

Aspects of the Phono-Graphological Design in Soyinka's 'Faction.'

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Introduction

The term 'faction' is a portmanteau word, which according to Tulloch (1991), was coined in the late sixties in the United States to refer to novels based on real or historical events. But in the eighties, the term was extended to dramatized television documentaries sometimes called docudrama or drama-docs.

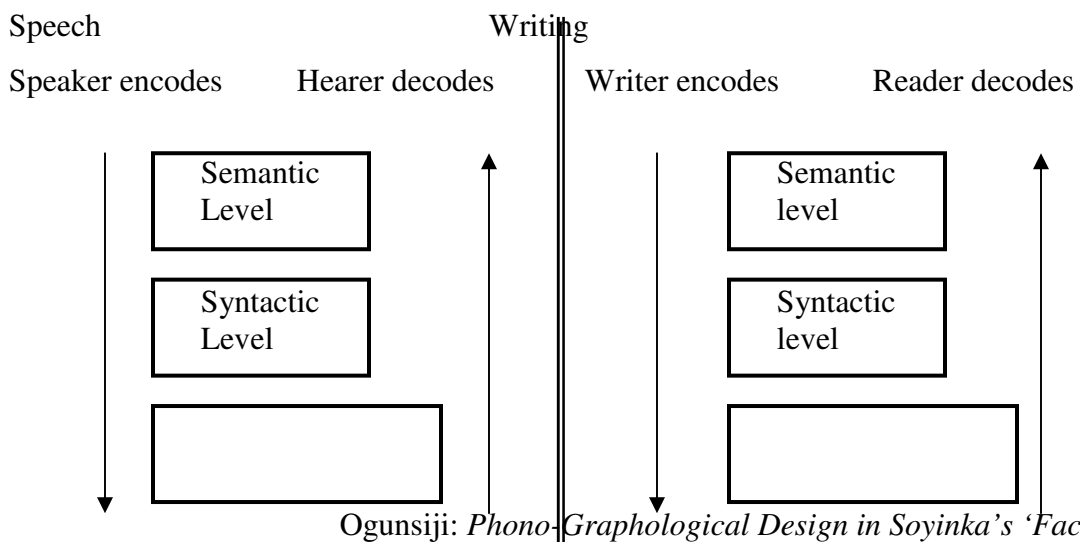
Also, Emenyonu (1991:133) takes 'faction' to be the art of "juxtaposing facts, real and identifiable, with fiction". He asserts that faction is the latest trend in Nigerian novel and that it is evident in Soyinka's *Isara* (1989). According to him, Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1988) also shows some traces of faction. Specifically, he attributes the emergence of the genre as a dominant feature in contemporary Nigerian fiction such as Kole Omotoso's *Just Before Dawn* (1988). As this critic reasons, the desire to satirize in a more direct and clear manner in order to reform the society more effectively may have been one of the motivations for the growing popularity of faction in the Nigerian literary scene. But I am apprehensive of the trend of turning fiction into the documentation of social history, with a shift of emphasis and focus from the imaginary to the factual. In this paper, I examine some phono-graphological aspects of meaning-making in Soyinka's *Ake*, *Isara* and *Ibadan* – the texts that can be regarded as 'factional' works.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is linguistic stylistic in orientation and it is hinged on the principles of Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (see Halliday 1985). Within this tradition, linguistic events are approached and explained at some inter-related levels, incorporating the primary levels of substance, form and context. Substance is made up of the phonic and the graphic materials of language realized by phonology and graphology respectively; form incorporates grammar and lexis while context relates language form to the non-linguistic features (Tomori 1977:44-45).

Systemic functional linguistics recognizes the formal and the situational dimensions of language description. At the formal level, meaningful patterning at phonological/graphological, grammatical and lexico-semantic sub-levels are accounted for, while at the situational level, the contextual variables of language events are brought to light. In other words, the systemic functional model is both structural and functional (Martin, Matheissen and Painter 1997).

