

A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Discursive Exploration of Gender Roles in Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*

Clara Unoalegie Bola Agbara & Patricia Nneka Ogbuehi

Department of English and Literary Studies, Admiralty University of Nigeria, Ibusa

Abstract

This paper is a sociolinguistic analysis of the discursive exploration of gender roles in Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*. It examines how utterances are influenced by the situations surrounding speech events in ways that reveal the real gender roles of the participants as a cultural based issue in interpersonal relationships in the play's situational context. The paper draws insight from sociolinguistics theory as specified by Saville-Troique's (2003) ethnography of communication. Using qualitative research design, the study highlights gender struggle for dominance where male characters seek to control and influence the female characters through the use of authoritative language and power-driven expressions to enforce control. Metaphors and mocking language further escalate gender conflicts, portraying men in prestigious roles while confining women to servitude. Women are often depicted negatively, as uneducated, gossipy, weak, and stubborn. The paper further reveals the complexity of male authority by questioning its effectiveness as portrayed in Lakunle's failed attempt to assert authority over the females. This paper concludes that through the intricate portrayal of gender roles in the play, Soyinka effectively critiques the societal constructs that perpetuate gender inequality by presenting a complex and conflicting view of masculinity and its challenges in asserting dominance. Through this nuanced portrayal, Soyinka both exposes and questions these cultural constructs.

Introduction

Language is a very important and indispensable tool available to humans for the facilitation of their day-to-day activities. It has been defined as a system of conventional spoken, signed, or written symbols by which human beings express themselves in a social context. Language aids people to transmit information, express feelings and emotions, influence the activities of others, and comport themselves with varying degrees of friendliness or hostility toward persons (Ogbuehi, 2024). What mostly differentiate humans from non-humans is basically the mode of communication. Human language is described as being generative and creative. Every speech situation is adapted to a particular speech form and style. Language is used by humans to express specific feelings, information, ideas which are language specific. People of different language have various ways of expressing their thoughts and meanings. Language is such a powerful tool such that most society undergoing great changes, have its existing words acquire new meanings, in addition to the coinage of new words. Agbara (2024) observes that "language can be manipulated so as to achieve specific function ... [manipulation] makes language a vibrant tools to exercise power over the addressee" Hence, every language has its own features that reflect a greater society (Akhter, 2014).

Gender issues in language studies as a linguistic variable have gained the attention of linguists for a long time. In the general society, women are not provided with equal opportunity

with the men. Every language has a way of representing gender specific in their socio-cultural context. The difference in the use of language between male and female can be observed at different linguistic level such as style of communication, tone of voice, choice of words or register (Akhter, 2014). All these variations are reflected in the social culture of speech events and account for how meaning is interpreted. According to Wenjing (2012), the language of gender differences is an extremely complex social, cultural, psychological and physiological phenomenon, which involves the language of politics, ideology, social status, roles, relationships, language, attitude, level of education, social interaction and many other factors. Lakoff (1975) submits that the differences of language between men and women are caused by social factors, not the language itself. These social factors include the different social roles male and female play in the society. According to Lakoff (1975), right from the beginning, Bible depicted women's role as being governed by men. She emphasizes that women speak without confidence because they have low social status and have no power.

It has been noticed that gender representation in Soyinka's work, like every creative writers, is often a reflection of his native cultural beliefs specifying male and female roles in their socio-cultural outlook. As opined by Agbara (2019) '... the subject matters and themes in creative writings almost always reflect the socio-cultural and political happenings in the society as well as societal norms and believes' (180). Just like any other typical patriarchal societies, the cultural configuration of Yoruba gender ideology displays male "perfection" and female "imperfection". Male are often seen as strong, powerful, domineering and wiser than the female gender. The female folk is usually seen as egoistic, weak, and easily enticed and deceived. African patriarchal society still upholds male supremacy over the female folk. Women are portrayed as being inferior to the male counterpart, such that through gender foregrounding, male dominates all major social, economic, and political institutions. Even at the family and religious arena, men are made to dominate (David, & Woldemariam, 2022). In most African plays, this cultural configuration of gender relations has consistently reflected and dominated their subject matter, characterization and themes of their playwrights. Giddens (1989), in an attempt to distinguish between sex and gender notes that sex deals with biological differences between male and female while gender is a reflection of psychological, social, and cultural differences between males and females.

The Concept of Gender

Gender has been defined as the socially constructed roles and characteristics assigned to girls, boys, women, and men (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003). Gender can be allocated based on roles, norms, and behaviors as they relate to boys and girls, male and female (Butler, 1990). However, gendered language is a reflection of social constructs, indicating traditional roles and stereotypes (Lakoff, 1975). Gendered language refers to social constructs depicted in linguistic codes such as the generic use of pronouns, gender-specific nouns, and adjectives (Cameron, 2006). Generic pronouns such as "he" are often used to refer to either gender, which tends to exclude women from linguistic visibility (Mills, 2006).

At the level of socialization, discourse practices such as conversational style, topic choices, and turn-taking behaviors often differ between genders (Tannen, 1994). Research findings have generally shown that men and women use language differently because of their

gender, adopting distinct communicative strategies (Coates, 2004). Apart from the difference in voice pitch between men and women, other studies reveal that women speak in a considerably different way from men (Lakoff, 1975). Coates (2013) studied men-only and women-only discussions and found that when women talk to each other, they reveal a lot about their private lives. They often stick to one topic for a long time and allow others to participate and to finish their talk. Men on the other hand, rarely talked about their personal relationships and feelings, but compete to prove themselves better informed about current affairs, travel, sports, etc. Some men often dominate the talk while some talk less.

