

# A Morpho-semantic Analysis of Aspects of Nigerian English in Wole Soyinka's *Alapata Apata*

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## Abstract

Morpho-semantics has to do with morphological and semantic analyses combined with a semantic interpretation of words. Scholars have analysed Wole Soyinka's *Alapata Apata* from various perspectives but the morpho-semantic analysis is the concern of the present study. The data for this study comprises words and phrases reflecting aspects of morpho-semantic use of English in Wole Soyinka's *Alapata Apata*. The theoretical perspectives for the study are Hymes' Ethnography of Communication (EOC) and Prague school's language as a system of sub-systems. The analysis shows that Wole Soyinka's *Alapata Apata* is in the contexts of misuse of power, political corruption, underdevelopment and godfatherism. The findings show that the text reflects aspects of morpho-semantic use of English in Nigeria such as loan blending: Oyinbo style, suya master and soja man; coinages: Yorubafonia, butcherus, and falstaffian; reduplication: Alapata Apata which has many interpretations and others. The work concludes that morpho-semantic analysis of English in Nigeria is a product of the use of English as a second language in the country. Aspects of Morpho-semantic use of English in Nigeria such as coinages, reduplication, compounding, loaning, clipping and others are intentionally used by writers to reflect their works as products of their African cultural backgrounds.

**Key Words:** English language in Nigeria, Morpho-Semantics, Coinages, Lexical transfer, Loan Blend

## 1. Introduction

Nigerian writers' use of English in creative writing is largely influenced by their culture. It is no doubt that a society's language is an aspect of its culture (Adegbite 2020). Language is a carrier of people's culture. Culture, on the other hand, is a carrier of outlook or consciousness, heritage and sense of identity of a people. In the works of most Nigerian writers in English language, they transfer some of the cultural nuances of the indigenous Nigerian people into their literary creations. To be able to play this role effectively, the structure of native speaker's English has to be adjusted. In this same regard, Nneka (2022) is of the opinion that a necessity for linguistic experimentation lies in the fact that Africans do not use English the way the English do, and in the fact that the rhetorical devices of each African language community are peculiar to it and are a legacy of its cultural inheritance. If a flavour of African life is therefore to be captured in literary works written in English, the English language has to be flexed and bent to allow these idiomatic and rhetorical usage to be presented.

In their writing, Nigerian writers too often bend, twist and flex the English language in such a way to suit and reflect their socio-cultural milieu and give their identity too, as writers from a given geographical region. Many Nigerian writers manipulate the English language to capture their local thoughts and reflect their cultural essence while still retaining meaning to

that radiate their rich cultural aura. This is often done with Nigerian idioms, manner of expression, oral tradition and speech tones. It is on the basis of this postulation that this work supports Onwubu's (1996) view that for English to express adequately, the way of life of a different culture, it must endure some internal structural changes. Also in his article, *English and the African writers*, Achebe (1965) advocates that the real African creative writers must alter the English language to suit their African surroundings. The English that emerges from this consideration 'must be "new" in the sense that it can carry the weight of the African writers' experience. Asika (2011), in defence of the Nigerian novelists, emphasizes that when a language is transplanted in a soil other than its native land, it undergoes transformations, modification and adaptation. The variety spoken or written in the new language is invariably distinct from the original form.

Nigerian writers use English as their creative medium in the consciousness that they are presenting a Nigerian experience and imagination which derives from their Nigerian background (Taiwo, 1979). This is particularly true since these writers grew up within the Nigerian environment and acquired a Nigerian indigenous language in which they think. In exploring these two factors, they have had to 'alter' the English language so as to incorporate the Nigerian language features and thought processes. Chinua Achebe, like some other African writers, successfully manipulated the English language to reflect the native way of speech, manner of linguistic expression and communication.

The global spread of English led to the emergence of many non-native varieties of English which resulted in many scholars recognizing World Englishes (WEs, i.e., non-native varieties of English language). It has been observed that the English language is gaining widespread use across the globe and since language adapts to its new environment and is sensitive to its context of culture, its various realizations at different levels of linguistic descriptions is inevitable. This fact led to the emergence of first language varieties of English such as British English, Nigerian English, Canadian English, Australian English and American English, among others.

