

## IMPLICATURE CONSEQUENCES OF THE THEME OF MISTAKEN SELF-IDENTITY IN OLA ROTIMI'S *THE GODS ARE NOT TO BLAME*

YomiOkunowo

Department of English,  
Tai Solarin University of Education,  
Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State,  
NIGERIA.  
[yomiokunowo@gmail.com](mailto:yomiokunowo@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

*Mistaken self-identity is central to birth crisis, uncontrolled temper and passion for responsibility in Ola Rotimi's The gods are not to Blame (gods) (1971). This paper analyzes the meaning façade revealed by the play's characters' dialogic utterances and the engendered consequences. To do this, I focus on the processes of conversational implicature. Conversational implicature (CI) Grice (1975) is an offspring of Austin's (1962) Speech Act Theory (SAT), and as a sub-theory of pragmatics, it concerns itself with How to Do Things with Words. I hold that meaning can be implicated in a literary text by what the author makes of his characters; that is what the character thinks, does and says, particularly in a dialogic context and the circumstances set up by the author. The main issue in gods is speech act functions and how meaning is implicated within the variable of conversational implicature. I analyze the production of language events and the dynamics of their implicatures as products of ideational factors identified in the play.*

**Keywords:** Mistaken Self-Identity, Conversational Implicature. Meaning, ideational

### INTRODUCTION

The play is a heavily cited and discussed one in pedagogy and literary criticism. It is a popular curriculum text in colleges and universities, and among western critics, it gained its 'notoriety' and attraction for being an adaptation of that Greek classic tragedy, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. Thus, Goff and Simpson (2007) wonders:

How can plays that dilate on power of the past, as the inexorable Curse of Oedipus, claim to articulate the postcolonial moment in Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa and United States? One answer is that the figure of Oedipus has been so widely disseminated, especially through the discourse of psychoanalysis, that he can feature not only as an object within the canon, bequeath, like a curse from one generation to the next, but also as the interstitial medium of the canon itself, complete with its many variations. Ola Rotimi's *the gods are no to Blame* challenges even this expanded notion of cultural inheritance by its characterization of Oedipus, and itself, as a miscegenated entity.

Much of the conclusions drawn in the criticisms of the play have been in the tradition of literary meaning speculations. I believe that a linguistic approach, like this one, will not only be a useful addition, but also unveils the intended meaning of the play. Thus, the issues being raised are: (1) Being an internally organized dramatic dialogue, what are its conversational motivations, sequences and consequences for its metaphorical immediate situation and characters, and its real world readers? (2) How is meaning implicated and understood within the stylo-pragmatic norm of

the play vis-à-vis our real world experience? By the time answers are provided to these questions, the play would have been analyzed as a conversational interaction whose implicature is engendered by the socio-cultural milieu of its wider context. This paper will proceed by a brief look at linguistics (pragmatics) in the business of literary analysis. This will be followed by a discussion of the applicable theoretical models in the analysis of the play. In addition, appropriately, the thematic consternation of the play will follow, within the variables of its composition as a drama, bearing in mind its linguistic, immediate and wider situations sociological world. This is indexical to the interpretation and conversational implicature within the framework of the proposed theoretical models. A major component of my analysis is the condensation of the identified speech acts and functions network, leading to a drawn up meaning façade in the play.

## LINGUISTIC (PRAGMATIC) ANALYSIS OF LITERARY DISCOURSE

The use of language in literature is a linguistic variation which makes a veritable component of pragmatic study, especially when one contemplates the orthodoxy of literary speculation of meaning in literary criticism, where meaning, the goal of criticism, is arrived at primarily from the ‘thinking’ of the critic rather than in conjunction with empirical data from actual language use. A literary text like *gods* should be conceived as an example of language use. It is a piece of language already used. It is a text with all linguistic variables, and as Adejare (1992:6) puts it “the text is a unit of language that has been used in specific context by a text producer with the purpose of communicating a message through the use of linguistic signs existing within the language’s semiotic universe.”

The relationship between language and literature is a dialectical one. Literature presents nuances of meaning, and pragmatics, being involved in the retrieval of meaning in utterances becomes a strong linguistic tool in literary analysis, like the one under consideration. Thus, understanding linguistic processes in literature is an occasion of explicating the meaning of a piece of literary product.