The above exposition indicates that gender is one of the social factors that influences language use in a social context or setting. Since the focus of this paper is basically on discursive exploration of gender roles in Wole Soyinka's play from the sociolinguistic perspective, we shall therefore focus attention on the analysis of gender roles as depicted in linguistic codes in Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*.

Synopsis of *The Lion and the Jewel*

The Lion and the Jewel was written by Wole Soyinka, a renowned Nigerian playwright, novelist, poet and polemical essayist. As a Yoruba man, his literary work is influenced and shaped by Yoruba cultural heritage and world view. He displays features of Yoruba culture in most of his literary text creation. In *The Lion and the Jewel*, the Yoruba culture is reflected both in the setting, the theme and the language use. The play is a light comedy revolving around four main characters: Baroka, the elderly chief of Ilujinle; Lankule, a teacher; Sidi, the belle of the village; and Sadiku, the eldest wife of Baroka. The play is divided into morning, noon, and night time setting. The physical setting is in a Yoruba village of Ilujinle, Nigeria. Some of the major themes explored in the play are vanity, gender roles, tradition versus modernism and so forth. The analysis of the present study therefore is hinged on the use of language to portray the unique gender roles of the characters in a typical socio-cultural setting of the Yorubas.

Empirical Review

Kogbeto and Koukpossi, (2015), in their examination of gender issues in Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* using systemic functional grammar and critical discourse analysis perspective concluded that Wole Soyinka consciously and unconsciously represented male characters as strong, powerful and metaphysically as a lion, a symbol of irresistible power, initiator, doer of something, and commander in chief, the king, while their female counterparts, as represented by Sidi and Sadiku, are represented as goals and / or beneficiaries of men's actions. Shivamallappa (2023) studied the status of women in Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*, focusing on their subjugation. According to her, the play reflects the conditions of postcolonial Nigeria, where women, despite political independence, still face harassment and sexual abuse from men. According to her, women have been suppressed, harassed and exploited by male dominated society and that every of their attempt to escape from the clutches of male supremacy ends in vain as the male, being the center of the society holds the power. She further reveals in her study that the prevailing ideology in Ilujinle is such that women are made servants without being aware of it by their male dominated society.

Moreover, David, and Woldemariam (2022), in their examination of gender question in Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* and *The Trial of Bro Jero*, anchored their study on a feminist stylistics theory. The plays were investigated keeping in view Mills (1995) three levels of linguistic enquiry: lexis, syntax, and discourse. The study advanced that women are represented through a sexist and hidebound lingo and were rendered as malevolent, deleterious, and calamitous, as they are only credited with transporting hitches to the lives of men.

The above review shows that most existing studies on gender issues tend to approach gender issues either from sociological perspectives or from linguistic lens. However, little attention has been given to exploring gender through a sociolinguistic lens that recognizes contextual issues that shape gender role play. This study aims to address this gap by examining gender issues from a sociolinguistic perspective to foster the contextual background that underlay the gender roles in the play *The Lion and the Jewel*.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is a holistic approach to the study of gender differences which involves putting into consideration the characters' personalities, communicative styles, and world view, as well as placing them in specific contexts. It is believed that language in a dynamically changing social context, is not only influenced by the factor of gender, but also controlled by social, cultural, and psychological factors. To achieve its aim, the paper is hinged on a critical component of Saville-Troique's theory of speech events and speech acts. Speech events are defined as instances of communication that are governed by rules specific to a particular culture (Saville-Troique, 2003). According to Saville-Troique's theory of Ethnography of Communication (2003), speech events relate to specific instances of communication that are governed by social rules and cultural norms that interact to shape the communication process. He specifies certain components of speech events that should be taken into consideration to produce a satisfactory description of a specific speech event. In line with Hymes (1974), he produced a SPEAKING grid indicating the relevant elements of speech event. These events consists of various speech acts performed through language use as the events unfold (Schmidt & Richards, 1980). For a better illustration, Hymes (1972) gives an example indicating speech situation as (the party), a conversation during the party as (speech event), and a joke within the conversation as (speech act).

In Saville-Troique (2003)'s opinion, undertaking ethnography of communication requires the knowledge of the communicative repertoire of the given area. This is defined by Gumperz quoted by Saville-Troique (2003) as all varieties, dialects or styles used in a particular socially-defined population, and the constraints which govern the choice among them. Holmes (2004) also contends that language varies based on the usage, the users, the context of usage and the participants involve in the discourse situation. She further affirms that the addressees and the context affect our choice or variety, whether language, dialect or style (p.235). The key components of speech events according to this theory is referred to as SPEAKING Grid which is designed to aid in orderly analysis of a speech event. They include: S stands for Setting and Scene, 'P' for Participants, 'E' for Ends, 'A' for Act sequence, 'K' for Key, 'I' for Instrumentalities, 'N' for Norms of interaction, and 'G' for Genre.

