

Exclamations as Discourse Markers in Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu and The Midnight Blackout*

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Abstract

The author investigates and describes the use of exclamations as discourse markers in Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu and the Midnight Blackout*. The data is got through a close reading of the two texts during which the various uses of exclamations are identified and analysed structurally in terms of the words, phrases, sentences and also in terms of the mood using Quirk et. al's (1972) categorisation of sentence structures. The analysis reveals that the writer's use of exclamations is not indiscriminate but is a stylistic device to present the imagery of sorrow, sadness, confusion, defeat and death in a helpless African community. It is also noted that structurally, the exclamations can be classified into words, phrases, clauses and sentences, the highest of which are the sentences. The findings also show that apart from the fact that exclamations have different structural forms, their meanings are also context dependent.

Key words: exclamations, discourse markers, Femi Osofisan, *Women of Owu, Midnight Blackout*

Introduction

Narratives and drama belong to the frozen style of language. They reveal some of the social values and practices of a community. In narratives and drama, writers speak through the characters, language and social practices of a particular speech community to highlight some of the communicative behaviour within the speech community. Toolan (2006:159) refers to Tannen (1979) who notes that our past experiences influence the particular ways we construct our stories and also interpret those of others. She notes further that our cultural disposition affects the stories we tell, create and interpret and that different kinds of stories are appreciated in different kinds of communities. Tannen (1991, 1994) further noted ethnicity and gender based differences in narrative constructions.

Studying communicative behaviour within a speech community involves the study of units of interaction. (Hymes 1972: 58-59) notes that units such as events and acts would be necessary parts of speech situations. To Hymes, speech situations are situations associated with (or marked by the absence of speech). Examples are all kinds of ceremonies, fights, love making, war etc.

The two texts examined in this paper are plays by the same author. They are situated within particular speech communities within south-western Nigeria. The stories are partly historical and seem to explain the attitudes and behaviour of community members (beliefs and attitudes that motivate a community people), highlight the source of the problems of the created speech communities where the actors and actresses are presented as individuals who existed at a point in time in history.

In any speech community, members share not only the cultural practices of the community but also share the same rules for speaking one or different varieties of the same language. The use of a particular variety or different varieties of the same language reveals how language users of a particular language organize their social relationships. The study of the relationship between the use of language and social and cultural values is what Fasold (1990) refers to as

‘Ethnomethodology’. Hymes (1962) believes that linguists were paying too much attention to language as an abstract system instead of being concerned with how speakers use structures such as syntax, phonology, and semantics in their use of language. To Hymes, speech situations are not purely communicative but may be composed of both communicative and other kinds of events. He notes further that a speech event takes place within a speech situation and is composed of one or more than one speech act. In identifying a speech act, the social context, the grammatical form and the intonation are important.

Sinclair and Coulthard’s (1975) and Coulthard’s (1977) account of speech acts show that they are not as ‘minimal’ as they are called. Acts could manifest in different forms syntactically even in conversational pairs. Hymes also suggested certain components of speech using the acronym ‘speaking’. These refer to the situation(setting and scene), participants(speaker/addressee), ends(outcomes /goals), act sequence(communication skills that vary from one culture to another), key(manner in which the speech act is carried out), and instrumentalities(channels- signals, drumming), norms of interaction and interpretation, and genre(etc categories- poems, proverbs). A deep understanding of the community is important in interpreting the attitudes of the community members and their reaction to situations around them.

This paper therefore tries to describe the use of *exclamations* as discourse markers by Femi Osofisan in his texts titled *Women of Owu and the Midnight Blackout*. Its objectives are to identify the context of the exclamations using Hymes (1962) taxonomy of situation, identify their syntactic structures in terms of the mood and then relate it to their communicative functions in the text.

Femi Osofisan and a Synopsis of the two Plays.

