

Proverbs As Tapestry: Pragmatic Analysis of Conflict-Motivated Proverbs in Stephen

O. Solanke's *Alaafin Aole Arogangan*

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Abstract

*This paper examines the pragmatics of conflict-motivated proverbs in Stephen O. Solanke's play, *Alaafin Aole Arogangan*. Solanke's play revolves around the conflict between the Alaafin, Afonja and the Oyomesi (the kingmakers) in the old Oyo Empire. The paper is motivated by the ingenious deployment of proverbs to facilitate effective communication and interaction in the play. This study examines how characters employ proverbs to negotiate power dynamics to justify their actions and manipulate others. The study draws on existing research on pragmatics, proverbs and conflict resolution, highlighting the significance of cultural context and language in shaping social relationships. Through qualitative analysis of the selected proverbs used in the play, and grounded in Mey's pragmatic acts theory, which posits that language is used to achieve specific goals and create social effects. The study reveals that proverbs are used in the selected plays for different pragmatic purposes, including supporting, warning/cautioning, questioning/querying, reassuring, defending, and accusing, which exploit contextual features such as relevance, reference, metaphor, inference, shared situation knowledge, shared cultural knowledge, and voice. The study reveals that proverbs are used as a form of pragmatic act to achieve specific goals, such as justifying actions, manipulating others, and negotiating power dynamics. The findings also highlight the importance of considering cultural context and background in understanding the meaning and function of proverbs. The paper submits that the context of culture and situation helps to inform the true meaning of proverbs when used in interactions*

Keywords: *pragmatics, motivated proverbs, conflict resolution, Alaafin Aole Arogangan*

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Proverb is part of our everyday language that mirrors the worldview of a people. It is the embodiment of values and worldview. Proverbs have been defined by many scholars. Adegbola (2018) defines proverbs as a short, well-known sentence or phrase that gives advice or says something is generally true in life. Proverbs are among the most cherished rhetorical expressions in human societies. In the context of language usage, proverbs remain the ready tools for thinking and communicating, not only because of their aesthetic exquisiteness, but also because of their being a way of life in African culture. (Coker and Coker, 2009). Proverbs are indispensable in conflict resolution and crisis management. As an oratory and linguistic tool, when proverbs are applied to conflict situations, they can function as ice breakers in relieving tension, as therapeutic tools in facilitating trauma healing, and in promoting introspection, which brings about change (Ajiboye, 2012). It is a known fact that if peace is to reign, there must be management of crisis and reconciliation, which would not be of value to one party in a dispute, but to all parties involved. Human beings are different, hence, the nature of individual differences. What one person may accept as a logical issue, other person might turn it down completely and therefore, care must be taken in making sure that such issues do not result into conflict and disagreement as such are subject to be influenced by the natural causes of conflict among humans which may include such things as; differences in needs, values, opinion and other components of human interaction. These differences often lead to conflict. Conflict, according to Egenti and Okoye (2021) can be described as a condition in which an identifiable group of human beings whether tribal, ethnic, linguistic, religious, socio-political, economic, cultural or otherwise is in opposition to one or more other identifiable human group because these groups are pursuing what appears to be incompatible goals. They also assert that, more importantly, conflict arises from the interaction of individuals who have partly incompatible ends, in which the ability of one actor to gain his ends depends to a great degree on the choices or decisions that other parties will take. Conflict could be violent, uncontrollable, dominant or recessive, resolvable or insolvable under various sets of circumstances (Emenike and Agu 2021). A proverb can perform different acts with different meanings depending on the context of the situation. Ik-Iloanusi (2014) observes that the meaning of proverbs is contextual, which makes it violate compositionality and thereby contributes to their various interpretations. This is in line with what Mey (2008:94) says with

regard to speech act. Mey asserts that “the language we use and in particular the speech acts we utter are entirely dependent on the context of the situation in which such acts are produced”.

Furthermore, proverbs draw from the holistic daily experience of life of language users (Ehineni 2022). They could convey the past, comment on the present and connect the future. This implies that proverbs are a very central part of a people’s beliefs and culture, and as a result, reflect the totality of their culture. Proverbs give expression to culture. The Pragmatics of conflict-motivated proverbs will be the central idea in this study. There is a popular adage among the Yoruba, which reads thus: “Òwe l’ eṣin ọ̀rọ̀; bí ọ̀rọ̀ bá sọ̀nù, ọ̀we làá fi ń wa” ‘Proverbs are horses of conveying words; if the word is lost, it is the proverb we use to find it. Conceptually, this implies that words are not just to be spoken, but they must be well embellished, garnished, and duly conveyed through proverbs. Omoniyi Adewiye (nd) translates the above saying as “Proverbs are the vehicle of thought: when the truth is elusive, it is proverbs that we employ to discover it.” Also similar to the interpretation of the Yoruba adage about proverbs is Kwesi Yankah’s rendition that “the proverb is the horse of conversation; when the conversation droops, the proverb picks it up” (Emenike and Agu, 2021). Proverbs are therefore “horse-footed” by words. That is, they are vehicles that convey words to their destinations. Proverbs, most times, make communication more effective and successful in the sense that they help to convey deep thoughts and ideas. Among the Yoruba people, proverbs are seen as valuable vessels of effective communication especially to drive home one’s points. They are also regarded as the ancient wisdom lore of the race and are often regarded as a preserve of the elders seen as the repository of knowledge. This is why the Yoruba people say: **Enu àgbà l’ obì tíí ń gbó** It is in the elder’s mouth that the Kolanut becomes ripe. Thus, proverbs are considered the language of the elders; the words of wisdom, knowledge, and counsel. Agbaje (2002: 243) observes that proverbs are introduced among the Yoruba people during significant moments which could be occasioned by certain situations in the society. Hence, proverbs are very important linguistic resources for the Yorùbá people. Characteristically, Yoruba proverbs are brief, precise, and metaphorical, yet strongly address a point to be decoded by the hearer. Adeeko (1998: 34) underscores that “proverbs being short and witty and widely known to all ideal members of the speech community to communicate very efficiently” He further elucidates that they are meaning-governed expressions whose main function in a conversation is to give cultural depth to a speaker’s thought. The brevity and communicative quality in the proverbs are accentuated in the popular Yoruba adage: **Ààbò ọ̀rọ̀ làá sọ̀ fún ọ̀mọ̀lúàbí; tí ó bá dénú rẹ̀ yóò di odindi.** Half a speech is enough for a well-