English in Nigeria is used by many writers in a way that the meanings of some lexical items often change, thereby leading to possible misrepresentations and misinterpretations, especially by international readers of such literary works. This problem is triggered by the adaptation of English to the Nigerian socio-cultural environment, in form of the use of certain lexical choices that include lexical transfer, coinage of new words, extension and restriction of meaning, borrowing of items from indigenous language or total change in meaning of items in regard to the world view of Nigerians. The main concern of this paper, therefore, is the use of Nigerian English expressions by these writers to capture their intentions and thoughts because of certain phenomena or simply because they cannot fully grasp the right words to fully express themselves in the English language? This paper undertakes an analysis of aspects of Nigerian English in Wole Soyinka's *Alapata Apata*. Specifically, the aim of the paper is to identify and analyse the context of use and features of Nigerian English at the morpho-semantic level in Wole Soyinka's *Alapata Apata*.

The study adopts a contextual/descriptive method using purposive sampling procedure. The data for this study were samples of selected texts: words, phrases and sentences reflecting

aspects of morpho-semantic use of English in Wole Soyinka's *Alapata Apata*. Instances the use of Nigerian English in the texts were identified and selected for analysis.

## **2. The Notion Nigerian English**

Nigerian English (NE) is a variety of English used in Nigeria, distinguished from the world's standard variety by its peculiar Nigerian core features. Some of the factors which have given Nigerian English its peculiar characteristics include the influence of Nigerian native tongues, cultures and world views. Nigerian speakers' usage of English is reflected not only in their speech but also in their written expressions, the most representative of which is creative writing. England and Scotland are the homes of the oldest and most authentic speakers of English as a first language (Nneka 2022). But as mentioned above, English left its original home since the 15th century to spread to other parts of the world. It came into Nigeria and other West African countries due to the activities of British traders, Christian missionaries, and later the colonialists.

Nigerian English has been a fascinating phenomenon. This is because the concept of standard Nigerian English has been difficult to create in many parts of Nigeria because of factors that include codification and standardisation. Because of the interaction between British Standard English and Nigerian English, which have two distinct sets of lexical and grammatical realisations, pronunciation peculiarities, and sometimes spelling rules, a common occurrence of 'faulty analogy' has emerged in what is referred to as non-standard varieties of Nigerian English usage (Nneka 2022). However, there are a few commonalities across Nigerian English groups that help to bridge the gap between distinct types even inside Nigeria, many of which are related to cultural values conveyed in English language words. The use of 'Sorry' and 'sir' are two common instances. The literal meaning of 'sorry' normally implies some form of blame on the side of the one expressing it; yet, it is used to communicate compassion in a unique manner, or to demonstrate empathy to whomever has suffered misfortune, in all variations of Nigerian English. 'Sir', or the use of titles instead of names, denotes respect and a great regard for manners. The addition of 'sir' to a title (for example, "Professor Sir) denotes a higher degree of status than usual, or an example of being more courteous than usual.

Though the precise degrees of English usage in Nigeria are debatable, there is widespread agreement that there are at least four levels of English usage in Nigeria (Babatunde 2001). The first level is non-standard English, which is largely spoken in informal contexts by both educated and uneducated segments of the society. Level two is a step up from level one, and it is spoken by those who have completed elementary school. Level three has a larger lexicon and fluency and is primarily spoken by those with a secondary education, whereas Level four is proposed to be the Nigerian Standard English because its features are very similar (but still uniquely Nigerian) to World Standard English and is primarily spoken by those with university education. The pragmatic realizations of Nigerian English are differentiated at these levels. Because of its prevalence in Nigeria, the English language has been a source of dispute among Nigerians who prefer a more native way of life. However, others would argue that English is inextricably linked to Nigerian culture owing to the nature of its introduction and its role in imposing colonial norms on a post-colonial Nigeria. Because they have evolved unique

meanings, certain English words are totally Nigerian in origin and cannot be found in any other form of English in the world.

Nigerian English is rich with many innovative words. The commonest of these according to Adegbija 2004 are:

- (i) Coinages and Neologisms: This is a situation where entirely new terms are created for new experiences. Examples are: been to, bush meat, cash madam, go-slow, junior brother, co-wife.
- (ii) Hybridisation: (e.g., kiakia bus, bukateria,) Here, there is a combination of a word or sense of a word in the indigenous language with a word or sense of a word in English.
- (iii) Direct Translation or Transliteration from Mother Tongue: This is a very significant feature of Nigerian English. This entails the creation of new structures with words that are obviously English lexis but are direct translation from indigenous languages. Examples include: goat head, long leg, cow leg, bush meat.

