

A Pragma – Syntactic Analysis of Traditional Nuptial Weep (Ekun Iyawo) Among People of Shao, Kwara State, Nigeria.

KOLAWOLE SALIU

Department of General Studies Education
Kwara State College of Education (Technical)
Lafiagi, P.M.B 01 Lafiagi, Kwara State, Nigeria.

Abstract

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that deals with the study of language used in a bid to communicate ideas or feelings. In order to establish the fact that understanding is the basis of communication, this study focuses on what utterance means through the pragmatic and syntactic analysis of nuptial weep (Ekun Iyawo). The aim of the study is tailored towards appreciating African aesthetics with particular reference to the beauty of African indigenous language (yoruba for example). In any yoruba society, nuptial weep (Ekun Iyawo) remains a song rendered by the bride who is about to formally commence marital life. Since nuptial weep (Ekun Iyawo) is a context – sensitive, data were sampled naturally from a collection of Ekun Iyawo in shao, a community blessed with culture of her own origin.. From the analysis, it has been clearly shown that Austin’s speech act types of illocution and per locution are used while other relevant tools include metaphor and rhetorical questions. The syntactic features include conjunctions, vocatives and communicative classification according to utterance. The study therefore finally concludes that Ekun Iyawo, pragmatically, involves declarative and interrogative renditions.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Syntax, Metaphor, Illocution, perlocution, Vocatives, Macrofunctions, Interpersonal and Textual.

Introduction

In every human community, language remains an essential ingredient for communication and interaction. All linguistic functions (except the use of paralinguistic features which are also inherent in nuptial weep (Ekun Iyawo) are carried out with the use of language. This study attempts to examine both the Pragmatic and syntactic features of Nuptial weep (Ekun Iyawo).

Nuptial weep (Ekun Iyawo), an occasional and oral poetry, pre-dated the written literature. It falls within the realm of oral literature. Alexander (1972) asserts that before the advent of written literature, Africans have a form of literary expression through oral literature. However, oral literature gives the base of African dignity in terms of values, moral and cultural heritage. Such oral literature as cognomy, chant, songs, folktales, moonlight tales and child drama form the basic outlook of oral literature. The literary expedience on oral literature exposes the rich aspect of African culture e.g. market days, entertainment, burial/wedding ceremony. It therefore refers to any form of verbal art which is transmitted orally or delivered by words of the mouth.

Nuptial weep (Ekun Iyawo) is an epitomic and nostalgic repertoire of joy and sorrow. The bride, in her euphoria, feels highly elated as she attains the crucial stage of marital recognition. Contrarily, she is disgusted and perturbed because she wants to depart her parents for marital life. In Yoruba land, the bride song affords her the best opportunity to express her inner-feelings in terms of appreciation, cognomic praises, respect and recognition of people in the society. As the bride prepares to leave for her husband’s house, she goes from house to house of her relatives to receive blessing and words of encouragement beginning from her parents. The bride sings to invoke through cognomic names and titles as people rain blessings on her. Nuptial weep (Ekun Iyawo) marks an important stage of traditional marriage in Yoruba community.

Kafidipe (2013) observes that Nuptial weep (Ekun Iyawo) gives the chanter an opportunity to make case for women. It affords the bride the opportunity to appreciate her mother and father. More so, the bride uses the opportunity of the performance to reveal the good things the parents have done for her while she equally exploits the chanting and songs to criticize male chauvinists who peddle different kinds of blackmail against young women.

Halliday's macro functions of interpersonal and textual functions of language become relevant to this study since our analysis is based on the use of language in a particular social situation. Interpersonally, language could be used to establish and maintain social relations. Such relations include conversations and getting things done. It is used by individuals to achieve social purposes.

Textually, language is used to provide links with itself and features of the situation in which it is used. The language user is enabled to construct "texts" that are situationally relevant. By the empowerment of this function, the speaker or writer is able to establish cohesive relations from one sentence to the other (Brown & Yule 1983, Halliday 1998, Morris 1938). The pragmatic and syntactic tools are deployed in the analysis of the data in order to achieve the objective of this study.

