



## A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF OLU OBAFEMI'S NAIRA HAS NO GENDER

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### Abstract

A discourse is a body of text meant to communicate specific data, information and knowledge, there exist internal relations in the content of a given discourse; likewise, there exist external relations among discourses. As such, a discourse does not exist in itself, but is related to other discourses, by way of inter-discursivity; therefore, in the course of intellectual enquiry, the discourse among researchers features the questions and answers of what is.....? And what is not ....., conducted according to the meanings (denotation and connotation) of the concepts (statements) used in the given field of enquiry, such as anthropology, ethnography and sociology, cultural studies and literary theory. The paper seeks, to identify the elements of discourse analysis in the exemplifying text NAIRA HAS NO GENDER, and how it has help to enhanced dramatic effects and meaning perceptions in the text through the use of discourse elements which bring out the beauty of literary or written discourse. The study reveals that discourse analysis plays an important role in decoding meaning of language. This discourse is rightly expressed through context, participants and speech act theory.

**Keywords:** Discourse Analysis, Communication, Language, Written Discourse, Literature.

### Introduction

Language is an instrument of unification. Every speech community relates in terms of custom, professions, culture and other means of socialization through languages. In the words of the dramatist, the novelist, and the poet, we become more fully aware of the power of symbols. In other words language is used to express literature, as literature is a mirror of life or society. Language is the medium of literature, but literature signifies in ways, which depend on more than just linguistic organisation. Consequently, there is a need for continual refinement of the descriptive models appropriate to the analysis of the language of literary and non literary texts. It applies particularly to the level of discourse, and will continue to lead away from the necessary focus on short, 'deviant' lyric poems and extracts from novels, which have been the domain of much stylistic investigation during the past sixty years, towards the signifying practices of texts in relation to a range of sociolinguistic and socio cultural factors. Such developments will, it is to be hoped, work towards fuller integration of language and literature, both in terms of pedagogical and critical-interpretive practice. The relationship will, however, only be strengthened if partners show mutual respect and heed-Roman Jakobson's (1960:377) famous call made at the Indian style conferences.

“A linguist deaf to the poetic  
Function of language and a literary  
Scholar indifferent to linguistic  
Problems and unconservant  
With linguistic methods, are  
Equally flagrant anachronism

### Functions of literary languages

Literary language is one of the most important and fascinating aspects of language. Literary language occurs frequently in our everyday conversation. In whatever form literary language appear – in poetry, prose, writing on ordinary speech, it is an integral and vital part; it is not decorative but functional. Moreover, literary language plays a prominent part in drama, poetry, but it also plays an important role in prose, not only in imaginative works such as novels and short stories but also in expository and persuasive works. Literary language is broadly classified into two major segments. The tropes – These are those attributes that describe, compare, address, for instance, metonymy, personification, periphrasis and simile.

The Schemes – They are those that add, subtract, repeat or e-arrange the meaning of words, for instance, apposition, ellipsis, repetition and anaphora. The following can be attributed to the functions of literary language:

- It is used to place emphasis on the meaning of words e.g. repetition. It ensures coherence in the arrangement of words or incidents e.g. climax. It can also be used to explain the unknown, especially in expository writing e.g. metaphor.
- Metaphor is a handy linguistic tool because it crams so many meanings into a few words.
- According to Halliday (1983), there are three meta-functions of metaphor language – the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual.

The ideational can be briefly defined as understanding the environment; the interpersonal as acting on others in the environment; and the textual as the providing of resources to ensure that what is said is relevant and relates to so-text/context. The interpersonal meta-function of metaphors is just as important as the ideational, despite the common misconception that metaphor is simply a descriptive device.

The following functions of metaphor are arranged according to how these meta-functions are primarily realized: ideational, interpersonal and textual. I say “primarily” because metaphors fulfil more than one function simultaneously. One function of metaphor is to fill lexical gaps. These occur when there is no adequate T-term in existence, so that extension or transfer of the reference of an existing word-form plugs the gaps. Metaphor is used for explanation and modelling. When the grounds of the metaphor become the central issue, metaphor can explain some relatively abstract concepts in terms, which are more familiar to the hearers.