Working within this tradition, Leech and Short (1981) identify four levels of language description: syntax, semantics, phonology and graphology. Syntax and phonology form the expression plane and interact to bring out meaning which is the pre-occupation of semantics. According to them, graphology is an alternative form of realization to phonology. Although phonological features can be said to be remote in a written text, they are still not irrelevant. Spellings can be exploited to suggest some phonological features and these will be more prominent when the text is read aloud. Leech and Short describe the levels of organization in speech and writing thus:

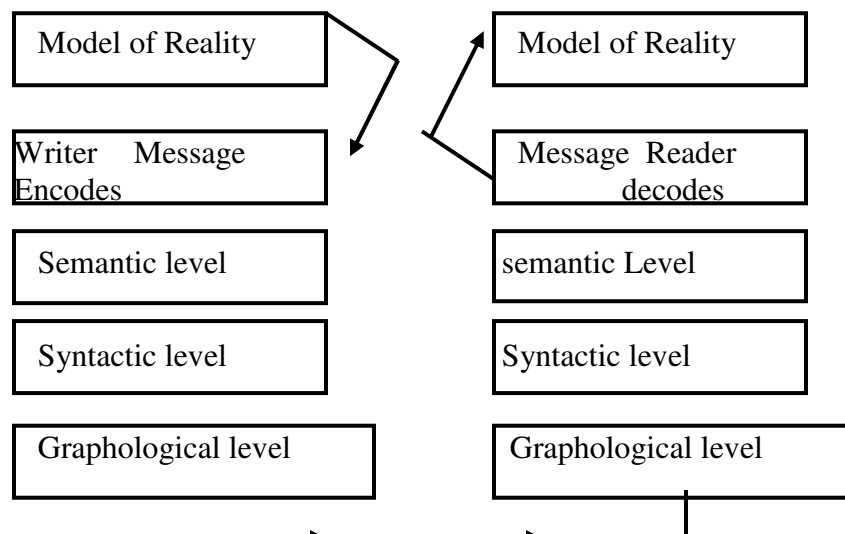


Phonological
LevelGraphological
level

(Leech and Short 1981:121)

In speech and writing, the process of encoding is top-down – the speaker or writer has some meaning to express and puts it in words in a specific order realizable by sounds or letters. The process of decoding is the other way round, from sounds or letters arranged in a specific order to the level of meaning. This process is bottom-up.

With specific reference to the analysis of fiction, Leech and Short (1981:126) defines the levels of language organization thus:



I interpret Leech and Short's 'model of reality' as being subsumed under contexts of situation and culture. In text encoding, the writer, based on a model of reality, conceives of a message expressible in the form of meanings realizable by syntax and graphology. In text decoding, the procedure is turned round. The Systemic Functional Grammar is very relevant to this scheme because it directly focuses on meanings. Language, as far as Halliday is concerned, is a system of meanings, and people's language acts exhibited in language use are manifestation of meanings (Bloor and Bloor 1995:1). In accounting for meaning, Halliday, according to Phillips, (2007:7-8) "charts a triadic boundary between ...substance (phone or graph), text (grammatical and lexical organisation) and context (linking the text to the "extra-textual" environment of the event itself). Necessarily, in order to capture the manifestations of meanings, a pluralistic approach – the type advocated by the Systemic Functional Linguistics – becomes a desideratum. As Fairclough (1995:4) observes, the written texts are

“increasingly becoming multi-semiotic”, exploiting photographs, diagrams, sound effects and other forms of graphic design.

Soyinka’s *Ake*, *Isara* and *Ibadan* Contextualized

Ake (1981) is a narration of the childhood experience of Wole, the child of Ayodele and Eniola Soyinka. The story covers the first eleven years of Wole’s life, up to the time he is about to enter the Government College, Ibadan. In addition to being the childhood story of Wole, *Ake* is also the story of the people, events and places that have some effects on Wole Soyinka’s early life experience. The story tells about the Christian family background of Wole Soyinka represented by the parsonage at Ake and the traditional background which is symbolized largely by his grand-father called ‘father’ as well as the small town of *Isara*. The text is a good background to the life and personality of Wole Soyinka as well as his later writings.

Isara (1989) goes back to about ten years before the birth of Wole to tell the story of his father who is called Akinyode Soditan (Essay). The narrative is therefore a biography. It is a reconstruction of the lives of Akinyode Soditan and other members of the circle – the educated elite of *Isara*, the products of Ilesa Teacher Training Seminary, styled “Ex-iles”.

