

Language Varieties in Wole Soyinka's The Interpreters

Patrice Codjo Akogbeto*

Université d'Abomey-Calavi, Bénin

*Corresponding Author: Patrice Codjo AKOGBETO, Université d'Abomey-Calavi, Bénin; Tel: 00229 97125515; E-mail: akopat17@yahoo.fr

Citation: Patrice Codjo Akogbeto (2015) Language Varieties in Wole Soyinka's: The Interpreters. Arts Lit Linguist 1: 001.

Copyright: © 2015 Patrice Codjo Akogbeto. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted Access, usage, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Abstract

People use language not for the mere sake of using it but for a purpose. "Only madmen engage in a linguistic activity without a purpose" [1]. The purpose, to be fulfilled, requires a specific discourse or use of the language. Language, in other words, varies as circumstances change, with the user selecting among options. This functional character of language has endowed it with total adaptability and causes it never to stop varying. The reader or critic of a text should therefore set both his/her eyes and mind on the language and scrutinize it whether used as a written or a spoken medium and consider it in its context of use. The language learner is therefore advised not to confine his/her mind to the mere form of the language but to stretch it to the meaning it is destined to make, which may prompt interest in the 'deviations'. Then, he/she will quite surely pay the so-called "bad English", its deserved tribute.

Keywords: Language; Purpose; Function; Adaptability; So-called deviations

Introduction

This topic has been prompted by a phenomenon I have observed with our francophone students of English for a few years now. They are very quick at labeling the English dialect their Anglophone classmates, Nigerians more specifically, speak, as 'uneducated English', 'ungrammatical English', 'non-standard English', etc., a way for them to mean that their English is low and not worth listening to. As a result, they shy away from interacting with them because for them it is not English if it is not Standard English. In this way they fail to turn the presence of those Anglophone students on our campuses to good account. This is an unseized opportunity since one of the ways for the language student to develop fluency is practicing that language with either native speakers or those who use it in almost all their life circumstances. This recurrent attitude which seriously affects our students' progress in their learning process

reflects their wrong perception of the role of language. They overlook the fact that language cannot but vary due to the nature of languages: "Languages are never uniform entities; they can be observed to vary geographically and socially and according to situational context" [2], and students specializing in English are expected to exchange with all ranks of people in a diversity of dialects.

This paper sets out to awake the language students' consciousness so that in their appreciation of language in use they will be considerate enough to go beyond the form to see if communication that the language is used for is effective. In other words, their attention is drawn to how constantly language varies and may, at times, shift from the standard form to the non-standard even in the same text. But because it is non-standard does not mean that it is uncommunicative and should not be given attention. The message being conveyed is central.

To reach this aim the study points out the fact that a work of art (a novel for instance) is often not a bulk of standard forms of the language used but rather made up of varieties of the medium and usually draws on a plurality of registers. Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters* is used to illustrate this language feature. The intent is to lead the student to seek familiarity with various dialects of English and more particularly with various accents and avoid falling into the trap of looking down on any of them.

The study briefly revisits what is meant by language varieties with a stress laid on Standard language, on Standard English specifically. The intention is to demystify the concept of Standard English which is most confusing, by trying to help the reader perceive that language is not a static but a perpetually adjusting tool that the user employs shifting from varieties to varieties of the language, and therefore making use of both standard and non-standard dialects often in the same text. The study revolves around the notion of world Englishes – a recognition that English has become a plurality and ought to be so considered. A few examples of non-standard English uses have been identified and selected as illustration in the novel under study.

Clarification of Concepts

For the sake of focusing the reader's attention on the target, such syntagms as language variety, dialect, Standard English, are defined.

Language Variety

There is hardly any language that does not comprise a complex and inter-locking series of varieties. A variety in terms of language is a specific form of a language. Language, indeed, constantly changes across space, across social group and across time, evolving and adapting to the needs of the users, thus taking different forms from one generation to the next. Verma & Krishnaswamy [3], observe that "Languages change because of their built-in tendency to change, the inventive faculty of the users". So, as language users' needs will infallibly continue to change so also will the language itself. The different forms which language takes as a result of the changes are referred to as language varieties. Linguists or others classify the variety according to its usage, as standard, dialect, register, idiolect, sociolect, local, regional, international, colloquia, vulgar, slang, argot, etc. The selection of a variety by the user is determined either by the use being made of it, which variety is labeled register, or by the user's own linguistic habits, in which case we are referred to dialects.

