

LANGUAGE AND THE FICTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF FAMILYHOOD IN SELECTED YORÙBÁ NOVELS

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Abstract

The significance of language in human existence cannot be overemphasised. Language serves as an indispensable tool in the communicative aspect of human life without which communication cannot take place. Human thoughts and opinions are best expressed through the vehicle of language hence its indispensability in human activities. Literary artists as echoes of the voices of their people employ the use of language in the presentation of their literary works of art. Even though other scholars have endeavoured to examine the use of language in several literary pieces, the dearth of critique on the use of language in Adésànyà's *Ọdún Á Y'Àkọ* (2007) and Adéríbigbé's *Òkété* (2008) justifies this article. The objectives of this work were to: (i.) examine the use of language in relation to the theme of family system among the Yorùbá by the authors of the selected novels; and (ii) compare the use of language adopted by the authors of the selected novels. This paper adopted a qualitative approach with a descriptive method of research through the content analysis and corpus study of two novels. The selected novels are Adésànyà's *Ọdún Á Y'Àkọ* (2007) and Adéríbigbé's *Òkété* (2008). Other materials such as books, journal articles and research theses relevant to this study were consulted on use of language by literary artists. The finding of this study was that authors of the selected novels made ample use of various figures of speech such as simile, metaphor, personification as well as idiomatic expressions relevant to the theme of family system among the Yorùbá in their literary works. This served the purpose of voicing the desperations, hopes and aspirations of the people on the theme of family in line with one of the principles of Nativism as a model of Postcolonial theory. In conclusion, the study observed that both Adésànyà and Adéríbigbé displayed a mastery of Yorùbá language which played a significant role in their respective texts.

Keywords: language, family, novel, nativism

Introduction

The significance of language to the entire success of any work of art cannot be over-emphasised in human existence. Language signifies the basis of communication without which there can be no human interaction. Many scholars have dwelt on the import of language in human lives as means of communication and its relevance to literary writing. Culture and traditional practices of various tribes could not have

become known in the present day without language as a means of transmission of such. Oláṣebikan (2019, p.154) sees language as “an instrument used for presentation as well as the transmission of the culture and tradition of a tribe or people”. Therefore, language is an indispensable tool for human communication, interaction and integration. Literature, being an integral aspect of human culture taps into the significance of language in its dissemination. Deductively, there cannot be any literature (be it oral or written) without the use of language. Language signifies the means of communication between the artist and his / her reader / audience as the case may be.

The writer’s use of language determines his mastery of the language and the level of dissemination of his message. Abéjídé (2016, p.195) opines that “the importance of language in the works of a writer cannot be underplayed as there is no communication where there is no language”. This signifies that the main focus of the writer is clarity of purpose, stimulating the interest of the reader, and for this to be achieved, painstaking efforts are usually made in handling language by writers. Depending on the era and the reader, language use, especially of novel writing can be deep, poetic or simple language for aesthetic purpose as well as the clarity of the message. To buttress this, Ogúnṣínà (1976, pp.202-205) believes that the use of language should conform to the modern usage especially in modern novels, and that the richness and beauty of such a language are usually revealed through the use of figurative expressions such as proverbs, idioms, wise sayings and a host of others. On language analysis by critics however, it is believed to be a herculean task as many problems abound. In Ṣòláf’s opinion, quoted in Abéjídé (2016, p.195), he claims that

The language of any novel is not easy to discuss mainly because of the sheer length of the work but also because there are usually too many little aspects to notice and too many examples to choose from. The best a critic can do, therefore, is to look for those patterns of language use that are peculiar to the work and discuss these. Even then one’s approach necessarily has to be selective.

Implicatively, many details abound in the analysis of language use by any critic but major ones should be taken cognisance of. For the purpose of the article, imagery, use of proverbs and idiomatic expressions, the use of figurative expressions (simile, metaphor etc), sentence structure, the use of incantations, was be considered in the analysis.

Review of Relevant Literature

Many scholars have made ample efforts on the use of language in literary criticism. Such efforts include that of Sání and Ṣàngótóyè (2019, pp.109-127), Oláṣebikan (2019, pp.152-167), Òjò (2016, pp.297-309) and Kíaríbèé (2020, p.53). While some of these critics examined the use of language in poetic writing, some others

scrutinised the use of language in the works of a particular author (D.O. Fágúnwà). This paper however examined the use of language in relation to the representation of family system among the Yorùbá people in Adésànyà's *Qdún Á Y'Akọ* (2007) and Adérìbigbé's *Òkété* (2008).

