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Résumé

Le choix d'une diction, d'une technique narrative et de toutes les implications pragma-esthétiques du parler du locuteur africain est important pour le lecteur de la littérature africaine, s'il doit comprendre son thème.

La tendance des écrivains africains de langue anglaise à absorber les nuances locales doit être considérée comme un mécanisme stylistique valable en dépit de la position de la langue anglaise. La faculté de s'adapter aux goûts naturels traduit l'intention des écrivains d'atteindre un public plus large. Par conséquent, la tentative des écrivains de 'décolorer' par la littérature la culture africaine 'polluée', passe bien par l'utilisation de notions appropriées et de nuances locales. La technique consistait habituellement à consigner des modes de vie traditionnels, les coutumes des populations, des activités collectives comme les festivals, les cérémonies, les rituels, les mythes, les contes populaires, les proverbes, la musique, la danse, les chansons, etc. afin de rappeler au lecteur africain l'importance de ces éléments essentiels de la tradition, en plus de l'appropriation du langage utilisé.

Par conséquent, on peut affirmer que les fondements de la plupart des écrits africains plongent dans l'héritage culturel de leurs différents groupes, en utilisant ce que l'on peut qualifier d'anglais africain techniquement implanté, de néographies africaines, de traductions directes, de proverbes, d'idiomes locaux, de transferts des langues maternelles, d'insertions locales, etc. Il ne suffit donc pas de recourir à une approche sociologique, formaliste et résiduelle de la littérature dans les discussions concernant un ensemble culturel d'individus. Dans tout discours sur la littérature africaine, il faut considérer l'approche pragmatique comme primordiale. Le pragmatisme implique l'adaptation de la langue aux besoins ou aux attentes du contexte social du lecteur.

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Abstract

The propensity of the English language to absorb native nuances by the African writers should be seen as a worthwhile stylistic device, despite the position of English language. Its adaptability to natural flavours should therefore be aimed at the writers' intention to reach a wider audience. This also means that the attempt by writers to decolorize through literature the polluted African culture goes through the use of appropriate notions and local nuances. The technique has, however, been to put on record traditional ways of life, the peoples' customs, communal activities such as festivals, ceremonies, rituals, myths, folktales, proverbs, music, dance, songs, etc. in order to remind the African reader about the importance of these crucial aspects of the tradition in addition to the appropriation of language use.

Hence most African writings can be said to have their foundations in the cultural heritage of their various groups through the use of what one may call technically implanted African English, African coinages, direct translations, proverbs, local idioms, transfers of mother tongues, local insertions, etc. Hence it is not enough to use the sociological and residual approaches to literature. The formalist and pragmatic approaches should also be considered paramount in the writing of African literature. For the choice of diction, narrative technique and the entire pragma-aesthetic implications the African man's speech is important to the reader of African literature, if he is to understand the theme

The appropriation of linguistic forms for better cognitive comprehension of the Nigerian pragmatic literature .

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Introduction

Pragmatics is the study of how context influences interpretation. Sentence meaning and speaker's meaning are two different things. Sentence meaning is the literary meaning where as the speaker's meaning is the concept that the speaker is trying to convey through signs and local expressiveness, according to his/her understanding i.e. his/her intuitive background situation.

The literary artist goes beyond the recreation culture. He aims at actually redesigning society. Meaning that literature in African is not just a visual and auditory art but also a critical medium. The African writer attempts to criticize, communicate with his people and argues for a change in the wrong order of things. He is in fact an auditor of the socio-cultural order. The parallel relationship between literature and language therefore needs to be established. This will help us to properly see the use of language for socio-cultural expression. Literature is creativity and writers make use of deliberate language, such as local insertions, familiar dictions and domestic imageries in order to depict Africanity. i.e. promote African culture and enhance reality. Without domestic familiarity, the aim of the theory of realism would be defeated. Besides, communication and information process will be hampered. The African creative imagination makes use of a socialized form of the communication medium, i.e. (language and style) to achieve its ultimate goals.

The case with African writings is a kind of synthesis of literary theories. Most themes are premised on religion, ritual, sacrifices, etc., since this kind of literature observes culture not as a static form, but as a dynamic element incorporating and adapting to modern trends, with the aim of effecting changes and protecting the peasants in the face of capitalism. The emergent theory cannot be omitted from the device of employing local flavours in foreign language use. Generally speaking, and as noticed by many African critics, Pratt and Traugott (1980: 2-50) say that:

Without language, culture would be impossible because it is through language that community aspirations and ways of life are created.

