

A Socio-pragmatic Analysis of Ahmed Yerima's *Ade Ire*

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Abstract

Studies on Ahmed Yerima have focused on the literary aspect of his texts to the exclusion of the linguistic perspective. The present study is designed to fill this gap by employing a pragmatic approach to the study of Ade Ire, by the playwright. Data were taken from the primary text which served as our major corpus. The Speech Act theory was deployed to showcase the illocutionary functions of language in the text while the VARIES model was used to explicate language use in the extra-textual context of the play. The study indicated that the informing act has the highest frequency among the speech acts deployed while informality has the highest frequency in the VARIES model.

Keywords: Ade Ire, socio-pragmatics, VARIES model, Yerima.

1. Introduction

One major means of sustaining interaction among scholars is through communicative writings. However, these works of arts are oftentimes constructed in esoteric languages which require only a discourse analyst to unravel. This is why Yule (1985), postulates that “the analysis of discourse is the analysis of language in use” (Yule 1985, p.13). It should be noted however, that language does not occur in isolation. It is used in context and social situations. This brings about the interface of Pragmatics and Sociolinguistics. The former being the study of language in use in context while the latter captures the study of language in use in social setting(s). Therefore, our preoccupation in the present study is to do a socio-pragmatic analysis of Ahmed Yerima’s *Ade Ire*, a play which has not enjoyed enough attention from both language and literary critics. This is with a view to demystify its language use and bring out its socio-cultural import.

2. Yerima and Ade Ire

Ahmed Yerima, was born in Lagos state, on May 8, 1947 to Saidatu and Musa Yerima. He obtained a Bachelor’s degree in Theatre Arts from Obafemi Awolowo University in 1981. Thereafter, he earned an M.Phil/ PhD in 1986 in Theatre studies/ Dramatic Criticism from Royal Holloway College, University of London. From 1986 to 1991, he was a lecturer in the Department of English and Grammar, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. In 1991, he served in the administrative division of Nigeria’s National Theatre as a Deputy Artistic Director of the national troupe and in 2000, he became the Director of the national troupe. Afterwards, he was made the Chief Executive Officer of the National Theatre from 2006 to 2009. At present, he works in Redeemer’s University, Osun State. Yerima’s works include *The Lottery Ticket*, *the Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*, *Yemoja*, *Aetu*, *Otaelo* and *Hard Ground* to mention a few.

Meanwhile, *Ade Ire* is a play based fictitiously on Yoruba culture and traditions. the text showcases the issue of power tussle and succession brouhaha in a purely hegemonic structure. The conflict culminates in murder and desecration of culture as well as their attendant effects.

3. Methodology

Twenty-six discourse situations were extracted from our primary text, *Ade Ire*. These were subjected to both quantitative and qualitative analyses based on the principles of Speech Acts and VARIES model.

4. Literature Review

Yule (1985) researches on language with specific reference to Discourse Analysis. He expatiates on interpreting discourse cohesion, speech events and conversational analysis among others. Cohesion is defined by Yule as the ties and connections that exist within texts. He describes speech events as various types of conversations involving turn-taking as a strategy of participation and hedges which are defined as “words or phrases used to indicate that we’re not really sure that what we’re saying is sufficiently correct or complete” (Yule 1985,p.130). His work is related to the present study in that he notes the roles of speaker(s), hearer(s) and their relationship(s) to certain factors which affect the way language is used. The work serves as a springboard for the present study.

Oyeleye (1997) studies literature as social discourse. Literature, according to him, is "a social discourse which is in varying degrees defined and controlled by the social institutions within which it is embedded" (p.89). He considers Soyinka’s poem ‘Telephone Conversation’ from the speech act perspective. Hence, illustrations with the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary forces respectively are deployed. Oyeleye’s work relates in distinct ways to the present study in that an aspect of Discourse Analysis is applied to the understanding of a literary piece. The theoretical framework is equally apt and similar to ours as we hope to consider aspects of the speech act theory in the present work. However, Oyeleye’s study is different from ours in that the genre of the literary piece (which he examines) is in contrast to the dramatic genre which constitutes our corpus in the present study.

Bloomer, Griffiths and Merrison (2007) study discourse as spoken literature. They classify ‘discourse’ as an ambiguous word. Thus, according to them, ‘discourse’ can be used to refer to any continuous stretch of language use larger than a sentence. It can also be (and often is) used in relation to written language. They also consider the concept of the text, who and what texts are meant for and how to analyse a text. The work serves as a springboard for the present study which is based on a dramatic text analysis.

5. Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical frameworks for this study are the Speech Act Theory (Austin1962) and the VARIES model (Adeyanju 2002; Nilsen and Nilsen 2006).

5.1 Speech Act Theory

Speech Act is a theory propounded by Austin (1962). The theory deals essentially with the linguistic functions performed by human utterances (Adeyanju 2002). According to Austin, when we speak, we perform several acts such as stating, directing, accusing, advising and informing among others. Speech Act is classified into three distinct types: the locutionary act, the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act.

The locutionary act is the communicative act of uttering a sentence. This involves the act of referring to certain objects, people or phenomena in the world and making comments on them. The literal meaning of an utterance whether written or spoken, is the locutionary act. The illocutionary act is the function which is performed through an utterance. It is defined by social conventions. It basically refers to what one can infer from a sentence. Examples of illocutionary acts include asserting, accusing, warning, informing and requesting. The perlocutionary act refers to the effect of an utterance on the hearer(s). The effect is not necessarily intentional and in some cases, it could be. According to Bloomer et al. (2007), it is important to recognise the existence of the perlocutionary act because communication is not a unilateral process. Examples of perlocutionary acts are: amusing, persuading, pleasing, and scaring.

5.2 The Varies Model

The VARIES model is an acronym for the combination of key words which are essential to the analysis of speech acts based on sociological factors otherwise called social variables. In this sense, V captures vocational jargons, A for Age related language, R for Regional/Religious language, I stands for Informality, E for Educational jargons and S for Sex language. This model is one of the theoretical frameworks under the divide of Discourse Analysis through which role sharing is determined by sociological factors such as age, religion, level of informality or formality, educational attainment and sex of discourse participants. The concept is applicable to our primary text which is an African based literature replete with the VARIES resources.

6. Data Analysis

This aspect is devoted to the analysis of utterances using the Speech Act theory and the VARIES Model.

The Speech Act theory is deployed with focus on the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts respectively, in selected utterances in *Ade Ire*.

6.1 Speech Act Analysis

Text 1

Titi: I am sorry, my queen.

Subu: Then speak, child.

[*Ade Ire* p.65]

From the text, Subu demands an explanation from Titi who initially refuses to talk. This action infuriates Subu, and Titi has to apologise as indicated in the excerpt. The illocutionary acts in the text are thus apologising (by Titi's utterance) and ordering (by Subu's statement). This brings about the perlocutionary act of acceptance or forgiveness as the case may be on the interlocutors. The conversation also indicates the roles of the speakers as far as their age and social status are concerned. Subu is playing the +Higher role while Titi is acting the -Higher role.

Text 2

Kabiyesi: [comes in unnoticed] what king comes and goes? Olori Subulade, leave the poor girl alone.

Subu: Haa... [kneels] sorry Kabiyesi...I did not hear you come. [*Ade Ire* p.65]

The extract involves several illocutionary acts. They include questioning and commanding in Kabiyesi's utterances and apologising and informing in Subu's response. The perlocutionary act majorly involves fright and remorse from the second speaker. The effect of the first speaker's (Kabiyesi), utterance on the hearer is reinforced by the social status, + Higher and – Higher role and the socio-political setting at present in the play. It is noted that Subu “kneels” in respect and in response to Kabiyesi's utterance. Hence, it is seen that no one questions the authority of the king rather, all must submit. The direct speech act dominates utterances. The illocutionary acts in the excerpt above include questioning such as “what king comes and goes?”, commanding such as “Olori Subulade leave the poor girl alone”, apologising such as “Haa..sorry, Kabiyesi..” and informing such as “I did not hear you come”.

Text 3

Oseba: So you did not see our son

Kabiyesi: (chuckles) You make me laugh. Who was going to show us to a man held to the teeth by soldiers. I must confess, I only did what I was invited to Abuja to do. A man does not hold a cutlass with the intention to pound yam. [*Ade Ire* p.79]]

In the excerpt above, the first sentence has the illocutionary act of questioning and it is considered humorous by the second speaker. Its overall perlocutionary act thus can be said to be humour. It is noted in the text that the second speaker, Kabiyesi, chuckles, in reaction to the first speaker's utterance. The question itself elicits a definite response from the king. However, the reaction can be said to be permissible with regards to the second speaker's higher rank on the social strata. Thus, the +Higher role and –Higher role is ascribed to the Kabiyesi and Oseba respectively.

Text 4

Kabiyesi: No, at least not until now. Anyway, I shall call another priest from Ike village.

I am worried that this may be a message from Oluawo and besides, in the palace for now, the secret of the Opele resides in your tongue alone and who knows...

