

The English Language and Afro Saxons: A Systemic Study of the Communicative Qualities of a Selection of African Prose Passages

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Abstract—This paper studies the discourse strategies and communicative potential of the English language in a selection of Afro Saxon prose passages. The term ‘Afro Saxons’ was first coined by Kenyan scholar, Ali Mazrui, in 1975, by analogy with ‘Anglo Saxons’, to refer to the linguistic phenomenon in which the English language is increasingly becoming the ‘first language’ functionally of a great many black and African people. This study, therefore, enlarges upon this concept and undertakes to elaborate on the ways in which the communicative and expressive possibilities of English are exemplified in a selection of some of the most lyrical and dramatic prose extracts by some African writers. Mounted upon the theoretical platforms of Mazrui, and Halliday’s systemic functional grammar (SFG) with its contextual parameters of the ideational (field), interpersonal (tenor) and textual (mode) metafunctions, the research appraises the attitudes to the increasing global status of English. Then employing two Anglo Saxon prose passages as the control, it investigates in some detail the organic configurations of discourse such as transitivity, mood, thematic structure, cohesion and coherence in passages from Armah, Achebe and Soyinka, and concludes that, based on the effective use of the figurative and expressive metafunctions of the language, these authors may indeed be referred to as Afro Saxons.

Index Terms—Afro Saxons, systemic grammar, ideational, interpersonal, textual, transitivity

I. INTRODUCTION

English as a Global Language

Although the English language was first spoken in England about 1,600 years ago (Jowitt,2014), it had always been in existence before then. Geographically, it originated from north western Germany from where it was brought to England. The past 500 years or more have, however, witnessed the rapid rise of the language, formerly of these Germanic invaders numbering a mere five or six million people, to the status of the everyday speech of over three thousand million people worldwide (Crystal, 2003). This phenomenal growth has no doubt been aided in part by the existence of a gigantic and immensely influential linguistic and cultural offspring of Britain, the United States of America. Added to this is the existence of millions more in Australia, New Zealand, Canada as well as the new nations of Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, who use the language as either a first or a second language.

There is clear evidence at present that English is the world’s dominant, and, perhaps, the most powerful language leading other world languages such as French, Russian, Portuguese and German. Armstrong (1993, p.65) states that the serious business of the modern world is carried on in English followed by French, German and Russian, and that ‘all other languages lag behind as vehicles for understanding and participating in the main business of the modern world’. He adds that to be confined to Spanish is to lag thirty years behind the times in science, engineering, business and scholarship. To be confined to Arabic is to lag at least fifty years behind.

It has to be conceded, however, that English owes many of these other languages much of its vocabulary, French, for instance, in the areas of fashion, culinary art, etiquette and social graces, and Italian for the vocabulary of music. Similarly, attitudes to English have not always been so clear cut and laudatory. At a point, the language was seen as ‘a tongue of small reach, stretching no further than the [British Isles], and not there over all’ (Mulcaster,1987, p.39), and before then even, Francis Bacon had written in 1600 that when men were better educated, the English language would be obsolete (Mackay,1987). Yet, as it is today, both Mulcaster and Bacon would probably be surprised at the enormous staying power of the language. As Boulton (1980) observes, it is a great advantage for the English language, making it superior to all other world languages, to have absorbed vocabulary from many languages, for, ‘this gives a great range of shades of meaning’ (p.9). The very rich vocabulary of English makes it possible to choose words not only with regard to the meaning but also with some consideration of the sound, associations and the appropriateness to the context.

David Crystal argues that English is now the language most widely taught also as a foreign language in over 100 countries such as China, Russia, Germany, Spain, Egypt and Brazil in most of which countries it is the chief foreign

language to be encountered in schools and often displacing another language in the process. According to him, English replaced French as the foreign language in schools in Algeria (a French colony) in 1996 for example (Crystal, 2003, p.5). He goes on to observe that a language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognised in every country:

To achieve such a status, a language has to be taken up by other countries around the world. They must decide to give it a special place within their communities, even though they may have few (or no) mother tongue speakers. The role of an official language is today best illustrated by English, which now has some kind of special status in over seventy countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, India, Singapore and Vanuatu (Crystal, 2003, p.4).

Echoing Bolton's view above about the versatility of the English language, Crystal refers to the easiness of grammatical construction, paucity of inflection, an almost total disregard of the distinction of gender save those of nature, simplicity and precision of terminations and auxiliary verbs, majesty, vigour and copiousness of expression as the markedly attractive features of the English language which make it particularly suitable as the world's dominant language. Again, he says:

Learners sometimes comment on the 'familiarity' of English vocabulary, deriving from the way English has over the centuries borrowed thousands of new words from the languages with which it has been in contact. The 'welcome' given to the foreign vocabulary places English in contrast to some languages (notably French) which have tried to keep it out, and gives it a cosmopolitan character which many see as an advantage for a global language (p.8).

However, as the study has already hinted, within this phenomenal spread of the English language globally, there have been challenges and doubts occasioned, for instance, by the possessive attitude of some of the original speakers of the language. These attitudes negate Crystal's position that one predictable consequence of a language becoming a global language is that nobody owns it. Yet again, there are the ambivalent attitudes of its second language and foreign speakers. On the one hand, to them, English is 'a necessary evil' to bridge the communication gap between themselves and some of their fellow countrymen. On the other hand, they abhor the way in which their own mother tongues struggle with extinction against the English language. Again, Crystal (2003) describes this complicated situation in the following way:

If English is your mother tongue, you may have mixed feelings about the way English is spreading around the world. You may feel pride that your language is the one which has been so successful; but your pride may be tinged with concern, when you realize that people in other countries may not want to use the language in the same way that you do, and are changing it to suit themselves ... And if English is not your mother tongue, you may still have mixed feelings about it. You may be strongly motivated to learn it because you know it will put you in touch with more people than any other language; ... you will feel pride in your achievement, and savour the communicative power you have at your disposal, but you may none the less feel that mother-tongue speakers of English have an unfair advantage over you (pp.2-3).