Dialects:

Dialects are language varieties determined by the user's own origins and total linguistic experience, including

formal education and social standing. They are used by particular speech communities and are associated with geographical settings or social groupings. Roach [4] describes them as "varieties of a language which are different from others not just in pronunciation but also in such matters as vocabulary, grammar and word order." Nelson [5] defines dialect as "A variation of a given language spoken in a particular place or by a particular group of people." It is a regional or social variety of a language characterized by its own phonological, syntactic, and lexical properties. All languages, indeed, comprise several dialects, differing from one another in structure and lexis. English, for instance comprises British English, American English, West African English, etc. British English encompasses countless dialects and accents shaped by thousands of years of history such as Cockney, Scouse, Midlands English, etc. Similarly, Nigerian English, Ghanaian English, Cameroonian English, etc, are part of West African English. Thus, every English speaker uses a dialect.

Standard Dialects:

"There seems to be considerable confusion in the English-speaking world, even among linguists" [6] let alone students of English as a second or a foreign language, "about what Standard English is." It is therefore worth being clarified here. Indeed, among the many dialects of a language, there usually is one that is thought of as "correct" by speakers of the language. This variety is selected and used for official purposes and is promoted as the standard dialect by the government through social institutions such as schools where the dialect is introduced and taught, through published grammar, dictionaries, textbooks that set forth a correct spoken and written form, etc. Very often this variety selected to be the standard is made the 'standard' "not because of any intrinsic superiority as a dialect, but because of the interaction of a large number of non-linguistic factors, which are social, cultural, commercial, political and economic" [7]. It is "the variety associated with the social group with the highest degree of power, wealth and prestige" [6]. Standard English can therefore be said to be a dialect of English, of course the most important variety of English associated with the education system in all the English-speaking countries of the world. It is English characterized by idiom, vocabulary, and grammar, that is "correct" and acceptable by educated native speakers. It is the English taught in schools and which students are expected to get used to and display in their essays, the English of the grammar book and the dictionary, therefore associated with the written form; it is the English to be found in official typed communications and to be heard in national news broadcasts and documentary programmes on radio or television [8].

It is all the same important to know that there is no one universal standard for English. As Hickey [9] observes,

“Part of the popular conception of Standard English is that it is a single form of language. But this view refers only to the written language and even there it is not wholly true. Across the English-speaking world there is variation in spelling, grammar and vocabulary in those forms of language which would be regarded by its users as standard. When it comes to the spoken word the variation among publicly used varieties of English is considerable, from country to country or often from region to region. A pluralistic conception of standard English is thus likely to be closer to linguistic reality in the societies across the world which uses English.”

In other words, there is a plurality of Standard English across the Anglophone world; that is, that Standard English is in a number of forms: British Standard English also had known as Queen’s English, American Standard English, Scottish Standard English, Irish SE, Australian SE, etc. Nonetheless, the differences between the educated in these standards are very few. Dialectal differences are easily noticeable but differences in terms of grammatical structure between the major English-speaking countries are so few that it is safe to agree with Boadi, Grieve and Nwankwo [7] that “it is no exaggeration to speak of a single ‘standard English’, employed, with minimal variants, everywhere where English is used as a first language.”

This variety of English, codified in written form and prescribed as the correct usage, is institutionalized and must, as the standard, be known and mastered by all people who want to participate fully in the political, social and economic affairs. Besides, its existence is highly advantageous. It is a particular variety of English which is accepted by most native English speakers as the standard in all countries where English is taught. As such, it eases communication and helps people to communicate effectively with one another within and across national boundaries. Trask [10] acknowledges this facilitating power in these terms: “the use of a single agreed form, learned by speakers everywhere, minimizes uncertainty, confusion, misunderstanding, and communicative difficulty generally.” Another advantage of Standard English is that many learners learn English to take a test and Standard English is the variety which is tested as, being highly codified, it qualifies as the uniform reference point for teaching/learning and testing. It is also this variety that US and UK language policy promotes through their publishing houses and agencies such as the British Council, BBC and US State Department. Thus, a good command of Standard English will empower the user and give him/her an advantage in exams, interviews, business and life.

