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Linguistic and social relevance of aspects of Yoruba culture in selected songs of Yomi Sodipo and some Yoruba nursery rhymes

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ABSTRACT

The anthropological approach to ‘culture’ has moved from the understanding of ‘culture’ as a certain kind of monolithic construct which could be meaningful (when described in terms of stable constituents) to the insight that ‘culture’ is inherently versatile, flexible, context-dependent and variably can be understood. Following from this, this study considers the linguistic and social relevance of African culture as projected in selected African oral renditions. The data for the study comprise of Yemi Sodipo’s lyrics of *Àmòràn* (Advice), and Yoruba school children rhymes. The data were analysed within the frameworks of Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar and Lakoff & Johnson’s Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The study finds that African culture is rich enough to constitute a tool for improving language users’ prowess. The analysis shows that such rhymes and lyrics do not only instill the values and culture of the Yoruba people but it also serves as a means of teaching/learning figurative language use. Its richness in the use of linguistic devices such as metaphor and substitution enhances critical thinking as the audience would try to interpret the language pattern in order to arrive at the literal meaning of the songs/rhymes. Also, the study shows that given specific contexts, moral messages among the Yoruba are conveyed using various strategies such as coding, referencing and amplification, among others, even in everyday interaction. Furthermore, it is evident from this study that fundamental arguments permeate African musical texts among which are political struggle, clamour against moral decadence and projection of individual and collective roles in ensuring that the “world goes around”. However, the study also acknowledges that many of these culturally conscious lyrics are fast fading away especially among younger generations. Thus, it is suggested in

this study that linguists and the Yorubas as a whole rise to re-awaken this consciousness and deploy such in ensuring a promotion of the African culture and its linguistic richness.

Keywords: culture, social relevance, lyrics, conceptual metaphor, linguistic devices

Introduction

Language, whether verbal (actual speech used in conversations), non-verbal (facial expressions, gestures etc), oral (listening and speaking) or written (reading and writing) is a means of communication that shapes cultural and personal identity and socialises one into a cultural group (Gollnick & Chinn, 2006). Babatunde (2002:1) opines that the indispensability of language is inexorably tied to the existence of man in the society. Language plays an important role in our lives. Sellers (1991:18) asserts that “language is intrinsic to the way we think, to the way we construct our groups and self-identities, to the way we perceive the world and organise our social relationships and political systems”. As Wierzbicka (2008:7) points out, “the meanings of words provide the best evidence for the reality of cultures as ways of living, speaking, thinking and feeling which are widely shared in a particular society.” The realities of cultures are communicated through various media such as learning through rote in schools as well as music. This paper therefore explores some of the concept upheld by the Yoruba people and which are orally communicated and transmitted to younger generation through music and rhymes. The attempt here mainly is to examine the social relevance of these concepts. Also, attention is given to language usage in conveying cultural ideologies and its implication for language learning.

Summary of texts

Sodipo’s *Àmòràn* (Advice) is an album that comprises five tracks entitled “B’ólá bá dé” *when wealth comes*, “E sé e re” *Do it right*, “K’ólá wọ’lé” *Bless me with wealth*, “Ìyá ni wúrà” *Mother is gold* and “Mà á gbádùn ara mi” *I will enjoy the best of my life*. The first track— “B’ólá bá dé” gives moral instruction to individuals who hope for better days ahead. It acknowledges the tendency to veer from long-upheld moral standards. “E sé e re addresses the general public on the need to do things right particularly political office holders, traditional rulers and leaders across all spheres; the artiste asserts that Nigeria and Africa would be a better place if all of us would do things right. “K’ólá wọ’lé mi” is more of a prayer/petition; the artiste cries to God who he otherwise refers to as “Bàbá” *father* to bless him with wealth, children and peace. “Ìyá ni wúrà” appeals to the emotion and thinking of an individual and projects the need for children to appreciate their parents. From his tone, the whole of human existence originates from the parents.

Lastly in the album is “Mà á gbádùn ara mi”. This track encourages a person whose spirit is dampened to cheer up and admit the fact that such experience is normal thus there is no need to feel bad so much about it. He encourages that there is the need to enjoy the best of life in such critical situations like economic recession.

“Isé ni òògùn isé” “*Work*” is the *antidote to poverty* is a didactic poem (in Yoruba language) that charges people, particularly the younger generation to give their best to whatever task they have before them; the poem leverages on the fact that being hardworking

is a sine-a-qua-non to greatness. The rhyme adds that dependence on inherited wealth only results in poverty and shame. The poem also acknowledges the importance of (formal) education èkó and thus must not be taken with levity.

Rhyme II is titled “Ìyá l’onígòwò mí” *My mother is my sponsor*; this poem recounts women’s efforts to ensure the survival of a child right from conception through the weaning stage to the early infancy (and sometimes to adulthood). He amplifies the protective role of the mother, the attempt towards ensuring bonding and so on. Following from this, the poet persona/artiste pledges his loyalty and obedience to his mother. “Ìyá ni wùrà” *mother is gold* is also a nursery rhyme which passes across a message that is not too different from what obtains in the fourth track of Sodipo’s *Àmòràn*. The slight difference is that while Sodipo mainly emphasises the necessity of children recompensing the efforts of their parents (both father and mother), the nursery rhyme “Ìyá ni wùrà” explicates the stress a woman goes through in pregnancy and weaning. Based on this, the rhyme regards the woman, a mother, as invaluable.