The data for this work were drawn from two of Femi Osofisan’s texts: *Women of Owu* and *The Midnight Blackout*. Femi Osofisan is a prolific and popular Nigerian playwright, actor and a theatre director. To his credit, he has written over fifty plays part of which include *Aringindin and the Night plays (1991)*, *The Oriki of a Grasshopper and other plays (1995)*, *Esu and the Vagabond minstrels (1991)*, and *Yungba Yungba and the dance contest (1994)*.

Femi Osofisan is a down- to- earth reality poet and playwright who has published a lot of plays, essays and poems. The experiences of his early life probably impacted on him and this made him to draw his themes from the happenings in the society. He went through some hard times very early in life having lost his father when he was three months old. He can be referred to as an accomplished actor, director, song writer and contemporary playwright. Awodiya (1996) sees Femi Osofisan as the most productive and most influential of the second generation of playwrights after Wole Soyinka. To Awodiya, Osofisan has a materialist and socialist perspective and combines ideology with cultural traditions.

In his writings, Osofisan seems to prefer to leave the criticism and judgments to his audience in that he just presents the problems in the society and leaves the audience to judge. In the play *Women of Owu*, the hopeless situation of the women is left for the audience to imagine and decide whether the gods should be blamed for the calamity or not.

Out of the many plays by Osofisan, two served as the data for this study. They are: *Women of Owu* (2006 &2009) and *the Midnight Blackout* (1994). The play *Women of Owu* was first published in year 2006 and reprinted in the year 2009. The play revolves around the conquered state of Owu. Owu was a model state, one of the most prosperous and best organised of those times. Owu was attacked by the allied forces with the pretence of

liberating the flourishing market of Apomu from Owu's control. The Allied forces determined that Owu must never rise again, reduced the city to complete ruins. Children were slaughtered while their females became slaves. The play is an adaptation of Euripides' play, in the season of the Iraqi war.

The midnight Blackout is another thrilling play text by Osofisan. It was published in 1994. It is woven around Dr. Juokwu, a respected Professor of Medicine and some members of several senate committees. The word "midnight" has been ironically used to describe the vices perpetuated by the Professor and his counterparts. The text is a satiric comedy.

Osofisan uses ordinary day situations, experiences and characters to project the themes of oppression, brutality, marginalization, war, wickedness corruption etc. Awodiya (1996) further notes that Osofisan specializes in submerging traditional myths for his own egalitarian purposes. This is evident in his book *Women of Owu*. In this play, he presents the god-*Anlugbua* as a helpless and undependable being who could not deliver his people in times of crisis. Unlike his earlier plays, the victims of war in *Women of Owu* were as helpless as their god or goddess. Osofisan used history, myth, song music, dance which are deeply rooted in the African traditional life to front his ideas in the play.

It is interesting to note that Femi Osofisan's writing is not only peculiar in terms of its literary qualities, his use of language in a stylistic way is also worthy of note. In the two plays under consideration in this work, Femi Osofisan has used a lot of exclamations to typify his characters and situations. Some of the semantic functions of the peculiar use of exclamations as discourse markers will be examined.

Discourse Markers

Schourup(1999:31-32) notes that discourse markers are grammatically optional and although they may change the interpretation of the utterances they frame, they do not change their truth condition. Fraser (1988) sees discourse markers as commentary marks because they signal a comment on the entire message of the utterance. Discourse markers frame an utterance in terms of its pragmatic interpretations. Schiffrin (1987) and Redeker (1990) both noted that discourse markers signal the relationship between utterances. Olateju (2006:522) refers to Schiffrin (1999:275) who notes that one should be able to differentiate between the contributions made by a discourse marker and that of the discourse slot in which the marker occurs. In essence, the semantic meaning and grammatical status of any discourse marker should be determined in relation to how the meaning influences the interpretation of the data. Gardner (2000:281) in writing about the importance of discourse markers sees them as items or conversational objects loaded with complex and subtle information about the attitude of listeners to what they hear, see or how they feel.