## THEORETICAL BASIS

The theoretical corpus we are applying in analyzing *gods* is a convergence of related pragmatic concepts. Austin’s Speech Act Theory (SAT), Grice’s systematization of it in his Cooperative Principle (CP) and Searle’s (1969) categorization of speech acts, including Face as espoused by Brown and Levinson (1987) will bear on interpreting implicature in the conversational interaction in the play.

Austin’s SAT is how we use words to perform actions. His postulation is essentially a counter point between the truth of an utterance and what that utterance actually impacts. Following Austin, the meaning of an utterance is not in its being false or true but in its performative. “Odewale: *Me an Ijekun man, a stranger in the midst of your tribe*” (23) for example, is not an utterance to suggest the ethnic origin of the protagonist (as defines by its Constative) but to express suspicion of the enmity within on the basis of tribal origin and difference. As we observed, it is right to think that the “uptake” by the textual recipient of a speech act may be distinct from the norm due to background as yet unknown to the reader. In *gods*, for sometime, it is the reverse, and that distinction is made by the ideational mistaken self-identity factor. Clearly SAT is a distinction made, according to Lyons (1977), between saying – constatives and performatives, and there are three components of SAT: What are called locutionary act (LA),

which is the utterance propositional content or state; illocutionary act (IA), where an utterance is deemed to have been used and performed an act, a speech act, and finally perlocutionary act (PA), where an effect, 'uptake' has been generated on the hearer.

The convergence of IA and PA are described as illocutionary force (IF). However, IF has been described as binary as there may be a difference between the IF concerned with the speaker and that of the hearer. Indeed Ismail Tahib (Literary Stylistics No 23) concludes that:

...there is the possibility that the actual illocutionary force registered by a character in response to another character's speech in a literary work, may be different from that registered by the reader...

In conversational communication a case is made in Grice's CP between what is "actual", that is what speaker externalizes and what is "intended", that is what the speaker has in mind. In general, what the protagonist, Odewale, has in mind is erroneous, engendered by the identity crisis in the play (unknown to him and too few of his hearers until toward the end of the play). The "actual" and "intended" is defined by what is called direct and indirect speech acts and processed by Grice's dimensions of language use of maxims, that is whether an utterance is adequate, gives enough information, relevant and orderly presented. The use and understanding of these maxims engineer the progress, tensions and strains among the characters-interlocutors in *gods*, and it provides the implicature that mars or makes the relationship among the character-metaphors. It is an occasion for drawing inferences and meaning on the part of the readers.

The "intended" meaning generated by IA is interpreted by Searle's (1969) categorization of speech act functions that may be illocuted at both ends of direct and indirect illocutionary acts and the 'force' generated thereof. The categories as espoused by Searle include: *representatives* (*assertives* Alston 2000), that is, commitment to the truth of and asserting a proposition, *directives*; making hearer to behave in a certain way, *commissives*; commitment of speaker to a line of action, *expressives*; attitudinal status of the speaker about a situation, *declaratives* (*exercitives* Alston 2000); "social status" changing uttering acts engendered by "institutional role or status". Odewale's linguistic sensibilities as interpreted by his social, sociological and psychological status mingle with his interaction with his countrymen. It also maps into the making public Odewale's background- the curse and the crime- despite attempts by his confidants to save the day and him the overwhelming shame. Odewale's fiery resistance proves salutary to challenge, on some occasions, the possibility of holding an individual above the larger society over which that individual presides.

The "Dialogic plot-exposition" Cooper (1977), a design understood within the paradigm of metaphorical speakers, metaphorical hearers and readers Pratt (1977), as reported by Hancher (1978) is analogous to author, metaphorical speakers/metaphorical hearers, and readers paradigm, an arrangement in which literary text implicates meaning, whereby exchanges among the character-metaphors will involve inferences by the reader about inferences the interlocutors are likely to make. This is from the standpoint that language and context are inter-woven elements. A piece of language only becomes meaningful when used in context, Meaning can only be contemplated as textured by context, and this is what pragmatics contributes to our understanding of the phenomenon called 'meaning'. Meaning is a complex concept to decipher in a piece of literature, particularly when we contemplate the contention that context seems to predetermine language forms in literature. Consequently, following John Lye (1996), the author, the text and the reader become interpreters of the meaning a work of literature implicates.

