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## The Linguistic Appraisal of Foul Language in Selected Yorùbá Video Films

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*Language is so subtle and complicated human phenomenon that it is used in communication for informative, expressive and directives. The environment we live is largely verbal therefore; language serves expressive function when used in conversation to get individuals to be more effective, polite and in causing or easing social tensions. In order to create social tension, foul language is usually employed. Though, the structural patterns of foul language used in everyday interaction in Yorùbá society are similar to the ones used in Yorùbá video films. This assertion confirms the generally belief that movie is a reflection of the society. The use of foul language in Yorùbá video films has become a common feature to be ignored. The foul language examined in them in this study is divided into two: insults (èébú) and curses (èpè). The main thrust of this paper therefore, is to give a linguistic appraisal of the two types of foul language used in Yorùbá video films. The paper examines the socio-semantic implications of foul language as it is used in the video films and shows that insults are more frequently used than curses in the films. Also, the paper examines the grammatical analysis of foul language used in the selected video films and posits that while insults come in noun phrases and sentences, curses are delivered in verb phrases and sentences. The sentences used in both cases are one clause sentences which consist of NP subject and a predicate thereby making it easy to grasp.*

*Keywords: Yorùbá, video films, Noun Phrase, Verb Phrase, Insults (èébú), curses (èpè).*

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### Introduction

Language is a familiar feature of human life that we tend to regard it as natural and simple. The mechanism of language can best be seen at work in a simple speech-situation where it is used to link meaning to expression in a given context, Finegan (2004:7). Copi (1953:35) observes that language serves expressive function whenever it is used to vent or communicate feelings, emotions or attitudes. Expression may be analyzed into

two components. It is used either to evince the speaker's feelings or evoke certain feelings (positive or negative) on the part of the auditor. Of course it may do both. The choice of different expressions has to do with the speech context and the respective roles the interactants take on, McGregor (2009:157). In other words, to grasp the intended content of an expression, hearers must examine it in the light of its context, Finegan (2004:7). Fodor (1982:19) opines that language

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should be viewed not as an abstract calculus but as tool, the proper characterization of a linguistic expression must include an account of how it is used and what it is used for.

The environment we live in is largely verbal. We spend most of our waking hours speaking words or responding passively or actively to the words we heard, Kluckhohn (1949:41). We talk to ourselves, family members, and friends and associates, partly to communicate to them and partly to persuade them, or to express ourselves. In the conversation, we use words, phrases, sentences to comfort and cajole ourselves in fantasy and daydream, to let off steam, to promote our purposes in dealing with others. At times, we build up verbal pictures of ourselves and our motives. We coax, argue, command, protest, incite, swear, invite, threaten, insult, bless and even curse. From the foregoing, we observe that language is an instrument for action. Primarily the social value of speech lies in getting individuals to be more effective, polite and or in causing or easing social tensions. In order to create social tension, we tend to use foul words, phrases and sentences.

Movie is a reflection of the society. They are based on life-related stories which are crafted around happenings or conflicts, Mgbejume (2006:36). In expressing the various disagreements in the film dialogue, foul language is always employed. We observe that Yorùbá scholars have paid little or no attention to the linguistic study of foul language. This inadequate attention informs the present study. Though the structural patterns of foul language examined in this study is similar to the ones used in everyday interaction in the Yorùbá society. However, we decided to focus on Yorùbá video films because the use of foul language has become a common feature to be ignored. Moreover, there is no known work on its grammatical analysis in Yorùbá and hence, the need for this study. The aim of the paper,

therefore, is to examine the grammatical analysis of foul language in some selected Yorùbá video films. In doing this, we delve briefly into the socio-semantic implications of foul language in the selected films.

### The Data

Language is a form of social behaviour. It is a product of a particular culture and it reflects the culture of the people and their view of the world. Since there is no written law which controls the use of language in Yorùbá society, people often do not understand the very concept of good language and bad language nowadays. In recent times, a Yorùbá movie channel on DStv<sup>1</sup>, *African Magic* channel 157 uses bleep tone to censor words that are considered highly inappropriate and unsuitable for broadcast in the films it shows to the viewers. At times, the bleeping may be so frequent that it may nearly disrupt the dialogue in the films. To most people, the inappropriate language is part of our culture. The bleeping noticed on this *African Magic's* channel, also arouses our curiosity to investigate into the structure and use of foul language in some selected Yorùbá video films. For this study, we selected randomly, more than thirty video films among the numerous produced between 1995 and 2015. These video films include *Ti Olúwa Ni Ilẹ̀ (1995)*, *Bánkàrere (2012)*, *Ìyàwó Èlénú Razor (2006)*, *Teacher Oko (2013)*, *Ètekéte (2011)*, *Ọkọ Màmá È (2012)*, *Ìbèèrè (2012)*, *Osas (2012)*, *Abúlè Mecho (2012)*, *Alakada (2009)*, *Suzzy Mama (2013)*, *Abéré (2013)*, *Dókítà Ige (2011)*, *Jéjélóye (2012)*, *Ọkọ Obinrin (2011)*, *Ilé Aláyò (2012)*, *Ináwó (2013)*, *Èrù Arúgbó (2013)*, *Pélé Mòdínà (2013)*, *Màmá Insurance (2012)*, *Àinà Òròsùn (2010)*, *Odíderé (2006)*, *Ìbínú Ọrúnmilà (2013)*, *Ilá Alásèpò (2014)*, *Tẹnbélú (2014)*, *Ọrẹ Mèta Wèrè kan (2014)*, *Wazo (2014)* and *Ọmọ Èlémòşó (2013)*. We collected the data by identifying foul language in the video films, transcribed them for

easy analysis. Space constraints would not allow us to attach the data collected as appendix to this write-up. However, we would make use of ample examples as necessary.