Schiffrin (1987:49) notes that analyzing discourse markers is part of the more general analysis of discourse coherence. That is how speakers and hearers jointly integrate forms, meaning and actions to make overall sense of what is said. Markers could also act as cohesive devices reflecting underlying connections between propositions. The locations of markers in texts are important in determining their expressive and or social meaning of the discourse. Schiffrin identifies three properties of markers which are multi-functionality in the sense that markers can be used in different discourse capacities simultaneously.

Secondly, markers are ever obligatory which means utterances can occur with or without the markers. The third property that Schiffrin identifies is syntactic diversity found in markers.

Exclamations

Arema(1995:368) see exclamations as sentences that are primarily used for expressing one's feelings. Exclamations usually begin with 'wh' words- 'what' and 'how'. Just like commands, exclamations can be formed from corresponding statements. The part of the sentence (i.e- subject, object etc) which is of particular interest is fronted or placed first in the exclamations and this is usually preceded by 'what' or 'how'. Arema (1995:370) notes that in writing, an exclamation normally ends with an exclamation mark but in speech it is usually uttered with force and given a falling intonation. It is also to be noted that a statement, question or command may also be uttered with force or given a falling intonation to show excitement, irritation, urgency, sadness, disappointment etc. Such forceful statements, commands or questions also end with exclamation marks in writing. Femi Osofisan used different forms of words and sentences as exclamations in the two novels as a narrative stylistic device. Arema (1995:370) notes further that in literary style, exclamations of the kind of subject- operator inversion can be used. E.g

‘How happy have we all been!’”

Exclamations can have different forms for different communicative functions.

3.2. The contexts of Exclamations in *Women of Owu* and *The Midnight Blackout*.

Text 1

Women of Owu has its setting in an open space close to the city's main gate, which used to serve as a market but has been demolished. There are 11 participants in Text 1. Of all the 11 participants, there are 10 active participants and 1 passive participant. All the participants engaged in various exclamatory conversations which described the tensed condition of the setting and also resulted into a more tensed condition which included the use of dirge. For example:

Adumaadan: I closed her eyes and poured some sand on her
In the situation, it was all I could do

Erelu: Thank you! Ah, Deoti, you too! Slaughtered like a goat
and abandoned to the flies like offal! And such a beautiful woman!
What a waste! Goodbye to you, my dear daughter. Orun re o!
(*As she chants Adeoti's oriki, the chorus dirge softly
in the background*)...

With reference to previous conversations between Adumaadan and Erelu, it is clear that there is no good rapport between them even though the relationship that exists between them is that of mother/daughter relationship. The extract above between the two participants resulted into Erelu's expression of mournful feelings. Adumaadan broke the news of Adeoti's death (her sister) to their mother (Erelu). Erelu broke into a chanting dirge which signified an outpour of her feelings. This contributed to the tragic condition of the setting of Text 1. The outcome of Erelu's dirge was the stirring of a mournful environment.

The messages in Text1 are conveyed by using songs to buttress their exclamatory points. The songs in Text 1 consist of dirges, bride chants (ekun iyawo) and Oriki (praise chants). Their essence was distilled more from the mood and atmosphere they create. These songs got adequate response among the participants and this resulted in more exclamations.

Text 2.

The Midnight Blackout has its setting in a regular bourgeois sitting room which is in a fairly dilapidated state and a garage from which the band leader emerged. In text 2, there are 7 participants. All these participants contributed to the humorous atmosphere of the text through the use of various exclamations at different times in the text.

Example 1

Obioma: (*her eyes fixed on his, she begins to sink slowly into sleep...*) It's true, Juokwu? You really love me...? You...really...?

Juokwu: Of course I do... I love you, with all my heart! (*Sees she is asleep, waves his hand across her face, just to be sure, then straightens up.*) God, that's that! (*rises pompously*) Science, the modern magic wand! That's Juokwu's technique, the midnight blackout! (*To picture*) Not those clumsy, outmoded tricks in your notebooks, Mr Cassanova.

