

LANGUAGE IN OKWE AGBAALA

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Abstract

Language is the key to communication, and whenever we talk about Literature, we think about language. Language does not stand in isolation. In a dramatic work, language is used to fulfill a wide range of communicative, interactive, social, cultural and qualitative education. This study sets out to have a look at how the playwright used language to create aesthetics.

Language is the key to communication, wherever human beings exist, language exists too. Language according to Tranggott and Pratt (1980:1) "is a capacity that distinguishes human beings from their creatures". Knowing a language therefore means knowing how to use them.

Nwadike (1979) according to Maduikwe (2008:150) saw language as the key to the heart of people. It means that all utterances can be thought of as goal-directed actions. It is the key to the people's mind. Fiske and Hartley (1978:17) see language "as that means by which man enters into society to produce reality". Every society has its language as an aspect of their cultural heritage. Without language, culture and education would be impossible because, it is through language that communication comes together to promote meaningful existence, as well as educational goals. When language is used, it is always used in context. What is said and how it is said is always in part, determined by a variety of contextual factors. These factors might be social, economic, educational, etc.

One factor remains valid here, that language is the medium of expression used

formally in a speech situation. It is also the identity of the participant in communication, the regional, social, ethnic and educational backgrounds of the speakers and hearers alike. In all, utterances are to some degree determined by the speakers and listeners.

Language therefore is used in different purposes. It helps us to communicate our ideas to other people. Language is an instrument of social interaction. It is used to maintain a relationship. It helps in qualitative education. In "all", language is used to control reality. It is used to evoke emotion.

Lethbradge and Mildrof (2004:122) were of the opinion that dramatic language is always "made up". That is, it is the author's creation. The understanding of dramatic text depends on the ability of the playwright to create good language. Language can of course assume all pragmatic functions that can be found in real-life conversation. This is to ensure mutual understanding and to convey information, to persuade or influence the reader or the audience to relate one's experience or signal emotion. Lethbridge and Moldrof (2004) were also of the opinion that dramatic language is often rhetorical and poetic, in that it uses language in ways which differ from standard usage in order to draw attention. Eghagha (2001:108) opined that: "Language in drama has a drama of its own, that of imaging into the consciousness of the reader or the character in a bald and deficit manner". Eghagha (2001) made us to understand that characters achieve a life of their own through a conscious selection of words and sentences, words or sentences that create effect or emotion on the audience.

In drama, people are always communicating with one another in various ways designed by different circumstance. It is from these interactions that we set to know what one character thinks of another as well as the reason for certain actions of certain characters.

Language in a dramatic work does not stand in isolation. In the dramatic work under study, the languages are used to fulfil a wide range of communicative, interactive and social functions. In the dramatic text, the playwright uses dialects, slangs, proverbs, idioms, figurative languages as well as loan words. These are used to create aesthetics. The languages used are examined.

Language in Okwe Agbaala

Okwe Agbaala is one of the Igbo drama books written by Prof. Innocent Uzoma Nwadike. Prof. I. U. Nwadike is a University lecturer. His impression about men and society are communicated in Igbo language. He has expressed his feelings in different genres of literature – prose, poetry and drama respectively. *Okwe Agbaala* is the collection of the writers knowledge about where he works.

The main issue in *Okwe Agbaala* is to bring out the picture of possibilities and realities of life. Thus, the drama can be seen as a translation of reality into fiction. It could be called a realistic drama. This does not imply that the drama is a true story of any particular person, group of persons or higher institution. It is rather the writer's impression of possibilities in our higher institutions today. What expo (examination malpractice) can cause among students and lecturers. *Okwe Agbaala* took place in a fictionalized University (Obinaozara) environment. In the drama, the playwright manipulates language to bring out the possibilities in our University environment today. This drama can be seen as an account of what happened and happens in a typical Nigerian

University. The playwright gives a picture of the rate of examination malpractices and their outcome. The playwright of *Okwe Agbaala* used language to bring out some of the ills in our higher institutions today. It is important to note at this point that this study will take into the language used-dialects, loan words, figures of speech, proverb, and idioms, slangs, etc. How these languages are used to create aesthetics.

Dialectism

Dialects in the words of Udeze (2004:56) are a variety of languages which are shared by a group of speakers. Dialects have to do with the speakers' social and geographical origin. Creativity in the use of dialects depends on the artist.

In *Okwe Agbaala*, the playwright did not limit himself to the standard Igbo all through. He complements his use of standard Igbo with the use of dialectal word. This is done for aesthetic purpose. These dialectal words could be seen on pages 5, 9, and 30 etc. of the text under study. Kata ozo (pg.5) (talk about another thing) ...Kwu feriri puo ebe a (pg. 9) (...stop being noisy) ...nta m hukwara gi ka okokoro... (pg. 9) (...I will still see you in a bachelor...) o sin a laibrari aputage... (pg. 30) (He is coming out from the library...).