For the successful literary communication to be achieved, the artists need to go an extra mile in the use of language. Adébòwálé, in *Qlášebikan* (2019, p. 155) maintains that:

...èdè ni òpómúléró fún lítírészò. nítorí láísí tàgírì, awọ ò hu. O fihàn pé èdè ẹ pàtàkì fún àgbékalè. lítírészò, nítorí pé èdè tí òhókòwé lò ni yóò jé. kí àròkò tí ó ní fí ịsẹ. ọnà rẹ. ràn sí àwùjọ yé àwọn òhókòwé rẹ. Àìmọ-èdè-é-lò lè sọ gbogbo ịyànjú òhókòwé di òfọ, ó sì lè mú kí gbogbo làálàá rẹ. forísánpón, nítorí ídí èyí, òhókòwé gbódò. ní ikọbiarasí ti ó mọyán lórí nínú èdè lílò rẹ. (o.i.155)

...language is the cornerstone of literature because without the *tàgírì* plant the hide cannot be scraped clean. It is obvious that language is significant in the presentation of any literary work because the clarity of the message of the author to the society is borne by language. Lack of proper command of the language can make the author's efforts to be in futility. Hence, an author must have a good command of his language (p.155)

Vivid description of events and characters play a very significant role in the overall success of any literary work. This is always employed by the authors in the presentation of their works. For any success to be achieved in any literary activity especially in prose or drama, the delineation of character is of utmost importance. A vivid description of the characters with the actions and words put in the mouth of the characters contribute a lot to the entire success of the work. The protagonists as well as the functional characters must be properly presented to achieve the exact action and imagery required. Many of the authors successfully presented their characters effectively. Most of the characters portrayed by the authors were realistically presented in realistic rural Yorùbá communal settings or the modern day Yorùbá society as opposed to the supernatural characters like animals, spirits or fairies characteristic of Fágúnwà and his tradition. Many picturesque images of actions and conversations put in the mouth of the characters did a lot of justice to the eventual success of the selected novels.

The significance of proverbs in the use of language among Yorùbá people cannot be over emphasised. Proverb is regarded as the "vehicle" with which lost words are searched for and found. This informs the Yorùbá saying that "*òwe lẹşin òrò, òrò lẹşin òwe, tórò. bá sọnú, òwe la fí ní wá a*" (proverb is the horse for words, words are also the horses for proverbs, when a word is lost, the proverb is employed to find it). Many of the Yorùbá scholars like Bámgbóşé (1974, pp. 120-121), Işòlá (1978, pp.219-228) and

Olújìnmí (2012, pp. 192-213) believe that proverbs play a significant role in the use of language of literary artists, making the language of the writers elegant. Almost all the authors whose works were analysed in this study made ample use of proverbs in driving their messages down.

Figurative expressions are commonly used by authors to embellish their writing and prove their deep knowledge of the language in which they write. The same is the case with the authors considered in this research work. Some of these expressions include simile, metaphor, hyperbole, pun and idiomatic expressions. These expressions were abundantly utilised by these authors for the success of their literary works.

Theoretical Framework: Nativism

This is the model of the postcolonial theory which seeks to identify the damages done to Africa by the colonialists. It propagates a total withdrawal from all colonial cultural and political affiliations. It calls for a complete return to the original African culture and heritage to carve a definite and personal identity for the African people. It advocates African writing for African people, to be written in the indigenous languages and presenting as well as representing them. Besides from calling for a cultural approach to the criticism of African literature, the Nativist model also enjoins a serious political approach. Among the notable proponents of this model are "Edward Braithwaite, (Caribbean), Imamu Amiri Baraka and Lolo Jones (America). Other scholars among the nativists who are of African descent include Okot P'Bitek, Joseph Opako, Obi Wali, Chinweizu and Ngugi Wa Thiongo" (Africa). (Adéyemí, 2003).

This model of post-colonial theory postulates that writers should evoke the voices of the societies they write for. Nativism as a model of postcolonial theory believes the writers, having being born and bred in the cultures of their societies must have understood and imbibed the cultural values of their individual societies, hence, they should be the best advocates for their culture and their societies. Such authors according to nativism scholars, should endeavour to present their culture and traditions in the best positive light for a better understanding of such culture and traditions by the outside world through the medium of literary writing. These writers, according to nativism scholars should employ the literary techniques and creative use of their languages in achieving these goals. This is corroborated by Adéyemí (2003, p.117) when he maintained that writers "who are striving to evoke the voices of their societies will make creative use of the words in that society". This assertion also tends to uphold the belief that literary world is created with a combination of indigenous words which establishes sound, structural order and rhythm. This serves both as inseparable extensions of a lexicon as well as inherent combinations to aesthetic growth.

Nativism also stipulates that cultural and political themes capable of invoking deep consciousness and independent thinking among the people should be the focus

of the writers and the critic: Being a literature in the traditional African language with its reality, it indicates that all the "raw materials" for creativity are in the indigenous language with which the people are familiar. Hence, themes of contemporary political and cultural inclinations should be the focus of the artists according to nativism. This would inform the readers to be in tune with the activities, challenges and prospects of the societies. Many of the themes of the writings would reflect the ancient, the pre-colonial, the post-colonial as well as contemporary periods and activities of the society with the effect of evoking deep consciousness among the people and the need for independent thinking in relation to the future of their societies in terms of their language, literature and culture.

It calls for the inclusion of the traditional African culture in all aspects of literary writings like the setting, characterisation, language and a host of others. Nativism regards African literature as an unimaginative experience, germane to the African situation. Hence, it stipulates that the traditional African communism should be delineated in the features, characterisation, setting as well as the language adopted in the writing. Being a writing which tends to serve as the voice of its society, the onus lies on it to do so in the best possible manner. This can best be achieved from the nativist's point of view through the complete delineation of the literary techniques.

The family institution is a cultural theme that has invoked deep consciousness among the Yorùbá people and the writers of Yorùbá literary works across the eras under study. Independent thoughts have also emanated on the cultural theme of family institution among the Yorùbá people across the eras, hence the significant variations in the perspectives of the authors of the three novels considered for this study. The consciousness of the Yorùbá culture in the delineation of the literary techniques by the authors of the selected texts informed the choice of Nativist model of Postcolonial theory in the analysis of the selected texts.