In this example, the relationship that exists between the two participants is that of a married couple. Previous conversations between the couple suggested that the wife is suspicious of her husband's infidelity. This extract came immediately after a usual accusation from Obioma (the wife). These previous accusations resulted into the midnight blackout which is a magic wand formulated by Prof. Juokwu. The intended outcome of the midnight blackout is to put Obioma in a state of uncontrollable sleep in order to allow him to go and visit his mistress.

Example 2

Juokwu: Go away! Go away, you this man! This is my house and I say you can't come in!

Akubundu: (*From Outside*) I must! I tell you, I must see you!

Example 2 suggests an unfamiliar relationship between the two participants. Go away! Go away, you this man! as an exclamation that describes unfriendliness and irritability on the part of the speaker. The intended outcome of this conversation is to demand the exit of Akubundu i.e. a direct way of asking the man to leave his house without hesitation.

3.3. The communicative functions of exclamations in *Women of Owu* and *The Midnight Blackout*.

The exclamations in the texts have different meanings in various contexts in which they have occurred. These examples are discussed below with examples from the texts.

Text 1**1. Pain.**

Exclamations are used to indicate the painful experiences of the women in text 1. Examples are:

a. Epah! (3 times), or yepah! (aggravated level of distress in text 1) Originally used by secret cult members to scare non-initiates. Epah! in this context is used to show that the women and the city at large are doomed. Epah! occurred 3 times and was uttered by the women. It is classified as a word.

b. Ah! : This is used to express pain among the characters. It shows that the characters are in agony and that they are passing through some emotional distress. Related to 'Ah!' is "yeah!". It gives an insight to the humiliating experience of the women in the hands of the soldiers.

c. Oh! : (with a tone of regret) This is also one of the exclamations used as word to express psychological pain. The use of these word exclamations enables us to have an understanding that the destruction caught them unawares.

Sentences and phrases are also used as exclamations in text 1 to indicate pain.

Examples include:

a. Mo gbe! : meaning "I'm doomed! This also used to express the sudden realization of the level of their destruction and how pitiable their situation is...

b. Oh shame! : This has also been used to measure the degree of the participant's pain and the state of their embittered minds towards the latest development in the city.

2. Anxiety and Fear.

In Text 1, exclamations have been used to indicate anxiety i.e. participants in Text 1 used exclamations to show their anxiety and fear of the future. Examples include the following:

a. Ah!.....ah!

Anlugbua: So go on, tell me all that happened here.

Women: Ah!...ah!

In the extract above, the women's use of ah...ah! signifies that they are fearful. Anlugbua was man turned deity like 'Sango'. He promised to help them in times of trouble if only they would remember to go to a particular place and pull a string. He eventually appeared to one of the women after the city had been destroyed by soldiers who invaded the land. The appearance of the deity, however, brought no succour or solution to their problem. Telling the sad story of the destruction and the uncertainty of the future did not move the deity to do anything or come to their rescue. The deity seemed helpless and kept on repeating or exclaiming 'you should have called me!

a. Ah, what happiness is waiting for me!

This exclamation portrayed the participant's state of fear and anxiety. She has been taken to become a wife to one of the soldiers. She wondered in her mind if she could ever experience happiness again.

b. I'm going to be given away in marriage to a warrior king!

This also expresses anxiety. The lady is fearful of where she is going because she doesn't know what will happen and also because she seems to be helpless.

3. Affirmation.

Exclamations in this text have been used to affirm some facts expressed in the text. Examples are as follows

a. Never!

This described the participant's determined heart.

a. Yes, it's the truth!

In the context in which this exclamation has occurred, it has been used to attest to what one of the participants had said, to this effect, the exclamation is for affirmation.

b. Yes, I am afraid!

This is an expression of fear on the part of the characters at the sight of the ruthless soldiers.

4. Pity/ depression.

a. Ah! Omo mi, Orisaye!

This exclamation expresses Erelu's pity for her daughter Orisaye who is about to be taken away as wife to a Soldier King. In this exclamation, there is a mixture of two codes- Yoruba and English to demonstrate that the characters are partly bilinguals.

b. How I pity you!

