

Types and Functions of Interjections in Wole Soyinka's *Alápatà Àpáta* and Yoruba Speech Community

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Abstract

*Interjections are universal means of communication among human beings which pass across different emotions and information in different cultures and languages. However, while some are found in nearly all languages but with varied meanings and functions according to context, some are peculiar to specific languages and cultures. This work, therefore, investigates the functions and meanings of both universal interjections (specifically 'Oh' and 'Ah') and the Yoruba language specific interjections found in Wole Soyinka's *Alápatà Àpáta*. The work also discusses two other significant Yoruba language specific interjections although they are not found in the analyzed text. The authors chose the text because it is replete with interjections 'Oh' and 'Ah' which carry various meanings and perform various functions (few of which have not been discussed in the literature) and also because it contains the Yoruba language specific interjections which probably have not been investigated in the literature, thereby contributing to knowledge.*

Keywords: universal interjections, Yoruba language specific interjections, *Alápatà*

Introduction

Language in its proper sense (spoken and written) is the most globally recognised means of communication with the tendency to pass across messages as they are intended by the speaker to the listener. However, the accurate interpretation of the speaker's messages by the listener depends on the two of them sharing the same code, world view and also operating within the same context understandable to both of them. Apart from the language as conceived above, there are other forms of communication in the forms of sounds, speech or non-words that emanate from human vocal organs that are used in passing across messages which, however, may not be interpreted in the same way as meant by the producer of the sound, speech or non-words especially if the listener is not context-

sensitive and if the two of them are from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

One of the forms of communication emanating from human speech organs which have been variously described as sounds or non-words by scholars is interjection. Research on interjection has been undertaken by different scholars from different climes and from different perspectives. However, this paper aims to contribute to scholarship by:

- i. investigating the functions of the universal emotive interjections *Oh* and *Ah* in a drama work titled *Alápatà Àpáta* written by Wole Soyinka;
- ii. identifying some language specific interjections and their functions as being used by the Yoruba people of the Southwestern Nigeria.

A Brief Review of Literature on Interjections

There is no single encompassing and generally accepted definition of interjections in the literature probably due to their “multi-functional property” and “heterogeneity” (Mao, 2017:41). The above assertion has been earlier revealed by Norrick (2009:867) when he writes that:

Giving an exhaustive and detailed definition of interjection is not a simple linguistic exercise since they do not only appear as “single words” but also in the form of “sounds”, “phrases” as well as “utterances”.

Nevertheless, some scholars have given definitions of the term. Leech (1989:215) writes that “an interjection is the grammatical term for an exclamation word such as ‘oh’, ‘ah’ and ‘wow’”. Crystal (1995:207) avers that “an interjection is a word or sound thrown into a sentence to express some feelings of the mind”. Hismanoglu (2010:18) opines that the term “interjection arises from the latin *inter* meaning ‘between’ and *jacer* meaning ‘throw’”. They are words and constructions with no real linguistic value but we generally employ them to express feelings or state of mind in daily life situation”. In order to give a more illuminating view of what interjection means, Ameka (2006:743) says that “interjection may be defined using formal, semantic or pragmatic criteria”. He goes on to briefly explain what each of the criteria is all about. Ameka’s “definition” is almost equivalent to “the nature of interjection” approach used by Goddard (2014:4-6) in shedding light on what interjections really mean and cover. Using the formal criterion, Ameka (2006:743) sees a typical interjection as a lexical item that:

- i. conventionally constitutes a non-elliptical utterance by itself;
- ii. does not enter into construction with other words classes;
- iii. does not take inflections or derivational affixes; and
- iv. is mono-morphemic.

Point (ii) above agrees with the position of Broughton (1990) that interjections do not

have grammatical linkage with other classes of words and they normally occur in isolation.

In defining interjections semantically, the scholar declares that interjections are “conventionalized linguistic signs that express a speaker’s current mental state, attitude, or reaction towards a situation”. Also from the pragmatic point of view, Ameka writes that interjections are “context-bound linguistic signs. That is, are tied to specific situations and index elements in the extra-linguistic context. They cannot be fully interpreted unless they are situated in the appropriate discourse”. This simply means that context influences how interjections are interpreted. In essence, the notion of pragmatic competence is equally relevant in interpreting interjections.