In *Ibadan* (1994) Soyinka resumes the narration of his life experience, this time covering his boyhood and manhood experiences, right from his government college days in Ibadan, his studentship at the University of Leeds up to his return to Nigeria as an activist to face struggles against what he considers to be repressive forces, both within the University and the larger Nigerian society.

The three texts blend fact with fiction, making references to real historical events, real people and places etc. But the events, people, and places are imaginatively rendered to the extent that they cannot be seen as mere historical documentations.

Phonological Analysis

As a poet, Soyinka exploits some sound devices to achieve certain effects and create aesthetic appeal in his ‘*Faction*’. An examination of how this is done is our pre-occupation in this section.

Sound Repetition

Repetition of sounds is one important poetic feature that re-echoes throughout *Ake*, *Isara* and *Ibadan*. This is largely in form of alliteration and assonance. For example, in *Ake* the features show up in such expressions as “*Strode Straight*” (p.1); “falling off faster and faster” (p.77). Examples also abound in *Isara* as seen in “wide, wild world” (p.19); ‘Psalming Soundlessly’ (p.170); ‘Stood stock-still’ (pp.190, 232). And in *Ibadan* we have such instances as ‘bolder than the boulders’ (p.16); ‘bloated British bourgeoisie’ (p. 26); ‘British breed’ (p.39); ‘big black buck’ (p.60); ‘far from family’ (p.89). With such an artistic deployment of alliterations and assonance, the narratives achieve effective and vivid descriptions besides the aesthetic joy they offer us. In addition, they appeal to our sense of hearing, especially when read aloud. A similar effect is created with sound duplications that are onomatopoeic e.g. ‘Kitipa-kitipa’ (*Ake* p.7); ‘garapa-garapa’ (p.142); ‘bente-bente’ (p.181). In *Ibadan*, while describing a man’s beer drinking from the bottle, Soyinka writes ‘glug-glug-glug’ (p.31). This is an effective onomatopoeia that serves a descriptive purpose.

Reinterpretation of Sounds

In Soyinka’s ‘faction’ some sounds of English are re-interpreted in the light of Yoruba sounds. In *Ake*, the name Mccutter is rendered as ‘Makota’ (p.39) to conform to the Yoruba consonant – vowel sequence and avoid consonant clusters. In this process of sounds re-interpretation, the phenomena of sound substitution and vowel insertion are embedded. The central vowels /ɪ/ and /ə/ in the name are replaced with /o/ and /a/ respectively, while the vowel /a/ is also inserted between the bilabial nasal /m/ and the voiceless velar /k/. The child, Wole, is used to the Yoruba version or rendition of the name i.e. Makota, until he encounters the original spelling of the name as Mccutter when he ventures outside *Ake* parsonage to follow a band to town. In a similar manner, the Hausa traders who used to patronize *Ake* parsonage also render the word ‘trousers’ as ‘torosa’ (p.47). This may have been as a result of the influence of the Yoruba language on them.

Similarly, in *Isara*, the European name ‘Gollmer’ is said to be reduced to ‘Goloba’ (p.160) in Egband. Rev and Mrs. Gollmer are said to have accompanied Rev. Henry Townsend during his second visit to the area. The rendition of Gollmer as ‘Goloba’ is to avoid the consonant cluster in the name and replace it with the Yoruba phonological feature of consonant – vowel sequence. The rendition – Goloba – may also be suggestive of the

physical configurations of the bearers e.g. in terms of hugeness. In like manner, Tugwell is rendered as 'Togiwe' (p.210). And in *Ibadan* there is the rendition of 'French' as 'faranse' (p.350).

In *Isara* sound re-interpretation attains a very humorous dimension. For example, in expressing perhaps the unfamiliarity of foreign names, Efuape renders Wade Cudeback (Soditan's pen-pal) as 'Cade Wooden back' (p.232). This creates humour and, in addition, may be indicative of the Yoruba people's somewhat negative attitude to the European 'intruders'. Efuape's comment that follows the rendition: "... or whatever he calls himself" tends to support this interpretation. It is along this line that we can also interpret the rendition of Mr. Carter as 'Mr. Kata-kata', which seems to suggest confusions or problems and may also imply the Ijebu people's negative and uncomplimentary attitude towards Mr. Carter, a colonial officer in Ijebu area (208).