Ifakunle: Kabiyesi... I beg you...[*Ade Ire* p.82]

The illocutionary acts in this extract are informing and pleading. These involve the utterances from both the speaker and hearer respectively. Kabiyesi threatens and informs Ifakunle of his intention to seek for the assistance of another priest in place of the uncompromising Oluawo. This (as perlocutionary act) elicits a kind of remorse in Ifakunle. He therefore begs the king (Kabiyesi). This scenario indicates deference and reverence for social institutions in the Yoruba society. Ifakunle is subject to the king's dictates.

Text 5

Kabiyesi: My Etutu Aiye. The ritual which only you can perform to keep me alive and well the last ten years is up. I do not want to die, Oluawo. I do not want to leave the throne.

Not now that life is becoming interesting again. The new Head of State knows the value of royal fathers, I want to be alive to enjoy his goodwill. You must do something, Oluawo.

Oluawo: Do what, Kabiyesi? Ten years ago, you gave your word. You swore that if Orisha aiye prolonged your life for another ten years, you will be ready to die happily. It was a covenant. [*Ade Ire* p.72]

This extract involves the illocutionary acts of informing and questioning. Kabiyesi informs while Oluawo questions. However, Oluawo is shocked by Kabiyesi's utterance, hence a shocking perlocutionary act in the extract. This is noted in the rhetorical question posed by Oluawo to express his shock, surprise and dismay. It should be noted that the question is more of a rhetorical question because Oluawo (as the Chief Priest) does not expect Kabiyesi to seek for additional period on the throne, having vowed before the gods ten years before that he would not exceed a decade on the throne. Furthermore, Oluawo knows that performing another ritual for the king would cost him (Oluawo) his life.

Text 6

Kabiyesi: so it is your place that Ifakunle goes to now? I thought he was to consult the Ifa oracle before our very eyes here in the palace?

Oluawo: It is true Kabiyesi. But no true medicine-man leaves home without checking on the outcome of his intended trip. That was when he stumbled on Ogun's message, and he ran first to my house.

Kabiyesi: I shall not listen to Ogun's message revealed to a Babalawo in the inner chambers of his bedroom. [*Ade Ire* p.71]

The illocutionary acts in this text are questioning and informing. The perlocutionary act i.e. the resultant effect is noted as that of defiance. This is as a result of Kabiyesi's displeasure at the non-adherence of one of the traditional norms of the society in which the play is set, the Yoruba society. It should be noted that the lexeme "*Babalawo*" mentioned by Kabiyesi is used for the consulting priest in Yoruba context and it is referred to initially as "*medicine-man*" by Oluawo. This is all in reference to Ifakunle who is noted for consulting the Ifa Oracle. Therefore, Oluawo's utterance above is preponderantly informing while the illocutionary act of Kabiyesi's statement is questioning as in: "So it is your place that Ifakunle goes to now?" and "I thought he was to consult the oracle before our very eyes here in the palace?" The proverb "But no true medicine-man leaves home without checking on the outcome of his intended trip" by Oluawo functions to affirm Kabiyesi's statement and it also throws light on the reason for the earlier stated actions. As Bamiro (2006) observes, the underdetermined nature of proverbs is that they are forms of interpersonal communication or speech acts meant to influence people's behaviour, to get things done, and to express the proverb's users feelings, attitudes, and opinions in relation to the speech event in which they are participating (Bamiro 2006b, p.323).

Text 7

Subu: Haa...Kabiyesi. Oriade ke?

Kabiyesi: Keep quiet, and do not call me. I heard you, and all you have been saying in the village with your son Subulade, I waited for my turn, tell your son to wait for his,but if I catch him trying to beat drums of downfall for me again, both him and his drum shall be torn to pieces. [*Ade Ire* p.66]

This extract has the illocutionary acts of exclaiming, questioning, commanding, warning and informing. The informing illocutionary act is noted in several utterances by Kabiyesi and the present one is underlined above. Other illocutionary acts noted in the extract are tabulated as follows:

S/N	UTTERANCE/ LOCUTION	ILLOCUTIONARY ACT
1	Haa... Kabiyesi.	Exclaiming
2	Oriade ke?	Questioning
3	Keep quiet, and do not call me.	Commanding
4	...but if I catch him trying to beat drums of downfall for me again, both him and his drums shall be torn to pieces.	Warning

The perlocutionary act is that of anger. This relates to a prior conversation on an issue that poses a threat to Kabiyesi, the second speaker.

Text 8

Kabiyesi: Howu Titi, I know how you feel, but who questions the wisdom of a king? At that time, it seemed a good decision.