Proverb and Idiom

Emenanjo (1981:75) saw proverb as "the oil the Igbo use to eat their words". In other words, proverbs are what the Igbo use to embellish their words. Again, it helps to make a speech pleasant to the ears.

Indeed, it is in proverb that culture, knowledge and life of a people are revealed. This is because proverb is a short way of expressing deep ideas/thoughts. Based on this, Igboanusi (2004:182) quoting Chukwuma (1994) described proverb as: "A part of a living speech tradition, a heightened and compressed form of language based on metaphor of daily living and

experience". What it means is that proverb reveals a lot about the society, but in a compressed form.

These explanations show how important proverb is in our daily life. A proverb is associated with intelligence. An intelligent speaker or writer polishes his speech or write-up with proverb, proverb gives weight to a speech or writer-up, among all, it heightens speech.

Idioms: Like proverb, idioms add a lot of literary beauty to language. It is an expression often used in order to give force, life and elegance to a piece of writing speech. It does not conform to the rule of grammar. It usually creates a meaning different from the surface meaning of a statement.

The presence or application of these in a work or speech makes a writer or a speaker a master of his language. However, the correct use of language dressed with idiomatic expression, has made Nwadike a good writer of Igbo drama. In fact, the creation and use of idioms mixed with slangs and coined words have made him to meet with other prolific Igbo writers like: Onyekaonwu, Ckwuezi, Ubesie, etc. His style is impressive in the sense that the reader can conveniently have a change of mood in his use of language. Nwadike uses proverb to usher in his ideas. The playwright uses proverb to give the summary of the story in the text. Again, the playwright uses proverb to let people know that they should not misuse their opportunity because they do not know where they will find themselves tomorrow. This is seen when he says: ...onye Ekwoatakwala make na ya nọ n'isi ugbo bido kwọwa amara aghara aghara maka na o dighi Onye maara onye mmiri ga-eri (pg. 2). (...let not one feel that he is the captain of a boat and therefore he can paddle recklessly since no one knows who gets drowned in the event of a boat mishap...).

Nwadike also uses proverbs to depict the kind of character seen in one of the characters in the text exhibits and what will be the outcome. Instead of going straight to the point, he says: ...ihe uto na-emekata luwe ilu chetakwa na mkpuruosisi na-atọ nwa nnunu uto na-agbawa ya eko... (pg. 2). (...something that is sweet sometimes becomes bitter remember that the fruit that is sweet to the bird is the one that bursts its storage organ...). (...Mmadu o ga-enwe nkwa na-akwa aka n'obi? Nku o ga-adoro uguru ana atu? Egbugbereonu o ga-anọ mmiri ana-ama eze?... (pg. 9) (...will one have drum and be beating the chest? Will there be firewood and people will be feeling cold? Will rain be beating he teeth when the lips are there?...) Aga m egosi ya na m ji ji Jide mma. Onye m wanyere o rie... (pg. 29) (...I will show him that I hold the yam as well as the knife whoever I give will take...) ...Onye si na ihe ojoo di ya mma, ya koo ji, ka o rutere ya ede... (pg. 45). ...whoever says that he likes evil let him plant yam and harvest cocoyam...), etc.

These devices could be used in a literary language to bring in comic relief to the readers of the serious message contained in a literary text. The use of devices also brings the story close to reality.

Idiomatic Expression

These are effective use of idiomatic expressions. In *Okwe Agbaala*, the playwright uses some idioms to embellish his work. Example: ...Obi gi o budu nkume?... (pg. 22) (...are you hard hearted?...) ...Achiputakwala m ukwu n'ama... (pg. 23) (...Don't implicate me...) ...Leenu otu ura mere anya leenu otu alaka na Ngalaba omenala na Ewumewu siri mechuo mahadum a na-ekpupuru okpu, ihu (pg. 49) (...what a disgrace, department of culture and institution has disgraced our respectable school...) ...aga m eburu uzo? Kperekwa azu?... (pg. 51) (...I cannot be everywhere?...) Nwadike uses idiom to create aesthetics.

Anecdotes

Nwadike (2003:4) defines anecdotes as: "A short story that is interesting or amusing that is brought into a speech so as to make the speech sweet" (translated from Igbo version). He also explains that there is always a deep thought in this type of story. Before anecdote is used, something must have happened. Human beings, animals, trees and other things are characters in anecdotes but spirit does not come in as it is found in folktales.

In *Okwe Agbaala*, the playwright effectively uses anecdotes. It is evident in most of the pages in the text.

