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TOWARDS A SOCIO-SEMIOTIC MODEL FOR THE ANALYSIS OF YORÙBÁ WRITTEN POETRY

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Abstract

Until recently, stylistics, literary and textlinguistic theories have been the major tools employed in analysing Yorùbá written poetry. However, this study explores and exploits a socio-semiotic approach towards the analysis of Yorùbá written poetry. Socio-semiotics, which was introduced by the linguistic theorist, Michael Halliday (1978), examines semiotic practices, specific to a culture and community, for the making of various kinds of texts and meanings in various situational çontexts and contexts of culturally meaningful activity. In this attempt, a socio-semiotic model was proposed for the analysis of Yorùbá written poetry. In the proposed model, text, context of situation, context of culture and meaning potential were properly incorporated. To test the applicability of the model, relevant empirical data were provided for its illustration. The poems for the analysis were randomly selected from Adélékè's Aso Ìgbà (1997) and Abíọ́dún's Àlo ń lo...Ewì (1998). The major finding is that employing the context of situation, that is, field, tenor and mode of discourse as well as the context of culture to analyse the poems gives a clearer, more engaging and appropriate interpretation of the selected poems. The study concludes that analysts do not produce textual meanings, especially of a poetic discourse arbitrarily, but in tandem with the contextual variables and the meaning potentials structured in the text.

Introduction

Across traditions, poetry has meant a concentrated form of imaginative writing which exploits certain special word patterns and rhythmic structures (figures, diction, sound system, and the like) to create meanings and thoughts that may have social, political or cultural implications (Bodunde, 2007). These special word patterns and rhythmic structures embedded in a text are seen as signs in semiotic perspective, which poets employ in creating meanings. With the adoption of socio-semiotic approach to the study of Yorùbá written poetry, it will allow us to establish the manner in which poetic discourses are systematically produced within the contextual variables of situation and culture.

Poets, most times, consciously or unconsciously, employ various expressions to describe persons or events in their works, which may be difficult for those that are not literarily inclined to comprehend. This study, therefore, is very significant because it introduces the socio-semiotic approach in analysing Yorùbá written poetry which, perhaps, is the first critical work in Yorùbá written poetry. Also, this work will be of great assistance to future researchers who may want to use the socio-semiotic approach to analyse other literary works.

Theoretical framework: Socio-semiotics

Socio-semiotics is a branch of the field of semiotics which investigates human signifying practices in specific social and cultural

circumstances, and which tries to explain meaning-making as a social practice. Linguistic theorist, Michael Halliday, introduced the term 'social semiotics' into linguistics, when he used the phrase in the title of his book, *Language as Social Semiotics* (1978). This work argues against the traditional separation between language and society, and exemplifies the start of a 'semiotic' approach, which broadens the narrow focus on written language in linguistics. For Halliday, languages evolve as systems of "meaning potential" or as sets of resources which influence what the speaker can do with language in a particular social context (Halliday, 1978, p. 39).

Social semiotics expands on Saussure's founding insights by exploring the implications of the fact that the "codes" of language and communication are formed by social processes. Social semiotics is thus the study of the social dimensions of meaning, and of the power of human processes of signification and interpretation (known as semiosis) in shaping individuals and societies. Social semiotics focuses on social meaning-making practices of all types, whether visual, verbal or aural in nature (Thibault, 1991). Social semiotics, as noted by Hodge and Kress (1988), can include the study of how people design and interpret meanings, the study of texts and how semiotic systems are shaped by social interests and ideologies, and how they are adapted as society changes. Unlike semiotics in the tradition of Ferdinand de Saussure, which focused primarily on theorising unchanging semiotic systems or structures (termed *langue* by de Saussure), social semiotics tries to account for the variability of

semiotic practices termed *parole*. This altered focus shows how individual creativity, changing historical circumstances, and new social identities and projects can all change patterns of usage and design (Hodge and Kress, 1988). From a social semiotic perspective, rather than being fixed into unchanging "codes", signs are considered to be resources which people use and adapt (or "design") to make meaning. In these respects, social semiotics is influenced by and shares many of the preoccupations of pragmatics and sociolinguistics and has much in common with cultural studies and critical discourse analysis. The main task of social semiotics is to develop analytical and theoretical frameworks which can explain meaning-making in a social context (Thibault, 1991). Social semiotics is currently extending this general framework beyond its linguistic origins to account for the growing importance of sound and visual images, and how modes of communication are combined in both traditional and digital media (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996), thus approaching semiotics of culture (Randiviir, 2004).