Titi: (kneels) Forgive me Kabiyesi, I am only a child. [Ade Ire p.68]

The illocutionary acts in this extract are questioning, informing and pleading. The utterances that have informing as their illocutionary acts are underlined above. The questioning illocutionary act is ‘...but who questions the wisdom of a king?’ and the illocution of the utterance “Forgive me, Kabiyesi” is pleading. The perlocutionary act noted is that of remorse on the part of Titi, the second speaker. It is also noted that she kneels as she pleads for forgiveness as a marker of deference. This reaction is informed by the reference to power and authority by the first speaker, Kabiyesi, and the traditional Yoruba belief that the King is always right.

6.2 The VARIES Analysis

It should be recalled that the VARIES model is an acronym that showcases the application of certain jargons (Vocational, Age, Religion, Informality, Education and Sex) to our linguistic data. The model is therefore tested on the data as follows:

6.2.1 Vocation

Text 9

Ifakunle : Not even a bush rat. Not a drop of blood of a living thing. Anything with life...anything with a soul. Even the hunters must not go to the bush to hunt...not one drop of blood.

Lisa: What a long time to wait, while we eats pots of soup with dried fish. Akika! Ogun! [Ade Ire p. 62]

One of the traditional occupations in the Yoruba society is hunting and this is reflected in the in the conversation above. The work of hunters and their work locale, [typically, a tropical environment characterized by trees and vegetations and game in general] are referred to. Basically, in this exchange, Ifakunle is informing Lisa about the orders of Ogun as regards an upcoming festival and Lisa responds with dismay as he considers the news untimely and unfortunate.

Text 10

Lisa : Haa...Oluawo restless?... the Chief Priest of Ogun restless? Or perhaps, we chose the wrong period for the festival.

Ifakunle :No. Ogun himself chose the dates before Kabiyesi, Oluawo was there. You all were there, Lisa.

[Ade Ire p.62]

This utterance by Lisa portrays the role of a traditional religious leader, Oluawo, who functions as the Chief Priest of Ogun, a supernatural being. His role is reflected as a messenger through whom Ogun, the god of Iron in Yoruba mythology, speaks. Thus, the Oluawo plays the role of a senior consulting priest. This is a traditional vocation. Hence, it can be said that this extract reflects a vocation related language. Primarily, in the exchange, Lisa is speaking with Ifakunle about his astonishment at Oluawo’s agitation, a person he holds in high esteem as a result of his occupation and he reflects on the cause of the present state of affairs and concludes that perhaps the mistake is theirs(Lisa and Ifakunle). Ifakunle, however, reaffirms the fact that the situation is all Ogun’s doing, a higher power.

Text 11

Titi : I only wanted to say that there is nothing wrong with the king. He is still as strong as we met.

Subu : Is he? I should know. I saw the prince become an old king. You see a woman, not a peacock, standing in front of you. I am content with my lot. I am the supreme mother... the first Queen. The Yeye Oba to be. But what are you... who are you. The King’s consort?... Shio! [Ade Ire p.65]

In the extract above, the monarchical positions typical to the Yoruba society are highlighted with specific references to the queen, prince and king. These lexical items reflect the royal vocation. Furthermore, the first Queen is referred to as the Supreme Mother and translated as the *Yeye Oba* in the Yoruba language. Also, the levels of ascendancy to the throne are reiterated. This is noted in the utterance “I saw the prince become an old king”. On the whole, Titi is informing Subu about her opinion on the physical condition of the king. In turn, Subu replies sarcastically on her doubts about Titi’s viewpoint and she goes further to inform Titi of her lack of status in contrast to that of herself (Subu’s). She reaffirms this with a reference to herself as a woman and the supreme mother, not a peacock and a king’s consort like Titi.

6.2.2 Age

Text 12

Titi: Iya mi

Subu: You heard me

Titi: I heard you, Iya mi. Er...Kabiyesi...[*Ade Ire* P. 64]

In the exchange between the two speakers, the use of lexemes ‘Iya mi’, which translates to ‘my mother’ in Yoruba language, by Titi reflects age difference and indicates a marker of deference. Thus, Titi’s role in the discourse is the –Higher role while Subu takes on the +Higher role. Subu’s response to Titi’s call also portrays a form of re-affirming of a prior order. Essentially in text 12, Titi is speaking to Subu, with undertones of respect and fear. Respect is noted in her reference to Subu as “Iya mi” while fear is noted in the compulsive use of a filler “er” in “Er...Kabiyesi”. This response comes as a result of the ill relations between Subu and Titi prior to the exchange. It should be noted that both of them are queens but Subu is the eldest. However, regardless of Subu’s curt remark “You heard me”, Titi still speaks to her with respect as a marker of cultural deference. This is further noted with the emphatic repetition of “Iya mi”.