Also the reference to a goat in the poem titled “Goat, a Domestic Animal” presents the recalcitrant nature of goat which often puts it in trouble, hence little children are encouraged not to take on such attribute that would constantly subject them to brutal discipline. The last rhyme studied – “Òmọ t’ó mó ìyá rẹ̀ l’ójú” *A child that dishonours his/her mother* – has a similar message to *Ewúré* (goat) and it is more of a warning against being rude to one’s parents, particularly the mother. This has a similar meaning with the English saying “It is bad to bite the finger that feeds one”, the poem makes it clear that it is evil to dishonour one’s parents who have put in so much effort to get one the best out of life; any child who does this is subjected to utter misery.

Theoretical framework: Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Several linguistic theories have been developed to enhance thorough research into functional use of language. Owing to the advent of cognitive linguistics, Conceptual Metaphor Theory has emerged to provide insight into how concepts and ideas are represented indirectly using another concept. The theory was developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in *Metaphors We Live by*. Their goal for this is to provide for the study of the role of metaphor in our ordinary conceptual system. Lakoff and Johnson’s main concern is why our everyday concepts are structured in one way rather than another. Fundamentally, the tenet of the theory is that metaphor operates at the level of thinking.

Germane to this cognitive approach to linguistics is the notion of conceptual metaphor which Kövecses (2005) explains as “the understanding of one idea, or conceptual domain, in terms of another”. The most basic assumption in cognitive metaphor theory is that there is a set of ordinary metaphoric concepts –conceptual metaphors– around which we conceptualise the world, and that the essence of such metaphoric concepts is to understand and experience partially one kind of thing or experience in terms of another.

Kövecses (2005) has identified two conceptual domains to which metaphors are linked- the ‘source’ domain and the ‘target’ domain. The source domain consists of a set of literal entities, attributes, processes and relationships that are semantically linked and apparently stored together in the (human) mind. These are expressed in language through related words and expressions, which can be seen as organised in groups resembling those sometimes described as ‘lexical sets’ or ‘lexical fields’ by linguists. The ‘target’ domain tends to be

abstract, and takes its structure from the source domain, through the metaphorical link, or ‘conceptual metaphor’. Thus while the source domain has a semantic link, the target domain has a metaphorical link. By the discussion of Evans & Green (2006), target domains are therefore believed to have relationships of entities, attributes and processes which mirror those found in the source domain. It therefore holds that entities, attributes and processes in the target domain are lexicalised using words and expressions from the source domain.

The proponents posit that no abstract notions can be talked about without metaphor. This claim is of course considered true in that there is no direct way of perceiving abstract concepts and we can only understand them through the filter of directly experienced concrete notions. If it is true that abstract subjects are generally talked about using metaphor, and a mass of linguistic evidence has been gathered to support this contention (Kövecses, 2005), it is not out of place then to say that a close examination of the metaphors used can be an important key to the way people have mentally constructed abstract domains.

The conceptual metaphor approach is very enlightening as a tool for identifying underlying meaning, but it has pitfalls. Researchers need to be alert to the dangers of overgeneralising on limited linguistic evidence, and to the need to establish consistent procedures for identifying metaphors.

Analysis of the Projection of Yoruba Social Values

Language projects human perception; it organises our experiences and understanding of the world as well. It organises our reasoning on the basis of our experience. This section discusses the social values projected in Sodipo’s *Amoran (Advice)* and selected Yoruba children rhymes.

Parenting

The following extracts show how the Yoruba conceive parenting.

Extract 1: “Ìyá ni **wùrà**, baba ni **jígí...**” *mother is gold, father is the mirror*

Extract 2: Ìyá **l’onígòwò** mi tí n tó’jú mi ní kékeré *(my mother has been my supporting strength from childhood)*

Extract 3: Ìyá tó’ò j’iyà ‘pò l’órí rẹ *mother, who suffered so much because of you*
Bàbá tó’ò j’iyà ‘pò l’órí rẹ *father, who suffered so much because of you*

Sodipo, in his “Ìyá ni wùrà” presents the inevitability of parental labour over the child and the subsequent need for reimbursing such effort by the latter. The Yoruba culture places much value on parenting; extract 1 attests to it that men and women are not only genetically different, but they are also given separate roles, and thus perceived differently in Yoruba culture. This is reflected in metaphorical expressions that are specifically used for either male or female. Here, we have the description of parents as not just ‘wùrà’ but a priceless one-‘wùrà iyebiye’ *priceless gold*, for mother and ‘jígí’ *mirror* for father.

