

Dialogic Features in Selected Plays of Wole Soyinka

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<p>Received: 25 May 2022; Received in revised form: 14 Jun 2022; Accepted: 22 Jun 2022; Available online: 30 Jun 2022</p> <p>Keywords— Dialogic features, interaction, characterization, Soyinka’s play</p>	<p><i>The human quotidian life is characterized naturally by communication which is essentially interactional. Life transactions are effected through interpersonal interaction and via it human vision, mission, strengths and weaknesses are observable. For instance, the garrulous/taciturn polarity in human description is drawn on the basis of attitude to participation in conversation. Dialogues in plays are a facsimile of the daily conversations and are designed to arrest human attention as worthwhile through their similitude. Literary conversation is for this reason a choice data for discourse analysis. This paper examines the features of joint production of conversations in Wole Soyinka’s The Trial of Brother Jero, Jero Metamorphosis and The Beatification of Area Boy to identify the discursal facilities employed to make each of the play an interact and reveal the process involved in the playwright’s successful characterization. Two samples of exchanges are drawn from each of the plays and the underlying dialogic devices identified. The devices found include characters’ judicious employment of the two canonical acts of giving and demanding, issuing of collective speech act, preponderance of personal pronouns, intrusion or interruption, lexical and structural repetition, greetings, vocative, hesitancy and modality. The devices are shown relevantly to relate directly to the author’s creation and characterization of Amope as shrewd and flippant; Jero as calculative, selfish and crook; Rebecca as robotic and sheepish; CEO as officious and, and the Military Officer as bossy and soldierly. The paper concludes that the success of the plays as interacts is predicated on the playwright’s endowment of the imaginary characters the conversational cooperative ability and human cognition that make them aptly employ speech acts and discourse strategies.</i></p>

1. Introduction

The possession of language more than any other endowment justifies the characterization of man as a social being. This linguistic possession accounts for the peaceful coexistence and the creation of social order in human society. Language makes communication possible and communication between or among humans is both orderly and sophisticated. Through it language users relates and by it their personality traits are also related. Communication takes the form of interaction which

is a combination of sequences of talk exchange composed of initiations and reactions. It is through this phenomenon of interaction that meaning is produced. Meaning is thus construed in dialogue and hardly exists in a vacuum. Both the speaker and listener jointly produce meaning on the basis of some existing meaning-enabling factors which are essentially social, psychological and cognitive.

Plays are written to replicate happenings in human society. They are wrought to mirror human life and designed by the playwrights to communicate

with the reader. The writers through characterization present literary humans fashioned against real people or at least imaginable in some acceptable contexts such that they are taken as real, genuine or conceivable. The felicity of all conditions associated with their utterances constituting dialogues are assumed as clear contexts are created for the scenes in the plays. Readers or viewers of drama often take their scenes as possible occurrences and some plays, particularly the historical too are predicated on real incidents.

This study examines features of co-production of speech in Wole Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero*, *Jero's Metamorphosis* and *The Beatification of Area Boys*. It is a discourse analysis aiming at unveiling the playwright's exploration of the natural cooperation between participants in discourse to create acceptable dramatic performances. The study attempts to explicate the underlying discursive resources to the success of the plays as they interact and the effects of the employment of the linguistic resources on the character portrayal.

2. Literature Review

Discourse Analysis, Speech Act and the Clause

Harris (1952) is associated with the introduction of the term *discourse analysis* to linguistic study as a way of analyzing connected speech and writing. According to him, connected speech occurs in a situation where people speak, in a conversation and in a piece of book of literary orientation. From this initial conception of discourse analysis, it is clear that its focus is on both written and spoken texts, while its emphasis is on connectedness. Paltridge (2006) provides the multiple but related foci of discourse analysis to include an interest in knowledge about language beyond the sentence; a study of pattern of language across texts as well as relationship between language and its socio-cultural context; an examination of the manner in which language use is influenced by the role relationship of the users; and a probe into the way in which the view of the world and identities are construed through both written and spoken texts. This broad scope of discourse analysis shows its functional perspective to language study which paves the way for a study of the language user along language use. An apt summary of the thrust of discourse analysis is provided by Johnstone (2002:3) as an interest in 'what happens when people draw on the knowledge they have about

language ... to do things in the real world.' A study of such happenings essentially is an examination of both the acts performed through language use and the effects of such acts.