Synopsis of the Selected Novels

One of the novels for consideration in this paper was *Odun A Y'ako* (2007) authored by Adesanya. The protagonist of the novel, Rolayo was born into a family with a gender bias. The first five children born into the family were females who were discriminated against by the father. He had to take a second wife with whom he had male children. The older children were denied western education beyond elementary level. Rolayo, like her older siblings, despite being brilliant right from childhood was also denied access to further education after the completion of her primary education. She however grappled with the challenges and survived against all odds, got educated to the tertiary level and eventually became the bread winner of the family. Despite losing her older siblings to untimely death occasioned by untold hardship due to lack of education and financial empowerment, she was not deterred. She later saw her younger siblings through tertiary education.

Tolani was the protagonist of *Okete* (2008). The untold hardship faced by women in polygamy was the concern of Aderibigbe, the author of the novel. Despite being the pillar of support for her husband at the initial stage of her marriage, her husband later betrayed her, engaged in adultery and maltreated her in the course of their matrimony. She strove to achieve better education in defiance of the atrocities committed against her. She saw her children through school, got them gainfully employed. The husband, Dapo eventually regretted his actions and apologised to Tolani, even though the deed had been done. He was later murdered by one of the ladies he brought home as a second wife.

For the purpose of the analysis, this paper adopted the Dynamic Equivalence version of Translation in translating the excerpts used in the study. This version is function oriented. It enabled the preservation of the original thoughts and concepts of the texts by the author of the paper.

Use of Language in the Selected Novels

Imagery

The ease of imaginable actions by the readers informs the use of imagery by authors. In essence, strong and clear pictures of events and characters in the mind of readers were made possible with the use of imagery. Imagery therefore entails the vivid presentation of the events and characters by literary artists for easy visualisation and clarity by the readers. Ample description and picturesque presentation of such events and characters in clear language ensured better comprehension and retention of the information passed by the literary artist. The ample use of imagery by Adésànyà in her novel *Qdún Á Y'Akọ* (2007) signified its import to the author and Yorùbá literary artists in general. Adésànyà's descriptive power was very real and full of images. The unprecedented academic performance of Róláyò, at a very tender age was vividly presented by the author. The head teacher of the elementary school Róláyò attended was expecting to see a tall and matured pupil to receive the prize for the first position but was shocked to see a little girl whose height was not even up to the table in front of him. The other members of the table had to redirect his gaze to where Róláyò was standing before he lifted him up to the table for people to see. The author presented the scene thus:

Bí ògá ilé-ìwé ti pe orúkọ rẹ, 'Róláyò. Asíndẹmádéni ó ẹ ipò kìn-ín-ní, ni olùkó rẹ tí í síwájú tábíli. Ògá ilé-ìwé kò tètè rí Róláyò. nítorí pé kò ga tó tábíli. Òkè ni ògá ilé-ìwé n wò kí àwọn àlejò orí tábíli gíga tó tó ó pe àkíyèsí rẹ. sí ẹsè tábíli tí Róláyò dúró sí. Bí ògá ilé-ìwé ti rí i, ó wí pé: "Hà! Ìwọ ni tàbí ègbón rẹ?" Pára ni Róláyò, dáhùn, ó ní. "Èmi ni mò n jé. Róláyò. Asíndẹmádé." Ògá ilé-ìwé ...gbé Róláyò nílẹ, ó gbé e lé apákan lórí tábíli. Gbogbo àwọn àlejò àti èrò iwòran dide dúró pèlú àtẹwó. (o.i. 9)

As the head teacher announced her name, 'Róláyò.Asíndemádé came first, her teacher pushed her to the front of the table. The head teacher did not see Róláyò.early enough because she was not up to the height of the table. The head teacher was looking up before the members of the high table called his attention to the bottom of the table where Róláyò.was waiting. When the head teacher saw her, he asked: "Ha! "Are you the one or your sister? Instantly Róláyò.answered, saying, "I am the one by the name Róláyò.Asíndemádé." The head teacher lifted Róláyò.up, placed her on top of the table by the corner. All the guests and the audience stood up to give her a standing ovation. (p. 9)

The presentation of the event and the character of Róláyò.Asíndemádé was very vivid, making it easy for the reader to understand the situation and appreciate the character of Róláyò.as a very young and smart child. She was so smart that she came first in her class where older children should have beaten her to a lower position. Her family was presented by the author as being blessed with brilliant children. Even though most of her elder siblings were female, they exhibited exceptional academic performance to the extent that all of them being award winners during the end of the session award ceremony. The author presented the situation thus:

Láti kílààsì kín-ní títí dé kílààsì kẹfà ní ilé-ìwé tí àwọn ègbón rẹ.nàà wà ní òkòòkan wọn gba èbùn mo yege. Nínú ilé Asíndemádé lálẹ.ọjó.nàà, ńse ni èbùn ń pe èbùn rán níṣé. (o.i. 11)

Each of her elder siblings also got awards of excellent academic performances from primary one to primary six in their respective schools. In Asíndemádé's house that night there was abundance of awards of excellence (p. 11)

This in-depth description of the academic brilliance of the children in family of Asíndemádé availed the readers the opportunity to visualise the kind of children the family was blessed with, and to appreciate and project the kind of future the family was likely to have. Unfortunately, however, the reverse was the case as the father was too myopic to appreciate the gift, he was endowed with in the kind of children he had, instead, his focus was on having male children. Despite the children's brilliant performances, their father decided not to sponsor them beyond elementary schools. He had to pawn them to his friends as child labourers for some years after which they would learn a skill and eventually get married. His belief was that whatever level of education a female attains, she would eventually end up in a man's house and kitchen.