The Yoruba people practice patrilineal system of marriage and from ancient time, patriarchy is held in high esteem. Thus, it is not out of doubt that the conceptual metaphor

'jígí' *mirror* as reference to father is hinged on the ideology that the father owns the child (especially a male) and the child genetically looks like the father in all things. By extension, the qualities of the father are traceable in the child thus, if he wants to get his true image, he finds it in the child. Even when he dies, the child continues to project him in terms of look, philosophy and worldview. Therefore, contrary to the good deal of metaphors on women in Africa which falls under the banner of depreciatory metaphors, Sodipo here draws from the common ideology of the people to amplify the appreciatory values of women above men.

It might be interesting to note that one of the reasons children are encouraged to value the efforts of their parents owes to the fact that such efforts are not being put in without measures of pains and sacrifice; Sodipo also metaphorises this in the track titled "Ìyá ni wúrà" and he calls such effort 'ààsùn' *sleepless nights* and "bí bàbá se ń sá'ré kiri" *the father's efforts at meeting his obligations*. This aspect of the people's culture is intended to be inculcated in the younger generation right from childhood, hence, the reason for its inclusion in the rhyme "Ìyá mi" *my mother*.

On another end, there are expectations from the child too to the parents; these expectations are seen in the extracts below:

Extract 4: Èmi kí iyá mi kú isẹ
Pèlú 'teríba m'ólẹ
Èmi kò ní kọ 'sé fún iyá mi mọ

Extract 5: Omọ t'ó mọ iyá rẹ l'ójú o
Òsì yí ò ta 'mọ ná à pa

The above lines show that a child's attitude to his/her parent should be that of reverence. In extract 4, the expectation is that the child acknowledges the parents' efforts; this includes phatic acknowledgment of such. Not should the child acknowledge the parents' efforts, it also required his/her willingness and readiness to render services to the parents. Extract 5 suggests the likely implication of a child who fails to meet the above expectations. The Yoruba prohibit every act of disrespect. To them, any child that scorns his/her parents will live the rest of his/her life in abject poverty.

Again, parenting in the Yoruba view entails maximal weaning and relatively long period of nursing. This is captured in the extract below.

Extract 6: Ó gb'óyún mi f'ósù mèsàán (She carries my pregnancy for mine months)
Ó pòn mi f'ódún mэта (She backwraps me for three years)

This is a projection of weaning as a crucial component of the Yoruba culture which is fast fading away in the current century owing to the advancement of western civilisation across the globe. Specific duties of mothers in Africa and particularly among the Yoruba as projected in Sodipo's *Amoran* are "Ó l'óyún mi f'ósù mèsàán, Ó pòn mi f'ódún mэта ..." (*she bore the pregnancy for nine months, and weaned/back stripped me three full years*); however, one may want to inquire of the continuity of these practices by contemporary parents. Thus, there is a need for cultural re-awakening in this regard as it is seen in popular practice in modern times that mothers hardly fulfill their role in weaning as well as nursing their babies for a long time; not necessarily three years as it used to be in the old times.

Apart from this, education as a whole is intended to address three basic domains in every child – the cognitive, the affective and the psychomotor; it is therefore not unlikely that this is an attempt to work on the child’s affective domain using the home as a starting point. It must be noted that instances like the one noted above are factors that enhance bonding and communal living in Africa.

This is so because unlike what obtains in the Yoruba culture, where a child enjoys the warmth of back strapping and the bond in breastfeeding, the western world introduces “the bottle” immediately a child is born, being put in a bogie and also gets a room to him/herself not too long after birth. Such western child on the contrary, unlike his/her contemporary in Africa, is physically and emotionally introduced to the world of individualism right from inception. Little wonder, children in this category live their lives independent of their parents where possible.

Disposition to Life’s Dynamism

One of the world’s conventional phenomena is the constancy/inevitability of change. The following extracts illustrate the disposition of the Yoruba to the dynamics of life.

Extract 7. “B’ólá bá dé , kò s’èni tí ò lè fẹ́lá *everyone flaunts his/her wealth*

Extract 8. “Ìgbà t’ó bá yá t’ólá rẹ́ bá bèrẹ́ sí ñ dé” *by the time your wealth increases...*

Extract 9. “... má t’orí owó k’o wá di èni tí ñ kanra...” *don’t be unkind because of Money*

Extract 10. “... t’ólá bá dé má fi sègbérega...” *do not become proud because of wealth*

Extract 11: **Bí ayé bá fẹ́ ọ ló’òní** *if people like you today*

Bí o bá l’ówó l’ówó *if you are rich*

Ni wón á máa fẹ́ ọ lóla *then they will love you continually*

Tàbí tí o bá wà ní ipò àtàtá *or if you are in a dignified position*

Ayé á yé o sí tẹ́rín-tẹ́rín *people will cheerfully exalt you*

Jẹ́ kí o di èni ñ ráágó *at any instance of poverty*

Kí o rí bá yé tí í sí mú sí ọ *then they will make a mockery of you*

The Yoruba socio-cultural perceptions presented in extracts 7-11 above presents the possible changes that human may exhibit due to a change of status, Sodipo acknowledges that there is every tendency for a person to become relatively unfriendly (“èni tí ñ kanra) when he/she amasses wealth, or becomes unnecessarily proud “...sègbérega” and deviant “... ọmọlúàbí ni kí o jẹ...”. The social issue raised here hinges on the perception that humans only desire to identify with successful people, no one wants to identify with failure or poverty.