A central concern of discourse analysis is what participants in discourse do with their words which is the domain of the speech act theory. Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) are reputable for their observation that language is employed in communication for the purpose of varied speech acts which constitute felicitous interaction. They note that many statements characterized by logical positivists as failing to meet the truth conditions are valid, as they do things that transcend their literal meaning by their employment in communication. Austin (1962) identifies three acts which occur simultaneously via a speaker's utterance in communication as locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. The locutionary act is the literal meaning of words; the speaker's intention is the illocutionary act while the perlocutionary act refers to the effect of the utterance on the thought and action of the listener. (Murana, 2019; Paltridge, 2006) The illocutionary act as well as its associated perlocutionary effect constitutes human interaction. This is because language use revolves around the addressee as 'we do something to and with others' (Wiltschko, 2021:37). The speech act theory is central to the concern of discourse analysis in its consideration of both the social and the linguistic contexts of language use. This therefore endows discourse analysis with a partly sociolinguistic, partially philosophical and largely linguistic perspective to the study of language.

The clause is a frequent grammatical form employed to effect speech acts. Grammatically, a verb is its important constituent. However, it can be verbless. Thompson and Couper-Kuhlen (2005:481) regard the clause as the locus of interaction and note that 'clauses are interactionally warranted...format for social action.' In social interactions, language is used naturally and therefore functionally in all contexts including formal ones. Against this reality, Halliday (2004) presents a functional view of language and identifies the interpersonal function which foregrounds turn-taking and the associated speech acts performance by the discourse interactants. He views language as performing two basic speech acts of giving and demanding thereby recognizing the role of the speaker as well as the active role of the addressee. Just as the speech act is central to the analysis of discourse, the clause also

occupies a pivotal place in speech act analysis. The analysis of excerpted conversations done in this paper is a discourse analysis that benefits from the theory of speech acts and makes relevant references to clauses constituting key characterizing acts.

Turn-taking

Conversation whether dyadic or multiparty is usually characterized by orderliness triggered by pristine mutual patience that seems to be part of the factors that define humanness and enable communal life. Part of this consensual order is achieved through turn-taking in conversation. This phenomenon denotes ‘the orderly distribution of opportunities to participate in social interaction and it is a prerequisite for viable social organization’ (Schegloff, 2001:1). In quotidian interactions, participants are guided by the etiquette of turn-taking which accounts for their activeness in the process (Wood, 2006).

Basically, conversations are marked by the rule that one person speaks at a time following which they may nominate another speaker or the speaker takes up the turn through self nomination (Paltridge, 2006 and Sack, 2004). Turn-taking, thus, involves the alternating change of the role of speaker and hearer in the course of conversation (Oguche, 2003) banishing total garrulousness and paving way for interaction. As Schegloff (2000) notes, turn-taking is not so much predicated by politeness consideration but rather informed by the reason of enabling orderly commerce between interactants. Although turn-taking is the order in social interaction, there are cases of simultaneous talk or overlap orchestrated sometimes by simultaneous start-ups of next turn by more than one speaker or by interruption, designed or spontaneous (Sack, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974).

Turn-taking is important in a number of ways. It is the major basis for characterizing a piece of communication appropriately as an interaction or more precisely as a conversation. It is the medium employed for the apportionment of floor in conversation through phonological, syntactic and gestural signals. Besides, the topic of conversation, the participants’ role relationships and attitude are all decipherable through turn-taking. To the focus of this paper, turn-taking is a veritable tool for characterization and it is through references to turns that conversation analysis can be systematically achieved.

Cooperative Principle

The turns that are taken in daily conversation which are neither pre-assigned nor formally designed are a clue to some kind of instinctive but marvelous cooperation involved in the natural talk venture. Another kind of cooperation involved in the daily practice is explained in Grice’s (1975) Cooperative Principle (CP). Grice argues that the common and mutual apt interpretation that participants in conversation display show their assumption of some kind of cooperative principle governing their talk exchange. The CP, according to him, accounts for the reason speakers make their contribution ‘such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction (1975:45) of the exchange in which they are engaged.