In the text, the citation of a list of names of foreign companies (probably Italian) also reflects humorous sound re-interpretation. Such names include 'Signore Porta Agostinoa & Co.' 'Messers Beila, Istituto Americale Lanieri X Italiano, via Allesandro Manzone Milano', 'Montarnari Caro Esq.; 12 via Morigi..' (p.102). 'Benito Paserelli' and 'Padua' are reinterpreted in the light of the Ijebu dialect of the Yoruba language (p.103) thus: 'B' eni to p'ase r'eni p'adua ('As one who feasts us so dead tired, we fall to prayers'). Such is the way Sipe Efuape reinterprets such names of his Italian trade partners as 'Benito' – 'B'eni to se' ('As one who can do it...'); 'Milano' – 'emi sipe re me lano' ('indeed it is I, sipe who blazes the path') (p.52). Such a humorous sound re-interpretation also occurs in *Ake* as seen in Wole's grandfather's reduction of the standard six certificate usually called 'As Amended' to 'Asamende' (p.142). This phenomenon is common among the old illiterate speakers of Yoruba as examples such as 'Adonka' (I don't care), 'monowaa' (man-of-war) etc in real life situations illustrate. Such is also the case with a driver's rendition of 'Gentleman' as 'Genturuman' in *Isara* (p.68).

Observe here that sound re-interpretation is a phenomenon of language contact situation in which there is a strong tendency to interpret unfamiliar sounds in the light of the familiar ones. Also sound re-interpretation is seen here as being akin to what Allan (1986:247) calls 'folk etymology'. But at times, sound reinterpretation may be employed for satirical purposes as seen in Chief Akintola's punning with the names of some Igbo

politicians and the public figures in *Ibadan* e.g. ‘Ikiniani, Ikejiani, Iketaani... Ikefaani... s’omo t’iwa na o gbodo ni ni’ (p.20). Soyinka translates this thus: the first will own, the second will own, the third... the ...! Is there any law which says that our own children also should not own? (p.201). Chief Akintola’s re-naming of the politician, S. G. Ikoku, as ‘Ikoko’ (Hyena) also illustrates reinterpretation of sound, with vowel mutation (p.201). A similar reinterpretation of names based on sounds is reflected in Chief Akintola’s reference to such Yoruba names as ‘oredeyin’ ‘Ademeyin’, ‘Oguntimeyin’, ‘Lanlehin’...’ as a bunch of losers, those doomed to come last in all things’ (p.20). This last example illustrates the fact that familiar sounds can be given another interpretations so as to create some effects.

Elongation of Sounds

There is in our data a phenomenon that may be described as elongation of sounds. It functions as a feature of speech as well as an indication of emphasis. The phenomenon is realized by unusual spellings such as ‘We-e-ll’ (Ake p.56); ‘Oge-e-ee’ (p.200); ‘Ze-e-e-e-k’ (p.200); ‘Bee-e-e-e-e-e-re’ (for Beere – Mrs Ransome Kuti) (p.210); ‘Dao-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o’ (for Daodu – Rev. Ransome Kuti) (p.171). This process of sound elongation also recurs in *Ibadan* e.g. ‘A-zee-kee-e-we’ (p.731), occurring in Madame Evanti’s special song rendered in honour of Azikiwe; ‘dooo’ (p.74), in the manner of Madame Evanti’s pronunciation; ‘... a ba-a-a-d son’ (p.7) etc. More properly, perhaps, we can describe this phenomenon as lengthening of vowels.

Sound Elision

The phenomenon of omitting a unit of sound or even a syllable; which I regard here as a feature of speech can be identified in *Ake* and *Isara*. Apart from being a feature of speech, we take it as a way of achieving economy of form (or sound). Some examples in the texts include ‘Ma’am’ (Ake p.84); ‘His’ry’ (*Isara* p.215); ‘Ba’tola’ (p.190); ‘Ba’tune’ (p.34).

Addition of the Vowel /o/ at the end of an Utterance

This phenomenon of adding the vowel /o/ at the end of an utterance seems to be a feature of Nigerian English and it is an attempt to create an emphasis. Examples of the feature are discernible in *Ake* and *Ibadan* e.g. ‘come and hear this o’ *Ibadan* (p.142). ‘Sorry

o' (p.210); 'Hey look o, just look this man o', (p.338). When they carry their protest against economic exploitation to Alake, a representative of the women in her speech affirms; 'special o, ordinary o, levy o, poll o... the women of Egba say, NO MORE TAX... (Ake p.208).

