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A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Felix A. Akinsipe's *Dawn of Awareness*

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It is a general fact that no two individuals speak exactly the same way in the society because no two individuals have the same experience of language. The aim of this study is to examine the causes of differences in language use in the society and how it reflects social structure. Language use which correlates to social variables such as class, age, gender and setting in Felix. A. Akinsipe's The Dawn of Awareness was selected to prove that people signal aspect of their social identity through their language use. Results reveal that the sociolinguistic background of speakers is reflected through their language use. The contribution of this work is that it makes the society aware that social stratification affects language in reality.

Introduction to the Study

Language is a co-arbitrary vocal symbol by means of how a social group co-operate (Bloch and Trager, 1942, p.5). It is an important phenomenon in every society as it helps to convey the identity of the society. Language use in a society is the chain that connects the people of a speech community, as it is used to express our cultural beliefs which are seen through accent, name, dialect, and mode of dressing (which is a non-verbal communication). Language can be studied from different levels of analysis such as: Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Semantics, Pragmatics and Semiotics, among others. Adeniyi (2011, p.10) claims that language is described as a system of communication in written and oral forms, which is used by a particular set of people that share same culture, idea, beliefs and values. It is a means of social control which allows every member of a community to communicate and interact, that is, language is a societal tool, while society is any group of people who are drawn together for certain purpose or purposes (Wardhaugh, 2001, p.1). An aspect of linguistics which studies how the society affects language is Sociolinguistics.

Gumperz (1972, p.223) defines Sociolinguistics as an attempt to find correlations between social structure and linguistic structure and to observe any changes that occur. It is a language discipline that studies the use of language in the society, the influence of the society on the language and the effect of the language on the society. In other words, it studies how language functions across the structure of the society, home, family and so on. Sociolinguistics views language as a social phenomenon; something that cannot be studied in isolation, thus it brings out the relationship between language and society. Therefore, the preoccupation of this study is to examine how language use varies according to the social context by using a drama text *Dawn of Awareness* written by Felix. A. Akinsipe. Sociolinguistic analysis as a tenet of English Language will be used to analyze the drama text and sociolinguistic variables such as age, gender, setting, status, among others will be used in the analysis of the data. *Dawn of Awareness* is selected for the current study as it accurately reflects and portrays the societal happening.

Biography of the Author

Felix. A. Akinsipe is an actor, choreographer and researcher. He was born in Ondo, Ondostate, Nigeria. He holds a B.A. (Hons.) in Performing Arts and M.A. degree in Theatre Arts from University of Ilorin and Ibadan respectively. His published creative works includes: *Talking Bodies: A collection of Dance librettos* (2003) and *What Hope? And other plays* (2005), *Never and Never* (2006). He taught at the department of Theatre and Performing Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, briefly and presently teaches in the department of performing Arts, University of Ilorin.

Review of relevant literature

Sociolinguistics: An Overview

Morphologically, Sociolinguistics is developed from two parent bodies of 'sociology' and 'linguistics', which by implication means, "the social aspect of linguistics". Sociology is the scientific study of society and people's behaviour in various groups within the society, while linguistics is the language used in that society, Adeniyi (2011, p.21). Sociolinguistics has been defined in different ways by sociolinguists. According to Holmes (2001), Sociolinguistics is concerned with the relationship between a language and the content in which it is used to study the different types of linguistic variations to express and reflect social factors. In the opinion of Hall (2005, p.30), Sociolinguistics is interested in how the structured system of a language is represented, acquired and put to use and how they interface with nonlinguistic world at social groups. Sotiloye (1992) cited by Ayodabo-Olatunde (2007, p.99) states that sociolinguistics is the study of the norms of the society at large and examine how the individual exploits his awareness of the norm in order to achieve particular effects. Linking the two definitions together Sociolinguistics deals with how language is used among the social groups in the society. It is also the relationship between linguistics and non-linguistic element in the society.