Harris (2006) posits that socio-semiotics is an approach inspired by Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, which emphasises the importance of context, both context of situation and context of culture, in reconstructing the meaning of a text. The socio-semiotic approach views language as the embodiment of the social process in a society. This view consequently shows that context is very important in the understanding and interpretation of a text. All texts written in

language are context dependent. There is no text which can stand alone. Therefore, to understand a text, the context of the text must be reconstructed. Other principal developers of socio-semiotics are Hodge & Kress (1988), Kress & Threadgold (1988), O'Toole (1990, 1994), Martin (1991), Hasan (1995) and Kress & Leeuwen (1996).

We shall go on to examine both the context of situation and context of culture in determining the intended meaning of a particular text e.g. a poem.

Context of situation

Halliday and Hasan (1989, p. 5) argue that a theory of context preceded a theory of text. What is being said in essence is that, in real life, contexts precede texts. The situation is prior to the discourse that relates to it. The context of situation is the immediate environment in which a text is actually functioning. This notion is used to explain why certain things have been said or written on this particular occasion, and what else might have been said or written that was not.

The term 'context of situation' originated from the anthropologist Malinowsky (1923, 1935) cited in (Halliday and Hasan 1989, p. 5). To Malinowsky, language usage has a context. The 'textual' features enable the discourse to cohere not only with itself but also with its context of situation. He, therefore, categorised the context of situation into three components, corresponding to the three metafunctions. These components serve to interpret the social context of a text, the environment in which meanings are being exchanged. The three

components are the field, tenor and mode of discourse. These are certain principles that we can use for choosing an appropriate way of describing the context of a situation of a text. Therefore, in this study, Malinowski's three components of interpreting the social context of texts are employed because they are all encompassing for and relevant to our analysis.

Field, tenor and mode of discourse

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 22), field is the total event in which the text is functioning, referring to inherent features of the situation and the events taking place with the emphasis on institutional areas of activity and function. The physical setting and its inherent features and activities, participants, world knowledge and semantic domain constitute both variable and invariable elements of the field of discourse. "Arena/activity" refers particularly to the locations of the interaction, both in terms of their inherent features, and in terms of the social institutions which determine them. The arena and the activities which take place are the most basic elements of context, motivating the possible range of selections in other elements of field, and in elements of tenor (Leckie-Tarry, 1995, p. 36).

"Participant", according to Leckie-Tarry (1995), refers to inherent features of the participants, that is, their physical and mental attributes and the knowledge they bring to bear on the setting and events. Such

attributes include characteristics such as race, gender, class, wealth, age, appearance, intelligence, cognitive and educational level, occupation, and the like, and also the background knowledge which the participants bring to bear on the situation: cultural knowledge, including intertextual knowledge, linguistic knowledge, situational knowledge and textual knowledge. Leckie-Tarry (1995) believes that the variable which is best able to subsume the other variables relating to participants is that of education, as the degree of education tends to predict a certain level of cognitive development, cultural knowledge and even, to a degree, a certain broad level of class and wealth. The 'participant element' constitutes the major means of access from the more specific context of situation to the broader scope of the context of culture. The participants are the means whereby specific cultural and linguistic exponents are selected from the broader meaning potential embraced by the context of culture. These two variables of field, arena and participants, are not, however, discrete elements. The arena has a certain effect in predetermining the participants who are to be present and hence the cultural and linguistic knowledge which they bring to the situation; for example, in the schoolroom setting, there is a high probability that the participants will be students and teachers, who bring certain specified knowledge to that situation. "Semantic domain" refers to the broad domain, the general subject matter or content of the specific language event. The two variables of arena and participant will have a considerable predetermining effect on semantic domain. The arena/activities will tend to narrow the range of possible

events/subject matters, which will be further constrained by the participants. For example, where the arena is the schoolroom, the activities involve 'teaching', and participants are students and teacher(s), the range of semantic domains will tend to be confined to school routines and academic subject matters (Leckie-Tarry, 1995, p. 37). Thus, field essentially focuses on those elements which are inherent in the situation, that is, which are invariable.

Harris (2006, p. 2) posits that field refers to what is happening, the characteristics of the social process which is in progress. In other words, field reconstructs the aspect of what is being done by the participant by using language as his medium. He stresses that the questions asked by field are *when, where, how* the event happened and *why*. Tenor refers to the participant in the social event, the characteristics of the participant, the status, as well as the social role which he/she holds (Harris, 2006, p. 3). Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 22) define tenor as "the type of role interaction, the set of relevant social relations, permanent and temporary among the participants". The elements of the category of tenor are related to and motivated by aspects of field. While field refers to the inherent characteristics of the situation, tenor refers to the non-inherent features – elements which vary according to the social interactions taking place. Wales (2001, p. 388) posits that tenor involves the relationships between participants in the situation, their roles and status. This will affect the kind of language chosen, particularly in respect of the degree of formality.