Apart from definition, Ameka (2006) identifies some characteristics of interjections of which phonological and morphological anomalies are part. He classifies interjections into two using the criteria of form and function, namely the form of the interjection and the communicative function of the interjection. He further classifies the form of interjection into two which are primary and secondary interjections. Taavistsainen (1993:574) declares that primary interjections consist of one word and they do not enter into syntactic constructions”. In terms of function, Ameka (2006) avers that interjections can perform expressive, conative and phatic functions. Reflecting on the function of interjection, Taavistsainen (1993:574) writes that interjections “express a speaker’s state, action or attitude and communicative intentions”.

Olateju’s (2006) work titled “‘Oh!’ As a Marker of Information Management in Ola Rotimi’s *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*” investigates the functions performed by “Oh” in the drama text from the perspective of discourse analysis. However, the paper does not investigate “Ah” and other Yoruba language specific interjections.

In his own contribution to the study of interjections, Goddard (2014:6) classifies interjections into three which are formal, semantic and contextual. Apart from the

above, Goddard contributes to the research on interjections by using what he calls Natural Semantic Meta-language (NSM) to analyse “surprise” related interjections in English such as *Wow! Gee! Gosh!* etc and “disgust” related interjections in English such as *yuck, ugh* etc.

Mao’s (2017) paper perhaps provides the most current insight into the study of interjections though he narrows his work to only “emotive” and “expressive” interjections. In order to make his work unique, he categorises primary interjections into universal emotive interjections, specialized emotive interjections and grammaticalized primary interjections. One significant assertion made by Mao (2017:45), which we fully align with in this work is that “emotions behind universal primary interjections are optional in such a wide range that the item (e.g. *Oh*) would have various interpretations in different situations”. This translates to the fact that context influences the emotive and informative content of interjections.

Nforbi, Konesso and Moko’s (2016) paper is equally significant in that the work explains the various ways through which English interjections like *wow! hey! oops!* and *ouch!* can be correctly taught to students and how they can use them properly in context. Using insights from different sources like course books, textbooks, articles and oral sources, the paper gives copious examples of English interjections and their meanings.

All the works examined in this section and other related ones which are not mentioned, no doubt, have shed light considerably on interjections. However, none has paid attention to the various functions that universal emotive interjections *Oh, Ah* perform in an extended literary discourse written by a non-native speaker of the English language. Also, none of them has investigated the Yoruba language specific interjections in the texts chosen for analysis. Furthermore, other common Yoruba language specific interjections apart from the ones in our primary text have not been functionally analysed. It is the above gaps that this paper wishes to fill.

Sources of Data for the Study

The data for this work is derived from two sources of which the first one is Wole Soyinka’s *Alápatà Àpáta* (2011). The choice is based on two major considerations. The first is that the play is replete with universal emotive interjections (*Oh, Ah, etc*) which perform different functions of which some might not have been identified in the literature. The text is equally chosen because it contains three (3) examples of language specific interjections (*haba! yee! yee-paripa!*) which would be used as an avenue to present other language specific interjections in the Yoruba language spoken in the Southwestern part of Nigeria. These other language specific interjections are identified through personal observations and overheard conversations. Works of drama are generally appropriate to investigate the types and functions of interjections because the dialogues in them are close to naturally-occurring speeches.

Method of Data Analysis

For the data extracted from *Alápatà Àpáta*, the relevant excerpts containing specific interjections were grouped under their appropriate functions based on the context of the utterance. This agrees with the position of Mao (2017:45) that emotions behind interjections are “optional in such a wide range that one item (e.g. *Oh*) would have various interpretations in different situations. Consequently, context is strongly bound with the vocal units”. In addition, the researchers are able to state the functions of the Yoruba language specific interjections in context because they are highly competent in the language due to the fact that they are the native speakers of the language. In other words, they rely on native speaker’s judgment. In analysing or identifying the functions of interjections in the text, two examples were used to illustrate each point.