What this means is that the use of the people's language will better indicate the Africaness of a piece of work about a set of people. To buttress this, Tinuoye (1994: 5) says "language is human specific. It is what gives a vivid and clear expression to human thought and interaction". B. K. Whorf (1939: 63-8) also observes that

We dissect nature along laid down rules by our natural language... the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic mind - and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds.

Nigerian literature from its earliest residual times is exemplified below as pragmatic literature: a literature harboring its people's contextual nuances.

In prose records, Amos Tutuola wrote and published *The Palm Wine Drunkard* in 1952. It is regarded as the first Nigerian novel accepted internationally as result of its native genuineness of Yoruba diction. Earlier, D.O Fagunwa had written three volumes of novels *Igbo Olodumare* 1947, *Ireke Onibudo* 1949, *Ogboju-Ode Ninu Igbo* 1963, as well as two other volumes *Irinkerindo Ninu Igbo Elegbeje* 1954 and *Aditu Olodumare* 1961. Both writers chose to write in Yoruba for native comprehensibility. However, critics initially regarded their works as rather unconventional. Ekwensi published *People of the City* in 1954. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, published in 1952, became highly acclaimed and brought Nigerian literature into international focus. Achebe followed this with *No Longer at Ease* in 1960, and *Arrow of God* 1964. Other notable novels of the sixties and early seventies include Cyprian Ekwensi's *Burning Grass*, *Beautiful Feather*, M. T. Aluko *One man one wife*, *One man one matchet*, *Chief the Honourable Minister*, Onuora Nzekwu *Word of Noble Word*, *Blade Among the Boys*, Wole Soyinka's *The Strong Breed*, *The Interpreters*, among others.

The disruptive effect of slave trade, and adverse effect of colonialism in the culture and life of the people form major preoccupation of these writers. With the attainment of independence, critics aimed to satirise the emergent writers such as Cyprian Ekwensi, M.T Aluko, Chinua Achebe, Zainab Alkali and other emerging writers who dwelt on topical societies issues, like the Nigerian Civil war, Military Rule, corruption in the society, etc.

On Drama, early plays staged by amateur dramatists and renowned playwrights, though didactic, were largely based on the Christian faith and therefore verbosely saturated with religious language. Ogunde, the doyen of Nigerian drama, started professional acting in 1945 during the famous railway general strike. Between 1947-1948, he went on an acting tour in Ghana. He also travelled extensively overseas to learn play-acting and stage-craft in other parts of the world. Each of his tours brought noticeable improvement in his plays and performance. Ogun-

dele's troupe became even more popular with the advent of television in the old Western Region in 1959. His two plays moved from the realm of entertainment to politics in 1964. His two plays *Olito Koro* (1962) and *Yoruba Ronu* (1964), in 1965 brought him into collision with the Western Region Government, resulting in his being banned from performing in this region in 1965.

Duro Ladipo brought the rich Yoruba culture into focus in his plays as well. This earned him a place in the newly established Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Ibadan in 1965. He also featured in various international arts festivals. His famous plays include *Oba Koso* (1963) and *Oba Waja* (1964). Ogumola and Jimoh Aliu are other travelling theatre groups that endeavour to re-awake the Nigerian culture past with all its glory and splendour.

Wole Soyinka returned from England and formed the 1960 Masks. He was also closely associate with the University of Ibadan Travelling Theatre and *Orisun* Theatre. Soyinka had a brief stint with acting, stage directing and playwriting in the Royal Court Theatre in Britain. His early works, *The Swamp Dwellers* and *The Trial of Brother Jero* were successful staged in Lagos in 1959, shortly before his arrival in the Country. He had actually been commissioned by the Government to commemorate Nigeria Independence Celebrations in 1960: *A Dance of The Forest*, was staged for that purpose. Soyinka became involved in the political situation of the country. His play *Kongi's Harvest* satirises the ruling class and he became arrested in 1967 and detained until 1970.

In Eastern Nigeria, plays written by J.P. Clerk were staged and directed by talented producers like John Kwere. Elder Fiberesima from the Rivers State also produced plays. Dr. Enshaw also wrote plays for secondary schools. One of his most popular plays staged nation-wide is *This Is Our Chance*.