The thrust of this postulation as Wood (2006) notes is that conversation is a cooperative engagement in which conversationalists ‘naturally acknowledge the indirection and purpose of speech exchanges’ (xii). Grice expands his CP through four sub-principles or maxims – maxim of quality, quantity, relation and manner. These maxims represent the assumptions that participants in conversation are usually truthful, informative, relevant and clear in their contribution (Paltridge, 2006; Wood, 2006). Evidence of willful compliance to the CP and its maxims exists in the speakers’ employment of modality, hedges and metadiscourse in conversation as these mark conscious evaluation of their proposition. Hyland (2005) notes that metadiscourse employed in conversation is central to apt interpretation as it reflects the speaker’s attitude to the text and the listener.

Grice (1975) is not oblivious of deviation as a natural tendency, a tool for stylistic ingenuity and a conversational norm. Hence he argues that listeners seek for the unsaid or infer conversational implicature when one or more of the maxims appear to be flouted. Speakers flout the maxims not to mislead but cue the listeners to making apt interpretation (Cutting, 2002; Thomas, 1995). Further still, Grice (1975) distinguishes between particularized or conversational implicature decipherable only with reference to the context of the conversation and conventional implicature suggested by the use of certain words only. Paltridge (2006:71) also identifies scalar implicature derivable from the use of words ‘from a set of words that express some kind of scale of value such as all, most, nothings and something’ Scalar implicature is thus a kind of conventional implicature as its onus is not

context dependent. CP and its maxims are relevant to the analysis of natural conversations and excerpts from plays as the latter are a mirror of the former.

Synopsis of the Three Plays

a). The Trials of Brother Jero

This play tells the story of prophet Jeroboam, a charlatan who employs the Christian faith to deceive, dupe and maneuver members of his church and other gullible individuals around him. Jero deceives the old prophet, his master, takes over his piece of land and the latter curses him in return. The efficacy of the aggrieved old prophet's curse is seen in the several 'trials' which Jero faces beginning with his experience with Amope. Prophet Jeroboam buys a velvet cape on credit from Amope, who unknown to him, is the wife of the most consistent and devoted member of his church, Chume. Jero believes that Amope does not know his house and he has no intention to pay. After three months, Amope requests her husband to take her to the house of one of her debtors. Chume takes her on his bike and drops her in front of the said house which unknown to him is Jero's house. As soon as Chume leaves for his office, Amope notices that her debtor is preparing to go out. She alerts him of her presence and warns him to pay her money if he wants peace. In the course of their discussion, a fish vendor (Trader) passes and Amope's attention is diverted. While Amope is haggling with the Trader, Jero escapes through the window. Amope discovers this very late and vows to wait for his arrival.

Brother Chume returns earlier than usual from work to seek permission from prophet Jero, his spiritual father to beat his wife for her incessant nagging. Jero warns him against this act and advises him to see his wife as his own cross. At a point in their discussion, however, Jero realizes that the woman in question is the petty trader who is currently laying siege by the door of his house and the music changes.

Prophet Jeroboam gives the unsuspecting Chume the permission he has been longing for but cautions that the beating should be done at his home. In his attempt to force Amope to go home with him, Chume discovers to his greatest surprise that the prophet owns the house contrary to his belief that Jero sleeps on the beach and that he is his wife's debtor. He concludes that he must have been flirting with his wife since Amope may be pretending. He runs back to find him. Prophet Jeroboam knows that he has lost Chume and he needs a replacement. In the evening that day, a

member of the Federal House who is targeting a ministerial post and rehearsing his speech comes to the beach as usual for a rehearsal. Jero tries his tricks on him, he prophesizes that he will become the Minister of War, the most powerful position in the Land. Upon his conviction, the member kneels at Jero's feet with his eyes closed. In the midst of the prayers, Chume appears brandishing a cutlass. Jero does not waste time, he flees and to his advantage the member believes that he has disappeared miraculously. With the aid of the new convert, Jero gets the police to arrest Chume for making an attempt on his life and subsequently puts him in lunatic asylum.

b). Jero's Metamorphosis

The play which is the second part of *The Trials of Brother Jero* opens with Brother Jeroboam dictating to Sister Rebecca, a new convert, the contents of a letter of invitation intended to be sent to other beach prophets. Brother Jeroboam has got possession of a confidential file belonging to the Tourist Board of the City Council through Rebecca, the former Confidential Secretary to the Chief Eviction Officer of the Board. He finds out from the file that the Board is planning to eject the prophets from the Beach and turn it to a tourist centre with an amphitheatre and a ground for public execution.