The love and compassion of a mother on her children was shown by the support and encouragement Róláyò's mother gave her in the pursuit of her academics. When the result of her senior secondary school certificate was released, the woman shared in her daughter's joy and lamented her convalescence state which hindered her

contribution to the daughter's strife. This was succinctly presented by the author as seen below:

Morólayò. Àjíní. Báwo ni ì bá ẹ̀ dùn tó tí ó bá jẹ́.pé ara mi le láti wá ị́ẹ̀. ẹ̀ kí n lè rí owó rán ọ ní ilé-ìwé gíga”.

Ó gbé ojú sókè, omi lé ròrò sí i lójú...Ó bojú wo Rólayò, ó fà á móra. Àwọn méjéèjì òmó.ara wọn, wón tún bú sẹkún (o.i. 28)

Morólayò. Àjíní. How nice it would have been had I been medically fit to get a job and raise money to sponsor your tertiary education”

She raised her face up, tears swelled up in her eyes...She looked at Rólayò, drew her closer. They both embraced and bursted into tears again (p. 28)

Even though the father did not appreciate his daughter's potential initially, the love, support and confidence shown by the mother went a long way in seeing Rólayò through the trying periods of her youthful age and the challenges of her academic pursuit. The father later realised his mistakes and sought forgiveness from his wife and female children.

Tólá in Adéríbigbé's *Òkété* (2008) was fundamentally portrayed from the perspective of the traditional Yorùbá woman and wife. She did everything possible to maintain a cordial relationship with her in-laws. Unfortunately, the in-laws paid her back negatively. The length she went in reuniting her husband with his father and other extended family members was strikingly presented by the author in her description of the distance and the disgusting experience she had on her way to her father-in-law's village. Adéríbigbé presented the picture as seen below:

Abúlé Gbékúbà tò ibùsò.méèdógbon sí Mádàní. Ọkò.kan peré ni ó máa n ná ibè.lójúmó.láti Mádàní...ẹ̀ni tí ó bá fé.bá a lọ sí abà Gbékúbà gbódò.jí dé ibùdókò.ní kò ríni kò mọni. Aago méta ọru ni Tólá ti jí ní àárò.ọjó.tí ó n lọ abà Gbékúbà lódò.àwọn ọbí ọkọ rẹ...yàtò.sí àwọn erù tí wón kó sí abé.ìjókòó tí kò jẹ.kí ẹsẹ.àwọn èrò tólè, àwọn míràn kò gbé ọmọ dání sùgbón orí ẹsẹ wón ni àwọn ẹran tí wón n gbé lọ sábulé wà, òmíràn, adiyẹ ló kó móyà bí ọmọ (o.i.7-8)

Gbékúbà village is about twenty-five kilometers to Mádàní. Only one vehicle plies the route daily...whoever intends to travel with it to Gbékúbà must reach the park early in the morning. Tólá woke up around three o'clock in the morning...apart from the loads of luggage put under the seats preventing the passengers from resting their feet conveniently, some of the passengers did not have any child with them, they put the goats they were transporting to the village on their laps, others held on to their fowls like babies (pp.7-8)

Tóláni went through all the challenges to reconcile her husband and his family, especially his father. The author thus emphasises the significance of each member of the family to the life and existence of every individual in life. It was indicated by the author that the rift between Dàpò, Tóláni's husband had hindered some of his developmental progress in life.

The significance of the members of the family was also emphasised in the character of Tóláni's maternal uncle (Ògúndìran) who stood by her and assisted with all the necessary steps taken for the eventual reconciliation of Dàpò and his father. This action also went a long way in sustaining Tóláni's marital home. The uncle took her to the babaláwo who made divinations for her and proffered solutions to the problem. This is presented by the author thus:

Ní ọjó kẹta, Ògúndìran mú Tólá léyìn, ó fi oókan kún eéjì, wón gba oko aláwo lẹ. Nígba tí wón dé òhún, babaláwo gbé òpèlè.sánlè, òdí méjìni odù tó jáde...Tólá ẹe bífá ti wí, ó múra, ó di abà Gbékúbà níbi ti bàbá àti ìyá okọ rè.ń gbé (o.i. 7)

The third day, Ògúndìran took Tóláni, added one cowrie to two cowries to visit the *babaláwo*. On getting there, the babaláwo cast his divining chain, *òdí méjì* was the Ifá verse related to her...Tólá carried out the instruction given to her, she prepared and left for Gbékúbà where her father and mother-in-law reside (p. 7)

If not for the assistance of her uncle as presented by the author above, she might not have found the solution to the problem between her husband and his father. The detailed description of the activities of Ògúndìran and Tólá by the Adérìbigbé ensured a better understanding of the events by the readers. Hence, imagery plays a very significant role in the total comprehension and appreciation of any literary work of art especially the novel.