The concept of “Face” as an element of politeness in conversational interaction is germane to the analysis of Odewale’s fierce responses and contemplation of events and people around him. “Face” as illustrated by Brown and Levinson (1987), is a process, in conversation, of creating, sustaining, applying or losing politeness. Face is a safeguard on the ability or the encouragement given in a conversation social environment without any feelings of uneasiness. Thus, an act of speech can either be negative, becoming “Face threatening” or positive encouraging interactants’ comfort. In a way, Face reads into Grice’s maxims of CP, in particular, relation and manner maxims. Consequently, interlocutor-characters can either lose or safe face on the basis of linguistic realities of the situation and whether socio-cultural identities have been subverted or respected. Odewale’s self-dignity is threatened in two major ways. His leadership in always being able to find solution to the community’s problem is in jeopardy. His birth and ethnic identity is under suspicion. The former forms the basis on which, as a ‘stranger’ he is made a king in another community. Being labeled *omo ale* (a bastard) or described as an *atoruniwa* (a person of no origin) is a psychological onslaught on one’s personality and ego, particularly, persons of his royal status. These are particularly sensitive issues in Yoruba cultural milieu. Thus, when an old man advertently addresses Odewale in proverb, saying “the butterfly thinks himself a bird” (59), subverting his identity and casting doubt on it, it is akin to being described as above. It sets in motion a psychological riot and paranoid thought in Odewale. Odewale’s evident xenophobia, later on, seems to trump up everything else, including his strategy to discover the killer of king Adetusa and his irredeemable dignified self-presentation, a necessity arising from the crisis of his birth. It is within these immediate contextual variables that the protagonist makes decisions, and predictably, it is within this context, as we shall see in our analysis, that meaning is implicated.

Within the psychological domain of the play, a theater of ‘irrational’ decisions, misgiving and mistrust play themselves out on the part of Odewale, bringing to bear on our understanding of how the dialogic-plot of the conversation of the drama criss-crosses Grice’s CP to implicate meaning within the spectrum of Searle’s categorization of speech act functions.

## ANALYSIS

The tragedy of Odewale is rooted in the cosmic world. According to Yoruba worldview, the individual chooses, by own free will, whatever will befall one in the here-world. The reality and the enormity of what Odewale does- defending his origin, defending his people inadvertently- can only be interpreted as his cosmic pick. The prologue sets this out: Odewale will kill his father and marry his mother. That choice is made in the world beyond. This presupposes that whatever Odewale would become, this choice must be fulfilled, thus making him a sport in the hands of his own fate. This being so, no mortal or gods can control Odewale’s destiny. The choice has been made and sanctioned, it awaits fulfillment. Consequently, any effort to thwart that destiny can only and will only lead to its fulfillment. Odewale’s interaction, what he says and does and what other people do to him in synthesis of his political authority, birth, origin and behaviour become the road map to implicating the ideational factors identified of mistaken self-identity, fiery temper and passion for responsibility in the fulfillment of his chosen fate.

These three factors are in consequence of one another. The identity crisis is an ego-hurting factor, which carries the responsibility that must be redeemed. For Odewale to discover his birth, prove his innocence and once again show being worthy and capable of leadership as a ‘stranger’ in a land being plagued by an unknown disease are in counter position to one another.

The search for one reveals the other, and that search itself is a process of responsible leadership. Odewale sees these as tasks that must be tackled, with all ruthlessness, and resolved once and for all. This need and passion are mainly responsible for Odewale's uncontrollable hot temper. He wants what he wants and wants it fast, any seeming obstacle in his way, to fulfill his chosen 'career', even himself, is doomed.

For the purpose of grasping the implicature in the text, my analysis will identify the structure-sequence domains of what is interplayed for meaning implicature in terms of "situational-sequence" and contextual façade of the drama. This contextual façade provides the mutual imaginative immediate situation within which the interlocutors/ character-metaphors interact. It maps into the real world experience; the wider situation in which the meaning is implicated in terms of the reader's interaction with the text as a literary discourse:

### **Situational-Sequence**

#### **Birth**

(Merry singing and drumming).

NARRATOR: The struggles of man begin at birth.

...A baby has just been born to King Adetusa

And his wife Ojuola...of this land of Kutuje. (1).

-birth, growth and development as struggles through life; struggles as process of life.

-beginning of life, joyous ceremonial occasion.