Bearing this in mind, therefore, an individual is spurred to always aspire for the best.

Hard work/industry

The Yoruba people celebrate industriousness and shun indolence. This is shown in extract 12 (below)

Extract 12. “bàbá sì lè l’**ésin léèkàn**...” *your father may have a horse ranch*
“*L’ésin leekan*” here means to have a ranch full of horses referring to a great deal of wealth (hence possibly amplifying “Ìyá rẹ le l’ówó l’ówó);

Extract 13 “... bí o bá gb’ójú lé wọn, o tẹ tán ni mo sọ fún ọ” *if you depend on them eventual shame is imminent*

This is as well contained in Sodipo’s *Àmòràn*. This is in tune with a saying among the people that a child who depends on his//her parents’ wealth is directly or indirectly subjecting himself or herself to poverty.

Sense of Morals

The morals upheld by the Yoruba people are coded in the way they use language to make descriptions. As they are popularly called ‘*òmólúàbí*’ *a well cultured child*, the people expect that any child born into the culture should at all times display appreciable characters; when the reverse is the case, they regard such an individual as defiant; and such (culprit) will not go unpunished. This is what Sodipo terms “*iyà n bẹ f’òmọ tí kò gbọn, ẹkún n bẹ f’òmọ tí ó n sáré kiri*” in *Ẹ jẹ k’ámúra*.

Extract 14: *Ìyà n bẹ f’òmọ tí kò gbọn, poverty lies in wait for a foolish child*
ẹkún n bẹ f’òmọ tí ó n sáré kiri woe betides a child who shirks

‘*Omọ tí kò gbọn*’ ordinarily translates as ‘*a foolish child*’; this is borne out of the ideology that the Yoruba people are civilised and that the culture has all the wisdom that makes the world sociable, therefore anyone who acts contrarily is regarded as ‘*foolish*’. Similarly, ‘*òmọ tí ó n sáré kiri*’ *a truant*, shows that the people celebrate discipline and focus.

In similar vein, such a recalcitrant child is metaphorically likened to ‘*ewúré*’ *goat* in the poem *Ewúré jẹ ẹran ilé*.

Extract 15: Ewúré jẹ ẹran ilé
Tí ó má a n jìyà púpò
Nítorí àìgbọ̀ràn rẹ
Bí wọn bá na ewúré
Á gbọn etí méjì pépé
K’ólójú tó séjú pé
Ó ti padà sí ibi tí
Ó ti jìyà lẹ̀kàn
*The goat is a domestic animal
that gets beaten a lot
because of its obstinacy*

*when the goat is being reprimanded
before the twinkle of an eye
it would have returned
to where it was reprimanded earlier*

The main picture presented in the above lines is that of a recalcitrant child, who is likened to a goat that never takes to instruction but heads for distraction. Such individual returns too soon and too frequently to the ill behaviour for which he/she was reprimanded: “K’ólójú tó sējú pé, Ó ti padà sí ibi tí, Ó ti jiyà lẹ̀ẹ̀kan”. The lines do not only communicate this, they also in a way send some caution to children. The line “Tí ó má a n jiyà púpò; Nítorí àìgboràn rẹ̀” implies that the child will continually suffer rebuke as long as he remains recalcitrant. The children are therefore warned to be obedient and well behaved; this is seen both in Sodipo’s songs and the poems thus:

Extract 16: ... Ọmọ́lúwàbí ni ko jẹ o...(You must be well behaved)

Extract 17: Èyin ọmọ́dẹ ẹ gbó, (children listen...)
È má se bí ewúre eran aláìgboràn (do not imitate the goat, a very stubborn animal)

Akin to this is the line in the nursery rhyme *Ọbí ẹni*; “Ọmọ t’ó mó iyá rẹ l’ójú...” This refers to a disrespectful child (especially to parents and elders); the Yoruba people shun this menace and the magnitude of its consequence is in what seems to be a curse “òsì y’ó ta’mo ná à pa” (a child that disdains his/her mother shall be subjected to abject poverty). ‘Òsì’ (poverty) here does not just conjure the conventional understanding of poverty (as it might be translated) instead, it refers to a series of unpleasant experiences that such a child would face, in fact, financial poverty may be exclusive.

Extract 18. “... ma wọ’sọ... ma gbádùn ara mi... ma jeun t’ó dára sí kùn mi... *I’ll put on a nice (expensive) cloth... I will enjoy the best of life... I will feed well.*”

The above extract suggests that the Yoruba people live a life of contentment; in the face of an uncontrolled and hasty rush for acquisition of wealth, Sodipo presents this people as a satisfactory group of humans. This is also projected in the track *Jẹ k’ólá wọlé mi*. In this track, it seems to hold that the Yoruba people are either regarded as being subsistent or on an appreciable ground, they consciously show modesty. For instance, what the artiste generally *prayerfully* requests for, is “ólá” *wealth*, yet, in an attempt to narrow it down; he simply says ‘owó *money/wealth*, ọmọ *child/children* pẹ́lú àláfìà... *and peace*; in this case, extraneous human existence in the Yoruba culture is principally dependent on these three factors- money, children and peace. A justification given to this is the line that reads “owó l’a fí n t’òmọ baba yé fí fún wa... owó l’a fí n kólé, baba yé fí fún wa ...” (Money is required to train up a child, God please give unto us... we need money to build a house, God give to us).

