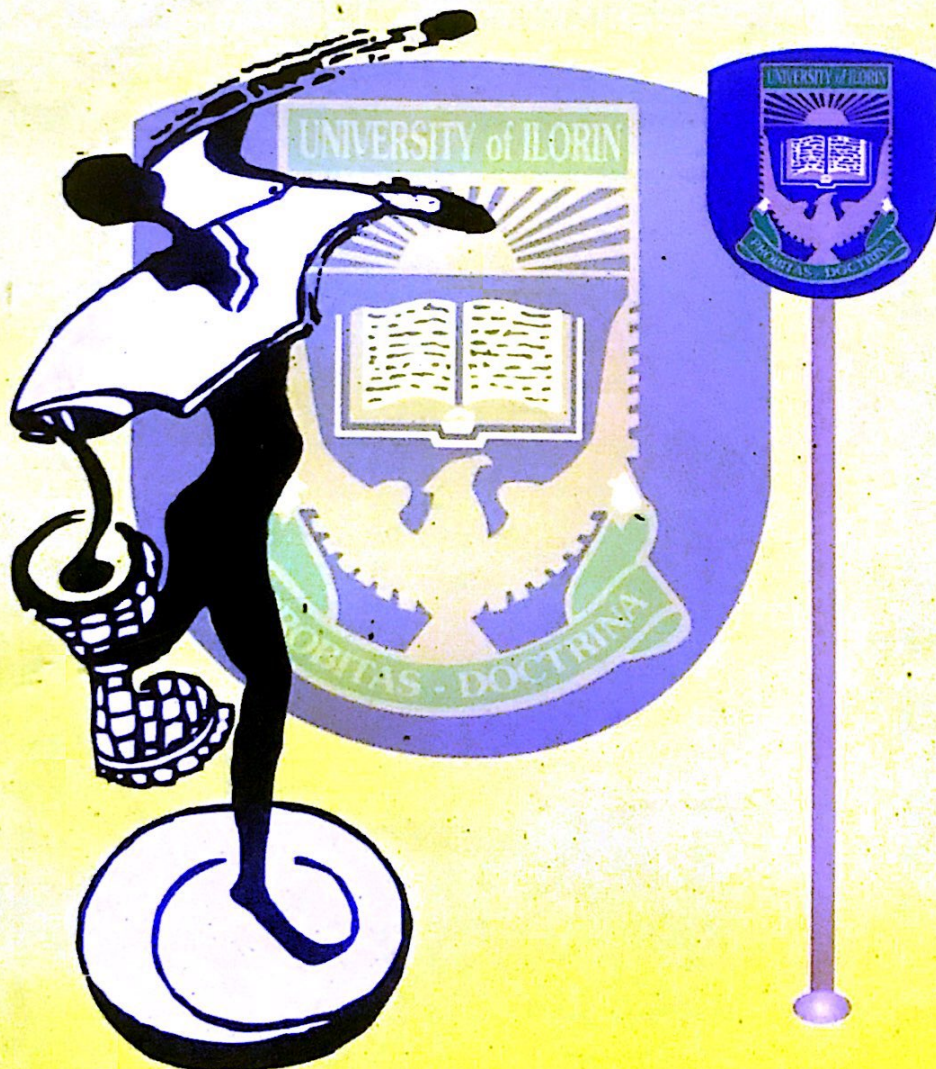


ISSN 1595-0972

The Performer

**ILORIN JOURNAL OF
THE PERFORMING ARTS**



Vols. 13 (2011) and 14 (2012)

The Performer

ILORIN JOURNAL OF THE
PERFORMING ARTS



THIS BOOK BELONGS TO
SAMIAH BINTI IRR
UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN
TGN. DATE.

