

A Pragmatic Analysis of Nigerianisms in the English Usage in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*

by

Moses Adebayo Aremu

aremu207@yahoo.com.uk, aremumoses79@yahoo.com

Moses Adebayo Aremu is a M.Phil/Ph.D. student in the Department of English, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. He has published in *Ife Journal of English Language*, *Ife Journal of Humanities and Social Studies*, *Journal of Nigeria English Studies Association*, *Papers in English Language and Linguistics*, and other scholarly journals. He teaches English as second language in the Department of English at Emmanuel Alayande College of Education in Oyo, Nigeria.

Abstract

Earlier studies on Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* (DKH) have been focused on the stylistic (Adejare 1995), literary (Dasylva, 2004), and pragmatic (Odebode, 2002), Aremu, 2008) analyses of this historical and ritual drama. Apart from the foregoing, very scanty research exists on the pragmatic analysis of Nigerianisms in the English language usage in the play. In the present study, Mey's (2001). "Pragmeme" was employed in examining the English usage in the text. According to Mey (2001), 'pragmatic act' deals with situating our speech acts in a context especially when analyzing people's conversation. "Pragmatic acts" are situation – derived and situation – constrained. They are determined by the broader social context in which they happen, and they realize their goals in the conditions placed upon human action by that context. "Pragmeme, that is "generalized, "pragmatic act," is apt in analyzing the language use in drama like that of "DKH" since when we co-opt, influence others, and set up people through language we perform "pragmatic acts" (Mey, 2001). Forty (40) utterances in 'DKH' were purposively selected for the study, while the simple percentage statistical approach was utilized to analyze Nigerianisms in English usage in the text. Our findings revealed that Nigerianisms in the play are employed in the contexts of language transfer, lexical borrowing, proverbs metaphors, pidgin, symbolism, reference; inference, shared situational knowledge (SSK) and shared cultural knowledge (SCK). Besides, participants in the play employed the different contextual backgrounds to 'pract' condemning, warning, exhorting, delaying and educating.

Key words: "Pract", "Pragmeme", "Nigerianisms", Pragmatic acts".

Introduction

The English language is the most widely spoken language in the world. It is a language used in about 673 countries globally, (Graddol, 1997, cited from Akere, 2009). In Nigerian social and cultural contexts, English has become a language employed in different domains of usage such as education, politics, religion, administration, foreign diplomacy, commerce, science and technology. According to Kachru (1985), users of English around the world can be classified into “norm-producing” inner circle which made up of native speakers of the language; “norm developing” outer circle, made up of second language users of English; and the “norm dependent” expanding circle comprising speakers of English as a foreign language. Since English has come in contact with people of different social and cultural backgrounds, new “hybrids” or variants of the language has ‘sprouted’; such as American, British, Canadian and Nigerian Englishes. Different tongues of the language are employed in countries like South-Africa, Ghana, Kenya, Egypt, Lesotho, Nigeria, Cuba, Philippines, Tanzania, Malaysia, Pakistan, Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Gambia etc. Also, the contact of the English language with numerous mother tongues in Nigeria has led to the phonological, syntactic and lexico-semantic variations of the language in the country.

As a result, several linguistic studies have been carried out on the lexico-semantic as well as the phonological variations of Nigerian English (NE). Among them are Brosnahan (1958), Banjo (1971, 1995), Bamgbose (1983), Adesanoye (1973), Jubril (1982), Odumuh (1984, 1987), Adegbija (1989, 1998), Udofot (1977, 2003), Kujore (1985), Jowitt (1991), and Bamiro (1994). According to Brosnahan (1958), variation of Nigerian English can be distinguished through the degree of deviation which the variety has from the “exoglossic standard norm.” Brosnahan’s variety 1 of Nigerian English is Nigerian pidgin which is mostly used by non-literate Nigerians. His variety 2 is the English of the primary school leavers. The variety 3 of Nigerian English, according to Brosnahan’s (ibid) is the English language employed by the secondary school leavers, while the variety 4 is the English of the university graduate. According to Banjo (1971), there are four varieties of Nigerian English. Banjo’s (1971) variety 1 of NE is characterized by the wholesale transfer of L₁ to L₂ (English); variety 2 resembles the standard variety (i.e. native speakers’), variety 3 resembles Standard British English (SBE) both in syntax and semantics but different in phonological features; and Banjo’s (1971) variety of NE is identical with the British English in syntax, semantics and lexical features, but it is mutually unacceptable among Nigerians. For a variety of Nigerian English to be accepted as a standard variety in the country, Adegbija (1998) states that such a variety must be internationally intelligible, mutually acceptable among Nigerians and devoid of ethnic or social stigmatization.

In his own view, Odumuh (1984) states that the following are the varieties of Nigerian English: (i) local colour variety, (ii) incipient bilingual variety, and (iii) near native speaker’s variety. Adegbija (1989, 1998), equally examines the characteristics of the lexical and semantic variations of Nigerian English. According to him, lexico-semantics variations of Nigerian English are caused by six factors thus:

(i) Socio-cultural differences between the native speakers and second language users of English in Nigeria; (ii) dynamics of the pragmatics of a multilingual context; (iii) the exigencies of the varied discourse constraints and modes in English and in the indigenous languages; (iv) the pervasive influence of the press; (v) the standardization of idiosyncrasies and errors; and (vi) the predominantly formal medium of the acquisition of English. According to Adegbija (1998), Nigerian English is characterized by analogy, language, transfer, acronyms, semantic shifts and neologisms. Odofot (1997 and 2003) investigates the disposition of Nigerian users of English to stress and rhythm in spoken Nigerian English. Udofot (1997) states that there are three varieties of spoken Nigerian English: (i) “Non-standard”, (ii) “Standard”, and (iii) “sophisticated” varieties which are individually and collectively different from standard British English. Also, Udofot (ibid) discovers that the common features in the spoken English of Nigerians include a tendency to stress more syllables in words than the native speakers.