-location (origin), royal house(social status).

Then they call a Preast of Ifa, as is the custom, to divine

The future that this boy has brought with him. (2).

-introduction of supernatural, a concept of Yoruba worldview introduced.

-a factor that reveals life direction, life direction uncontrollable by humans.

BABA FAKUNLE: This boy, he will kill his own father and

Then marry his own mother! (3)

-direction of the new-born's life revealed; it is a taboo and an abomination.

-direction to be mitigated.

NARRATOR: The only way to stop it is to kill, kill the unlucky

messenger of the gods, kill the boy.

Preast bears boy to Gbonka, the King's special

messenger,...to the evil grove. (3-4).

-boy (assumed) killed to prevent prediction coming to pass.

**Birth-Identity Crisis**

ODEWALE: Who ordered you to kill me?

GBONKA: The man behind you, my lord, the priest of Ogun.

OGUN PRIEST [*gravely*] It is the custom: when the gods command, we  
men must obey!

ODEWALW: Whose child was I ?

OGUN PRIEST: It is too late now, you must know the last, even if---

ODEWALE: [in a frantic scream]. I said who gave me b-i-r-t-h!

OGUN PRIEST: She. The woman who has just gone into the bedroom. Bearer of your children.  
She too is your... mother! (68)

-Cross road of mistaken self-identity.

-The inevitable revelation of real self, and last stage of the test of responsibility to interpret “free will”

**Heroism**

ODEWALE: I gathered the people of Kutuje under

My power...we attacked the people of

Ikolu, freed our people, seized the land of Ikolu...

Kutuje prospered.

In their joy, the people made me KING, me,

Of Ijekun tribe... (6-7).

The king, Adetusa dies and Ikolu town takes advantage to attack Kutuje and a stranger, Odewale, a tribe (supposedly) of Ijekun Yemoja who helps ward off attacks by defeating Ikolu is made king as compensation and to sustain the security of the town.

ODEWALE: I, Odewale,...son of Ogundele...have taken

For wife, as custom wishes, Ojuola, the motherly

Queen Of the former king Adetusa.

She is now bearer of all my four seeds...(7-8).

-the new king (supposedly a non-native) has settled and taken root in Kutuje.

**Responsibility**

There is trouble now in the land...peace,

too, is no more. (8).

SECOND CITIZEN: When the head of a household dies, the house becomes  
an empty shell. But we have you as our head, and with you our,

our chiefs; yet we do not know whether to thank the gods that you  
are with us, or to look elsewhere for hope. (9)

THIRD CITIZEN: When the chameleon brings forth a child, is that child not  
expected to dance? As we have made you king,

Act like a king. (9)

-a new challenge, a disease plagues the community, again, to be tackled by the 'stranger' king; a  
new responsibility and a test of Odewale's heroism.

ADEROPO: The oracle said that there is a curse in this land, and

Until that curse is purged, our suffering will go on.(19)

ODEWALE: ...Who was this man who got killed by this...villain?

Answer quick.(20)

ADEROPO: King Adetusa----my father, the king who ruled this land before  
you. (20)

The source of the sickness is known, the murder of the former king, and the particulars of that  
murder become the greatest challenge yet for Odewale. This must be unveiled to find cure for the  
disease plaguing the community. Thus:

ODEWALE: Before Ogun the God of Iron, I stand on oath.

Witness now all you present that before the feast of Ogun, which  
starts at sunrise, I, Odewale, the son of Ogundele, shall search and  
fully lay open before your very eyes the murderers of king  
Adetusa. (25)

Odewale not only swears to find the killers, he also outlines the punishment that awaits the  
culprits. In searching for the killers, he is inadvertently piecing together his real identity which  
hitherto not known to him. Consequently, the search for the killers of the former king incites the  
challenge of the crisis of Odewale's birth to reveal his mistaken self-identity. In the reality of his  
life, he is faced with the challenges of defending his people, his identity and proving responsible  
at all cost. All these are intertwined, one being the aftermath of the other, and to overcome all  
requires an extra-ordinary sense of commitment, accountability and the sacrifice of self-  
punishment, and, may be, self-destruction. It is within this passion that lays the power, which  
propels Odewale's attitude, his quick hot temper and language in his interaction with his  
community.