These components encompass various speech acts, which are the basic units of communication, such as requests, promises, apologies, compliments, ordering and others. Culpeper and Haugh (2014) are of the opinion that attitude can be expressed through the performance of speech act. For instance, according to them words like ‘please’ and ‘kindly’ (especially in British culture) are often used to express attitude of politeness especially in performing the act of requesting. Ogbuehi (2023), in her submission, affirms that phatic expressions such as congratulatory messages, wishes and condolence messages are speech acts used as indicators of friendship, harmony, sympathy, and solidarity. Searle (1975) in his speech acts theory observes that utterances can be used to perform acts such as making statements, giving commands, asking questions or making promises. By analyzing these elements, this study tend to uncover the underlying cultural values and social norms that shape gender communicative behaviour in the Yoruba cultural setting. With respect to cultural context, Saville-Troique’s theory emphasizes how cultural beliefs, practices, and power dynamics influence communication. In this study, the focus is on how the various speech acts and speech events used in the play depict cultural beliefs, practices and power dynamics that reflect gender roles in the Yoruba social cultural context, revealing the requirement of the society for males and females.

Research Method

Wole Soyinka’s literary works are influenced by his culture and mother tongue. In order to find out how the writer has made culture-based assumptions in the speech of the characters of his play, this paper is anchored upon Saville-Troique’s (2003) theory of ethnography of communication. The descriptive methodology based on qualitative approach has been adopted in the study. Through qualitative analysis, explanations of the sociolinguistic factors as reflected in the play are carried out with regards to the gender roles played by the characters. This qualitative approach is considered appropriate for this study to enable an in-depth analysis of the cultural and social factors that influence characters’ speeches and interactions, so as to capture subtle nuances in dialogue and character interactions that convey meaning, attitudes, and values through language. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The data for this study is drawn from Wole Soyinka’s *The Lion and the Jewel*. For the purpose of the analysis, some excerpts reflective of cultural gender roles are purposefully selected from the playtext. The analysis of each communicative event is carried out within the framework of sociolinguistic context of situation to reflect those linguistic situations that are influenced by gender role within the socio-cultural context of the Yoruba culture. With respect to functional analysis, various types of speech acts are identified to explain their deployment for expression of meaning and attitude.

The play, *The Lion and the Jewel*, was chosen for this study so as to have a focused in-depth analysis and thorough examination of the contextual background that shape the cultural display of gender roles by the characters, providing a richer understanding of the linguistic features and their implications for gender discourse. In line with this, Yin (2014) asserts that case studies allow researchers to delve into the intricacies of a particular case, providing detailed insights that would not be possible with other methods.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This data analysis is based on sociolinguistic features: speech event, participant roles, the speech acts, and other linguistic devices used by the participants in the play. In *The Lion and the Jewel*, the following types of speech events are notable for their thematic and dramatic significance: causal conversation, dialogues, monologues, songs, dance, and storytelling and these contribute to the rich tapestry of cultural designation of gender roles in the play. The participants encompasses the characters in the play among who are: Sidi, Baroka, Lakunle, and Sadiku. Some notable speech acts include making statements, giving commands, asking questions or making promises, educating, condemning, requests, expression of surprise, wishes, and apologies, with their associated linguistic devices such as the use of figurative languages, proverbs, and repetition of linguistic elements.

Excerpt 1

A clearing on the edge of the market, dominated by an immense 'odan' tree. It is the village centre. The wall of the bush school flanks the stage on the right, and a rude window opens on to the stage from the wall. There is a chant of the 'Arithmetic Times' issuing from this window. It begins a short while before the action begins. Sidi enters from left, carrying a small pail of water on her head. She is a slim girl with plaited hair. A true village belle. She balances the pail on her head with accustomed ease. Around her is wrapped the familiar broad cloth which is folded just above her breasts, leaving the shoulders bare. (p.1, Paragraph 1)

The above excerpt is a description of the physical setting of the first part of the play, which takes place in the morning. It portrays a typical Yoruba village, centered around a traditional “odan” tree. Nearby, there is a school referred to as “bush school”, with “rude windows”, suggesting a neglected and an abandoned school. The dilapidated building indicates that little or no attention is given to it neither by the villagers nor by the government. However, the appearance of one of the major female actress is revealed. She is seen carrying a small pail of water on her head. This reveals one of the common roles of a female gender in a village setting of the Yoruba culture. Females are traditionally trained to perform domestic tasks such as fetching of water and other domestic roles to serve the male folk. Sidi, the “village Jewel” is seen performing her gender role of servitude without the consciousness of the subjugation it represents. The phrase “She balances the pail on her head with accustomed ease...” indicates that this task is second to her nature and she does it with ease. Sidi’s attire is also described. She only ties a wrapper around her chest which is a typical dressing for females in the village. With this description, Soyinka represents Sidi as a typical Yoruba village girl, who embodies the socio-cultural norms of her society, and fulfilling the traditional female gender role expected of women.