In Nigerian socio-cultural contexts, the employment of Nigerianisms in the English language looms large. Nigerianisms used in Nigerian English are characterized by lexical borrowing, acronyms, first language interference, proverbs, slang, honorifics (polite tokens) Aremu (2006), code-mixing, code-switching, semantic shift, etc. The resilient nature of English has led to the new hybrids of the language in Nigeria such as “bush-meat” (savory game), “sugar daddy” (an old man who flirts a teenager). “Carry-over” (academic failure), the king climbed the ceiling (the king died), etc. It is noteworthy to state here that Nigerianisms like: (i) “the old man joined the ancestors” (the old man died) or (ii) “He is a man of timber and caliber” (an important personality) are a common-place in the text of Nigerian written literature. Nigerian literary writers like Amos Tutuola, Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi, Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisah, Niyi Osundare, Chimamanda Adichie, Kole Omotosho, Flora Nwapa, Olu Obaremi, Zainab Alikali, Ahmed Yerima, etc. always employ Nigerianisms in their English usage. In this work, the pragmatic concept of “pragmeme” propounded by Mey (2001) was employed in analyzing Nigerianism in the English language usage in Soyinkas’ *Death and the King’s Horseman* (henceforth “DKH”).

Brief Synopsis of the play (DKH)

The play titled “DKH” is an historical and ritual drama. According to Ogunba (cited from Dasyuva, 2004), it is a “Slice of Oyo history”. The play was staged to discuss an historical event about a traditional chief in Oyo called “Elesin Oba” who refused to commit a ritual suicide as tradition demands, during the colonial era, in 1948. Elesin’s ritual-suicide serves as a “life sustaining tank” to the people of Oyo (Dasyuva 2004). The incursion of the colonial masters has not only desecrated the ancestral cults but it has also made the acolytes of traditional religion like Elesin to desert his own people and keep-on foot-dragging in the performance of the necessary traditional rite and ritual suicide after Alafin’s demise. Elesin’s promiscuity, egocentrism and stubbornness make him to neglect Iyaloja and praise-singer’s warning. Despite the constant warning from the women, Iyaloja and Olohun-Iyo, Elesin shirks in performing his traditional obligation for the Oyos.

As a result, Olunde's coming from Europe to replace his father (Elesin) and commit suicide proved abortive since the real Elesin has shirked in his responsibility as people's "life sustaining tank." On learning about the death of Olunde his son, Elesin strangled himself in the police custody where he was kept by Mr. Pilkings. In short, the play has the thematic preoccupations like: (i) culture conflict (ii) condemnation of the effects of colonialism on African tradition, (iii) ancestral worship, (iv) fate or destiny and (v) the condemnation of the hubris in Elesin's nature such as "pride", and "geocentricism".

Theoretical Perspectives

The linguistic concept of Mey's (2001) "pragmeme" refers to generalized "pragmatic acts." The concept of pragmatic act was first introduced by Gu (1993) before it was developed in full-blown by Mey (2001) to serve as a replacement to Austin's (1962) speech act which, according to Mey (2001), "lacks a theory of action", and is "non-situated". In condemning the concept of speech act, Mey (2001: 214) states thus:

"Human activity is not the prerogative of individual setting goal and devising strategies, or charting out courses of action like a ship captain, a platonic rider on her or his beast of burden. Rather, the individual is situated in a social context, which means that she or he is empowered, as well as limited by the condition of her or his life."

Mey (ibid) also states that pragmatic acts can be considered as "adapting oneself linguistically and otherwise to ones' world." In pragmatic acts, there is always an "agent" and an "act." The identified variables like the age of an individual, his or her social class, gender, education, previous life history etc, are termed "individual agents" or "member resources" (MR). That is, the resources that people dispose of as members of the community with regards to communication. These, according to Fairclough (1998:14), are often referred to as "background knowledge." While speech acts, when used in the contexts are pragmatic acts, pragmatic acts need not be speech acts (Mey, 2001:216).

As a result, pragmatic acts deal with situating our speech acts in a context, especially when analyzing people's conversation. According to Mey (Ibid) no conversation can be properly understood unless it is situated within the environment in which it is meant to be understood. In Odebunmi's (2006) view, pragmatic act is performed when we communicate implicitly. In his article titled: "The impasse of perlocution", Gu (1993) also condemns total reliance on speech act thus: "perlocution is not a single act performed by a speaker; nor is its effects being caused by an utterance. It involves (rhetorical) transaction involving speaker and hearer(s) as well as other agents or factors". Although, pragmatic acts have some similarities with indirect speech acts, they are different and are in sharp contrast to speech acts.

Pragmatic acts incorporate the notion of “common scene”. For speech acts to be effective they must be situated. That is, they must rely on, and actively create situation in which they are realized. “There are no speech acts; but only situated speech acts or “instantiated pragmatic acts”, (Mey, 2001:218). Pragmatic acts involve “adapting oneself to context as well as adapting context to oneself” (Mey, 2001). This is the reason why the pragmatic acts, when suitably utilized, can be properly employed in analyzing the language of a drama like that of the Nigerianisms in the English usage in Soyinka’s “DKH”.

According to Mey (2001:223), “there is only one force in any act of uttering, whether illocutionary or perlocutionary, and it is pragmatic. The force of the pragmeme”. Kurson (1998:28) in his analysis the pragmeme of “incitement” states that:

The theory of pragmatic acting does not... explain language from inside-out that is from words having their origin in a sovereign speaker, and going out to an equally sovereign hearer. Rather, its explanatory movement is from outside in focus is on the environment in which participants find their affordances; such that the entire situation is brought to bear on what can be said in the situation, as well as what is actually being said.”

Mey (2001) further explains that pragmatic acts “engage the whole individual in communication, (and) not just his or her contribution”. According to Mey (ibid), pragmatic acts are also essential in establishing and maintaining the meta-communicative framework for communication. In studying “instantiated pragmatic acts” pract or “practs”, we are not concerned with matters of grammatical correctness or the strict observance to rules (Mey 2001:221). What connotes as “practs” is determined by the understanding that participants have engaged in communicative utterances in a particular situation and the effects that “practs” have or may have, in a given context. Pragmeme always have two parts: (i) activity part and (ii) the textual part. The activity part can be referred to as “interactant part”, while the textual part can also be called “the context” of the discourse. This has been explained in the following chart by Mey (2001).