Prophet Jero works out a plan to unite all prophets on the Beach under one church and demands right of monopoly on spirituality in the proposed centre. He, therefore, decides to call all the prophets to a meeting slated to take place in his office, to intimate them with his scheme and tactfully impose himself on them as their leader. Jero instructs Rebecca to handle the distribution of the letters and attend to the Prophets as they arrive while he leaves to look for Chume, his old disciple. Chume has been released from the lunatic asylum with the intervention of Captain Winston of the Salvation Army, a church. He has since then been a member of the church and serves as their trumpeter. Prophet Jero's search for Chume is, therefore, informed by Chume's new skill. After some initial difficulties, Jero is able to convince his old disciple of the need to leave Captain Winston's camp, join him and be one of the founding prophets of the new church. Jero purposefully delays his arrival at the meeting having provided enough alcoholic drinks and instructed Sister Rebecca to serve the assorted prophets generously so that he only discusses his mapped out plans with a bunch of drunks.

On his arrival, Jero begins to act out his script. He proposes to the prophets the need for them to unite and operate a single church. He immediately announces the birth of the new church named the first Church of the Apostolic Salvation Army (CASA) to be headed by whoever has the secret of the Tourist Board. Invariably, Jero imposes himself as the head since he is the one with the Board's files. He subsequently announces the impending arrival of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Tourist Board of the City Council to the meeting. Meanwhile, Prophet Jeroboam motions to Rebecca to bring out the bundle of military outfits already provided for the prophets and as he dresses them, he changes their titles from religious to military. Among them are Colonel, Major and Corporal while he (Jero) himself is a General. The CEO has been saddled with the responsibility of retrieving the Tourists Board's confidential file from Jero and as soon he arrives at the meeting, negotiations commence. General Jero negotiates on behalf of the prophets, while he represents the Board. The latter accedes to Jero's demands since they constitute the conditions for the release of the Board's confidential file and the meeting ends. The play ends with the angry departure of the CEO and jubilation by the assorted Beach Prophets.

c). The Beatification of Area Boy

The Beatification of Area Boy is a story of Sanda who perhaps drops out of the university in the penultimate year to his graduation. His decision is probably informed by the prevailing frustration and apparent hopelessness that characterize the nation. Sanda returns home and picks up a security job in an opulent shopping plaza in Ita Balogun, Lagos, to earn a living. Meanwhile, he combines this job with the coordination of the Area Boys who operate in the vicinity of the plaza. Sanda initiates the various extortions and duping of the shoppers but spends part of the proceedings on the needy Area Boys and prisoners.

Miseyi, a former schoolmate of Sanda whose wedding is about to take place in the banquet hall of the plaza comes to do some shopping in the plaza and meets Sanda by the staircase in his security outfit. Shocked to the bone marrow, Miseyi condemns Sanda's decision and complacency, walks out on him but comes back later after her shopping to apologize and reconcile with her one time revolutionary and visionary school mate. She then gives him an invitation card to her wedding.

At the climax of the traditional wedding ceremony, that same day the Master of Ceremony instructs Miseyi, the bride, to look for the groom from among the guests and give him a drink from the gourd she is carrying as the tradition demands. On getting close to the expectant groom, Miseyi breaks into a run, plunks down the gourd before Sanda and turns round defiantly to face the High Table to the utter surprise of her parents, the groom's parents, the Military Governor and all and sundry. Sanda, the king of the Area Boys is the most surprised by Miseyi's sudden change of mind and choice of the life of squalor over that of glamour. Miseyi's preference for Sanda marks his beatification by Soyinka.

3. Methodology

The objective of this paper is to identify and discuss the variables through which the playwright presents the selected plays as records of progressive and coherent interactions. In other words, we are concerned with an exposition of the devices of conversation employed in the plays. For this purpose, two samples are randomly drawn from each of the three texts starting with the two Jero's play. The six excerpts are numbered samples 1-6 for ease of citation and the analysis is done with reference to the turns in the exchanges and where necessary to the constituent clause(s) to achieve systematic analysis of the dialogues and relate the identified discursual devices to character portrayal. Synopsis of each play is provided to bridge the gap created by the sampling and aid contextualization.