Vols. 13 (2011) and 14 (2012)
ISSN 1595-0972

Published by the Department of the Performing Arts
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

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THE PERFORMER

The Performer is published by the Department of the Performing Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. The Editor welcomes articles in any area of performing arts and brief review of relevant publications. The journal is published once in a year. All correspondences, inquiries and articles should be addressed to the Editor, *The Performer*, Department of the Performing Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

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**Vol. 13 (2011)
ISSN 1595-0972**

**Published by the Department of the Performing Arts
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria**

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NIGERIA	FOREIGN		
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Individual N1,000	\$30	#25	35
Institution N1,500	\$35	#30	40

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The Performer: Ilorin Journal of the Performing Arts

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Editorial Comment

Volume 13, 2011 of *The Performer: Ilorin Journal of the Performing Arts* is now firmly placed in your hands. You will be intellectually satisfied and your curiosity of wanting to know more will be sustained because the papers in this particular Volume have gone through painstaking review processes. They are also written by credible scholars of life and letter who have challenged existing ideas and substitute same with contemporary ideologies that will renew our existence.

More is still in this offering because Volume 14, 2012 of *The Performer: Ilorin Journal of the Performing Arts* is placed immediately after Volume 13, 2011. This Volume has critical articles on pedagogy of pluralism, socio-cultural dimension, psychology, sexuality, dialectical intentionalities and of others which are interrogated on the larger umbrella of drama, dance and music. The new addition to Volume 14, 2012 is the review of a Book, *The Dramaturgy of a Theatre Sociologist: Festschrift in Honour of Ayo Akinwale* (2012) edited by AbdulRasheed A. Adeoye carried out by 'Lere Adeyemi. Please don't wait, read on.

Dr. AbdulRasheed A. Adeoye
Editor

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Yorùbá Proverbs in Media Intervention: The Case of Radio Nigeria Harmony F.M's Òkodoro-Òrò

By

Samiat Olúbùnmi Abubakre* and Moses. O. Adébólá*

Abstract

Proverbs are the moral science and conscience of the Yorùbá nation. Many of these proverbs contain traditional observations on the nature of things and some are moral boosters among other functions. As important as proverbs are in many societies, little attention is being given to this by majority of Yorùbá people particularly the educated. The result of this is the moral decadence among many youth today. One of the factors that are responsible for this situation is modernisation that has made these people to prefer foreign languages especially English to the indigenous languages. This study therefore appraises the electronic media's interventions in redressing the situation. The innovative use of proverbs in Yorùbá press reports in a radio station in Ilorin, Kwara State, is the focus of this paper. The programme titled Òkodoro-Òrò literally meaning "the reality of the words", has served as means of sensitising and re-awakening listener's interest in Yorùbá proverbs in addition to the news being provided. Thirteen randomly selected episodes of the programmes were recorded off air over a period of two weeks. Twenty five proverbs were used as copus in this paper. The findings revealed that through the programmes, the listener's awareness of Yorùbá proverbs is re-awakened while his or her lexicon is positively imparted and developed. In addition, the language and culture of the Yorùbá people are preserved.

Introduction

The broadcasting industry came to being in Nigeria in the year 1932 in Lagos on an experimental basis, whereby, the British Broadcasting Corporation Empire programmes with the occasional local programmes were transmitted by telephone wires to subscribers (known as Wired

*Samiat Olubunmi Abubakre and Moses O. Adebola are of the Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

Broadcasting Services). It was used as government propaganda instrument, because it was not intended for the Nigerian audience. It was also meant to satisfy the colonial staff at the various regions. The Wired Broadcasting (Radio) Service as it was called was later renamed Radio Distribution Service (RDS) and several stations were opened in some parts of the country like Ibadan (1939), Kano (1944) and later extend to Kaduna, Enugu, Abeokuta, Jos, Zaria, Calabar and Port Harcourt (James, 2009, p. 60).

In any given society, developmental initiatives are geared towards structural transformation in that society. In order to achieve this, there must be an effective communication media in personal, interpersonal and non-human relation. It is in this light that the media have been found to be the most successful way of relaying messages to people both at the rural and urban areas. It is a known fact that radio is the easiest medium to be accessed by majority of the people, especially the rural populace. As the society increases in population, the need also arises for an effective communication system to be developed and sustained to disseminate information to the audience and one of the vital instruments of mass communication in this development process is the radio. Hence, the creation of more states in the country has always led to the growth of the radio station.