Sociolinguistic Variables

Labov, (1972b) defines Sociolinguistic variables as one which is correlated with some non-linguistic variable of the social context. Labov (1972b) whose major Sociolinguistic investigation is on accent variation focused on the dialect and sociolect of a language. Labov's Variationist version of Sociolinguistics is a systematic and quantitative study of accent structures. This theoretical dimension posits that members of a speech community in most especially, urban centres, witness a lot of variations, changes and features in the language they speak. Corroborating Labov's work, Romaine (2000, p.64) affirms that, differences in language are actually, tied to social class, and that the discovery of this fact made sociolinguists turn their attention to "the language of cities where an increasing proportion of the world's population live". In a nutshell, urbanization breeds social stratification, which in turn, leads to linguistic variation. (Cited by Abdullahi- Idiagbon 2007, pp.126 -127).

Language and Age

Peccei (1989) cited in Abdullahi - Idiagbon (2007, p.128) says age is an important cultural category, an identity marker, and a factor in producing language variation within a speech community. Abdullahi - Idiagbon (2007, p128) claims Age which is an index of mental

maturity influences the language usage and use. Preston (1989) cited by Abdullahi -Idiagbon (2007, p.128) asserts that age could be influential to the use of language in two ways. First, age could mark a generational speech, thus, serving as an index to language change which may or may not survive the next generation. Secondly, and in particular, slang serves as an important measurement of age grading since age flourish more within teenagers and youth.

Language and Gender

Gender is often discussed in terms of biological role of male and female. Language variation according to gender is noticeable in male and female language use differences. Different researchers have come up with lots of findings that show the uniqueness between male and female use of language. Holmes (1992) observes that gender difference is one of the linguistic differences reflecting social status or power difference manifested in various responsibilities of men and women.

Language and Class

Class refers to the social position a particular language user belong to in the society and it usually determines the way a person uses a language. In other words, it means how one is rated in one cultural environment. Abdullahi-Idiagbon (2007, p.129) claims that differences in language use is also tied to the social class of the participants and that the class may be socioeconomically or educationally enhanced which could also be based on the occupation of such discourse participants.

Language and Setting

Setting is another social variable which makes the use of language vary. It is also known as context. It could be cultural or situational; it dictates the formality of language use which is also referred to as 'Domain'. Domain of language use was propounded by American sociolinguist called Joshua Fishman who claims that "Domain of language use involves the typical interaction between typical participants in a typical setting about a typical setting". Joes (1962) cited by Holmes(2001) describes five (5) major domain setting in his own cultural system which include frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate.

Language and Ethnicity

Ethnicity is another sociolinguistic variable that causes variation in language use. This occurs due to the difference in race, nation or tribe. Abdullahi- Idiagbon (2007, p.129) claims that ethnicity, which is also a social variable, affect both the use and usage of a language. Its manifestation much more glaring in a second language setting in forms of lexico-syntactic transfer, semantic shift, overgeneralization, difficulty in some sound production, and so on. Sometimes, it often leads to emergence of language varieties. Other possible effects of ethnic factor are multilingualism and/or its variants. It is also a strong determinant of language class and clash.

Language and Identity

Thornborrow (1999 pp.135-149), observes that linguistic identity is not just a matter of using one dialect rather than another, or one accent rather than another. It is also a matter of

how we use language with others. Therefore, identity is what distinguished us from another member of a group even in the same context. People's identity could be established either through the use of names or address terms. In addition, the way people are addressed in different contexts also helps to establish our identity within that context and this can depend on the degree of formality, of intimacy and of relative status of the entire participants involved in the interaction.

Language and Geographical Origin

Adeniyi (2011, p.37) observes that the use of language changes slightly in pronunciation due to geographical location. When there is difference in grammar, lexis and pronunciation within a particular language, that makes it different from other variant of that language, the term dialect is used. In other words, the forms of a language which is spoken only in area with words or grammar or pronunciation that differ slightly from other forms of the same language, is known as 'dialect'. Moreover, the unique way in which individuals in a community use language due to life experiences, education, age and aspiration is called idiolect, i.e. an individual's personal variation of language use. Jargon is specific technical vocabulary associated with a particular field of interest or topic.