It expresses her state of pity for Gesinde who was sent to take her. This pity is for his future and not for his present.

5. Consolation

a. I'll destroy them totally, totally, without remorse!

This exclamation stands for consolation in the context in which it occurred. Orisaye informed the other characters that her marriage to the new King is to bring destruction upon the King and his household while it will hopefully bring joy and happiness back to Owu. This is just to console the women and to encourage them to stop wailing.

b. All our dead will be avenged!

This is also a consolatory exclamation meant to comfort the women that the conquerors will pay for their act of wickedness and humiliation.

6. Emphasis.

Some of the exclamations in text 1 were also used for emphasis. The emphasis is divided into two as follows:

Negative emphasis

a. No!

This means that the participant was not in agreement with the action of the context.

b. No, drag her out by her!

This emphasises the order that was given.

a. No, don't thank me!

b. No, Erelu, not yet!

Positive emphasis.

a. Yes!

b. Yes, Iyunloye!

However, there are some exclamations that are neither for positive nor negative emphasis but yet they are for emphasis. Some of these are single words or phrases meant to identify.

- a. Me!
- b. Women!
- c. Yesterday, old man!

Text 2

1. Repentance and soberness.

Some exclamations of various syntactic units in this text were used to portray the participants' state of soberness and repentance in their contexts. For example:

- a. I was wrong!
- b. I'm sorry!
- c. Forgive me darling!
- d. No, I promise you, you'll see!
- e. I promise you!

The above exclamations were used in a context of settlement of a quarrel by Obioma to show her husband that she regretted her past actions especially, the suspicion of her husband's infidelity.

2. Confusion!

The use of exclamations could also portray a character as being confused. This is evident in this text when Juokwu made the following exclamations.

- a. But it's unreasonable!
- b. Hey, here we go again!

The first exclamation above showed that Juokwu is confused having heard that a man wrote all his escapades with his mistress while the second was uttered when his wife begged him to forgive her after apologising earlier

3. Justification of Intention

Exclamations as used in this text gave us an understanding that exclamations can be used to justify a participant's intention. For example: "well seeing, as they say, is believing!" Obioma used this exclamation to justify her reason for going to the board meeting to check if truly Juokwu had gone for the meeting.

1. Anger

Exclamations could also express a participant's state of mind in terms of anger i.e. a participant's unpleasant mood towards other participant's action. The following exclamations expressed anger.

a. What!

Obioma: Well, I'll confess. I went to your office in the morning to get it.

Juokwu: What! And they gave it to you!

The exclamation "What!" gave us an insight to Juokwu's mood that suggests that Juokwu

was not happy with Obioma going to collect his letter.

a. Oh, you called that nothing! what kind of woman do you take me for!

The above portrayed that Obioma is annoyed with the fact that the man took her fidelity for granted by proposing to her in her matrimonial home.

b. Thank you!

Naturally, thank you! is an exclamation that shows a participant's appreciation but in the context in which it had appeared in this text, it showed that the participant is angry.

Juokwu: ... I'm going to deal with him! Giving out my letter like that to anybody!

Obioma: Thank you! I'm just anybody, eh?

Here, thank you! Described the fact that Obioma is not pleased with being called "just anybody"

5. Surprise/ disbelief.

Exclamations also sometimes display surprise or disbelief as evident in the following examples.

a. What!

Earlier on, What! was described as being used to express anger but here in another context, the meaning is different. This is because it was used to show surprise. This is evident in the conversation below.

Obioma: ... Mr. Iberibe is well known to me. He was a frequent visitor in our house, when my late husband was alive!

Juokwu: What! What coincidence!

Juokwu used the exclamation to show that he was surprised that Obioma had known Iberibe for a long time.

a. Ah!

This also functioned to mean "surprise. It was used by Obioma to show Iberibe that she was surprised that he didn't believe that she was re-married even after meeting Juokwu and that she was surprised that he proposed to her.

a. No!

