

ADVERBS IN THE NIGERIAN PIDGIN ENGLISH: THE CASE OF *THE ROAD* BY WOLE SOYINKA.

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ABSTRACT:

A pidgin or pidgin language is a simplified language that develops as a means of communication between two or more groups that do not have a language in common. Nigerian Pidgin is indisputably one of the most efficient means of inter-ethnic communication among the densely culturally and linguistically heterogeneous people of Nigeria. This language is currently undergoing a process of social expansion as a result of its dynamic socio-cultural relevance and increased communicative demands, hence its use in some literary works by some writers from Nigeria among which Wole Soyinka. This paper investigates the use of adverbs in the Pidgin English of Soyinka's *The Road*. Our concern, here, is to know the distribution of Adverbs in the play. In other words, does the use of adverbs reflect the social status of characters? Our analysis will consist in going through the play to track down all the adverbs used by the characters of the play.

Keywords: Nigerian Pidgin, Language Change, Adverbs, Social stratification. Language planning.

RESUME

Un pidgin est un langage simplifié qui se développe sous forme de moyen de communication entre deux ou plusieurs groupes d'individus qui ne partagent pas la même langue. Le Pidgin Nigérian est sans nul doute l'un des moyens de communication inter-ethnique les plus effectifs entre les locuteurs qui sont culturellement et linguistiquement hétérogènes au niveau du Nigeria. Cette langue est actuellement engagée dans un processus d'expansion sociale en raison de sa pertinence socio-culturelle dynamique et des besoins de communication de plus en plus croissants, d'où son utilisation dans certaines œuvres littéraires par des écrivains du Nigeria dont Wole Soyinka. En effet, cet article examine l'utilisation des adverbes dans le pidgin anglais à partir de l'œuvre théâtrale intitulée *La Route* écrite par Wole Soyinka. Notre préoccupation, ici, est de connaître la répartition des adverbes dans cette pièce? En d'autres termes, l'utilisation des adverbes reflète-t-elle le statut social des personnages? Notre analyse consistera à parcourir la pièce afin de traquer tous les adverbes utilisés par les personnages de la pièce.

Mots-clés: Pidgin nigérian, changement linguistique, adverbes, stratification sociale, aménagement.

INTRODUCTION

A play is a form of literature written by a playwright, usually consisting of scripted dialogue between characters, intended for theatrical performance rather than just reading. In other words, the play is intended to tell a story about life or characters and it is performed. Several key elements of a drama include character development, plot, setting and theme. The main character, called the protagonist, expresses his feelings through his words and actions. He is often seen as the hero.

Professor, the protagonist of *The Road*, searches for the Word, or Logos, the inward rational principle of language, consciousness, and the natural universe. As the proprietor of the “Aksident Store”, Professor also dedicates his life to the knowledge and propagation of death, which the Word symbolizes. In his quest for the Word, Professor will engage in conversation with other characters on the road where we find people from different social origins, speaking different languages, among which the Nigerian Pidgin English. Our work will first consist in shedding light on the Nigerian Pidgin, then we will explore the community of *The Road* into discovering its various social classes. In the last part of our work, we will see whether the use of adverbs by the different characters reflect their social origins.

I- ON THE NIGERIAN PIDGIN

New Englishes, modern Englishes, international Englishes, world Englishes, South African English, Australian English, Indian English are some of the designations used to describe the new varieties of English bourgeoning all over the world. These new “Englishes” are, in fact, the result of the global spread of English that began with British colonialism during the nineteenth century.

According to J. N. Ogu (1992), N. G. Walsh (1967) was among the first to draw attention to the existence of a variety of English Language known as “Nigerian English” (NE). Ogu quoted Walsh by saying that “*The varieties of English spoken by educated Nigerians, no matter what their language, have enough features in common to mark off a general type, which may be called Nigerian English (1992: 88).*”

A pidgin language is a simplified language used as a form of communication between groups of people who do not share a common language. The origin of the term "pidgin" is

uncertain. It may come from a mispronunciation of the English word "business," or it may come from "pigeon," which is used to mean "bird" in some pidgin languages. Because they are learned quickly and spoken by people with different linguistic backgrounds, pidgin languages usually have simple grammar. Another characteristic of these contact languages is that they tend to have a very small vocabulary compared to "normal" languages. Now why have we decided to carry out such a study on adverbs from a literary work? In fact, as the linguist, J.F. Wiredu (1991:10) asserts:

Literature may be written to express personal experience or emotions, explain a concept, or simply to educate readers. These are some of the social functions of literature. But a play is art. Therefore, it is structured in such a way as to produce aesthetic response in the reader or audience. The important thing about language is its communicability. Any proposition is aimed at a specific end. This end is achieved only when the listener or reader understands the proposition. Thus, communication breaks down if a piece of dramatic work does not easily yield itself to comprehension. It becomes frustrating, indeed.