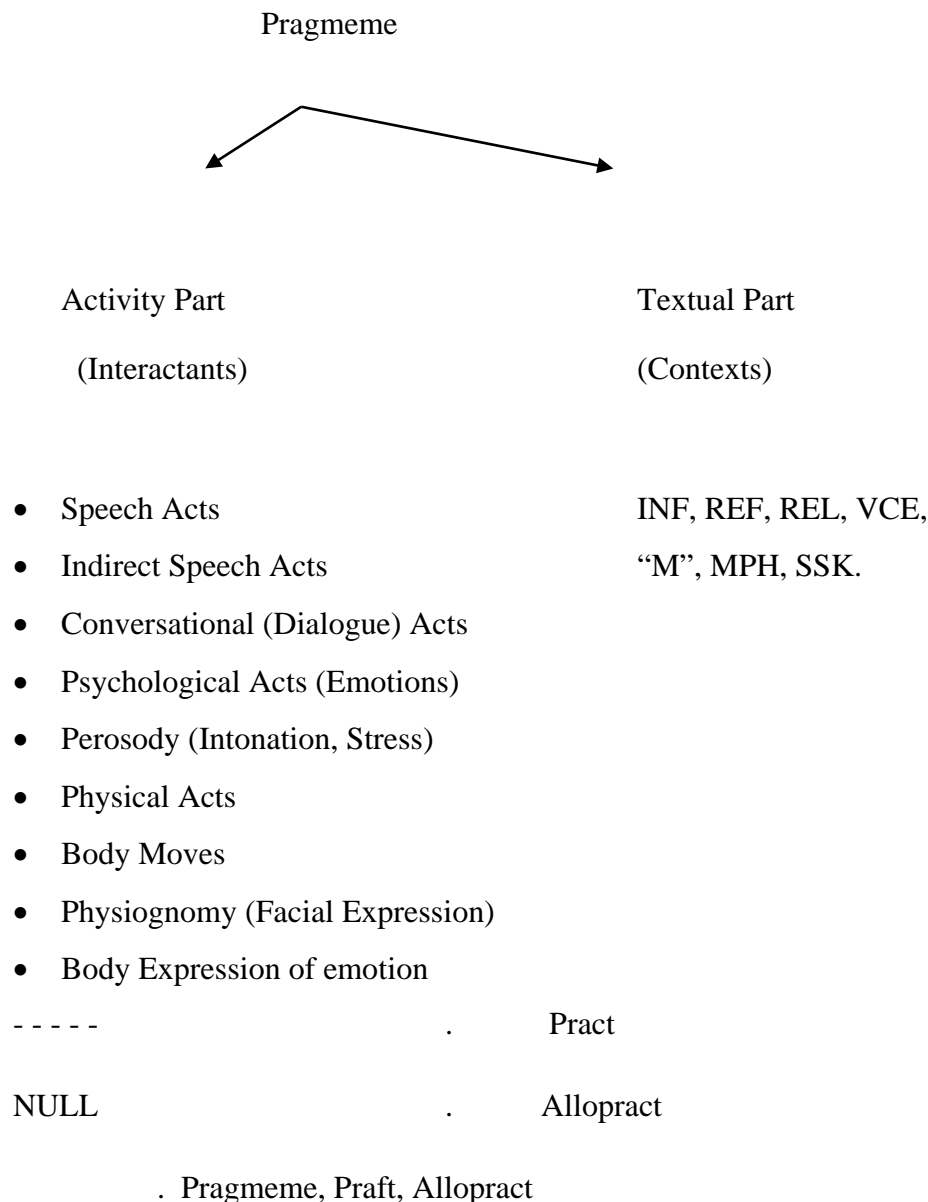


Fig 1: Mey’s (2001) Model of Pragmeme

The pragmeme in the above chart has the (i) activity part and (ii) textual part. The central in the concept of “pragmatic act” is the pragmeme (that is the generalized pragmatic acts). A pragmeme can be instantiated through the individual pragmatic acts (Mey 2001:222). This is what Jacob Mey termed “practs”. An “allopract” or “pract”, according to Mey (2001:221) is “a concrete an different realization of a particular pragmeme.” The activity part of a pragmeme shows the options that are available to participants (interlocutors) in a text include the speech acts, indirect speech acts, dialogue or conversational acts, psychological acts, prosody, physical acts, body moves, facial expressions or physiognomy, and body expressions.

Also, the textual part of a pragmeme contains the “contextual features that influence communication” (Odebunmi, 2006) such as INF, REF, REL, VCE, SSK, MPH and MN. “INF” stands for “inference”, “REL, represents “relevance”; VCE” stands for “Voice”, “MPH” for Metaphor”; “REF” stands for “Reference”, “SSK” for Shared situational Knowledge”: while “M” stands for “Meta-pragmatic joker”. Both the interactant part and contexts (or MCB) in which they operate are essential for our understanding of “pragmeme.”

Some scholars have employed concept of “pragmeme” in analyzing discourse. Examples are Gu (1993), Hanks (1996), Kurzon (1997, 1998), Gill, et al (2000), Mey (2001) and Odebunmi (2006, 2008). Hanks (1996) explains the pragmatic acts in the language form and communicative practices, Kurzon (1997) examines the pragmatic acts in the “discourse of silence”, Kurzon (1998) studies the pragmatic acts in the” speech acts of incitement”, while Gill et al (2000) explain the pragmatic acts and body movement in dialogue. Odebunmi (2006) studies the pragmatic acts in Ahmed Yerima’s three plays: *Yemoja*, *Attairu* and *Dry leaves on Ukan Trees*; while Odebunmi (2008) examines the pragmatic functions in crises-motivated proverbs in Ola Rotimi’s *The gods Are Not To Blame*. The present study was employed to carry out a pragmatic analysis of Nigerianisms in the English usage in Soyinka’s “DKH” by employing modified Model of Mey’s (2001) pragmeme. Hence the following is our modified model of Mey’s “Pragmeme.”