Text 13

Titi: I am sorry, Olori.

Subu: I say you should be sorry for yourself. Just remember when you prattle and flaunt your youth at us, that a king is still a king, no matter who wears the crown, and the youngest Olori mocked by fate ends one king and begins another. [*Ade Ire* p.65]

In Text 13, Titi apologises to Subu. Subu then goes further to reaffirm her rejection of the apology as she reminds Titi of her impending fate through the use of a proverb. The lexemes which reflect the age variable in the discourse are *Olori*, *youth* and *youngest*. *Olori* is a term in the Yoruba language which refers to the title of a Queen while *youth/ youngest* reflects a young person. The exchange typically reflects a conversation between two speakers of different ages, one being older and more mature as reflected in her use of a proverb and the other being younger as portrayed in her apology to the older speaker. The use of the proverb “a king is still a king, no matter who wears the crown, and the youngest Olori mocked by fate ends one king and begins another” by Subu confirms her status as an elderly person. As noted by Bamiro (2006b, p.:323), proverbs serve the “instrumental” function (language used as a means of obtaining goods and services to satisfy emotional and material needs), the “regulatory” function (language used as a means of controlling the behaviour of others), and the “personal” function (language used as a means of expressing individuality, including expression of emotion, etc). The function of the proverb in Text 13 can be classified as regulatory.

Text 14

Titi ; Haa.. OloriSubu.

Subu : Shut that mouth of yours. How dare you call me by name? Haa... the sand-fly forgets herself. Already because you can bite, you think you are a mosquito. [*Ade Ire* p.65]

In the text above, Titi reacts to an earlier utterance by Subu and in turn, Subu orders her to keep quiet about it as she expresses her anger at being called by her first name by Titi. The exchange between the speakers in the extract is replete with references to age or ‘respect tradition’ which characterizes the Yoruba society, the play’s setting. Titi is insulted by Olori Subu for calling her by her first name, ‘Subu’. This is against the Yoruba tradition. A chief or a title holder like Queen Subu is not expected to be addressed by her first name; but by her title alone. This extract is therefore a case of age related language.

6.2.3 Religion

Text 15

Lisa : Ogun o!

Ogun Onire,

Great son of Olorin,

The great Orisa of war.

Ogun,

Great hunter of Ire...

Do not leave us then, stay... [A chant of Ogun’s song continues]

Ifakunle : Ago o! Lisa! Ago! May Ogun answer our prayers! [*Ade Ire* p.61]

Lisa, in text 15, is worshipping Ogun in form of a song which is based on incantation. This in turn functions as a form of prayer. Ifakunle's response to this is a form of affirmation of the prayers alongside his own personal prayer. The lexemes in this exchange constitute a reference to religion. A form of African Traditional Religion [ATR] is seen in the worship of Ogun, a Yoruba based deity, by Lisa and Ifakunle. Also, a reference to prayer reflects religion related language. It should be noted that Ogun is the god of iron in the Yoruba pantheon of gods. As noted by Bamiro (2011, p.5), in all cases of interactive dyad, there is the presence of an unseen god or ancestor to whom the performer implicitly or explicitly alludes. The unseen god which Lisa and Ifakunle explicitly allude to in this exchange is Ogun.

Text 16

Ifakunle: Problems. I was sitting at home trying to ask Orunmila about the coming festival, when it was revealed to me that something really bad will happen during the festival if we are not careful.

Lisa: Careful about what? The festival starts tonight.

Ifakunle: Ifa says that Ogun wants a peaceful and quiet festival. No bloodshed, apart from the dog to be used for the sacrifice. Ogun wants Oluawo to hold the rains for a week before and after the festival. Ogun wants the heavens in support of the festival. On the eighth day of the festival, Ogun himself shall open the floodgates of the heavens... [Ade Ire p. 62]

The focal point of the conversation between Ifakunle and Lisa is that of religion. In the excerpt above, Ifakunle reveals the intentions of Orunmila, a deity in traditional Yoruba society and instructions concerning an upcoming festival. Lisa however reacts with incredulity as he opines that the festival would commence soon. Ifakunle's final statement "Ogun has spoken" lends his earlier information a tone of finality and this relates to the reverence accorded Ogun. The specific lexemes that pinpoint religion as the bane of this discourse are *sacrifice, heavens, sins, Ogun, Orunmila, Oluawo and festival*. All these portray the sociological background of the play.