Functions of Universal Primary Interjections in the Text

“A-ah”, “O-oh”, “Oh-ho” are used to indicate sudden realization or remembrance of a fact or point

The above are primary universal interjections used sometimes in discourse by the current speaker to show that he/she has just remembered a fact or point that is relevant to the discourse. They are equally used to indicate that the ongoing discourse has triggered a point or certain idea that is either remotely or genuinely connected with the current topic. In this situation, it does not necessarily mean that it is the last speaker's speech that triggers the point, the fact or the idea that suddenly comes to the speaker who uses any of the above interjections. In this situation, it is not necessarily that it is the last speaker's speech that triggers the point. Sometimes, it is the event, that is, the non-linguistic situation that triggers the fact that is realised or remembered by the current speaker. Below are the examples from our data:

1ST FARMER: Are you no longer a herbalist?
2ND FARMER: What kind of question is that?
Of course, I still practice my father's trade – just like your brother.
1ST FARMER: You no longer know a madman when you see one.
2ND FARMER: (Turns slowly and stares more carefully at Alaba) O-oh (p. 24).

In the above excerpt, the object of discourse is ALABA, the main character. Because of the way he sits in the same place every time and every day, different characters in the play describe him in different ways. A critical look at the dialogue above reveals that the 2nd FARMER uses “O-oh” to indicate that he has just realised that ALABA is a madman based on the preceding comments of the 1st FARMER.

ALABA: Ah well, I don't know who else can help you. My advice would be – wait right here until those workers start passing on their way to work....
SENIOR BOY: But that means we'll be late to school, sir.

PAINTER: (Really agitated) Ha, Mo gbe, Supercharge will call it double delinquency and give me double punishment, lateness and failure to complete assignment.

ALABA: Supercharge? Who is that? (pupils splutter, stammer, look at each other) Oh-ho, so that's what you call your teacher.

PAINTER: Baba, please, don't tell him. (p. 72)

In the above excerpt, PAINTER (a student) calls one of his teachers a nickname – *Supercharge*, forgetting that ALABA (TEACHER's friend) is there. The name “*Supercharge*” is strange to ALABA whereupon he wishes to know the person. However, the behaviour of the two students (SENIOR BOY and PAINTER) which is adequately captured in the stage direction typed in italics above leads ALABA to sudden realization that “*Supercharge*” is TEACHER's nickname, hence, he uses “Oh-ho” interjection before the main comment.

“Oh-yes” for making emphatic positive response or to indicate total agreement

In this situation, the current speaker uses the interjection above to show emphatic positive response to the previous speaker's speech or to show total agreement with the last speaker's utterance. Below are instances from our data.

INVESTOR: Let's do that. I mustn't miss my plane.
PROSPECTOR: No sweat. Just the matter of leaving that deposit. Refundable within two weeks.
INVESTOR: Oh yes, as soon as I get back I'll do an electronic transfer (p. 14).

In the excerpt above, INVESTOR uses “Oh-yes” to show total agreement with his interlocutor on the issue of “leaving the deposit”. In other words, the INVESTOR emphatically agrees that he will settle the issue of money involved in the transaction under discussion through an electronic transfer.

ALABA: You don't know my Oriki? Well, you know what Oriki is at least.

SENIOR BOY: Oh yes sir. It's a kind of praise name (p. 76).

"Oh yes" is used above by the SENIOR BOY as an emphatic positive response to the question.

"Oh" and "Ah" for expressing surprise

In the text under consideration, "Oh" and "Ah" are used to express surprise in respect to the last speaker's contribution to the ongoing discourse. This means that the information passed across by the previous speaker is a totally new and unexpected one. The excerpt below is used to illustrate the point.

2ND STUDENT: Hey, hey, are you sure of what you are saying?

1ST STUDENT: How do you think I got to know the place so well? It was his shop I selected for my Master's dissertation - Abattoirs and Ruminants as Dialectical Paradigms.

2ND MECHANIC: Oh, you know him that well? (p. 50)

In the text above, 1ST STUDENT is describing the place where ALABA (the main character) sells *Suya*. He goes further that he writes his Master's dissertation on ALABA's shop. The information sounds so impressive to 2ND MECHANIC that he makes the statement in which "Oh" conveys surprise taking the context of the utterance into account.

ALABA: You are all welcome

MOTHER: Actually, Baba, we came to you for advice

ALABA: Me? Ah, (sits up) I hope nothing serious. Are you sure I can help? (p. 117)

In the situation above, MOTHER and her daughter came all the way from Lagos to see ALABA. MOTHER reveals that they have come to him for advice. The interjection "Ah" as used in the context signifies surprise.