A Modified Model of Pragmatic Acts For Nigerianisms In Nigerian English

Usage

The present analysis of Nigerianisms” in the English usage in Soyinka’s DKH” was based on the characteristic features identified in the following modified model of pragmatic acts:

Nigerianisms in “DKH”

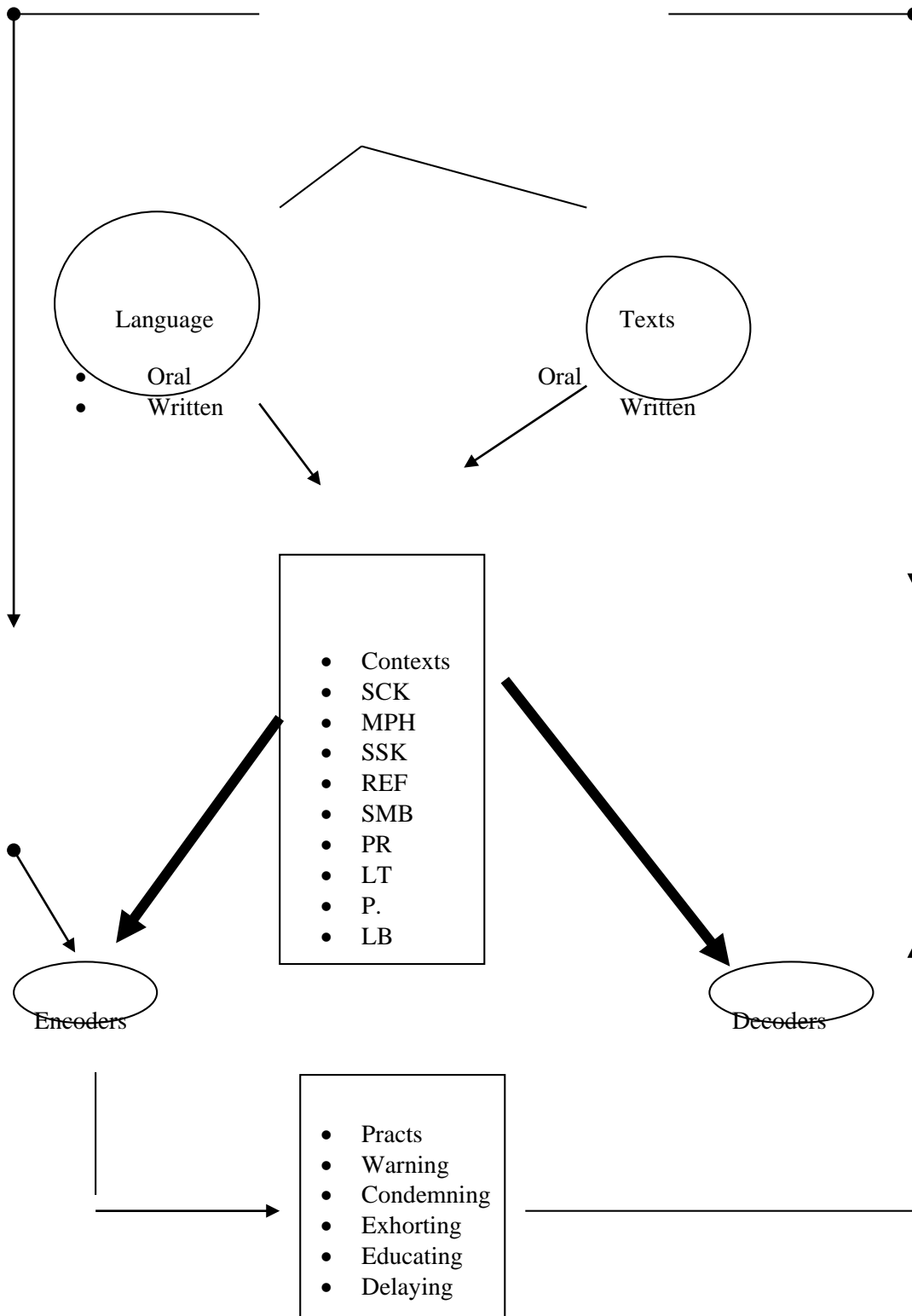


Fig 2: Modified Model of pragmatic acts for Nigerianisms in Soyinka’s “DKH”

The above model is a modification of Mey's (2001) pragmatic acts shown in figure 1, and contains features of Nigerianisms already mentioned. The REF (reference), MPH (metaphor) and SSK are (Shared situation knowledge), borrowed from Mey (2001), while SCK (shared cultural knowledge), PR (Proverbs) SMB (symbolisms), LT (Language transfer), P (Pidgin) and LB (Lexical borrowing) are operationally added given the attachment of Nigerianisms in Nigerian English usage to culture, proverbs, symbol (or iconicity) as well as inference and lexical borrowing from mother tongues. In the new model, it can be identified that the language of Nigerianisms (most especially in a drama like "DKH") is always in an oral form before being written. Hence, the text of Nigerianisms used in "DKH" can be either oral or written since drama is "an action performed on the stage". Also, the language use and the text are understood in the different social and cultural contexts. The social and cultural knowledge of the participants in the text of "DKH" reflects in two ways: (as their shared cultural knowledge (SCK) and as their shared situation knowledge (SSK); (Odebunmi, 2006).

Participants in the texts share a cultural, linguistic, referential, and social knowledge which make the audience to easily understand the "practs" used in the text. The participants in the text of "DKH" reflect in two ways: as their shared cultural knowledge (SCK) and as their shared situation knowledge (SSK); (Odebunmi, 2006). Also, participants in the texts share a cultural, linguistic, referential, and social knowledge which make the audience to easily understand the "practs" in the text. The shared linguistic, social and cultural backgrounds between participants make the audience to understand the PR (proverbs), SMB (symbols) P (pidgin), LB (lexical borrowing), REF (reference) and INF (inference) employed in the text. Hence, participants share the background knowledge in the categories of SCK, MPH, SCK, REF, SYB, P, PR, LT and LB in Nigerianisms employed in the text.

Significance of the Study

Scholars who have carried out research on Nigerian English focused their studies on the lexico-semantic variations of the language (e.g. Brosnahan, 1958: Banjo, 1971; Adesanoye, 1973: Bamgbose, 1982: Odumuh, 1984: Kujore, 1985: Adegbija, 1989), phonological variations in the language (Jubril, 1982: Udofot, 1993, 2003, 2006: Akinjobi 2003, 2004, Jowitt, 1991, etc), sociolinguistic variations in the language (Jubril, 1986, etc), as well as the standardization and codification of the language (Salami, 1968; Adegbija, 1998; Akere, 1982: Banjo, 1995: etc). It has been discovered that scanty works exist on the pragmatic analysis of Nigerianisms in the English usage in Soyinka's "DKH". This is the vacuum which the present study was employed to fill. Besides, this study is also significant in expanding the terrain of research on the variations and usage of Nigerian English as well as extending the work on the use of this new tongue in Nigerian literature.