Formality, according to Leckie-Tarry (1995, p. 39), refers to the degree of formality associated with activity, particularly from the degree of institutionalisation involved. Where settings are highly institutionalised, a higher degree of formality will tend to prevail. Where the institution involved is more in the nature of a social practice rather than a formally constituted institution within the society, levels of formality will tend to be lower. It is apparent that the field has a primary influence on this tenor variable; however, the interaction of all field variables constrains the degree of formality. Levels of formality are motivated by the schematised background knowledge of the participants derived from the context of culture, that is knowledge of cultural mores which establish a relationship between areas of interaction, types of participants and semantic domains to levels of formality, and situational knowledge as to role assignment (Leckie-Tarry, 1995, pp. 39-40).

Mode refers to what part the language is playing, what it is that the participants are expecting the language to do for them in that situation: the symbolic organisation of the text, the status that it has, and its function in the context, including the channel (is it spoken or written or some combination of the two?) and also the rhetorical mode, what is being achieved by the text in terms of such categories as persuasive, expository, didactic, and the like (Halliday and Hasan, 1989, p. 12).

Mode in linguistics is conceived in terms of the format or genre of discourse. It refers to the totality of situational factors which subscribe

to the medium of communication. Mode is a general term for a wide spectrum of linguistic and literary approaches used in achieving purpose or function of communication (Alabi, 2009, p. 77). In literary discourse, mode is a force to reckon with in an attempt at correlating the linguistic forms of the literary genre with their respective functional loads. It can also be described to mean the process through which a given language form is made to operate in order to achieve the desired language function.

Context of culture

The context of culture is a large and complex knowledge system spread among the various members of a particular culture, and hence consisting of many sets of knowledge, including, in particular, the institutional and ideological. In any given interaction, that is, a particular context of situation, the context of culture is accessed by means of the knowledge systems which the various participants bring to bear on the situation, where the knowledge is triggered by aspects of the context of situation.

Halliday and Hasan (1989, p. 46) posit that the context of situation, however, is only the immediate environment. There is also a broader background against which the text has to be interpreted: its context of culture. Any actual context of situation, the particular configuration of field, tenor, and mode that has brought a text into being, is not just a random jumble of features but a totality – a

package of things that typically go together in the culture. People do these things on these occasions and attach these meanings and values to them: this is what a culture is. All these factors constitute the context of culture, and they determine, collectively, the way the text is interpreted in its context of situation. It is helpful to build in some indication of the cultural background, and the assumptions that have to be made if the text is to be interpreted in the way poets intend.

Given the difficulty of distinguishing between the knowledge gained by a participant in an interaction from direct input from the senses (that is, experience of the world) and from other texts, Leckie-Tarry (1995, p. 21) maintains the position that a distinction between knowledge gained from direct experience and from other texts is a fine one, but not essential. Hence, she uses ideational knowledge to cover both experiential and intertextual knowledge. The knowledge and assumptions at the level of the context of culture is paramount in determining what meanings are possible, how they are classified and how they are realised in linguistic form.

LECKIE-TARRY'S MODEL OF CONTEXT

Leckie-Tarry gives a conceptual model of context as follows:

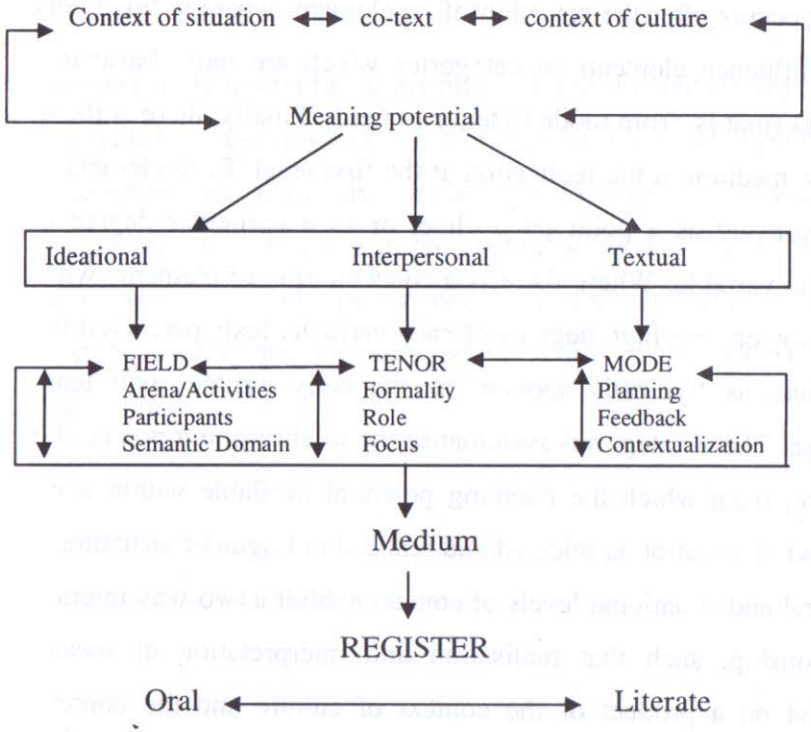


Fig. 1: Conceptual model of context (Leckie-Tarry, 1995, p. 32).