Most of these early plays perceived essentially as mere entertainments, as some were staged to mock the political leaders. However, they actually serve to revive our cultural past with all its glory and greatness, using appropriate flavours of native diction. Other earlier comedians of early seventies include Adejumo, popularly called Baba Sala. He started comic acting in 1969. Also on the Nigerian drama scene are Afolayan alias Dele Love, Ojo Ladipo called Baba Mero, Bayo Salami called Bello and Sunday Bolanle called Aluwe, prominent actors in this group. They dramatise serious topical issues like bribery, corruption, barrenness, the Nigerian marriage system, unemployment and the problem of urban cities, in a comic, hilarious way. The plays serve to ease the tension in the audience but at the same time drive home important messages on issues raised. Although those categorized here are Yoruba plays, they used English dictions with certain intonations to make a mockery of "their masters", who brought "their freedom" but rather became integrated into society, with the advent of the notorious world of slave trade. A second mode of slavery in the social set up necessitated the "Africaness" to use the native

language of the people's literature to create the traditional ways for life, through the maximisation of native sense and wisdom integrated in the foreign language. To the Nigerian readers, therefore, the native language is richer, better understood as it carries loaded messages.

In poetry, John Pepper Clark was born in Kiagbodo in Ijaw, the Midwestern state of Nigerian. His poetry makes extensive use of local imagery, symbol and ideas. And this localization of his themes produces perfect artistry, vivid analysis and description of actual situations.

The use of native nuances and environment picturesqueness facilitates adsorption of the acquired western tradition by the existing culture of the Ijaws of Nigeria. In this way, Clark presents a clear scene indicating an intense moment of emotion based on experience. This is why his poems become disturbing to the human mind. Clark successfully touches on the innermost mind of man by creating anxiety about the developing atmosphere of the Ijaw domestic situation. The uncertainty about the future and the general livelihood of the Ijaw person is the major portrayal of the poem:

What time of night it is
I do not know
Except that like some fish
I have hobbled up belly wise
from the stream of sleep
And no cocks crow.
It is drumming hard here
And I suppose everywhere
Droning with insistent ardor upon
Our roof thatch and shed
And thro' sheaves slit open
To lighting and rafters
I cannot quit make out overhead.

In K. E. Senanu and T. Vincent, (1976) *A selection of African Poetry* Longman Nig. Ltd. 139-40.

In this particular poem, the poet expresses sympathy regarding the living condition of the Nigerian average man. And the presentation of man is around nature. The poet's technical competence helps to create the rhythm built on detailed river scenes. The night image for instance is a depiction of the tranquillity of the environment and the innocence of its inhabitants. Line 2 of the poem further accentuates the innocence of the people living in abject poverty. Man is pre-supposedly weakened by nature, symbolized by rain coming through the leaking roof. Man is animated and degraded to a fish, through the use of the simile in line 3, comparing man to fish, as in "from stream of sleep" is a metaphor that is expressed in alliteration. The image of 'drum', 'roof', 'thatch', and 'shed' are indicators

of local sceneries. He further talks of shears, raters, orange, mango, fruits, beads, string wooden bowls, roomlet, bins, bags and vats, wood, loosening mat, owls, bats, iroko beds and earthen ware. The scenery is that of the poet's mother trying to protect her child and luggage from the rivulets that have formed on their poor floor. What is presented is an ironical indication of the function of the rain, which in the true sense is supposed to lull man to sleep and not make man 'bob like fish'.

Niyi Osundare's *Village Voices* which has the Nigerian Yoruba setting, is a poem that also makes use of the imagery of the local community with a rhythmic-al repetition of social, political, economic and logical activities of the people. The poet associates the reader intimately with the subject matter and also enables him/her to be involved in the activities that affect him/her.

The pleasantries of the ordinary people find expression. The poet poetizes the aspirations, perception and world view of the rustic populace. He does this by using the language of the ordinary man on the street. He talks about the hawker, the *moin-moin* (bean cake) seller, etc. By so doing, communication is enhanced. In this poem, the use of the traditional local flavours makes effective the comparisons and contrasts between modernity and traditionalism, the one being peaceful while the other is compelling. For this reason, Osundare's poem are referred to as 'voices' of anger and indictment, as a result of the loss of cultural harmony. The poet hammers on about the political greed in Nigeria. It becomes glaringly obvious that it is the use of the cultural element that helps bring out the poet's fine sentiments. His poetic complaints are "on notional insufficiency, commotion, in sensitivity and hypocrisy", all of which are responsible for making the land uneasy. Osundare laments the condition of the have-not and the poor, by using the image of a staple Nigerian-Ondo food yam. The young and the old are all being cheated, despite the buoyancy of the economy, as shown by the following lines of the poem:

The yam of this world is enough for all,
Mouths which pay daily homage. To the god of the throat
Enough for the aged avoiding days dust
And the young people of tomorrow
From mother's back

Osundare observed the leaders as people of no conscience towards humanity. And to deny a Nigerian his entitlement is a case of corruption and moral lapses not of lack of "enough".