Other functions of literary language are as follows:

- It associates and relates attributes, e.g. metonymy.
- It does transfer emotions, e.g. apostrophe.
- It is commonly used to advertise e.g. the trope
- It functions in variations of word order e.g. the schemes.
- It reveals the author’s attitude, quality of voice or selection of language in writing e.g. tone.
- It presents symbols in place of words for instance synecdoche “wheels” for car.
- It allows audience/reader’s participation e.g. rhetorical question. It also gives the reader, the necessary witty saying by playing on similar meaning and sounds for instance fun, onomatopoeia.
- It reveals undeniable fact via its placing opposing ideas closely together e.g. antithesis. It recasts the past incidents e.g. allusion. An example of antithesis can be found in Soyinka’s “Abiku”. The Ripest fruit is the saddest”.

Naira has no gender: a broad review.

Olu Obafemi, the author of “NAIRA Has No Gender”, is an indigene of Akutupa in the kappa/Bunu Local Government Area of Kogi State of Nigeria. Olu Obafemi is a playwright, novelist, poet, theatre artiste, director and journalist. He started his career at the University of Ilorin in 1976 in the Department of English. According to Martin banham, Olu Obafemi’s play – “Naira Has No gender “had its premiere in a workshop theatre at Leeds in March, 1990. Naira Has No Gender has been staged in Cameroon by Asheri kilo. The play, Naira has No Gender, according to the author’s note, shows the choice of an ostensibly trivial part-domestic part and social issue to examine how conscious

(socially and politically) individuals confront the reality of daily existence in a bankrupt, cynical and dysfunctional social order.

Certain factors contribute to this social disorganisation. Such factors include degeneration, poor economy, rigged election, corruption and myopia on the part of the leadership. Naira has no gender starts off with two lovers – Otunla and Aina discussing their love and proposed wedding. A wedding that is being stalled by the groom's inability to garner and supply the bride price and materials. Chief Awadanu represents the corrupt moneybag of the present day Nigeria. In the play, the playwright reveals the crass fraudulence that controls the Nigerian economy as managed by Chief Awadanu (scatterer, waster, and maniac squander) whose control or lack of it, creates the economic and social deprivations that almost make the marriage of Aina and Otunla impossible.

Dotun, the son of Chief Awadanu, prefers to live as a poor man than to live a life of corruption. The title of the play itself is what brings the play to the reality of what Naira really means to the capitalists way of embezzling money. "Naira Has No Gender" here means that currency is sex blind, as Debby says "man? Naira has No Gender. I tell you the currency is sex blind". The central symbol in this play is that of money. The playwright clearly pinpoints the common and corrupt way of our women traffickers. They conceal dangerous drugs in their body even when they are pregnant. People are staking everything for Naira, including the humanity of the unborn.

The parents of Aina, Baba and Mama, whose wretched existence, as victims of the reckless class exploitation by the likes of Awadanu, contrasts with the life of abundance of the exploiters. Aina's parents also stand for the status of tradition, which insists that the system of tradition, which insists that the system must be and remain what it, has always been. The subject matter of Olu Obafemi's – "Naira Has No Gender" may be regarded as the theses of the play. In the play, the major theme is Naira but there are other themes or subject matter like gender, economic deprivation and opposition of the oppressed, social revolution, marriage, love, inequality, politics and tradition. The theme of gender starts off with lovers – Otunla and Aina, discussing their love and proposed wedding.