### CONTEXTUAL FACADE

There are three basic frames that could be advanced to describe the contextual façade responsible  
for the implicature in this play. The first one takes the NARRATOR as affiliated with the  
prologue present in immediate situation (world of the play), INTERPRETER (reader/witness)  
present in wider situation (our real world), and INTERLOCUTORS (character-metaphors)  
present in immediate situation. The interpreter stands, as an all-knowing witness to the mistaken  
self-identity, between the narrator and the character-metaphors, in particular, Odewale.

The second frame, (situational context) is constructed by the SUBJECT; birth of a baby, which constructs identity crisis, attack on Kutuje and sickness in the community in turn constructs the murder of King Adetusa and the search for the murderers. The search deconstructs, at the end, the mistaken self-identity which sustains the process of tragedy in the play.

The final frame (socio-cultural/world view context) is propped by Yoruba's belief in predestination with particular reference to destiny, which can be interpreted to mean that the individual's activities in life are predetermined by that individual, long before birth, and by implication in the real world. This final frame is vital to the interpreter-reader/audience to share Odewale's socio-cultural sensibilities, particularly when it comes to the issue of tribal origin, birth, and self-identity. Again, these sensibilities motivate Odewale's manner of language, attitude and interaction with his people. This situation forms the basis of understanding the implicature as may be interpreted within the contextual façade as conveyed by the linguistic-pragmatic variables of the speech acts in the play.

Odewale's quick temper and his irrationality thereof can be explained by the need to sustain his heroism, maintain his dignity as a stranger and continues to be worthy of the throne which he occupies as a 'stranger'. His passion for responsibility and accountability without which he may lose face is another. Most important is the need to prove his birth and identity. In doing this, he will have to absolve himself of the murder crime allegation, clean himself of the identity doubt, which is a blemish tarnishing his ego, the royal throne and his person as a Yoruba man.

### **SPEECH ACT ANALYSIS**

Essentially, this analysis concerns the utterance by utterance as made by the characters, particularly, the protagonist. By this we derived the implicated meaning as engendered by the ideational factors within which Odewale's sensibilities operate. We follow the applicable insights, as earlier hinted, from Speech Act Theory, Cooperative Principle in conversational interactions, and Searle's functions of SAT. This analysis will be concerned with selected relevant utterances to the ideational factors already identified:

#### **A. Locutionary Act (LA)**

BABA FAKUNLE: This boy, he will kill his own father

And then marry his own mother. (3)

#### **Direct illocutionary Act (DIA):**

-This is assertive and stative force.

#### **Indirect Illocutionary Act (IIA):**

-This is directive act of warning, giving the fact that such a situation is a taboo with terrible consequences. The warning is indirectly accentuated.

#### **Perlocutionary Act (PA):**

IIA generates filial emotion in the royal household and the drastic decision to cast away the newborn to avoid the prediction from coming to pass.

**B. LA:**

NARRATOR: Priest bears boy to Gbonka,  
The king's special messenger,  
And orders him to go  
Into the bush  
With the little boy,  
To the evil grove. (3)

DIA: An act of exercitives and directives being performed to truncate the prediction from happening.

IIA: An order that the new born be killed to prevent the taboo from being committed.

PA: The royal household and society become rest assured.

**C. LA:**

ODEWALE: I came to this land of Kutuje  
To see for myself  
The truth of the rumoured wailings.

I gathered the people of Kutuje  
Under my power  
And under my power  
We attacked the people of Ikolu,  
Freed our people,  
Seized the lands of Ikolu,  
And prospered from their sweat.

Me, of Ijekun tribe.  
They broke tradition and made me,  
Unasked,  
King of Kutuje. (6-7)

DIA: Expressive direct act expressing, stating and contemplating heroic act done.

IIA: In the mind of Odewale such a position, being unusual, may bring envy.

PA: Odewale becomes suspicious on the basis of IIA above.

**D. LA:**

ODEWALE: For eleven years now,  
I, Odewale,  
The only son of Ogundele,  
Have ruled Kutuje  
And have taken for wife,  
As custom wishes  
Ojuola, the motherly queen

DIA: Expressive direct act, making known how much his deed has positioned him within the community of Kutuje.

IIA: Odewale has taken root at Kutuje, predicting what could come out of this, being a 'stranger' made king.