Language and Society

The connection between language and society is tightly anchored. The relationship between language and society is deeply rooted. Language performs various functions in the society and the society does the same way. If one does not exist, the other will be affected. Therefore, language is the primary tool for communication and for establishing peace and order in our society. It is also useful for showing authority and power, and for attaining goals and objectives. It can also destroy the society if it is used inappropriately. It must follow conformity governing the society to avoid conflicts and to meet the boundary of individual differences. Hence, language can be defined as the totality of meaningful utterance in a society.

Analysis and Discussion

In the book titled *Dawn of Awareness*, Felix. A. Akinsipe uses his characters to disseminate information about social groups and how membership of these groups is usually reflected in the way they speak. In this chapter, Labov's theory of variation which includes: Age, Gender, Class, Setting, and so on will be used to analyse the data.

Language Variation According to Class

Social Stratification according to class is made explicit in the speeches of characters in the data. Characters are portrayed as either belonging to the upper class or lower class based on the power and status they possess in the play. The language use of the upper class is usually instructive and authoritative while that of the lower class is submissive. Instances of these include:

In Act:1, Scene:3, p.46,

Kabiesi: Go and take your gong and announce. To the whole village; hosts or guest, male or female, old or young that...

Second Chief: Let them come here and we shall tell them.

First Chief: It is better that way: let them come here.

Kabiesi: Alright, Obente, you hear that. Announce we want them all.

The social status and power of Kabiesi of Anjowon village with his chief sare portrayed through their directive and instructive speeches in form of ordering all the people of Anjowon village to come to his palace before they could deliver their messages. Also, the language of the upper class is often interruptive as could be exemplified in the following extracts:

In Act:2, Scene:3, pp.80-81,

First chief: Obente, tell us where you are coming from.

First messenger:AH!

Second Chief: Talk quick.

First messenger:(shaking) my lord, it is the village that. sent us on errand. (pause).

Third Chief: Go On.

First Messenger: we were giving two calabashes of "Ayogan".

In the extracts above, attention to the social distance between the chiefs and the messenger was revealed by emphasizing the specific differences between their respective use of language as the chiefs frequently interrupts the messenger's speech due to the power they possess. The reply of the messenger is submissive due to the class he belongs to. Another social factor that causes language to vary is Gender which constitutes the next discussion.

Language Variation According to Gender

Gender is an important sociolinguistic variable that shows differences in the language use of males and the females. Felix. A. Akinsipe shows this distinction in form of different conversational types between the male and female characters in the data. In doing this, he uses characters like: Fadeke (the king's daughter) and the girl who are the only female characters in the text, Narrator, Kabiesi, Ibukun, Moladun, Banji, and the Chairman. In the following we shall consider the unique features of the language use of the male and female characters:

Topics related to emotions and feelings

In the book titled "*Dawn of Awareness*", it can be seen that females mostly discuss topics that relate to their personal emotions. Instances in the text include:

In Act one, Scene one, p.11

Narrator: (To the boy) stop! if you beat her ...

Boy: I will, I will ... (sobs)

Narrator: Why? what did she do to you?

Boy: she ... she was abusing me

Girl:(still holding the Narrator) He is a thief. Seehis eyes like that of a crayfish.

Boy:Yeah!youhear that?(the boy rushes at the girl who smashes him on the floor)

Narrator :(Trying to pull them apart) Stop it! I say... Stop ...

Girl:(Standsup)Ole!Thief,councilor!Coun-c-i-lo-r-!!!(Takes to her heels)

Boy: Me Councilor? I can never take that (Purses her out)

In the above extract, it can be seen that the conversation was initiated by a male (the Narrator). The males (the Narrator and the boy) took more turns (5 turns) than the female (the girl) had just two (2) turns. This shows a kind of dominance that males have over females in the society. For example, in Africa society males are over hyped and are more favored over the females. It can also be seen in the extract that the girl's topic relates to her personal emotion this could be seen in her use of word, she was deeply hurt by the boy's action which made her call him a thief and compared him to the councilor who is a looter of the public fund.

And in Scene 2, Act 2, pp.66-67

Kabiese: And that is what I want you to be (calling) Fadeke

Fadeke: (curtsyng) My lord; Good evening councilor

Ibukun: Fad- Fad- Good evening

Fadeke: My father, did you call

Kabiese: Yes, my daughter. I have a big plan for you and I hope you will not let me down!