The theme of opposing oppression and economic deprivation is when the town is plagued by a protest of unimaginable magnitude by women who walked naked round the streets; a man committing suicide by burning himself. All of this is to oppose oppression and deprivation. The abrupt cancellation by Otunla and Aina of "a society" wedding crystallizes into a crescendo, almost knocking the final nail on the coffin of sanity". Subject matter pushed by Olu Obafemi is the case of abject poverty at the midst of absolute plenty squandered by a few keeping the majority in poverty. Also, Olu Obafemi is able to link the domestic issue of marriage with National issues of economic exploitation and politics to keep the two themes developing side by side by relating them to the issues of social revolution. The marriage theme is developed as an aspect of the theme of revolutionary change. Otunla and Aina's rejection of the traditional values and practices of marriage is made to symbolize the revolutionary act that heralds the dawn of a revolutionary future.

**Research Objectives:** The objectives of the research is to add to knowledge and also to examine and analyse the text of Naira Has No Gender by Olu Obafemi using the appropriate discourse elements in the analysis. In other words, the study will see to how various elements of discourse are employed to pass messages from an encoder to a decoder and the pattern of transactional transfer from the speaker to the listener. Also, it aims at employing speech act theory such as Austin (1962).

### Research Methodology

Previous work on discourse analysis will be reviewed. Elements of discourse will be employed in this paper in order to carry out the analysis of the data. The source of the data is a drama text written by Olu Obafemi. The data for this study will be gathered through the selection of utterances of different characters in the play, giving particular attention to the context under which such utterances are made. The collected data from the selected text shall be place on discourse elements for analysis. Elements like context, participants, theory of cooperative principles, reference, presupposition, speech act, types of meaning will be reviewed.

### Literature review

According to Mills (1997:9), discourse is a verbal communication, talk, conversation, a formal treatment of a subject in a speech or writing; a unit of text used by linguists for the analysis of linguistic phenomena that range over more than one sentence; the ability to reason: Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2000) describes discourse as the use of

language in speech and writing in order to produce meaning; language that is studied, usually in order to see how the different parts of a text are connected: spoken/written discourse. The term 'discourse' has become common in a variety of disciplines: sociology, linguistics, philosophy and many other fields, so much so that it is frequently left undefined. Discourse is a conceptual generalization of conversation within each modality and context of communication. As discourse, a statement is not a unit of semiotic signs but an abstract construct that allows the semiotic signs to assign meaning, and so communicate specific, repeatable communications to, between, and among objects, subjects, and statements.

In the humanities and the social sciences, the term discourse describes a formal way of thinking that can be expressed through language; the discourse is a social boundary that defines what statements can be said about a topic. Discourse affects the person's perspective, it is impossible to avoid discourse. Discourses are embedded in different rhetorical genres and metagenres that contain and enable them. That is language talking about language, for instance the American psychiatric Association's DSMIV manual tells which terms have to be used in talking about mental health, thereby mediating meanings and dictating practices of the professionals of psychology and psychiatry. Discourse is used widely in analysing literary and non-literary texts. It has to do with conversation and "hold-forth" on a subject, or giving speech, has been partly due to the etymology of the word. Discourse is linguistic communication seen as a transaction between speaker and hearer as an interpersonal activity whose form is determined by its social purpose. Longman dictionary of English language (1984) describes discourse as a conversation, especially of a formal nature; formal and orderly expression of ideas in speech or writing, such as an expression in the form of a sermon, a treatise etc. It is a piece of unit of connected speech or writing.

### Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is concerned with social contexts, and in particular with interaction or dialogue. Discourse analysis does not presuppose a bias towards the study of either spoken or written language. Discourse analysis is a hybrid field inquiry. It's "lender disciplines are to be found within various corners of the human and social sciences, with complex historical affiliations and a lot of cross fertilization taking place. Discourse analysis, according to Yule (1989:9) is, "how human beings use language to communicate and in particular how addressers construct linguistic messages for addresses and how addresses work on these linguistic messages to interpret them.