The impact of the broadcasting service of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), state owned and private stations in our contemporary Nigerian state cannot be over-emphasised. In view of the foregoing, the present paper examines the impact of Harmony F.M. located in Idōfiàn, Kwara state, Nigeria in the development and preservation of a significant aspect of Yorùbá cultural values that is almost going into extinction, proverbs.

Proverbs among the Yorùbá People

Proverbs are collection of earthly experience, critical observation and deep thought. Proverb is very important and abounds in many languages of the world as each speaker of any language has his own set of proverbs. Proverb enriches discussions, gives deeper meanings to words and as a result has deeper impact on the addressed and is not easily forgotten.

The African (Yorùbá) proverb is a distinctive aspect of language use employed mainly by adults in informal conversations as well as in formal speeches at meetings, conferences and other occasions. Bámgbòṣe (1974, p.120) states that the use of proverbs in a discourse is a traditional stylistic

device in Yorùbá speech-making. It is a common proverb in Yorùbá that *Òwè lèsin òrò òrò lèsin òwè, bórò bá sọ̀nù òwè lá ó fí wá*. This means that proverb is the "horse of words", because utterances ride on proverb to achieve the purpose of communication. This may have been born out of the fact that "Yoruba proverbs are self-evident truths" which help to "drive home a point or describe a situation in a few striking words" (Delano, 1973, p.77). Agbájé (2005, p.50) also Opines that proverbs are regarded as the wisdom lore of the society.

Yorùbá proverbs are the preserves of the wise people, hence, the saying: *Bi ówè bí ówè là n lùlù àgídígbo, ọlọghón ní í jó o ọmọ̀ràn ló n mọ̀ ọ*; meaning: "It is in proverb that the àgídígbo drum is being beaten, it is only the wise that dances to its rhythm and only the knowledgeable that knows its message".

Proverbs actually make a language. A language is alive and functional as a result of the proverbs which that very language embodies. The relationship and nexus between a language and proverb could be likened to a skeleton with flesh as well as a body with a soul. Simply put, proverbs are the ingredients and tools that enrich and beautify a language. The concept of proverb cannot be well understood and complete without considering the views and opinions of scholars and communication experts.

Finnegan (1978, p. 389) sees proverbs as easy "record" of some sort which links the present with the past and the past with the present. She defines proverb as "a saying in more or less fixed form marked by 'shortness, sense and salt' and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it." Proverb is equally defined as a short saying in more or less fixed form which expresses a general truth in a delightful and figurative way. Although this agrees with a Yorùbá proverb, which says *Àbò òrò ní à n sọ̀ fún ọmọ̀lúàbí bó bá dẹ̀nù ẹ̀ tán á di odidi*, meaning that "a word is enough for the wise". However, Yusuf (2012) in his keynote address during the Second International Proverb Conference in Nigeria which was held at University of Ilorin also informs that the "truth" in such definitions as quoted above, should be removed as some proverbs do not always contain "truth".

People within a society imbibe and apply the uses of proverbs in their everyday activities. Vansina (1985, p.11) exemplifies that proverbs express the experience of contemporary situations or events, morals to be drawn from such occurrences or situations, or express intense emotions associated with them. This is true of other oral traditions, but more than

any other: proverbs are more or less a sort of brief compass that comes handy in everyday discourse of a group of people. Consequently, this paper sets out to analyse the oral artistry in the use of proverb in the electronic media as found in *òkódoró òrò*.

It must be noted that the English has completely taken over the functional role from the indigenous languages. This portends some dangers for the speaker of the indigenous languages. It is in view of the foregoing notes of caution that this paper calls for a renewed interest in the use of indigenous languages. One medium that is at the reach of everybody from urban to the rural populace is the radio.

In developing countries, radio is the only medium that can really be labeled "mass", where a large proportion of the population can be reached by radio broadcasts and possess the means to receive them. No other medium now has the potential to reach so many people so efficiently for information, educational, cultural and entertainment purposes. Radio can be used easily and economically to reach outlying regions and for communication in the many vernacular-often unwritten – languages existing in developing countries (MacBride et al. 1980, p. 61).

Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

Motivation for the study derived from the observation that English has displaced indigenous languages, especially in elite parents-children relationship; this is in addition to the fact that some Yorùbá graduates/teachers are losing real contact with the language. They only teach it in the form of 'Garbage-in-Garbage-out (GIGO)'. That is, from books to classroom and nothing more. This is an indication that the future blinks for the sustainability of the language and all that it transmits, particularly culture. Indeed, if the language dies, the speaker's death is also imminent.

Thus, the corpus for the study was made up of thirteen randomly selected programmes that were recorded off air over a period of two weeks. The observer method of data collection was adopted. The analysis was done using descriptive statistics as analytical tool. A projection into possible number of proverbs that the listener is opportuned to acquire was therefore made based on the number of proverbs that were featured in the selected episodes.

Based on the understanding that proverbs across cultures constitute a special class of utterances, akin to metaphorical or idiomatic expressions whose meanings cannot be arrived at by solely relying on the meanings of the words of which they are composed, our analysis considers the proverbs within the context of the News items being reported. The views of scholars on some of the strategies that are very useful in the creation of awareness on the importance of proverbs among Yorùbá people were also reviewed. For instance, Omoloso (2006, p.8) submits that "the understanding of the proverbs will incorporate the meanings and the contexts in discourse".

The study, like Omoloso's (2006) adopts the blend of Lambrecht's (1998) Information structure and Conversational pragmatics as espoused in works like Austin (1962), Yule (2007) etc. These theoretical frameworks have been referred to as Context – Structure Theory /Analysis (Omoloso 2006). The theory emphasizes the belief that there is an intrinsic relationship between the structure of a proverb and the contexts in which it is used. It must be pointed out however, that this study differs from Omoloso (2006) in some respects. Whereas, some expressions that call the attention of the addressed to the proverbs referred to as 'information signaling hedge' (ISH) and 'proverb signaling hedge' (PSH) respectively in Omoloso are used in ordinary daily usage of the proverbs are used in the corpus collected for this study, to call listener's attention to the news contents. And in view of this significant difference, our analysis considers proverbs as serving as ISH or PSH to the News contents. Therefore, emphasizing the value accorded the proverbs in the News reportage. We also examine the appropriateness of the proverbs that were used as riders (or ISH) following Omoloso's (PSH). Therefore, the Context – Structure Theory / Analysis proposed and explicated in Omoloso (2006) with a little modification was used as our conceptual framework. This was used to justify the fact that proverbs must be contextualized. As a matter of fact, amidst the array of definitions of proverbs, Hussein (2005) was also adopted as our conceptual framework; regarding the use of proverbs as artistic creation. The definition supports the thesis in the paper that language (and indeed proverb) should not just be preserved on pages of papers; it must be used to keep it functional. Hence, radio, a branch of the electronic media, and of course the most available to every member of the societies and requires no special training before being used, has been chosen for our data collection. It has been proved with series of research that discussions or works of art garnished with proverbs are always rich

and attract peoples' attention. this was also identified as the strong weapon with which programme under study attract attention from more listeners than other similar programmes.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Results

The following are the representative corpus (samples of some proverbs) and the press reportage that were recorded off air for a period of two weeks. It was discovered that apart from providing the new headlines in Yorùbá to inform the listeners, it also expand their proverbs' lexicon while at the same time providing some entertainment.