PA: The irony of Odewale's statement is impacted on the reader/audience who is already aware of the oppositeness of where he thinks he is from. Thus, IF implicates different impact on the character-metaphors and the reader/audience. This difference also constructs the irony of the drama.

**E. LA:**

TOWNSPEOPLE: We hear that your highness wants us.

ODEWALE: Hmm. My people, I fear and I tremble. Suspicious,  
Heavy suspicions fill my heart. I look about me...  
Eyes, white, vacant, innocent, they stare back from  
Faces of sorrow and pain. But the faces may as well be  
Smiling. For who knows what is behind those eyes:  
White eyes, vacant eyes, innocent eyes? When the  
Frog in front falls in a pit, others behind take  
Caution. It would be me next. Me an Ijekun man, a  
Stranger in the midst of your tribe (Stares at Chiefs)  
When crocodiles eat their own eggs, what will they  
Not do to the flesh of a frog? (23)

ODEWALE: All lizards lie prostrate: how can a man tell  
Which lizard suffers from bellyache? In time, the pain  
Will make one of them lie flat on its back, then  
Shall that which has been unknown be made known.  
(Crosses to Townspeople) Minds are not clean, my

People. Evil doers are many in this land: evil  
Doers backed by heavy money, heavy influence. The  
Manner of your former king's death is all too clear  
to me now. Bribery. Men with money bribed villains  
to kill King Adetusa. With their influence, they dug  
his grave and in it buried his body and his memory.  
Then with money and influence they sheltered (23)

DIA: This is assertive act, laden with rhetoric questions stating suspicion, fear and suspected precarious Odewale's position as a 'stranger' King.

IIA: Odewale's statement has accusation force, suggesting the people are his enemies for reason of his origin and as a king. It is a verdictive act

FACE: The statement has face threatening effect, on the basis of the misplaced accusation.

PA: It generates misplaced tribal politics. Generates the need by the townspeople and the chiefs to clear themselves of Odewale's accusation that rages on until he (Odewale) discovers his true background and identity.

#### F. LA:

BABA FAKUNLE: Rage all you can, King. I will speak no more.

THIRD CHIEF: Pray you, Old one, to be silent is to be-

ODEWALE: Don't beg him. He will not talk. The murderers  
Have sealed his lips with money. Hmm, our race is  
Falling fast, my people. When the elders we esteem so  
Highly can sell their honour for devil's money, then  
Let pigs eat shame and men eat dung.

DIA: Stating and commanding in assertive act sense.

IIA: Reinforces suspicion to validate implicated meaning of conspiracy and misplaced enmity accusation.

FACE: Face threatening effect is generated in the counter accusation. The counter accusation is brought about by the previous threatened face situation.

PA: Allows the need to pursue and discover the truth of the accusation and counter accusation.

#### G. LA:

BABA FAKUNLE: I said you.....bedsharer!

CHIEFS: (restraining ODEWALE). My Lord-

Your highness, peace-  
Will you listen to this?  
Patience, my Lord. (29)

DIA: Assertive act, alleging in counter accusation as a result of previously incautious misplaced accusation.

IIA: Concluding, disclosing that Odewale shares bed with his mother- he has married and bears children by his mother; a grievous taboo.

FACE: Face is totally lost on the part of Odewale, and needs to be restored by his own decisions and actions.

PA: Irrationality sets in, and incites further Odewale's erroneous belief that the chiefs are against his kingship or envious of his achievement as a so-called non-native of Kutuje.

**H. LA:**

BABA FAKUNLE: Your hot temper, like a disease from birth,  
Is the curse that has brought you trouble.

ODEWALE: Listen to that.

DIA: Assertive and stative force, stating a known situation.

IIA: The statement has evaluating, criticizing force, suggesting that "hot temper" creates a situation where Face of the townspeople and chiefs are threatened, leading to the revelation of "bedsharer" accusation.

PA: Engenders the need for Odewale to discover the truth of this accusation, and by implication, in the process, deconstructs his mistaken self-identity.

**I. LA:**

SECOND CHIEF: I feel no pity for him.

THIRD CHIEF: For whom?

SECOND CHIEF: (indicating ODEWALE within) The way  
He too accused us yesterday in the eyes of the whole world

FIRST CHIEF: Enough. Everyone to his home.(30)

DIA: Assertive, remarking force.

IIA: That Odewale's accusation engineered by his hot temper causes the expressive act of opposing and 'exposing' him.