Dialogic Features in the Three Plays

Sample 1

This exchange ensues in front of Prophet Jeroboam's house. Chume though ignorant of the business transaction between Amope, his wife, and Prophet Jero, his spiritual father, has just brought the former on his bicycle to the latter's house. Amope's notice for Chume to stop the bike is quiet sudden and Chume's effort to comply makes Amope to bruise her ankle. She complains of broken ankle and Chume tries unsuccessfully to appease her.

Chume: *Do you want me to bandage it for you?*

Amope: *No, no. What for?*

Chume: *You are sure you don't want me to take you back?*

If it swells after I've gone...

Amope: *I can look after myself.*

I've always done and look after you too.

Just help me unload things and place them against the wall...

you know I wouldn't ask if it wasn't for the ankle.

(The Trials of Brother Jero: 12-13)

In his opening turn, Chume wants to know whether his assistance is needed in the nursing of Amope's supposedly broken ankle. He employs a demanding clause (a question) which compels his wife to make a choice for him out of two available options - to intervene or to keep away. His demand, however, is a politely couched offer to help. With the choice of the polar interrogative, Chume charts the course for interaction. Amope consequently, rises to the bait. Her responding move - *No, no. What for?* - is a complex one with three elliptical or minor clauses: the first two, giving, and the concluding one, demanding. Again, Amope's bellicose attitude is foregrounded by the complexity of her response. She does not stop at rejecting her husband's kind offer; she also questions the basis as if it were wrong or unheard of. Chume's employment of interrogative to offer a hand of help is premeditated. This helps him to preserve Amope's face leaving her with options. An offer enacted by an imperative mood (e.g. Let me bandage it) or a declarative mood (e.g. I will bandage it for you) would have been more unacceptable to Amope. Amope's emotion as revealed by her style of disagreement evident in her choice of double negative response marker is transparently aggressive especially against the backdrop of the Chume's pleasing offer.

Further elements that mark the discourse as interactive besides the question-answer adjacent pairs include: ellipsis and personal pronouns. The first set of elliptical dots in Chume's second turn is a graphological indication of an incomplete turn. Amope, tired of Chume's insistence, interrupts him to make some demands. This shows Amope's impatience against the background of Chume's caring persistence. It also projects her as a flippant and deviant wife. This is because interruption in couple discourse in Yorubaland, the cultural context of the play, is strictly monodirectional. Only the husband can interrupt her wife as a mark of his lordship over her. The second set in Amope's final turn, however, is a pause: a temporary rest or silence in conversation following which she justifies her

proposal. This portrays her as calculated in her speech. Finally, counter self references also reveal the construction of the play as an interaction as this excerpt shows. The 'You/Me, I/You' Subject-Complement references clearly mark an encounter between the two presented interlocutors. Personal pronouns are, thus, essential interactive tools in the exchange.

Sample 2

The next extract shows other features of interaction in *The Trials of Brother Jero*. Brother Jeroboam has just noticed the presence of Amope as he prepares to go out. He retreats, leading to the discourse below:

Amope: *(without looking back) Where do you think you are going? One pound, eight shillings and nine pence for three months. And he calls himself a man of God.*

Jero: *(coughs) Sister...my dear sister in Christ...*

Amope: *I hope you slept well, brother Jero...*

Jero: *Yes, thanks be to God. (Hems and coughs)*

I-er-I hope you have not come to stand in the way of Christ and his work.

Amope: *If Christ doesn't stand in the way of me.*

(The Trials of Brother Jero: 15-16)

Besides Amope's first proposition as contained in the question which Jero either pretends not to hear or refuses to answer, her final proposition shows a 'recreation' of Jero through the selection of the subject *he* instead of *you*. Jero is projected here as non-interactant or non-present. This enables Amope to shift the orientation of the interaction to the audience and solicit their judgment. The question that bothers her, therefore, is: *can Jero be a man of God?* With this temporary shift in orientation, Amope is characterized as discerning. Again, the shift is characterized by imprecision that complements the thrust of Amope's introductory question which obviously is an indirect speech act of warning as opposed to a demand for Jero's destination. The two acts are deniable should Jero feign a tactically contrary and pleasing behavior.

Further to this are other discursal markers such as: greeting, vocative and intrusion. Jero resorts to phatic communion beginning with vocatives sandwiched by pauses to calm down his fuming guest. The heavy modification of *sister* in the second or repeated vocative is Jero's attempt to achieve this through the endearment. Amope understands the vocative to implicate greetings and responds aptly to sustain the discourse flow. The exchange of greetings by Amope and Jero does not only crystallize the interaction but also predicate Jero's cunning nature as well as Amope's business mindedness and shrewdness.