### **Foul Language in Yorùbá Video Films**

Almost everyone in Yorùbá society from preteens, teenagers and the elderly are quite familiar with the use of foul language. Its use is so known and common in the speech of people that it is now becoming regular language in our daily conversations. Foul language is seen as indecent or obscene words and phrases. What is considered indecent or obscene varies from one culture to the other. Therefore, we want to add that foul language is a subclass of a language lexicon in a typical culture that is generally considered to be strongly impolite or offensive. In Yorùbá culture, insults, curses and vulgarism are typical examples of foul language.

The use of foul language in the society today seems to be on the increase. Words once thought to be unspeakable in the society now make a regular appearance in Yorùbá music (Adébòwálé & Olúmúyiwá forthcoming), video films, television and even radio. The use of foul language in Yorùbá video films nowadays has to be the most confounding. In the past, before any film production is presented to the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB), each producer of the motion Pictures in Nigeria must make sure his production does not run foul of paragraphs 13-15 of the code of ethics and production for film makers which forbids the use of vulgarity, obscene and profanity. Excerpts

#### 13.0 **Vulgarity**

13.1. The treatment of low, disgusting, unpleasant thought not necessary evil subjects should always be guided by the dictates of good taste and a proper regard for the audience.

#### 14.0 **Obscenity**

14.1. Obscenity in word, gesture, reference, song, joke, or by suggestion (even when likely to be understood only by part of the audience) is forbidden.

#### 15.0 **Profanity**

15.1. Pointed profanity and every other profane or vulgar expression however used are forbidden. No approval by NFVCB shall be given to the use of 'swear words', abusive, sexual expressions and phrases in motion pictures

(Source: Ekwuazi et al. (2001:312))

In contemporary society, Nigerian Filmmakers (Nollywood) however flooded the film market with all manners of expletives and profanities as most of their video films run foul of the code of ethics for their production. This is attributed to many factors. First, most of the video films in the market do not pass through NFVCB before they are released into the market. Second, most video film producers are not honest in their dealings with NFVCB. The version of their video films they package to the NFVCB for censorship is not what is eventually released into the market. Third, the rating system of the video films allows people to say whatever they want in the movies. Therefore, one rarely finds a Yorùbá video film without the use of foul language in ordinary conversation. The foul language comes in the form of abusive words, phrases and in sentences. Foul language examined in this paper can be divided into two. They are insults (*éébú*) and curses (*èpè*).

### **Insults**

Insults have been defined variously. They are considered a violation of the principles of politeness, (Leech 1983). Also, insults are seen as linguistic, paralinguistic or symbolic communication forms which are meant to cause mental pain, embarrassment or disgrace, (Agyekun, 2004). In similar vein, insults have been described as utterances with which speakers intend to offend their interlocutors by saying

or doing something rude or insensitive that offends them, (Juker 2000, Fielder 2007). Babou (2014:112) opines that insult is a category of taboo which exists in many forms across cultures and languages used in downgrading, offensive and reprehensive manner to express the opposite of someone's value especially when it is intentional. Mateo and Yus (2013:92) believe that insulting is a social ritual learnt from childhood which is accompanied by a special kind of communicative exchange (verbal or nonverbal) usually involving a speaker who utters words with certain effects on addressee. We can deduce from the foregoing that insults are words, statements or actions that inflict or cause the emotional damage to someone.

The Yorùbá word for insult is *èébú*. *Èébú* (*henceforth*) is a word or statement or an action used (with the intention to be rude or scornful) to express one's emotion: hatred, aggression and anger to the people. The use of insults is not new. Throughout the centuries, human beings have exercised their highest powers of invention and wit of speaking ill of one another, Mcphee (1978:10). In Yorùbá society, the people are dynamic in expressing themselves. They don't hide their real thoughts, feelings and emotions behind fuzzy words and a mealy mouth. Yorùbá have in their lexicon, audacious words and phrases that can hurt more than body blows. Maybe that is why Olútóyè (1987:2) defines *èébú* among the Yorùbá people as speech used to ridicule people.

There are very few scholarly works on *èébú* in Yorùbá studies. Besides Olútóyè (1987) there is no other known works on *èébú*. Olútóyè's (1987) work describes different types of *èébú*, there after; it examines the place of *èébú* among Yorùbá oral genres. The study posits that *èébú* is one of the Yorùbá oral genres such as *Ifá*, *Ìjálá*, *òwe*, *oriki* etc. We are at variance with this position because *èébú* does not conform to all the corpus criteria universally used in the recognition of genres in oral literature i.e. content, stylistics features,

mode of delivery, nature and training (if any), of the addresser, type of addressee, occasion... etc, (Yai (1975:601)). Besides, *èébú* is an act of invective which shows the speakers creative ability to easily invent insult. Apart from coming in words, which we shall examine later, it may also come in songs. As shown in the following song in the film: *Ìyá Obámà*.

1.
 

‘Okọ wo ló kó wọn dé o	‘by what means were they here,
Hèè hè, okọ wo ló kó wọn dé	by what means were they here,
Ará oko wólú o,	the villagers are now in town,
Wón n tẹlẹ̀ bí ọ̀bọ;	they are walking like (monkeys) fools,
Okọ wo ló kó wọn dé’	by what means were they here’

Innovation plays an important role in the creation of an insulting utterance, Fine (1981:94). Skilled insulters devise highly innovative expressions to launch their verbal missiles. Those who are witty in this act of verbal pyrotechnic are regarded as ‘*ẹlẹ̀rẹ̀kẹ̀ èébú*’ ‘foul mouthed person’ in Yorùbá society. Adéwálé Ẹlẹ̀şòó is a good example of such people in Yorùbá films.