The majority of these ambivalent attitudes often result from the rejection of some varieties of the language. A common exclamation often heard among the British, for instance, as alluded to by Crystal, is: 'Look what the Americans have done to English', yet even the Americans are often heard to exclaim: 'Hey, look, you've got an accent', when they encounter striking variations of English which are emerging around the world.

Some have even called for the abrogation of the proprietorial rights of the British over the language. Ufot (2009, p. 7) reports of the statement of Meghani, a Kenyan, to the effect that:

It is not at all wisdom on the part of a tiny British population in this wide world to claim that English as presented and pronounced by Americans, Canadians, Africans, Indians and the people of Madras State is not English. It may not be the Queen's English, but then what? Strictly speaking English cannot be called 'English' at all, since it is a universal language belonging to all. It is difficult to understand why it is still known by that horrible name; it should have had another name.

There was of course a swift 'British' rejoinder reiterating the cultural and geographical exclusiveness of the English language and suggesting an alternative name for the non-native variety:

As one who holds that the English language is an autochthonous product of that civilization (bounded on the North by the Thames and on the South by the English Channel) I feel that your correspondent's suggestions should be acted on immediately or, as he would probably prefer to put it, implemented forthwith. There is, however, no need to coin a new name for the 'universal' language. There is a time-honoured one – Pidgin English (Ufot, 2009, p.7).

There are scholars who have cautioned against these inordinately possessive and prescriptive attitudes towards the English language. Brazil (2008), for instance, feels that the desire to protect the 'home-grown product' from external interference is as questionable as the wish to prescribe standards for English speakers outside the British Isles. Achebe's famous statement about a world language needing to pay the price of submission to many different kinds of use is also apposite to this discourse. Boulton (1980) goes radically further to make a case for the competence of speakers of the non-native varieties of English and says:

Foreigners often speak English more grammatically than we do, because they have learned it as a foreign language, with rules; the foreigner is usually bewildered, not by grammar, but by idiom, which is unpredictable and completely irregular. The intelligent foreigner who knows some English never says, 'We was' or 'I wanted' (p.21).

Nor does he say 'He don't ...', as often heard in certain varieties of English in the United States, this research might add.

II. ENGLISH AND AFRO SAXONS

The expression 'Afro Saxons' was coined by Mazrui (1975), by analogy with 'Anglo Saxons', to refer to the phenomenon in which the English language is increasingly becoming the 'first language' functionally of a great many black and African people. According to Mazrui.

English is already becoming the first language in the functional sense of dominating the lives of many Africans. It seems possible that English will continue to be the first language functionally of large numbers of Africans critically placed in the destinies of their nations for the rest of the century. But in addition it looks feasible that English will become increasingly also the first language chronologically of many African children.... This emergence of black people who speak and write English as a native language chronologically is what we have termed the emergence of Afro Saxons in the world (pp.10-11).

Mazrui went on to predict that by the turn of the century, there would be more black people in the world who speak and write English as their native language than there would be British people. It now appears that Mazrui's predictions have been borne out essentially by contemporary linguistic events. Already, African Americans alone whose mother-tongue is English are 'nearly the equivalent of, if not more than half, the population of Great Britain'. Secondly, in Nigeria, for instance, more people are estimated to speak English than in the UK. Crystal (2003, pp. 62-65) puts the figure of active English speakers at 60,000,000 for Nigeria, and 58,190,000 for the UK.

From the above, it does appear that the position of the English language cannot and will never be seriously challenged by any indigenous language, as more and more people speak and write in English in Africa. Forty years after Mazrui's prediction, evidence of the burgeoning growth of Afro Saxons abounds most especially in the literary world in writers like Armah, Achebe, Soyinka and a host of others whose prose skills best exemplify the Saxonian textual configurations reminiscent of Joseph Addison's and Samuel Johnson's Anglo Saxon models.

For these Afro Saxon writers, the English language is an African language which contributes somewhat positively to their mind styles, and so, together with a number of other writers and critics, they have tended to repudiate the extreme positions of those who reject the language completely. Morehouse (1994) finds it remarkable that English has not been rejected by Achebe, Armah and Soyinka as a symbol of colonialism despite their numerous ascerbic satires against colonialism. Blyden (1988) believes that these African writers have represented the English language effectively in their works. Roscoe (2001) suggests that despite the colonial history of the language in Africa, writers choosing to use it face a dilemma of the odds between its universality and the clash with local idiom and imagery. He goes on to proffer an 'Africanized English idiom' (a kind of Afro Saxon English) as the solution (p.29).

This is not to suggest that the concept of Afro Saxon English finds favour with all African writers. A good many writers frown at the employment of a language which is accompanied by aesthetic and cultural precepts 'alien' to Africa. Okpaku (1989) describes it as 'invalid and dangerous' (p.139). Ladimeji (1982) accuses the English language of shedding very little light but much distortion on African literature (Ngara, 1982, p.5). Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who no longer writes in the English language, had long ago predicted a bleak future for the language when, describing it as merely 'a stop gap', he claimed that it would not be used always and that it was 'a temporary phenomenon that is dying' (Egejuru, 1980, p.54). But this is obviously not a carefully thought out statement because it loses sight of Mazrui's concept of Afro Saxons, which has now been validated. It ignored, or could not foresee, the current phenomenon of globalisation of which the English language is in a pole position.