Background to the Study

Central to this study is the concept of World Englishes. Since English moved from its birthplace and has expanded to the whole world, it has become the propriety of the various world communities and has developed several different English dialects, which phenomenon is referred to as World Englishes, a concept which has emerged for about three decades now. World English refers to the users of English as related to all English speakers of the world, including both native speakers and all those who use English as their second or foreign language. The concept has increased in importance as a result of English being subject to technological and industrial pressures throughout the world and is therefore worthy of attention. To address our students’ attitude, we need to consider the status of the varieties of English in such ex-colonies as India, Nigeria, Ghana, and Singapore where English has been indigenized. Scholars have tried to classify and describe models of world English in order to explain the ways English is used in different countries and show the process through which a variety becomes an established one.

The most common classification of Englishes distinguishes between English as a Native Language (ENL), English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This classification means that the English as a native language category, for instance, is superior to the other categories and posits as the model to be followed by the ESL and the EFL speakers. Selinker [11, 12] buttresses this model. His view is that if the second or foreign language learners’ competence is different from Standard English (American Standard or British Standard), this must be seen as an error, and if they continue producing errors, then the phenomenon is referred to as fossilization. In this vein, Quirk [13] reported by Kilickaya [14], recommends, for all users of English, one common standard of use for both written and spoken English, to help regulate the use of English in different contexts. To this end, he advises teachers of English to “focus on native norms and native-like performance” and suggests that non-native varieties of English be considered “just interference varieties” in order to avoid the risk for English to break into many unintelligible varieties or different forms and lose the function of international communication. Thus, Selinker and Quirk’s view makes the native speaker’s dialect the Standard overlooking the cultures and specificities of ESL and EFL speakers [11-13].

Wehbe [15] rather finds the idea that every native speaker speaks the same ‘standard model’ is simply incorrect because many different varieties of English are spoken in ENL countries. He also finds that the suggestion to use ENL as ‘the model’ ignores the fact that such a model might be inappropriate in ESL countries where the local variety would be a more acceptable model, as there are many fluent speakers and expert users of that particular variety.

As a result of the shortcomings of this model, Kachru [16] came up with a Three-Circle model which distinguishes between the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle. The Inner circle which goes for the countries traditionally known as native speaking viz. UK, USA, Anglophone Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, etc; where English is the first language, encompasses varieties which are said to be 'norm providing'. The Outer Circle, comprising the former colonies such as Nigeria, Ghana, Malaysia, Singapore and others [17] are considered 'norm developing'. The varieties under the cover of the Expanding Circle - the countries where English is a foreign language but is used as the most useful language of international communication - are regarded as 'norm dependent.'

With this model Kachru has, to use Kilickaya's formulation, pluralized English; that is that the spread of English to the world has resulted in the development of many Englishes [14, 16]. As Kachru [16] himself states, "English now has multicultural identities". For him, acknowledging a variety of norms would not lead to a lack of intelligibility among different users of English. His view is that the Outer Circle speakers of English are not interested in the norms of English based in Inner Circle and are not trying to identify with Inner Circle speakers. Therefore the Englishes that characterize the Outer Circle must not be seen as an error and be labeled as 'deviant' or 'deficient' and 'fossilized'. Kachru is strongly supported by Widdowson here quoted by Jenkins [18]:

When we talk about the spread of English, then it is not that the conventionally coded forms and meanings are transmitted into different environments and different surroundings and taken up and used by different groups of people. It is not a matter of the actual language being distributed but a matter of the virtual language being spread and in the process being variously actualized. The distribution of the actual language implies adoption and conformity. The spread of virtual language implies adaptation and nonconformity. The two processes are quite different.