### **The Socio-Semantic implications of Foul language in the selected Yorùbá video films**

Actions which are performed through the use of language are regarded as speech acts, Finegan (2004:296). The actions include greetings, giving complement, plead or flirt, to seek or supply information and insulting one another. Insults are culture-dependent speech acts. The principal components of speech acts include the utterance itself (locution), the intention of the speaker in making the utterance (illocution) and the effect of the act on the hearer (perlocution). In this section, we shall concern ourselves with the intentions of the speaker(s) to insult their interlocutors in Yorùbá films.

### The Illocutionary Acts of *Èébú*

In Yorùbá culture, *èébú* are not regarded as taboo as it is an integral part of their life. The use of *èébú* in Yorùbá video films could be seen as a carryover of the tradition of using *èébú* among the people. Most *èébú* used in Yorùbá video films are used in interpersonal relationship. People insulted and were insulted in these video films because they were in interpersonal relationship that permitted and encouraged the use of insults in verbal interaction. It is generally common in these video films that the speaker makes his intention to insult explicitly taunts and the interlocutor recognizes the insult. The addressee may feel insulted and reacts or decided not to react. Jucker (2000) and Gabriel (1998) share a similar view that insults have to produce cognitive effects that lead to a reaction. On the contrary, Mateo and Yus (2013:90) believe that a lack of reaction does not necessarily invalidate the insulting act. In Yorùbá video films, whenever a verbal attack is subtle and allusive especially between peers, it may not elicit any response from the addressee.

The Yorùbá video films however show a variety of intentions in the use of *èébú* among the people beyond that of offending, hurting and arousing the anger of the addressee. Such intentions include the following. First, in verbal dueling among the people, *èébú* are used in order to prove a superior skill in the use of Yorùbá language. Therefore, in Yorùbá video films, when there is trading of insults between addresser and the addressee in the presence of bystanders, the one that did not take insults would reply, either by saying “*Mi ò kì í ṣe omọ lọ sílé lọ gba èsì wá.*” “*I am not someone that needs to get home to reply you*” or “*Wọ̀n ò gbé ẹ̀nu mi fún alágbàfọ̀*” “*I don’t need to take my mouth to the launder to reply you.*” Second, *èébú* are used in some cases in the video films to correct misdeeds in the addressee especially when they are subordinate

to the addresser i.e. servants, younger ones. In this situation, the addressee may not react in most cases even when he feels insulted. Third, paradoxically, *èébú* are sometimes used in Yorùbá video films with the intention of flattering and showing admiration towards the addressee. For example, a housewife addressing her sister-in-law as “*iyá ọ̀kọ tí ò kọ*” “*a miserly sister in-law*” or “*iyá ọ̀kọ tí ò rọ̀ọ̀kán*” “*a sister in-law that is not civilized*” At this instance, the addresser usually uses the right intonation, gesture or paralinguistic mechanism to avoid unwanted interpretations (Fine 1981:54). Fourth, *èébú* are also used in Yorùbá video films to describe the interlocutor. The description though in the negative, may describe either the physical features of the addressee or his behaviour in order to draw his attention or attention of others to his physical features or his infelicitous behaviour. It may even be used to show disapproval to such behaviour. Examples of such *èébú* are:

2.

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| i. Èlèsè wógowògò                    | ‘Someone with curved legs’                   |
| ii. Òpónú<br>Arígbínímáhe            | ‘A daft who do not utilize opportunities’    |
| iii. Qdè, o ò rẹ̀nu è,<br>kọ̀likọ̀li | ‘Stupid person with bad mouth’               |
| iv. Etí è dá dúró bí ṣọ̀ṣi<br>oko    | ‘His ear standing aloof like village church’ |

### Curses

Over the centuries and in every human culture, a curse is an expressed wish that some form of calamities or misfortune will befall some other person(s) or entity. The calamities or misfortune intended by the curser may range from illness, bad luck, retrogression, harm to even death. In Yorùbá society, curse is known as *èpè*. *Èpè* (henceforth) is the opposite of *Ìre* ‘blessing’. *Èpè* is variously used in Yorùbá culture. It is used to seek justice, revenge, or protection of property such as home, farm, land

and other treasures. Just as we said concerning *èébú* there are few scholarly works on *èpè* in Yorùbá studies. The major scholarly work on it is Òpèfèyintimí (2010). At a glance, the work looks exhaustive; however, a critical appraisal of it shows that there are few things left out in the work. First, the data used is restricted to Òyó Yorùbá. Òyó Yorùbá can not be used as a yardstick for other Yorùbá people. *Èpè* that is peculiar to Ìjẹ̀bù people is different from *èpè* peculiar to Ìjẹ̀sà people. Therefore, there are *èpè* that are peculiar to different ethnic groups that constitute the Yorùbá nation. Second, the work believes that *èpè* is one of the Yorùbá oral genres which has three patterns: *ìbèrè* ‘the beginning’ (1<sup>st</sup> stanza); *àárin* ‘middle’ (2<sup>nd</sup> stanza) and *ìparí* ‘end’ (3<sup>rd</sup> stanza). To the present writer, *èpè* is not always poetic and static as the work appears to suggest. Besides, the different types of *èpè* mentioned in the work confirms our view that *èpè* is not poetic with stanzas as shown in the series of appendices containing copious data examined in the work.