The problem of language in African literary circles transcends these narrowly idealistic and irredentist postulations. It is the position of this paper that Afro Saxon literature is not just African literature, but a part of world literature in the English language. Its characteristics include the dialectics of colonialism, acts of courage in relation to the parameters of societal decay and regeneration, and a unique blend of traditional, political and modernist imagery delivered in an individualist idiom. Afro Saxons like Achebe, Armah, Soyinka and Okri employ the English language to capture experience which are typically 'African' in a manner that makes the experiences memorable to both Africans and non-Africans alike.

Thus, it can be said that no matter how mixed the feelings about English are, in Nigeria, for instance, people still favour the learning and use of the English language and are proud when their children are considered to be competent in the language enough for their accent, pronunciation and written performance to compete with those of the Anglo Saxons. Many now consciously neglect their mother tongue. Mixed feelings, if any, are greatly in favour of using the English language, on the whole. Afro Saxons tend to grow in number each day. Since English is now the global language in a global village, Afro Saxons do not wish to be left behind. Because of the structures of these countries, English has taken a pre-eminent position effortlessly in such domains as the law court, the educational system, the government and the media. As a result, parents encourage their children to become Afro Saxons so that they will not encounter any problems in the globalised village into which the world has effectively turned. In the next section, the study sets out in detail the theoretical basis for the investigation of Afro Saxon prose extracts in terms of their functional significance and competence.

III. SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR

Systemic functional grammar (SFG), also referred to as systemic functional linguistics (SFL), is a theory of language which is rooted in anthropology. It is associated with the work of M.A.K Halliday begun in the late 1960s and developed from his earlier scale and category grammar first outlined in 1961, which itself was built on the ideas of J.R. Firth and Karl Bühler (Fish, 1981; Teich, 1999; Wales, 2011). The theory has been developed further, notably by Halliday himself.

The crucial characteristic of the theory is its orientation outside linguistics towards sociology. It emphasizes the notion of system seen as a network of options or of choices. In SFG, each major aspect of grammar is analyzable in terms of a set of options, each dependent on the context or environment. The system of grammatical mood, for instance, involves a basic choice of indicative or imperative; the indicative involves a further choice between declarative and interrogative, while the imperative can be either 'inclusive' or 'exclusive' (i.e. first person or second person). But of course, these choices are not always binary, as SFG allows for flexibility and 'delicacy' of subdivision, which result in the breaking down of the boundary between grammar and meaning. This has been especially popular in the analysis of verbal functions such as transitivity.

According to Halliday (1994, p.112), the systemic model is functional and works in three distinct but closely related senses in its interpretation of texts. It is a functional grammar which construes all the units of a language as an organic configuration of functions in which each part is interpreted as functional with respect to the whole. Here, language is viewed as a social semiotic in which the contextual determinants of a language such as culture and situation are indispensable in the proper study of that language. In SFG, language is a means of doing, providing a linguistic behaviour potential which is ultimately defined by the context of culture.

Furthermore, language use depends on choice among the linguistic possibilities and is therefore primarily a social resource with which speakers and hearers act meaningfully. SFG is concerned with providing an answer to the question: how is language organised to convey meaning? Meaning in SFG is defined by the linguistic behaviour potential. Thus, as Halliday himself states it, whereas in semantics a speaker CAN mean, in SFG the emphasis is on the realisation of what the speaker does (Teich, 1999). Semiotic systems develop and function in a context, and so meaning is a product of the relationship between the system and its environment. and function, in turn, has various aspects that are simultaneously fulfilled whenever language is used.

More fundamentally, there are three crucial parts to Halliday's SFG which are germane to this study. In the first part are the categories – unit, structure, class and system. The first two, unit and structure, are categories of chain, that is, they refer to the syntagmatic axis or axis of combination. The category of unit, relates the constituents of discourse to one another in combination i.e. morpheme, word, group, clause and sentence. Structure involves syntagmatic relationships within units i.e. subject, predictor, complement and adjunct. The categories of class and system involve choice, of the axis of selection. Class contains nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, items which can be substituted for one another at certain points in a unit. System refers to the systematic relationship between elements of structure, such as concord and voice. These categories together enable the linguist to analyse the text horizontally or vertically.

The second part of the concept concerns the three scales of abstraction which link the categories to each other and to the linguistic data. These are rank, exponence and delicacy. The scale of rank refers to the occurrence of constituents within the structure of another unit. This leads to words operating in the structure of phrases/groups, and phrases/groups in turn, operating within clauses. But often rankshifting occurs when a clause, for example, operates in the structure of another clause, or of a group, or even a word, leading to what is referred to as first, second and third degree rankshifts respectively.

Exponence refers to the relationship between the data and the abstractions of the system allowing a recursive relation between the description and the actual lexical items of the text. Finally, delicacy refers to the degree or depth of details provided. Descriptions which extend right down to the constituent words of a sentence are more 'delicate' than those which terminate at clause or phrase levels.

The third part of the theory is a modification of Bühler's tripartite classification of language into three functions often referred to as metafunctions. These are ideational, interpersonal and textual functions. The ideational function refers to the expression of content. According to Halliday, it is concerned with 'the speaker's experience of the real world', and it is:

that part of the grammar concerned with the expression of experience, including both the processes within and beyond the self – the phenomena of the external world and those of consciousness – and the logical relations deducible from them (Teich, 1999, p.21).