nurtured person; when it gets to his inside, it becomes whole. Yorùbá proverbs are naturally brief but communicatively loaded with deep meanings to be decoded by the hearer who also belongs to that shared community of usage. Thus, the hearer engages in the meaning decoding process of the Yoruba proverbs by relying on the context and shared linguistic knowledge as a member of the speech community. The present study, however, discusses the pragmatic uses of conflict-motivated proverbs in Stephen O. Solanke's play, *Alaafin Aole Arogangan*. Solanke's play in this study is a suitable quintessential set of play to describe the character, theme, or element that perfectly represents the play's essence or message. The play is suitably set within a Yoruba socio-cultural setting and is characterised by an ingenious deployment of rich Yoruba proverbs to facilitate effective communication among characters in the text. This study is, thus, motivated by the need to explore the pragmatic uses of the Yoruba proverbs employed in the text. Significantly, the study seeks to foreground the pragmatics of Yoruba proverbs that are peculiar to conflict-motivated the texts and to provide more insights into the contextual uses of Yoruba proverbs in general.

1.2 Statement of Problems

Proverbs play significant roles in conversational and communicative contexts and have become part of the linguistic resources deployed in most African literary texts for the achievement of effective discourse tasks. Indeed, several studies have examined the use of proverbs in African literary texts. African proverbs have been relevantly explored from different scholarly viewpoints. Some of such studies include Obeng (1996), Adeeko (1998), Raji-Oyelade (1999), Odebunmi (2007), and Emike (2012), Mensah (2013), Michael (2014), Adeiyongo (2017), Ogbalu (2021), Omotunde (2022), Ogbuehi and Olashehinde (2025), among others. These studies have discussed proverbs from Igbo, Akan, Efik, and Yorùbá discourse perspectives. Essentially, these studies foreground the significant uses, functions, and forms of African proverbs in discourses, texts, and contexts. Obeng (1996) explores proverbs as a mitigating and politeness strategy in Akan discourse. He opines that proverbs serve as 'mitigations' and also function in maintaining a person's face, which is capable of being threatened by his or her utterance (1996: 521). Odebunmi (2007) examines the pragmatic functions that crisis-motivated proverbs play in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not To Blame*. He analyses the pragmatic roles of these proverbs that are ultimately necessitated by the crisis-oriented situations in the text. Emike (2012) underscores the use of Afenmai proverbs by the Afenmai people to facilitate communicative competence in interactions. Also, Ogbuehi and Olashehinde

(2025) present in their study on the pragmatic function of Igbo proverbs by looking at it from the area of dialect and communication about the people of Ihioma in the South East of Nigeria.

The use of proverbs in conflict situations is a significant aspect of Yoruba communication and other Nigerian cultures. Yet, there is a gap in understanding how these proverbs are used to negotiate relationships, convey meaning, and shape social interactions in the context of crisis-motivated proverbs, and this is the reason why this paper uses Solanke's play, *Alaafin Aole Arogangan*, to drive home the contextual angle through pragmatics. This study aims to investigate the pragmatics of motivated proverbs in this play, exploring their role in conflict resolution, social commentary and cultural expression. This study is expected to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on pragmatics, conflict resolution, and Yoruba cultural studies of the pragmatics of proverbs. By analysing the use of proverbs in the play, we will provide insights into the cultural significance of proverbs in Yoruba society and their role in shaping communication and conflict resolution strategies. There is a notable gap in existing studies on the pragmatics of motivated proverbs in Solanke's play, *Alaafin Aole Arogangan*. Specifically, there is limited scholarly attention paid to how proverbs are used in the play to negotiate relationships, convey meaning, and shape social interactions in conflict resolutions. Based on the task at hand, this study is set to fill some potential gaps, which include: a comprehensive analysis of the pragmatics of motivated proverbs in the play, exploring their meanings, functions, and roles in conveying themes and ideas. This study will also look at the pragmatic functions of proverbs in the play, including their use in conflict resolution, persuasion and social commentary.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aims to investigate the pragmatics of conflict-motivated proverbs in Solanke's play, *Alaafin Aole Arogangan*. However, the study is guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To identify discursive issues in Stephen O. Solanke's *Alaafin Aole Arogangan*.
2. To identify and analyse pragmatic acts in Stephen O. Solanke's *Alaafin Aole Arogangan*.
3. To discuss pragmatic functions in Stephen O. Solanke's *Alaafin Aole Arogangan* using a relevant theory.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What discursive strategies are employed in Stephen O. Solanke's *Alaafin Aole Arogangan* to convey meaning and negotiate power dynamics?
2. How do characters in Stephen O. Solanke's *Alaafin Aole Arogangan* use pragmatic acts to achieve their goals and shape relations?
3. What pragmatic functions do proverbs, idioms, and other figurative language serve in Stephen O. Solanke's *Alaafin Aole Arogangan* and how do they contribute to the play's themes and character development?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is multifaceted. This is because it covers many areas of human and societal knowledge, which can seriously contribute to the existing knowledge in literature. This study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the pragmatics of proverbs. It will provide insights into the cultural significance of proverbs in Yoruba society and their role in shaping communication and conflict resolution strategies. This study is significant, particularly to arbitrators in conflict resolution. To the people, it would form a document that preserves the genre from possible extinction. To future arbitrators, it can serve as a reference material that they can fall back on for reference to know the appropriate proverbs when dealing with cases before them. This study will make a good instrument for teaching people African proverbs and encourage them on the need to preserve the genre. It would add to the existing works in African proverbs and also encourage further research in the area.