This model in Fig.1, according to Leckie-Tarry (1995, p. 31), describes the process of realisation of meaning in the following way: within a given contextual category, there is a constant overlap and interaction of elements (vertical interaction). From a given contextual category, there is also a predetermining effect that the occurrence of

an element in one category has on the occurrence of elements in other categories (horizontal interaction); this effect operates primarily from field to tenor to mode. However, there is an important feedback effect which occurs after the selection of an element, whereby this element may influence elements in categories which are more basic in the process (that is, from mode to tenor to field). Finally, there is the dual role of medium in the realisation at the first level. Each element may be expressed as a point on a cline, or as a particular degree of a specific variable. Where there is a concentration of elements with all very low or very high degrees of each variable, texts perceived in the literature as 'typically spoken' or 'typically written' will tend to emerge. These categories systematise the total meaning potential of a culture, from which the meaning potential available within a given context of situation is selected and realised in linguistic structure. The cultural and situational levels of context exhibit a two-way interactive relationship, such that realisation and interpretation of meanings depend on a product of the context of culture and the context of situation; but once realised or interpreted, meanings feed back into the broader context to become part of its future existence. The categories themselves are continually modified by the new meanings created within such contexts of situations (Leckie-Tarry, 1995, p. 32). No doubt, Leckie-Tarry's model gives insight into how useful contextual variables are to the interpretation of text in the work of literature in general. It is, however, observed that the use of language in interpreting the intended meaning of the text is not well emphasised.

This study, which centres on written poetry, requires detailed explication on the use of language which our proposed model will take care of under the mode of discourse.

A socio-semiotic model for analysing Yorùbá written poetry

In line with Leckie-Tarry's (1995, p. 32) proposal, we shall propose a less complex but distinctive model which will be suitable for analysing the selected poems in our present study and indeed Yorùbá written poetry as a whole. In our model, the text, context of situation, context of culture and meaning potential are well emphasised as shown in Fig. 2.

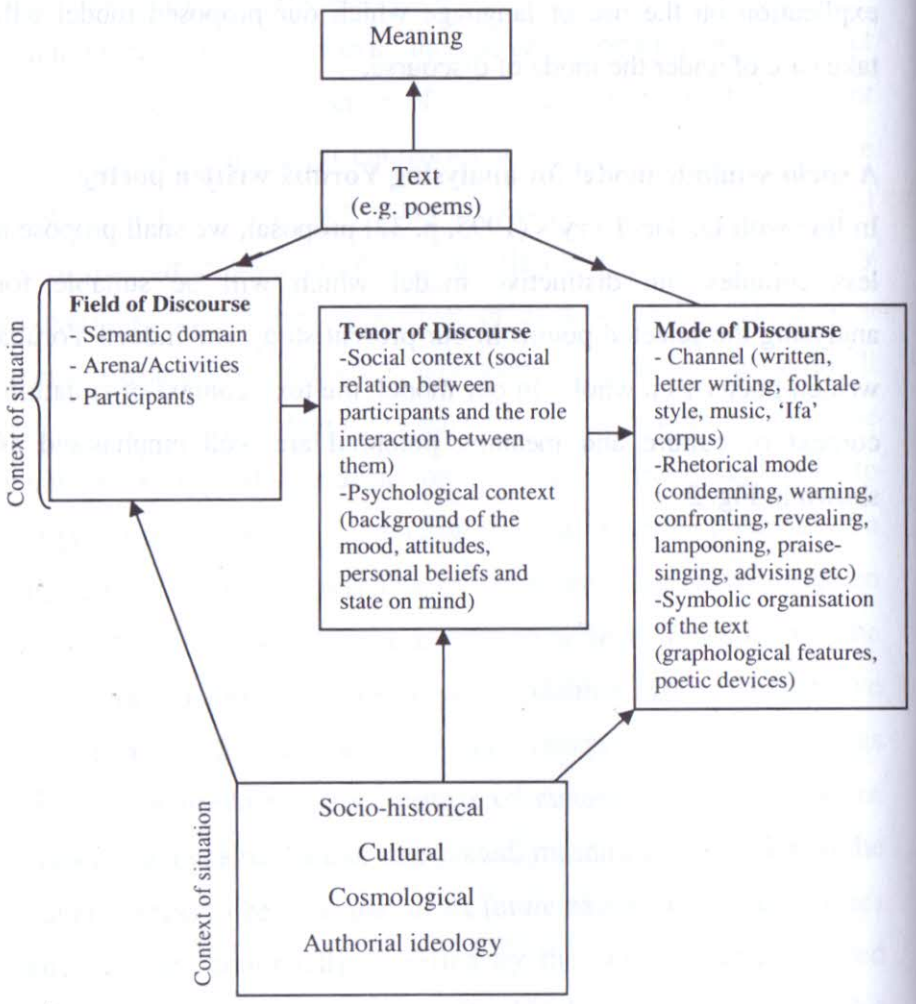


Fig.2: The Proposed Socio-semiotic Model for Analysing Yoruba written poetry

In analysing data, based on our proposed model in Fig.2, the exploration of meaning investigation begins by putting the text at the centre of the context of its generation. In other words, a poem is seen