...Nkita si mgbe o bula ya na-eri nsị onye akpokwarala ya ihe ojojọ aha... (pg. 5)

(...Dog said whenever he is eating excreta nobody should mention a bad thing...)

...Aturu si na ya amaghi egwu agba ma a kuru ya rute n'ama nna ya, ma ya amaghi ihe ya ga-eme, ya awuwa ya awuwu... (pg.45-46)

(...sheep said, it does not know how to follow the beat of a music but when it gets to its father's house even though it does not know how to dance, it will move its body by jumping...)

The playwright uses anecdotes, apart from making the text interesting to the readers, it evokes emotion of joy on the reader or audience.

Metaphor

This is the application of a name or descriptive term or phrase to an action to which it is imaginatively but not literally applicable. The playwright uses metaphor effectively. This is seen in the following pages of the text: ... Umunwaanyi bu azu... (pg. 30) (...woman are fish...)

The playwright uses fish to describe women and their action that is another person can still keep them as friend.

Personification

This is a special type of metaphor that entails giving human character to inanimate object or abstract ideas. The playwright, while trying to explain what happens in our higher institutions today, personified his word: ...O so gi mewe mkpotu, oge ga na-aga njem ya... (pg. 40) (...if you like keep making noise time will be making its travel...). Ordinarily, time does not travel but it is used to add beauty to the work. Egwu ji m aka... (pg. 27) (fear is holding me...) fear is seen in this context as a human being.

Simile

Simile is a figure of speech involving the comparison of one thing with another of a different kind. This is evident in the dramatic work. Simile is used in this text to embrace emotion of joy thus: ...Egede esirila ka ite siri n'okụ... (pg. 45) (...the whole thing is like a pot that is on fire...).

Rhetorical Questions

The purpose of using rhetorical question is to conjure up the feeling of the audience (Uzochukwu 2001:103). It is used to strike emphasis. Rhetorical questions do not anticipate answers from anybody.

There are instances of rhetorical questions used to achieve aesthetic effect in *Okwe Agbaala* thus:

*...Unu si na m ga-esi anaa agu
omenaala na ewumuwu
nke a?... Ajuju ntaramaakpu Dkt
Emezina na-aju?
...ole onu m ga-eji a koro mmadu ma
o buru na m daa
kos a?... Chineke o ga-eji ugbo elu
ebubata ya n'uwa...(pg. 18-19)*

(How do you people say I am going to read this culture and institution?... This difficult question Dr. Emezina asks?... How am I going to use to tell people if I fail this course... Is God going to use plane to bring it to the world?

Colloquial Speech

Characters in *Okwe Agbaala* make use of elision to achieve economy of words. This is evident in: ... Ọọ okwu DKT ogbu-oge (pg. 5) (... Is it Dr. Ogbu-oge's word...) ... Ọọ gini (pg. 21) (... what is it...) ... Ọọ ihe ị na – ele?... (pg. 25) (... is that what you are looking at?...).

Slang

Slang according to Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary (1977) is: “Jargon of any class, profession or set: colloquial language with words and usages not accepted for dignified uses”. The playwright of *Okwe Agbaala* uses slang to depict the setting of his work. That is, it is used to depict the nature of the character and setting in the play.

Slang seen in the work are as follows:

S/N	Slang	Meaning	Page
1.	Akada biskit	Kola	7
2.	Maazi Ura atu mbe	Kola	7
3.	Akada	Student	7
4.	Abuba ugo	Certificate	8

The playwright who picked the title of his work *Okwe Agbaala*, from a popular slang among students does not write all through with slang. What is rather seen is that slang are used in the description of the setting and the characters. One good thing about Nwadike's *Okwe Agbaala* is that the major characters make appropriate use of slang so as to depict the title which he picked from the slang.

Loan Words

Nwadike used loan words to portray the nature of some characters, and also to show the extent of influence English Language has on Igbo language. Some of these loan words are:

S/N	Loan Words	Meaning	Page
1.	Iko	Economy	3
2.	Fuchọ Prof	Future Professor	4
3.	Sekond klas opa	Second class upper	4
4.	Festi klas	First class	4
5.	Dọkita	Doctor	5
6.	Kredit	Credit	8
7.	Meriti	Merit	8
8.	Toozdee	Thursday	9
9.	Boodu	Board	10
10.	Broda	Brother	10
11.	Kopi nootu	Copy note	10
	etc.		

Conclusion

The study has demonstrated the playwright's ability to use language as his artistic weapon in drama, to air his views, ideas, thought and feelings about man, society and our Universities today. The ills man lives are raised through the language in *Okwe Agbaala*. Also, the moral decadents are seen in our Universities are also portrayed.

Nwadike as a playwright has the ability to visualize, recognize and represent the ills of our contemporary society with particular reference to our higher institutions through language. Using the language as it affects the setting made the work an interesting one.

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