Fadeke: No, Father

Kabiese: (pointing to the councilor) Do you know this man?

Fadeke: Very well.

Kabiese: Good, go back. (Fadeke goes out)

In the above extract, the conversation is initiated by Kabiese (a male) who had more turns (5 turns) than the female (Fadeke) who had just (4 turns) and this aligns with the findings of some researchers like Holmes (2008) who claims that in conversations, it is the male that do start the conversation and also take more turns than the female. In the above conversation; it can be seen that the female speech is submissive and based on personal emotions. This is evident in Fadeke's speeches as all her responses to the questions asked in the conversation are all positive or affirmatives which shows her submissive and cooperative character. Another example of this can be seen in: **Act 2: Scene: 2: pp.68-69**

Fadeke: (Bursting in) My lord ... my lord... this is not fair (kneels) my lord.

Kabiese: (Looks at Fadeke who has remained kneeling as if glued to the floor) Fadeke, what is wrong with you?...

Fadeke: (Begins to sob) Why ... why have you given me to someone I don't like, even without my previous knowledge? There are other people in the village but you gave me to this cunning... this dubious... this...

Kabiese: Fadeke!

Fadeke: This... this...

In the conversation above, Fadeke is portrayed as a woman who does not have a choice in serious issues such as life partner. Despite the fact that she is not pleased with who her father choose for her to marry, she is obviously helpless.

In these extracts, the woman's speech can be said to show or reflect their state of mind and emotions. However, men's discussions are not personal because they often discuss topics that involve technical knowledge or factual matters like: politics, sports, business issues, etc. which could be seen in the extracts below:

In Act: 1, Scene: 2, p.23,

Chairman: First of all, I will talk about the government and people's farming project.

Banji: Government and people's farming project? That is strange!

Chairman: Yes, the aim is to promote farming in all the local government areas. However, the people will be required to provide the labor.

Banji: Only the labor?

And in Act 1, Scene 3, p.39,

Kabiese: What is it now that we have won?

Ibukun: If we are able to cope, it is the pipe-borne water project.

Kabiese: Pipe -borne water project?

First chief: You mean we shall now have water all over the village? ...

In the extracts, all the participants are all males and the topics being discussed is about politics and does not deal with personal emotion as it is about the social amenities the Government promised to provide to the people for the well-being of the village and this makes it different from the female topics which deals with personal emotions and is usually submissive in nature.

The use of question Tags

The use of question tags is one of the characteristics that differentiate male and female language use. In conversations, female uses a lot of question tags and some researchers think it is rhetoric and kind of subordinate while men's use of question tags is a means of curiousness. This use of question tags by females could be exemplified in the extracts below:

In Act 2, scene2, p.70

Fadeke: And what do you see?

First Messenger: I am sorry for disturbing your counsel my lord but it is happening

Fadeke: what is it?

First messenger: Bad things, Princess, bad things in this very village.

Fadeke: Tell us exactly what happened.

First Messenger: it is the councilor.

Fadeke: The councilor?

While in the extract below, the male's use of question tags shows curiousness. This could be seen In Act 2, Scene 1, p.61

Narrator: Is anything the matter?

First Chief: Nothing much- nothing.

Narrator: There must be something. I am no more a kid. I know that there is a change when the dog that used to play with one turns to bark at him. And whatever it is must be very grave. The expression on your faces tell it all. Please, I am afraid, can't you soothe me?

Third Chief: Erm ... You don't have to be afraid. This issue, although it concerns the public, concerns us elders more, and you see we are coming straight from the secretariat. **Narrator:** (Showing surprise) At the capital? Why all of you together, it is strange. **Second chief:** Ah! When our sitting down has almost if

not earned us our roles. Or if when you see us now all you did was to greet us with a sneer, can we continue to claim that we are titled chefs?

Narrator: What, then, is the trouble?

In the above extract, the Narrator was curious to know what took the chiefs to the secretariat.