Another important ideological inclination that is manifested in the texts is that just as what obtains in the metaphysical tradition of (English) poetry, Africans revere the passage of time. The life and times of a human also takes importance in the philosophy of the Yoruba people; it is believed that humans have a relatively short life span and as such there is the need to maximize their time. In Sodipo’s *Ma gbádùn ara mi*, this theme is projected in the

choice of the metaphor ‘*ojo*’- a reference to human life and time. Here, a choice is made on the paradigmatic (vertical) level. ‘*Ojò*’ *lifetime* in Yoruba and as used here does not connote the usual ‘day’; instead it is a hyponymy for all indicators by which human life and existence can be measured: day, time, age and others.

Analysis of Linguistic Devices

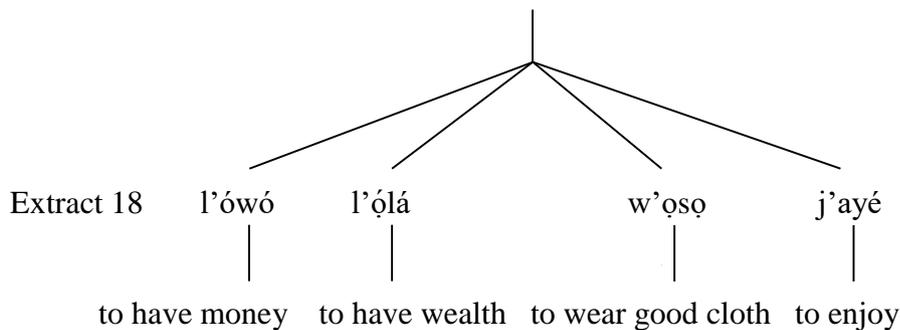
In the last few paragraphs, attention has been given to the ideational metafunction of language as evident in the texts; the social ideologies discussed above are not without certain forms of linguistic features that make a discourse. Each of the texts adopted for this study deploys various linguistic tools to project the messages therein. The textual metafunction of the text is embedded in the tools deployed and these are discussed below:

Substitution

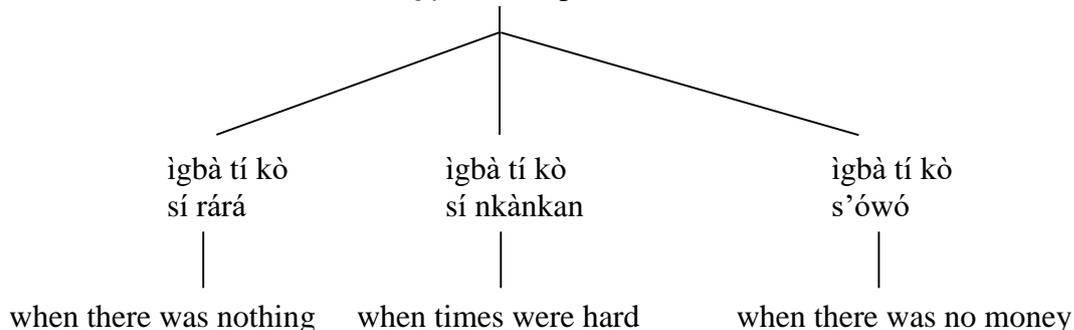
The primary essence of language is communication- that is exactly what sustains human relationship. A speaker is always at liberty to select appropriate medium which suits them; to ensure the success of the communication process; one of such media available to a speaker to reach their audience is the ability to present same thing in different ways, and at different times. Substitution is a basic figure of every verbal communication. The levels and forms of substitution in discourse are varied. In most cases, intentional and manipulative replacement of words, phrases, sayings or text passages are irrevocable means of expression of a given speech and discursive interchange. Sodipo deploys this for the purpose explained above. Below are examples of instances evident in *Àmòrà̀n*.

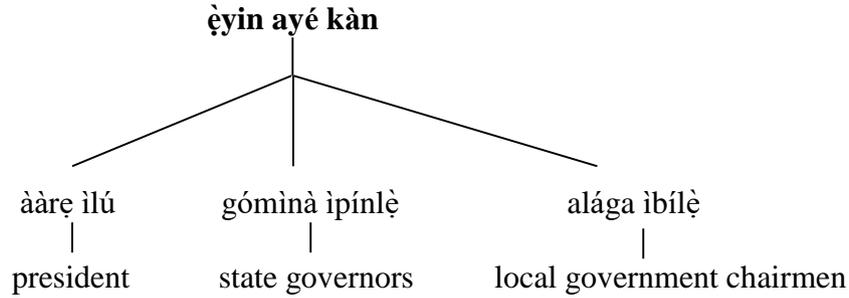
Extract 7:

Felá (to flaunt wealth)



Àtijó (in time past)





The lexical relations presented above show the semantic domain of the discourse. In extract 14 above, *l'ówó*, *l'ólá wọsọ* and *jayé* above are all substitutes for *fẹlá*. The centrality of the lines in extract 15 is that the audience (addressee) should always call to mind the 'present' day when the expected turn around eventually becomes real. To establish this, we have the subject matter first presented as 'àtijó' (*the former times*) then as 'ìgbà tí kò sí nkànkán' (*when there was practically nothing to live on*). Ideally, 'àtijó' would mean 'olden days' which does not 'really' capture the intention of the speaker. Attempting to make it clearer, he says 'ìgbà tí kò sí nkànkán' but the clearest and most exact message of this line is actually the days when poverty was in place, which was a situation the addressee had experienced before. Similarly, in the track *E se 're*, it is not unlikely that 'èyin ayé kàn' might be interpreted differently from the intention of the speaker possibly as the rich.

On the contrary, we come to see that 'èyin ayé kàn' in this sense refers to political office holders- *president of a nation* (ààrẹ̀ ilú), *state governors* (gómìnà ìpínlẹ̀) and *local government council chairmen* (alága ìbílẹ̀). From the recurrent experience in Africa, particularly in Nigeria, political office holders have been observed to always disappoint the people who voted them into power, by becoming indifferent to the plights of the people. From Sodipo's perspective, this attitude has deterred sustainable development in Nigeria; if only things were done right, sustainable development would have been inevitable. This is an advice to all who are at an advantage to be humane enough notwithstanding their social and financial statuses. This is possibly borne out of the common practice found amongst humans who tend to take an absolute turn around when things begin to work out or from the idea of 'power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely'. As evident in the data above, the role of substitution is to synchronise with the others the continuance of personal manifestation and to provide the necessary 'time-durability' of the communicativeness, namely transforming it into a socially legitimate linguistic interactivity, in the long run – into a communication of full social value.

Repetition

In the data, repetition is used to make sense of the activities of the Yoruba people in their capacity to re-assert every single truth or convention thereby, building invaluable blocks of social experience. In Sodipo's works, he deploys constant repetition of the key words; this is to foreground the subject matter. In the poem *Isé l'òdògùn isé* the word 'isé' *work* recurs five times, this emphasises the poet's concern and the fact that there are no other ways by which one can achieve good success without being hardworking. In *Ìyá l'onígbòwó* the word 'ìyá' appears six times; the last line also makes it emphatic. The repetition of what is significant

makes it generally known to the community and decodes it in the eye of all social actors. “There is no such a discourse, striving toward a permanent return in its original literal sense, or such a discourse, that always yields novel and unique meanings with not a single one being repeated” (Boychev 2003). The use of repetitions in this work helps to enhance interactivity between the language users who are not physically together and focus the attention of the interactants to significant elements in the discourse.

Amplification

Words are weighty, to put it more aptly, words vary in gravity. In other words, the weightiness of words determines the gravity of its implication. However, a writer may decide to choose weighty words for the purpose of emphasis. This seems to be the case in Sodipo’s *Àmòràn*. In the track *B’ólá bá dé*, the writer says “kò s’èni tí ò le **fèlá**” (extract 17) in this sense, ‘fèlá’ is an amplified choice that shows how seriously such an individual who has experienced change in situation would be given to pleasure; not just mere enjoyment. Again, ordinarily a Yoruba man would say “múra sí isé” *press hard* (as we have in the children rhyme *Isé ni òdògùn isé*) as an encouraging clause to make someone sit up, but Sodipo says “tẹ’ra mọ isé” *be hard working* (Extract 18) and this shows that the speaker is not just encouraging the audience to sit up but to ensure that so much effort is put into whatever is being done at any given time, in fact to “tẹ’ra mọ” *means to be hardworking*; in the later lines of *Isé ni òdògùn isé*, we have “ohun tí a kò bá j’iyà fún kì í le t’ójó, ohun tí a bá f’ara s’isé fún l’ón pé l’ówó èni” (Extract 19). This suggests that a great deal of diligence is required if success would be achieved and sustained.

Extract 18. “... **kò’ s’èni tí ò lò fèlá...**” *everybody loves to flaunt wealth*

Extract 19. “**Tẹ’ra mọ’sé rẹ o tẹ’ra mọ ...**” *press hard on your work ...press hard*

Extract 20. “**ohun tí a kò bá j’iyà fún kì í le t’ójó, ohun tí a bá f’ara s’isé fún l’ón pé l’ówó èni**” *What one labours to get is usually valued and also lasts longer.*

Ellipsis

To be put in its simplest way, ellipsis can be regarded as a language process within a single text. Today, we rarely speak, or even write, in complete sentences that are considered to be the ideal structures of language in general. Language is, in fact, made of gaps since the speakers of one language (as well as writers) operate within the context in which omitted or replaced parts of linguistic structures are understood even though they are not expressed. Ellipsis is a key feature of natural language. For a natural language generation system to produce fluent coherent texts, it must be able to generate coordinated and elliptic sentences. Below is a proof from Sodipo’s *Amoran* (“...” represents position where certain lexical/grammatical items are elided).