Other classification models are also suggested among which is Rajadurai's three-circle model [17]:

*While acknowledging the fuzzy distinctions between circles, in principle, **the inner circle** could comprise all users who are proficient in English and able to instinctively code switch between international and national or regional varieties to communicate in the most appropriate way. **The second circle** could consist of speakers who are only proficient in regional varieties, i. e. native and nonnative speakers with restricted intranational proficiency while **the outer circle** will be made up of learners of the language.*

Rajadurai's classification of English speakers is not based on national identity but on speakers' degree of proficiency in international and regional varieties shown through whether, in various contexts, they communicate or not in the most appropriate way. This means that a Kachru's Expanding-Circle speaker of English might belong to Radajurai's inner circle while an American might be counted among Radajurai's second circle speakers. This model does actually not make a consistent difference with Kachru's model on which it leans. Thus, Kachru's model has remained influential. Kachru perceives the forms of English in each circle as a community's mark of linguistic identity of which it must be taken account in the assessment of the language used. As a tool, it is called upon to serve the needs of the user communities and internationally as well. Of course, the output will be primarily regional, though it may be slightly different from what is usually conceived as Standard English (British or American), each variety being a dialect which should be seen and recognized as such and not pointed to either as an error or a deviation or deficiency. In other words, when language is used, not its Standard form for its own sake, but how effective communication is made is the priority.

Unfortunately, most students of English as a foreign language too often mistakenly assess the language based on form, overlooking meaning. The speaker's linguistic competence – his/her ability to produce grammatically correct sentences - is wrongly made or thought to be the core of the communication act. Communicative competence – the ability to select from the totality of grammatically correct expressions available to the user, forms which appropriately reflect the social norms governing behavior in specific encounters [19] – is itself left aside both in spoken and written English. What their appreciation of language fails to involve is the communicative situation and the cultural context. They make Standard English seen as the strict application of English grammar their main target. In terms of spoken English they would hardly interact with a Nigeria-grown or a Ghana-grown speaker of English if the latter would not sound American or British; that is, this Nigerian or Ghanaian should use the Standard American accent or the Queen's Pronunciation in all of his/her life circumstances. Otherwise, each of his/her utterances would derogatorily be labeled 'ungrammatical English', 'Nigerian English', etc. It escapes the francophone students that how participants sound in an interaction depends on the geographical area, the context of situation, context of culture, the purpose, the relationships that they share, etc; that more importantly, pronunciation is a mark of identity. For them, it is not English if it is not RP or Standard American accent.

Standard English and Non-Standard English

From what precedes, we are led, at this juncture, to wonder how English is spoken worldwide in terms of Standard or non-Standard forms. Studies have shown that about 90% of world English users speak Non-Standard English with their own grammar, words and accent. Even among the British population, only a minority of 15% speak Standard English [20]. This status is confirmed by a British native's words: "Non-Standard English is what most of us use and is all about the place we grew up in." Even in both literature and film or television series, non-standard English varieties also often appear. As Zabrus [21] asserts about popular forms, "Play-wrights like Shakespeare or Molière might use them occasionally as some characters' social status. Poets and novelists might venture a few vernacular terms in the interest of local colour." Wole Soyinka had some of his characters in *The Interpreters* use both Standard English and non-Standard English.

The question therefore logically arises as to know why, in spite of the conspicuous advantages with which Standard English provides its users, there is a considerably higher percentage use of non-Standard English while at the same time these non-standard variants are generally conceived, taught and regarded by many as 'incorrect'. The answer will enlighten the language learner or assessor about the role of language and the possible perceptions to have of dialects.

The reasons for this higher percentage use are very many indeed, the major ones running as follows:

¹- **Anonymous:** "English Language Usage" in Standard English vs Non-standard English www.howtospell.co.uk/standard-v-non-standard-english retrieved on 12/ 5/2015.

One is that grammar – the main feature of Standard English, which tends to install discipline and consistency in the language as is generally known, is formal; that is it deals with forms by the nature of its subject-matter. As such, the grammar of a language is not very flexible and differs little from one generation to another. Metcalfe and Astle [22] highlight this conservative feature of grammar: "Since 1500 there have been changes in literary and conversational style, changes in usage, changes in the meanings of words, ... but grammar has hardly changed at all. The fundamental rules now observed and to be respected, in fact, are the rules observed by the Elizabethan writers." This rigidity of grammar and standard language is not always in tune with the message we wish to communicate. We write to make a meaning, to solve or help solve problems, to create interpretations, etc. We write within the academy but also outside the academy in cultural, political and civil contexts. In other words, in practice the way in which the grammatical system is applied in the actual process of communication depends on the participants involved, the communication

setting, the context and the participants' purpose. These factors consistently influence the speaker's choice of linguistic forms. Outside the academy, we ought to wonder whether our discourse reflects real written language usage. That is, that outside the academy, our writing does not necessarily have to adhere to the standard code. Thus, in spite of the stability of the grammar and the standard language, "language changes constantly, and new ideas and new concepts and new things and inventions are around us at all times" [23]. Conventions are even sometimes disrupted. So, ways may sometimes be a bit unusual but still be effective. Soyinka in an interview that Kola [24] conducted with him in Montreal recognizes that he sometimes manipulates English in a complex way:

Language is a tool and therefore I manipulate language any way I like, any way that seems to me appropriate to the very theme which I am concentration on at that particular moment. Yes, I agree that I use language in a complex way sometimes. I agree that I use it in a complex way, as in the same way, it is obvious, that in certain writings, I use it in a far more straightforward manner. It depends on the burden which that language is supposed to carry at any given time. (The Interpreters: Soyinka's Prose Style)

Soyinka thus acknowledges that in literature he uses both Standard and Non-standard English, each depending on "the burden the language is supposed to carry at a given time."

Another reason for people's frequent use of non-standard English is that the English grammar must be assumed to be mainly the grammar of prose, which does not govern poetry or spoken language. Indeed, poetry is not meant to be strictly analysed, for instance, in terms of syntax and there is the poets' refuge known as 'poetic licence' [22].

In the same vein, spoken English does not obey the same norms as writing. People do not talk like they write even in the most formal of situations or contexts. When we speak, what we say is what comes into our heads as we feel, or think, or whatever it is, as individuals. We just speak and do not think that much about sentences at all. "**Speech is so ephemeral that some minor errors of construction are often overlooked, and many conversations, if put into cold print, could shock by their apparent immaturity of language.**" [22]. Moreover, even the Standard English is at times not as accurate as nonstandard dialects.

What is worse is that at some other times it is hard to know what Standard English actually is. To highlight this inconsistency, it may be entertaining to quote this example: the grammar book teaches us to say: 'it's I.' Yet, most native speakers say 'it's me.' And many are the highly educated people who now say and write it." This means that at times what some take as non-standard is rather the standard.

Non-Standard Varieties in *The Interpreters*

That Soyinka has used Standard English to write *The Interpreters* is not questionable. What attracts attention however are the narrative structure and the other various linguistic forms he used to write the novel. The forms are an important number; a few of them are identified and commented upon in this study. Their use makes Soyinka's style in *The Interpreters* a novelty in Nigerian Literature [25]. Indeed, though the novel dwells on common national issues central to which is Modern Nigeria moral decay, the style deviates from the norms of conventional prose narrative in a number of ways. One is Soyinka's extensive use of flashback techniques. Eager to uncover the mysteries in Nigerian realities and at the same time let his own life philosophy be known to the reader, Soyinka manipulated English any way he deemed appropriate to draw the multi-faceted aspects under which he observed the country. Thus, in the novel, he addressed the Nigerian economic, political and social realities going about them not in a straightforward manner but in fits and starts; that is as Abdullahi [25] points out, "Soyinka has the penchant in this book to narrate about an incident, abandon it midway and after series of other narrated incidents, go back to pick up the hanging incident from where it is left off." This gives rise to a narrative structure which does not conform to the standard usage of English where the discourse is expected to be cohesive and coherent; it rather goes forward then backward at times infiltrated with Yoruba culture, making the task uneasy to the reader. Two, Soyinka used a whole range of English in the novel, viz. poetic prose with a series of speech figures (p7-8), the proverb (p9), pidgin English, local language phrases certainly part of Yoruba verbal oratory, etc., evidence that Soyinka's prose style (the sum of language forms that he has used) involves both standard and non-standard varieties of English. A few examples among the many will help confirm the presence of non-standard English in *The Interpreters*.