Lexical transfer, according to Sonde (2013) has to do with the transfer of culture, sense or meaning from the native language into English, reinterpretation or extension of an existing meaning in English to cover new areas of experience in Nigerian English. Examples involve the extension of the meaning of certain lexical items such as “Mother/father” to refer to someone that is not a biological mother or father. For instance, the use of ‘take in’ to mean to become pregnant, ‘sorry’ to express sympathy, the extended use of kinship terms like ‘daddy’, ‘mummy’, ‘auntie’, ‘uncle’, and many more. Other lexical features of Nigerian English including the formation of new words through the process of affixation (e.g., Awoism, Zikism) and acronymization (e.g., NAFDAC, JAMB, NEPA).

Semantic extensions are major features of Nigerian English in which some expressions have been fore-grounded and semantically adjusted (Eze & Igwenyi, 2016). Thus, the standard international meanings of certain lexical items and expressions have been modified to explain certain Nigerian practical concepts and objects which do not obtain in native speakers societies like America and Britain. Examples include expressions like: “to see a woman”, “Oga, I am waiting for you to see me”, or “Park, what you are carrying”. Also, the exclamation “Ok” has been fully incorporated into Nigerian English to mean several things, such as “acceptable to me”, “yes”, “everything is fine”, etc.

### **Morpho-semantic Innovations in Nigerian English**

According to Adegbija (2004), loanwords, coinages, acronyms, and semantic shifts are the four main types of innovations that have emerged as a consequence of the nativization of English in Nigeria. There are additional terms in Nigerian English that have taken on new meanings. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines a loan word as “a term taken from a foreign language with little or no alteration.” There is a wealth of loan terms in Nigerian English that have no direct English counterparts but have distinct meanings and have entrenched themselves into the variety. The examples below represent some of the most common Nigerian English loanwords. *Agbada*, a kind of flowing garment worn by males, particularly by Yoruba; *babanriga*, a long, loose clothing worn by males, particularly by the Hausa; *akara*, a kind of dish often known as ‘bean

cake'; *akamu*, a cereal dish; *danfo* and *okada*, forms of public transportation, to mention but a few occurrences.

Coinages are comparable to loan words in that they act as a kind of colloquialism that is pronounced in English but have a distinct cultural connotation. The majority of these inventions take the form of compounding. These are very common in Nigerian English. Coinages, unlike loanwords, often have a brief existence and are accepted for specific cultural objectives at the time of acquisition, and hence sometimes fade out with time. *long-leg, free and fair, coming of age, carpet crossing, no-go-area, man of timber and caliber, money bag, political juggernaut / heavyweight, political bride*, are examples. Further examples are: *bottom strength, long throat, chewing stick, tight buddy, go-slow*.

The re-appropriation of the meaning of English terms for Nigerian purposes and applications is a frequent example of semantic shift. The original English meanings may be 'shifted,' confined, or expanded as a result of this. This entails reframing a word's distinctive pattern inside the semantic field, thus marginalizing the word's primary context. For example, whereas the term 'trek' has a sense of a long distance or arduous travel in international use, it signifies 'to walk a small distance' in Nigerian English. This stretching of meaning represents something from Nigerian culture as well as changing the meaning of the English term.

Semantic Extension in Nigerian English has to do with the extension of semantic bounds of existing English terms to include unexpected meanings. Akindele and Adegbite (1999) refer to it as "the addition of meanings to a conventional English word." The following are some instances in the use of the English language in Nigeria:

- 1a. I offered the cop a '*kola nut*' (bribe) before I was freed.
- 1b. I offered the cob bribe before I was freed.
- 2a. He has a '*stranger*' (a guest) this evening.
- 2b. He has a guest this evening.

The italicised terms '*kola nut*', '*stranger*', '*stayed*', and '*hearing*' all retain their traditional English connotations while gaining new ones. '*Kola nut*' refers to a chewable tree seed but is broadened to mean 'bribe'; *stranger* is expanded to mean 'visitor'.