2.0 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Empirical Review

Some works have been done on proverbs and especially proverbs of conflict and crisis management in African culture by different scholars. Among these works are Adeiyongo (2017), who works on Tiv proverbs in solving conflicts and sees them as a means of instruction in the traditional society. He considers proverbs as an effective linguistic medium through which teaching and moral instructions can be carried out in the traditional Tiv society. The work emphasises the educational role of proverbs in the traditional education system, which he sees as an educational practice with the use of proverbs and which is a common practice in almost every language community and it culminates in good moral upbringing that makes a better society through crisis management. Mensah (2013) analyses the morphological and

syntactic structure of proverbs in the Efik language. He describes proverbs as morpho-syntactic constructions of different kinds, structures and functions, with their unique grammatical peculiarities. The study investigates the internal structure of Efik proverbs and highlights their grammatical relevance in an attempt to accentuate an aspect of the Efik language and culture which is daily put out of prominence and active use, as Efik proverbs mainly thrive in oral tradition. They specify what should or should not be done and lay conditions for certain actions and attitudes and equally remind the people of the possible consequences of some actions, reactions, omissions, and commissions; and sometimes remind the people of some responsibilities as members of a society. Some cultural values are peculiar to a particular culture, as well as others which are common or shared by different cultures. The peculiarity in culture gives the people a sense of uniqueness, which makes it imperative that matters involving the people, like conflict resolution, should not be addressed with a foreign cultural context. Makami (2012) confirms that conflict management should incorporate local cultural practices. He expresses that the individualistic cultures (e.g. the United States, England, etc.) use coercive ways of resolving conflict, the collectivist cultures (e.g. Africa, etc.) give preference to withdrawing, compromising in problem solving. This, we believe, depends on belief or cultural practices. Proverbial expressions can be negative, positive, but always rich in traditional concepts. The negative expressions usually assert what things are not or should not be done, while the positive ones assert the reverse. This often embodies a moral or practical precept or a rule of conduct aimed at ensuring a harmonious society.

Ashiru and Amende (2013) see proverbs as a circumstantial language that constitutes one of the major linguistic activities of an unwritten culture. They further argue that proverbs are circumstantial speech acts frequently used in conversations, public speeches and oratory to embellish, conceal and adorn such speeches. Thus, they posit that for effective understanding of language use in traditional societies, proverbs should be incorporated into the study of discourse analysis, pragmatics and semantics of African languages. Similarly, Michael (2014) investigates the literal structure of proverbial idiophones in Anaang. The study reveals that proverbial idiophones in Anaang are rich in the use of style, literal and contextual techniques and any user requires the knowledge of the socio-cultural background of the people. Furthermore, the study gives a general overview of the use of proverbial idiophone in Anaang as a model for socio-cultural communication, daily interactions and experience defined by the choice of words in speech. Adeyemi and Balogun (2014) work on proverbs as a veritable instrument for development. The work looks at the valuable nexus between language and development with particular emphasis on how the use of proverbs could help to revive morals

and thus be used as an instrument of development. Aragbuwa and Omotunde (2022) examine the metaphorization of women in the proverbs in the Yoruba language. 100 proverbs were used to address the major themes of female gender in the area of procreation and domestic conflicts among spouses. The proverbs show that women are marginalised and negatively represented and subordinate to men and if care is not taken, it might lead to conflict and divorce, especially in today's generation.

Obiajulu (2022) sees the exploration of proverbial conflict and resolution in Rotimi's play and reveals a deep understanding of the human condition and societal structures. His characters navigate complex relationships and historical contexts, often embodying proverbial wisdom that reflects communal values. Through the lens of pragmatism, Rotimi illustrates that while conflict is inevitable, the pathways to resolution involve dialogue, compromise, and a willingness to adapt, an essential lesson for both individuals and societies at large. Each of his plays invites the audience to reflect on the consequences of their choices, underscoring the enduring relevance of proverbs within the narrative of conflict and resolution. In a similar vein, Idegwu (2022) examines the concept of conflict, its causes, and effects and how to minimise it in human relationships. He employs Ahmed Yerima's "The Angel" as the illustrative text of the study. The study reveals that selfishness, greed, inappropriate and or unhealthy competition create dissension among siblings and members of society. These things create discord, which undermines the family bloodline and goes on to consume everyone. It also shows that the survivors, if there are any, are usually concerned with how to maximise the moment for selfish gains, rather than brooding over the monumental waste of lives, among other things. He notes that, though conflict is prevalent in all societies, siblings and human beings in general could minimise it to the bare minimum. This is possible if they refuse to allow greed and avarice to influence them.