Political chameleonic attitudes are exposed through the poet's use of language and this serves to highlight the bondage of unhappiness among the natives. Apart from the fact that the poem points to the wrongs of the society, it goes a little further to emphasis the need for us to be self-reliant and stop living on outside countries as a result of our incompetence, ineffectiveness and greed.

Osundare's poems in *'Village Voices'* are therefore satiric poems. They are

meant to laugh at the failure of our leaders. And the leaders, the poet says, should take their cue from Esimuda, a legendary warrior among the Ondo Yoruba, who fought for the people's survival using a large sword.

It is therefore out of ignorance that the word "patriotism" is very often used by our leaders themselves. To Osundare it is a word of enslavement. The populace therefore needs to be alerted to this, in order to effect a change in the status quo of the country.

This is why many critics have raised a few questions as to whether literary works written in English can be called African/Nigerian Literature. Language, they say, is culture and culture is language. Is it possible therefore to express the culture of a society in a foreign language? In other words, can Yoruba culture be vividly and adequately portrayed, if a literary work is in Hausa, Yoruba or Efik? A writer should be considered as one writing from experience. For instance, early Nigerian writers got their inspirations and material from religions and traditional beliefs, festivals, music, folktales and folklore. How can these be expressed in the western, unfamiliar idiom without losing their natural sense?

Towards a pragma-linguistic theory of literature

Although there exist various theoretical frameworks on African literature, Amuta (1989: 2), Eagleton (1976: 13) and Frye (1986: 110), a pragma-linguistic theory of language should be considered for any literary analysis involving language use. The current issue of dialectics in literary writings needs to be given special attention with regard to archetypes of language and style as transmitted into writing from the traditional linguistic compositions. To be able to effect this successfully, a change in the present status quo of Nigerians is needed. For example, the language, which the Nigerians understand, must be used. The concept of dialectics itself is the use of cultural materialism for effecting a change in society. And it is noteworthy therefore that language is a cultural material serving as a better critical approach to literary analysis in context. The language of a people cannot be left out of their literature. For language adaptation is used as a liberating force. The African people use the language they understand to free themselves from foreign intruders through the writing medium.

Therefore even the sociological approach, which is one of the literary theories, embodies the conservative cultural credentials and uses these credentials to bring out the African setting, themes, language and character types. The psychological approach also uses language to deal with the internal workings of the minds of the characters. The moral approach presents Africans through the preaching of humanism and ethics. The effectiveness of this is achieved through the use and

choice of diction, proverbs and local nuances. The evaluation of the Nigerian society is therefore based on moral codes derived from the existing practices of the society as exemplified in their literature. According to the users of this school of thought, art has no meaning if it does not reflect a given setting. Hence, the writer's concern is with the structure and form of a given society. Nigerian writers sometimes, though unconsciously, use the prehistoric areas of knowledge to articulate better, using their language message to explain the happening in the present world.

The Marxist approach is a newly recognized literary theory through which literature began to be organized as a weapon for social change. The weapon here is the manipulation of language in order to have the desired effect on the audience, the reader. It is only when the reader understands what is happening around him that reaction is possible. And understanding societal happenings can only be enhanced through an appropriate use of linguistic codes, symbols and imageries.

"Pragmatics is a distinct level of linguistic investigations that deals with utterances and the meanings of these utterances in the social context" (Korint 1992: 3 and Leech 1982: 24). Pragmatics according to Adegbija (1988) is the study of how communicative codes acquire meaning in the context of their use in relation to the participants and the non-linguistic setting in which the utterance occurred.

Furthermore, the works of Bach and Hamish (1979) and other pragmatists give in detail practical angles to the application of pragmatics to societal elements. For instance, Bach and Hamish developed the notion of mutual contextual beliefs (MCBS), which takes the world knowledge, the contextual background and the mutual beliefs of the participants in any conversation into consideration in decoding the meaning of their utterances. And Adegbija extends this notion to arrive at a more comprehensive one. He arrives at a "pragma-sociolinguistic" context of an utterance. Van Dijk (1977) opines that the meaning of a discourse expression is a function of its component expression and that the real interpretation of an expression is a mental act on the cognitive process of language users.