This portrayed disbelief. This is evident in the conversation below:

Obioma: (laughing) But I have!

Iberibe: No! I don't believe it!

No! was used by Iberibe to emphasise that he doesn't believe what Obioma told him.

6. Positive and Negative emphasis!

In this text, Yes! was used in various contexts to show emphasis in a positive way. Likewise, 'No!' was also used to show negative emphasis! Oh no! (Negative emphasis), Oh yes! (Positive emphasis).

6. Pretence.

In the text, exclamations such as "Oh him!" was used to portray pretence. Obioma used it while pretending not to know the person Juokwu was referring to as a buffoon.

7. Contempt.

Exclamations such as "ha ha ha! Indeed! were used to depict contempt.

The Syntactic Structures of exclamations in *Women of Owu* and *The Midnight Blackout*.

Of the 2577 exclamations in the texts analysed, 284 (11.021%) were words, 501(19.441%) were phrases, 750 (29.104%) were clauses and 1042(40.34%) were sentences. This indicates

that exclamations are more predominantly in form of sentences in the texts. This observation is illustrated in Table 1 below:

Table 1: The Structure of Exclamations

Structural Units	Text 1		Text 2		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Words	64	13.4	220	10.48	284	11.021
Phrases	66	13.8	435	20.72	501	19.441
Clauses	142	29.7	608	28.97	750	29.104
Sentences	206	43.1	836	39.83	1042	40.434
	478	100	2099	100	2577	100

Examples of the realisation of these grammatical units are presented thus:

a. Words

Text 1: Impossible! What! No! Epah! Anlugbua!

Text 2: What! No! You! Yes!

The following words are repeated in Text 1: Epah! (3 times), me! (3 times), what! (3 times), Impossible! (3times) No! (7 times) O (3 times).

The following words are repeated in Text 2: What! (10 times), Yes! (19 times), No!(15 times), Obi(4 times), Okay(2 times), Nothing (2 times), Witnesses!(2 times), Chinwe! (vocative) (2 times), There!(2 times), Go!(2 times).

The following words occur repeatedly across the texts: No! (22 times), what! (13times)

b. Phrases.

Text 1: Our daughters! The gates! Only yesterday! A slave! The gods!

Text 2: The Midnight Blackout! The cheat! The Criminal! My dear! My letter! Oh yes! Me too!

In Text 1 “the gates!” was repeated 2times while in text 2 the following phrases are repeated: into slavery! In spite of! (2 times), Oh my God!(2 times), The Cheat!(2times), Me too!(2 times). What an idea! (2 times)

These are examples of phrases realised as exclamations across the text.

c. Clauses

Text 1: Just as I feared! Ah, just think of having to clean their toilets! ... Where we all come from! Into Slavery! Put out your torch! Whose consequences you see now before you! In spite of our courage! Disaster drains us!

In Text 1 “put out the torch” was repeated 2 times.

The following clauses are repeated in text 2: Lower your voice! (3 times), I suppose so! (2 times), tell him to get lost! (2times).

There are no examples of repeated clauses across the texts.

In Text 2, the following clauses were repeated: Lower your voice! (3 times), I suppose so! (2 times), tell him to get lost (2 times).

d. Sentences

Text 1: You did not send for me! The oath I made forbade me to return! How we need you all the time! They got them, we learnt from their trade with the white men of the coast! I curse you! They are preparing for their journey back home! May you all without exception suffer the Indignity of unremembered graves!

Text 2: This is going to be a launching with a difference! I don't care! Love is not a crime! I think you are mad! I don't want to lose my job, you hear! This is going to be my first meal today! Oh are you there! It is obstreperous! I hear them coming!

The following sentences are repeated in Text 1: We curse you all! (2 times), The gods are not worth much! (2 times), We have seen him! (2 times).

The following sentences are repeated in Text 2:

I don't care! (3 times), I'll kill you! (2 times), it's obstreperous! (7 times), I don't believe it! (2 times)

There are no repeated sentences across the texts. The exclamations were further classified into their sentence types according to mood as- declaratives, interrogatives, or imperatives.