as a text which should be interpreted from two broad perspectives of the context of situation and the context of culture. Firstly, under the context of situation, the analyst is expected to consider the field, tenor, and mode of discourse of the text, which will subsequently give a clue to the intended meaning embedded in the text. The field of discourse will consider the arena which the total event is taking place in the text. It also considers the participants in the situation, that is, their physical and mental attributes and the knowledge they bring to bear on the situation. The tenor of discourse will consider the participants' social status as well as the social role they hold. The mode of discourse considers the communicative function which a text is made to perform by the use of a given channel. Secondly, at times, the analyst's background cultural knowledge, both institutional and ideological of the text, is required before he can unravel the intended meaning of a particular text; hence the context of culture. It is felt that when textual analysis is approached from this dimension, it offers the analyst an opportunity of decoding a text exhaustively to mean what the language user has used the language to mean in a given situation.

The analysis that will emerge from our proposed model would buttress the fact that the socio-semiotic approach assumes that language is the realisation of the social process and highlights the importance of understanding the context of a text. It views language as the embodiment of the social process in a society and consequently sees that context is very important in the understanding and

interpretation of a text. There is no text which can stand out of context. Therefore, to understand a text, the context of the text must be reconstructed.

The most important part of the socio-semiotic approach is that it not only discusses *what* the people say and *how* they say it, but it is also concerned with *when* (that is, in which context) and *why* (Harris, 2006, p. 2). Thus, the approach will be used to reconstruct meaning in order to trace its 'real' meaning. This meaning reconstruction is derived from the three variables of field, tenor, and mode of discourse which help to trace the context and situation of the text so that the real picture of a text can be realised.

Analysis of sampled data

Two poems are selected each from Adélékè's *Aṣọ Ìgbà* (1997) and Abíọ́dun's *Àlọ ń lọ...Ewì* (1998) to test the viability of our proposed model in this study. The poems selected from *Aṣọ Ìgbà* are "Ẹlẹ Ọsíẹ̀lẹ̀" (Ladies of Òsíẹ̀lẹ̀) (p. 23) and "Lẹ́tà sí Ẹwà" (Letter to Beauty) (pp. 34-39). The poems selected from *Àlọ ń lọ...Ewì* are "Akọni ọmọ Oòduà" (Heroes of Oòduà's offspring) (pp. 7-8) and "Ayé Padà" (The turn of events) (p.5).

Field of discourse

Poems which mirror man's interaction and interpersonal relationship with one another as it affects the totality of their existence reflect peculiar forms and functions at different axes of context. In Adélékè's

"Ẹlẹ̀ Òsíẹ̀lẹ̀" (Ladies of Òsíẹ̀lẹ̀) (p. 23) and "Lẹ́tà sí Ẹwà" (Letter to Beauty) (pp. 34-39), the field of discourse focuses on social vices among young ladies who are the participants. In the former, the arena of social event is the Nigerian tertiary institutions. The poet comments on the moral decadence, especially campus prostitution, that has become rampant among female students. The whole idea is summed up in the following:

Alẹ́ lẹ́ tàìlẹ́
Ẹgbẹ̀lẹ̀ ẹlẹ̀ Òsíẹ̀lẹ̀ á ṣe ṣinrá sínú
ọkọ̀ ayọ́kẹ́lẹ́ mìnìjọ̀...(p. 23)
(Every evening
Some female students
are always alert
to follow big men in posh cars)

Also, in the latter, the poet laments on what may be the grave consequence on the act of promiscuity which has become prevalent among young girls. The first four lines in this poem summarise this:

Ẹwà mi ọ̀wọ́n,
Àánú rẹ ṣe mí jọjọ
O gbẹ́rù kan àrà tó lóòrìn rù
Ẹrù ìbànújẹ́ ayé lẹrù ọ̀ún...(p. 34)
(My dear Beauty I really pity you
You place on your head a very mysterious load
The said load is a regrettable one...)