-Pidgin English

Pidgin English in *The Interpreters* -- a post-colonial novel -- may be a wonder to the English learner. It is however one of the linguistic forms in the works by such other creative writers as Cyprian Ekwensi, Gabriel Okara, Ama Atta Aïdo, Kofi Anyidoho, etc. Not only is it used in *The Interpreters*, it is also a medium Samson switched to in Soyinka's *The Road*. In *The Interpreters*, Mathias is central in this context and the dialogues he has with Sagoe in chapter five and Nwabuzor in chapter six are illustrative of the presence of this variety in the novel. Part of the dialogue between Mathias and Sagoe in chapter five runs as follows: Mathias explained, 'Na local brickler come make alteration for inside. De wall done rotten to ground, so den brings

them fat woman come lean for the wall. Na private house before before, so dey knock down de wall turn is to office. Na dem own wife dey take body knock de wall for ground.' And he roared away for a full minute.

Sagoe looked through the rear window...He turned to Mathias, 'How do you work in this stench?'

'Ah, na so everybody dey say first time. But make you look me now, I just dey grow fat for the smell.'

Sagoe asked to be shown the canteen. He paid for a coffee but could not drink it. The two halves of the cup were held together by accumulated filth in a deep crack. And it was difficult to tell what gave the special quality to the smell in the canteen; there was the greasy water in which yesterday's lunch-plates were soaked, (p. 72).

Sagoe: 'Where is the toilet?'

Mathias: 'If na only piss you wan' piss, lagoon dey for backyard. Na in we dey take use for common piss.'

'No Mathias, I want a proper sit-down-strike.'

'Siddon wetin? I no sabbe . . . o-o . . . 'and he hunched over to his knees with laughter. 'Oga you too funny. To God I no hear dat one before.'

Mathias was in front, but Sagoe's nose arrived long before them both and the sight of soggy scraps of newspaper stuck in urine only confirmed its probing . . . Sagoe turned back.

Mathias bewildered, 'I think Oga say e wan' shit?'

'No no, the ting done disappear.'

'Enh? You mean e go on strike?' And the wit rendered him so helpless that Sagoe feared for his health with such huge intakes of air. . .

'I dey go oga. But make you siddon small. Sometime e fit come back.'

'Siddon where?'

'Siddon where? A-ah, youself oga, wissai person dey siddon for latrine?'

'Never mind,' . . . 'Sometimes my belly dey do dat kin' ting. E no gets sense.'

Mathias was not deceived; the outrage at least in Sagoe's voice had betrayed the truth. 'Ah-ha, you no like de place. I sorry oga, na so we dey manage am.'

'You mean you haven't any other lavatory?'

'Unless woman own. Dat one dey for upstairs.' (p.75-76)

As a simple form of English with a limited number of words that are used together with words from a local language, pidgin English is used when people who do not speak the same language need to talk to each other or when one of the interlocutors does not speak English well [26, 27]. From the example above, Mathias has spoken Pidgin English throughout his exchange with Sagoe and not standard English at all even at moments when this latter variety is required, evidence of his limited linguistic competence.

Sagoe primarily uses standard English but has also used pidgin very little during the exchange with Mathias as a means of only expressing disapproval ('No no, the ting done disappear') and rejection ('siddon where?'). Through the dialogue, Soyinka has made a description of the premises where the interview is to take place: the building – a colonial one -- is neglected and turned to a place unhealthy for people to work in safely. The whole place – be it the toilet, even the canteen – is unbearably filthy and flows with stench. It resents Sagoe. For instance, he could not drink the coffee which he bought because he could not bear the dirt about the cup let alone the stench all around (how do you work in this stench?). As a matter of fact, the interview setting symbolizes the poor political, economic, and social state in which Nigeria finds itself in the postcolonial era. Through Mathias a Pidgin English user, Soyinka points to the average Nigerian's abject working and living condition, which poor state Soyinka satirically addresses through Sagoe's use of the same variety of English. Mathias and Sagoe the two participants in the dialogue belong to two different social categories, which each of them are well aware of. Mathias is a happy-go-lucky sort of person who is content with his working setting, a place Sagoe cannot accommodate to. Moreover, Mathias shows high respect for Sagoe who, freshly back from abroad, has been staying at a renowned hotel, Hotel Excelsior, which highlights Sagoe's social class. By switching to Pidgin at times, and making it used by both interlocutors, Soyinka suggests his belief that Pidgin suits the expression of the circumstances portrayed and fixes them in a context where a language of more natural and more appropriate expression than the colonial language could do.