Graphological Analysis

Relevant graphological features that we shall consider relate mostly to punctuation marks and these include capitalization, italicization, hyphenation and dotting. Other relevant features of graphology are spelling and cartooning. The utilization of these features in the texts under consideration has some semantic and stylistic implications as shall be revealed in the following analysis. In fact, the stylistic deployment of certain graphological resources of language is a common feature of African literary works. For example, Okunoye and Odeunmi (2003:293) have also observed that Achebe makes special use of some print marks like italicization and capitalization, among others, in *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah* to achieve some stylistic effects.

Capitalization

In our texts, capitalization is a common graphological feature used as a foregrounding device. In *Ake* some expressions are foregrounded in capital prints for prominence and emphasis. Such include inscription on sign-posts bearing place identification: 'MRS. T BANJOKO LONDON – TRAINED SEWING MISTRESS' (p.40). (Ironically, the dresses worn by the pupils of this institute which must have been sewn there are said to be 'shapeless'). Some other sign-posts include those bearing 'LAFENWA', 'IGBEIN' (p.41) 'ABEOKUTA GRAMMAR SCHOOL' (p.43). Also, appearing in capital letters are the inscriptions on the embroidered, framed and glazed homilies hung on the wall at Soyinka's residence at Ake among which read thus: 'REMEMBER NOW THY CREATOR IN THE DAYS OF THY YOUTH; 'EBENEZER HITHERTO HATH THE LORD HELPED US', 'HONOUR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER' etc (p.94). These homilies are not mere decorations – the inscriptions they bear are more or less religious injunctions which produce some effects on the children; they help us define the religious mood at Soyinka's residence at Ake.

Also, for emphasis and perhaps thematic purpose, the word CHANGE(S) is capitalized on pages 82, 93, 94 and 95 of *Ake*. It refers to-physical changes like the arrangement of household objects as well as emotional changes like that caused by the death of Folasade on her first birthday.

In a similar way, the expression “NO MORE TAX” (p.208) which is more or less the catch – phrase of the woman protesters against any form of taxation is foregrounded in bold prints to underscore its significance. In addition, capital letters occur in some unusual places in *Ake* e.g. ‘Birthday’ (pp.29, 30) and ‘Temperature’ (pp. 66, 80). The initial capital ‘B; of ‘birthday’ when it is not at the beginning of a sentence seems to personify the word and express the importance which the children attach to it. The same thing applies to the word ‘Temperature’, treated as if it were a proper noun.

It is with the same thematic and stylistic purpose that capitalization is employed in *Isara*. While on board a train to the seminary teachers training college at Ilesa, with Damian, the Edo boy, accompanying him, Akinyode’s mind flashes back to Damian’s suicide attempt not long after his arrival at *Isara* – he attempts to purchase raw soda and drink. Damian’s reason for this is not known but ‘THE QUESTION’ (p.140) motivation for the suicide attempt. Foregrounding “THE QUESTION” in capitals continues to agitate Akinyode’s mind – he wants to find out from Damian his expresses the heavy weight which it carries. The same thing also applies to the instruction in the train’ ‘NEVER LEAN OUT OF THE WINDOW!’ (p.16).

Another instance of the use of capitalization for emphasis is seen in Mr. Beckley’s statement ‘I am NOT sitting down...’ (p.119) addressed to Mr. Soditan. The former had visited the latter to complain about the beating of his son. Upon being requested to take a seat, Mr. Beckley makes this response. The capitalization of NOT in the response indicates the placement of the emphatic stress on the item – it indicates Mr. Beckley’s unwillingness to accept the offer and expresses his disapproval of Mr. Soditan’s action in punishing the young man. Also in *Isara* unconventional capitalization is adopted to show Tenten’s low literacy level (p.79).