Research Methodology

The text of Soyinka's "DKH" was read and forty (40) statements which contain the features of Nigerian English as examined by Adesanoye's (1973) and Adegbija (1989 and 1998) were purposively selected for analysis. Stratified random sampling technique was used for the selection. According to Adegbija (1989), Nigerian English is often characterized by code-mixing, language transfer, lexical borrowing, semantic shifts, coinages, acronyms etc. In the view of Kachru (1982), when a language is employed in a new social and cultural context, the new tongues of the language will be hybridized as a result of the contact of the language with new social and cultural contexts.

As a result, we have employed the modified concept of Mey's (2001) "pragmeme" in analyzing Nigerianisms in the English usage in the text. The shared socio-cultural knowledge (SCK), shared situation knowledge (SSK) etc which exists between participants in the text were examined. Also, the simple percentage statistical approach was used in analyzing the contexts / MCBs in which the forty (40) purposively gathered utterances from the text are employed. Besides, Mey's (2001) "Pragmeme" was used in examining the pragmatic functions (or practs) in the randomly selected utterances from the text.

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

From forty (40) randomly selected utterances from "DKH", ten (10) contextual usages of Nigerianisms in English language were examined. These are shared cultural knowledge (SCK), metaphor (MPH), shared social knowledge (SSK), reference (RE), inference (INF), symbolism (SYB), proverb (PR), pidgin (P), language transfer (LT) and lexical borrowing (LB). It has also been examined from the text that each of some utterances in our purposively gathered data were employed in more than one contexts. For instance, the statement uttered by praise-singer to Elesin in page 44 of the text of "DKH".

"Elesin Alafin...; does the voice of gbedu cover you like the passage of the royal elephant?... Are the drums on the other side now knowing skin to skin with ours in Oslugbo".

In the above utterance, participants (Praise-singer and Elesin) have the shared cultural knowledge (SCK) that no citizen of Oyo must go against members of ancestral cult (Oslugbo) to which the praise-singer belongs. The praise-singer was reminding Elesin not to shirk in his duty as people's "life sustaining tank". Also, there is a kind of lexical borrowing (LB) in the text. Words like "gbedu" and "Oslugbo" were borrowed from Yoruba Language and they are understood by participants as a result of shared cultural knowledge between them. As a result of the dual contextual usage of some of the forty (40) selected utterances, fifty –six (56) variables of mutual contextual beliefs (MCBs) were discovered from the text. These are analysed in the following chart:

S/N	Contexts of use of Nigerianisms in “DKH”	Variables	Percentages (%)
1	SCK	09	16.07
2	MPH	08	14.28
3	SSK	02	3.7
4	REF	02	3.7
5	SMB	08	14.28
6	PR	07	12.5
7	LT	08	14.28
8	P	05	8.92
9	LB	05	8.92
10	INF	02	3.57
	TOTAL	56	100%

Fig. 3: contexts of use of Nigerianisms in “DKH”

The following are the forty (40) statements which contained Nigerianisms that were examined in Soyinka’s “DKH”.

Text 1: “Elesin O! Elesin Oba! Howu! What tryst is this cockerel goes ... that it must leave its tail behind” (P. 1).

Text 2: “Oh-oh, you hear that my companion” ...Because the man approaches a new bride he forgets the faithful mother of his children (P.).

Text 3: “When the wind blows from behind that’s when the fowl knows his true friend (P.).

Text 4: “There is only one home to the life of a river-mussel, there is only one home to the life of a tortoise ...there is only one world to the spirit of our race. If that world leaves its course and smashes to boulders whose world will give us shelter. (P.).

Text 5:“When the wind blows from behind, that’s when the fowl knows his true friend (P. 9).

Text 6: In their time, great wars came and went, little wars came and went (P. 10).

Text 7:“A twilight whisper before the great Araba falls? (p. 11).

Text 8:“...When the hour comes watch me dance alone, the narrowing path, glazed by the soles if my great precursors (P. 14).

Text 9:“When friendship summons is when the true comrade goes (P. 14).

Text 10:“I go to keep my friend and master company, who says the month does not believe in 'No, I have chewed all that before?' (P. 14).

Text 11:“The world is not a constant honey pot” (P. 14).

Text 12:“Elesin Oba! I say you’re that man who chanced upon the calabash of honor. You thought it was palm wine and drained its contents... (P. 15).

Text 13:“... When time is short we do not spend it prolonging the riddle ...let us pursue the ailment to the home of remedies” (P. 16).

Text 14:“A fault soon remedied is soon forgotten (P. 16).

Text 15:“... Richly, robe him richly. The cloth of honour is alari, Sanyan is the band of friendship...” (P. 17).

Text 16:“The gourd you bear is not for shirking. The gourd is not for setting down at the forest cross- road or wayside grove.” (P. 18).

Text 17:“And they tell me my eyes were a hawk in perpetual hunger (P. 18).

Text 18: “Who will deny you reputation... bedbug who wages war on the mat and receives the thanks of the vanquished...Oka-roaring from a camouflage-of-leafs before he strikes the victim is already in prone (P. 19).

Text 19:“The leaf-nibbling grub leaves on the leaf, the cola-chewing beetle leaves in the kolanut” (P. 19).

Text 20:“I saw the ivory pebbles of Oya’s river-bed...Not even Ogun with the finest hoe, he ever forged at the anvil could have shaped the rise of the buttock (P. 19).

Text 21:“The sap of the plantain never dries ...let me going be likened to the twilight hour of the plantain” (P. 20).

Text 22:“Only the curses of the departed are to be feared.” (P. 21).

Text 23:“Eating the awusa is not as difficult as drinking water afterwards” (P. 22).

Text 24:“The swallow is never seen to peck holes in the nest when it is time to move with the season? (P. 23).