In semantic narrowing, the meanings of existing terms are semantically restricted to have a reduced scope. For instance,

1. The cost of kerosene is higher than the cost of *fuel* (petrol, PMS).
2. The light of my *globe* (electric bulb) is brighter than yours.

Many Nigerian English sentence structures include redundant semantic reduplications of the same meaning. This is known as tautology, or stating the same thing over and over again without clarifying one's meaning. Tautology may be seen in phrases like:

1. "Repeat again"
2. Nigerian previous history is worthy studying.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical perspectives for this study are Hymes Ethnography of Communication and the Prague school's language as a system of subsystems (Doubravová, 1999).

#### Ethnography of Communication

Ethnography of communication is the study of communication within the background of social and cultural practices and beliefs. First introduced by Dell Hymes in 1962, he described it in detail in his article 'Introduction: Toward Ethnographies of Communications', which was published in 1964. The term 'ethnography of communication' means the different features of an approach that is taken towards understanding a language from an anthropological perspective. Originally termed as 'ethnography of speaking', Hymes broadened it in 1964 to include the non-vocal and non-verbal aspects of communication. Ethnography of communication has two main purposes, according to Hymes:

1. "to investigate directly the use of language in contexts of situations so as to discern patterns proper to speech activity"
2. "to take as framework a community, exploring its unrestrained habits as a whole"

According to Hymes, language cannot be studied in isolation. It has to be studied in the wider context of cultural and social aspects. Language is not limited to a mere technical set of grammatical rules. In fact, it has a specific context, both in terms of the individual and the cultural norms and beliefs. They cannot be separated. Hymes divides speech into two components: 'means of speech' and 'speech economy'. 'Means of speech' means 'the features that enter into styles, as well as the styles themselves'. 'Speech economy' refers to the relationships within a speech community where the people use their means of speech.

#### The Speaking Model

Hymes also developed the SPEAKING model which analyses speech in its cultural context. It consists of sixteen parts which have been divided into eight categories.

They are as follows:

S	– setting and scene	–	the physical location where the speech takes place
P	– participants	–	the people who take part in the speech
E	– ends	–	the purpose and the outcome of the speech
A	– act sequence	–	the speech acts and the sequence in which they are carried out
K	– key	–	the tone and manner in which the speech is carried out
I	– instrumentalities	–	the medium of communication that is used
N	– norms of interaction	–	the rules of speech, interaction and interpretation
G	– genres	–	the 'type' of speech and its cultural contexts

The ethnography of communication (EOC), originally called the ethnography of speaking, is the analysis of communication within the wider context of the social and cultural

practices and beliefs of the members of a particular culture or speech community. It comes from ethnographic research. It is a method of discourse analysis in linguistics that draws on the anthropological field of ethnography. EOC takes into account both the communicative form, which may include but is not limited to spoken language, and its function within the given culture. The basic approach to the study of linguistics of the Prague Circle sees language as a synchronic and dynamic system. The functionality of elements of language and the importance of its social function have been key aspects of its research program.

### **Prague School's Language as a System of Subsystems**

The Prague Linguistic Circle group of Jakobson, Mathesius, Trubetzkoy, and Kartsevsky announced a radical departure from the classical structural position of Ferdinand de Saussure. They suggested that their methods of studying the function of speech sounds could be applied both synchronically, to a language as it exists, and diachronically, to a language as it changes. The Prague School stresses the function of elements within language, their contrast to one another, and the system formed by these elements. They developed distinctive feature analysis, by which each sound is regarded as composed of contrasting articulatory and acoustic features, with sounds perceived as different having at least one contrasting feature.

While they were known for their identification of the "distinctive features" of language, these theorists also explored culture and aesthetics. In fact, Jakobson considered language to be a means of the expression and development of culture. Thus, the general approach of the Prague school can be described as a combination of functionalism—every component of a language, such as phoneme, morpheme, word, sentence, exists to fulfil a particular function—and structuralism—the context not just the components is what is important. In addition, synchronic and diachronic approaches are seen as interconnected and influencing each other. They regard language as a system of subsystems, each of which has its own problems but these are never isolated since they are part of a larger whole. As such, a language is never in a state of equilibrium, but rather has many deviations. It is these deviations that allow the language to develop and function as a living system (Doubravová 1999).