Hutdlin and waters define discourse analysis as:

*A logical development of the functional or national view of language, which had shown that there is more to meaning than just words in the sentence and context of the sentence is also important in creating meaning.*

Crystal (1992:106) says, "Discourse is the study of continuous stretches of language longer than a single sentence; also called "discourse linguistics". Discourse analysis studies words and their relation to situation in which they are made so as to facilitate hearer's response. In discourse analysis, we study how one can use an utterance or an expression to transform a message through meanings. Its general usage has to do with conversation and holding forth on a subject. Discourse analysis falls under applied linguistics together with contractive analysis and error analysis. A text according to Sara Mills (1997) is linguistic communication (ether spoken or written) seen simply as a message coded in its auditory or visual medium. It may be non-interactive and can be long or short. A text must be possessed of surface cohesion.

Brown and Yule (1983:1) are of the opinion that the analysis of discourse is necessarily the analysis of language in use. As such, it cannot be restricted to the description of forms independent of the purpose, or function, which their forms are designed to serve in human affairs. Medubi (1987:20) however, posits that "It concerns the analysis of language events to decide how the various linguistic and extra linguistics factors to which they are subject, affect their structure". Discourse analysis came about due to the need of linguists and others to study the underlying principles of everyday interactions.

They intend to limit discourse to the sentence level only or as Medubi would see it to the effect on the structure of language events. Apart from this effect on structure, it should include the meaning we read into discourse events and

how we engage in it and understand it. On the whole, one may say that discourse analysis is concerned with the thorough examination of the different aspects of conversation in different social contexts, how they are organized, and how meaning is encoded and decoded, particularly in social situations through interactional talk.

A lot has been done on discourse analysis in various fields like adverts, speeches, programmes, news and newspaper cartoons. Makanjuola (2001) did a discourse analysis of Nigeria Television Authority (N.T.A) Tuesday Nite Live. In the course of the study, she discovers that talk show as an aspect of discourse makes a profound use of linguistic structure. The talk show also uses background information/knowledge of happenings in the Nigerian context, the world and the participant's social status in answering questions. There is also the use of reference elements in its response for easy comprehension. She concludes that to understand the discussion, one must have the knowledge, social status, the physical context, participants, and the reference. Question must be asked with caution because the discourse structural elements reveal different types of grammatical and linguistic structures.

Ogunyemi (2001) investigates Ola Rotimi's 'The gods are not to blame'. Employing the theoretical framework of discourse. Elements of discourse like context, participants, cohesion, presuppositions, speech acts, and message are used to bring out meanings of certain dialogue in the text. She concludes that the message of Ola Rotimi in the exemplifying text The gods are not to blame is that, the downfall of a man is not really the handiwork of the gods; rather, man to a greater extent is the real architect of his own downfall or success in life. That is, the gods have a minimum role of play in the making of a man's destiny.

Olajide (1997) investigates a discourse analysis of political cartoons in selected Nigerian Newspapers. He makes use of discourse elements – linguistic and extra linguistic factors from the Nigerian Newspaper namely: "The Tribune" and "National Concord". Olajide discovers that there is an outstanding goal behind cartoon. St's Satiric works and that few of them is to educate, rebuke, advice, inform, blame, warn and so on. He also discovers that a reader who is ignorant of rules of discourse would find it difficult to decode appropriately (as it is intended by the encoder) and capture the meaning and effect of a location. He concludes that readers' worldview, presupposition and the social context of an utterance are indispensable to total understanding of speakers' messages.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Elements of discourse analysis are the vital elements on analyst needs in carrying out an effective discourse analysis. The elements are the items that must be put into consideration during the process of translation or encoding and decoding a discourse. These involve linguistic elements of discourse. No discourse can be analyzed without the knowledge of the linguistics elements such as, speech Act Theory, participants and the context of discourse. Also, many words have no meaning without contextual information. Such words as 'they', 'she', and 'it' are called deities.