Unlike *èébú* which is frequently used in everyday interaction among the Yorùbá people and in the selected Yorùbá video films, *èpè* is seldom used. This may be due to the fact that the people see *èpè* as objective reality with real power that is backed by magic, spell, supernatural or metaphysical forces. Depending on the curser, the use of *èpè* in the selected Yorùbá video films involves some level of ingenuity which depends on what make the curser lay a curse on another person or on himself. Linguistically, *èpè* is used in the selected Yorùbá video films as a vulgar epithet. In most of the Yorùbá video films selected, especially the comedy ones, *èpè* is used as a profane or obscene expression of anger, impatience, pride, disappointment, disgust, regret, or to prove a point or to show some level of honesty. Examples of such *èpè* include:

3.
  - i. Tí mo bá puró kí tèmí bàjè ‘Let me be unfortunate in life if I am lying.’
  - ii. Mo dárán, bàbá yíi ba tèmí jẹ pòò. ‘I am in trouble; this man has completely destroyed my life.’
  - iii. Mo gbé, kò ní dáa fún ọ ‘I am in trouble; It shall not be well with you.’
  - iv. Ayé mi bàjè, Dayò, ò n toast ‘I am doomed; Dayò, you are wooing a girl.’
  - v. Kò ní yé ọ, orí ẹ burú ‘It shall not be well with you; you are doomed.’
  - vi. Olórún ní yóò kò ọ; yóò kọ gbogbo idílé yín ‘God will forsake you and your families.’

These *èpè*, as used in the selected films are not backed with magic, spell or supernatural forces, as such, they may not be effective. At times, some of the *èpè* used in the selected films are attached as appendage of *èébú* as italicized in the following examples:

4.
  - i. Alápamášìšè, òkú ọlẹ, kò ní dáa fún ọ ‘Lazy fellow; it shall not be well with you.’
  - ii. Olòšì ọdọkọ, kò ní yẹ ọ, o ò ní jèrè ‘Destitute adulterer, it shall not be well with you.’
  - iii. Wèrè, kò ní dáa fún iyáláyáá ẹ ‘Mad fellow; it shall not be well with your great grand mother.’

However, there are few cases in the selected Yorùbá films where *èpè* is used as an expression of pain; therefore, a solemn utterance is used with the intention to invoke a supernatural power to inflict punishment on someone as shown in *Àpáàdì* and *Èrù Arúgbó* video films. In such cases, effigy was used to put such *èpè* on the offender(s). Such *èpè* may become effective immediately or may be dormant for some period depending on if the curser’s vital energy goes into the *èpè*. Examples of such *èpè* is shown in (16) below.

5.

- i. Eyin ará Igbálá-ayé ! Awón gbogbo oore ti mo Ɛe yín poo, ibi le fi sán fun mi. Ogun yòò jà yín. Igbóná, àsàsi kó máa bá gbogbo yín!

*People of Igbálá-ayé! You pay me with evil for my good services to you all. Calamities will befall you.*

At times, Èpè of this type may not be effective if the presumed offender is innocent of the offence he was accused of. That is what prompted the Yorùbá adage ‘èpè ñ rò kí ó tó jà ni’- ‘a curse reflects before it attacks’.

### The Grammatical Analysis of Foul Language in Yorùbá

In this section, we shall examine the language of èébú and èpè as used in the selected Yorùbá video films.

#### The Language of èébú

The daily socio-cultural evolutionary phenomena in Yorùbá society favour a rich linguistic creativity for èébú. Although the special effect(s) that èébú have on the interlocutors depends not only on the linguistic structure of the language used. The usual approach to linguistic analysis of any utterance must examine the total meaning of the utterance before beginning any analysis. There are at least two kinds of meaning in the total meaning of an utterance. There are for example the meanings of the separate words as dictionary would record them (lexical meaning) and structural meanings (function words perform in an utterance). In light of this, the total linguistic meanings of èébú consist of the lexical meanings of each word used plus the structural meanings. However, we must state here that the borderline between the lexical meanings and the structural meanings of èébú is not always sharp and clear. Based on the linguistic characterization of èébú, we would like to show that the following

constructions are prima facie evident: (a) phrases; (b) sentences.

#### (A) Phrases

The intermediate units between words and clauses are called phrases. Phrases do not normally constitute complete clauses. Phrases are named according to their clauses. These include verb phrase, noun phrase, adverbial phrase and preposition phrase. The most common phrase used in èébú is noun phrase. This may be due to the fact that èébú have to do with name-calling.

#### The Noun Phrase (NP)

The NP in Yorùbá language is a group of words that is headed by a Noun (N) or Pronoun (P). The phrase got its name by virtue of the headedness. Yorùbá NP can be found in different constituents in the sentence; in the subject position, in the object position or as object of a preposition. Also, Yorùbá NP may vary in complexity. It may be simple to have contained an N or P only. It may contain a noun and its qualifier(s) as shown in (6) below:

- 6.
- |                            |                   |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| i. mo                      | “I”               |
| ii. àwa                    | “we”              |
| iii. omọ                   | “child”           |
| iv. olè                    | “thief”           |
| v. àwa <i>Yorùbá</i>       | “we Yorùbas”      |
| vi. omọ <i>okúnrin</i>     | “male child”      |
| okò <i>ayóké lé funfun</i> | “three white car” |
| vii. mètá                  |                   |

As shown in (6) v-vii above, the qualifier(s) (as italicized) follows the noun it qualifies (Awóbùlúyì 1978:31). The noun it qualifies is usually referred to as the ‘head’ or ‘head noun’, (Bámgbóṣé 1967:12; Yusuf 1997:8). Example (6vii) shows that a noun can have more than one qualifiers in the language. The complex NPs could be one with sentential qualifier(s) as in

7. omọ tí Olú nà “the child that Olu flogged”

Now, we shall examine *èébú* that are NPs in the selected Yorùbá video films

### Simple NPs

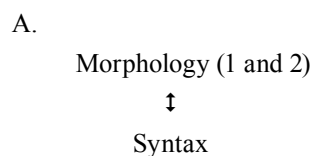
The *èébú* used as simple NPs in the selected Yorùbá video films are in names which were either used with or without qualifiers. These include:

8.	Adàgbàmádanú	‘daft person’	Afójú	‘blind person’
	Afókungbému	‘fool’	Agùnmáníyè	‘silly/ stupid’
	Àjé	‘witch’	Ajègborodàgbà	‘wanderer’
	Aláiniláákàyé	‘moron’	Aláilójúti	‘shameless
	Aláwòkù	‘daft’	Apòdà	‘fool’
	Arègòmu	‘drunkard’	Aṣṣéwó	‘prostitute’
	Dindinrin	‘dense’	Èhànnà	‘wild person’
	Elédè	‘pig’ (dirty person)	Èranko	‘animal’
	Erinmi	‘hippopotamus’ (obese)	Òbùn	‘dirty person’
	Òfòn-òn	‘thief’	Òkóbó	‘impotent man’
	Olè	‘thief’	Olẹ	‘lazy person’
	Olèdàrùn	‘sluggard’	Olójúkòkòrò	‘greedy/ covetous’
	Olóórùn	‘dirty person’	Olóríburúkú	‘unfortunate person’
	Onígbèsè	‘a debtor’	Òpònú	‘idiot’
	Ṣòbòdiyèsà	‘imbecile’	Wèrè	‘mad person’

With the exception of *olè*, *òfòn-òn* *dindinrin* and *wèrè*, all other words above are formed in the language. In order to explain the formation process of these words, we shall employ the weak lexicalist hypothesis. The weak lexicalist hypothesis (WLH) states that some words are syntactically derived while others are not (Adeniyi 2007:36). The morphology and syntax constitute semi-independent, where the principle of the

morphology govern categories of level x<sup>1</sup>. No ordering is imposed between the components, hence, apart from the standard situation whereby the morphology provides inputs for the syntax, it is also possible for the syntax to derive a word category levels. The implication of the foregoing is that in the formation of words, both syntax and morphology interact as opposed to what Chomsky (1970) and others that believed that morphology and syntax are

on different autonomies tiers. Syntax is not relevant to word formation processes while morphology is not also relevant to syntax. However, following Pulleyblank and Akinlabí (1988), the model below establishes the fact that morphology and syntax interact.



The model above suggests two morphological components, namely, morphology 1 and morphology 2. This can be exemplified as follows:

The word *adé* ‘personal name/ crown’ is derived by combining an agentive nominal prefix *a* to the verb *dé* as given

below:

9.

a	+	dé	→	adé
agent		cover		personal name/ crown
Morphology 1				

Other words formed in similar way in (8) above include

10.

a	+	[di àgbà má da inú]	→	‘daft person’
adàgbàmádanú				



a +	[fò ikun gbé mu] → afòkungbému	‘fool’
a +	[ṣe owó] → aṣéwó	‘prostitute’
a +	[jẹ igboro da àgbà] → ajẹgborodàgbà	‘silly/ stupid’
à +	[jé] → àjé	‘witch’
ò +	[lẹ] → òlẹ	‘lazy person’
ò +	[ponú] → òpónú	‘idiot’
agent +	VP → NP	
	verb phrase	noun phrase

The derived word *adé* in (9) can function as the subject of the sentence in (x).

11.  
(x) *adé wá sí ilé* ‘*adé* came to the house.’

In (x), morphology is the input to the syntax as in (y)

(y) Morphology 1 → Syntax (where words are put together to form a sentence). Similarly, we can also derive a word from the words/lexical items in (x) through the process called desententialization thus:

12.  
i. *Adéwálé* ← *Adé wa sí ilé* ‘*Adé* came home.’  
ii. *Òlẹdàrùn* ← *Òlẹ di àrùn* ‘laziness becomes disease’  
‘sluggard’

The above examples show that a sentence serves as the input to the word giving rise to morphology 2 as given in (z)

(B)  
(z) Syntax → Morphology

In the same vein, each of the following nouns extracted from (8) above

13.  
i. *eranko* ‘animal’  
ii. *erinmi* hippopotamus

is derived from a noun phrase thus:

14.  
i. *eranko* ← [NP [N *eran*] + [N *oko*]]  
ii. *erinmi* ← [NP [N *erin*] + [N *omi*]]

Where the noun phrases is the input of each of the word.

All of these examples, confirms the fact that a non-lexical category can derive a lexical one. Pulleyblank and Akinlabí (1988:158-160) say that the model in (A) above suggests that all morphological processes derivation (including phrasal derivation) and inflections are located within a single morphological component in which the syntactic input is needed in the formation of some words, the model is possibly modified to allow recursion from syntax into morphology.

We must add at this juncture that most of the words in (8) above are used metaphorically to give the addressee in the selected video films offensive names.

The nouns in example (8) above are used independently without qualifiers. However, there are other simple nouns with qualifier(s) used as *èébú* in the selected Yorùbá video films. These include the following:

15.  
i. *Olórí gbọọṛọ* ‘long headed person’  
ii. *Olorí burúkú talakanians* ‘a wretched person’  
iii. *Èyin ẹranko yii* ‘these animals’  
iv. *Ọmọ òfò* ‘good for nothing child’  
v. *Ọmọ lásán èkejì ajá* ‘useless child’  
vi. *Àgbà iyà* ‘ignoble elder’  
vii. *Wèrè dàginnìdọṛọ* ‘a tall mad man’  
viii. *Gbàdigbagidi apá* ‘bulky and massive arm’  
ix. *Ọmọ àlẹ* ‘bastard’  
x. *Ọlọwọ ike* ‘a sluggard’  
xi. *Ọmọge adódómáwẹ* ‘a dirty lady’  
xii. *Ọmọ ẹhannà* ‘hooligan’  
xiii. *Ọmọ rádaràda* ‘a ruffian’  
xiv. *Èlẹnu irú* ‘stench-mouthed person’  
xv. *Epo pupa gààrí Ìsòbò* ‘a bad skinned person’

The NPs used as *èébú* in example (15) above are used to describe the addressee in offensive manner. As in example (8) above, the NPs used in (15) above are also used metaphorically to either describe or name the addressee.