Here, our purpose is to show that one may postulate that the play is a mere representation of life, but it should not be forgotten that it presents life in a sort of realistic way since performers are somehow put in a real situation of life, communicating with one another. So, what will be at stake here is the snapshot of the way each of them views and perceives the world through the use and/or of adverbs. But before all it is worth making some precisions concerning the Nigerian Pidgin as far as the English Pidgin is concerned.

1.1. Nigerian Pidgin (NP) vs. Pidgin English (PE)

We have been warned by Mensah (2011: 5-6) who state that

"There have been a lot of misconceptions about the status of NP and PE. Most references in the literature (Agheyisi 1984, Mafeni 1971, Mufwene 2007, Orisawayi 2007, etc.) combine the two varieties and refer generally to them as Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE). In Nigeria, where the two forms of pidgin are spoken, there is discrete distinction between the two genres. NP has been identified as a language with its unique linguistic structure and identity. It evolved within a known and specified time frame and undergoes stages of growth to attain some levels of linguistic refinement. Some of the known varieties of NP include Ikom, Calabar, Warri, Port-Harcourt, Onitsha, and Ajegunle among others (The Warri variety is fast expanding towards creolization). In these varieties, there is conventionalization of their lexical items".

He further went one by saying that Pidgin English on the other hand, is "*...a substandard attempt by a large proportion of ill-equipped, illiterate Nigerians to manipulate the English language*"

(Elugbe and Omamor 1991:66¹). However, for the purpose of our analysis we will not discriminate both Nigerian Pidgin and Pidgin English. We will rather put both in the same basket and consider them as the Nigerian Pidgin English as spoken in *The Road* since this play itself can be considered as a microcosm of the macrocosm which is in fact the whole population of Nigerian speakers. In fact, in this bulk all the speakers are using the English language but some of them we will find speak good English, another cluster speaking Pidgin English and others who speak Nigerian Pidgin. This will surely help present the speakers of *The Road* into different groups.

II- SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN *THE ROAD*

In the society, people are mostly classified according to their position pertaining to whether they belong to the low, the middle or the upper class. This reality will consist in putting them into clusters based on shared socio-economic conditions. When differences lead to greater status, power or privilege for some groups over the other this phenomenon is known as social stratification. It is therefore a system by which society ranks categories of people in a hierarchy. Our paper is based on the use of adverbs by the characters of *The Road* which is a play. And the setting of the play itself is a road which is used by lot of people since we may all agree that it is likely to encounter people from all the different background when we venture to take a road.

In this part, we will try to present the different characters and see whether there are similarities and differences among them. This will rightly help us have a picture of the speech community through the different interactions. Our purpose here will not consist in giving a full description of the characters but just give their social origin from their role in the play, as stated by the author, in order to have their linguistic identity since sociolinguistics have investigated the correlation between language and society.

PROFESSOR is the proprietor of a drivers' haven; formerly he was a Sunday school teacher and lay reader. As his name may let know he is a Professor, someone who is supposed to be highly educated and belonging to the upper social class. CHIEF-IN-TOWN is a politician and as such he is supposed to be from the upper class since we expect a politician to

¹ Quoted by by Mensah (2011: 5-6)

be someone whose purpose is to lead others; and one could do that only if he is perceived as a social model this does not mean that a politician may not be a self-made person, the one who originates from the lower class. SAY TOKYO KID, a driver, the captain of a group of thugs may also be considered as coming from the lower class since he is member of a gang of thugs. In fact, thugs are mostly expected to be people considered as renegades, the shame of the society, mostly originating from the lower class.

Since Murano he is a personal servant to Professor so we may infer that if Murano is to serve Professor, both may not come from the same social class. Here, we may establish a master-servant relationship and since Professor is the master Murano will naturally belong to the lower class. KOTONU as a truck driver, SAMSON who is a passenger tout and driver's mate to Kotonu and SALUBI, a driver-trainee are expected to be from the same social class which may be the middle one. PARTICULARS JOE, a policeman on the road may be considered as someone who enjoys the status of a member of the middle class. How the different characters are going to use the adverbs all over the play?