Furthermore, the theme in Abíọ́dún's "Akọni Ọmọ Oòduà" (Heroes of Oòduà's offspring) (pp. 7-8) extols the virtues of some prominent leaders in Yorùbá land who have distinguished themselves in their pursuits to ensure better life for their people. These people also displayed exemplary actions and high level of patriotism in ensuring enthronement of democracy in Nigeria – the bulk of which is made manifest in the following:

Èèyàn tó ṣiṣẹ́ ire sílẹ̀
Ká kí í kúuṣẹ́.
Ẹ̀dá tó fohùn rere sílẹ̀,
Ká yìn ín kú ohùn.
Àwọn tó n jà àjàkú-akátá
Pé kọ́mọ Oòduà má dìmẹ́ẹ́rí
Ẹ jẹ́ á kí wọn, wọ́n ṣeun...(p. 7)
(One that has left a good legacy
Let us appreciate him,
One that has left a good voice,
Should be appreciated for that,
Those that are fighting tirelessly
That the offsprings of Oòduà may not be marginalised
Let us say 'thank you' to them)

In this poem, the poet identifies the role played by these heroes, both living and dead, in seeing that the Yorùbá race is not marginalised or relegated to the background in the scheme of things in Nigeria.

The subject-matter in "Ayé Padà" (The turn of events) (p. 5) is the exhibition of the roles of the contemporary Yorùbá traditional rulers. The poet accuses these traditional rulers of their involvements in the corrupt practices leveled against the political leaders. More importantly, during the military era in Nigeria, some of these kings were used to achieve their aims. They were, at times, accused of getting contracts and taking bribes from the government at the expense of their subjects. The whole idea is presented in the following:

Adé orí wọn,
Ó dadé ìdí, ẹ ẹ̀ ráyé.
Àkún ọrùn wọn,
Ó dàkún ẹsẹ̀, ẹ ẹ̀ réèmò.
Ìrùkẹ̀rẹ̀ ọwọ́ ẹbọ-á-fín,
Ti padà sídìí ọmọ ẹranko.
Ẹni à n sá á bá
Wá rèé n sá báàyàn...(p. 5)

(The crowns on their heads,
Have turned to the crowns in the buttocks, it is a pity.
The beads on their necks,
Have turned to the ones in the leg, it is unimaginable.
The whisk in their hands,
Has returned to the buttock of the animal.
One who people run to
Has turned to the one who runs to people...)

Tenor of discourse

The semantic domain in "Ẹlẹ Òṣíẹlẹ" and "Lẹ́tà sí Ẹwà" informs the peculiar role-relation that exists between the poet and the addressees. The relationship is that of teacher-student. The tenor of discourse exhibits in the texts is an indication of the role expected of the elderly to the young ones. The tenor of discourse in "Akọni ọmọ Oòduà" exhibits the mutual social interaction between the heroes and their kinsmen. Examples of such are presented in the following:

Bàbá ẹlẹ́kọ̀ọ́-ọ̀fẹ́,
Awo tó fọ̀wọ̀ ṣawo...
Bàbá tó jásin lọ́wọ̀ 'màdẹ ń kọ́.
Ò-dé-kílé-kún,
Ò-fadé-ìwà-rera...
Àdùbí ọmọ Ẹ̀sà,
Ẹ̀sà tí ń bẹ lókè ténté.
Ọmọ Oṣó tó wọlé,
Oṣó wọlé ó yí ọn ká.
Ọmọ akin tó rìn tòun tadé,
Akin tó mádé rìn...
Gàní ọmọ ifá tó n wèyìn mí
Ẹ̀gin, ọmọ afilóòkílì ṣorò.
Bẹ́ẹ̀ni-Bẹ́ẹ̀kọ́ ọmọ Kútì... (p. 7)
(The man who provided free-education
Awo who was honourably ordained as priest ...

What about the man that plucked akee apple
from Ọ̀wọ̀ 'màdẹ̀
Whose arrival brought fullness to the house
An embodiment of good character...
Àdùbí, offspring of Ẹ̀sà
Ẹ̀sà, who is at the hill top.
Son of Oṣó who enters into the house
Oṣó enters and surrounds all.
Son of Akin who walks with crown on his head.
Gàní, the son of Ifá oracle who takes charge of me
Ẹ̀gin, an offspring of one who uses dogs for rituals.
Bẹkọ, the son of Kútì...)

The personalities mentioned in the extract are Chief Ọbáfẹ́mi Awólọ́wọ̀, the first Premier of the defunct Western Region of Nigeria; Chief Adékúnlé Ajásin, the Governor of the old Ondo State in the second Republic; Chief Bọ́lá Ìgè, the Governor of the old Oyo State and Professor Wọlé Soyinka, a Nobel Laurette and human right crusader. Others are Chiefs Akin Akínrìnádé, Gàní Fáwéhìnmí and Dr. Bẹkọ Ransome-Kútì, who were human right activists.