Use of Proverbs

The use of proverb permeates the works of the authors considered in the paper. Proverbs abound to drive the messages of the author's home. This is evident right from the first page to the last in the two novels. Proverbs are usually believed to be the 'oil with which the elders eat the words. It is always reserved for the elders and the few well versed and wise young ones who exhibit good command of the language in driving home their points in conversation. This significantly aligns with the belief of Nativism that literary artists should exhibit a superior command of the language in which they write for a better appreciation of the work by the readers.

Adésànyà is an author who employed the use of proverbs in her novel *Ọdún A Yakọ* (2007). Three of her chapters were captioned with proverbs in the novel to indicate her groundness in Yorùbá language and her homeliness in the use of proverbs. These chapters include chapters six (6), nine (9) and ten (10) which she titled "Ọsán já",

"Ìgbèyìn níì dun olókùú àdà" and "Omi tuntun rú" respectively. In chapter six, the proverb "osán já ọrún dọpá" literarily indicates the breakage or cutting of the string of a bow. When such happens, the bow definitely becomes useless as the arrow could not be useful without the string. This was used by the author to explain the situation of one of Róláyò's sisters, Móbóníkèé, who got infected with the HIV virus and who later died. "Ìgbèyìn níì dun olókùú àdà" explains the regret felt by Róláyò's father on the instance of the death of another of his daughters, Rómoké, when the latter aborted a pregnancy with the help of a non-professionally qualified practitioner. This situation awakened the consciousness of Róláyò's father to his mistake but with irreversible damage done. Chapter ten indicates a new dawn with the resolution by Asíndemádé to salvage the damage with all his effort and redeem the situation. Seeing Róláyò's age and stature, the head teacher of her school could not help but commended the effort of Róláyò for coming first in her class. Facing the person sitting close to him, the head teacher commented "...à bọ̀ò rẹ̀nì táà ní kò le pàgọ́, tó ẹ̀ bẹ̀. tó kólé aláururu" (...can you imagine a person not expected to perform a feat but surprising everyone) p. 9.

This proverb explains the surprise felt by the head teacher when he eventually saw the person bearing the name Róláyò Asíndemádé. The person he expected to see was not the one he saw hence the proverb. Despite Róláyò and her sisters' academic excellence at the elementary level of their academic pursuit, their father never saw any inspiration in them. The author likened his action to that of a dog destined to be lost which never hearkens to the call of the hunter. This she does with the aid of a proverb like "Ajá rẹ̀ tí yóò sì sọ̀nù rẹ̀é, kò rẹ̀tí gbọ́ fẹ̀rẹ̀ ọ̀dẹ̀" (His dog however that will be lost would not hearken to the sound of the hunter's whistle" p. 11.

This in essence indicates that Asíndemádé was blind to the achievements of his daughters and could not pre-empt what the future holds for him through the possible achievements of his daughters if given the necessary encouragement. Even though he later realized his mistakes, much havoc had been done to his family with the loss of three of his daughters to death. The author referred to his situation as regrettable when she captioned the chapter relating the incidence of his third daughter as "Ìgbèyìn níì dun olókùú àdà". In essence, a person holding a blunt cutlass in the bid to cut would eventually regret the fruitless effort. Even though Asíndemádé thought he had justifications for his actions on his daughters' education, he later regretted his action and resolved to salvage the situation. This the author clearly explained with the use of proverbs as highlighted above.

The title of Adéríbigbé's novel is another example of a proverb *Òkété* (2008). "Òkété gbàgbé ibòòsí, ó dégbá aláṣe ó káwó.móri" (the bushrat forgot to be proactive to regret later) is the Yorùbá proverb used to indicate the lack of pro-activeness of people when the repercussion sets in and the actor tends to resort to lamentations. This literarily means a bushrat forgot to scream and eventually regrets its action on getting to the sale stand. In essence, deep thought and serious pro-action are essential in one's everyday activities. When one underscores these significant factors in one's

activities, the results are bound to be regrettable. This explains the actions taken by the husband of the protagonist, Dàpò in the novel and the consequences he faced at the end of the novel.

In appreciating the consideration of his children for him on the need to remarry after the death of their mother, Tólá's father prayed for them adopting the use of a proverb "ayé tí ẹṣin kò jẹ, ìrù ìdí rẹ́ á jẹ́ ẹ́" (the feat the horse could not attain due to early demise would be achieved by its tale) (o.i.3). This is a prayer for the longevity of life for the children to achieve most of the things their mother could not live to achieve. In essence, the bliss that their mother could not enjoy due to untimely death, the children would live long enough to enjoy it.

In explaining the insensitivity of Dàpò and Dúnní to the plight of the people around them, Adéríbigbé maintains that the duo became oblivious of the situations around them to the extent of forgetting the existence of God and the likely retribution to follow. Using a proverb to reiterate this thus: "òṭafà sókè yídó borí, bóba ayé ò rí ọ, tòrun rí wò ó" (a person who shoots an arrow to the sky and covers himself with a mortal, if the earthly king does not see him or her, that of the heavens is definitely watching) (o.i. 32). This is indicative of the fact that even though the two of them behaved with utmost abandon, they should expect the judgement of God almighty.