In *Ibadan*, there is the continuity in the use of capitalization for emphasis e.g. ‘PARTY POLITICS’ (p.198); ‘SWANSTON ... SWANSTON’ (p.111). Just as the words “Birthday” and “Temperature” are treated with initial capitals, “Freedom”, a common noun,

starts with an initial capital letter to indicate its significance and draws attention to it (p.88). Also in this text, capitalization is employed to indicate abbreviations e.g. SGNN (p.64), meaning ‘Self Government for Nigeria Now’ ‘NCNC’ (p.65) meaning ‘National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons. Abbreviations for the names of some other political parties in capital letters include NNDP (p.336); UPGA (p.336); NPC (p.240); NEPU (p.24); NNA (p.241). As Adejare (1992:65) says, the use of capital letters other than in their conventional places is a features of philosophical texts. Thus, Soyinka’s *Ake*, *Isara* and *Ibadan*, like most of his works, are philosophical to some degree.

Italicization

Loan words and expressions are foregrounded in italics in the three texts, especially Yoruba words and expressions e.g. *egungun* (*Ake* p.1); *iwin*, *igbagbo* (p.7); *agidi*, *saara* (p.11). In *Isara* examples also abound e.g. *akowe* (p.12); *abiamo* (p.17); *edan* (p.1213); *arodan*, *osugbo* (p.235). In *Ibadan* the same style continues e.g. *agidigbo* (p.183); *opelenge* (183); *ewedu* (p.182); *adire* (p.182); *oge* (p.151); *awawi* (p.25) etc. Some expressions from other languages like French also appear in italics e.g. *cherie*, *tricitteuse*, *Monsieerur* (*Ibadan* p. 62) *boum – boum* (*Ake* p.2); *eloi*, *eloi lama sabaktani* (Greek) (*Isara* p.67). In addition, titles of journals, dailies and magazines are italicized. Examples include the *Mail*, *Times Pilot*, *The World Review* (*Isara* p.177); *Daily Times* (*Ibadan* p.169). Marian’s letter to her son, *Akinyode*, is also put in italics to set it out from the rest of the narrative (*Isara* pp 77-80).

Like quotation marks, italicization is adopted at times to mark off direct speech as it is the case with ‘*Iya Agba’s* speech while talking about the way she wishes to be buried.’ (*Isara* p.30). The use of italics and quotation marks to indicate direct speech provides stylistic variation – free direct speech appears in italics while dialogues are put in quotation marks. (*Isara* pp.30-31). In *Ake*, italicization also serves the purpose of indicating what goes on in the mind of a character but which is not articulated (p.99).

Asterisks

In the three texts, the author employs the asterisks in the glossary to make the translations or interpretations of non-English expressions (these appear as footnotes). The use of asterisks in this manner is a common feature of the texts.

Dots

Dots appear as another common graphological device in *Ake*, *Isara* and *Ibadan*. In these texts, dots indicate ellipsis and serve to achieve economy of space e.g. “He hides among the bougainvillea...” (*Ake* p.8); ‘The others took it up, Osiki supplying a ko-ko-ti-ko-ko...ko-ko-ti-ko-ko-beaat’ (p.31); ‘In... out ...in ...out ...breathing deeply’ (p.77); ‘Wait wait wait... padua...padua’ (*Isara* p.103); ‘Gossypium Brasillewe... Ishan type Gossypium... South African U\$... Vinifera Afr...’ (*Isara* p.14); ‘Aim... hat’s it.. and press..’ (*Ibadan* p.211); ‘I mean, technology is not all bad when you think of it...’ (*Ibadan* p.280). Throughout the texts, dots perform both dialogic and narrative purposes; dialogic when occurring in dialogues and narrative when appearing within the authorial narrative.

Hyphenation

Compounding with hyphenation features prominently in Soyinka’s ‘Faction’. He utilizes hyphenation to form both simple and complex compound words. Examples include: “No size in London” (*Ake* p.14); “LONDON-TRAINED” (*Ake* p.40); “win-de-War” (p.111); “strictly – between – parents” (p.85); “more – than willing” (*Ibadan* p.11); ‘barman-cum-bouncer’ (p.31); ‘that – which – grows – tall – without-sense’ (p.127); ‘Lesser – than – grandshi-d-of-theirs’ (p.172); ‘boy-meets-girls-familiars-embrace-one-another’ (p.224). There is syllabification also done with hyphenation to create emphasis e.g. “ig-no-ra-mus” (*Ibadan* p.205).