### **Empirical Review**

This section reveals related studies on aspect of Nigeria English. (Ogeshi and Ingo 2020) investigate spoken Nigerian Pidgin by educated speakers and found no evidence of a continuum of lects between Nigerian Pidgin and English. Many speakers, however, speak both languages, and both are in close contact with each other, which keeps the question of the nature of their relationship on the agenda.

Ajani (2007) opines that global spread of the English language as one of the most far-reaching linguistic phenomena of our time is already an established fact. Evidence of this worldwide phenomenon of language contact, variation and change can be seen through such designations as world Englishes, new Englishes, modern Englishes, West African Englishes, South African English, Australian English, Indian English, to mention just a few. The phrase "Nigerian English" has also appeared in the last four decades or so.

Duru (2022) carried out a research on English as an International Language from the point of view of the Nigerian English variety. He applies the concept of Standard English to

the English language spoken in Nigeria and explains whether the term ‘Nigerian English’ could be added to the list of World Englishes (WEs). He also seeks to affirm that the English language spoken around the world is not just British English, the work expounds on World Englishes and Nigerian English. Eze and Igwenyi (2016) also carried out research on the varieties and features of Nigerian English today and found that the domestication and nativization of spoken English in a multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic environment like Nigeria has given rise to the varieties of Nigerian English notwithstanding the effort that is being made towards preserving and advancing the Standard English. Thus, Nigerian English is today one of the Englishes existing as a result of the interaction between foreign English and the local languages in Nigeria. Also, the varieties of Nigerian English have come to stay and is now part and parcel of the Nigerian people and so should be integrated into the education and other sectors of the Nigerian society.

#### **4. Data Analysis**

This section presents the analysis of the aspects of Nigerian English in Wole Soyinka’s *Alapata Apata*, using Dell Hymes Ethnography of Communication and Prague school’s language as a system of subsystems. For the purpose of analysis, samples of words, phrases and sentences identified in Soyinka’s *Alapata Apata* are categorized according to their features: coinages, borrowing, semantic extension, semantic narrowing. These are listed out one after the other and explained.

#### **Context in Wole Soyinka’s *Alapata Apata***

**Misuse of Power and Political Corruption.** Set in contemporary Nigeria, “*Alapata Apata*” explores the depth of misuse of power and political corruption among the elite in Nigeria. In the play, all the political leaders are corrupt, greedy and power drunk. For instance, in “*Alapata Apata*”. General, a representative of the military strand of the political institutions will do anything “to sit on natural resources”. He mobilises his troop to capture a site that he believes contains some minerals by force. He orders them to: “shoot any interloper in sight, burn any mining license or certificate of occupancy anyone tries to display and deal with the claimant with extreme and terminal prejudice.” (p.97).

**Godfatherism.** Typically, in Nigeria, politics thrives on *godfatherism*. Every political figure or candidate in an election has one or more godfathers who control them. In “*Alapata Apata*”, Wole Soyinka dramatises how politicians run from pillar to post, seeking endorsement during an election. *Daanielebo*, the failed bricklayer who suddenly becomes the governor of his state represents this crop of individuals. He talks about how he slavishly grabs political power through the influence of his godfather. Hear him:

“I prostrated myself to him. I licked his boot. I let him scrape his boots on my head. He taught me the dirty tricks I know, tricks I have improved on” (p.138).

**Underdevelopment.** This is one of the consequences of cluelessness and the self-seeking preoccupation of the ruling elites. As exposed in “*Alapata Apata*”, the Ajaokuta Steel Company



Limited is now moribund due to the cluelessness and negligence of the government. Despite being the largest steel mill in Nigeria, starting since 1979, the steel mill was mismanaged and remains incomplete. Through his character, Alaba, Soyinka describes the company as “the proverbial stone that gathers no moss” and produces a total sum of Zero after forty years of existence.

**Man’s Inhumanity to Man.** Another theme that can be found in “*Alapata Apata*” is man’s inhumanity to man. In the play, we see the sorry and poor conditions of the Nigerian people under poor leadership. Soyinka portrays Nigerians as a people plagued by poor electricity, insecurity, bad roads and several other kinds of calamities. Wole Soyinka also stresses the fact that workers and pensioners are maltreated by the government and their officials.