Mode of discourse

The rhetorical mode in "Ẹlẹ Òṣíẹlẹ" is advising. The poet is positively disposed towards the addressees. This is what is responsible for the warning statements expressed throughout in the poem. The sense of

parenthood engendered in traditional Yorùbá philosophy is sustained. This is illustrated in the following extract:

Ẹ̀lẹ̀ tó ọ lọ́wọ́ èlẹ̀ Òṣíẹ̀lẹ̀
Rọra máa jòfẹ́ fẹ̀é fẹ̀é kiri ayé
Aìjòfẹ́ ká má fẹ̀yìn ralẹ̀ fákọ lálẹ́
Òótọ́ lèyí kìí ṣẹ̀fẹ̀...(p. 23)
(Take it easy you ladies of Òṣíẹ̀lẹ̀
Stop following men around because of free money
Free money will lead you to sleeping with them
This is the truth and not a joke...)

In advising female students in this extract, the poet plays on the words *èlẹ̀* and *Òṣíẹ̀lẹ̀* to achieve this. In the first line "èlẹ̀ tó ọ lọ́wọ́ èlẹ̀ Òṣíẹ̀lẹ̀" (take it easy you ladies of Òṣíẹ̀lẹ̀), the poet deliberately selects *èlẹ̀* to mean 'ease' in the first word, and the same *èlẹ̀* having same tone, which is a metonymy to mean 'lady' in the fifth word. These are derived from the word *Òṣíẹ̀lẹ̀* which is the name of a community in Abẹ́òkúta, Ògùn State, Nigeria. It is possible that the poet uses other words like "pẹ̀lẹ́/pẹ̀lẹ́pẹ̀lẹ́" and "ọmọge" in place of "èlẹ̀", to read "pẹ̀lẹ́/pẹ̀lẹ́pẹ̀lẹ́ tó ọ lọ́wọ́ ọmọge Òṣíẹ̀lẹ̀", but he chooses not to do that, simply to achieve the aim of playing on the word "Òṣíẹ̀lẹ̀" where the college is situated.

Similarly, in "Lẹ́tà sí Ẹwà" (Letter to Beauty), the poet uses the channel of letter writing in delivering his message to the addressee. This is evident in the opening of the poem as 'Ẹwà mi ọ̀wọ́n' (My

dear Beauty). His presentation frowns at the level of promiscuity prevalent among the young girls. He also concludes the poem in the form of ending a letter as if he is addressing a particular person.

Mo dúró ná
Ọ̀pọ̀ ọ̀rọ̀ kò kágbọ̀n
Afẹ́fẹ́ níí gbé e lọ
Èmi ni tiẹ
Ẹ̀yìnlàárò (p. 39)
(I stop here
A lot of words do not fill a basket
The wind blows them away
Yours,
Ẹ̀yìnlàárò.

The effect of letter writing as a channel in this extract is a way of varying the method of the target audience. The use of proverb "ọ̀pọ̀ ọ̀rọ̀ kò kágbọ̀n, afẹ́fẹ́ níí gbé e lọ" (a lot of words do not fill a basket, the wind blows them away) in the concluding statement emphasises the seriousness of the warning and advice given to the addressee.

The rhetorical mode in "Ayé Padà" strongly condemns the Yorùbá traditional rulers because of the filth they are enmeshed in. The use of indexical items such as 'Adé', 'Àkún', and 'Ìrùkẹ̀rẹ̀' portrays the exalted position of a king among the Yorùbá. However, the contemporary Yorùbá traditional rulers have relegated this position to a state of disrepute. The poet believes that if they keep their integrity

intact, it would be difficult for any political leader to toss them around, and also their subjects would have confidence in their rulership and authority.

Context of culture

The extract in "Ẹlẹ Òṣíẹlẹ" could be better comprehended if we consider it from the perspective of the context of culture. 'Ẹlẹ' as commonly used by the Yorùbá means woman's private part (vagina). However, the use of 'ẹlẹ' in this context connotes a young woman. Also, the word 'Òṣíẹlẹ' is the name of a community in the city of Abẹ́òkúta, Ogun State, Nigeria. A Federal College of Education is situated in this town (Òṣíẹlẹ), where the poet once worked as a lecturer, hence his experience on the social ills that pervaded the institution.