"Oh" and "Ah" for conveying emotion of delight and admiration

During interaction, one of the interlocutors may say or do something which delights the listener or which the listener really admires. In order to express this emotion, interjections "Oh" and "Ah" may be used alone or used to accompany utterance which matches the emotion as evident in the following illustrations.

*ALABA: Teacher, every handing-over note makes mention of him. In fact, the last president – that was all he set down in his handing-over note: whatever you do, - he wrote in his presidential green ink – I have just one advice to give you – don't tamper with the *Suya* section of the kitchen.*

*TEACHER: (Declaiming) Oh, Destiny, thy name is wonder! Who would have thought that this crossroad of our humble villages would produce the Chief Meat Carver and *Suya* specialist, not just to one Head of State, but to his successor; Ah well, he is of good pedigree. The nation owes you (pp. 42-43),*

In the above selection, ALABA is narrating to TEACHER how one of his former apprentices described as "the head of the meat section of the presidential kitchen" was recommended to be retained by the outgoing president. TEACHER's emotional response to the above information is that of delight expressed with the use of "Oh" before the main information.

TEACHER: You must forgive us. Sometimes we don't know what we have until the callus over our eyes is peeled off by others. The Royal Father must have heard what you did to the soldiers, that's why they trooped out to pay their respect.

FRIEND: Thank goodness even the royal fathers know when to set aside their pretensions and come and render homage where homage is due.

FARMER: A-ah, you should have been here that day. Those soldiers came here like cowards under dark. They surrounded the Rock. We all fled into the bushes. The weapons they brought! Then they saw ALAPATA, sitting quietly in his usual place.

He did not blink. One look at him and they scattered (p. 171).

The characters above are praising ALABA for some of his exploits in the village which they ignorantly believe is the main reason for the coming of the royal fathers to ALABA's place of residence. The FARMER, in his attempt to glowingly recount what ALABA does to the soldiers, starts with interjection *Ah* which contextually passes across emotion of extreme admiration.

"Oh" to pass across emotion of disappointment or lack of interest in something said by the interlocutor

In this function of interjection, the previous or last speaker says something or gives information that is contrary to what the current speaker expects or information that is not of his/her interest. This is illustrated as follows:

PAINTER: Only the accents remain – on the letters

ALABA: Well, your work is nearly done then. Congratulations

SENIOR BOY: But that's the trouble sir. Our boy Big Arse'o here doesn't know where the accents go

ALABA: Oh, you don't? (p. 65)

ALABA, in the above passage, expresses disappointment initially with the use of "Oh" at the inability of the PAINTER to put accents on the signboard that TEACHER asks him to make for ALABA. In other words, ALABA expects the PAINTER as a senior secondary school boy to be able to put accents on words. However, the inability of the boy to do so becomes a source of disappointment rendered through the primary universal emotive interjection "Oh".

ALABA: I keep saying that I'm a retired man but just see what fate has been keeping in store for me.... Always on call, one way or the other even without my knives and apron. I am beginning to think it's on account of this rock. No matter what, I accept my fate. So, what is your problem?
DAUGHTER: (Suddenly bursts out)
ALAPATA sir, it's my husband!

ALABA: Oh, that kind of problem? What's the matter with him? (p. 120)

Although ALABA is a retired butcher in the play, people come to him to seek advice on various issues. At a point, two women come from Lagos, saying that they want to discuss a particular problem with him whereupon he asks them the nature of the problem. ALABA cannot hide his disappointment which is visible in the interjection "Oh" before the main comment. This function of "Oh" has probably not been investigated in the literature.

"Oh" and "ha" for expressing desperation

Desperation in this context has the meaning of extreme anxiety, fear or despair. The "Oh" and "ha" interjections are normally used when the last speaker says or does something that is likely to have negative effect on the current speaker. The interjections can also be used by the current speaker when the last speaker talks or acts in such a way as to indicate that the plight of his/her or interlocutor is not of concern to him/her. The following are examples from our text:

ALABA: ...but I did not need to pass an exam to become London Butcher or expert in Suya. Instead, London came to me; not just London, the whole world. Look at those postcards if you don't believe me. None of them ever asked me about akiset.