### The complex NPs

The *èébú* that have complex NPs in the selected Yorùbá video films are of two types: (a) relational NPs and (b) Simile NPs.

#### (a) Relational NPs

This type of NPs contains a noun with relative clause qualifiers. The clause qualifier which typically begins with the relative particle **tí** marks sentences that are used as relative clause qualifiers, Awóbùlúyì (1978:94). The particle always appears at the beginning of sentences. For example:

(16)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| i. <i>Omọ ọsàn tí ń kó pópó bá iyá rẹ̀</i>     | ‘A troublesome child that brings problems to his parents’   |
| ii. <i>Eranko tí ó daṣọ èniyàn bora</i>        | ‘An animal in human skin’                                   |
| iii. <i>Aláìnrònú tó ń bọ ajá lówó</i>         | ‘A fool that offers a dog handshake’                        |
| iv. <i>Ọ̀bùn ajímábojú tó ń fojú ànà wòran</i> | ‘A dirty-mannered person that lacks daily personal hygiene’ |

The utterances in (16) above are used metaphorically to describe referents’ attitude in the selected Yorùbá video films.

#### Noun Phrase (Simile)

Simile is a linguistic expression used in overt comparison. It describes one object as being similar to another, Olátúnjì (1984:53). Simile is a form of meaning extension in which the sense of an expression is extended to another on the basis of resemblance. Simile is always marked by **bí** ‘like’ in Yorùbá language and **bí** in the language is a noun (Awóbùlúyì 1978:17;

Bámgbóṣé 1990:100). All *èébú* that are used as simile in the selected video films are noun phrases in the language. The NP structure is however complex if it is derived from a sentence as shown in (17a) below.

17a.

A	B
NP (SIMILE)	SENTENCE
i. <i>Ìwọ kan bí odó ibilẹ̀ yìí</i>	← <i>iwọ kan tí o rí bí odó ibilẹ̀ yìí</i>
	‘You that look like local mortal (for pounding yam)’
ii. <i>Èyìn ẹ̀ gànàkù bí ijápá</i>	← <i>èyìn rẹ̀ rí gànàkù bí ijápá</i>
	‘His back looks like that of tortoise’
iii. <i>Èlẹ̀nu bí ẹ̀nu àgẹ</i>	← <i>ẹ̀nu rẹ̀ rí bí ti àgẹ</i>
	‘His mouth looks like that of rubber kettle’
iv. <i>Àṣán orí bí tàgbìgbò</i>	← <i>Ó ṣe kiki orí bí ti agbigbò</i>
	‘A big headed person’
v. <i>Ọ̀kùnrin báńgẹ̀ bí ewédú</i>	← <i>Ọ̀kùnrin tí ó rí báńgẹ̀ bí ewédú</i>
	‘A light-weight man’
vi. <i>Aláìlójúti bí eja konté</i>	← <i>Aláìlójúti ni bí eja konté</i>
	‘A shameless person’

The complexity in each of the NP structure under **A** in (17a) above occurs because all words in each example are nouns in the language. However, the head noun of the NPs in (17a) is **bí**, without which the NPs becomes meaningless as shown in (17b) below.

17b.

- i. \**iwọ kan odó ibilẹ̀ yìí*
- ii. \**èyìn ẹ̀ gànàkù ijápá*
- iii. \**àṣán orí tàgbìgbò*
- iv. \**ọ̀kùnrin báńgẹ̀ ewédú*
- v. \**aláìlójúti eja konté*

However, if the NP structure is as shown in (18) below where the noun phrase (simile) occurs in the object position of a simple sentence, the complexity is removed.

(18)

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| i. <i>Eyìn ẹ̀ fọ́kà bí iná wẹ̀dà</i> | ‘His teeth scattered like welder’s light’ |
|--------------------------------------|---|

- |                                     |   |     |                         |                                |
|-------------------------------------|---|-----|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ii. Ó rí gbọṣṣò bí okùn<br>Ṣòkòtò   | ‘He is tall like rope<br>used to tie local<br>trouser’    | 19. | i. O gò                 | ‘You are stupid’               |
| iii. Qpọlọ yín yòrò bí<br>àlòmù     | ‘Your brain dissolves<br>like alum’                       |     | ii. Inú yín bu          | ‘You are daft’                 |
| iv. Ó n rìn bí àgàtú                | ‘He walks like àgàtú<br>(a farm labourer)’                |     | iii. Kọkọró orí ẹ sọ̀nù | ‘You have lost your<br>senses’ |
| v. Ẹnu ẹ̀ níṣon bí ilẹ̀kùn<br>dánfó | ‘His lips are tick like<br>dánfó (mini-bus) side<br>door’ |     | iv. Ó n ranjú fòò       | ‘He is mopping’                |
|                                     |   |     | v. Ó rí bí igi iṣáná    | ‘He is too skinny’             |

The head noun of the object noun phrase simile in (18) above is **bí**. The noun is followed by its qualifier(s) as italicized above.

### Sentences

Having looked at èébú at the phrasal level, our focus here will be on the structure of èébú in sentence form in the selected Yorùbá video films. Sentence is the largest unit that shows grammatical patterning in a language. There are three types: simple sentence, the compound sentence and the complex sentence. Out of these types, simple sentence is used often in hurling insults in the selected Yorùbá video films. The reason for this may not be far fetched. The use of simple sentence by the insulter to hurl insults on the addressee, we assume, will allow the insulter to hit the nail on the head in order for the insults to have a great effect on the perlocutor.