Conceptual Framework

The flagrant and brazen attitude of Nigerians towards the use of indigenous languages call for urgent linguistic resurrection before such languages go into extinction. The linguistic universality across global languages appeals to the minds when considering the areas of similarity and difference in languages. These are evident at the levels of syntax, semantics, phonology as well as the structural make-ups of these languages.

In the light of this, the second language learners of English are better reminded of the contrastive analysis which emphasizes the comparative study of languages in terms of positive and negative transfers (strong and weak versions hypotheses) which remain sinequanon to effecting good spoken and written forms of English. This study, however, becomes significant as it aims at carrying out a syntactic and pragmatic analysis of Ekun Iyawo to bring to the fore, the importance of this oratory which is an essential aspect of Yoruba traditional marriage.

Pragmatics and syntax are two inseparable aspects of language (Morris, 1938). He distinguished three branches of inquiry within pragmatics and semiotics. These are syntax, semantics and pragmatics. The field of pragmatics has been greatly influenced by scholars like Austin (1962), Wales (1989), Yule (1996) Lawal (1997), Grice (1925), Adegbiya (1999) and a host of others. Several studies have been carried out by these scholars using pragmatic models to achieve their targets.

Olujide (1999) submits that syntax is concerned with the various relationships that exist among the words of a sentence. However, grammarians like Chomsky (1957), Rasford (1988), Cook (1988), Halliday (1964, 1979, 1994, and 1998), Osisanwo (2012) and the likes of others have contributed immensely to the field of grammar. It becomes pertinent at this point to highlight and discuss the pragmatic and syntactic tools of this study starting with Austin's speech act types.

Illocutionary Act- an illocutionary act can be said to be a non-linguistic act performed through a linguistic or locutionary act (Osisanwo, 2003). A hearer listening to an utterance made by a speaker perceives him (the speaker) to be doing certain things with the utterance. His intention is reflected in the utterance. The speaker might be asserting, predicting, praising or requesting etc.

Perlocutionary act – when an utterance is made by a speaker x to a hearer Y, the effect of that utterance on hearer Y is called perlocutionary act. Allan (1986:181) asserts that "the perlocutionary act presupposes an illocutionary act which presupposes denotational act which presupposes a locutionary act which presupposes an utterance act "the speech act can be direct or indirect.

Lakoff (1980) views metaphor as a novel, poetic or linguistic expression where one or more words of a concept are used outside of its normal conventional meaning to express a similar concept. It is argued that rhetorical question is a figure of speech in the form of question that is asked in order to make a point or asked for a purpose rather than to obtain the information. As pointed out in Oleksanddra's (2014) communicative classification according to utterance, a declarative sentence makes fact while imperative sentence gives command. Interrogative sentence seeks to ask questions as exclamatory sentence expresses sudden surprise, unexpected happenings like fear, sorrow etc. A conjunction is a word that is used to join two sentences or words together e.g and, but etc.

Vocatives are noun phrases used to further address someone. These are the pragmatic and syntactic tools used for the analysis of this study.

The Pragmatic and Syntactic Analysis of Data.

This aspect dwells on the pragmatic and syntactic analysis of data. The data of the studies remain *Ekun Iyawo* (nuptial weep) which were directly collected from the chanter. *Ekun Iyawo* is a repository of praises, appreciation, eulogy and invocations. The data are presented in Tables for ease of analysis.

Table 1.1 Speech acts, vocatives and communicative classification.

Text/Utterance	Translation	Speech acts		Communicative Classification
		Illocution	perlocution	
<u>Bi</u> e O Me'rin	If you know not the elephant	Eulogising/ asserting	Persuasion	Declarative
<u>Bi</u> e O Jika erin	If you recognize it not	-	-	Declarative
<u>Bi</u> e O M'osa	If you know not Osa (lagoon)	-	-	Declarative
<u>E</u> O jiyo lobe	Don't you taste salt?	-	Conviction	Interrogative
<u>Bi</u> e O <u>momi</u>	If you know me not	Eulogising/ asserting	Persuasion	Declarative
E o gbohun enu mi	Don't you hear my voice?	-	Conviction	Interrogative
E mi alake, omo erumosa. (lines 1-7).	I, Alake, the child of erumosa	-	Persuasion	Declarative

The foregoing is an introductory stanza which presents the poet as a sonorous singer. The poet sees herself as an unbeatable singer whose quality of singing lies in her voice. The majority of the lines of the stanza contain if sentences. However, the “**Bi**” (If) of the sentences is used to create suspense and capture the attention of the listeners.