In Alaba’s words, “Pensioners queue at government pension office every month and faint or drop dead while waiting to collect pension”. Sadly, this is Nigeria where this inhumanity to man makes the headlines every day. How corrupt officials loot pension funds: the report on how over thirty billion nairas meant for over four thousand retirees was stolen by top government officials in 2012 could have served as a backdrop to this thematic discussion in “*Alapata Apata*”.

### **Aspects of Morpho-Semantic use of English in Soyinka’s *AlapataApata***

Morpho-semantics deals with the interface between morphology and semantics. In morphology, words are identified in their smallest units. Semantics studies the meaning of various units of grammar including words. In order words, bridging the gap between these linguistic levels gives birth to morpho-semantics; focusing the links between structures of words and their meanings. The concern of this section is to identify how Soyinka has communicated meaning through his coinages which are products of different word formation processes. The analysis below is done based on the word formation processes. Meaning would be analysed below in correlation with the contexts of the utterances according to their use in the text.

### **Coinages**

(i) ***Yorubafonia*** (front-page) (blending): the blend of *Yoruba* and *fonia*.

The coinage of ‘*Yorubafonia*’ stems out of the blend of two words namely: *Yoruba* and *fonia*. Soyinka’s choice of the blend of ‘*Yoruba*’, a conglomerate of a Nigerian language, blending with ‘*fonia*’ is suggestive of his endowment with powerful imagination. In Soyinka’s caption “*A play for Yorubafonia, Class for Xenophiles*”, the choice of *Yorubafonia* points to the class of people which the play is meant to benefit. Soyinka meant to direct the play to the lovers of the Yoruba culture; he has no other creative word to convey such identity but to adopt the blend of *Yoruba and fonia*. Its identical coinage ‘*Yorubaphobia*’ means “having hatred towards the Yoruba identity”. In order words, Soyinka draws his attention to those who have penchant for the Yoruba culture.

(ii) *Xenophiles* (on the cover page): a blend of *Xeno* and *Philes*.

The coinage of “*Xenophile*” is borne out of the process of blending. *Xenophily* or *xenophilia* means affection for foreign objects, manners, cultures or people. It is an antonym of *xenophobia* or *xenophoby*. The word is a modern coinage from the Greek “*xenos*” and “*philia*”. Soyinka succinctly affirmed that the play is meant for the class who have penchant and affection for foreign cultures.

3. *Falstaffian* is a blending of false and mafia,

The author: Moses Olaiyas *métier* was broad, socially disruptive, *Falstaffian* (p. xi).

In *falstaffian*, Soyinka blends two lexical items together to achieve literary aesthetics. The words that are blended are ‘false’ and ‘*maffian*’. Mafia means ‘gang’ and ‘clique’ and ‘false’ means untruthfulness. Soyinka reflects this in the excerpt below:

Moses Olaiya’s *métier* was broad, socially disruptive, *falstaffian*, while Kola’s was the economical, understand gesture and delivery (xi).

*Falstaffian*, as implied by the context of the text, means the Moses Olaiya’s job was less economical and full of gesture. Soyinka uses the word to describe someone who has a great sense of business ideas. Soyinka’s morphological creation was borne out of his creative use of language.

#### 4. *Butcherus*

Teacher...do nothing dear butcherus. (p. 45)

‘Butcherus’ is derived from the word ‘butcher’. Here, the playwright, Soyinka, has added a suffix ‘us’ to the existing word ‘butcher’. The morphological process is formed below: Butcher + us = *butcherus*. The word formation process above followed a morphological process of deriving a ADJECTIVE from a NOUN.

### Lexical Transfer

#### (i) *Alapata Apata*

The lexical item, ‘*Alapata*’ and ‘*apata*’ are transferred from Yoruba language to English. It is a product of blending and reduplication. The blend of ‘*alapata*’ meaning the ‘seller of meat’ and ‘*apata*’ meaning ‘meat selling’ is suggestive to thematic interpretation in the text. The blend could, however, be effective in the coinage of “*The alapata of apata*”. The process of reduplication is reflected in the sound effect of the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ and the voiceless alveolar plosive /t/. This is reflected in /pa/ and /ta/. The ‘pa’ and ‘ta’ are reduplicated to appeal to the sense of killing and selling: ‘pa’ meaning ‘to kill’ and ‘ta’ meaning ‘to sell’. Interpretively, what appears innocuous in the coinage is the wrongful application of stress patterns on two words – *Alapata Apata* which changes both their meaning and range in a manner that reinforces the oddity of a society that is far gone in excesses of the absurd. Play on

words can also be identified in the purposive choosing of the title which can mean different thing entirely with just the difference in the tone used in the pronunciation of *Alapata Apata*