PA: All now focus on Odewale's reaction and how he hopes to decipher the situation and prove his innocence.

**J. LA:**

ODEWALE: (pacing nervously). Indeed! When the evil-plotter  
Beats his drum for the downfall of the innocent,

I say, Oduduwa, the all-powerful will never, never let  
It – (faces FIRST CHIEF). It is all my fault. I  
Should have known. The hyena flirts with the hen, the  
Hen is happy, not knowing that her death has come.  
I am an Ijekun man. That is the trouble. I, an Ijekun man  
Came to your tribe, you made me king, and  
I was happy, ignorant that plots, subversion, and  
Intrigues would forever keep me company. Oh, but you  
Wait....you will know me. One by one I will catch you:(30)

DIA: Expressive act, stating unhappiness, including commissive act, promising to defend himself and reveal what is hidden about the situation.

IIA: The statement rejects the accusation, and accepts the challenge to fish out the culprit at whatever cost.

PA: Progressively, henceforth, more accusation mounts, further Face is subverted. The verdictive force becomes cumulative in a mutual distrust between the protagonist, Odewale and the chiefs/townspeople.

This point is critical, since the feeling of suspicion engenders the revelation of “bed sharing”, and that revelation can only be made to save Face on the part of the chiefs/townspeople who are being accused of conspiracy. Thus, the line is drawn for the opportunity of counter subversions, further necessitated by Odewale’s hot temper which forces out the indirect revelation, by expressive performative act, of him having married his own mother.

#### K. LA:

ODEWALE: I do, Do I? Very well then, tell me this:  
“Bedsharer” You heard it. Didn’t you? That blind  
Bat who calls himself seer says I am a bedsharer  
What does that mean? Sharing a bed with whom?  
Ojuola, Aderopo’s mother. In other words, I don’t  
Belong in that bed. In other words, I have no right to  
Be King. What do you think of that? You don’t answer.(31)

FIRST CHIEF: We thought he could help.

ODEWALE: Well, he has done what you sons of Kutuje  
Wished. He called me murderer. Which means I must  
Leave the land. Is that not so? (*Chuckles cynically*)  
Is Aderopo jealous that I am sharing a bed  
With his mother? Very well then, let him come

And sleep with his mother. (31)

ADEROPO: My Lord, may I come-

ODEWALE: If you think that you can drum for my  
Downfall, and hope that drum will sound, then  
Your head is not good. (32)

ADEROPO: So be it, I shall greet you in like manner  
Then.....(*Prostrating himself*) Your highness, if you  
Think to have heavy suspicious is wisdom, then  
Your head is not well. (32)

DIA: Expressive act on both sides of the interlocutors, in an opposition manner, bringing King Odewale to be on the same status as Aderopo in a Face destroying conversation.

IIA: Accusing, expressive act.

FACE: Threatened, engenders further build-up of disagreement on the basis of the previous face threatening allegation.

PA: Odewale becomes xenophobic, regarding everybody around him a potential enemy and every utterance made a potential statement of evil plot against him. Tension multiplies.

### **Mechanism of “Cooperation” in the Conversation/Dialogue**

We note, from the selected speech act functions highlighted, that the conversation in the drama plays out maxims of cooperative principle (CP) on the synthesis of the reality of Odewale’s life-crisis of his birth, his heroic activities, the crisis of his identity, which comes to him in a reversed form. Odewale’s verbal dexterity becomes subversive as his life unfolds from the moment his birth origin and identity become major issues in his socio-cultural and political activities. His effort to sustain his heroism of responsibility, maintain his face is hedged on proving his origin and identity. In connection to this, his search for identity is to prove his innocence in the murder crime accusation. Ironically, Odewale’s search becomes the journey back to his real self-identity and revelation of guilt of murder. His mistaken self-identity is revealed to him, and that revelation constructs him as the murderer. Again, he must pay for that crime to prove his passion for accountability and passion for responsibility. To do this, he allows his hot temper and self-will to play to the end, thus standing the test of time as a politically responsible leader and culturally conscious Yoruba person, who must reclaim and redeem his origin and identity.