Intrusion or overlap and hesitation are equally significant in the design of the play. Each of the interlocutors intrudes on the others' utterances. Brother Jero particularly hesitates after his response to Amope's greeting forming her second turn to tactically structure his proposition as a hope in the light of his spiritual calling. The hedged insult contained in his speech notwithstanding attracts a fitting response from Amope. This is climaxed by Amope's structural mockery – *in the way of me* motivated by Jero's earlier phrase *in the way of Christ*. This imitation achieved through parallelism is especially important in two respects. Pragmatically, it shows Amope's repartee and battle readiness, while sociolinguistic wise it reflects Amope's linguistic background being a direct translation of the Yoruba phrase 'ni ona mi.' Jero's expression of hope through his spiritual affiliation is met appropriately with Amope's provision of pragmatic condition to present the reality in the social world where actions court reactions and negotiations involve ground shifting or compromises. This analysis of discourse unfolds the writer's construction of social identities as well as the implication of role relationship on language choice.

Sample 3

The excerpt below is the opening exchange between Prophet Jeroboam and the new convert, Sister Rebecca, formally the Confidential Secretary to the Chief Eviction Officer (CEO II) of the Town Council and now Prophet Jero's Secretary. Prophet Jero dictates the wording of the letter of invitation he intends to send to his co-prophets while Sister Rebecca types.

Jero: ... *in time of trouble* it behoves us to come together, to forget old enmities and bury the hatchet in the head of a common enemy... no, better

take that out it sounds a little unchristian wouldn't you say?

Rebecca: (her voice and manner are of unqualified admiration)

Not if you don't think it, *Brother Jeroboam*.

Jero: *Well, we have to be careful about our brother prophets. Some of them might just take it literally. The mere appearance of the majority of them not to mention their secret past and even secret present... ah well, stop at 'bury the hatchet'*

Rebecca: *Whatever you say, Brother Jeroboam*.

(Jero's *Metamorphosis*: 1)

Prophet Jero's initial dictation is followed by three ranking clauses. The initial - *No, better take that out*, as well as the final clause, *wouldn't you say?* demands for goods-&-services, while, the median: *It sounds a little unchristian* gives Rebecca information about Jero's misgiving on the contextual appropriateness of the final circumstantial adjunct – *in the head of a common enemy*. By implication, prophet Jeroboam's combination of both giving and demanding clauses unveils the playwright's process of creating exchange. Rebecca's response to Jero's demanding clause complements this continuous process in interactive discourse. While prophet Jeroboam is portrayed as critical and careful in this part of the exchange, Soyinka portrays Rebecca as not just a copy-typist but also a docile secretary through her dependence only on the thought of Jero. Soyinka's subtle criticism of this supreme shepherd versus silly sheep relationship mostly obtainable in the Christian creed particularly in Africa is remarkable here.

The two characters' second turns are functionally structured as order and compliance. Jero clarifies his argument through declarative clauses and ends resolutely with a command, while Rebecca expectedly complies. Jero's vast knowledge of his brother prophets is signaled through the giving clauses, while the concluding command underlies his savvy and calculative nature. The excerpt too shows the interactive orientation of brief silence and vocative Jero's second turn in this sample begins with *well*, a delay marker in discourse (Li and Xiao, 2012) following which he finally gives his order and makes his revelation about his crook

co-prophets. The brief silence within the turn marked graphologically by the three dots (...) is followed by a second employment of the delay maker giving vent to his final declaration and editing of the manuscript. Jero is engaged in character assessment of his co-prophets as evident in his choice of the pronoun *some* and the noun *majority* in his last turn. The scalar implicature of his choice is that he is not generalizing his indictment of the prophets. This strategy is to consolidate Rebecca's conviction of the fairness of Jero and prophetic mission. Rebecca's termination of each of her two turns with the same vocative corroborates her sheepish kowtows to Jero's inordinate dictate. Part of the markers of collective participation and or joint involvement in the exchange is signaled by Prophet Jero's enactment of collective speech act in the initial clause of his last turn through the use of the personal pronoun 'we' to include himself and his naïve secretary and exclude the other prophets who are his targets.