Thus, ideationally, a text is evaluated for its representation of reality and participants, as well as the information in clauses and sentences. It is subdivided into experiential, which refers to the processes, events, the participants and circumstances, and then logical, which refers to the organising relations expressed, for instance, by dependencies (elaborating, expanding, extending, comparative, etc) and taxis (parataxis or hypotaxis).

The interpersonal metafunctions involves the expression of the speaker's attitudes and evaluations, and of the relationship he sets up between himself and the listener. It relates to the contextual parameter of tenor, and in Halliday's words, expresses 'the speaker's role in the speech situation, his personal commitment and his interaction with others' (Teich, 1999, p.24). In sum, it is the relationship a text establishes with its audience.

Finally, the textual metafunction refers to the way in which language makes links with itself and with the extra linguistic situation. And according to Halliday, it is concerned with the creation of text, the expression of the structure of information, and the relation of each part of the discourse to the whole and to the setting. For the three metafunctions then, as summarised by him:

we need to make some reference to the categories of our experience; we need to take on some role of the interpersonal situation; and we need to embody these in the form of text (Teich, 1999, p.9).

It is also important to add that these metafunctions developed from Halliday's triple categorization of registers and context of situation, that is, field, tenor and mode respectively. Field is concerned with what is going on in a situation (including subject matter), tenor reflects interpersonal relations and the roles participants adopt, and mode refers to the status assigned to the text, including the medium and channel of communication. The core components of these metafunctions are, for ideational, transitivity; for interpersonal, mood; and for textual, thematic structure, cohesion and coherence.

IV. TRANSITIVITY

Transitivity is part of the ideational metafunction of language because it is concerned with the transmission of ideas. Transitivity carries out this ideational function of language by the expression of processes. Halliday states that our most powerful conception of reality consists of 'goings-on'; of doing, happening, feeling, being sorted out in the grammar of the clause, and which are products of our conception of the world or point of view (Halliday, 1978). Transitivity is concerned with the process type encoded in a clause and the participants involved. It is the configuration of processes and participants at clause level. In grammar, it describes what is known in other theories as semantic relations, deep cases or theta roles, and together with the systems for circumstantials (adjuncts), for verb tense, for noun type (common noun versus proper noun), for types of prepositional group (location in time or space) etc, it describes the experiential part of the ideational multifunction.

Transitivity in SFG is construed in a much more expanded sense than in traditional grammars in which it merely denotes verbs which take direct objects. Here, transitivity, according to Simpson (2007, p. 22), refers to:

the way meanings are encoded in the clause and to the way different types of *process* are represented in language. Transitivity normally picks out three key components of processes. The first is the process itself, which is typically realised in grammar by the verb phrase. The second is the *participant(s)* associated with the process, typically realised by *noun phrases*.... Transitivity also picks out the *circumstances* associated with the process. This third element is typically expressed by *prepositional* and *adverb* phrases which.... fill up the Adjunct element in clause structure.

Transitivity is, thus, part of a broader, semantic configuration of relations involving processes (the verb phrase), participant roles (the noun phrase) and circumstance (adverbials). Simpson (2007) goes on to identify six types of processes now categorised, by grammatical as well as semantic criteria, into:

- (i) **Material Processes** (doing): *jump, swim, break, etc*
Participant roles: *Actor* and *Goal*
e.g. Peter jumped the fence.
Actor: Peter
Process: jumped
Goal: the fence
- (ii) **Mental Processes** (sensing): *notice, fear, love, hate, etc*
Participant roles: *Sensor* and *Phenomenon*
e.g. Elizabeth noticed the error.
Sensor: Elizabeth
Process: noticed
Phenomenon: the error
- (iii) **Relational Processes** (being): *is, stands for, has, etc.*
Participant roles: *Identified* and *Identifier/Carrier* and *Attribute*
e.g. Achebe is Africa's best novelist. His novels are very witty.
Identified: Achebe
Process: is
Identifier: Africa's best novelist
Carrier: His novels
Process: are
Attribute: very witty
- (iv) **Behavioural Processes** (doing/sensing): *breathe, cough, cry, laugh, etc.*
Participant roles: *Behaver* and *Circumstances*
e.g. The athlete breathed in and out. She laughed at the joke.
Behaver: The athlete/She
Process: breathed/laughed
Circumstances: in and out/at the joke

(v) **Verbalisation Processes** (saying): *claim, announce, state, etc*Participant roles: *Sayer, Verbiage* and *Receiver*

e.g. The witness claimed that he saw the murder. The President announced his decision to the National Assembly

Sayer: The witness/The President

Process: claimed/announced

Verbiage: that he saw the murder/his decision

Receiver: /to the National Assembly

(vi) **Existential Processes** (existing/happening) *is, was, etc*Participant roles: dummy '*there*' and *Existent*

e.g. There was an accident. There was a fire.

Dummy '*there*'/'*there*'

Process: was/was

Existent: an accident/a fight

rather than, for instance: 'An accident occurred' or 'A fight broke out/erupted', which would then convert it to material transitivity processes.

In sum, therefore, transitivity is the relationship between the action of the Actor (or its variants) and its effect on the Goal (or its variants). These essentially replace the traditional categories of subject and object. Transitivity is, thus, so central to the ideational function of language that it is indispensable in the analysis of prose especially as it concerns Afro Saxon point of view and mind style.

V. MOOD

The mood system in SFG is, again, slightly different from its traditional grammatical variant where it is signaled basically by differences of verb forms corresponding to different sentence types such as indicative and subjunctive, and semantic contrasts of modality. Trask (2000) identifies five moods including:

Indicative (factual utterance): Susie is being hired.

Subjunctive (doubtful/real utterance): I suggest she be hired! Imperative (commanding utterance): Hire her!

Optative (wishful utterance): May she be hired.