1. *Alapata Apata*: The butcher man in *Apata* town
2. *Alapata Apata*: One who cuts/slices rocks in *Apata* town
3. *Alapata Apata*: The official title of an Oba, the king of *Apata* town.
4. *Alapata Apata*: meaning the owner of shield in *Apata* town

The title in itself is a Yoruba word that is polysemous with these different meanings clearly portrayed in the text where we see Alaba, a butcher who sits on the rock without allowing anybody there.

**(ii) *Akamu***

Still, as they say, native *Akamu*, or white man's tea, it's the same hot water, and they both scald the throat. (p.59).

*Akamu* is a metaphor used to qualify the feat he achieved as an *alapata* while whiteman's tea is a metaphor of a degree which he missed. Alaba uses this proverb as he expresses his wish to have had a university degree. However, degree or no degree, he has achieved and surpasses what people with degree can achieve. So, his achievement as an *Alapata* is almost more prestigious than what a degree could have offered him.

**(iii) *Kobokobo***

The *Koboko* which is used for the junior wife, you think it won't first descend on the senior wife's back (p. 66).

The lexical item *Kobokobo* is Yoruba name for horsewhip. Alaba uses the proverb to express the punishment that awaits the two school boys when they get back to school. He lets the senior boy know that the painter alone is not the one to be punished by their teacher. Senior boy will also share out of the punishment if the work is not done to the

**(iv) *Sokoto* (a city in Northern Nigeria) / *Sokoto* (a brand of trousers)**

So he's gone searching in *Sokoto* for what was right here in his *Sokoto* (p. 136 )

*Sokoto* is the name of an ancient city in Northern part of Nigeria, while *Sokoto* is the trousers that are worn. The proverb is directed to the conduct of the soldiers – General, who led his force to *Apata* to dislocate Alaba from the rock. However, the wrong accent on the sign post with the reputations that General has built for himself over the year made the soldiers not able to achieve their purpose. So, they have to shift their search to another place. What they go looking for in

Sokoto is right very close to them, right in the pocket of their trousers. **Lexical transfer/play on words**

(v) **Orita Mefa**. Total Transformation of '*orita-mefa*'

Teacher: The foundation stone for the TOTAL TRANSFORMATION OF *ORITA MEFA* ... (p. 88)

The coinage of '*Orita-mefa*' is a product of hyphenated compounding and reduplication. In the Yoruba cosmology, '*Orita*' means 'crossroads'. Therefore, '*orita-mefa*' refers to that crossroads that lead to 'six destinations. This coinage is also suggestive of reduplication as certain phonemic structures are repeated. The phonological repetition of /t/ sound in '*orita*' and '*mefa*' is suggestive of creating a rhythmical effect and powerful sensation. As portrayed above, the use of these words are deliberate to fully bring the readers into their texts, these words are used by the writer instead of the word helicopter to show the speaker is an illiterate or someone who has limited knowledge of the English language.

(vi) **Adireh** /doh doh -re/. This refers to cloth is libeled *adireh* as in (p. ix) The coinage of '*Adireh*', a Yoruba word, is a product of the word '*adire*'. The playwright added the letter 'h' in order to make it English.

### **Loan Blend**

Loan Blend is one of the commonest features of Nigerian English. It is often analysed alongside with code-mixing and code-switching. This is so, due to the limited diction or lexical items in the writers' language of communication (usually English) to communicate his cultural norms and traditions. Loaning is also referred to as borrowing. A few cases of this are exemplified below:

(i) **Suya Master**

Teacher: ..... Even the master Butcher himself remarked it... (p. 10)

Suya is a spicy meat skewer which is a popular food item in West Africa. It is traditionally prepared by the Hausa people of northern Cameroon, Nigeria, Niger, Ghana, and some parts of Sudan. Suya is generally made with skewered beef, ram, or chicken. Innards such as kidney, liver and tripe are also used. The coinage of '*suya*' and 'master' as collocative pairs could also be accounted for as mixing, since *Suya* is not a word peculiar to the English language.