### **Speech act theory – Austin and Searle**

In actual fact, some of the words we utter when we speak are meant to perform some specific actions. This act of acting with words is what is referred to as the speech acts. The speech act theory was propounded by John L. Austin, in his book titled, HOW TO DO Things with Words (1962). Austin observes that: "Human utterance performs specific function and action and that every single utterance has a power to perform and effect action (SD)" – Pg. 164). The British Philosopher J. L. Austin observed that while it has long been the assumption of philosophers that "the business of a "statement" can only be to describe some state of affairs or to "state some facts", which it must do either truly or falsely, more recently they had come to realize that this was not always the case. J. L. Austin was the first to draw attention to the many functions performed by utterances aspect of interpersonal communication.

### **Analysis of data**

Speech Act Theory attempts to explain how speakers use language to accomplish intended actions and how hearers infer intended meaning from what is said. Elements of discourse such as context, participants, speech act theory, deities will be used in analyzing the drama text.

**Context:** Context is the setting or the environment in which language is used. Physical context, psychological context, socio-cultural context and linguistic context are evident in the text. All these contribute to the effective analysis of the text.

**Physical Context:** The physical context of the text is a village. How words collocate in Atmosphere one, page 9 is a clue to this. Below are the collocates:

“streamside .... natural colour.....chirruping

Bird .....frogs croaking.....drag on flies

Buzzling.....country pond.....village lady.....”

All these words give the text a rustic setting.

For instance, the sense of ‘country’, which is ‘rural’, collocates with the chirruping of frogs and puzzling of drag on flies, which are common to rural setting to give the text a rustic taste which, in turn gives a clue to the setting. Though, frogs and birds can be found in the cities, the busy state of the cities swallows the croaking and chirruping. Not only collocates, but also the names of the characters in the text provide the evidence that the physical context is a village, precisely, a Yoruba land. For instance, Otunla, Aina, Abeke, Awadanu, Baba, Mama, are all Yoruba names.

**Linguistic Context:** Linguistic context has to do with language use such as proverbs, metaphors and so on. As it is known, Africa has rich traditions, when it comes to speaking. This has positive effect on the characters. They try to pass across some messages through the use of proverbs. For instance, in the play, when Aina replies Otunla in Atmosphere one, page 13, line 28-29 by saying “.....where have you heard of red coal perishing without ashes?” what she is trying to say in essence is that, she would give birth to many children.

In Atmosphere four, page 46, lines 2 – 3, Baba says, “owls have begun to hoot in broad day light”. In this proverb, owls are birds that are not supposed to hoot during daylight. According to Yoruba believe, this proverb means that an unusual thing has begun to happen. Metaphor is used in the dramatic text and the effect of the use of metaphor in a dramatic text is to stir up the emotion of the audience in perceiving the meaning and to take it with all seriousness. A clever example of this is the seek and catch game of courtship at the end of the dramatic text where the metaphor of the hunting game between the cat and the rat, the hawk and the chick, the dog and the prey leads eventually to the marriage scene at the end of the play.

**Social Context:** The social context of the text consists of the cultural context of the discourse in the dramatic text. This deals with the names, cultures and traditions of the participants, in fact Africa as a whole. In addition to this, they have their own culture, norms and value system. Some cultures are peculiar to the Yoruba society. They believe so much in the payment of bride price and dowry. An instance of this can be seen in Atmosphere one, page II, when Aina says: “I will keep those aspect of our culture that I find morally valuable, inspite of the general decay. And don’t just forget to go and pay he pride price, you hear?”

Marriage is also another cultural belief among the Africans. This can be found in Atmosphere four, page 44 when Mama says: “My daughter, an unwedded woman is like a fowl, a chicken meant to be taken cheaply by the hawk”.

## **Participants**

It is important to note that no written discourse can be successful without participants. The participants are the human elements in a discourse. Any discourse must consist of at least two participants. The environment of discourse is what determines the social status of any participant, that is, the role taken by any participant is based on age, gender, etc. In the text, Otunla and Aina variously represent the wretched, impoverished, the intellectuals, the working class, but collectively the revolutionary vanguard. They resist the corrupt oppressors. Dokun, the son of Chief Awadanu, the husband of Debby own dashing cars and goes on “infinite trips abroad”.