Text 17

Kabiyesi : But you are right. I felt it as the Osiawo led me to the shrine of Ogun. As we got to the grove, I felt my feet give way. I could not stand straight. Then, as he offered prayers, the mist of the night thickened, and started to slowly choke me. I could not breathe save for the two Emese standing by me, I would have fallen.

Titi: Haa...Kabiyesi, may Ogun forbid!

Kabiyesi: But Ogun almost allowed it. I, Oba Adisa Adejebu of Ilesa Oki, almost fell at the shrine of my fathers. I am the thirty-fourth king of this village, and it has never happened. [Ade Ire p.68]

Religious related language is observed in the utterances by the two speakers, Kabiyesi and Titi. They allude to the "shrine of Ogun", "grove" and "prayers". These reflect the traditional African religion. It should be noted that one of the deities being worshipped by the Yoruba, a tribe which our text replicates, is *Ogun* (the god of iron). It is a taboo to swear by Ogun falsely in Yorubaland. This is why Osiawo and Kabiyesi are punished by Ogun in this context despite the prayers said by the former.

6.2.4 Informality

Text 18

Oluawo: Ogun Alakaaye

Osin umole

Ogun o,

One whose honour spreads the world over.

Ogun the troublesome god.

Ogun the friendly god..

Osiawo: Ago Oloko!

My master lives here, so I shall call him

My master works for Ogun, so I shall serve him. (Ade Ire p.84)

In Text 18, informal language is reflected in the use of the Yoruba language alongside the English language with the words *Osin Umole* and *Ago Oloko*. *Ago Oloko* is a form of Yoruba greeting that roughly translates to "greetings to whoever is there." The function of this incantation rendered by Oluawo is to appease Ogun.

Text 19

Titi: I say I am sorry, abi?

Subu: For, whom?...

[*Ade Ire* p.65]

In this exchange between Olori Subu and Titi, the interference of the Yoruba indigenous language in the word “*abi*” indicates the informality of their utterances and this also reflects the setting of the play. The indigenous word is used to emphasize Titi’s disappointed reaction to Subu who refuses to accept her apology. Hence, she says “I say I am sorry, *abi*?” and it also shows that Titi has made an earlier apology and is simply repeating it out of duty. However, this utterance by Titi does not carry the same weight and import of remorse as an earlier “I am sorry” would have done. It is also noted that Subu rejects this seemingly weak apology in her response “For whom?”

Text 20

Subu: May Ogun forbid what? Shiiio! I said more than that, but look at me today. Read your paper. Dance for the mirror. Flaunt your youth, but remember, queens, like kings, come and go.

Kabiyesi: What King comes and goes? Olori Subulade leave the poor girl alone. [*Ade Ire* p.65]

The use of “*shiiio*” by Subu reflects the informal nature of her utterance. This also sets the tone of the conversation as the king comes and in and admonishes Subu the first speaker lightly. As used in this context, “*shiiio*” functions as an expression of disgust as found in the Yoruba cultural setting. In its use, it also reflects Subu’s dislike for Subu as regards her current position as the youngest Olori.

Text 21

Kabiyesi : May Ogun guide you...

Ifakunle: Ase,Baba.

[*Ade Ire* p.84]

The utterance, ‘Ase Baba’, reflects discourse particles from the Yoruba language and this showcases the informal setting and nature of the conversation between the speakers. The meaning of “Ase” is made clear in the context in which it is used as a response to a prayer. Thus, its translation basically is “amen” or “so be it”. “Baba”, on the other hand translates to “father”. In this extract, both utterances reflect the +higher role of the speaker and –higher role of the addressee. It should be noted that Berry (1987) propounds the +Higher role and –Higher role as the distinction between the roles of participants. The extract reiterates the clearly defined roles of the speakers. Hence, the roles of the king and his subject.

6.2.5 Education

Text 22

Osiawo: ...I am not ready.

Oluawo: You can do it. You will see. You are an initiate. My only worry is when Kabiyesi gets to the shrines, he must come in with his left foot first, and the Ade Ire, Ogun’s crown, make sure he never sees inside it. If all these are done, you have no problems. [*Ade Ire* p.85]

This extract showcases education/ teaching related language. This is vividly seen in the instructions, methods and ways taught by the speaker. It further reflects a master student relationship between Osiawo and Oluawo. While Osiawo expresses his doubts about his ability, Oluawo allays his fears and this is informed by his expertise in contrast to Osiawo who is referred to as an “initiate”. Also, the sensitive workings involved in the art of traditional rituals are reiterated by Oluawo in training Osiawo.