Omission of the full-stop

In *Ake* the omission of the full-stop where it should be is observable in the speech of one of the boys of Abeokuta Grammar School, nicknamed ‘IKU’ (Death) when he assumes the role of a lawyer before Rev. Kutu, the Principal of the school. The following illustrates this:

I concluded principal, and there no time like now because action speaks louder than words, time and tide waited for no man opportunity once lost cannot be regained a stitch in time saves nine... (*Ake* p.174)

The omission of the full-stops in this question is to make it resemble law discourse which the speaker attempts to imitate. The scanty use of the stop is characteristic of legal documents.

Spellings

As observed under elongation of sounds, unorthodox spelling is employed to create certain sound effects e.g. doo for do (*Ibadan* p.74); ba-a-a-d for bad (*Ibadan* p.7); we-e-ll for well (*Ake* p.56). Apart from this, unorthodox spelling is used to mark out some characters as it is the case with Tenten, the carpenter whose incompetent sign-writing skill is brought out by the way he spells some words e.g. “ADEbabs FATUKA-LETTER WRITER AND CoffeDetial SPECKeries. All epistolary and DocUMental MATTERS UnderTaking” (*Isara* p.79). The author goes to reveal that Tenten’s sign writing venture had attracted only two patrons and the ‘results showed very clearly that he was neither gifted nor more than barely literate’ (*Isara* p.82)

Also in *Ake*, unusual spellings perform a similar function. For example, the white officer that Wole meets when he ventures outside Ake parsonage to follow a police band to town, addressing Wole, says; “... That is venhrry clenver...” “What can I doon for you” (p.46). Here, Soyinka utilizes spelling to show the white man’s habit of using the intrusive alveolar nasal /n/ after a vowel to nasalize the vowel. The white man is thus said “to speak through his nose” (p.46). In addition, the man renders Wole as “Wonlay” and realizes “what is your name?”. As ‘Whaznamee’? (p.47). A similar thing happens with a humorous character who is almost a glutton, nicknamed “You-Mean-Mayself” as a result of his mannerism of responding: “Oh you – mean-may self? Ny-ou” whenever asked “Have you had your breakfast? He renders “Myself” as “Maysel” and “no” as “ny-ou” (p.117) and the author captures this in the spellings. This is an instance of spelling and sound interacting to indicate some peculiar mannerisms and create humour. Such is the manner in which Soyinka records the peculiar pronunciation of Maren’s Cameroonian student friend in *Ibadan*. To the boy, “money” is “monee” and “big” is “bee” (p.44) and “is” is rendered as “eez” (pp.40, 41). Madame Eventi’s peculiar pronunciation is also captured in the same way as shown thus: “But that eez eemposseably. The tribute would be ruined. It seems one single piece. The spirit will be destroyed eef...” (*Ibadan* p.74).

Cartooning

At the end of Soyinka's *Ibadan*, a cartoon is used as a graphic illustration of the 'penkelemes' that engulfs the western region. The cartoon is that of a chief regarded by the people as a collaborator in the Ijero massacre and consequently nailed to a tree. Ironically, the cartoon bears the title 'greetings' and below it there is the inscription 'No blood flows' which ridicules or satirizes the government's claim at the press conference after the massacre in Ijero that "No blood flows". Soyinka writes a poem of six stanzas with three lines each on the episode, alluding to Christ's crucifixion on the cross. But unlike Christ, the nailed chief is said to be a "Saviour self-elect" (p.381). The chief is nailed with a six-inch nail and Soyinka's poem on the episode is in six stanzas.

Conclusion

Meaning permeates all the levels of language description. In this paper, I have shown how Soyinka exploits some aspects of the phonic and the graphic substance of language to achieve some specific thematic and stylistic effects in *Ake*, *Isara* and *Ibadan*. Considering the phono-graphological devices in the texts, it becomes apparent that the texts are multi-semiotic in nature, with multi-layered meanings which can be better appreciated within the tradition of the formal-functional perspective of language description. The combination of phono-graphological features in the texts appeals to our sense of seeing and hearing and confirms Eagleton's (1983:128) observation that:

...Meaning is scattered or dispersed along the whole chain of signifiers. It cannot be easily nailed down; it is never fully present in any one sign alone...

Moreover, the aesthetic deployment of phono-graphological features in the texts contributes to the "genre-bending ...force" (Jeyifo 2004:39) that is discernible in Soyinka's works. His prose writing, for example, is imbued with poetic and dramatic echoes.

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