Local Language

This English indigenization is enhanced by Soyinka also code switching to Yoruba, as can be seen for instance in: '*Se wa s'omo fun wa?*' (p.84) and '*ologomugomu*' (p.166). '*Se wa s'omo fun wa?*' literally, means: 'will you act as a dutiful son should?' and *ologomugomu* is a sacrificial figure. This code-switching between the imperial language and the author's mother tongue seems to indicate Soyinka making sure that his Africanness is clearly demonstrated in the work under study. Thus, he alienates the colonial language which he seems to regard as insufficient in exactly conveying African transcendental thoughts. Poetic prose

Poetic Prose

Another feature of Soyinka's style, evidence that he deliberately deviates from the conventions, is that his prose is highly poetic. In most non-dialogue passages, he chooses to refer indirectly to actions, events, situations, issues, using far-fetched language to the extent where, if his prose is examined literally, unimaginatively, it will be found that at times he is speaking nonsense while actually he is speaking figuratively, saying either less or more than what he means

or the opposite of what he means, with a frequent use of imagery. The following are a few examples of the sort of imagery highlighted in the underlined segments:

1-Mathias was in front, but Sagoe's nose arrived long before them both and the sight of soggy scraps of newspaper stuck in urine only confirmed its probing. . . . The rout was completed and his bowels closed at once (p.76).

These are two powerful types of imagery. The first, olfactory imagery, suggests the repulsive stench which spreads from the toilet place in the premises of the interview; this is reinforced by the second, a visual imagery, seen in 'the newspapers stuck in urine', all resulting in an immediate inhibiting effect on Sagoe who, in other terms, no longer feels like easing himself. All this is achieved through a central figure of speech: the metaphor -- a means of comparing things that are essentially unlike -- realized in 'Sagoe's nose arrived.' and 'his bowels closed.'

2-The buzz of his outraged comrades swelled the incident beyond proportion. It was the only sound that could be heard, a slow gathering buzz of a swarm of greenbottles disturbed on some rotting food. (p.91)

The imagery here is auditory. Just like the previous forms, it also is a metaphor, a powerful comparison where human beings are seen as having the same qualities with a swarm of bees because they have grown very annoyed and behave accordingly.

One of the shrewd ways the metaphor is realized in the novel is that sometimes it draws on other figures of speech. In 'Lethargy had crept on him and it spread imperceptibly; each voice grew a projected echo far cast as the dusk wailing of the muezzin catechist.' (p.7), the author has built it on such figurative language as Personification (lethargy had crept) and Oxymoron (muezzin catechist). This latter figure of speech is also found in 'The reaction was a simple unison of utter disbelief. (p. 78) which describes Sagoe's attitude during the interview: a show of total disbelief is in actual fact no reaction at all, but rather the opposite of any factual reaction.

Soyinka also uses proverbs. The proverb, as is known, is usually a phrase or a sentence that gives advice or says something that is generally true. For instance, when Egbo persists to get the paddlers confirm that the old man is blind, the elder of the paddlers unwilling to answer, only says to Egbo:

'When asked why they wore leather shields over their thoughts, the counselors replied, "the king says he's blind".' (p.11). This proverb which is an indirect answer not only helps the elder paddler rid of Egbo but also is at the same time an advice to Egbo himself. This is very wise and intelligent of the elder paddler. Proverbs play an important part in African cultures all across the continent. Morals and lessons have been crystallized in the form of proverbs which convey wisdom, truth, life lessons.

Thus, this other proverb:

'A degree does not make a graduate.' (p. 79) is a reflection one of the members of the Board who interviewed Sagoe made when Sagoe who holds high degrees from abroad proved unable to answer the questions he was asked. The member, an elderly person who does not necessarily hold such high degrees, teaches Sagoe one life aspect: degrees are not synonymous with competence. By means of a proverb this is done wisely enough though this is also a subtle way of laughing at the young man. It is quite surely Soyinka's view that book knowledge does not equal life experience.

Conclusion

Based on this bulk of information, it can safely be asserted that a work of art is hardly just a connection of the standard form of the language used; instead, a text emerges as a variety of registers. It involves varieties of the language used and as such takes care of both the standard and the non-standard forms. Thus, an essay can suddenly switch from a formal to an informal register. Language, indeed, has to adjust to the situation it takes care of in order to make sense. Therefore, when we learn and/or teach English, a worldwide spoken language, we are called upon to not lose sight that it is spoken by different people in different places and have to be receptive and tolerant to consequent varieties.