The simple sentence is a one clause sentence which consists of NP subject and a predicate thereby making it easy to grasp. Simple sentences which come up in diverse structures are common in our day to day conversations, Yusuf (1997:59). It may come in form of declarative or imperative statements. Sometimes, they are employed as questions. Similarly, èébú in sentence form in the selected Yorùbá video films contains one verb and specify a single event. It however comes in the following different forms:

#### (a) Declarative

This type is used in the expression of statements. For example

#### (b) Interrogative

These are èébú that are employed as questions. For example

- |     |                                  |                                      |
|-----|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 20. | i. Ojú ẹ̀ fọ̀ ní?                | ‘Are you blind?’                     |
|     | ii. Ṣé o ò yọnu?                 | ‘Are you mentally<br>balanced?’      |
|     | iii. Kí ló ṣe olóòórùn<br>yí ná? | ‘What is wrong with<br>this stench?’ |
|     | iv. Ẹ̀ ò nírònú ní?              | ‘Are you daft?’                      |

In most cases where èébú in interrogative sentences are used, they are not used to seek information; rather, they are used rhetorically to express anger, impatience or disgust. However, in some cases in the selected Yorùbá video films, we observed that the addressee may answer such questions in order to be rude especially, if he is not a subordinate to the insulter as in the dialogue below.

- |     |                                  |   |
|-----|----------------------------------|---|
| 21. | A. Kí ni were ẹ̀ n wá<br>níbí?   | ‘What is this idiot<br>searching for here?’ |
|     | B. Asínwín ẹ̀ nàá ni mò<br>n wá! | ‘It’s you fool I am<br>searching for!’      |

#### (c) Negative

This type of sentences contains at least one negative word. The common negative word in èébú is **kò**, which also occurs as **ò**, **ẹ̀** in the following examples:

- |     |                          |   |
|-----|--------------------------|---|
| 22. | i. kò gbádùn ni          | ‘He is sick’                                |
|     | ii. Qmọ̀ tí ò níbi-níran | ‘A child without good<br>family background’ |

- |                     |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| iii. Ori ẹ̀ ò pé    | ‘You are stupid’   |
| iv. Ẹ̀ ò ní láákàyè | ‘A dullard’        |
| v. Ẹ̀ ẹ̀ ṣèniyàn    | ‘You lack manners’ |

#### (d) Code-mixing

Code-mixing is a phenomenon common in bilingual speech communities in which the speakers of the two languages in question transfer linguistic elements from one language into another. The speaker combines lexical items and features of both languages in a single discourse. Such mixed forms are found in *èébú* in the selected Yorùbá video films as shown in (23) below.

- |                                       |                                    |  |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| 23.                                   |                                    |  |
| i. Oṣoṣo ẹ̀ ti kó virus               | ‘Your brain is malfunctioning’     |  |
| ii. Compound illiterate ni ẹ̀         | ‘You are a compound illiterate’    |  |
| iii. Olóòrùn tó ñ lo black bra        | ‘A dirty lady that uses black bra’ |  |
| iv. First class lo wà nínú àwọn adití | ‘Your deafness is first class’     |  |
| v. Ọ̀pákan, o stupid                  | ‘Ọ̀pákan, you are stupid’          |  |

#### The Language of ẹ̀pẹ̀

Unlike *èébú* which comes up in noun phrase and sentences, *ẹ̀pẹ̀* comes in verb phrase and sentences.

#### The Yorùbá Verb Phrase

Traditionally, the verb phrase is a group of words that has the sentence predicator, namely, the verb, Yusuf (1997:21). The main verb is the head of the verb phrase, Lamidi (2000:80). As the head of the verb phrase, the verb is obligatorily present in Yorùbá with or without its satellites (complements), Awóbúlúyì (2013:98-99). The verb phrase complements in Yorùbá could have NP complements or sentential complements, Yusuf (1997:31). Adverbs may occur in Yorùbá verb phrase. Whenever they occur, they modify

the verb in the verb phrase. Two types of adverbs occur in a verb phrase: those that occur before verbs and are therefore referred to as preverbal adverbs, and those that occur after verbs which are consequently referred to as post-verbal adverbs, Awóbúlúyì (2013:142-143). In *ẹ̀pẹ̀*, only preverbal adverbs **kò ní** occurs mainly in the verb phrase as shown in example (24) below.

- |                          |   |  |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| 24.                      |   |  |
| i. kò ní yẹ ọ̀           | ‘It shall not be well with you’         |  |
| ii. kò ní dáá fún iyá ẹ̀ | ‘It shall not be well with your mother’ |  |
| iii. kò ní rí bátiṣe     | ‘You shall not make it in life’         |  |
| iv. kò ní dára fún ọ̀    | ‘It shall not be well with you’         |  |

The adverbs **kò ní** in the verb phrase above marks the future tense in the negative.

#### Sentences

Like *èébú*, simple sentences are used in *ẹ̀pẹ̀*. The simple sentences however come in the following forms:

#### (a) Declarative

This type expresses a fact in the affirmative, negative or futuristic.

#### Affirmative

- |                    |                       |  |
|--------------------|-----------------------|--|
| 25.                |                       |  |
| i. Mo gbé.         | ‘I am in trouble’     |  |
| ii. Ayé mi bàjẹ́.  | ‘I am doomed’         |  |
| iii. Iná jó mi.    | ‘I am doomed’         |  |
| iv. Mo dáràn.      | ‘I am in soup’        |  |
| v. Orí ẹ̀ ti burú. | ‘Your life is ruined’ |  |

#### Negative

- |                    |                                 |  |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| 26.                |                                 |  |
| i. Ẹ̀ ò lè ṣoriire | ‘It shall not be well with you’ |  |
| ii. O ò lè ráláánú | ‘Helpers shall be far from you’ |  |

iii. Orí ẹ̀ ò pé 'You are insane'

iv. Àbí ayé yín fẹ́ rún ní? 'Are your lives ruined?'