Eulogy and assertion run through the lines of the stanza. They are illocutionary elements used by the poet to amplify her singing ability. The perlocutionary effect of this rests on persuasion and conviction. The bride employs “erin (elephant), “Osa” (lagoon), “Iyo” (salt) and “ohun” (Voice) as instruments of persuading and convincing the listeners thereby accentuating and confirming her authoritative stamina in the singing industry. All the sentences of the stanza are declaratives authenticating the undoubted quality of the poet in poetry rendition.

The “e” (you, plural pronoun) underlined in the extract vocatively and exophorically used to refer to the addressees (listeners) who are ready and anxious to listen to her song. Finally, “Emi” (I) refers to the bride. It's used for emphasis and to praise her.

Table 1.2 Speech Acts. Conjunctions and Communicative Classification.

Text/Utterance	Translation	Speech Acts		Communicative Classification
		Illocution	Perlocution	
E o Weyin wo	Let you look back	Advising	Compelling	Imperative
<u>Kee</u> ribi ti ore sin mi de	And see a true friend	Asserting	Character assessment	Declarative
<u>Kee</u> ribi ti abani ku oko sin mi lo	And see how committed a true lover is	Confirming	-	Declarative
Iloko, omo erumosa	Iloko, the child of erumosa	Praising	Invocation	Declarative
Won ti ni n o te	It has been asserted that I will be put to shame	Asserting	Objection	Declarative
Iya mi ti lemi oni te	My mother refutes it	-	-	Declarative
Efo ewuro o te ninu oko	Bitter leaf is valued most in the farm	Praising	Invocation	Declarative
<u>Bee</u> <u>ni</u> tete o te laala	As spinach is appreciated by all	-	-	Declarative
Iyami ti lemi o nit e (lines 14-22)	My mother refutes my being put to shame	Confirming	Objection	Declarative

As the bride is fully prepared to leave her parents, she finds no space to harbour her Sorrow. The above extract gives clearer picture of the bride's appreciation of her mother. She praises her mother who, over the years, had demonstrated her full support. In Yoruba culture, it is obvious that no parent would want her child to fail. The bride mother's support is reflected in lines 19 and 22- "Iya mi ti lemi o ni te".

In lines 20-23, it is further confirmed by the poet that success shall be hers, "Efo ewuro o te ninu oko", "Bee ni tete o te laala", "Iya mi ti lemi o nit e", from these lines, the poet reassures herself of the certainty of prosperity, wealth, children and other fruits of marriage in advance. What pervades through the illocutionary act are those of advice, assertion, confirmation and praises while perlocutionarily, the poet warns, invokes and objects as well. In all the lines of the stanza except line 14, "E o weyin wo" where she technically compels the listener to watch out, what we have are declarative sentences.

The words "Kee" and "Beeni" are conjunctions (and & as respectively) used to effect a grammatical balance within clauses.

Table 1.3 Metaphor, speech Acts, Conjunctions and Communicative Classification

Text/utterance	Translation	Metaphorical elements	Speech acts		Communicative classification
			Illocution	Per locution	
Bi e o m' <u>erin</u>	If you know not the elephant	"erin (Elephant)	Eulogising/praising	Persuasion	Declarative
Bi e o m' <u>osa</u>	If you know not Osa (lagoon)	"Osa" (lagoon)	-	-	Declarative
E o gbohun enu mi	Don't you hear my voice?	"ohun" (Voice)	Eulogising/praising	Conviction	Interrogative
Efo <u>ewuro</u> o te ninu oko	Bitter leaf is valued most in the farm	"Efo ewuro (Bitter leaf)	Praising	Invocation	Declarative
Bee ni <u>tete</u> o te laala (lines 6, :20&21)	As spinach is appreciated by all	"tete (spinach)	-	-	Declarative

For listeners to better appreciate the credible quality of the poet – singer, striking metaphors pervade. From the extract, “Erin (elephant), “Osa” (lagoon), “ohun (voice), “Efo ewuro” (bitter leaf) and “tete” (spinach) metaphorise the bride. To magnify her melodic voice, she compares herself with elephant, lagoon, bitter-leaf, voice and spinach.