Text 25:“Mista Pirinkin, I beg you sir, what you think you do with that dress? It belongs to the dead wilt not for human being” (P. 24).

Text 26:“How can man talk against death to person in uniform of death?...please sir, I go and come back (P. 25).

Text 27:“Madam, I arrest the erring-leaders who make trouble but me I no touch egungun. That egungun itself I no touch. And I no abuse am. I arrest the ringleader but I treat egungun with respect. (P. 25).

Text 28:“The king die last month. Tonight is his burial. But, before they can bury him, Elesin must die so as to accompany him to heaven.” (P. 28).

Text 29:“I am tell you woman for the last time to commot my road”... I am order you now to clear the road (P. 34 – 35).

Text 30:“You ignorant man. It is not he who calls himself Elesin Oba, it is his blood that says it.” (P. 35).

Text 31:“Madam Iyaloja, I glad you come. You know me I no like trouble...what kind duty be dat one Iyaloja? (P. 36).

Text 32:“The river is never so high that the eyes of a fish are covered... A child returning home-wards craves no leading by the hand (P. 43).

Text 33:“The elephant deserves better than we say “I have caught glimpse of something”. If we see the tamer of the forest, let us plainly say we have seen an elephant.” (P. 43).

Text 34:“It is the death of war that kills the valiant. Death of water is how the swimmers go... the trade of cutlass blunts its edge” (P. 43).

Text 35:“Elesin Alafin ... does the voice of gbedu cover you then like the passage of royal elephant? ... Are the drums on the other side now tuning skin to skin with our Osugbo? (P. 44).

Text 36:“...How boldly the lizard struts before the pigeon when it was eagle he promised us he would confront” (P. 67).

Text 37:“He is gone at last into the passage, but oh, how late all is. He son will feast on meat and throw him bones. The passage is clogged with droppings from the king’s stallion...” (P. 76).

Text 38:“The dogs demanded only the expired plantain, but you cut down the sap-laden shoot to feed your pride.” (P. 76).

Text 39:“... Let him alone. However sunk he was indebt to pauper’s carrion abandoned on the road (P. 76).

Text 40:“Child, forget the dead, forget even the living. Turn your mind only to the unborn (P. 76).

Contexts of Use of Nigerianisms in Soyinka “DKH”

Participants in the texts of Soyinka’s “DKH” have the shared social, cultural and linguistic contexts in their use of English. According to Crystal (1987:48), context refers to the environment in which communication takes place. In the view of Odebunmi (2006), context is the spine of meaning. The context of any speech can be linguistic, psychological, social, or situational. The linguistic context implies the relationship which exists among words in a given utterance, while the socio-cultural context presupposes how the social and cultural beliefs affect the meaning of an utterance. The different participants in the text of Soyinka’s DKH” employ the English language in distinctive ways which differ from the tongues of the native speakers of the language. Also, participants in the discourse use Nigerianisms which are employed in the contexts of proverbs, lexical borrowing, language transfer, metaphors, symbolisms, pidgin, reference, inference shared cultural knowledge (SCK) and shared situation knowledge. These are discussed below.

Metaphor as a Feature of Nigerianism in DKH

According to Benoit (2002) cited in Yusuf (2004), metaphor refers to “Implicit or indirect comparison”. In metaphor, implicit comparison is made between the animate and inanimate objects. The socio-cultural contexts of use of the English language in Nigeria milieu as well as in Nigerian literature allow the use of metaphor since many of Nigerian mother-tongues which have had a contact with the English language in Nigerian are rich in it. Examples of this abound in the text of Soyinka’s ‘DKH’. For instance, texts 1, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, and 36. In “text 1”, Elesin is referred to as a cockerel who ‘left his tail behind as a result of ceremony (tryst)’. The statement implies that Elesin has neglected his role as the king’s horseman.

Also, in “text 16”, Elesin’s role is described with the metaphor of a “gourd” in which the safety of lives of the Oyos are kept. “The gourd you bear is not for shirking” in the text means that Elesin must not fail in carrying out his duty. In “text 17” Elesin compared himself with a hawk which is hovering to carry the prey. Besides, in “text 28” Elesin is referred to as “bed-bug that wages war on the mat.” Praise – singer employs this utterance to condemn Elesin’s promiscuity. In text 21”, Elesin uses metaphor to explain his lust towards the wife of Iyaloja’s son.

In text 3, participants in the text have the shared social, cultural and linguistic contexts which make them to use metaphoric language among one another. The praise-singer and Iyaloja who belong to the ancestral cults of the Oyos use the “language of the gods” which is often characterized with metaphor and symbolism to warn Elesin against his egocentrism, and stubbornness. In the same vein, Elesin is called “a lizard that struts / boasts to kill an eagle but could only kill a pigeon” in “text 36”. This implies that Elesin is a weakling and not a hero.

Symbolism as a Feature of Nigerianism in ‘DKH’

Nigerian English usage is often characterized with the employment of symbolism since the use of symbol is one of the characteristics of Nigerian mother tongues like Hausa, Fulfulde, Yoruba, Edo, Igbo, Ijaw, Tiv, Gwari, Kanuri, besides others. According to Hornby (2000), symbolism refers to the use of symbols to represent ideas in language or art. Symbol is the third, out of the aspect of semiotics. In the view of Oloruntoba – Oju (1999), semiotics refers to the scientific study of signs. On the other hand, sign has three classifications: ‘icons’, ‘index’, and ‘symbol’ Icons refer to images like picture, photograph, sculpture etc. that give near-identical representation. Indices refer to a fact or idea that signifies by being closely related, conceptually, to the object. Symbols, according to Oloruntoba – Oju (ibid), are those signs whose meanings are controlled by conventions (and norms) in the society. For instance, in the context of Yoruba socio-cultural beliefs, the black colour is a symbol of sadness and sorrow while red color symbolizes danger. Hence, in “DKH”, there are different symbols, icons and indices which are understood by participants in the text as a result of the shared social and cultural beliefs among them. Examples of symbolism employed in the play are in texts 4, 8, 33, 34, 37 and 38. In “text 4” the expressions, “there is only one home to the life of a river-mussel”, and “there is only one home to the life of a tortoise” are symbolically used”. Elesin’s role as the king’s horseman is referred to as a symbolic ‘shell’ that contains peace, security and prosperity of the people of Old Oyo. Hence, in this speech the praise-singer is reminding Elesin not smash the spiritual shell against a boulder. If the ‘shell’ is destroyed, there would be no other one to “give us (Oyos) shelter”. In “text 8”, the “narrowing path” symbolizes a passage to the ancestral world. In “text 33”, the word “elephant” symbolizes a great or powerful person. The word has been symbolically used to refer to Elesin whose spiritual role among the Oyos was very great. In “text 34” the symbols of the ‘valliant’s’ and the “swimmers’ who are destroyed by what they love doing was used to describe Elesin’s lust for women. Iyaloja tells the praise-singer that sexual promiscuity will destroy Elesin.