Naturally therefore, discussions on pragmatics lead to discussions on other applied concepts and theories such as semantics, syntax (grammar), discourse analysis, speech acts, co-operative principles, indirect speech acts, semiotics, etc. Since pragmatics overlaps, subsumes and embraces these linguistic areas, it is believed in most linguistic circles that "the study of speech act is a central concern of pragmatics". Also to Geoffrey Leech (1983) the fundamental premise of the pragmatics principle is based on the formal-fundamental paradigm that exists between semantics and pragmatics on one hand and pragmatics and syntax on the other hand. This view treats the three as co-tenants in the abode of linguistic analysis. Effective communication is therefore based on semantic and pragmatic use of language. A combination of these different relevant theories with emphasis on the

available linguistic contents is what is needed in any literary writing in Africa especially in Nigeria. Anozie (1981:85) rightly observes therefore, that the aesthetic enjoyment of a piece of work is made up of a multiplicity of excitements, moods, tones of expectations, disappointments all expressed by language use".

Eagleton (18976: 3) in his discussion on Marxist criticism mentions that the aim of the Marxist is also "to explain the literary work more fully using styles and meanings".

Conclusion

Since the white man uses language to write his own literature, African writers, to give more air of authenticity to African Nigerian writings, pay particular attention to the issue of effective communication and comprehension between them and their audience. And to achieve this desire effect, the writer cannot but bring into focus the language of the setting in which he writes. English language is still being used in Nigerian literature but it is used with an entirely local slant and translation for perfecting comprehension by the audience. By so doing, the "collective sentiments can be built upon a firm foundation of an identity and self recognition". Chinua Achebe's contention below supports the above opinion.

The African writer should aim at using English in a way that aims to bring out his message best... He should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience ... I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communication with its ancestral home and altered to suit its new African surroundings (1972).

Hence, better enrichment of Nigerian literature will serve to abate the continuous manifestation of the foreign language under the guise of the use of good grammar, good writings in English language. The language devised by the Nigerian writers is a medium of communicating their culture and wishes. Total emancipation can come from freedom in the choice of diction, local insertions, coinages and, in general, free use of language in context.

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Abstract

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Hence most African writings can be said to have their foundations in the cultural heritage of their various groups through the use of what one may call technically implanted African English, African coinages, direct translations, proverbs, local idioms, transfers of mother tongues, local insertions, etc. Hence it is not enough to use the sociological and residual approaches to literature. The formalist and pragmatic approaches should also be considered paramount in the writing of African literature. For the choice of diction, narrative technique and the entire pragma-aesthetic implications the African man's speech is important to the reader of African literature, if he is to understand the theme

Résumé

Le choix d'une diction, d'une technique narrative et de toutes les implications pragmatiques du parler du locuteur africain est important pour le lecteur de la littérature africaine, s'il doit comprendre son thème.

La tendance des écrivains africains de langue anglaise à absorber les nuances locales doit être considérée comme un mécanisme stylistique valable en dépit de la position de la langue anglaise. La faculté de s'adapter aux goûts naturels traduit l'intention des écrivains d'atteindre un public plus large. Par conséquent, la tentative des écrivains de 'décolorer' par la littérature la culture africaine 'polluée', passe bien par l'utilisation de notions appropriées et de nuances locales. La technique consistait habituellement à consigner des modes de vie traditionnels, les coutumes des populations, des activités collectives comme les festivals, les cérémonies, les rituels, les mythes, les contes populaires, les proverbes, la musique, la danse, les chansons, etc. afin de rap- peler au lecteur africain l'importance de ces éléments essentiels de la tradition, en plus de l'appropriation du langage utilisé.

Par conséquent, on peut affirmer que les fondements de la plupart des écrits africains plongent dans l'héritage culturel de leurs différents groupes, en utilisant ce que l'on peut qualifier d'anglais africain techniquement implanté, de néographies africaines, de traductions directes, de proverbes, d'idiomes locaux, de transferts des langues maternelles, d'insertions locales, etc. Il ne suffit donc pas de recourir à une approche sociologique, formaliste et résiduelle de la littérature dans les discussions concernant un ensemble culturel d'individus. Dans tout discours sur la littérature africaine, il faut considérer l'approche pragmatique comme primordiale. Le pragmatisme implique l'adaptation de la langue aux besoins ou aux attentes du contexte social du lecteur.

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