Text 23

Osiawo: Why, Baba, what have you seen? What do you know?

Oluawo: I know the mind of Kabiyesi. He is overbearing when he wants something. Be careful, Osiawo. You remind me of the choice the Oluawo has to make between using the dove or a pigeon for the sacrifice of Etutu Aiye.

Osiawo: What choice master, master? Which one does one use?

Oluawo: Both are good. But beware not to have a hand in the ritual. Both have life. Remember Ogun’s command, do not conflict it with the desires of a being. [*Ade Ire* p.86]The transfer of knowledge and didactic discourse is reflected in this extract. One speaker seeks to know while the other advises and teaches.

This reflects the Yoruba method of education which involves didactics, an apprentice and a master. Primarily, a form of questioning and answering occurs between Osiawo and Oluawo. It is noted that this form of tutoring is important for Osiawo to perform a sacrifice. Alongside Oluawo's explanation to Osiawo, he also gives his counsel and warning concerning what is being learnt and its import.

Text 24

Osiawo: I hear your words, master, what else does my master want me to know?

Oluawo: Osiawo, Kabiyesi has a request he might ask of you. You are like a son to me, so I shall warn you, do not have a hand in his Etutu Aiye ritual.

Osiawo: Etutu Aiye ke? Never. Up till now he has not mentioned it

Oluawo: Good. Do not have a hand in it, I beg you, your father was good to me, and today I speak to you as a father. A little word is enough for the wise. I have spoken to you, Ogun is my witness.

Osiawo: Thank you, master. I shall return. [Ade Ire p.87]

In Text 24, the language of instruction is aptly reflected in the utterance by Oluawo in particular. His utterance however is in response to Osiawo's question. The first speaker, Osiawo, plays the role of the student/ learner and the second, Oluawo, the teacher. It is observed that the exchange exceeds the level of learning and goes on to advising and the impartation of morals. Oluawo advises Osiawo not to get involved in the ritual and he backs up his advice with a proverb "A little word is enough for the wise". At this level Oluawo moves beyond the level of a teacher or instructor as it were to that of a father as he refers to himself as such. This advice is legitimized with Oluawo's status as an elder. In the Yoruba societal context, it is commonplace for persons considered as elders to offer advice to younger people as typified by Osiawo. Osiawo's acknowledgement of Oluawo's status and advise in his use of the lexemes "master" and "thank you" respectively.

Text 25

Titi: Who says it is not a great thing to be the wife of great thing to be the wife of a great king?

Here, it is in coloured photograph. I spread out like a peacock...

Subu: If the beautiful peacock can tell me where to find the great king,

I will leave her alone to her dance of radiance [Ade Ire p.64]

The lexemes "wife" and king" reflect both the female and male sexes respectively. In this utterance, the first speaker "Subu" praises herself for being the "wife of great king ". This is with regards to the privileges/ benefits enjoyed by "wives of kings" as portrayed in the context of the play.

Text 26

Oluawo: We begged you Kabiyesi, but you refused to listen to our pleas. You insisted that you will take the woman from her husband. I paid the dowry for that woman, Kabiyesi, Salako , her husband had lived with me since he was six years old, after his parents had died. I told you Kabiyesi, I begged you, but like you say, power is sweet and power is supreme, and we must spoil our king or else... So in your eyes, you did nothing wrong Kabiyesi.

Kabiyesi: But in yours, my sin was unforgiveable... [Ade Ire p.74]

References to sex related language dominate this extract. Instances of these words are woman, husband, dowry and king. These reflect the reffered institution of marriage and the ceremonial procedure of a dowry for a woman. Furthermore, it depicts male chauvinism and the oppressive nature of the Kabiyesi as regards his subjects and majorly, his misuse of power. This relates to the Nigerian cultural environment as regards specific gender related traditions but with emphasis on the Yoruba society.

7. Statistical Analysis

Below are statistical representations of the frequency and percentage of speech acts in the excerpts analysed from the play, *Ade Ire*. Inclusive is a summary of the analysis using the VARIES Model which is represented in tables revealing both the frequency and percentage of the respective variables found respectively in the extracts from the text. Pie Charts and Bar charts are also employed to illustrate this further.