Igwebuike (2020) examines how proverbs drafted from body parts and animals are deployed in literary discourse on war/conflict context to perform specific acts and functions. Drawing insights from Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts, the paper argues that proverbs used in a conflict context are ideological and perform specific pragmatic acts and functions. Using purposively sampled proverbs from Tony Ubesie's two novels, which focus on the Nigerian-Biafran war of 1967 – 1970: namely, *Juo Obinna* and *Isi Akwu Dara N'ala*, the findings show that the proverbs perform five pragmatic functions of advising, warning, inciting, criticising and harmonising for peace. While the animal-based proverbs perform directive acts of warning, criticising and inciting violence, the body parts-related proverbs perform representational acts of advising and harmonising for peace. All acts perform two-fold functions of escalating and

de-escalating the tense conflict situation. The study concludes that proverbs used in conflicts need to be carefully deployed to aid peaceful resolutions of conflict.

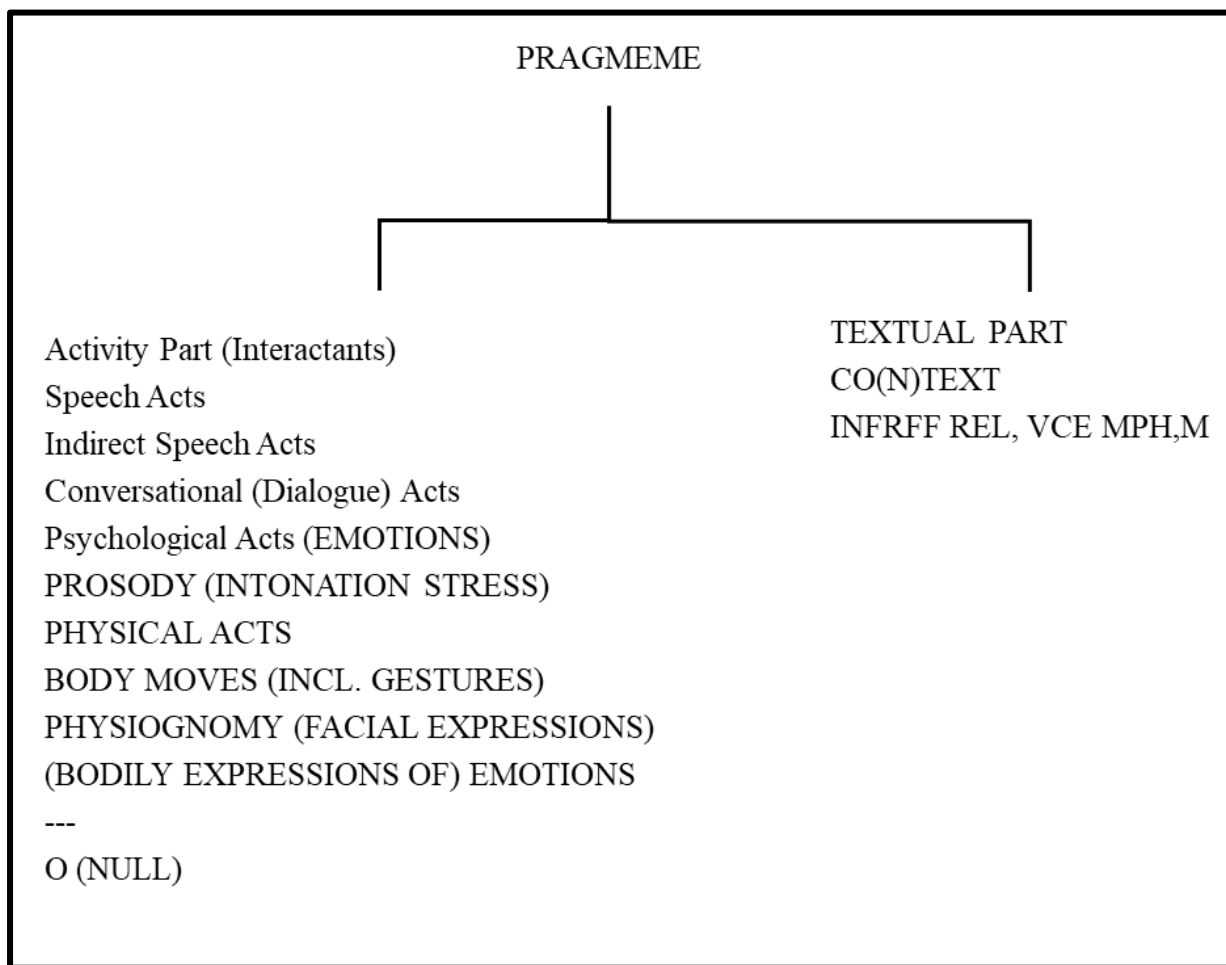
The reviews above provide some evidence that across cultures and languages, studies on proverbs, and for that matter, those undertaken from sociolinguistics and pragmatics perspectives are enormous. However, Solanke's works seem to be given little attention in the areas of pragmatics of proverbs, especially in the area of conflict-motivated proverbs, and cultural communication and literary interpretation. This will make this study relevant to the understanding of proverbs in performing many actions socially, economically, politically, religiously, culturally, etc., as the case may be. It is for this reason, therefore, that this study is undertaken to fill the gaps in studying the areas of Solanke's usage of proverbs in his texts, which can be useful in resolving conflicts in the language community. If proverbs can be used to revive good morals, they can also be used to bring about peace when appropriately used to resolve conflicts. Both good morals and peace are prerequisites to development in society.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The Theory of Pragmatic Acts will be employed in this study. This theory came up to cater for the lapses of the speech act theory, which has been criticised by scholars (Fairclough 1989, Mey 2001). Fairclough (1989: 9) refers to the speech act theory as being 'atomistic' and as 'thought wholly emanating from the individual'. Similarly, Mey (2001: 214) argues that it lacks 'a theory of action'. Pragmatic acts, therefore, unlike speech acts, cater for not just utterances but 'action' and the situation that influences these utterances. This theory deals with how people use language within their limitations, situations and the 'affordances' of the immediate context. Therefore, the pragmatic acts theory is aptly selected for this study based on its suitability. Proverbs are not just mere ordinary linguistic expressions, but they carry underlying and deep cultural meanings beyond the surface level. Hence, this theory is adequate to uncover and navigate the different interpretations of the contextual uses of proverbs in the selected text. Mey (2001) explains the concept of a pragmeme with the model below: According to Mey (2001), the theory focuses on "the environment in which both speaker and hearer find their affordances, such that the entire situation is brought to bear on what can be said in the situation, as well as what is actually being said". The diagram indicates two parts to a pragmatic act and consisting of the activity part and the textual part. The activity part refers to the interactants, while the textual part refers to the context of use. In pragmatics, meaning construction and comprehension depend on a number of variables, which include the speaker, hearers and their Shared Background Knowledge (SBK), Shared-Cultural Knowledge (SCK), Shared Socio-