In general term, Cooperative Principle maxims of quality and quantity are regarded inadequate and broken as the conversational interactions do not satisfy Odewale’s yearning for information to get the truth he wants. Such conversations bring out his hot temper in most cases. Citable cases include, his encounter with Aderopo on the information from Ile-Ife about the sickness in the town (19-20). His encounter with the Ifa priest, Baba Fakunle who seems to be holding back on the information as to the killer of King Adetusa is another (27-29). Finally, his encounter with Alaka, his childhood friend, who tries to hold back the truth about Odewale’s origin on discovering the danger that the telling might bring, is also a case in point (68). What is *actual* here is the interpretation that Grice’s maxims of quantity and quality clash and break the maxims of relation and manner in the context of the dramatic conversation. This scheme seems to

engineer and assures Odewale's conspiracy allegation, and the eventual pursuit that Odewale engages in, in searching for the so-called truth. Odewale finds the real truth and heroically accepts and fulfills his destiny:

**LA:**

**ODEWALE:** No, No! Do not blame the Gods. Let no one  
Blame the powers. My people, learn from my fall. The  
Powers would have failed if I did not let them use  
Me. They knew my weakness, the weakness of a man  
Easily moved to the defence of his tribe against others. I  
Once slew a man on my farm in Ede. I could have  
Spared him. But he spat on my tribe. He spat  
On the tribe I thought was my own tribe. The man  
Laughed and laughing, he called me a 'man from  
The bush tribe of Ijekun'. And I lost my reason  
Now I find out that that very man was my.....own  
Father, the King who ruled this land before me. It was  
My run from the blood I spilled to calm the hurt  
Of my tribe, that brought me to this land to do more  
Horrors. Pray, my people – Baba Ogunsomo- (71).

**DIA:** Directive performative act, imploring and accepting responsibilities and consequences of his actions and decisions.

**IIA:** Verdictiveperformative act, expressing and accepting responsibility.

**FACE:** Threatened face is restored consequent upon DIA above.

**PA:** Cognitive affectation on the audience/readership to accept responsibility. Engenders verdictiveperformative force, attracting readership/audience's support for Odewale's action of self-punishment, with a universal lesson for accountability in our real world experience.

## **IMPLICATIONS AND CLOSING**

The meaning of this drama, in particular, the meaning implicated by Odewale's mistaken self-identity, beyond its linguistic structure and proposition is derived progressively from its socio-cultural pragmatic contexts through which the indirect illocutionary and perlocutionaryperformative acts are implicated. In a rather prejudiced contemplation of a conspiracy on the part of the protagonist, a progressive cumulative verdictive force is constructed for meaning implicatures. The speech acts generated favour the suspicion and distrust Odewale projects about his chiefs and townspeople on the premise of his mistaken self-identity, the basis on which he tries to exonerate himself, only to discover with utmost shock but with acceptance that, indeed, he has committed a taboo and a murder of unpardonable dimension.

## REFERENCES

- Adejare, O. (1992). *Language and Style in Soyinka: A Systemic Textlinguistic Study of a Literary Idiolect*. Ibadan. Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) PLC.
- Alson, W.P. (2000). *Illocutionary Acts and Sentence Meaning*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Austin, J.H. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. Cambridge, M.A: Howard University Press.
- Bach K et al (1979), *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts*. Cambridge, M.A., M.IT.
- Brown, P. and Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Geis, M.L. (1975). *Speech Acts and Conversational Interaction*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Grice, H.P. (1975). "Logic and Conversation" in P. Cole et al (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics*, Vol.3. New York: Academic Press.
- Hancher, M. (1978). "Grice "Implicature" and Literary Interpretation: Background and Preface". Twentieth Annual Meeting Midwest Modern Language Association, Minneapolis, Minnesota.
- Kay, P (?), *Three Properties of the Ideal Reader*.
- Levinson, S.C. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Lye, J. (1996). *The Problem of Meaning in Literature*. Brock University.
- Lyons, J (1977), *Semantics I*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Miller, J.H. (2001). *Speech Acts in Literature*. California: Standard University Press.
- Roitmi, Ola. (1971). *The gods are not to Blame*. Oxford University Press.
- Searle, J.R et al. (1980). *Speech Acts Theory and Pragmatics*. London: D. Reidel Publishing Company.
- Goff and Simpson: [fds.oup.com/www.oup.com/pdf/](https://www.oup.com/fds.oup.com/pdf/)
- Tahib, I (?), *Literary Stylistic Notes*.