In 'text 37', the expression "He is gone... into the passage" symbolizes that Elesin is dead". This is an example of Nigerianism in English usage which cannot be easily understood by the native speaker of the language. In "text 38". The "old expired plantain" symbolizes Elesin while the "sap-laden shoot" refers to Olunde who committed ritual suicide instead of Elesin (his father). The employment of symbolism in "DKH" shows that Nigerianisms employed in the play cannot be easily construed by the native speakers of the English Language.

Proverb: A Feature of Nigerianisms in "DKH"

Different scholars have explained the meaning of proverb. Examples are the definition given by Firth (1962:134), Mieder (1994), Taylor (1994), and Benhard (1995). According to Yusuf and Muthangwane (2003:408), "Proverbs are relatively short expressions which are usually associated with wisdom and are used to perform varieties of social functions". Among the Yorubas and in every African community, the employment of proverbs permeates people's discussion. Proverbs are short witty expression which are characterized by and reflect the socio-cultural belief and traditions, in African society. In Soyinka's "DKH", proverb is employed as a feature of Nigerianisms in Nigerian English usage. Examples of such are in texts 2, 5, 9, 11, 13, 23, 24, 32, 34, and 36. In "text 5", the praise-singer tells Elesin not to forget his friends (Oyo people) in the time of need. The statement "when the storm pleases, it directs the giants of the forest", in text 9", implies that "anywhere that a boss pleases, he / she directs his subordinates". In 'text 11', Elesin's states that the world has the feature of joy and sadness. The statement in text 33 is a proverb which is rendered in Nigerian English. The text has the Yoruba translation thus: "Ajanaku kuro ni mo ri nnkan firi. B'a ba r'erin, ka so p'a r'erin". The word "ajanaku" or "elephant" here refers to Elesin. The proverb will be difficult for the native speaker of English to interpret because of Nigerianism and local colorization that characterized its usage. Proverbs are employed in "DKH" by Elesin, Iyaloja and Praise-singer and women since these people are custodians of culture, norms and traditions among the Oyos. The existence of the shared socio-cultural contexts between the participants gives room for the use of proverbs in the text.

Lexical Borrowing in "DKH"

The transfer of mother-tongues into the second language is a common feature of Nigerianisms in Nigerian English usage (Odumuh, 1984; Adegbija, 1989). In Soyinka's drama like Kongi's *Harvest*, *A Dance of the Forest*, *The Strong Breed* among others, the employment of this transfer of L₁ into the English Language is commonplace. In "DKH", the transfer of mother tongue into the English Language abounds. Examples of such are in texts 2, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, and 21. In 'text 2', the statement "Because the man approaches a brand-new bride, he forgets the fateful mother of his children" is characterized by L₁ interference.

The statement has been generated from the Yoruba expression: “Ori ‘yale ko’yawo”. The praise-singer uses the utterance to warn Elesin not to neglect Oyo people because of his lust for ladies. Also, the statement in “text 9” has been generation from the Yoruba expression: “Ibi to wu efufu lele nii darii igbe si. Ibi t’o wu olowo eni nii ran ni lo.”

Other examples are in the following:

Yoruba Language	English Translations
1. <i>“Iku ogun ni pa akinkanju, iku odo Nii p’omuwe,</i>	(1) <i>“It is the death of war that kills the valiant, death of water show the swimmers go.</i>
2. <i>“Ajanaku kuro ni mo ri nnkan firi</i>	(2) <i>“The elephant deserves better than we say “I have caught a glimpse of something...” (Text 33).</i>

In the example above, there has been the transfer of the lexical, syntactic and pragmatic features in L₁ (Yoruba) into English Language. According to Skuttnabkangas, cited in Adegbija (1998), when there is a transfer of the features of L₁ into a second language, like that of English used in Soyinka’s “DKH”, a new tongue of the language which will be difficult to construe by the native speakers will be hybridized.

Pidgin English in Soyinka’s ‘DKH’

‘Nigerian Pidgin’ (NP) is a variety of the English language which came about and a result of the contact of the Portuguese with people in Niger Delta of Nigeria in the 15th/ This ‘broken’ or ‘bastardized’ language is a variety 1 of Nigerian English according to Brosnahan (1938). The language is common among the people of Niger Delta as well a non-literate, semi-literate Nigerians. However, this language is now popular among youths and students in cities like Port Harcourt, Lagos, Benin, Warri, Kaduna, Kano, Abuja and Onitsha. According to Ighokhare (2001), ‘Pidgin’ is the most popular language employed by Nigerians because its usage is devoid of ethnic or social barrier. In Soyinka’s ‘DKH’, semi-literate participants like Amusa and Joseph who are collaborators and employers of labor under the colonial master (Mr. and Mrs. Pilkings) use pidgin English to discuss. Examples are in texts 25, 26, 27 and 31. In texts 26 and 27, Amusa is trying to educate Mr. and Mrs. Pilkings about African culture thus:

- (a) *“How can I talk against death to person in the uniform of death?Please, sir, I go and come back” (Text 26).*
- (b) *“... But me, I not touch egungun...And, I no abuse am...(Text 27)*

In the above statements, Amusa is trying to warn Mr. and Mrs. Pilkings against the desecration of the ancestral cult.