PAINTER: Oh, I'm going to fail, I'm going to fail (p. 69).

In the above, TEACHER (ALABA's friend) asks PAINTER to design a signboard that reads:

ABÀ ÀLÀBÁ ALÁPATÀ Rt. D. Butcher Emeritus

MAESTRO DI SUYA

Alumnus Butcherus, Queen Victoria Secondary (p. 61).

The Yoruba language accents, being a tone language, have to be put on some words in order to realise their correct meanings. PAINTER does not know how to put accents on words because he is not a Yoruba person whereupon he solicits the assistance of ALABA. ALABA responds that he does not

know what accent (which he pronounces as akiset) means and nobody has asked him about it before. It is this information that prompts PAINTER to exhibit emotion of desperation through “Oh” before the main information.

ALABA: Ah well, I don't know who else can help you. My advice would be – wait right here until those workers start passing on their way to work.

SENIOR BOY: But that means we'll be late to school, sir.

PAINTER: (Really agitated) Ha, mo gbe. Supercharge will call it double delinquency and give me double punishment; lateness and failure to complete assignment (p. 72).

“Ha” as used by PAINTER above passes across emotion of desperation because of fear and anxiety of what Supercharge (TEACHER) will do to him for his “lateness and failure to complete assignment”. This function of interjection has probably not been identified in the literature.

“Oh” and “Ah” for making emphatic negative response

This is a situation where the current speaker strongly passes across the message that he/she does not agree with the last speaker's idea, point of view or line of reasoning. On the above point, Olateju (2006:59) writes that “In emphatic negative response, *Oh* with *no* could form a sequentially constrained pair in which the speaker's emphatic negative response will be seen as officially absent if not pronounced”. The following are examples from our data:

TEACHER: A head to head, heart to heart talk first, the military assault, then the royal fathers, and ...see how people have read both? Even my own head is spinning. As our man wrote centuries ago, there is a tide in the affairs of men...this is a high tide in the affairs of Orita Mefa. My master plan is back on track, if anything, bigger than ever.

ALABA: (Retreating) Ah, no no, Teacher, no. Your plans are big. Too big for me. I know they are clever because you're a clever man. You think big. But all your ideas do is

get me into trouble. I want my retirement. (p. 177)

TEACHER, in the context of the play, is ALABA's advisor and chief planner. However, ALABA believes that TEACHER's recent plans and pieces of advice have only brought him trouble and headache, even with the town's royal fathers. Hence, we believe that the use of “Ah, no no” by ALABA is to emphatically make it known to TEACHER that he does not want any of his (TEACHER's) plans at that point in time.

DAANIELEBO: Palm wine? I am offering you champagne, nothing lower than crystal – morning, noon and night.

ALABA: Ah no, Teacher – that's my own “father”. If you like, my mentor, since you seem to know about him already – he made me try that stuff once, and it gave me headache for days. (p. 137)

“Ah no” is used above by ALABA to indicate emphatic refusal of DAANIELEBO's offer of champagne on the ground that it gives him a headache.

“Ah” for indicating caution or warning

It is possible when conversations are going on for one of the interactants to use the interjection “Ah” to caution or warn his/her interactant. This may be for the benefit of the speaker, his/her listener or even the third party. However, it is the verbal message that follows the interjection that will reinforce or give full weight to this function of interjection just like others. The following are examples from our data:

DAANIELEBO: What is there to be confused about? Don't we all pray that we should be greater than our fathers?

ALABA: True, true. And Èdùmàrè granted that prayer. For both of us.

DAANIELEBO: No. For you, yes, you became more famous than your father but in my case....

ALABA: Ah, gomina, don't commit sin o. don't commit sin. Òrúnmilà is listening. Don't be ungrateful (p. 135).

In Africa, children always pray to surpass their parents' achievements. In the case of the characters above, ALABA reiterates the fact that both of them are already greater than their fathers in that ALABA is known throughout the country as the best *Suya* maker even up to the office of the president. DAANIELEBO, on his own, is an Executive Governor. When DAANIELEBO wants to deny the fact that he is already greater than his father, ALABA uses the interjection "Ah" which in the context of the utterance that follows is meant to caution or warn DAANIELEBO against saying something that can offend *Òrúnmìlà* (god).