Extract 19. “...**àmọ sá... ni ko jẹ ó...**”

Extract 20. **B’ó ti le wù k’ólá yen pọ tó... ni k’o jẹ o...**

Extract 21. “ní t’èmi, ní t’èmi, ... ni ma jé o...”

In elliptical constructions, as we have above, parts of the statement (ọmọlúàbí) that the recipients understand from the context of the conversation have been omitted in extracts 19-21. Thus ellipsis is used as a linguistic mechanism which helps specific linguistic structures to be expressed more economically, at the same time maintaining their clarity and comprehensiveness despite complete omission of words, phrases or clauses.

Epigrams

In human languages and cultures, proverbs constitute a very important aspect of language use. Epigrams in this particular population (Yoruba) function as a highly contextualised communicative strategy. Some examples taken from the texts are considered below:

Extract 22. “...iyà n bẹ fún ọmọ tí kò gbón, ẹkún n bẹ f’ọmọ tí n sáré kiri” *eventual sorrow and suffering are imminent for a child that plays truancy*

Extract 23. “... bí a kò bá rẹni fẹ̀yìn tì, bí ọ̀lẹ̀ là á rí” *lack of firm support can make one to struggle like a lazy man*

Extract 24. “...ohun tí a kò ba jìyà fún, kì í lẹ̀ tójó, ohun tí a bá fara sisé fún, ní í pẹ̀ lówó ẹ̀ni” *What one labours to get is usually valued and last longer*

Extract 25. “... apá lará, ìgùnpá niyèkan...” *your hands are your family while your elbows are your relations*

The social and cognitive aspects of language use must be combined for a complete understanding of how genres of language are actually used by regular people in daily life. Appropriate use of proverbs is part of the competence that a speaker is expected to exhibit. This is a social marker amongst the Yoruba. They use proverbs to present their worldviews and believe in everyday conversations, poems, music and others as we have in these extracts.

Metaphor

Metaphor is an indirect comparison between two or more seemingly unrelated subjects. Metaphors help constitute the realities we live in. Musolff (2011) asserts that metaphor functions almost like a pair of glasses through which the metaphoric object is observed, in other words, re-organised. The metaphors identified so far in this study are ‘wùrà’ (*gold*), ‘jígí’ (*mirror*), ‘ẹ̀sin léèkàn’ (*a ranch of horses*) and ‘ewúré’ (*goat*). As earlier stated, within the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, lexical sets are interpreted or linked with the conceptual metaphors in the target domain based on the shared knowledge of language users. In this wise, the metaphors ‘wùrà’, ‘jígí’ ‘ẹ̀sin léèkàn’ (a ranch of horses) and ‘ewúré’ constitute the source domain (the literal sets), their interpretation thus depends on the perception of the people among which such words are used for reference purpose. For example, generally, a ranch is a determinant of wealth, hence, it is implied that the use of

ranch of horses in the poem makes a reference to great wealth while ‘goat’ is interpreted as stubbornness, defiance and recalcitrance. These metaphors are structural (e.g “ìyá ni wúrà... bàbá ni jígí), visual and conceptual. Also, *hands* and *elbows* are metaphorically used to represent *family* and *relations* in *Apá lará, ìgúnpá nì’ yèkan*. This only points to the fact that, both hands and elbows which are closer to one than members of one’s family and relations are needed instruments for hard work and success in life.

Verbal Choices

Also, there is a need to call to mind the choice of mood and verb in the text. In the work of Sodipo, the choice of mood system shows that the artiste sometimes excludes himself from some issues he raises. Let us consider the following:

Extract 26. “òrẹ́, kí ló se ẹ́...?” (friend, what is the problem?) (**interrogative**)

Extract 27. “... ọmọ̀lúàbí ni k’o jẹ́ o...” *you should be a properly cultured person* (**imperative**)

Extract 28. “... ní t’èmi, ọmọ̀lúàbí ni **mo fẹ́ jẹ́**” (*I want to be well cultured*) (**indicative, declarative**)

Extract 29. “...tẹ́’ra mọ ‘sẹ́ rẹ́...(press hard) (**imperative**)

Extract 30. “... múra sí isẹ́ rẹ́ ọrẹ́ mi (*be hard working my friend*) (**imperative**)

Comparing extracts 26-30 above, it is observed that the speaker identifies with the audience. The questioning in (26) is not threatening at all; instead it makes the discourse more interactive, and also provides a ground for the audience to have a contribution to the subject matter. However, a closer look at the choice of modal (auxiliary) verbs in 27 and 28 shows that the speaker distances himself sort of. In the poem “Isẹ́ l’òògùn isẹ́” the choice of verb distances the two participants. All through the structures are imperative, an example is what we have in extracts 29 and 30. This tends to make these discourses somewhat formal, didactic as well as entertaining.