Excerpt 2

Almost as soon as she appears on the stage, the schoolmaster's face also appears at the window. (The chanting continues -- 'Three times two are six', 'Three times three are nine', etc.) The teacher Lakunle, disappears. Lakunle now re-appears below the

window and makes for Sidi,... The schoolmaster is nearly twenty three. He is dressed in an old-style English suit, threadbare but not ragged, clean but not ironed, obviously a size or two too small. He wears twenty-three-inch-bottom trousers, and blanco-white tennis shoes. (p.1, paragraph 2)

In the above excerpt, the appearance of one of the main male characters in the play “Lakunle” is revealed. He is the teacher in the “bush” school. He is presented as a professional village teacher representing the modern culture introduced by the colonial masters. By portraying him as a teacher, Soyinka aims to elevate the role of male in the society. Even in a traditional context, the male roles are more dignified than that of the female. He is dressed in clean English suit, though not ironed. This symbolizes that after liberation from the colonial era, men enjoy greater liberation than women. While men like Lakunle embrace their new freedoms, women, represented by Sidi, remain trapped in a form of cultural colonialism, still regarded as second-class citizens in society. Hence, Sidi ties wrapper around her chest, the traditional wears for females.

Excerpt 3

LAKUNLE: Let me. [Seizes the pail. Some water spills on him.]

SIDI: [delighted.]

There. Wet for your pains.

Have you no shame? (p. 1)

LAKUNLE: That is what the stewpot said to the fire.

Have you no shame-at your age

Licking my bottom? But she was tickled

Just the same. (p. 2, Stanza 2)

SIDI: The school teacher is full of stories

This morning. And now, if the lesson

Is over, may I have the pail? (p. 2, Stanza 3)

LAKUNLE: No. I have told you not to carry loads

On your head. But you are as stubborn

As an illiterate goat. It is bad for the spine.

And it shortens your neck, so that very soon

You will have no neck at all. Do you wish to look

Squashed like my pupils' drawings? (p. 2, Stanza 4)

Analysis

Speech Event: Casual conversation and dialogue

Participants: Sidi and Lakunle

Speech Acts: Linguistic and non-linguistic devices:

Requesting: “Let me.”

Stating: “The school teacher is full of stories this morning.”

Seizing: [Seizes the pail. Some water spills on him.]

Instructing: “I have told you not to carry loads on your head.”

Mockery: [delighted.] “There. Wet for your pains.”
Rhetorical question: “Have you no shame?”
Proverbs: “That is what the stewpot said to the fire. Have you no shame-at your age, licking my bottom?”
Figures of speech such as simile: “Do you wish to look squashed like my pupils' drawings?”
“But you are as stubborn as an illiterate goat.”

Gender roles

The above excerpt is a casual conversation between Sidi and Lakunle, the school teacher. Lakunle warns Sidi of the danger associated with carrying bucket on her head which he claims to have repeatedly mentioned to her. He made a move requesting to carry the bucket of water from Sidi. To enforce his ideas on her, he forcefully grabs the bucket of water away from Sidi's head and also seized it. Sidi seems not to be comfortable with the forceful act, mocks Lakunle when the water spills on him, instead of sympathizing with him. However, as a female, Soyinka presented Sidi as a powerless personality who could not put up physically resistance to recover her bucket of water but resorted to verbal retaliation when she sarcastically mocked Lakunle, using rhetorical question to ask if he has no shame.

Lakunle, on the other hand is portrayed as the stronger male figure, who imposes his will on Sidi without respect or regards to her feelings. He uses a proverbial expression “That is what the stewpot said to the fire. Have you no shame-at your age, licking my bottom?”, and employs metaphor to equate Sidi to a stubborn and illiterate goat. This animal imagery paints Sidi as lacking common sense, incapable of making good decisions. This reflects the height of disrespect and disregard towards the female by the male in the patriarchal society like the one depicted in Yoruba culture in this context. Here the females are captured as illiterates that must forcefully be rescued from the clutches of ignorance, backwardness and servitude as represented in the words of instructions given by Lakunle “It is bad for the spine, and it shortens your neck, so that very soon you will have no neck at all. Do you wish to look squashed like my pupils' drawings?”

Excerpt 4

LAKUNLE: [looks, and gets suddenly agitated.]
And look at that! Look, look at that! [Makes a general sweep in the direction of her breasts.] (p. 2)
Who was it talked of shame just now?
How often must I tell you, Sidi, that
A grown-up girl must cover up her . . .
Her . . . shoulders? I can see quite . . . quite (p. 2-3, Stanza 13)

SIDI: Are you at that again? Why, I've done the fold
So high and so tight, I can hardly breathe. (p.3, Stanza 14)

LAKUNLE: You could wear something.
Most modest women do. But you, no. (p. 3, Stanza 15)

Analysis

Speech events: Dialogue; Correction of dress code

Participants: Lakunle and Sidi

Speech acts and linguistic devices

Agitation [*looks, and gets suddenly agitated.*]

Condemning and criticizing: “And look at that! Look, look at that!” [Makes a general sweep in the direction of her breasts.] “I can see quite . . . quite a good portion of-- that!”

Informing: “Why, I've done the fold so high and so tight, I can hardly breathe.”

Instructing: “You could wear something most modest women do.”

Figurative language: hyperbole: “You must run about naked in the streets.”

Rhetorical questions: “Does it not worry you . . . the bad names, the lewd jokes, the tongue-licking noises which girls, uncovered like you, draw after them?”

Repetition of syntactic structures: “the bad names, the lewd jokes, the tongue-licking noises...”