The total disregard of Tóyin's actions when Tólá went to her husband's place to report the sickness of their child and the need for Dàpò to assist her in the care for the child was also captured in a proverb by Adéríbigbé. She claims Tólá believed that "ẹni à rí bá nájà làá kojú sí, a kíí rẹ́tí gbó ariwo ọjà" (o.i. 43) (it is the person with whom we are in a commercial transaction that one focuses on, one does not have the concentration to notice the noise in the market). This assisted Tólá in preventing an ugly situation. "Àbámò níí gbẹ̀yìn ọ̀rò" (regret is preceded by lack of thoughtfulness in action) (o.i. 66) is another proverb adopted by Adéríbigbé in her novel to indicate the regret felt by Dàpò at the last stage of his life when he was hit with a rod by Àńwòó, his last wife. This led to his demise while seeking Tólá's forgiveness at the point of death.

The authors of the texts considered for this research work have served as the advocates of Yorùbá language and culture in line with one of the principles of Nativism. Not only have they presented the Yorùbá culture and traditions to the society, they have done so through the use of rich Yorùbá language as evident in their use of proverbs adopted in the texts.

Use of Figurative expressions

Adésànyà and Adéríbigbé expressed their mastery of Yorùbá language in the use of figurative expressions with ample use of simile, metaphor, hyperbole and idiomatic expressions in their novels.

Adésànyà, in *Qdún Á Y'Àkọ* (2007) not only adopted the use of simile, metaphor and idioms, she also employed the use of personification. In narrating her dream, Róláyò described the white people she was selling bread to, that their noses were long

like that of okro planted in Èdẹ. She said: "Imú wọn rí sọgila bí ilá Èdẹ" (o.i. 16) (Their noses are long like okros planted in Èdẹ (p. 16)). This expression is an example of simile comparing the noses of the white men in her dream with a specie of okro which is always long and thin.

Another comparison is seen while Róláyò was selling bread to a driver and she remembered that she owed another person a balance of his change. While trying to hasten the driver to pick the bread he wanted and not to waste her time, the man described Róláyò as being sharp tongued, liking her mouth to that of razor blades. The man claims: "Ènu rè.mú, àfi bíi abefélé" (o.i. 18) (Her mouth is as sharp as a razor blade (p. 18). This is also a straight forward comparison, an example of simile where Róláyò's mouth or tongue was compared to that of a razor blade. The author makes such comparison to drive home the point of comparison being made, using similar objects for perfect comparison.

Metaphor is another figurative expression used by Adésànyà in her novel. One of the students who attended the secondary school where Róláyò was selling bread, Jéḃéè was referred to as 'Pàṣàṇ' by Bánkólé Alágbàfò in the novel (o.i. 32). This is due to the physical feature of the young man who was described as being tall and slim. The feature of a long slim cane was used to represent the boy and the name given to him. Even though this is a form of comparison, it is not a direct one like simile. In the discussion between Rómóké and the youth corper member (medical doctor) who attended to her, (Làbáké), Rómóké referred to wives in polygamy as labourers or assistants whose efforts her father would engage for him to have sons in the event of the first wife's inability to give him a son. The author presents their discussion thus:

"...Tí ó bá jé.pé bàbá a tẹ̀mì nì, yóò tì wá nńkan ẹ̀ẹ̀ sí àìlómọ̀kùnrin".

"Bí kí nìyẹn o." (sic)

"Bí kí á gba àwọn alágbàṣe sínú ogbà fún ìkórè púpò.nì."

"Kíkó ìyàwó jọ nítorí ọmọ̀kùnrin."

"Béè.nì. Abí kò tó ìtorí?" (o.i. 71)

If it were to be my father, he would have sought a solution to it.

Like what?

Like getting many labourers into the yard for a bountiful harvest.

Marrying many wives just for the sake of having sons.

Yes. Or is it not worth the while?

The author used three words, alágbàṣe (labourer), ogbà (garden or farm) and ìkórè (harvest) to refer to three different concepts for a better understanding of the feelings of the young lady who was affected, having found herself in the family unfortunately. This is an indirect comparison, an example of metaphor likening the women or wives in her father's polygamous home or family as labourers being engaged in her father's house as the garden or the farm, with the children or off-springs of the family as the harvest or farm produce. To her, her father had no regard for women, seeing them just

as workers or labourers in his garden or farm. Hence, the wives were referred to as "alágbàṣe" (workers/labourers). The home or family was referred to as the "oḡbà" (garden/farm) while the children (sons in this case) were referred to as "ìkórè" (harvest). This is a rich and indirect comparison of the three different concepts.

Even though the concepts may appear very different at the first consideration, due to the nature of contract between a labourer and the employer; the author was able to adapt the concepts to suit her descriptive purpose perfectly. The farm produce which could be said to be the product of the farmer's effort cannot be directly likened to children who are gifts from God to cherish and be taken care of. This explains Adésànyà's perfect understanding and mastery of Yorùbá language and her ability to employ the rich vocabulary she possessed to suit her literary purpose. This is in line with the Nativist principle of the need for the literary artist to employ the rich and vast vocabulary of their indigenous language in their literary works of art.