Conclusions

African music is a developmental communication process, that is, it is the application of process of communication to the development process. Words are cultural artifacts, reflecting aspects of the cultures in which they were created. To buttress this, Inchaurrealde (2003: 179) asserts that certain lexical units are associated with *cultural lexical scripts*, which are in turn linked to a certain cultural background. Words have meanings because people continuously recreate and negotiate them by interacting with one another within a given socio-cultural context. The linguistic features of songs and rhymes in the Yoruba language are instrumental in the acquisition of communication skills; ability to be dynamic in the use of language will undoubtedly enhance language users’ general skill in a second language situation. In order to

participate fully in a culture, one should learn that culture's language. Conversely, in order to be fluent in a language, one must learn the culture that language represents.

It is as well pertinent to state that the analysis of various aspects of Yoruba culture in this study offers support to the tenets of Systemic Functional Grammar, particularly with reference to the idea that the function of language is to make meanings, and that meanings are influenced by the social and cultural context in which they are exchanged and that the process of using language is a *semiotic* process, a process of making meaning by choosing. Diverse linguistic tools are deployed in formal and informal talks in specific contexts to represent the world in which we live. Mention also needs to be made that prominent among these linguistic features is metaphor; it plays a major role in setting the tenor of discourse.

Socially, the songs and children rhymes are geared towards ensuring the cultivation and recognition of the mind; embracing the Yoruba traditional value system, encouraging good citizenship and patriotism, promotion of virtues of honesty, discipline, sense of responsibility, integrity and hardwork/industry; promotion of merit and competence against mediocrity; promotion of creativity and innovation. However, with the current trend particularly among the 'literate' Yoruba group, the fore culprits of the loss of values celebrated in the culture, there is need for attitudinal change on their parts as well as speakers of each language so that there will be justifiable pride in using the languages for non-intimate and formal purposes.

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APPENDICES

Nursery rhyme 1 ISÉ NI ÒÒGÙN ISÉ

Isé ni òògùn isé
Múra sí isé re òré è mi
Isé ni a fí í di ẹni gíga
Bí a kò bá rẹni fẹyìn tí, bí ọlẹ là á rí
Bí a ko rẹni gbẹkẹlé
À á tẹra mọ isé ẹni
Ìyá rẹ l lówó lówó
Bàbá sì le lẹsin léèkàn
Bí o bá gbójú lé wọn
O tẹ tán ni mo sọ fún ọ
ohun tí a kò ba jìyà fún
kì í lè tójó
Ohun tí a bá fara sisé fún
Ní í pé lówó ẹni
Apá lará, ìgùnpá niyèkan
Bí ayé n fẹ ọ lónií
Bí o bá lówó lówó
Ni wọn á máa fẹ ọ lola
Tàbí tí o bá wà ní ipò àtàtá
Ayé á yẹ o sí tẹrín-tẹrín
Jẹ kí o di ẹni n ráágó
Kí o rí báyé tí í símú sí ọ
Èkọ sì tún n sọni í òdọ́gá
Múra kí o kọ ọ dárádára
Bí o sì rí ọpọ èniyàn
Tí wọn n fí èkọ se ẹrín rín
Dákun má se fara wé wọn
Ìyá n bọ fómọ tí kò gbón
Èkún n bẹ f'ómọ tó n sá kiri
Má fòwúrò seré, ọré mi
Múra sísk, ọjó n lọ

Nursery rhyme 2 ÌYÁ L'ONÍGBỌWỌ

Ìyá l'onígbọwọ mi
Tí n tọ́jú mi ni kékeré
Èyìn rẹ l'ó fi n pọn mi
Ìyá kú isé o
Èmi kí iyá mi kú isé
Pèlú 'teríba mó'lẹ
Èmi kò ni kọ 'sé fún iyá mi mó
Ìyá o! Ìyá o!! Ìyá o!!!

Nursery rhyme 3 ÌYÁ NI WÚRÀ

Ìyá ni wúrà iyebíye
Tí a kò le f'owó rà
Ó gb'óyún mi f'ósù mèèsán
Ó pòn mí f'ódún méta
Ìyá ni wúrà iyebíye
Tí a kò le f'owó rà

Nursery rhyme 4 EWURE JE ERAN ILE

Ewúré jé eran ilé
Tí ó má a n jìyà púpò
Nítorí àìgboràn rẹ
Bí wọn bá na ewúré
Á gbọn etí méjì pépé
K'ólójú tó séjú pé
Ó ti padà sí ibi tí
Ó ti jìyà lẹ̀ẹ̀kan
Èyin ọmódé ẹ gbó
È má se bí ewúré eran aláìgboràn

Nursery rhyme 5

Ọmọ t'ó mọ ọ 'yá rẹ l'ójú o
Òsì yí ọ ta 'mọ ná à pa x2
Ìyá tó'ò j'iyà 'pọ l'órí rẹ
Bàbá tó'ò j'iyà 'pọ l'órí rẹ
Ọmọ t'ó mọ ọ 'yá rẹ l'ójú o
Òsì yí ọ ta 'mọ ná à pa