Gender Roles

In the above excerpt, Lakunle tries to educate Sidi on the right mode of dressing for the modern women. He makes concerted effort to convince her to abandon traditional fashion, which he claims to be exposing her body. In doing this, he employs various linguistic devices to drive home his point. He harshly criticizes and sarcastically mocks Sidi's mode of dressing that tend to visibly expose part of her chest. Lakunle wants Sidi to understand the importance of adopting a more modern, "proper" style of dress.

Lakunle's agitation and outburst of sarcastic expressions of criticisms and condemnation of Sidi's dressing were all a reflection of his intolerance, sparked by Sidi's provocative rhetorical question “Have you no shame?” In a patriarchal society, the women are expected to address the men with respect regardless of the men's conduct. Any act of disrespect from the women is resisted sternly by the men as shown by Lakunle's response in this scene. This also highlights the selfish, jealous and protective nature of the men.

Sidi, just like any other female in a patriarchal setting, is a victim of verbal tongue-lashing from the male as Lankunle criticisms and confrontations indicate. Sidi, feeling so humiliated and uncomfortable, tries to make Lankunle understand her effort to meet his demands, uses rhetorical question to express her bewilderment over the recurring heavy criticism from Lakunle, hence,

“Are you at that again? Why, I've done the fold so high and so tight, I can hardly breathe.”

Her statement shows her struggle to understand and adapt to modern fashion, as advocated by Lakunle to meet his expectations. This scene portrays the female as being unteachable, exhibiting low cognitive acumen to easily grasp new ideas or instructions.

Excerpt 5

- LAKUNLE:** Wasted! Wasted! SIDI, my heart
Bursts into flowers with my love.
But you, you and the dead of this village
Trample it with feet of ignorance. (P.5, Stanza 10)
- SIDI:** [shakes her head in bafflement.]
If the snail finds splinters in his shell
He changes house. Why do you stay? (P.5, Stanza 11)
- LAKUNLE:** Faith. Because I have faith.
Oh SIDI, vow to me your own undying love (P. 5, Stanza 12)
- SIDI:...** I shall marry you today, next week
Or any day you name.
But my bride-price must first be paid. (Pp. 5-6, Stanza 13)
- LAKUNLE:** A savage custom, barbaric, out-dated..., (P. 6, Stanza 15)

Analysis

Speech event: Dialogue, Expression of love and desire for marriage.

Participants: Lakunle and Sidi

Speech acts and linguistic devices:

Expressive speech act of frustration for being misunderstood: “Wasted! Wasted! SIDI, my heart bursts into flowers with my love. But you, you and the dead of this village trample it with feet of ignorance”.

Requesting: “Oh SIDI, vow to me your own undying love; Swear you will be my wife.”

Commissive speech act of Promising: “And I will scorn the jibes of these bush minds who know no better”.

Assertive speech act: “But I tell you, Lakunle, I must have the full bride-price”.

Figurative language: Personification: “But you, you and the dead of this village trample it with feet of ignorance”.

Metaphor: “bush mind”; “A cheap bowl for the village spit”

Simile: “And you must chirrup like a cockatoo”.

Repetition of lexical words: “Wasted! Wasted!”; “But you, you”; “Swear, Sidi, Swear”

The use of proverbs: “If the snail finds splinters in his shell he changes house”.

Gender roles

In the above excerpt, Lakunle expresses his frustration for being misunderstood by Sidi and other villagers, when he shouted “Wasted! Wasted!” He expresses his deep love for Sidi, promising to marry her regardless of her ignorance. All he needed from Sidi is for her to agree to marry him. In this scene, the playwright reveals the cultural norms that guide marital relationships. In a typical African culture as exemplified with Yoruba cultural heritage, it is the man that woos a woman and not the other way round.

However, Lakunle's plea for Sidi to swear her undying love for him without the payment of bride price is tied to his concept of romantic love, which contrasts with the transactional nature of traditional marriage customs (like the bride-price). This reflects a shift in gender roles where emotional connection is increasingly valued alongside, or instead of, traditional obligations. Lakunle's vehement condemnation of paying of bride price as barbaric and outdated is a reflection of gender dynamic where men, like Lakunle, who align with more progressive or educated ideals, see themselves as superior or enlightened compared to women or communities adhering to traditional roles. This is in contrasts with Sidi's adherence to tradition. Sidi's insistence on the bride-price being paid before marriage is a significant reflection of traditional gender roles. In many African cultures, the bride-price (or dowry) is a customary requirement that signifies the man's respect for the woman and her family. It is an essential part of the marriage process and represents the man's ability to provide, which is a key expectation in the gender roles assigned to men. Lakunle insistence of jettison payment of bride price is viewed as an act of irresponsibility, which Sidi, as an embodiment of tradition distances herself from. This highlights tension between modern and traditional views on gender roles. Sidi embodies the expectation that women should uphold cultural practices, whereas Lakunle's attitude suggests a challenge to these norms, particularly from a more modern or Westernized perspective. However, Lakunle, who represents the modern age views paying of bride price as an indication of female gender being reduced to the status of a property that is to be acquired. He sees it as a degradation of the womanhood.

Excerpt 6

SADIKU: Fortune is with me. I was going to your house to see you. (P. 19, Stanza 1)

SIDI: [*startled out of her occupation.*] What! Oh, it is you, Sadiku. (P, 19, Stanza 2)

SADIKU: The Lion sent me. He wishes you well. (P.19, Stanza 3)

SIDI: Thank him for me.