Sample 4

Prophet Jeroboam has invited the Chief Executive Officer (CEO I) of the Tourist Board of the City Council to a negotiation meeting so that the Council's confidential file got through the conversion of the Confidential Secretary to the Chief Eviction Officer (CEO II) can be returned on certain conditions. The CEO I has been warned not to come with any security officer so as to keep the deal secret. This sample is extracted from their interaction.

Executive: *What do you want?*

Just say what you want.

Jero: *Monopoly is the subject of your file No I.B.P. stroke 537 stroke 72a beauty parlors... parking facilities- for the new National Amphitheatres to be built on the Bar Beach. Mr. Executive Officer, the list is endless, but what is of interest to the good Lord whose interest I represent is the method of awarding these superabundant contracts*

Executive: *No need to talk so loud. (Looks round nervously) Just say what you want.*

Jero: *Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God What is God's.*

Executive: *What does that mean in plain Caesar's language?*

(Jero's *Metamorphosis*: 87-88)

The CEO I is uncomfortable with the nature of the meeting, its timing and the personality of its convener. He expects a snappy discussion. His first turn in this sample includes both a proposition (a question) and a proposal (a command) both directed at Prophet Jeroboam. Jero who is quite aware of this double attack consequently feigns impatience, raises his voice as he reads part of the proceedings in the seized document with him. The CEO I, further embarrassed by Jero's indirection and loud voice, condemns his attitude and reiterates his demand. Both his disapproving comments on the loudness of Jero's voice and the repetition of his proposal are clear indices of an ongoing interaction between two incongruous interlocutors. Prophet Jero talks of 'the method of awarding contracts' instead of the particular 'contract' he wants and 'Caesar's or God's portion' in lieu of his own portion. He thus controls the discourse through this indirection and disregard for the maxims of quantity and relation. Through this, he is further portrayed as tactful.

Jero's employment of specialized language, precisely the religious variety in his last turn is part of the playwright's device of depicting him as a prophet. His reference to the Bible shows an acclaimed spiritual perception and this is intended to condemn the council's planned mundane antagonism and demand the prophets' rights, the God's due. The Executive understands Jero's taxonomy and can identify his own apportioned part of the divide when he asks for the plain Caesar's meaning of Jero's coded message. The CEO I is characterized through this interaction as a typical civil servant whose duty is to take orders from the officer above him and give orders to the officers below him. This is clear from the bulk of order and question in his speech. The CEO 1's comment - *No need to talk so loud*- on his co- interactant's manner of talk, repetition, *What do you want? Just say what you want* and borrowings of the lexical item - *Caesar*- just used by Jero are parts of the hallmarks of interaction in this excerpt.

Sample 5

Miseyi, the would-be wife to Chief Kingboli's son comes to do some shopping in an opulent shopping plaza and runs across her old friend and school mate, Sanda, who unknown to her is the security guard to the plaza. Shocked by Sanda's outfit, she tries to interpret the situation.

Miseyi: Sanda, *ple-e-ease*,
explain this joke. You saw me coming,
didn't you?

You came shopping just like me and
then saw me from a distance. You
borrowed the cap and jacket...

Sanda: And *the trousers? I*
changed from whatever I was
wearing into this outfit just to tease
an old friend?

(The Beatification of Area Boy: 47)

The excerpted conversation begins with a proposal, a demand for explanation, initiated with a vocative with which Miseyi enacts Sanda's attention and participation. Miseyi is passionate as her articulation of 'please' testifies. The phenomenon of drawling is a tonal signal of invitation to participate in discourse (Oguche, 2003). Here it is also informed by the rude shock. Miseyi's next clause, 'You saw me coming', is a proposition that demands confirmation as the mood tag, *didn't you?* attached to it is non-assertive. Through these devices Sanda is given no option other than to react verbally. Action and reaction in succession form the basis of a play. Sanda's subsequent interruption is justifiable in this connection.

A question ordinarily prospects an answer in response. However, part of the complexity of human discourse is a deviation from the question-answer order. 'In moving into the role of speaker, the listener has considerable discretion' (Halliday, 2004:109). Sanda's response is discretionary on the basis that Miseyi would not be satisfied with a simple polar answer. Sanda's question in response to Miseyi's is a logical way of demystifying the cause of her worry and letting her see and accept the reality of Sanda's life. The author, through the interactive strategies, contrasts the high emotion of Miseyi with Sanda's calmness.

