

LANGUAGE USE IN OLA ROTIMI'S *THE GODS ARE NOT TO BLAME*: A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Language plays pivotal roles in the perception of emotions. It is a veritable tool for conveying emotions overtly and covertly. An intrinsic relation exists between language and emotions. Speakers of a language express their emotions directly through the use of language. Language is particularly relevant in representing abstract categories and shapes how individuals construe meaning of affective states. Therefore, this paper examines the use of language in conveying emotions in Ola Rotimi's "The gods are not to Blame". It particularly highlights the emotional language used in the drama. It is discovered that Ola Rotimi employed proverbs, incantations, metaphor, simile and apostrophe to express emotions vividly. These expressions and figurative language are overtly used to express emotions of anger, fear, distrust, suspicion, hatred, admiration and the like. It is also discovered that emotional language is rooted in culture and environment. The study draws theoretical insights from psychological constructionist theory and the Conceptual Act Theory in the discussion of emotions and language. Therefore, language involving emotions reflects specific and obvious psychological and behavioural angles of human experience and situations.

Key words: Drama, Language, Perception of emotions and Psychological constructionist theory

Introduction

Language performs transactional and interactional functions in texts. Therefore, writers employ language which portrays these functions in diverse forms. Bamberg (2019) asserts that language forms the important building blocks in the formation of social constructs that are achieved in interactions such as emotional ones. Hence, emotional language models, remodels and shapes attitudes in people. As a result, dramatists employ emotional language overtly and covertly to mould the reactions of readers and to present their themes

succinctly. Also, language plays crucial roles in portrayal of emotions in drama texts. Thus, human emotions are explored through language use.

Bamberg (2019) asserts that the relationship between language and emotions can be viewed in two ways. First, people portray their emotions in a variety of ways using extra linguistic cues, supra-segmental and prosodic features and in linguistic forms. In this angle, language and emotions are two concurrent parallel systems and their relationship exists in the way emotions impact on the performance of language. Second, language refers to and reflects objects in the world among them the emotions. Language has emotional terms and people talk about emotions. In other words, language explains emotions (Bamberg, 2019). Edward and Potter (1992) have stressed that assumptions about the society are seen from the way the speaker construct emotions and motivations of the actors. Emotional language evokes emotions in the reader and influences the value of the message transmitted. Therefore, emotions such as sorrow, jealousy, love, anger, envy and so on are all conveyed through the use of language in dramatic texts.

Sometimes, readers fail to realize the effects of emotional language on the audience. The audience should be aware that emotional language controls events and actions. Sometimes, it is often impossible to convey one's themes without the use of emotional language. It is pivotal for the purpose of evoking particular emotions in the audience. Feelings of different types are made possible and clear through emotional language. Thus, dramatists employ emotional language to stimulate the readers. So, it significant to use emotional language in dramatic texts since it can be very narrative, vivid and stimulating. Emotional language is equally connotative, symbolical and captivating. This paper, therefore, examines the use of language in conveying emotions in Ola Rotimi's play "The gods are not to blame". The study particularly highlights the figurative language use.

Language and Emotions: A Brief Review

Linguists, Gendron and Satpute (2018) have stressed that language modulates and shapes the emotions that people experience and perceive. Language helps human to represent all category knowledge and abstract categories that do not have strong perceptual regularities in the world (Lupyan, 2012). In his own view, Foolen (2012) remarks that a speaker has the possibility of expressing his/her own emotions directly via language resulting in expressive/emotive/affective language. With nouns like love, anger, surprise and so on, people talk about emotions. Thus, Foolen (2012) has observed that emotions are conceptualized in languages by a variety of word forms with literal and figurative meanings. Furthermore, metaphors are powerful in emotive language because they have the potential to evoke vivid accounts that tap into actual physical experience of emotions (Gib et al, 2002). Ortony and Fainsilber (1989) have asserted that metaphors are used in discourse but they appear to be especially frequent when the topic is emotional and their frequency increases with emotional intensity. Emotions can also be expressed in a more direct way through the use

of prosody, syntactic constructions and figurative use. (Foolen, 2012). Lindquist, MacCormark, and Shablack (2015) have reiterated that recognizing the roles of language in emotion may thus help scholars to measure and document the individual differences and cultural relativity underlying emotion category. Also, the relationship between language and emotions can be transferred to practical contexts in the areas of language teaching, psychotherapy, alexythymia, product advertisement and inter-cultural communication (Foolen, 2012). Thus, Wierzbicka (1995) stresses that every language imposes its own classification upon human emotional experiences and emotions are a semantic domain to be investigated in a semantic meta-language that is shared by all human languages.