Data Presentation

- Ikú oniyàálù, iyà ló fi ñ jẹ omele
(When one's helper is dead, one will suffer)
- Tẹni n tẹni tàkísà n tààtàn
(What belong to one is one's possession, filthy garment belong to the dung hill)
- Àbò ẹni, lààbò ilú
(The security of an individual is the security of the nation)
- Sàń àń làá ñ rìn ajé ní mú ní pẹ+ko+ro+
(It is good to call a spade a spade)
- Ẹní bá bèrè ibéèrè ló ñ fẹ́ idí è gbọ́
(Whosoever ask question want an answer)
- Ibi a bá ẹ sí náà la ti ñ jẹ
(It is from one's labour that one eats)
- Ẹní bá júnìlọ́ jufá ilé ẹni lọ
(Whosoever is older than one, is older than the oracle in one's house)
- Ọmọ bẹẹrẹ òsì bẹẹrẹ
(Many multiple children leads to many sorrow)
- Ohun tó sí adé lóri ọba ohun náà ló sí filà lóri ijòyè
(It is the same thing that removed crown from the king's head that removed cap from the chief's head)
- Ọfò ẹni kò ní se ẹlòmíràn
(The evil that should befall one would not befall another person)
- Ibi tí ẹnikan ti ñ sunkún àìlẹ́yín lẹnikan ti ñ sunkún àìrètè bo tirẹ

- (When someone is crying of lack of teeth another is crying of not having enough lip to cover his own teeth)
Òrò tétí kejì bá gbò tí kúrò lasiri
- (Whatsoever two people are aware of is no longer a secret)
Òrò tí abuké ẹ́dà bá sọ ẹ má yiri rẹ̀ wò látòrun ló tí sọ ọ̀
- (Whatever a hunch back (person) says should not be screened it is from heaven)
Bójò bá pa àjẹ lóru kò ní délé wí
- (If rain beats a witch in the midnight she would not tell when she get home)
Kí láá jẹ̀ làgbàa kí láás+e
- (It is what to eat that comes before what to do)
Kò sí akíkanjú kan tí kò ní rẹ̀ nígbẹ̀yìn
- (No strong individual that would not get tired at the end)
Dàda ò le jà, ó ní àbúrò tó gbójú
- (Dada could not fight but has a younger brother who is brave)
Òrò àgbà balẹ̀ milẹ̀ tititi
- (Elder's words drop and make terrific impact)

Analysis and Results

As mentioned earlier, the average proverbs in an episode is put at thirteen, and the data were collected for two weeks, (ten days) because the programme is usually aired from Monday to Friday. Thus, in our projection, if thirteen proverbs were featured on each episode, a total of two hundred and sixty proverbs are likely to be aired in a month that has twenty days of airing. For the duration of the programme on the basis of five days per week will culminate in three thousand, three hundred and eighty proverbs in a year.

The above can be represented in figure as follows $= 13 \times 5 \times 52 = 3,380$. Considering the data analysis above, it is obvious that many proverbs are disseminated on air during the news reportage, this in no doubt promote Yorùbá cultural values that are expressed through the proverbs. Thus, the media, especially the radio has a lot to offer in the development of indigenous languages and cultures. .

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is obvious that proverbs actually make the Yorùbá language. The language Yorùbá comes alive and functional as a result of the proverbs which are employed in the press reportage. In the programme, proverbs serve as the ingredients and tools that enrich and beautify Yorùbá language. Also when we compare the numbers of proverbs in each episode per the days of the airing of the programme in a week per month and within a year, the average proverbs a listener is exposed to is significant to enrich his lexicon about Yorùbá proverbs and cultures.

Our findings reveal that it was during the reportage of òkodoro òrò that proverbs are being used and this underscores the reason for which it attracts more listeners than other similar programmes in the different Radio Stations in the State. The proverbs are always used to attract the attention and re – awaken the interest of the listeners. Each news item in the reports is being preceded by at least an appropriate proverb. This therefore shows that the electronic media adds value to the language as it promotes and preserves proverbs, a very significant aspect of the Yorùbá cultures.

We are not oblivious of the fact that book forms preserve proverbs, but such may remain on the pages of papers forever, because conventional reading is dying and electronic reading is most preferred by many youths. Press reportage on radio have greater value than other media, this is because many people have access to radio than other media. People listen to news reportage through different medium such as world receiver/battery radios, Media players (MP3), IPHones (IPs) and cell-battery radios that are at the reach of majority of the people. It has been suggested that a parallel programme in English should also be given consideration; the argument still holds that translation cannot adequately convey the meaning in one language into another. Hence, our main concern in this study is that the indigenous languages must be preserved and promoted.

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