III- THE DISTRIBUTION OF ADVERBS IN THE PLAY

Our concern in this paper is the use of adverbs by the different characters of *The Road*.

3.1. Definition of the Adverb

In English an adverb is a part of speech. It is any word that modifies any other part of language: verbs, adjectives (including numbers), clauses, sentences and other adverbs, except for nouns; modifiers of nouns are primarily determiners and adjectives. Adverbs typically answer questions such as how?" (or "in what way?), when?, where?, why? and to what extent?. In English, they often end in -ly. When they answer 'how' it is usually in what way. When they answer 'when' it is usually a date or a word such as yesterday or today.

3.2. Methodology

Now, what are the different occurrences of the use of adverbs by each of the characters of *The Road*? Our task consisted in reading the play and noting down all the different cases of use of the adverbs by the characters. Each individual use of an adverb was taken into account

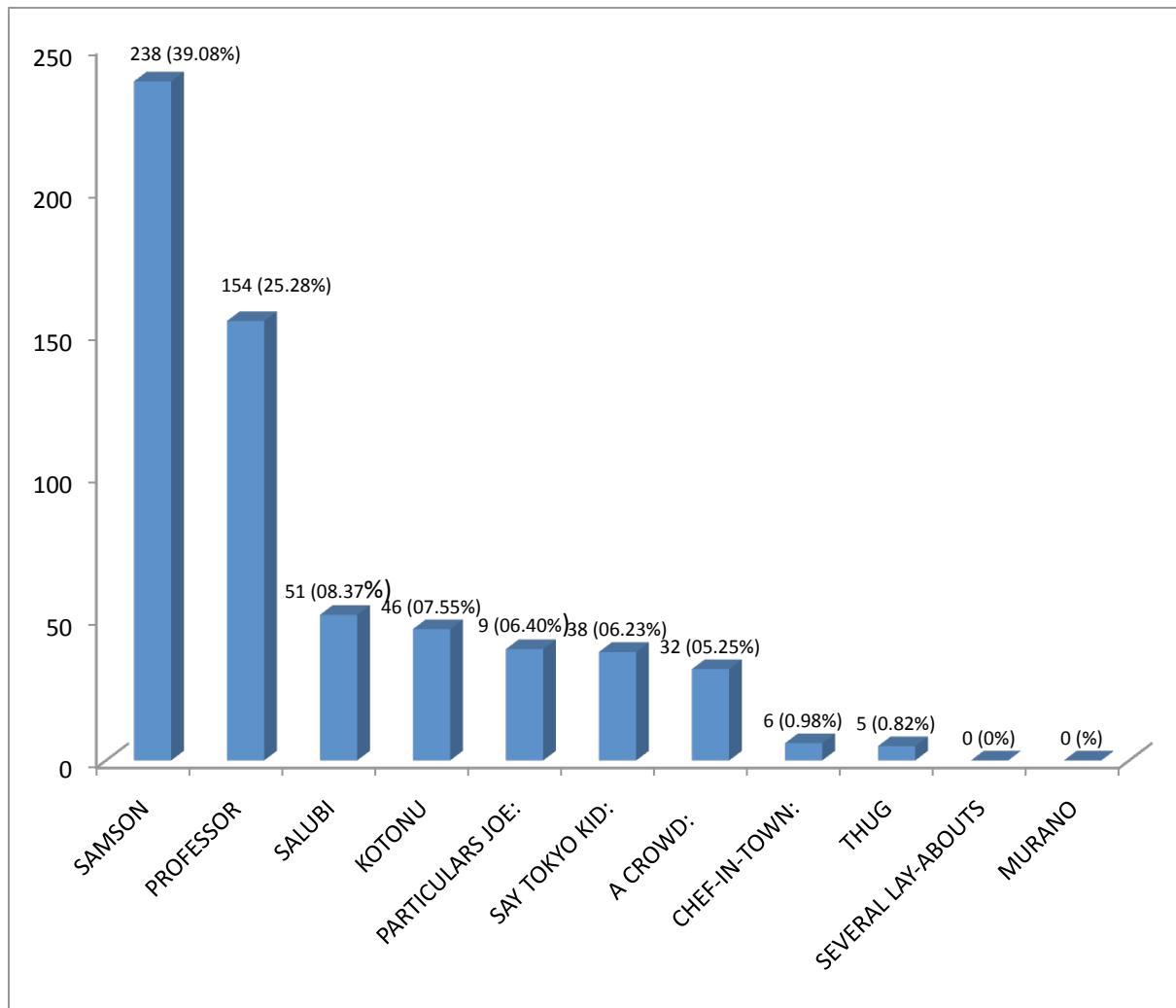
and when the same adverbs is used many times in the same sentence and even in the same sentence we considered each of the different appearances. Followings are the results pertaining to the different occurrences of adverbs in *The Road* per characters. We relied on the list of all the adverbs of the English language in order to see each time one of the characters uses an adverb in order to have a total number of the use by them.