Interrogative (questioning utterance): Will she be hired?

(pp.83-84)

In SFG, the mood system is closely related to the interpersonal metafunction (tenor) of language. The basic contrast here involves distinctions of illocutionary force, that is, whether it is indicative or interrogative. The declarative refers to sentences which have the force of statements whereas the interrogatives are used to ask questions. The imperative mood, on the other hand, has the force of commands or requests. Thus, we speak of the choice between declarative and interrogative, and of indicative and declarative, for instance, being ordered in delicacy, the ever finer discrimination of choices.

VI. THEMATIC STRUCTURE

In SFG, thematisation involves the theme and rheme which are usually the initial and non-initial elements in a clause structure corresponding respectively to the subject and predicate or sometimes topic and comment. These terms distinguish the informational value of utterances. Whereas theme in systemic grammar carries the least significance in content and is commonly associated with given information and almost always occurring as the grammatical subject of the utterance, the rheme coincides with the 'theme' of a work, that is, the point of a literary work, its central idea derived from the interpretation of the plot, imagery and symbolism and sometimes from the title of the work itself. Linking the theme and rheme are elements referred to as transitional elements (usually the predicator or verb phrase).

Although the theme commonly occurs initially, this is not always so especially in a connected discourse, but it will always be the element with the lowest communicative value. In SFG, the theme is any initial element whether conjunction, adverbial or nominal phrase including the subject or the complement if it is placed initially. For instance, in the statement.

Your rage, I defy.

the theme is: 'Your rage' whereas the rheme, which is the most important part of the message, is: 'I defy'.

The entire discourse on thematic structure in SFG stems from the perceived weakness of the traditional classification of the subject of clause structure. Halliday (1994, p.30) provides the theoretical basis for this solution by making references to the following three broad definitions of the term 'subject' in traditional grammar:

i) that which is the concern of the message;

ii) that of which something is being predicated; and,

iii) the doer of the action.

and then observes that: 'these three definitions are obviously not synonymous: they are defining different concepts.... Is it possible for the category of "subject" to embrace all these different meanings at one and the same time?' (p.31)

Halliday then proceeds to trace the markedly different functions of these subjects to their later categorization as:

- i) Psychological Subject: the concern of the message, i.e. the mind of the speaker at the production of the clause;
- ii) Grammatical Subject: that of which something is predicated, seen as grammatical because of its purely formal nature determining various formal features such as case, concord, number without any particular meaning; and,
- iii) Logical Subject: doer of the action, i.e. logical in the sense of the relationship between things, as opposed to 'grammatical' (symbols) relationship.

Thus, in the sentence:

The Duke gave my aunt this teapot.

the three definitions of the term 'subject' are combined in the element: 'The Duke'. But in a sentence like:

This teapot, my aunt was given by the Duke.

There are the following subject configurations:

- i) Psychological Subject: This teapot
- ii) Grammatical subject: My aunt
- iii) Logical Subject: the Duke

And to these different realizations of the term 'subject', Halliday assigns the terms *Theme*, *Subject* and *Actor* as follows:

- i) Psychological Subject: Theme
- ii) Grammatical Subject: Subject
- iii) Logical Subject: Actor

Finally, the question of themes and rhemes, which have their realization in English most notably in word order, focus and intonation, corresponds to the textual metafunction (mode/medium) in SFG.

VII. COHESION AND COHERENCE

Cohesion and coherence refer respectively to the grammatical and semantic connections which tie up a piece of discourse or text. Cohesion is a crucial device of discourse. With coherence, it confers intelligibility on any piece of discourse, and distinguishes it from individual strings of sentences. Wales (2011, p.66) describes it as 'the means (phonological, grammatical, lexical, semantic) of linking sentences into larger units (paragraphs, chapters, etc), i.e. of making them "stick together"'. Coherence is the semantic aspect of cohesion. But whereas cohesion is strictly a property of the individual words and phrases and their syntactic connectedness, coherence is a property of the entire text created by its 'senseness' and context. Coherence is sometimes seen as referring to the underlying development of propositions in terms of semantic relations and speech acts, in contrast to cohesion, which is concerned with surface features of connectivity.

Some scholars like Widdowson (1979) associate cohesion with text, and coherence with discourse, a distinction seen as unsatisfactory by Wales on the grounds that:

Text, no less than discourse, is 'coherent' if it makes sense, has a unity, and is therefore well formed. Indeed, a text without coherence is hardly a 'text' at all; and we certainly expect even conversation to be coherent in the sense of being relevant and clear (Wales, 2011, p.67).

Coherence without cohesion depends considerably on inference and the mental activity of the reader or addressee. It is in coherence that the mental representation of the connectedness of discourse is most observed to exist. Discourse coherence is a marked feature of dramatic dialogue, which usually occurs without the non sequiturs, digressions and redundancies that are features of colloquial discourse.

These aspects of SFG, which, like, thematic structure above, represent the textual metafunctions of language, combine with the ideational and interpersonal metafunctions to present the stylistic scholar with the tools for exhaustive investigation of the communicative qualities of language. They are seen as such by this study in the proper analysis of the written communicative competence of Afro Saxon writing. In the following sections, the paper employs two short prose passages from Joseph Addison and Samuel Johnson as quality control, and proceeds to apply the foregoing theoretical postulations to an analysis of a selection of prose passages each from Ayi Kwei Armah, Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka.