References

1. Adejare O (1992) *Language and Style in Soyinka: A Systemic Textlinguistic Study of a Literary Idiolect*. Ibadan: Heinemann.
2. Milroy J (1992). *Linguistic Variation and Change*. Oxford: Blackwell.
3. Verma SK, Krishnaswamy N (2009: 19) *Modern Linguistics: An Introduction*. Oxford: University Press.
4. Roach P (2009) *English Phonetics and Phonology: A practical course*. Cambridge: University Press.
5. Nelson C (2015) "What is a dialect?" In *e Learning English Language*. elearnenglishlanguage.com/blog/English. Retrieved on 15/10/2015.
6. Trudgill P (1999) *Standard English: What it isn't*. Available on line at <http://www.sociolinguistics.uottawa.ca/lin7942/readings>. Retrieval date: 25/10/2015.
7. Boadi B Grieve L, Nwankwo DW (1990: 43) *Grammatical Structure and It's Teaching*.
8. Greenbaum S (1991) *An Introduction to English Grammar*. London: Longman.
9. Hickey R (ed., 2004) *Standard English and standards of English*. On line at https://www.uni-due.de/an300/standards_of_Engli. Retrieved on 13/5/15.
10. Trask RL (2000) *Dictionary of English Grammar*. Penguin.
11. Selinker L (1972) "Interlanguage." *International Review of Applied Linguistics* 10: 209-231.
12. Selinker L (1992) *Rediscovering Interlanguage*. London: Longman.
13. Quirk R (1990) "Language varieties and standard language." in *English Today*, 21: 3-10.
14. Kilickaya F (2009) "World Englishes, English as an International Language and Applied Linguistics" in *English Language Teaching*. Vol 2, no 3.
15. Wehbe F (2013) *Advantages and Disadvantages of Kachru's 'three circle' model*, academia.edu/7391094.
16. Kachru (1985) "Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: the English language in the outer circle." R Quirk and HG Widdowson (Eds), *English in the World: Teaching and learning the language and literatures* (pp. 11-30). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
17. Rajadurai J (2005) "Revisiting the Concentric Circles: Conceptual and Sociolinguistic Considerations." *Asian EFL Journal* 7(4).
18. Jenkins J (2015) *Global Englishes: a resource book for students*. London: Routledge.
19. Gumperz JJ (1972) "Sociolinguistics and Communication in Small Groups" in *Sociolinguistics: Selected Readings*. Ed. by Pride JB and Holmes J Harmondsworth: Penguin Books. P. 205.
20. Ritchie H (2013) "It is time to challenge the notion that there is only one way to speak English" in *Reference and Languages* at www.theguardian.com/books/2013/dec/31/one-way-speak-English-standard-spoken-british-linguistics-chomsky. Retrieved 12/3/2015
21. Zabus C (1991) *The African Palimpsest: Indigenization of Language in the West African Europhone Novel*. Amsterdam – Atlanta, GA: Rodopi.
22. Metcalfe JE, Astle E (2005) *Correct English*. Surrey: Clarion.
23. Dako K, Angsotinge G, Denkabe A (2005) *An Introduction to Language and the Language of Literature*. Legon-Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers.

24. Kola (2001) The Interpreters: Soyinka's Prose Style on line at [www.thefreelibrary.com/the+Interpreters%3A+Soyinka's+Prose+Style+\(Literary+Criticism\)-a091011987](http://www.thefreelibrary.com/the+Interpreters%3A+Soyinka's+Prose+Style+(Literary+Criticism)-a091011987). Retrieved on 10/5/2015.
25. Abdullahi D (2014) Style as Deviation from the Norm: Soyinka's The Interpreters sunnewsonline.com/new/style-deviation-norm.
26. Hornby AS (2010-2015) Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English. Oxford University Press.
27. Phillipson R (2012) Linguistic Imperialism alive and kicking. On line, at <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2012/mar/13/li>. Retrieved on 27/10/2015.

Please Submit your Manuscript to Cresco Online Publishing

<http://crescopublications.org/submitmanuscript.php>