Situational Knowledge (SSK), Common Ground and the context (Ayodabo and Ayinuola, 2025). This means that context is the spine of meaning and the confluence of language and society. The Pragmatics of conflict-motivated Proverbs shows interactants communicate by exploiting the different speech act types classified as indirect speech acts, conversational ('dialogue') acts, psychological acts, prosodic acts, and physical acts under the activity part. The various acts are communicative options available to users, speakers or interactants to use for communication. Also, as explained by Mey (2001: 222), interactants draw on these acts about contextual features consisting INF (inference), REF (reference) REL (relevance), VCE (voice), SSK (shared situation knowledge), MPH (metaphor) and M (metapragmatic joker). Hence, the interaction between activity part and textual part makes up the pragmeme as pointed out by Mey (2001).

Pragmatic Acts by Mey2001



PRACT ALLOPRACT
 PRAGMEME, PRACT, ALLOCRACT

3.1 Methodology

The proverbs in this study were randomly selected from Stephen O. Solanke's *Alaafin Aole Arogangan*. Eight proverbs were randomly selected since all the proverbs used in the texts generally played different significant parts roles in the interaction between the interlocutors. The proverbs were subjected to pragmatic analysis using Mey's theoretical approach. Both the context of the situation, culture as well as the status/identity of the interlocutors are put into consideration in analysing these proverbs. From the theoretical background, this paper discusses the pragmatic uses of Yorùbá proverbs in the texts to reflect both the interactants using the proverbs and the contextual features they exploit for effective communication and adequate understanding of the proverbs. Context is crucial to the understanding of and decoding of meaning from proverbs. 'Proverbs are sometimes semantically ambiguous, especially when cited in isolation.' Hence, contextual information is needed in navigating proverbial meanings. This study seeks to identify the contextual features within the texts which responsible for effective communication of the proverbs.

4.1 Brief Synopsis of the Play in this Study

Solanke explores the theme of conflict and resolution, reflecting the complexities of human relationships, political turmoil, and cultural identity within the context of Nigerian society. His play, *Alaafin Aole Arogangan*, provides rich insights into the proverbial pragmatics of conflict-motivated proverb strategies, revealing deep societal truths. In the play, Solanke chronicles the story of one of the Alaafins who had ruled in the Old Oyo Empire, in the person of Alaafin Aole. The king was so powerful to the extent that he hardly changed his mind after he had given a verdict on some issues in his kingdom. According to historical accounts, Alaafin Aole's reign was marked by controversy and power struggles, which ultimately led to the decline of the Oyo Empire. The play explores themes of power, governance, and conflict between the King and his Chiefs: Afonja, Basorun, Saamu and some others. The play draws out the rich cultural heritage of Yoruba history and traditions. Alaafin Aole's story serves as a cautionary tale about the consequences of poor leadership and the importance of accountability. Without doubt, Solanke's play is rooted in Yoruba history and culture, offering valuable insights into the region's past and its ongoing relevance to contemporary society.

4.2 Data and Analysis of Proverbs in Solanke's *Alaafin Aole Arogangan*

4.2.1 The Pragmatic acts strategies used in Solanke's play will be examined based on the prominence parts as well as how these strategies resonate with pragmatic acts in legitimising

and perpetuating the discursive issues as raised in the play. The pract of the discursive are: Proverbs of Condemnation and Vengeance; Caution or Warning; Boasting and Inciting; Courage and Assertion; Pacifying and Advice; Destruction and Rebellion. The following pragmatic acts will be used in the analysis of this study: Reference henceforth (REF), Shared Cultural knowledge (SCK), Metaphor (MPH), Shared Situational Knowledge (SSK), and Inference (INF).