Personification is another literary device adopted by Adésànyà in her novel. On the day of the end-of-term celebration, gifts received by Asíndemádé's children (Róláyò and her elder sisters) for their outstanding performances in the examination were personified. The author referred to the quantity of gifts and represented them as human beings sending one another on errands. This is represented thus: "Nínú ilé Asíndemádé lálé, oḡ. nàà, ṛṣe ni èbùn ní pe ebùn rán nísé" (In Asíndemádé's house that night presents were ordering one another on errands) p. 11

This excerpt indicates that the gifts were so enormous. This is usually expressed idiomatically among the Yorùbá people as seen by the example above. Another example of personification is also seen where Róláyò was denied the opportunity for further studies like her elder siblings by her father. She decided to think deeply and come up with a plan for her future endeavour. This was expressed by the author with a personification where Róláyò was said to have called some of her internal "organs" to a meeting as if they were human beings being summoned for deliberations. This is evident as seen below:

Róláyò sun oorun méta tí èdà ní sùn. O pe àwọn ìjòyè méta pàtàkì ikùn rè, Àró, Ejemu àti Qdòfin sí ipádé pàtàkì kí ilè.tó mó.(o.i. 14).

Róláyò slept the decision-making sleep characteristic of human beings. She invited the three important chiefs in her stomach, Àró, Ejemu and Qdòfin to a special meeting before dawn (p. 14)

Even though there are no humans living in another human being that could be invited to any meeting, the author adopted the use of personification for her message to be figuratively presented.

Idioms are also not left out of Adésànyà's literary piece as ample use of the figure of speech was made by the author. The confusion of Róláyò's father when the news of his daughter's success in the School Certificate Examination was broken to him was expressed in idiomatic expression by the author thus: "Oṛò.nàà rú bàbá róláyò.lójú,

ó só sí i lénu ó bu iyò sí i. Orò pèsì je” (The news confused Róláyò’s father, it was a kind of bitter-sweet information. He could not come up with any reasonable response) p. 29. Two idiomatic expressions were adopted in the example above. The first one expressing Róláyò’s father’s confusion which led to his speechlessness represented in the second example.

Another example of idiomatic expression is found in page thirty-three where Róláyò was presented as being downcast and in a depressive mood. Two expressions were also used to express the position and these are “*dorí kodò*” and “*bu èrèké diwó*”. The first example meaning casting her head downwards while the second one means placing her cheeks in her palms. Both expressions are idiomatic expressions used by the author to enrich her literary writings while showcasing her level of vocabulary acquisition at the same time.

Adéríbigbé, is also not left out of the stylistic presentation of her literary work. Her novel *Òkété* (2008) is fully embedded with the use of various figurative expressions. This informs the success of the novel. Like Adésànyà, the use of simile, metaphor, personification, idioms and a host of other figures of speech permeated her novel. The first example of simile is found in the first paragraph of the novel where the author tried to compare the love between Dàpò and Tólá to that of one between pigeons, a type of covenantal bond which more often than not is irreplaceable. This is found in the excerpt below:

Ífẹ́ tí ó wà láàrin wọn kọ́já ìròyìn, àfi bí ìmùlẹ̀ eyelẹ̀. Bí ìgbín n fà ìkarahun a tẹ̀lẹ̀ e ni wón. Oníṣẹ́ àrà ni Ọlórún ọba, bí ó tilẹ̀ jẹ́ pé tọkọ tìyàwó ni àwọn méjéèjì yí, wón jora bí ìmúmu (o.i. 1)

The love between the two cannot be narrated. It’s like the crawling of the snail which cannot be separated from its shell in the process. God is really a wonderful God, even though the two are husband and wife, they resemble each other like the ‘ìmúmu’ fruit (p. 1)

From this example of about four lines, the author made use of simile three times. This explains her knowledge and mastery of the Yorùbá language and her utilisation of same in her literary work. The Yorùbá believe that one does not describe someone without relating it to a similar object or another human was also brought to fore by Adéríbigbé in this example. This is in line with the Nativist theory that a literary artist should be one with ample knowledge of his or her culture and tradition while exhibiting the same in his or her literary work.

Another example of simile is also seen on the same page where Adéríbigbé was trying to describe the traditional facial mark on Tólá. She claimed that:

...Tólá tí ó jẹ́ ìyàwó kọ ilà ilú wọn sí èrèké méjéèjì, ilà náà sì yẹ é púpò, àfi bí eni pé wón bí mó o (o.i. 12)

Tólá who is the wife had the traditional facial identification marks of their town on both cheeks, the marks fit her perfectly, just like she was borne with it (p. 1)

This is a direct comparison of the tribal mark on Tólání's face with a birth mark. It signifies the appropriateness and fitness of the marks on Tólání's face. In describing the splendour of Tólání's father in his regalia on the day of Tólání's wedding, Adéríbigbé likened Tólání's father's posture on the seat directly to that of a king, employing the use of a simile. She explains thus:

Bàbá Tólá gúnwà bí oba nínú aṣò.òkè àlààrì tí ó fi rán dàndógó àtì ṣòkòtò kèṣbè, òun nàà ni ó fi rán filà abetí ajá (o.i. 12)

Tólá's father posed like a king in aṣò òkè (a traditional textile material) which he sew in kaftan style with baggy trouser, he used the same material for his (abetí ajá styled) cap as well (p.12)