VIII. PROSE TEXTURE

[1.8.1] When I look upon the tombs of the great, every emotion of envy dies in me; when I read the epitaphs of the beautiful, every inordinate desire goes out: when I meet with the grief of the parents upon a tombstone, my heart melts with compassion; when I see the tombs of the parents themselves, I consider the vanity of grieving for those whom we must quickly follow. When I see kings lying by those who deposed them, when I consider rival wits placed side by side, or the holy men that divided the world with their contests and disputes, I reflect with sorrow on the little competitions, factions and debates of mankind. When I read the several dates of the tombs, of some that died yesterday, and some six hundred years ago, I consider that great day when we shall all of us be contemporaries, and make our appearances together. (Joseph Addison, 1771)

[1.8.2] Mr. James Macpherson,

I received your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered me I shall do my best to repel, and what I cannot do for myself, the law shall do for me. I hope I shall not be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat by the menaces of a ruffian.

What would you have me retract? I thought your book an imposture; I think it an imposture still. For this opinion I have given my reasons to the public which I here dare you to refute. Your rage I defy. Your abilities, since your *Homer*, are not so formidable: and what I hear of your morals inclines me to pay regard, not to what you shall say, but to what you shall prove. You may print this if you will. (Sam Johnson, 1775)

[1.8.3] We are not stunted in spirit, we are not Europeans, we are not Christians that we should invent fables a child would laugh at and harden our eyes to preach them daylight and deep night as truth. We are not so warped in soul, we are not Arabs, we are not Muslims to fabricate a desert god chanting madness in the wilderness, and call our creature creator. That is not way. (Ayi Kwei Armah, 1973)

[1.8.4] A man who has just come in from the rain and dried his body and put on dry clothes is more reluctant to go out again than another who has been indoors all the time. The trouble with our new nation – as I saw it then lying on the bed – was that none of us had been indoors long enough to be able to say ‘To hell with it’. Then a handful of us – the smart and the lucky and hardly ever the best – had scrambled for the one shelter our former rulers left, and had taken it over and barricaded themselves in. And from within they sought to persuade the rest through numerous loudspeakers, that the first phase of the struggle had been won and that the next phase – the extension of our house – was even more important and called for new and original tactics; it required that all argument should cease and the whole people speak with one voice and that any more dissent and argument outside the door of the shelter would subvert and bring down the whole house. (Chinua Achebe, 1975)

[1.8.5] The farewell smile on the British face was broken razor, the hand outstretched for a genteel handshake, or snapped up in a farewell salute, cunning crab claws whose sidewise sleight of motion hid the toxification of the passage it traversed and the sowing of tares such as the falsification of the nation’s population figures. The parting gift of the British to themselves was thus a solid base in a region that the colonial power had rendered pliable to her will, one that would guarantee continuing control over the vast nation for decades to come – at least with the centennial of the anniversary of the Treaty of Berlin – and maybe even until the third millennium – why not? All the signatories would meet and compare notes, crow over who had completely lost out, and who were still in business. (Wole Soyinka, 1994)

IX. IDEATIONAL METAQUALITIES

There are remarkable similarities not just in the ‘common core’ phraseology of all texts but also in the fact that encoded in the grammar of the clauses of each text is the muscular and supple mental picture of the author’s reality. The texts all consist of clause complexes with significant propositional content exteriorised by three main types of participant processes, causal circumstantials as well as logical dependencies and taxis, namely, relational, mental and material processes, as well as hypotaxis.

Text [1.8.1] and [1.8.2], employed as quality control, feature the experiential skills of the ‘writers of graceful verses’, Joseph Addison and Samuel Johnson (Long, 2013, p.279). In his extract entitled ‘Tombs of Westminster’, Addison immerses himself in his favourite subject matter, ‘the little vanities and all the big vices’ of his time, but he does so with ‘kindly ridicule and gentle humour’ which take speedy improvement for granted. Johnson himself says of Addison’s prose:

Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison.... Give nights and days, sir, to the study of Addison if you mean to be a good writer, or, what is more worth, an honest man (Long, 2013, p.282).

In text [1.8.2], Johnson addresses his epistolary masterpiece to Scottish poet, James Macpherson, who claimed to have translated the ancient Gaelic epic poetry of a third century Scottish bard named Ossian. Johnson had maintained that the translations were a fraud and published his reasons, to which Macpherson responded with threats of physical violence against Johnson. Johnson’s letter came to be regarded as an epistolary locus classicus, and Johnson himself, as a result, was described as ‘the dictator of English letters’ (Long, 2013, p.287).

Like these Anglo Saxon past masters of the written word, the Afro Saxon ‘kindly ridicule and gentle humour’ are nicely resonant in texts [1.8.3], [1.8.4] and [1.8.5] in which Armah, Achebe and Soyinka take turns to repudiate colonial, post-colonial and neo-colonial helplessness through their individual expressive reconstruction of the Afro Saxon way. Armah’s extract has been described by Soyinka as ‘a visionary reconstruction of the past for the purposes of social direction’ (Booth, 1981, p.8). Achebe’s gentle but vigorously controlled wry, self-mocking narrative humour in [1.8.4], a memorable Afro Saxon description of African post-colonial politics, is spoken by one of his most complicated and controversial narrative voices named Odili. With Soyinka’s surgically sarcastic attack on British colonial treachery in text [1.8.5] through a good deal of ‘kindly ridicule’, these Afro Saxon texts match their Anglo Saxon counterparts ideationally, textually and interpersonally.

X. TRANSITIVITY

Like the control texts, transitivity in the Afro Saxon texts is secured chiefly by relational, mental and material processes, with the mental dominating the former while the relational dominates the latter. This is significant because it is the relational processes which relate the mental to the material processes.