DAANIELEBO: He undermines me. He seduces my loyalists. He is so evil, even satan shrinks from his presence. I want to surpass him. I want to beat him at his game. I want to floor him, malice for malice, evil for evil.

ALABA: (sits bolt upright, staring at him in disbelief for several moments) You want to be more evil than – that your father?

DAANIELEBO: You heard me. I want to be the greatest. I have sold my conscience now I want the ultimate.

ALABA: Ah, my great brother, I don't advise it. That will be the real great grandfather of all headaches (p. 139).

DAANIELEBO in the above declares that he wants to surpass his father in devilish, dubious and diabolical acts upon which ALABA cautions or warns him with the initial use of the interjection "Ah" and the utterance that follows lends more weight to the caution or warning.

The above are some of the functions of the universal emotive and primary informative interjections in the text. The next section discusses the functions of language specific interjections found in the text which are *Haba*, *yeparipa*, and *yee*.

Functions of Language Specific Interjections in the Text

"Haba"

This is a disyllabic interjection which originated from the Hausa language. The meaning varies according to the context in

which it is used. Generally, it may show emotion of surprise. In some cases, it may be informative in that it can pass across the following information if used in context or used alone as a response to the last speaker.

- a. What you have said was unbelievable (surprising)
- b. The issue is not as serious as you have taken it.

"Haba" is used three times in the text. Two of these are:

ALABA: This matter requires serious thought. It is delicate.

3RD OKADA: We know Baba. You're our only hope.

ALABA: If the problem is of this earth, then to earth belongs the solution.

3RD OKADA: Our views exactly, Baba.

ALABA: (Eyes shut, heavy concentration. A beam breaks across his face) Haba, I did not even need my thinking cap for that. This is no problem at all. Crash helmet you say, the government says you must wear crash helmets? (p. 150)

In the above, three (3) *Okada* (motorcycle) riders approach ALABA to help them solve the problem of government policy that all *Okada* riders should have crash helmets. In ALABA's last conversational turn above, the interjection "Haba" contextually means something like "the problem is not as serious as I have taken it to be". This function of "Haba" is almost the same thing as that of "sudden realization" of the universal primary emotive interjection "Oh".

OLUWO: Stop! Stop right there. This court has just one question for you. Just where did you get the chieftaincy title of Alápatà of Àpáta?

ALABA: (Light slowly downing) The Alápatà? Of Àpáta? Ah-ah. Is that my crime?

ASIPA: Is what your crime? Can you think of a more heinous crime? The Oluwo asked you – who gave you that chieftaincy title?

ALABA: (Slowly clambering back to his feet) Haba, my royal elders. It is the name I was given. The akiset was a akisident so I

tried to make the best of the situation (pp. 163-164).

The traditional ruler of the town and his chiefs accuse ALABA of giving himself a chieftaincy title (Alápatà of Àpáta) which of course is the result of wrong placement of an accent on Alápatà. In fact, when the chiefs arrive at ALABA's residence, they roundly abuse him. So, when he eventually learns that his crime is that he has given himself a chieftaincy title, he utters "Haba" to show his surprise and incredulity. In other words, he expresses surprise that the royal father and his chiefs could leave the royal palace, come to his residence and accuse him of something which he believes is very trivial. He explains to them that the accent (akiset) which confers the chieftaincy title on him is only an accident (akisident) or not intentional.

"Yéèpàrìpà"

Just like "Haba" above, this is also a language and culture specific interjection. "Yéèpàrìpà" is an interjection strictly used among the Yoruba people of the Southwestern Nigeria. It is both informative and emotive. In the Yoruba society, when Oro (cult) members walk the street, they use "Yéèpàrìpà" to warn all those around to stay indoor as it is forbidden for anybody to see them. That is, it is only the initiates that can see members of the cult. In another sense, "Yéèpàrìpà" is used by initiates when they see or hear non-initiates say or do something that only the initiates are supposed to say or do. In this case, "Yéèpàrìpà" means "an abomination has been committed". However, when this interjection is uttered in a "non-cult initiate context", it is simply informative – that the utterer has run into a serious trouble or has come across something that is life-threatening. It may equally mean that something bad has happened or about to happen to another person that is close to the utterer of the interjection. This interjection occurs thrice in our data. It is presented below:

PAINTER: But Baba, this looks like guess work to me.