[Then excitedly.] Have you seen these?

Have you seen these images of me?

Wrought by the man from the capital city?

Have you felt the gloss? [*Caresses the page.*]

Smoother by far than the parrot's breast. (P. 19, Stanza 4)

SADIKU: I have. I have. I saw them as soon as the city man came. . . Sidi, I bring a message from my lord. [*Jerks her head at Lakunle.*] Shall we draw aside a little? **SIDI:** Him? Pay no more heed to that than you would a eunuch. (P. 19, Stanza 5)

SADIKU: Then, in as few words as it takes to tell, Baroka wants you for a wife. (P.19, Stanza 6

LAKUNLE: [*bounds forward, dropping the wood.*]

What! The greedy dog!

SIDI: Be quiet, ' Kunle. You get so tiresome. (P. 19, Stanza 9)

Analysis

Speech events: Dialogue, Wooing of Sidi as a second wife to Baroka by Sadiku.

Participants: Sadiku, Sidi and Lakunle

Speech acts and linguistic devices:

Expressive speech act: "Sidi, my heart bursts"; "Fortune is with me"; "What! Oh, it is you, Sadiku" "What! The greedy dog!"

Sarcastic Advice: "Pay no more heed to that, than you would a eunuch".

Informing and messaging: "I was going to your house to see you"; "The Lion sent me. He wishes you well"; "Baroka wants you for a wife".

Requesting and rhetoric question: "Have you seen these images of me, wrought by the man from the capital city?" "Have you felt the gloss?" "Is he at his tricks again?"

Commanding: "Be quiet, 'Kunle."

Praises: "Smoother by far than the parrot's breast"

Figurative Expressions:

Metaphor: "The Lion sent me"; "The greedy dog! Insatiate camel of a foolish, doting race"; "Than you would a eunuch".

Simile: "Smoother by far than the parrot's breast"

Gender Roles

In the above excerpt, Sadiku acts as a messenger for Baroka who relays the marriage proposal of Baroka to Sidi. At this time, Sidi has realized her worth through her popularity made possible by her image on the cover of a magazine. Sadiku's role as a messenger highlights the subordinate and servile role often assigned to the females in patriarchal societies, where they act as intermediaries, and playing passive roles in decision making. The message conveys the idea that women are seen primarily as objects of men's desire irrespective of their value as enhanced by their beauty. Through the use of metaphor, Baroka, a male character is portrayed as a powerful figure "The Lion" which reinforces the typical patriarchal view of the male as influential and dominant figures. In contrast, Sidi's reaction to her image, where she admires herself, linking her value to her beauty highlights the idea of a woman's value being tied to her physical attractiveness and desirability. Meanwhile, Lakunle, who opposes and criticizes Baroka's action appears too weak to make impact as he was ignored by the two women with the order to remain silent "Be quiet, 'Kunle". This further emphasizes the hierarchical gender dynamics at play, where men either assert authority or are ineffective to make impact.

Excerpt 7

SADIKU: [*throws back her head in laughter.*] You a man? Is Baroka not more of a man than you? And if he is no longer a man, then what are you? [*Lakunle, understanding the meaning, stands rooted, shocked.* (P.34, Stanza 6)

SIDI: Stop. Sadiku stop. Oh such an idea
Is running in my head. Let me to the palace for
This supper he promised me. Sadiku, what a way
To mock the devil. (P.34, Stanza 7)

- SADIKU:** Away then. Away woman. I shall bide here.
Haste back and tell Sadiku how the no-man is.
Away, my lovely child. (P.35, Stanza 2)
- LAKUNLE:** [*he has listened with increasing horror.*] No, Sidi, don't...
Do not go to torment the man... (P.35, Stanza 3)
- SIDI:** [*running off gleefully.*] Ta-raa school teacher. Wait here for me. (P.35, Stanza 7)
- LAKUNLE:** [*stamps his foot helplessly.*] Foolish girl! . . . And this is all your work.
Could you not keep a secret?
Must every word leak out of you... (P.35, Stanza 8)

Analysis

Speech event: Dialogue, Sadiku licks the secret of Baroka's pretended manhood failure to Sidi and Lakunle.

Participants: Sadiku, Sidi and Lakunle

Speech acts and linguistic devices:

Indirect informative speech act rendered in a question form: "You a man? Is Baroka not more of a man than you? And if he is no longer a man, then what are you?"

Command and order: "Stop. Sadiku stop"; "Away then. Away woman"; "Away, my lovely child"; "No, Sidi, don't".

Advice: "Do not go to torment the man."

Reprimand: "Could you not keep a secret? Must every word leak out of you?"

Accusation and blaming: "And this is all your work."

Insult: "Foolish girl!"

Figurative expressions:

Irony: "What a way to mock the devil".

Gender roles

Sadiku, the senior wife of Baroka, embodies the role expected of older women in patriarchal societies, acting as a mediator between younger women and powerful men. She fits the stereotype of a traditional matriarch, using her influence within the household. However, Sadiku subverts this role when she mocks Baroka's masculinity, calling him a "no-man." By revealing his supposed impotence, she fuels the stereotype of women as gossips, as Lakunle criticizes her for not keeping the secret, saying, "Could you not keep a secret? Must every word leak out of you?"