The Mood System of English

The mood system is usually determined at the clause level. Muir (1972:93) notes that the features of mood are realized by the verb. Clauses containing features of mood express, for example, statement, question or command, according to which form of the verb occurs. The mood features are realised by particular arrangements of some of the elements of clause structure. Features of mood are not in a one-to-one relation with contextual classes of sentences.

As noted by Muir (1972:95) the initial choice in the mood system is between indicative and imperative and if the clause is indicative, there is still a further choice to be made between declarative and interrogative. The subject of a declarative clause precedes its predication while an interrogative clause has either the subject included in the predicator or an initial wh-element. Below is a table showing the distribution of exclamatory sentences which have also chosen the mood system.

Table 2: The mood structure of exclamations in *Women of Owu* and *The Midnight Blackout*.

Mood structure	TEXT 1		TEXT 2		TOTAL	
	NO	%	No	%	NO	%
Declaratives	128	62	794	76.2	922	73.8
Interrogatives	10	4.9	42	4.0	52	4.2
Imperatives	68	33.1	206	19.8	274	22
	206	100	1042	100	1248	100

Of the 1248 sentences in the two texts, 922(73.8%) are declarative sentences, 52(4.2%) are Interrogative sentences and 274(22%) are Imperative sentences. Examples of the realisation of the mood structures are as follows:

a. Declaratives

Text 1:

1. They slaughtered them all!
2. You have nothing to fear!
3. They got them, we learnt from their trade with the white men on the coast!

Invocation

4. May you all without exception suffer the indignation of unremembered of graves!
5. They are preparing for their journey back home!

Text 2:

This is going to be a launching with a difference!

- a. I don't care!
- b. I don't want to lose my job, you hear!
- c. This is going to be my first meal today!
- d. I was an idiot of a wife, that's all!

a. Interrogatives.

Text 1:

- a. Ah, what happiness is waiting for me!
- b. Is it my mother you dare address like that!
- c. Wouldn't you like to know!
- d. Did I not say you never loved your husband!
- e. My husband, you see how they treat me!

Text 2:

- a. You know you promised me!
- b. So my dear, you no longer trust even me!
- c. Don't say jealous of a dead man now!

- d. Oh, you called that nothing!
- e. You told her, didn't you sir!

a. Imperatives

Text 1:

- a. Don't kill her!
- b. Get away from me!
- c. Let us sing and dance instead for the victory that is coming!
- d. Yet see what they have made of our city!
- e. No, don't thank me!

Text 2:

- a. Let's take the thing down!
- b. Just look at how beautiful she is, sleeping there!
- c. I beg you, don't!
- d. Let me go, iberibe!
- e. Come, we're losing precious time with all these arguments!

The following declaratives are repeated in text 1:

We curse you all! (3 times), we have seen him! (2 times)

The following examples of declaratives are repeated in Text 2:

I don't believe it! (2 times), I don't care! (3 times), it's obstreperous! (7 times), He's confessed it (2times).

Conclusion

In the war torn town of 'Owu', it was noted that as usual, the women were at the receiving end. They had their husbands killed, all their male children slaughtered and their beautiful women taken to the palace of the conquerors as wives and slaves. The bulk of the exclamations were made by the women which expressed the pain they suffered (physically, psychologically) and disappointment compared to other participants. In text 2, there was an even distribution of the exclamations among the two genders involved in it.

Although Femi Osofisan used about 2577 exclamations across the texts, these exclamations have different semantic importance. Unknowingly, narrators or playwrights use stylistic and linguistic devices that complement their narration for better understanding and communicative purposes as revealed in these two plays by Femi Osofisan. Exclamations could belong to any of the syntactic units and could be used for communicative purposes and meaning making at any level of discourse. This research has also highlighted the fact that exclamations do not have specific meanings because their meanings are context dependent. Femi Osofisan's stylistic use of exclamations across the texts has thus aided a better interpretation of the texts.

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