Emotions, as all other psychological processes, are products of discourse constituted in interaction and emotion words function to build emotional acts (Harre and Gillet, 1994). Through the communicative powers of language, parents help children to acquire emotion concepts and they also scaffold children through the process of making situated conceptualizations of emotions (Lindquist, MacCormark and Shablack, 2015). Language can also be used as a means of altering an emotion after it is formed. Therefore, language is a veritable tool for understanding and exploring the world of emotions. Language shapes and re-shapes emotion vividly.

Theoretical Framework

The researchers employed the theoretical assumptions of Barret (2012) and Lindquist et al (2015): Psychological constructionist theory and the Conceptual Art theory in the study. Psychological constructionist theory states that language is a fundamental element in emotion. Language helps to constitute emotions and it plays a crucial role in emotion experiences and perceptions, Therefore, psychological constructionist theory predicts that emotions are experienced when affective states are made meaningful as specific instances of emotion categories that exist in a given culture. (Lindquist, Gendron, Satpute, 2018). In the same vein, psychological constructionist views are a family of psychological and neuroscience models that predict a constitutive role of language in emotions. (Lindquist, Gendron and Satpute, 2018). Furthermore, psychological constructionist theory state that emotions that are constructed out of a more basic elements as nominal kind categories that exist only by nature of fact that a group of people agrees about their feature (Lindquist et al, 2015)

The Conceptual Art Theory also agrees that language plays a role in emotion because language helps a person to initially acquire and then later support the representations that comprise emotion concept knowledge. Lindquist, MacCormark and Shablack (2015) have remarked that language plays a role in emotion because it helps individuals to initially acquire and then use emotion conceptualization of affect. The writers state that emotion categories are represented as re-enactments of prior interceptive sensations such as

feelings. Also, language is seen as a key to acquiring and using abstract concepts such as emotion concepts.

Furthermore, Conceptual Art Theory (CAT) suggests that language plays a role in emotion since it supports the conceptual knowledge used in making meaning of sensations from the body world in a given context (Lindquist, MacCormark and Shablack,2015). The authors have asserted that “language serves as a glue for emotion concept, knowledge, and binds concepts to embodied experiences and in turn shapes the on -going processing of sensory information from the body and the world to create emotional experiences and perceptions. Thus, words for emotion categories serve as the glue that helps bind otherwise disparate instances of a given category. Also, CAT recognizes the power of the precise emotions experienced by a person in a given culture will depend on the emotion concepts available to that person. (Lindquist, Mac Cormark & Shablack, 2015). This paper draws insights from these theories. The study examines the use of language in expressing emotions in Ola Rotimi’s ‘The gods are not to blame’ from the psychological perspective.

Textual Analysis

“The gods are not blame” is an insightful drama portraying predestination, crime and punishment, self-knowledge, power and honour, ethnic hatred. Predestination is the belief that one’s life is predetermined by God and man has no control over his destiny. Odewale, born with a curse, becomes a victim of predestination. Every attempt to avert the curse especially by his parents failed. Odewale also gets the revelation of his evil destiny and then tries to run away from his fate. Ironically, he runs into his fate. Odewale commits the crime of patricide and incest ignorantly and is punished dearly for the crimes. Odewale swears to punish the killers of the former king, his father. He promises to torture the culprit by pulling out the persons’ eyes and banishing him from the kingdom. Ironically, he does not know that he is the actual murderer. He takes an oath to find the killers of the former king. This decision portrays him as a man of honour despite his perceptible weaknesses.

Furthermore, his search for the murderer of king Adetusa leads to the search of his identity. He is aware of the fact that a curse is upon him from birth, but he thought the curse has been averted since he ran away from his supposed parents and found himself in Kutuje land after saving them from the tribe of Ikolu. Ironically, he thinks he has averted the curse not knowing that he has fulfilled the destiny as stated by the gods. His search for his identity led to the discovery of exactly who he is. Another comic twist is seen in the encounter between an old man and Odewale. The old man calls Odewale’ tribe bush and mocks the tribe. Odewale tries to defend the tribe, he thinks is his own but fails to realize that he belongs to the same tribe with the old man who is incidentally Odewale’s father. Ola Rotimi resorts to the use of proverbs, metaphoric expressions, simile, incantations and apostrophe to capture the emotional language which is expressed in the play “The gods are not Blame”

The Use of Proverbs

Proverbs are extensively used in the play "The gods are not to blame." Proverbs are expressions recognized by people as embodying the wisdom and philosophy of their ancestors (Umeasiegbu, 2007). They play crucial roles in the play. They not only portray Yoruba cultural values, but they also portray vivid emotions in the play. In the play, Ola Rotimi succeeds in using proverbs to stir emotions of anger in the characters in the drama. Odewale becomes very suspicious of Aderopo and accuses him of mutiny. Therefore, he says:

"If you think that you can drum for my downfall, and hope that drum will sound, then your head is not good" (32)

Odewale accuses Aderopo falsely but Aderopo denies the accusation. Thus, Odewale puts up a defence filled with emotions of anger and remarks:

"Two rams cannot drink from the same bucket at the same time. They will lock horns." (34)

When the citizens of Kutuje, show their emotions of distrust towards the King for not finding a therapy for their ill health, they vividly express themselves through the following proverbs:

"when rain falls on the leopard, does it wash off its spots?..." (10)
"How long must feverish birds tremble in silence before their keeper?" (10)

Odewale also replies them by saying:

"Have I been sleeping? If so, I am sick in the head: for only a madman would go to sleep with his roof on fire." (11)

Odewale also calms their fears by asking them to take different herbs and boil the herbs longer for effective healing. He pacifies them to continue taking the herbs patiently by saying:

"By trying often, the monkey learns to jump from tree without falling. Keep on trying." (14)

In the same vein, when Aderopo comes home after consulting the oracle of Ifa at the shrine of Orunmila. He tells Odewale that the cause of the sickness and deaths has been found. Odewale asks for the details but Aderopo insists that the details will be given privately. Odewale remarks:

“I refuse to listen alone. Speak openly son, before all. A cooking pot for the chameleon is a cooking pot for the lizard” (19)

With a heart full of emotional appeal, Ojuola states:

Pray, son, tell us the word from Ifa. No matter how bad it is, we are ready to hear it. The horns cannot be too heavy for the head of the cow that must bear them. To remain silent is to make light of the troubles in the land. (20)

Aderopo, then tells them that a murderer is in their midst and refuses to continue. Odewale filled with emotions of anger, orders Aderope to speak quickly. Aderopo then remarks:

....the oracle warns us that we left our pot unwatched and our food now burns (21)

When the people of Kutuje express their emotions of sadness, fear and distrust, Aderopo, in his fear, expresses his dissatisfaction again in these words:

That was why I feared to speak mother until the rotten tooth is pulled out, the mouth must chew with caution. (21)

When one of the chiefs in Kutuje recounts how King Adetusa was killed in bush near Ede, Odewale becomes very suspicious again. Filled with emotions of distrust and suspicion, he says:

.....it would be me next. Me, an Ijekun man, a stranger in the midst of your tribe.
When crocodiles eat their own eggs, what will they not do to the flesh of a frog? (23)

This particular proverb becomes very indicting and the third Chief asks Odewale to point to me one person plotting evil against the throne. Odewale says he cannot mention any name. The chiefs demand for his reason and he asserts:

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 (23)

Proverbs are equally employed by Ola Rotimi to show the emotions of admiration, and praise. When Baba Fakunle comes to the palace to interpret the message from Orunmila, Odewale eulogizes him in this proverb:

A chicken eats corn, drinks water, swallows pebbles, yet she
complains of having no teeth. If she had teeth, would she eat gold?
Let her ask the cow who has teeth yet eats grass
Baba Fakunle
If you had eyes what would you see? Ask us who have eyes yet
see nothing. (26)

Furthermore, when Baba Fakunle notices that Odewale is the murderer, he decides to leave the palace but is confronted by Odewale. Odewale, filled with rage, asks Baba Fakunle to talk. Baba Fakunle insists that he will not speak. Odewale accuses him of selling his honour for devil's money in anger. Baba Fakunle calls Odewale the murderer. Then, one of the chiefs says:

My Lord, let him go: Our elders say he who drums for a sick man
is himself a sick man.

Baba Fakunle also calls Odewale a bed sharer and says that his hot temper, like a disease from birth is the curse that has brought Odewale trouble and asks Odewale to sit down in private and think deep before darkness covers him. Odewale is led into the inner room. He is visibly shaken and in emotions of nervousness states:

Indeed! when the evil plotter beats his drum for the down fall of
the innocent, I say Oduduwa, the all-powerful will never never let
itThe hyena flirts with the hen, the hen is happy, not
knowing her death has come..... (30)

The proverbs in the drama evoke emotions in the readers. Ola Rotimi used a lot of proverbs in play to assert the Yoruba cultural values and to produce salient desired literary effect. Thus, the proverbs in the drama play a pivotal role in the stylistic technique used in the novel. These proverbs reinforce Odewale's image and hot temper as well as his emotions of anger, fear, distrust and suspicion. Therefore, the use of proverbs has become a technique with which writers portray their weak traits and the emotions of characters. Thus, Asika (2013:140) asserts that "through the use of proverbs, writers try to express their wealth of philosophy, wisdom and perception of life as they affect and control their community. These wisdom and rich philosophies were handed over from the ancestors and their use is an index of continuity with the past".