Mental Processes

- (i) Sensor: When/every... envy
Process: look/dies
Phenomenon: upon ... great/in me
- (ii) Sensor: I
Process: received
Phenomenon: your ... letter

Relational Processes

- (iii) Identified: We/We We
Process: are/are/are
Identified: not... spirit/not Europeans / not Christians... truth
- (iv) Identified: A man ... clothes
Process: is
Identifier: more... time
- (v) Identified: The farewell... face/The ... themselves
Process: was/ was/ was
Identifier: broken razor/cunning ... figures/thus... millennium

As indicated earlier, the relational transitivity process, the most complicated of the six ideational categories, is preferred by the Afro Saxons, who are concerned chiefly with the expressive and figurative possibilities of the English language in expressing a complicated phenomenon such as colonialism. The subsequent clauses for the control texts also follow a similar pattern of preference for mental and material processes as follows

Addison	Johnson
Sensor: When I / When I	Goal: Any... me/your rage
Process: read/meet	Actor: I/I
Phenomenon: the... beautiful/with... tombstone	Process: shall... repel/defy
Sensor: every... desire/my heart	Identified: Your... <i>Homer</i>
Process: goes/melts	Process: are
Phenomenon: out/with compassion	Identifier: not... formidable

The dominant rhetorical anaphora created by the repetitive use of ‘when’ clause complexes underscores Addison’s point of view about life’s little vanities and big vices. It creates two types of anaphora, textual and grammatical anaphora. These parallel repetitive structures run through the rest of the extracts. The dramatic nature of the transitivity is further underscored by their logical dependencies and taxis. Text [1.8.1] for instance consists of six major clause complexes while [1.8.2] is made up of nine. Whereas the former presents us with the most predictable type of taxis consisting faithfully of hypotactic dependencies in which every initial clause is introduced by the binder ‘when’, the latter illustrates various degrees of interdependence with the exception of clauses one: ‘I received... letter’; and nine: ‘What... retract’, which are independent.

Addison skillfully balances his pairs of clauses by an initial beta clause which expresses the vanity:

When I look upon the tombs...

When I read the epitaphs...

When I see kings..., etc

Followed consistently by the resolving alpha clause:

... every emotion of envy

... every inordinate desire

... I reflect ...

In Johnson’s text, between clauses two (‘Any violence...repel’) and three (‘offered me’), there is a relation of hypotaxis, between three and four (I shall... myself), it is paratactic, and between ‘... and what ... me’, there is a relation of hypotaxis. The rest of the clause complexes, except between ‘I thought ... still’, are hypotactic.

The Afro Saxon texts match this pattern effectively. In Armah’s text, the relation between the structures:

We are not... spirit/we... Europeans/we... Christians

is one of parataxis whereas the type of interdependence is extending. Between the three parallel structures and the beta clauses:

that we... fables/a child would... at

there is a hypotactic relation with an elaborating interdependency. A similar relation is set up in the next set of clause complexes with:

We... soul/we... Arabs/we... Muslims

demonstrating a relation of parataxis with an extending interdependence.

Achebe’s pattern of taxis and interdependence relations follows roughly similar complexity. The relation between:

A man who... rain/dried... body/put... clothes... again

and:

than... time

is hypotactic, while the type of interdependence is comparative. Similarly, the relationship between:

The trouble... that/as I ... bed/none... say/To...it

is hypotactic while the interdependence is extending. Achebe's style here is complicated by, at once, Odili's complex role as a victim, an architect and a commentator on the complex mix of corruption, decay and post colonialism.

In text [1.8.5], Soyinka also sets up an initial paratactic relation between: 'The farewell smile... razor' and 'the hand... claws'. But between those two structures and the relative clause: 'whose...figures', there is a relation of hypotaxis whereas the type of interdependence is elaborating. This elaboration is continued in the next clause complex: 'The parting gift... why not?' There are four clauses here as follows:

The parting...region(alpha)/that...will(beta)

one that...millennium(beta)/why not? (alpha)

all setting up a relation of hypotaxis.

The major cognitive tropes which dominate the discourse of these Afro Saxon texts, like those of their Anglo Saxon counterparts, are metaphors, synecdoche, metonymy and elegant variation.

Here are a few examples.

(i) Metaphor/synecdoche/metonymy

a) epitaphs of the beautiful/rival wits/that great day [1.8.1]

b) a cheat/the menaces of a ruffian/the law/an imposture your Homer [1.8.2]

c) fables/a desert god/our creature/our way [1.8.3]

d) rain/ our house/the door of the shelter [1.8.4]

e) the British face/broken razor/cunning crab claws/sowing of tares/ the parting gift [1.8.5]

(ii) Elegant variation

(a) the colonial power [1.8.5]

Thus, all the Afro Saxon texts, like their Anglo Saxon counterparts, express disenchantment, sarcasm and anger through a similar set of ideational tools.

XI. INTERPERSONAL METAQUALITIES

The interpersonal qualities of these texts are exemplified by the distinctions of illocutionary force often illustrated, as we have observed before, by the mood system and corresponding to tenor of discourse. All the texts, except [1.8.2], are clearly expressive, i.e. addresser-oriented. [1.8.2] is conative, that is, addressee-oriented because Johnson addresses a specific entity, Macpherson, directly. Yet, like the rest of the texts, [1.8.2] is dominated by the most obvious linguistic marker of the interpersonal style – the first person pronouns, *I* and *we*. And even though this is formally absent in [1.8.5], the expressiveness of Soyinka's disenchantment is nonetheless vigorously addresser-oriented mostly in third person characterisations such as 'the British face', 'broken razor', 'cunning crab claws' etc.