The same morphological process affects the formation of '*suya master*' is also reflected in *Suya specialist* (p.42) and *Suya section* (p. 42).

**(ii) Soja Man**

You can take *soja-man* out of uniform but you cannot take uniform out of *Soja-man* (p. 138).

Alaba uses this proverb to confirm that a soldier remains a soldier forever, even after their retirement. They hang their uniforms and later put it on during special operation. Nobody challenges them for doing so. Figuratively, it is difficult to change a man from his old self. Your behaviour remains a part of you. Loan blend

**(iii) Our Moslem aafa**

2<sup>nd</sup> PUPIL: And our neighbor is a Moslem *aafa* who also knows him... (p. 53)

The use of *aafa* is a typical example of loaning which is also a product of lexical insertion. The word ‘*alfa*’ is an Islamic lexis borrowed into English language. ‘*Alfa*’: an *Islamic* scholar known as an Alfa is a man of many characteristics in the eyes of Nigerian media.

**(iv) Meat Carver**

Teacher: Our humble villages would produce the Chief Meat Carver... (p. 42)

A meat carver is the person that uses pieces of meat to achieve a purpose. He uses it to create other things such as *Suya* of different brands and types. The coinage of ‘meat carver’ is an unhyphenated compounding. The word ‘meat’ refers to an animal flesh that is eaten as food. Humans have hunted and killed animals for meat since prehistoric times. The advent of civilization allowed the domestication of animals such as chickens, sheep, rabbits, pigs and cattle. Just like in one of the analysis above, a type of meat is referred to as ‘beef’, that is, the meat from cow. ‘Meat carver’ therefore means “one who carves meat”.

**(v) Akisident**

Alaba: Oh, that was only an *akisident*... (p. 119)

*Akisident*’ is a loan word from English to Yoruba. It is used instead of ‘accident’. It is a creative way of making illiterate members of the society to use language to achieve effective communication. In Yoruba language, consonant cluster is not allowed the way it is done in English language.

- (a) Accident: /aksident/ (VCCVCVCC), English, the source language.
- (b) Akisident: /akisideti/ (VCVCVCVCV), Yoruba, the target language.

(vi) *Garaviti*

Alaba: *Garaviti, Garaviti!* What is that one again (p. 161)?

The playwright, instead of using the word 'gravity' adopted '*garaviti*' Here, Soyinka has done this to create an imaginative effect in the mind of the audience.

(vii) *Oyinbo style*

Alaba: I see. A modern marriage, *oyinbo* style (p. 121)

The coinage of the word '*oyinbo style*' is symbolic. The playwright foregrounds the uniqueness and disparities between the Western and the African cultures. The word '*Oyinbo*' is a Yoruba word used in Yoruba and Nigerian Pidgin to refer to white people. In Nigeria, it is generally used to refer to a person of Western descent or people perceived to not be culturally African, or someone who does not behave like a Yoruba or generally a Nigerian, because Nigerians are rugged in nature. They can scale through any difficulty and Nigerians are mostly not picky. The word is pronounced '*Oyinbo*' in Yoruba speaking areas and '*Oyibo*' in Igbo language. Soyinka, through the coinage of '*Oyinbo style*' refers to the peculiarities in the western ways and cultures.

### The Use of Pidgin

*And you fit sleep while fire dey burn for your roof* (p.3)

Use of Pidgin language is common among educated and illiterate members of the society. Members of the community of Apata, such as mechanic, use Pidgin language to express their agitation about why Alaba Alapata would have continued to sit on the rock for about thirty days doing nothing. So, rumours were spread about whether Alapata has a dangerous ambition which would have led to his sitting down in such a place doing nothing.

### 5. Conclusion

The use of English by Wole Soyinka in *Alapata Apata* is a reflection of the situation of English in a second language environment. Aspects of Morpho-semantic use of English in Nigeria such as coinages, reduplication, compounding, loaning, clipping and others are intentionally used by writers such as Wole Soyinka to reflect their works as products of African cultures such as Yoruba from where he originated. The circumstances that surround the writing of a literary text, the stylistic end the author intends to achieve and the complex social reality of the text are a part of what influence its meaning.

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