Commissive speech acts also known as intended acts imply a type of utterance where the speaker makes a commitment to a further cause of action. Commissive speech acts are characterised by verbs such as offer, swear, promise, volunteer, vow, assuring, threats, among others. Expressive speech acts occur in utterances when the speaker expresses his or her psychological state to the listener or reader. They are also characterised by verbs like thanks, promises, apologises or welcomes, among other examples, while declarative speech acts are statements that can bring about a change in status or conditions to an object by virtue of the statement itself. This means that when declarative speech acts are uttered, perlocutionary effect is immediately felt on the hearer of the utterance. They are characterised by verbs such as passing sentences, issuing a warning, inciting, declaring, and resigning, among several other verbs in this category.

Presupposition, Implicature and Mutual Contextual Beliefs

The variables listed above are the necessary background pivots upon which an interpretation of meaning in a particular context must have, to strengthen all the aforementioned inferential or utterances. The variables are interrelated, but they have to be so identified and brought into this study because when a speaker takes certain information for granted, he implies more. Interpreting an utterance or implicature correctly depends on the cosmological knowledge and the mutual contextual beliefs existing between the speaker and the listener so that the essence of the information would remain relevant. The implied information then goes through an inferential process to be carried out by the listener.

Table 1: Illocutionary Acts from the Poem

Samples	Illocutionary Acts		Tally					Typologies	
	Direct	Indirect	A	C	Di	Dii	E	Constatives	Performatives
1	Direct	Indirect		1			1	Dii	E
2	,,	,,		1			1	C	E
3	,,	,,		1	1		1	C	E
4	,,	,,		1	1		1	C, Di	E
5	,,	,,		1	1		1	C, Di	E
6	,,	,,		1	1		1	C, Di	E
7	,,	,,		1	1		1	C	E
8	,,	,,		1	1		1	C, Di	E
9	,,	,,		1	1		1	C	E
10	,,	,,		1			1	C	E
11	,,	,,		1			1	C	E
12	,,	,,		1			1	C	E
13	,,	,,	1	1			1	C	E
14	,,	,,	1	1			1	C	E
15	,,	,,	1	1			1	C	E
16	,,	,,	1					A	
17	,,	,,	1			1		A, Dii	
18	,,	,,	1			1		A, Dii	
19	,,	,,	1			1		A, Dii	
20	,,	,,	1			1		A, Dii	

Key: A= Assertives
C= Commissives
Di= Declaratives
Dii= Directives
E= Expressives

Table 2: Frequencies of Illocutionary Acts

Number	Acts	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Assertives	8	16
2	Commissives	15	30
3	Declaratives	8	16
4	Directives	4	8
5	Expressives	15	30
Total		50	100

Discussion

Analyses in Tables 1 and 2 indicate that the use of commissive and expressive speech acts have 15 frequencies representing 30% each, next to the commissive and expressive acts in ratio of occurrence are assertive and expressive acts with 8 frequencies representing 16% each while directive speech act has 4 frequencies representing 8%. The analysis is indicative of Bayo Lawal's "If I were Olódùmarè" for using his pragmatic prowess to assert some truths, facts and his psychological state of mind. These are possible on the premise of the writer/reader or

speaker/listeners' understanding of the socio-cultural instance of Nigeria cum the mutual contextual beliefs (MCBs) that are shared in the typical Nigeria context.

Conclusion

Inferences are drawn from the discussion of the study thus concluding that the poem "If I wereOlódùmarè" by Bayo Lawal's *Melodreams* shows a set of heterogeneous illocutionary acts of commissives, expressives, assertives, declaratives and directives in order of frequencies. It could therefore be concluded that the pragmatic analysis of the poem checkmates and shows the excesses and tyrannical nature of people (rulers) and the would-be-consequences that would be meted out to the wicked if human beings were to be like Olódùmarè, the Supreme God.

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