Owing to the fact that "Akọni ọmọ Oòduà" (Heroes of Oòduà's offspring) is composed to eulogise the good virtues in great personalities, the rhetorical mode is eulogising which is instituted in the Yorùbá culture. As such, poetic techniques of nominalisation and allusions are used to achieve this feat. For example, 'Bàbá ẹlẹ́kọ̀ọ́-ọ̀fẹ́, Awo tó fọ̀wọ̀ ṣawo' (Man who provided free-education, 'Awo' who is honourably ordained as priest) is an allusion and a praise song to the man, Ọbáfẹ́mi Awólọ́wọ̀, who during his time as Premier of the old Western Region, made free-education one of his administration's cardinal programmes. Also, the sentences 'Bàbá tó jásin lọ́wọ̀ 'màdẹ̀'

(the man that plucked akee apple from Ọ̀wọ̀) and 'Ò-dé-kílé-kún' (whose arrival brought fullness to the house) are derived from 'Ajásin' who hails from Ọ̀wọ̀ in Ondo State and his first name 'Adékúnlé' respectively. The poet plays on the name 'Adékúnlé' to reflect the Yorùbá cultural value of a male child 'Ò-dé-kílé-kún' as opposed a female child which they refer to as 'Adé túlé'. A similar process applies to 'Àdùbí ọmọ Ẹ̀sà' (Àdùbí, offspring of Ẹ̀sa). In Yorùbá culture, 'Àdùbí' is a praise-name for 'Ìgè'. This name reflects the physical condition of the name bearer at delivery. 'Ìgè' is a name given to a male or female child born with feet first, in other words, in breech position (Akínyẹmí 2010:6). Hence, the poet refers to Chief Bọ́lá Ìgè who hails from Ẹ̀sà Òkè in the present Òsun State as 'Àdùbí ọmọ Ẹ̀sà, Ẹ̀sà tí ń bẹ lókè ténté' (Àdùbí, offspring of Ẹ̀sà / Ẹ̀sà, who is at the hill top). Furthermore, 'Ọmọ Ọ̀ṣó tó wọlé, Ọ̀ṣó wọlé ó yí ọn ká' (son of Ọ̀ṣó who enters into the house, Ọ̀ṣo enters and surrounds all) is derived from the name, Wọlé Ṣoyinka. "Ọ̀ṣó" is a prefix to names used by devotees of the Yorùbá goddess of fertility or farm divinity *òrìṣa oko,* which also translates that one is surrounded with children or abundance. 'Ọmọ akin tó rìn tòun tadé' (son of Akin who walks with crown on his head) is praising Àlàní Akínrìnádé. The prefix 'Akin' - is used only in naming male children born into the family of warriors in Yorùbá society. In 'Gàní ọmọ ifá tó ń wẹ̀yìn mí. Ẹ̀gin ọmọ afilóòkílì ṣorò' (Gàní, the son of Ifá oracle who takes charge of me / Ẹ̀gin, an offspring of one who uses dogs for rituals);

the two lines refer to the late legal icon, Chief Gàní Fáwéhìnmí who hailed from Ondo town. 'Èǵin' is short praise-name for the people of Òndó, while 'ọmọ afilóòkílì ṣorò' (an offspring of one who uses dogs for rituals) emanates from the general assumption that the Ondó indigenes take dogs (lóòkílì) as delicacy. Finally, the poet plays on the word 'Bẹ́kọ́' to praise the human rights activist, Dr. Bẹ́kọ́ Ransome-Kútì when he says 'Bẹ́ẹ̀ni-Bẹ́ẹ̀kọ́ ọmọ kútì' (Bẹ́kọ́, the son of Kútì). Praise-singing is intended to appreciate the roles played by these people in the socio-political emancipation of the Yorùbá race.

The cultural import in the poem "Ayé Padà" (The turn of events) presents the bastadisation of the Yorùbá traditional class by the present Yorùbá traditional rulers. In the traditional Yorùbá society, the kings were much respected because of the authority they asserted, hence the saying 'ọba aláṣẹ èkejì òrìṣà' (king, the second in command to the gods and whom all authorities reside in). However, in this modern Yorùbá society, most of these kings are no more respected by their subjects because of dirty things they have involved themselves in. The poem emphasises authorial viewpoint as one who believes in the Yorùbá traditional authority but not disposed to the way it has been bastadised by some greedy and corrupt traditional rulers, who, because of their selfish interests, have turned themselves to 'errand boys' for the political leaders.

Conclusion

This study introduces a socio-semiotic approach to the Yorùbá scholarship and written poetry in particular. Socio-semiotic approach and its components were examined. Also, a model for analysing Yorùbá written poetry was proposed and used for analysing the sampled data. Firstly, under the context of situation, the three components of interpreting the social content of texts, that is, field, tenor and mode of discourse, were employed for the analysis. While discussing the field of discourse, the two variables of arena and participants that have a considerable predetermining effect on the semantic domain were examined. The tenor of discourse examined both the social relations and role interaction that exist among the participants in the poems. The mode of discourse probed into the communicative functions the poems were made to perform by the use of given channels. It also discussed the status assigned to text organization on an occasion of use. Secondly, the knowledge systems which constitute the context of culture were explored and analysed. The study concluded that the deployment of both the context of situation and the context of culture to analyse the poems paved the way for an intensive study of Yorùbá written poetry, thereby making their meanings more readily accessible.

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