Sample 6

The Military Officer has ordered his ADC to torture one of the Area Boys, Judge, whom he takes to be a practicing judge from the way he dresses for touching his uniform and the ADC is back to give his report.

Military Officer: *Don't tell me*
you're done with him

already.

ADC: *The others*
are taking care of him sir.

Military Officer: *I said you were*
to take personal charge.

ADC: *I did sir. And I*
left them very specific instructions sir.
I made sure he was bundled into the
boot before I left (Displays car keys) I
secured the boot myself.

Military Officer: *You locked him*
in the boot, then what?

ADC: *I thought we*
would take him to the nearest police
station, sir.

Military
Officer: *On what*
charge?

ADC: *Interference I*
thought you said, sir. Interfering with
your er... your control of evacuees.

(The Beatification of Area Boy: 77)

The Military Officer either gives orders or asks leading questions while his ADC tries hard to give convincing explanation as their various turns show. The Military Officer is dissatisfied with the quick return of his ADC and concludes that the latter has not carried out the given instruction to the letter. This informs his series of questions. The role relationship between them is signaled not only by the question-statement structure of the interaction but also by the employment of the formal vocative – *sir*, consistently by the junior officer, ADC. The negative polarity, *not*, in the Finite that begins the Military Officer's first clause, *Don't tell me*, is restrictive. The clause issues a command presupposing a threat. These together with ADC's frequent resort to modality, *I thought*, are contrastive signals of the superior/inferior officer status distinction that characterizes the overall exchange.

The two characters are portrayed differently by the features of interaction they employ. The Military Officer is characterized as bossy and impatient through his choice of imperative and interrogative mood types and negative polarity, while his ADC is portrayed as polite and cautious by his constantly hedged propositions in spite of his sound epistemic warrant. The intervening clause, 'I thought', in the ADC's last turn is an instance. He is not engaged in any mental exercise and he is quoting his boss correctly. The brief silence within the turn is not due to forgetfulness or inarticulateness but to let him reframe his boss' charge against the accused in a

way that will not court him further trouble. The exchange presents an interaction replete with attack and defense. While the attacker employs the personal pronoun *I* only once, the defender exploits its commissive and defensive tendency eight times. The unequal power relation between the two characters represents the playwright apt contextualization of the discourse as military.

4. Summary and Conclusion

The various samples examined reveal the playwright's process of creating, initiating and sustaining interactions that form the plays. The process of the discourse production also reveals characters' creation and portrayal. Characters in the excerpts take turns to talk but there are cases of interruptions occasioned by either the mood choice made by certain characters or their attitudes as communicated through the mood. Hesitancy and modality are also identified as discourse strategies that enable characters mitigate the potential face threat in their mood choices and consequently indexicalize certain aspects of their character traits such as politeness, calmness, tact and finesse. The analysis also reveals the two canonical acts, giving and demanding, that underlie interactions in the plays. Through these, each play is wrought as a real dialogic mode. The implication of the characters' participation in these acts is that they are all portrayed as social personages and, therefore, acceptable to the readers. This justifies Cockelreas and Logan's (1971:87) view that characterization involves 'the artist's creation of imaginary persons who seem so credible that we accept them as real'. It is through this collective participation that the power relations between characters are signaled. Equality for instance, is shown between Jero and Amope through their constant intrusion on each other's speech, whereas dominance is obvious in the case of ADC and his boss; Military Officer especially in the later's choice of imperative and minor interrogative clauses. The ADC neither intrudes on his boss' speech nor opts for an interrogative mood to let his boss put his argument in clear perspective like Sanda does in his interaction with Miseyi.

Repetition is another common feature of interaction in the plays under analysis. In sample 2, Amope in her final turn repeats part of Jero's initial speech. In sample 4 the CEO repeats Jero's word, 'Caesar', and in the last sample, Military Officer paraphrases his ADC's utterance, 'I made sure he was bundled into the boot'. This interactive device

partly performs a similar function with backchannels - that of indicating attention (See Traum, 1994). More specifically, repetition in the case of Amope and the CEO depicts repartee, witticism and create humor that energizes the reader while the Military Officer employs it to register indignation and condemn perceived ineptitude. In all samples, interaction is coherently enabled through characters' attention to each other. By endowing the characters with the ability to employ options from the mood system to perform varied speech functions and use other discourse strategies, the playwright has made each of the plays interactive and fascinating.

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