Datum 1: Here, there is a Pragmatic act of “Condemnation as well as Vengeance”. Despite the pleading from Lafianu to Alaafin Aole on the offence committed by Gboye, the king objected to the plead vehemently and stood his ground that Gboye must be killed. Gboye who mistakenly killed his rival over a woman and he fled away after a death sentence had been passed on him by the Alaafin that ruled before Alaafin Aole (this is an act of “REF”, because, there was a reference to the message being passed here) When Gboye came back, thinking that his sentenced must have been waved away, because of the influence he has with Lafianu. There was a conversation that erupted and proverbs were drawn to accentuate Alaafin’s points (there is an act of SSK here, because the situation is known to both interlocutors).

Aole: *Lafianu! The powers we gave you, arbitrary you use. With impunity, you step on Alaafin, A man cannot from his shadow run. The sin of the fathers, on the children shall be visited.*

The Pragmatics of conflict-motivated Proverbs is used. The proverb here is one involving the (MPH) metaphor of the word ‘shadow’, meaning that one cannot escape their nature, characteristics, or circumstances. Just as a shadow is an extension of the person or object it represents, our problems or characteristics are inherent to us... The voice here is cultural and the (SCK) shared cultural knowledge between Alaafin Aole and Lafianu. The proverb assumes that the listener understands the concept of a shadow being an inseparable part of the person or object it was used to depict the action of Gboye, who escaped but was later captured. The meaningfulness of the proverb is also premised on its (REL) relevance to the present discourse. Hence, Lafianu understands by (INF) inference that Alaafin Aole wants him to describe his exact dilemma to him. The pragmatic effect on the King’s proverb by extension represents allusion (to biblical scripture meaning that the consequences of the actions of parents or ancestors will be borne by their children or descendants. There is a (SK) shared knowledge which assumes that the Lafianu is familiar with the concept of intergenerational consequences and the idea that the actions of one generation can impact subsequent generations. The proverb may be used in situations where someone is experiencing the consequences of their ancestors’ actions, such as family legacies, historical injustices and others. Therefore, the proverbs are meaningfully interpreted by Lafianu based on contextual features of shared knowledge, voice,

relevance and inference. Both proverbs touched on themes of the inevitability of facing one's problems or characteristics, while the second proverb emphasises the inevitability of consequences for actions. These proverbs offer insights into the human experience and the importance of acknowledging and addressing the consequences of our actions.

Datum 2. Here, there is a pract of Caution or Warning.

Ashipa, Afonja and Basorun were discussing the excessive power of the Alaafin Aole, and the rationale for defending the muslim religion in Oyo (INF). Afonja was told by Ashipa that he was not supposed to be the Aare Ona Kakanfo (An Army General) because he is from a royal bloodline (SCK). Through the conversation, the following proverb was used to convey a point:

Basorun: *I questioned Aole's rationale for defending a muslim in our land...*

Ashipa: *And he listened to you, Basorun?*

Basorun: *... But he usurped my power and told his soldiers to go and retrieve the property from my store...*

Ashipa: *... but remember that you are royal blood and should not be the Army General. **The sheep that follows the dog will one day eat faeces.** But you deserve the position...*

The figure of speech used in the proverb above is (MPH) metaphor and an idiomatic expression. The proverb is voiced by Ashipa, who is likely a wise and experienced individual who understands the dynamics of power and loyalty in the kingdom. The proverb means that if you follow or associate with someone who is considered inferior, unwise, or troublesome, you will likely suffer the consequences of their actions or behaviour. The (SK) shared knowledge of the proverb assumes that the listener understands the cultural significance of sheep and dogs in Yoruba culture, where sheep are often seen as gentle and innocent, while dogs are considered inferior or unclean (SCK). The situation that warrants the proverbs was cautioned by Ashipa. He cautioned Afonja against following Basorun's treacherous acts and challenging the king's authority. The (INF) inference here implies that Afonja should be careful not to get entangled in Basorun's schemes, lest he suffer the consequences of Basorun's actions. In addition, the proverb references the common knowledge that dogs are often associated with dirt and filth, and that sheep are generally considered clean animals.

The use of this proverb in this context serves several purposes: 1. Cautionary advice by Ashipa to Afonja to avoid getting involved in the treacherous act of Basorun. 2. The proverb draws on (CREF) cultural reference by (SCK) sharing cultural knowledge and values, emphasising the importance of associating with wise and virtuous individuals. 3. Warning is another area that the proverb serves to warn Afonja about the potential consequences of his actions, and encourages him to reconsider his loyalty to Basorun. By using this proverb, Ashipa can convey

a nuanced message that is both culturally relevant, prudent and memorable. This draws on shared cultural knowledge and values to persuade Afonja to make a wise decision.