The Use of Incantations

One of the stylistic techniques employed in the drama text is incantations. These words with magical powers show emotions of hatred and anger. In controversy over a farmland, Odewale and the old man (King Adetusa) have used their incantations to destroy each other in anger. Odewale brandishes his tortoise talisman pendant and holds it towards the old man's servants (Olojo and Gbonka) to mesmerize them. He uses the following incantations to destroy them:

What are these before my eyes?
What are these before my eyes?
Are they mountains or are they trees?
They are human beings and not trees,
They are human beings and not mountains
For trees have no eyes, and mountains have no eyes
Then let these eyes around me close.
Close, close in sleep, close in sleep
That is my word-the mountain always sleeps. Sleep... sleep
Remain standing, remain rooted,
a tree stump never shifts.
Stand there... stand back and sleep, sleep I say sleep till the sun goes to
sleep
And you wake up (47).

As the men are fast asleep, the old man in anger pulls out his own charm of dried eagle's skull, vulture's claws, bright red parrot tail-feathers and begins his own enchantment:

No termite ever boasts of devouring rock
I am your lord, your charms can do me nothing
Venom of viper does nothing to the back of a tortoise,
The grinding stone says you must kneel to my power;
The basket says you must tremble
When you see me;
Mortar and pestle say you must bow
Countless times to power
The day the partridge meets the lord of the farm
It jumps into the bush with its back
Or it drops dead. Drop dead, drop dead--- (48)

As the old man uses his spell on Odewale in deep hatred and anger, Odewale begins to stagger and struggle with his breathing.

The old man then continues with his magical words:

The plant that rivals the opa tee in size is killed by Opa;
The tree that over-reaches the Oriri
Seeks its own death;
And the plant
That entwines its branch
With the branch of
Omoluwere will be strangled by
Omoluwere.
drop dead... drop deed.... I say drop
deed ... drop d-e-a-d ... (48)

Odewale, in a drawl, groups for something to use on the old man and says :
When ogun, the god of iron,
Was returning from Ire
His Loin cloth was a
Hoop of fire. Blood... the deep red stain
Of victim's blood
his cloak (49)

Odewale finds a hoe and brandishes it high above his head and continues his incantation:
this is... Ogun
and Ogun says; flow
flow... let your blood flow
flow ... flow ... flow (49)

Suddenly, Odewale lurches forward and strikes the old man down with a blow of hoe and kills the old man. The emotions of hatred, anger, wickedness are all portray through the use of incantations. The incantations also show emotive language. The emotive language here is completely negative and threatening. Apart from the emotive language use in the incantations, the Yoruba cultural heritage and expressions are also portrayed.

Metaphoric Expressions

A lot of metaphoric expressions used in the text portray emotive language. Metaphors are used when describing emotions and more metaphors are used for intense emotions

(Fansilber and Ortony, 1987). Metaphors are very powerful in emotive language because they help in conveying very vivid experiences and situations. Hence Foolen (2012) states that emotions are abstract and hard to talk about without metaphor and metonymy. Thus, emotions are critical in the exposition of emotional experiences. In the play, "The gods are not to Blame", some of the metaphoric expressions portray emotions of anger. Baba Fakunle is summoned to reveal the murderers of king Adetusa. He comes in to see Odewale and the chiefs and discovers that Odewale is the murderer. He rejects Odewale's greetings and tells the boy holding him to lead him out of the palace. In anger Odewale remarks:

My people when the elders we esteem so highly can sell their honour
for devil's money, then pigs eat shame and men eat dog. (27)

Odewale, thus calls Baba Fakunle a pig and Baba Fakunle flares up and calls Odewale the murderer and says that he has only used the weapon of truth, (28). The truth is that Odewale is the cursed murderer that he seeks. Odewale insults Baba Fakunle after paying him. Baba Fakunle, in anger, replies him:

Again you force words from me!
You force words from me again.....you.....
You bed sharer (29)

Odewale begins to suspect his brother and step son Aderopo and accuses him of conniving with Baba Fakunle to insult and dethrone him and avenge the death of his father. Odewale then remarks:

No, you are a tortoise, a coward, a conniving slippery maggot (34)
So you go round me, bribe that blind bat to come and point his finger
at me as the cursed killer of your father. Tell me now, is that not the
act of crawling, cunning tortoise (34)