Language variation According to age

Age which is an index of mental maturity influences language use. Variation according to age is related to adult and children language while the language of the adults is characterized by:

The use of proverbs

In the book titled "Dawn of Awareness Eight", (8) proverbs were used and the author Felix A. Akinsipe portrays the fact that the language use of Adults are conservative and full of wisdom as can be seen in their use of proverbs. Characters like: the Chiefs, Kabiesi, Ibukun, and the narrator are used to portray these facts. This could be made clearer in the extracts from the play below:

In Act:1, Scene:3, p.42

Kabiesi: The Forest cannot be so thick as to make it difficult for the wind to be able to penetrate ...

In this extract, the king and Kabiesi use proverb when stating to his chiefs and Ibukun why they must strive all their possible best to meet the requirements of the Government for the pipe-borne project so that it (the pipe-borne project) will be allocated to their Local Government Area. The use of proverb can also be seen in:

And Act:1, Scene:3, p, 41

Kabiesi: Um ... No matter how dry the "OSUN" dish may become the bit to rub the body of baby will remain.

And in the same Act:1, Scene:3, p.41

Kabiesi: It has not been so bad for a healthy matured cock not to crow. We shall make it. All wood are usually drums to the chimpanzee. We shall make it.

Also in Act :1, Scene4, p.48

Second chief: Now, councilor, speak words cannot be too big for the mouth. Whatever the problem is, tell us we cannot be living in happiness without a day of tale of shock... No matter how black the cockroach will paint itself the cock will swallow it.

Philosophical Expressions

The Narrator also establishes the fact that adult language is philosophical in the following extracts:

In Act:2, Scene4, p.80,

Narrator: No use, the decorations on a pig, it will carry it to the swamp. The man that deserves to sleep on the floor, if put on bed, he will fall. There he goes to his final end....

In the above extract, the Narrator is addressing himself on how Ibukun whom he advised refuses to heed to his advice and how he feels sorry for him because the path Ibukun is

about to follow will lead to his down fall. Philosophical expressions also show speaker's age and wisdom as it can be seen in:

In Act:1, Scene:2, p.35,

Moladun: That is the complexity of the world we live in People with very good cap usually face the problem of a head that is either too small or too big, while the problem of the people with a shaped head is how to get a good cap for it.

Here, Moladun's philosophical sayings explain how his Local Government Area could not be awarded some government projects which they needed badly due to the fact that they could not provide some facilities. The use of philosophical expressions can also be seen in:

In Act:1, Scene:4, p.48,

Kabiesi: Ah-ha, Councilor, speak up. You are no longer a kid. Whatever it is, we are prepared to hear. Nothing is strange any more in this world. We have seen the embryo die in its egg and a day-old child dying. The birds in the air die, the animals on the land and even the fishes in the sea perish. What then can be stranger?

These philosophical expressions are mostly used by the male adults in the society. They reflect the societal values of the physical setting of the text. These sayings when situated in the African context are well understood mostly by adults and very few young ones.

This study has shown how language use varies according to social stratification along the lines of age, gender, and class in the dramatic text "*Dawn of Awareness*". It also shows how the sociolinguistic background of characters is reflected through their language use. It points out the importance of the dramatic text to the study of language use in the society. This study proves the fact that the dramatist is conscious of the mechanism of language variation through his characters' conception. It is observed in the study that social class causes language to vary because the social class or status of a particular speaker of a given context is signaled in the way he or she uses language. It is also noticed in (Act:1, scene:3, p.46) and (Act:2, scene:3, pp.80-81), in the attitudes of Kabiesi, the Chiefs and the messengers respectively that the level of instructiveness, interruptiveness and submissiveness in language use indicates speakers' social position in terms of power and the status they possess in the society.

Conclusion

It is a fact that one cannot make any important progress towards understanding the mechanism of language variation without a study of the social factors that cause language to vary. Above all, language variation along the lines of social variables like:age,gender, class and setting are seemingly real and not only in literature but also in our expectations. Therefore, a comprehensive study of this kind will enhance the understanding of the way language is used in literature as well as in the society in general. Again, literary works can yield themselves to greater relevance when their language is analysed through variation, which will further enhance the importance of sociolinguistics.

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