Datum3: In this case, there is the use of the Pract of Boasting or Inciting

Lafianu: *It is Kabiyesi. Gboye... has been killed on his orders.*

Afonja: *Aole steps on our toes. The lion, relying on its teeth, thinks he can handle the elephant because he has never felt the weight of the elephant, who shakes the forest with his trumpeting alone!*

The aggrieved Afonja made use of the proverb to query the excessive power of the Alaafrican in the land. Lafianu reported to Afonja that Alaafrican Aole had given the order for the killing of Gboye. This did not sit well on the part of the Aare Ona Kakanfo Afonja, hence, he made use of the proverb. The figure of speech used is (MPH) Metaphor and hyperbole (HPB), meaning that someone confident in their abilities or strengths may underestimate the power or abilities of someone else, simply because they have not experienced it firsthand. With the (SK) shared knowledge, the proverb assumes that the listener understands the cultural significance of lions and elephants, where lions are often seen as powerful predators, but elephants are massive and formidable creatures. In this context, the situation of this proverb is likely used to caution Alaafrican Aole against underestimating the power and authority of the Aare Ona Kakanfo Afonja at the same time, Afonja boasts of his power and position as a General... The proverb infers (INF) that Afonja's confidence in his abilities and his association with Basorun may not be enough to take on the king, who has greater power and authority. The proverb (REF) references the physical characteristics and abilities of lions and elephants, emphasising the significant difference in their strength and power. The use of the proverb in this context serves several purposes: 1. Cautionary warning; the proverb serves as a warning to Alaafrican Aole about the dangers of underestimating the power of the Generalissimo. (2). The proverb encourages humility on the part of the language used by Afonja to the action taken by the King. It shows that there is a limit to abilities and strengths. (3). The proverb also emphasises the importance of respecting those in positions of power and authority. By using this proverb, the speaker is able to convey a nuanced message that is both culturally relevant and memorable, cautioning Afonja against taking on the king without fully understanding the consequences of his actions.

Datum 4: There is a pract of Courage and Assertion of Authority through bravery

Another example of a pragmatic conflict-motivated proverb is seen in the words of Afonja, where he showed bravery after he was challenged by Alaafrican Aole on his mission to go and capture Apomu, a town under the supervision of Ile Ife. He knew that the town would not be easy to capture because of the hills that surrounded the town. He said, "You know how

impregnable Apomu is. What with its mountains and hills? Send me to an honourable death and I will gladly go. All the chiefs rejected this mission except Saamu. (SCK) There is shared cultural knowledge here because, culturally, if Are Ona Kakanfo should go to war and fail to win, he dares not return to Oyo.

Aole: *Apomu we have chosen. Apomu it will be. No Are Ona Kakanfo has ever refused his liege's directive. No Are Ona Kakanfo has ever returned from a defeat alive. Or is our Are Ona Kakanfo afraid?*

Afonja: *This Are Ona Kakanfo is afraid of nobody. When the lion roars, all the animals in the forest scamper for safety. If Ogun decides to kill, where shall the condemned run to?*

In the proverb above, there is the use of metaphor (MPH) and rhetorical question (RQ). Metaphor is used to compare the lion's roar to the power of Ogun, a Yoruba deity associated with iron, war, and hunting. A rhetorical question is used from Afonja's question, "Where shall the condemned run to?" This emphasises the inevitability of fate.

The (INF) inference here is that Afonja is not afraid of going to war, but he is aware of the dangers and uncertainties involved. Afonja knows that if Alaafin has decided to eliminate him, there is no escape or refuge. The situation here is that Afonja is responding to the challenge of being afraid and refusing to go to war. The proverb is used to convey his understanding of the situation and the potential consequences of his actions. Under the (SCK) shared cultural knowledge, the use of the lion and Ogun as symbols of power and danger reflects the Yoruba cultural context. The proverb assumes that the listener is familiar with the Yoruba mythology and the significance of Ogun. The proverb is (REL) relevant to the situation because it highlights the idea that some forces are beyond human control. Afonja is using the proverb to convey his acceptance of fate and the inevitability of consequences.

There is the use of voiced (VCE) opinion by Afonja. Afonja is using indirect language to convey his message, avoiding confrontation with the Alaafin. There is the use of cultural reference (CREF) in the use of the proverb and the reference to Ogun demonstrates Afonja's cultural knowledge and sophistication. In addition, the use of rhetorical questions emphasises the futility of resistance and the inevitability of fate. The implicature here is that Afonja's response implies that he is aware of the Alaafin's true intentions and is resigned to his fate. The proverb suggests that Afonja is not naïve about the dangers of the situation and is prepared to face the consequences. By using this message, Afonja is able to convey a nuanced message that is both culturally relevant and memorable, highlighting the inevitability of fate and the dangers of underestimating the power of those in authority.

Datum5: Here, there is the pract of Pacifying or Advice

Modeke: *Oyo is no longer what it used to be. A land of unified people all going about their duties.*

Samu: *We are not the cause. Some circumstances, sometimes, are beyond the control of humans...if the Alaafin cannot see eye to eye with the Oyomesi, and the Oyomesi do not want to reason with him, then, it is not only us that will suffer...*

Modeke: *But the Kabiyesi is doing his best.*

Samu: *Yes. And the Oyomesi is doing its best too. Both trying to ruin Oyo.*

Chorus: *Ija de, orin d'owe. Ote de, oro di wahala. (Within the presence of a fight, songs become proverbial. Within the coming of the plot, words become problematic.*

In this context, Ajani and Agbaje are friends and they both met at a joint where they both played games. Ajani is a Prince while Agbaje is the son of Basorun, the King's second in command. While playing the game, Ajani was defeated and he scattered the game, and this led to a fight between them. Samu, one of the Oyomesi, saw them and rebuked them. He asked them to go to their various homes. At this setting, Modeke was with Samu and he was advising Samu to call the Basorun to order and advise him to nail the problem before it gets to a situation where the handshake will go beyond the elbow. Thus, the above proverbs were used. There is (INF) inference here because the two people in the picture here, are fully aware of the situation at hand in the Empire.