XII. MOOD

All the texts are dominated clearly by the declarative mood both grammatically and pragmatically as follows:

When I look... me/When I read ... out [1.8.1]

I received your... letter/I thought ... still [1.8.2]

We are not ... truth /We are not... creator [1.8.4]

A man who... time /The trouble ... it [1.8.4]

The farewell... figures/all the signatures... business [1.8.5]

But there are two instances of indicative interrogatives in [1.8.2] and [1.8.5]:

What would you... retract? [1.8.2]

Why not? [1.8.5]

which, because they are essentially rhetorical, have the pragmatic (illocutionary) force of declaratives. This preference for indicative declaratives argues the superior moral and linguistic compass of their authors.

XIII. TEXTUAL METAQUALITIES

In all the texts, the force of given and new information is structured by means of thematisation as well as cohesion and coherence as follows:

(a) Thematic Structure

As indicated already, the theme occurs initially whereas the rheme pushes forward the message. Let us consider the following examples:

i) Theme: When I... great/Rheme: every... dies in me

ii) Theme: I (subject) /Process: received/Rheme: your... letter

- iii) Theme : We/Process: are /Rheme: stunted... truth
- iv) Theme: A man... clothes/ Process: is Rheme: reluctant... time
- v) Theme: The farewell... face/Process: was/Rheme: broken razor

The most interesting thematised element occurs in [1.8.2] in:

Your rage I defy.

as follows:

Theme: Your rage (psychological subject)

Rheme: Actor: I (logical subject)

Process: defy

This fronting or inversion for emphasis by Johnson presents us with what Quirk et al (1985) refer to as the ‘marked theme’ (Wales, 2011, p.424). But when Achebe, in text [1.8.4], says:

We had been in the rain together until yesterday.

it is somewhat difficult to determine precisely which is the theme or rheme because all parts of the clause, except ‘in the rain’, constitute new information. It would, therefore, seem that the circumstantial adjunct ‘until yesterday’, would satisfy this requirement of theme, but why is it in the initial position?

(b) Cohesion and Coherence

Cohesion and coherence in these texts are seen chiefly in anaphora. The texts reverberate with rhetorical repetition of lexical items as well as consistency in tense marking. In text [1.8.1] anaphora occurs chiefly in the repetition of the adverbial binder *when* and pronoun *I* at the beginning of a succession of clauses:

When I.../ when I.../ when I...

The deictic pronouns: *I, me, those, whom, them, we, our*, etc, predominate. The tenses are mainly in the present whereas coherence is also seen in the ideas expressed by ‘that great day’, ‘contemporary’ and ‘make our appearance together’. In text [1.8.2], cohesion and coherence are achieved also by the repetition of the first person and second person pronouns, which occur fifteen times in the parallel, antithetical structures, as well as in the word ‘still’ as follows:

I thought... imposture/ I think... still

Your rage... / Your abilities...

Pay regard not... but to what you... / You... this... will

Here again, the tenses are mainly in the present.

In text [1.8.3], cohesion and coherence are achieved through rhetorical anaphora, similar to [1.8.1], in which the first person plural pronoun *we* is repeated at the beginning of a succession of clauses:

We are not... / we are not... /we are not...

Indeed, the repetition of the expressions ‘are not’ and the second person pronoun ‘our’, (‘our creature’ and ‘our way’) reinforces the cohesion. In [1.8.4], cohesion is wrought through anaphora in the lexical repetition of deictics:

A man *who...* /dried *his* body / then *another* *who...*

The trouble with *our...*/as I saw.../our former rulers/our house

The tense here begins with present perfect:

has just come/(has) dried/(has) been

and swiftly progresses to simple past and then past perfect tense:

saw, was, had, been, had scrambled, had taken, etc.

In Soyinka’s text, cohesion is achieved mainly by the repetition of the relational process verb *was* in the first and third sentences:

The farewell smile... *was*/ the parting... *was*

It also occurs in its ellipsis in the structure:

...the hand outstretched ... (*was*) cunning crab claws

as well as in the words:

whose sidewise ... /... the British to *themselves*

colonial power (the British)/... to *her* will/*one* that

the vast nation (Nigeria)

and also in the consistency of verb tenses – *was, hid, traversed, was, would* and *were*. These enable the effective cohesion and coherence in the construction of Soyinka’s textual representation of reality.

XIV. CONCLUSION

It is fairly certain now that there exists what can be objectively referred to as Afro Saxon prose as part of the larger communicative metafunctions of the English language. Ideationally, in terms of their referential and logical components of transitivity, taxis and interdependence, Armah, Achebe and Soyinka in these texts effectively match the Addisonian and Johnsonian styles in the way in which they exemplify the figurative and expressive possibilities of the English language. Their chief concerns, dialectics and distress of colonial and postcolonial politics, correspond to the larger politics of man as seen in the Anglo Saxon texts, yet experientially and logically, their mind styles are dominated by the complex relational processes of transitivity manifested mainly by the predicator *is/was* and flanked by the ‘Identified’ and ‘Identifier’ participant roles.

Interpersonally, Afro Saxon prose is dominated by indicative declaratives corresponding with the urgency of the tenor of their discourse, which brooks none of the luxury of indicative interrogatives or even imperatives. The task of communicating to their addressees, it seems, supersedes other linguistic luxuries. But more importantly, it reveals the choices made by each writer, choices made possible by the communicative possibilities of the English language.

The textual relations and configurations of these extracts are set up by their unique thematic structures in which the message of anticolonial feeling occupies the regular theme position in clause structure while the dominant properties of cohesion and coherence are set up by repetition. It can, thus, safely be said that Mazrui's thesis about the existence of Afro Saxons finds its grandest expression in the communicative qualities of Armah's, Achebe's and Soyinka's prose styles.

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