Through her mockery, Sadiku disrupts the traditional reverence for male authority, especially regarding sexual and physical dominance. Her laughter and confidence reflect a fleeting moment of empowerment, aligning her with Sidi as they both ridicule Baroka's loss of manhood. This mockery temporarily turns Baroka into a figure of ridicule. It reflects a brief instance of women's empowerment, which, in a patriarchal context, is achieved only through deception. However, Baroka's eventual seduction and deflowering of Sidi reveal that his earlier claims of impotence were merely part of his trickery.

However, Sidi seemingly empowered by the idea of mocking Baroka, contemplates going to the palace, ostensibly to apologize and honor his invitation, but with the intention to mock his masculinity. This portrays Sidi's role transition from passive object to a more active participant in the gender power struggle.

Lakunle is portrayed as an embodiment of modernity, attempting to challenge traditional gender roles. However, his masculinity is questioned throughout the play as Sadiku mocks him for not being as much of a man as Baroka. His failed attempt to stop Sidi from going to mock the Bale highlights his inability to assert control over Sidi. Lakunle's form of masculinity is intellectual and idealistic, but in this setting, it renders him ineffective and emasculated, implying that traditional masculinity (physical strength, virility, and dominance) remains the societal standard as implied by the playwright.

Summary

The above data analysis of gender roles in *The Lion and the Jewel* reveals the deep-rooted gender dynamics within the Yoruba culture, which emphasize traditional gender roles through various speech events, participant roles, speech acts, and rhetorical devices. The analysis focuses on discursive interactions among the main characters: Sidi, Lakunle, Baroka, and Sadiku. It showcases and highlights a male-dominated patriarchal society and how it subjugates women. The speech events include casual conversations, and dialogues, that frame the interactions between the characters and reveal the gender-based power dynamics.

The analysis reveals that the male characters, especially Lakunle, and in extension Baroka, uses authoritative and power-driven language to enforce their desire and will on the females intended to undermine their personality. For example, Lakunle criticizes Sidi's traditional dressing, using some demeaning figurative language to promote and enforce modern ideals. Baroka's power is reinforced through metaphors such as his reference as "the Lion," which symbolizes male dominance in the patriarchal society. The play reflects the traditional gender expectations of Yoruba culture, where women like Sidi fulfil subservient roles. Soyinka illustrates how women's value is often linked to their beauty and ability to perform domestic duties.

This findings of this study resonates with the discovery of David and Woldemariam (2022) in their study of women representation in Soyinka's plays that the females are assigned mundane roles such as homemakers, paltry traders, hawkers, child bearers, and caregivers to their husbands and children, while men occupy more prestigious positions such as schoolmasters and chiefs. Sidi's portrayal in the play as carrying pale of water and her comment on the role of women in the play to refute the claim of being the weaker sex as she questions "Is it a weaker breed who pounds the yam, or bends all day to plant the millet with a child strapped to her back?" and Lakunle's portrayal as the village school teacher align with this view.

The play also portrays the female gender negatively as unschooled, stumpy, gossips, weak, stubborn, as tools to be manipulated by the male, and only celebrates empowerment through a moment of deceit. For instance, Sadiku and Sidi celebrate the supposed impotence of Baroka as women's triumph only when they were deceived by Baroka to believe that he has

lost his manhood. This leads to the eventual seduction of Sidi in the play, signifying the triumph of the male folk.

Interestingly, the play also highlights the complexity of male authority as it questions masculinity all through the play. This insight is giving in Lakunle's ineffective and failed attempt to assert authority and dominance as he struggles to control the women around him. Linguistically, Soyinka utilizes proverbs, similes, rhetorical questions, and repetition to convey characters' emotions and reinforce societal norms. The frequent use of metaphors and language of mockery in dialogues highlights gender conflicts, with men asserting superiority and women either resisting or conforming passively. The struggle for dominance is evident in interactions where male characters seek to control or influence women. Sidi's initial empowerment through her beauty and fame is later undermined by Baroka's deception, while Lakunle's failed attempts to modernize Sidi demonstrates his ineffectiveness in challenging the traditional patriarchy.

Conclusion

From the above analysis and result of this research findings, this study concludes that the play *The Lion and the Jewel* by Wole Soyinka offers a profound exploration of gender dynamics within the context of traditional Yoruba culture. Most creative writers embark on correcting some anomalies in the immediate environment through their writings. Hence, 'most often, creative writers' [themes] are influenced by the happenings in their immediate society' (Agbara, p.4, 2024,). Through various speech events, character interactions, various speech acts, and the use of rhetorical devices, the play reflects not only a patriarchal structure that subjugates women and reinforces male dominance, but also reflects gender conflict of struggle for dominance by the male gender and a resistance of the female gender as it heightens and questions the complexity of masculinity that reflects ineffectiveness in assertion of authority by the male gender. Characters like Lakunle and Baroka utilize authoritative language and figurative expressions to impose their will on female characters, particularly Sidi, which reinforces the power imbalance between the genders. Despite Lakunle's attempts to challenge these traditional values, his failure to effect meaningful change and to effectively assert authority reveals the complexity of the dynamics of masculinity in a typical patriarchal system. Through this intricate portrayal of gender roles, Soyinka effectively critiques the societal constructs that perpetuate gender inequality.