The negation marker is ò 'not' in example (26) above.

Depending on the status of the curser to the addressee, such question may not necessarily require an answer.

### Futuristic

This type of sentences is signified by the presence of any one of **yóò/òò, ó máa** 'will/shall' as shown in the following examples.

- 27.
- i. Èmí ẹ̀ ló máa bó 'You shall die'
  - ii. Ògún ló máa pa ẹ̀ 'You shall be struck by Ògún (god of iron in Yorùbá land)
  - iii. Olórún ni yóò kò ọ́ 'God shall forsake you'
  - iv. Ayé ẹ̀ máa bàjé 'Your life shall be ruined'
  - v. Ẹ̀ óò parun 'You shall be destroyed'
  - vi. Ẹ̀ óò kú sọ̀nà bí èéfín 'You shall faint on the way like smoke.'

Likewise, in negative sentences containing (k)ò, future action is signified by ní 'shall'. For example:

- 28.
- i. Ẹ̀ ò níí délé 'You shall not get to your destination'
  - ii. Ayé iyáláyáá ẹ̀ ò níí dáá 'Your grandmother shall be unfortunate'
  - iii. Ẹ̀ ò níí jèrè 'You shall not make it'
  - iv. O ò níí ṣoriire 'You shall be unfortunate in life'

### Interrogative

These types of èpè are employed as questions. For example

- 29.
- i. Ayé yín fẹ́ bàjé ní? 'Are your lives destroyed?'
  - ii. Ṣé orí yín ò burú? 'Do you want to be doomed?'
  - iii. Ẹ̀ gbèpè ní? 'Are you cursed?'

### Conditional

This type of sentences is complex and is introduced by tí 'that' or bí 'if' in the language. The èpè that comes in this form are always in two parts. One part is the sentence itself (condition for the curse to be effective) and the other is the actual curse. For example

- 30.
- i. 'Ọjọ́kọ́jọ́ tí o bá fi omọ́ mi Bímpé sílẹ̀, o ó Ṣòfò ẹ̀mí, o ó Ṣòfò ohun gbogbo.'  
'Any day you divorce my daughter Bimpe, you shall lose your life and all you have.'
  - ii. 'Àwọn tó n sọ̀rò mi láìda lẹ̀yìn, bí wọn bá fojú ọ̀wọ́ ṢiṢe, wọn òò fẹ̀yìn ọ̀wọ́ dáá nù'  
'Those that back bite me shall not be profitable in their doings.'
  - iii. 'Bí mo bá purọ́ mó ẹ, kí iyá mi ṣòfò mi'  
'Let my mother lose me if I lied against you'
  - iv. 'Bí ó bá fún mi lówó, kí n má jèrè'  
'Let me not be profitable if he gave me money.'

### Conclusion

So far in this study, we have been able to show that èébú and èpè are not Yorùbá oral genres but rather, they are forms of expression used to express one's emotion: hatred, aggression and anger to the people. This use of èébú and èpè is known and common in the speech of the people that it is now becoming regular language in a simple daily conversation in the society and in the selected Yorùbá video films. Unlike èébú which is frequently used èpè is seldom used because it is believed that it may be backed by supernatural forces. Also, in this study, we have appraised the structural components of èébú and èpè. We observed that most word used as èébú are formed in the language and are used metaphorically with

or without qualifiers. Also the sentences used for *èébú* and *èpè* often come in simple sentences to allow the addressee grasp the meaning in such that its impact will be greatly felt.

<sup>1</sup> DStv is a pay digital satellite TV service in Africa. It is founded by Multichoice in 1995. Its headquarters is located at Fernadale Randburg, South Africa.

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## **Лингвистическая оценка ненормативной лексики в избранных телевизионных фильмах Йорубы**

**Темитопе Олумийива**

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*Представляя собой сложный человеческий феномен, язык используется для неформального, экспрессивного общения и указаний. Окружающий мир, в котором мы живем, является в значительной степени вербальным, в этой связи язык выполняет экспрессивную функцию, когда используется в общении для того, чтобы добиться большей эффективности и вежливости от людей, а также провоцирует или нивелирует социальные проблемы. Для создания социального напряжения обычно используется ненормативная лексика. Структуры ненормативной лексики, встречающиеся в повседневной жизни народа Йоруба, отражены в телевизионных фильмах. Это еще раз подтверждает общепризнанное мнение, что фильмы являются отражением того, что происходит в обществе. Использование ненормативной лексики в телевизионных фильмах Йорубы стало обычным явлением, которому не придается особого значения. В данной статье исследованы два вида ненормативной лексики: оскорбления (ééví) и проклятия (èrè). Таким образом, основной задачей данной работы является лингвистическая оценка двух видов ненормативной лексики, используемой в телевизионных фильмах народа Йоруба. В статье рассматривается социально-семантический подтекст ненормативной лексики, используемой в телевизионных фильмах, и показано, что оскорбления встречаются в фильмах чаще, чем проклятия. Кроме того, проведен грамматический анализ ненормативной лексики, отмеченной в избранных телевизионных фильмах. Выявлено, что оскорбления чаще всего встречаются в виде именных словосочетаний и предложений, в то время как проклятия представляют собой глагольные словосочетания и предложения. Предложения, используемые в обоих случаях, являются простыми, состоящими из подлежащего, представленного именным словосочетанием, и сказуемого, что позволяет легко понять смысл предложения.*

*Ключевые слова: Йоруба, телевизионный фильм, именное словосочетание, глагольное словосочетание, оскорбления (ééví), проклятия (èrè).*

*Научная специальность: 22.00.00 – социологические науки, 23.00.00 – политология.*

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