The proverb, "Within the presence of a fight, songs become proverbial. Within the coming of a plot, words become problematic." The figure of speech here is (MPH) metaphor and an idiom. Meaning that in times of conflict or crisis, words and actions can be misinterpreted or have unintended consequences. It highlights the importance of being cautious with one's words and actions during difficult situations. The (INF) inference here is that the conflict between Ajani and Agbaje is not just a simple disagreement, but rather a symptom of a larger issue. Modeke is advising Samu to be cautious and to involve Basorun, the head of the Oyomesi, to settle the differences between the two parties before the situation escalates. The situation here is that the conflict between Ajani and Agbaje has the potential to escalate and involve more people, including those in positions of power. Modeke is trying to prevent further conflict and promote a peaceful resolution.

The proverb reflects the Yoruba cultural value of caution and diplomacy in times of conflict. The use of the proverb assumes that the listener is familiar with the importance of careful communication and conflict resolution in Yoruba culture, which is (SCK). The proverb is relevant (REL) to the situation because it highlights the potential consequences of not addressing the conflict in a timely and peaceful manner. The proverb is used for peace to reign

between the Alaafin and the Chiefs. However, there is a cautionary advice from Modeke to Samu, encouraging him to be careful and proactive in resolving the conflict. The use of the proverb demonstrates Modeke's diplomatic language and approach to conflict resolution. The proverb reflects the cultural significance of careful communication and conflict resolution in Yoruba society. By using this proverb, Modeke can convey a nuanced message that is both culturally relevant and memorable, highlighting the importance of caution and diplomacy in times of conflict.

Datum 6: There is the pract of Destruction or Rebellion here. Afonja aimed at destroying the Oyo Empire and forming his kingdom at Ilorin.

Afonja: We shall still conquer them; the sons of slaves are themselves slaves...

Opele: Urge the men on? To what Lafianu? ... Why have you not attacked it with your regiment? Are you not of the royal regiment?

*Afonja: ... I do not intend to die the death of a coward. **If one cannot go forward, Adegun, our fathers say one should retrace one's footsteps...***

*Adegun: ... Instead of attacking Apomu, let us turn our arms against Alaafin Aole. **"Kaka ki eku ma jese, a fi se a wa danu."** (What we can't appropriate, we destroy).*

The figure of speech used in this proverb is (ID/MPH) idiom and metaphor... The meaning is that if they cannot achieve their goals or gain what they want, they will destroy it so that no one can have it either. The (INF) inference here is that Adegun and Afonja's war followers are planning to revolt against the Alaafin, and they are willing to take drastic measures to achieve their goals. The (SSK) situation is that Afonja's mission to conquer Apomu has failed, even though the King of Apomu later committed suicide. So, his plan with his cohorts is to attack Alaafin Aole and claim independence from Oyo. The fact that if he returns empty-handed to Oyo without the head of the King of Apomu, it will be so disastrous to him. The situation has led to a turning point where Afonja and his followers are considering rebellion.

The shared cultural background (SCK) in this act of proverb reflects the Yoruba cultural value of determination and resilience in the face of adversity. The use of a proverb assumes that the listener is familiar with the importance of perseverance and strategic thinking in Yoruba culture. The proverb is (REL) relevant to the situation because it highlights the desperation and frustration felt by Afonja and his followers. Adegun's use of the proverb emphasises the idea that they would rather destroy everything than submit to Alaafin's authority. Adegun's use of a proverb demonstrates subservient language, as they are planning to revolt against the Alaafin. The proverb reflects the cultural significance of determination in the face of adversity. The use of a proverb serves as a rhetorical strategy to persuade others to join their cause and to justify

their actions. Finally, the implications of the proverb suggest that Afonja and his followers are willing to take drastic measures to achieve their goals, which could lead to further conflict and instability. The use of the proverb highlights the complexity of the situation and the potential consequences of their actions.

Findings and Conclusion

This study on the pragmatics of motivated proverbs in Stephen O. Solanke's *Alaafin Aole Arogangan* has demonstrated the significant role of proverbs in conflict resolution, negotiation, and power dynamics. The study highlights the importance of considering the context and cultural background in understanding the meaning and function of proverbs in conflict situations. The use of proverbs like "when the lion roars, all the animals in the forest scamper for safety" and "what we can't appropriate, we destroy" reveals the complex power dynamics at play and how characters use language to negotiate and manipulate their relationships.

In light of Mey's pragmatic acts theory, this study demonstrates how proverbs are used as a form of pragmatic act to achieve specific goals and create social effects. The use of proverbs in the play serves as a form of praxis, where characters use language to shape their social context and relationships.

The tragic outcome of the play, where Afonja and the Oyomesi's actions lead to the downfall of the Alaafin and ultimately to Afonja's demise, highlights the importance of considering the long-term consequences of our actions and words (Law of Karma). The study contributes to our understanding of the role of language in shaping social relationships and conflict resolutions, and highlights the importance of cultural context in understanding the meaning and function of proverbs. This study has implications for conflict resolution and negotiation in various contexts, highlighting the importance of considering cultural background and context. The use of proverbs as a form of pragmatic act can be applied to various fields, including linguistics, anthropology, history and communication.

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