References

- Agbara, Clara U. B. (2019). 'The Cultural Realm and its Implications for Development: A Pragmatic Perspective'. *Calabar Journal of Liberal Studies (CAJOLIS)* 21 (2), 180 – 188.
- Agbara, Clara U. B. (2024). 'A Pragmatic Analysis of Language as a Mechanism for Peaceful Interaction: A Case Study of When Women Go Naked'. *Journal for the Study of English Linguistics* 12 (1), 102 – 116.
- Akhter, I. (2014). Differences in language use by male and female students in tertiary Academia in Dhaka City. A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English and Humanities of BRAC University.

- Beltrama, A., Solt, S., and Burnett, H. (2022). Context, precision, and social perception: A sociopragmatic study. *Language in Society*, 1–31.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversive of Identity*, London: Routledge.
- Cameron, D. (2006). *Language and Sexual Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Coates, J. (2013). *Women, Men and Language: A Sociolinguistic Account of Gender Differences in Language* (3rd ed.). Pearson Education: New York
- Cook, G. (1999). *Discourse and Literature*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Culpeper, J., & Haugh, M. (2014). *Pragmatics and the English Language*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- David, N. D., & Woldemariam, H, Z. (2022). Gender questions in Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* and *The Trials of Brother Jero*. *f* 4(1), 100–119. <https://doi.org/10.32350/jcct.41.05>.
- Duranti, A. (1985). Sociocultural dimensions of discourse, In Van Dijk, T. A. (ed), *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, London: Academic Press Limited, pp. 193-230.
- Eckert, P., & McConnell-Ginet, S. (2003). *Language and Gender*. Cambridge University Press.
- Goffman E. (1979). *Gender advertisements*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Hennebichler, V. (2008). Of mothers, babies and little girls. [Unpublished PhD Thesis]. University of Vienna.
- Hilton, K., and Jeong, S. (2019). The role of context in sociolinguistic perception. *Linguistics Vanguard*, 5(s1).
- Holmes, Janet (2012). Politeness in intercultural discourse and communication. In Christina Bratt Paulston, Scott F. Kiesling and Elizabeth S. Rangel (eds.) *Handbook of Intercultural Discourse and Communication*. Oxford: Blackwell. 205–28.
- Hymes, D. (1972). Models of the interaction of language and social life. In J. Gumperz & D. Hymes (eds.), *Directions in Sociolinguistics: The ethnography of Communication*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, pp. 35–71.
- Hymes, D. (1974), *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Kogbeto, P. & Koukpossi, A. (2015). 'Gender issues in *The Lion and the Jewel* by Wole Soyinka: A linguistics-oriented analysis from a Systemic Functional Grammar and Critical Discourse Analysis perspective'. *Communication and Linguistics Studies*. 1. 26-34.
- Lakoff, R. (1975). 'Language and woman's place'. *Language in Society*, 2(1), 45-80. New York: Harper and Row.
- Léon, J. (2005). Referring to the context of situation: From J. R. Firth to present-day linguistic theory. In B. W. L. Ng, L. Thompson, & M. Winz (Eds.), *Language and context* (pp. 45-62). Routledge.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

- Mills, S., (2006). Feminist stylistics. In: K. Brown, ed. *Encyclopaedia of Language and Linguistics*. Amsterdam: Elsevier Science, 221–223
- Ogbuehi, Patricia Nneka (2024). Critical discourse analysis of pronominal in political discourse: An examination of inaugural speech of Nigerian President, Ahmed Bola Tinubu. *Journal Innovations*, 77, 2010-2025. www.journal-innovations.com
- Ogbuehi, P.N. (2023). Phatic Exchange: Instrument of Social Construction in WhatsApp Discourse. *Ife Journal of Languages, Literatures and Linguistics (IJLLL)*, 9 (1), 130-149.
- Saville-Troique, M. (2003). *Ethnography of Communication*. London: Routledge
- Schmidt, R. & Richards, J. C. (1980). Speech Acts and Second Language Learning. *Applied linguistics* 1(2), 129-157.
- Searle, J. R. (1975). *Indirect speech acts* in Cole, P. & Morgan, J. L. (Eds.).
- Shivamallappa M. (2023). Center holds... Things cannot fall apart: The status of women in Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*, 11(8), 465-468.
- Song, L. (2010). The Role of context in discourse analysis. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 1(6), 876-879.
- Soyinka, W. (1963). *The Lion and the Jewel*. Oxford University Press. London.
- Tannen, D. (1990). *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*. New York: William Morrow & Co., Pp. 330.
- Tannen, D., 1994. *Gender and Discourse*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Wenjing, X. (2012). Study on gender differences in English. *International Conference on Education Technology and Management Engineering*, 16-17, 218-221.
- Widdowson, H. G. (1973). *An Introduction to the Study of English Language*. Oxford University Press.
- Widdowson, H. G. (2000). *Linguistics*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2000.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case Study Research Design and Methods* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Yule, G. (2000). *Pragmatics*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Yule, G. (2007). *The Study of Language*. (2 ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Zimmerman, D. H., & West, C. (1975). Sex roles, interruptions and silences in conversation. In B. Thorne & N. Henley (Eds.). *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance* (pp. 105–129). Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers.
<https://doi.org/10.1075/cilt.125.12zim>