When Aderopo asserts that nobody is stopping Odewale from being king, Odewale, in anger again retorts:

...Your intrigues and the blackmail and ...ooohh, take your time child
If you rise too early, the dew of life will soak you. (35)

Furthermore, metaphor is also used to show Odewale's hot temper. Alaka comes to visit Odewale from Ijekun-Yemoja; he greets Odewale and calls him:

Scorpion! My child Scorpion
Scorpion one that must not be vexed (43)

Odewale introduces him to Ojuola in these words

...wife, this is my friend of all friends, my brother...nomy master.
He taught me everything in my father's house in Ijekun (44)

Ola Rotimi uses metaphorical expressions to portray emotions of anger and hot temper. Thus, his characters use these metaphors to express anger, suspicion, and distrust and so on. Thus, Gibbs and Van-Orden (2003) have remarked that because metaphors tap into universal physical experiences of emotions, they are especially relevant for communicating emotions.

The Use of Simile

Simile also expresses the emotions of anger, distrust and suspicion.

Baba Fakunle complains about Odewale's anger in the drama text and indicts him of his temper in these words:

Your hot temper, like a disease from birth is the curse that has brought
you trouble (29)

The third chief also indicts Baba Fakunle for calling Odewale a murderer. He likens him to a parrot for being very talkative:

Is it because the king called you plotter in the death of our former king,
that now, like a parrot that has eaten too much pepper, you call him
murderer? (28)

Also, while accusing Aderopo of mutiny and insubordination, Odewale likens him to a tortoise who is cunning. Here, Odewale insinuates that Aderopo is trying to dethrone him; hence he asserts:

Aderopo, if you think like a tortoise you can plot against me without my cutting you down
first with my own tortoise tricks, then, follow madness is in your liver.

Alaka likens Odewale to a scorpion that must not be vexed. Hence he remarks:

Scorpion! one that must not be vexed.
Smooth on the surface like a woman's jewel
Poison at the fail
It is you I great (43)

The Use of Apostrophe

The use of apostrophe is also present in 'The god's are not to blame'. The apostrophe is used emotionally to portray Odewale's desperation, confusion and fear. When Ojuola demands for the reason for the conflict and quarrel between Odewale and Aderopo, Odewale's refuses to say anything because of anger. He promises to reveal the cause of the conflict to Ojuola later on. Ojuola accepts his promise and obeys Odewale by calling Akilapa. Odewale is overwhelmed and amazed. He kneels before the household shrine with his arms raised and declares:

Give me some of her patience. I pray you some of her cool heart ... let her cool spirit enter my body and cool the hot =, hot, hotness in my blood- the hot blood of a gorilla.

Odewale cleanses himself in the sacred water and continues.

Cool me, Ogun cool me. The touch of palm oil is cool to the body.
Cool me. The blood is hot. The blood is hot because fear now
Grips the heart of Odewale, son
Of Ogundele, a stranger in this land.
Fear now grips my heart as I discover how king Adetusa who ruled this
land before me was killed ... (39)

Furthermore, after killing the old man (King Adetusa) over a piece of land, Odewale becomes afraid and remorseful. He cries out:

The whole world ceased to be. Ogun
Ogun ... I have used your weapon,
And I have killed a man. Ogun... !
With my own hands... with my own
hands I have killed. Burst open and hide me.
Hide me ... hide.. m-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e(49)

The emotion of fear is shown here through the use of these words. Hence, humans have the unique capacity to experiences complex, nuanced emotions and they also have the unique challenge of communicating these experiences to one another with language. (Linguist, Gendrom and Satpute, 2018).

Conclusion

Figurative language serves as a linguistic feature through which people express their emotions and feelings. The emotions of anger, sorrow, destruction, fear, suspicion and the like are mostly expressed through figurative devices. Figurative language makes it possible for one to convey difficult abstract feelings/emotions. Hence, they are employed

by writers to express intense emotions. So, emotions are complex and made up of affective response, physiological reactions, cognitions and behavioural responses. (Ekman & Davidson, 1994).

The figurative language used in The gods are not to blame are in the traditions & culture of Yoruba people. It has also been observed that the elements of the figurative language that show emotions are equally derived from the physical, social and religious environment of the people. Through the application of figurative language, both negative and positive emotions are portrayed. So, the figurative language provides a vivid form of description and it also plays a crucial role in conceptualization of emotions. Thus, Palagar (2013:33) asserts that “the expressive function of figurative language in conveying meanings in various human interactions entails the operationalization of underlying socio-cultural and affective experiences available to the language user”. Therefore, figurative language involving emotions reflects specific psychological and behavioural aspects of human experience.

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