Dokun’s father, Chief, Alhaji Awadanu and the set of brutish soldiers represented the politicians and contractors. They snatch away the wealth of the society. Everything to him;

“.....Na money matter.

Cash. Cool Naira. E no get relative.

E no get sex, man o, woman oo

Na di same” (Atmosphere two, page 27).

Abeke and Chief variously represent the colonial agents, neo-colonialists, the aristocrat, the wealthy, the affluent, the oppressor, the exploiter, but collectively the bourgeoisie. Baba and Mama, Aina’s parents stands for the status of tradition, which insists that the system must be and remain what it has always been. Orchestra is a group of singers and instrumentalists. The audience are also participants. They participate in singing. They are encouraged at various points to join the singing. “Dokun and Debby sing. “We want a new world”, join by the orchestra. They invite the audience to participate with claps” (Atmosphere two, page 30).

### **Speech Acts**

Some of the words we utter when we speak are definitely out to perform some specific actions. Speech act is the act of acting with words. In atmosphere four, page 51, the statement of Mama “I will tell you” is an instance of commissive speech act. Here mama is promising Baba that she would tell him what happened at the market. In Atmosphere five, page 52, line 30, the statement of the Immigration officer:

“..... could you step inside that room

Please” is an instance of directive speech act. Here, the Immigration officer is directing an African lady to step inside the room for proper checking.

In Atmosphere five, page 53, line 23, the Immigration officer says:

“..... The testing instrument confirms that you are carrying some hard drugs.....”

This statement is an instance of declarative speech act. The Immigration officer declares that the African Lady is carrying some hard drugs.

### **Deitics**

Deixis are words that cannot be interpreted unless the physical context of the speaker is known. Person deixis are used in reference to persons. Personal pronouns are useful in this capacity. For instance: I, me, you, your, we, she, he, etc; these words could be singular or plural, could be actively or passively participatory and could be indicative of gender. Time deixis tells time (now, this week, yesterday).

Place deixis locate the spatial setting of events e.g. here, there, in the x, outside the x.

### **Person Deixis**

In Atmosphere one, page 9, line 7, Aina says:

“who you.....what are you.....” “you”

here means Otunla,

“we” in atmosphere one, page 10, line 13 refers to both Otunla and Aina.

### **Time Deixis**

“Now” in Atmosphere one, page 17, line 2, is an instance of time deixis, when Aina says: “...you know I’m proud of you now as always”.

“Last week”, which is another instance of time deixis can be found in Atmosphere two, page 21, line 20.

### **Place Deixis**

In Atmosphere two, page 21, line 24, Chief says: “.....As country hard so, she collect the cash, and you dey there”. “There” in this statement is an instance of place deixis. It refers to the place where Shola, Chief’s daughter collects the cash. Otunla in Atmosphere three, page 36, line 20 says: “Let’s get out of here fast”. “Here” is another instance of place deixis referring to Chief’s house.

### Conclusion

The message of Olu Obafemi in the exemplifying text *Naira Has No Gender* is that the currency is sex blind. The central symbol in the play is that of money. The play, stands as a fine example of modern agit-prop. The study has brought out how language is used to highlight some specific actions in the play. The elements of discourse have portrayed the potency of discourse analysis on dramatic text, and aesthetics of text in general. As such, we can conclude that drama-texts and perhaps other literary works can yield themselves to greater relevance when their language is analyzed through discourse. This will further enhance the significance of Discourse Analysis.

### Findings

This paper has been able to discover that language plays very important role in human activities because it is a means of expressing one’s feelings on views. This paper has been able to see that the use of drama texts is a very important tool in our society. Drama text as a form of discourse makes profound use of language to disseminate information effectively to its readers. Apart from this, it has also been observed that to fully understand utterances and the meaning of an expression, elements of discourse such as presupposition, context, participants and so on are pertinent.

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