3.3. Results

CHARACTERS	ADVERBS OCCURRENCES	PERCENTAGE
SAMSON	238	39.08
PROFESSOR	154	25.28
SALUBI	51	08.37%
KOTONU	46	07.55%
PARTICULARS JOE:	39	06.40%
SAY TOKYO KID:	38	06.23%
A CROWD:	32	05.25%
CHEF-IN-TOWN:	06	0.98%
THUG	05	0.82%
SEVERAL LAY-ABOUTS	00	0%
MURANO	00	0%
TOTAL NUMBER OF ADVERBS OCCURRENCES	609	100%

The table above helps us have the figures concerning the occurrences of adverbs used by characters in *The Road*. These figures have also been expressed in percentage and represented in a graph.

Adverbs Occurrences in the play:



3.4. Analysis

From the results, we can cluster these characters on the basis of their use of adverbs in the play as follows:

SAMSON (**39,08%**) and PROFESSOR (**25,28%**) display the higher rate of use of adverbs amounting to **64.36%** which almost represent **2/3** of the total occurrence of adverbs. SALUBI, KOTONU, PARTICULARS JOE, SAY TOKYO KID and A CROWD have a total rate of **33.80%** representing **1/3**. CHEF-IN-TOWN and a THUG have a total rate of **01.80%**. AS for MURANO (**0%**) and SEVERAL LAY-ABOUTS (**0%**) they have the lowest rate which is **0**. The case of MURANO is a special one because in the play, this character is mute, he is unable to speak. This could naturally explain why he does not make use of adverbs because he cannot speak at all!

3.5. Interpretation

Does this distribution display any case of social affinity? In other words, if a character uses lot of adverbs or not so many does this imply that it has something to do with his/her social background? What is the rate of the use of adverbs according to the social origins of speakers? We can observe that Samson has the highest rate of the use of adverbs despite the fact that he is not from the higher social class. Samson is from the middle class and has the highest rate whereas Professor who is from the highest social class has the second rate. The difference between Professor and Samson is very significant.

Salubi, Kotonu, Particulars Joe, Say-Tokyo-Kid and The Crowd have a relatively the same figures and almost the same rate while we know that among them Say-Tokyo-Kid is considered as coming from the lower class given the role he plays in the play. Their rate is very low for speakers coming from the middle class because they are supposed to be well educated and likely to make some comment about the language. As we all know, adverbs are used to modify other parts of speech. So, using the adverbs can be considered as knowing how to reflect or to comment upon the language we use. However, is it a specific way of speaking which consists in not avoiding the use of adverbs that has been adopted by the character Chief-in-Town?

As for Chief-in-Town, a politician he is supposed to be from the upper class while we notice that he has one of the lowest rate in the use of adverbs in the play. As a politician he is supposed to be someone who knows a lot in the society so as to be able to lead others. Normally, he should be capable of using all the different elements from any part of speech. However, can we infer that the fact of not using the adverbs can show a sort of inability in using them properly? Not really, since this may be the result of a choice made by the speaker each time he/she mobilizes the language.

CONCLUSION

This paper has helped us go through a play, which The Road by Wole Soyinka in order to see the use of adverbs by all the characters. Since a play is intended to represent life, it was an opportunity for us to see how each speaker uses the language which is the Nigerian Pidgin. Since a pidgin language is a fundamentally simpler form of communication, the phonology and grammar are usually as simple as possible and this leads to the loss of some

parts of speech. Our characters coming from different social background we tried to see whether the extent to which they use adverbs will reflect their social class. From the results, it appears that the occurrence of adverbs does not reflect the social origins of speakers/characters. In fact, it is not possible to state that speakers coming from the upper social class will use more adverbs than those coming from the lower class. The fact of using adverbs or not may be determined by other factors different from the social background.

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