SCK as a Feature of Nigerianisms in “DKH”

The Shared Cultural Knowledge (SCK) which exists between participants affects the English Language usage in the play. In the text, the African cosmological belief in the worlds of the living, the dead and the unborn is a shared cultural knowledge between participants. Elesin is to commit a ritual suicide and serves a scapegoats role to ward off evils from Old Oyo. This is shared cultural knowledge which controls the utterances of Elesin, Iyaloja, praise singer and women in “DKH”. Examples of such are in texts 16, 22, 28, 35, 37, 39 and 40. For instance, In ‘Text 35’, the words ‘gbedu’ and ‘osugbo’ can only be understood by those who have the knowledge of the socio-cultural beliefs among the Yorubas. “Osugbo” refers to the ancestral cult of the Oyo while “gbedu” refers to the traditional, royal and ritual drum of the Yorubas. Also, in “text 40,” the expression “the dead” refers to the ancestors” while “the unborn” refers to the “world of the spirit”. Nigerianisms employed in “DKH” is characterized by the shared socio-cultural beliefs which exist among the participants in the text.

Shared Situation Knowledge (SSK) in “DKH”

The Shared Situational Knowledge (SSK) which exists among participants in the “DKH” is reflected in texts 19, 20 and 39 of the play. In “text 39”, there exists a shared situational knowledge among participants that Elesin has not only betrayed the entire people of Oyo but has also desecrated the ancestral spirit/cult by shirking in his responsibility as a “shell” in which the peace, stability, and prosperity of the people of Oyo is kept. Hence, Iyaloja commands the people to disregard Elesin in the statement “... let him alone... However, sunk he was in debt to pauper’s carrion abandoned on the road. The expression implies that Elesin has died an ignoble death. Hence, Iyaloja states that “His (Elesin’s) son will feast on the flesh and throw him bones’ (P.), since he (Elesin) fails to die the death of honour. The Shared Situational Knowledge (SSK) which exists among participants in “DKH” makes interlocutors to easily Nigerianisms which they use among one another in the text.

Reference and Inference as Features of Nigerianisms in “DKH”

“Reference” according to Hornby (2000), is a statement which a person says or writes that mentions something else. Reference, according to Adegbija (1999) explains the meaning which is external to language unlike ‘sense’ that discusses the meaning that is internal to a language. Inference’ on the other hand implies the act of deducing the meaning from a given utterance. Meaning is always inferred (or negotiated) on the basis of the social, cultural, and linguistic presupposition believed to be in linguistic communication (Babatunde, 1999).

In Soyinka’s DKH both inference’ and ‘reference’ are to be employed in understanding the meanings of each of the utterances in the play. For instance, in text 19, reference is made to Elesin when the praise-singer describes him with a metaphor of “The leaf-nibbling which lives on the leaf and a “colar chewing beetle” which lives in the kolanut. Elesin’s promiscuity is here condemned by the praise-singer. In text 39” reference is made to Elesin who has died an ignoble death. Also, in texts 19 and 20, inference will be made before someone can decode the meanings of utterances made by participants. In deducing or decoding the meaning of each or the utterances in texts 1- 40, the audience needs to understand the socio-cultural and linguistic background of the statement.

Pragmatic Acts in Nigerianism Used in”DKH”

“In Soyinka’s DKH” participants employ different shared contextual background to ‘pract’ warning, condemning, exhorting, educating, commanding, delaying and requesting. For instance, in ‘text 1,’ the praise-singer employs the shared socio-cultural context and metaphor to ‘pract’ warning. Also in texts 4, 16, 22, 24, 32 and 35, the praise-singer employs the socio-cultural situational and linguistic context (in the categories of metaphor and symbolism) to ‘pract’ warning. The pragmatic act of warning was used to change Elesins’ from his egocentricism, promiscuity foot-rugging stance.

Apart from the foregoing, Iyaloja also rides on the symbolic, metaphoric, situational as well as socio-cultural contexts to ‘pract’ condemning in texts 2, 3, 5, 6, 12, 18, 19, 23, 34, 36, 37, 38 and 39. For instance, in text 36 Iyaloja says: “How boldly the lizard struts before pigeon when it was eagle... he promised he would confront”. In this utterance, Iyaloja has employed the metaphoric, as well as socio-cultural contexts to ‘pract’ condemning. Also, in “text 37” Iyaloja says this against Elesin” “He is gone to the passage, but oh! How late all is. His son will feast on the meat and throw him bones...” in this utterance, Iyaloja has employed the socio-cultural context to pract condemning. Elesin is condemned here as an outcast who will not enjoy zest in the ancestral world since he has disappointed his ancestors.

In the same vein, in texts 6, 13, 14, 16, 23, and 38, Iyaloja employs the metaphoric, symbolic, situational and socio-cultural contexts to 'pract' exhorting. Elesin is exhorted to charge his stubbornness and sexual lust and perform his necessary ritual suicide. Also, Amusa and Joseph employ the linguistic context of pidgin to 'pract' educating in texts 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, and 31. Elesin equally employs the linguistic contexts of metaphors and symbolisms as well as situation and socio-cultural contexts to 'pract' delaying in texts 7, 8, 9, 10, and 17. For instance, Amusa states: "that egungun itself I no touch. I treat egungun with respect." In this utterance, Amusa has used the socio-cultural context to act' educating Mr. and Mrs. Pilkings are educated that the ancestral cult of egungun is not to be desecrated. In text 17', Elesin states:

"My eyes were a hawk..... in perpetual hunger..." Here, Elesin employs the context of symbolism and metaphor to pract delaying. He is delaying instead of carrying out his normal ritual suicide to serve as "life sustaining tank" of the Oyos mutual contextual beliefs (MCBs) and contexts are employed as background knowledge by participants in the text not only to make their intended audience understand their speeches but also to pract warning, condemning, exhorting, delaying, and educating.

Conclusion

By and large, Soyinka has used Nigerian English expression in the text of "DKH" in a way that the language of the drama will not only be mutually acceptable among Nigerians but which will equally be internationally intelligible. The different variants of Nigerian English according to Banjo (1971) are represented in the play. It will be essential to state here that for the audience to construe the preoccupations in the play, they must understand the contexts in which each of the utterances made by participants in the texts is employed. The drama is a text in which the symbolic, situational, metaphoric, social and culture usages of Nigerian English in Southwestern Nigeria are reflected. It is also a dramatic genre that can only be construed with a full understanding of Yoruba oral tradition and cosmology.

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