By its nature, elephant is conspicuous among other animals as no swimmer dares to swim across “Osa (lagoon). As bitter as it is, the bitter leaf is never worthless as “tete” (spinach) has no enemy - it is consumed by all while “:Ohun” (voice) remains the sole symbol to identifying the singer. All these metaphorical elements are used to confirm the bride as a brilliant poetic-singer. They are instruments for eulogizing and equally convince the listeners thereby reiterating the illocution and perlocutionary acts. The sentences are declaratives.

Table 1.4. Speech acts and communicative classifications

Text/utterance	Translation	Speech acts		Communicative classification
		Illocution	Per locution	
Baba oniwa <u>ku</u>	Somebody’s father is dead.	Asserting/confirming	Fright	Declarative
Won gbele, won kan <u>okuta</u> .	while digging the ground, stone was discovered	Asserting	Bad omen	Declarative
Baba eleyin <u>ku</u>	Another person’s father is dead.	Asserting/confirming	Fright	Declarative
Won gbele, won kan <u>apoti owo</u>	while digging the ground, a box full of money was discovered	Asserting/confirming	Opulence	Declarative
Omo Olalomi (lines 31-35)	The child of Olalomi	Praising	Invocation	Declarative

This stanza is dedicated to the bride’s father. She praises him to show her appreciation. The verb “ku” (is dead) in lines 31 and 32 creates perlocutionary effect of fright as in Yoruba land, no one will be happy to hear his final day on earth and even be bold to confront it. “Okuta” (stone) and “Apoti Owo” (a box full of money) in lines 32 and 34 juxtaposes the two characters under discussion. The discovery of stone while digging the ground suggests how wretched the first man was before he died. Contrarily, “apoti Owo” (a box full of money) which was also discovered while digging the ground of the other man symbolizes his opulence and wealth before he died. Stone and box are powerful symbols of richness and pauperism to confirm that the poet, through a box full of money, comes from an opulent family.

They also contribute to creating the perlocutionary effect of bad omen and opulence. Since the poet asserts, all the sentences are declaratives. She wraps the stanza up by invoking the cognomen of her father by referring to him as “omo Olalomi”

Table 1.5 Rhetorical Questions, Speech Acts, communicative, Classification

Text/Utterance	Translation	Types	Speech Acts		Communicative Classification
			Illocution	Perlocution	
E o jiyo lobe	Don’t you taste salt?	Rhetorical Question	Euilogising asserting	Conviction	Interrogative
E o gbohun enu mi	Don’t you hear my voice?	-	-	Conviction	Interrogative
Kinlode ti o pa Baba mi?	Why did you kill my father?	Rhetorical Question	Condemning	Callousness	Interrogatives
Ao mo iyato ninu Alagbede-Akogbe (lines 4, 6 42 and 57).	What makes the difference between you and the earliest blacksmith?	Rhetorical Question	Clarifying	Conviction	Interrogative

Rhetorical questions deserve no definite answer. They are asked for emphatic purpose. All the lines contain the indirect illocutionary facts of assertion, condemnation and clarification. The perlocutionary is conviction and callousness. The sentences are interrogative bearing the content of asking questions to make meaning.

Table 1.6 speech Acts, Conjunction and Communicative Classification.

Text/Utterance	Translation	Speech Acts		Communicative Classification
		Illocution	Perlocution	
Iku ti doro	Death is cruel	Asserting	Sympathy	Declarative
Iku ti ni oun doro mo	It objects not to inflict pains any more	Confirming	-	Declarative
Orun sika	Heaven is inconsiderate	Confirming	Callousness	Declarative
Orun ti ni oun o doro mo	It has stopped being callous	-	Consideration	Declarative
Nigbati o doro	Now that you are kind	Asserting	-	Declarative
Ti o o sika	And considerate	-	-	Declarative
Kinlode ti opa Baba mi? (lines 36-42).	Why did you kill my father?	Condemning	Callousnes	Interrogative.