7.1 Speech Acts Statistical Distribution

Table 1: A Table Illustrating the Frequency of Speech Acts in the Text

SPEECH ACT	FREQUENCY
Apologising	2
Ordering/ Commanding	3
Questioning	6
Informing	7
Pleading	2
Exclaiming	1
Warning	1

It can be deduced, from the table above, that the Informing speech act occurs as the highest frequency (7). It is followed closely by the questioning speech act (6). The ordering/commanding speech act (3) follows while the speech acts of apologising and pleading occur twice and exclaiming and warning occur once each.

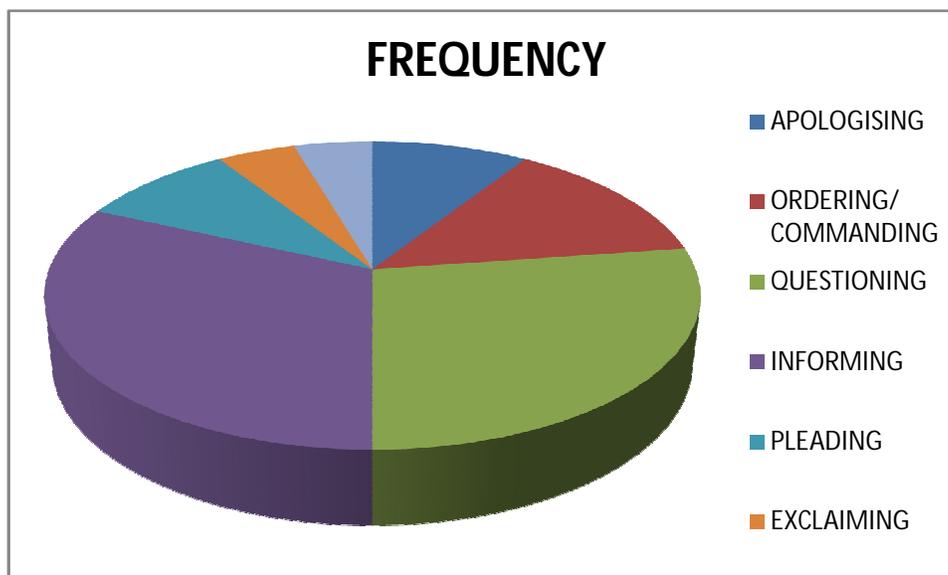


Fig 1: A pie Chart Indicating the Frequency of Speech Acts in the Text

The chart above depicts the graphical representation of the frequencies of the speech acts analysed above. the informing act exceeds the rest. It is followed closely by questioning among others.

Table 2: A Table Illustrating the Percentage of the Speech Acts

SPEECH ACT	PERCENTAGE
Apologising	9
Ordering/ commanding	13.6
Questioning	27.2
Informing	31.8
Pleading	9
Exclaiming	4.5
Warning	4.5

The frequencies of the speech acts' analysis, in Table 1 above, inform the result of their percentages presented in Table 2. The speech acts of exclaiming and warning have 4.5% each, apologising and pleading have the same percentages (9%) respectively; informing has the highest percentage (31.8%), with questioning (27.2%) immediately following it and ordering/commanding has 13.6%.

7.2 The VARIES Model Analysis

The subsequent tables 3 and 4 below represent both the frequencies of occurrence of the social variables in the exchanges analysed and their percentages respectively. Table 3 is also illustrated with a bar chart under it.

Table 3: A Table Illustrating the Frequency of the VARIES Model Analysed

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE [%]
Vocation	3	16.6
Age	3	16.6
Religion	3	16.6
Informality	4	22.2
Education	3	16.6
Sex	2	11.1

From the table above, it is observed that vocation, age, religion and education variables attract three frequencies (16.66%) each, whereas informality and sex variables have four (22.2%) and two frequencies (11.1%) respectively. Therefore, informality has the highest percentage and sex has the lowest percentage.

7.3 Conclusion

This study has been able to explore some sociolinguistic and pragmatic resources inherent in the play *Ade Ire*, an exemplary piece of African literature.

It is observed that the application of the Speech Act theory in analysing selected utterances by speakers in the play aids our understanding of the language use in the text. Hence, the functions of the utterances are demystified based on the contextual variables in the text. The significance of the social variables like education and sex in conversational discourse are also identified as pertinent in role relations, most especially with the preponderant use of informality which largely helps in locating the Nigerian socio-cultural context that produced the text. It has also been identified that age is a variable that majorly informs the allocation of roles and turn-taking in the discourse. The variables of vocation, age, religion, informality, education and sex, are seen as related to the themes, language and the sociological setting of the play i.e. a traditional Yorubaland in Nigeria as reflected in the English language deployed in the text alongside the Yoruba language, thus, reflecting the plural linguistic situation in Nigeria.

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