Examples of metaphor as a figure of speech also abound in Aderíbigbé's novel. While expressing his gratitude on the thoughtfulness of his children on his welfare after their mother's death, Tólání's father prayed for longevity of life for his children. He employed the use of a metaphor in the prayer, likening Tólání's mother to a horse and the children to the horse tail. This is evident in this excerpt:

Lágbára Ọlórún, mi ò ní mọ sààrè òkankan nínú yín. Ayé tẹ́sìn ò jẹ, irù idí rẹ.á jẹ é. (o.i. 3)

By the grace of God, I shall not bury any of you. The feat that the horse could not attain due to early demise, the tail shall live to accomplish it. (p.3)

It is the belief of the Yorùbá that the horse suffers in existence as a carrier of humans and goods while the tail dwells in affluence in palaces as a sign of royal splendour. Hence, when a parent suffered in life without leaving to enjoy the fruits of his or her labour, the prayer is always that the children live long to enjoy the labour of their parent(s). The success of Dàpò's mother's business was likened to one who scoops money with a calabash. She claimed that "Oníṣòwò ni ìyá Dàpò, òun là bá sì má a pè ní Arígbábuwo"(Dàpò's mother is a merchant, and she is best described as one who scoops money with calabash). Arígbábuwó literally means one who scoops money with calabash. In essence the wealth of Dàpò's mother is enormous to the extent of its being scooped with calabash.

The analogy of the horse and the tail given above are also examples of personification. The horse, even though an animal, is personified as capable of experiencing pleasure like humans, the tail likewise. Another example of personification was seen when Tólá went to her husband to intimate him of their son's ill health. Dàpò's response to Tólání shocked her to the marrow. She remained rooted

to the ground, unable to make a move. The author presented the situation with a personification, claiming the ground held Tólaní to it. She expressed thus: "Ilè mú Tólá mólè. Kò lè jókòó, kò lè yísè padà" (Tólá was stuck to the ground. She could neither sit nor move).

Idiomatic expressions also abound in Adéríbigbé's novel. Dàpò used an idiom in explaining his response to the request of Tólaní for him to make peace with his father, he said it was a fruitless effort on her part. In essence, he could not grant the request. He said: "Şùgbón, şóo rí tí bàbá mí tí o şọ yẹn,...Foríjì mí, eja ní" (o.i.4) (But that of my father you mention...Forgive me, it is not possible). *Eja n bákàn* is usually employed by Yorùbá people enquire about positivity or negativity of a situation or expected information. While *akàn* indicates the positive aspect, *eja* indicates the negative one. In essence, Dàpò was trying to inform his wife that while he could give in to pressure on any other matter, that of his father is an impossibility. Another example of idiomatic expression was employed by Adéríbigbé where she mentioned the cause of the initial loss of Dàpò's job. Dàpò was presented as a diligent and hard-working person who was always commended by his superior officers. This is presented thus:

Ó şe àkóbá yìí fún un nìtorí pé inú rè kò dùn sí bí işé.rè.şe ní lẹ síwájú tí àwọn ògá wọn şe ní fẹràn rè.tí wón sì ní lù ú lógò ẹnu nígbà gbogbo (o.i.19)

He (Fáşólá) set him (Dàpò) up because he was not happy about his (Dàpò's) his career progression and the appreciation and commendation he (Dàpò) was enjoying from their bosses (p.19)

"Lù lógò ẹnu" is usually employed by the Yorùbá to indicate appreciation and commendation for a job well done or an action appropriately performed. This serves as a form of motivation for such a person to improve on his performance the next time. While explaining the disposition of Tóyìn (the lady Dàpò later married) to Tólaní's plight in her marriage, the author in one of the situations presented Tóyìn as making a sarcastic laughter when Tólaní was asked by her father-in-law to kneel down and beg Dúnńí, another lady Dàpò had an affair with in the course of their marriage. Adéríbigbé wrote: "Tóyìn náà rérìn iyàngì..." (o.i.44) (Tóyìn also laughed sarcastically) (p.44). All these were adopted by Adéríbigbé to enrich her literary work as well as exhibit the richness of Yorùbá language.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has emphasised the significance of language use in literary activities. The authors of the selected novels have displayed their versatility in Yorùbá language which was adopted as the language of presentation. Adésànyà's purposive use of imagery, proverbs as well as figurative expressions like simile, metaphor, personification and idiomatic expressions in presenting the challenges faced by members of family among the Yorùbá people was commendable. This is

indicative of her mastery of the Yorùbá language which she adopted in her writing which went a long way not only in enriching her work but also in serving as a means of presenting the challenges, hopes and aspirations of her people to the readers for better understanding and appreciation. Adèríbigbé, the second author whose work was considered in the paper also proved her versatility in the Yorùbá language. The title of the novel is symbolic. It is also an analogical proverb of regret. For an author to have derived such a title for her literary work is suggestive of the depth of her knowledge in the language she chose to write her literary piece in. Her deep use of imagery, simile, metaphor, personification and idiomatic expressions in presenting her perspective of the family system among the Yorùbá people was also commendable. She succeeded in presenting the rich culture and traditions of her people to the readers in her choice of language. The successful presentation of the novels by both authors in very deep Yorùbá language not only enriched the writing but also ensured better understanding of the novels by the readers. The principle of Nativism which stipulates the use of the indigenous language by creative writers was adhered to by the authors of the texts. This has ensured the success of the novels in their entirety.

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