The poet is infuriated by her father's demise who is supposed to be alive to witness her marriage. The entire stanza is ridden with lamentation and condemnation of death as being callous. "Iku" and "Orun" are connotations of being callous and wicked. The significance of these is to show sympathy for the deceased and praise him as well because she feels very much, his absence and role.

Obviously she's disappointed in what death and nature have done; the illocutionary acts reflect assertion, confirmation and condemnation. In line 42, "Kinlode ti o pa Baba mi?" the listeners are able to probe into her mind, her state of psychological disorientation. She would want to know why death has refused to spare her father. The perlocutionary acts are those of sympathy, callousness and consideration. All the sentences are declarative except line 42 "kilode ti o pa Baba mi?" that is interrogative expressing the poet Inner-thought and concern on her father's death. The "Ti (and) of line 41 connects the preceeding line and properly co-ordinates the idea fluently well.

Table 1.7 Vocatives, Speech Acts and Communicative Classification

Text/utterance	Translation	Vocatives	Speech acts		Communicative classification
			Illocution	Perlocution	
<u>Eyin</u> lomo inuola	You, the children of inuola	You	Praising	Invocation	Declarative
Ti owo ti omo ni ipinya wa	We shall all depart for wealth and children	We	Asserting	Farewell	Declarative
<u>Eiyn</u> lomo ina won sun, won o mako ina won sun, won o m'abo	You are so erotic that you can't differentiate between male and female	You	Confirming	Invocation	Declarative

Once again, the poet re-opens her song by re praising her mother who is from a different family of Nupe tribe. "ina", a loaned word in Yoruba from cognomic name of Nupe. The use of "Eyin" (you) in line 53 refers to the family of bride's mother while "wa" (we) in line 54 refers to the poet and all the listeners. The line captures the bitterest lamentation of the bride who is about to depart her dear friend. Illocutionary acts revolve around praising, confirmation and assertion and perlocutionary effects give priority to invocation and farewell.

Table 1.8 Speech Acts and Communicative Classification

Text/utterance	Translation	Speech acts		Communicative classification
		Illocution	Per locution	
Awa lomo gbedo-gbedo	We, the children of wood-carver	Asserting	Invocation	Declarative
Iloko timuda, odi ewe	Iloko handles sword, he becomes younger	Asserting	-	Declarative
Osi iloko ti muda odi ero	The leftist of iloko handles sword, he becomes soft	-	-	Declarative
Odi omo abenilori	He becomes a beheader	Confirmation	Fear	Declarative
Abeni lenu	The sole destroyer	-	Fear	Declarative
Awa lomo oga idi ape (lines 8-13).	We, the head of them all.	Asserting	Invocation	Declarative

Finally, the poet digresses to bring the occupation of her father to lime-light. Line 8 “Awa lomo gbedo-gbedo” further confirms that she hails from a family where the sole occupation is wood-carving. She goes ahead by invoking the cognomen of her father by describing him as “Abenilori” (a beheader), Abenilenu” (The sole destroyer). These indicate that “Iloko” becomes angry only when he’s provoked. Fear and invocation remain the perlocutionary acts while the illocutionary acts are assertion and confirmation.

Conclusion

As commonly found in yoruba communities of south west, Nigeria where *Ekun Iyawo* is perceived as an important aspect of traditional marriage, shao is not left out in this rich aspect of cultural marriage in its wholeness. When a masquerade dances, all eyes are on it so is the bride.

The illocutionary acts cap the actual intentions of the poet (bride) while the perlocutionary acts state the effects of utterance on the listeners. In conclusion, the study has discussed pragmatic and syntactic analysis of *Ekun Iyawo*. The study reveals that it is rendered in declarative and interrogative sentences. Lastly, this study is a case based for experimentation in the teaching of comparative analysis of English and yoruba structures.

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