SENIOR BOY: We might as well as a babaláwo to consult Ifá for us.

ALABA: Yéèpàrìpà! Shut your mouth you senior dunce, your ears are so stuffed; you can't even recognise a do-re-mi if it was played on dùndún drums. And you, Kanuri boy, what do you know of Ifá? You think you can just take Ifá's name in vain? (p. 81)

ALABA uses "Yéèpàrìpà" above to mean that "an abomination has been committed by the SENIOR BOY for mentioning *Ifá* (which is a revered means of consultation and divination in Yoruba society). In this case, ALABA means to say that a boy as young as the SENIOR BOY should not use the expression "consult *Ifá*". The above is a specialised language specific primary interjection which probably has not been researched into before.

DAANIELEBO: (Looking down on the boy whose back is turned to him. Stops) That one is just a child. He's nothing.

FIGURE IN RED: Is no ordinary child. It's not even a child, it's his ànjònnú. With a broom. Anjonnu Olowo! This is beyond my powers o.

DAANIELEBO: Stop! You can't leave me alone here. Move one step and you are sacked.

FIGURE IN RED: I resign

DAANIELEBO: Security, protect your governor!

POLICEMA: (Picking himself up) Yessir. I'll radio for reinforcement. (Takes off at full speed).

DAANIELEBO: (Boy turns. Daani sees his face for the first time) Ànjònnú Olówó, the demon of the Rock! Yéèpàrìpà! (Dives headlong over the rear of the rock) (p. 145)

In the above excerpt, DAANIELEBO (an Executive Governor) and his security aides come to ALABA's house in order to forcefully take over the rock in front of his house with the belief that it contains something of real substance. When they get there, one of DAANIELEBO's security aides (FIGURE IN RED) notices a boy who unknown to him (FIGURE IN RED) and the POLICEMAN is ALABA's son. However, the boy has had his face painted and he is holding a broom with the intention of sweeping the front of the house. The fearful appearance of the boy coupled with the broom he is holding makes

the security aides believe that the boy is an *Àhjànnú* (elf or imp) whereupon they take to their heels leaving DAANIELEBO to take care of himself. When DAANIELEBO himself sees the boy's appearance, he utters *Yèèpàrìpà* believing that what he is looking at is *Àhjànnú Olówó*- the demon of the Rock he has come to take over. In Yoruba worldview, no "ordinary" person sees an *Àhjànnú* and survives. Hence, "*Yèèpàrìpà*" in the context is both emotive and informative. It passes across emotion of fear as well as giving the information that the utterer is in real trouble or danger of losing his life then or later because of something he has seen, done or heard.

"Yéé"

This is another language and culture specific interjection mainly used among the Yoruba people. It is a specialised emotive interjection. When somebody utters this interjection, it specifically carries the general meaning of "I am in trouble", "I am ruined", "I am finished", "this is really a sad occurrence", etc "*Yéé*" is different from "*Ye*" which merely expresses surprise or bewilderment. "*Yéé*" occurs once in our data.

SENIOR BOY: But that means we'll be late to school, sir.

PAINTER: (Really agitated) Ha, mo gbé. Supercharge will call it double delinquency and give me double punishment, lateness and failure to complete assignment.

ALABA: Supercharge? Who is that? (pupils splutter, stammer, look at each other) Oh-ho, so that's what you call your teacher. Supercharge.

PAINTER: Baba, please, don't tell him.

ALABA: Don't tell him? Why not?

BOTH: Baba please...in the name of God...ah, yéé, we are surely finished, etc, etc. (p. 72)

In the above, PAINTER and the SENIOR BOY mistakenly reveal the nickname they call their teacher, which is "supercharge" in the presence of ALABA who incidentally is a friend of TEACHER. When ALABA insists on telling him, both of them use the specialised emotive interjection "*yéé*" to mean that they are in trouble.

"Págá" and "Pagidari"

Apart from the above, other notable language specific interjections in Yoruba language and culture are "*págà*" and "*pagidari*". "*Págá*" generally, means that something unpleasant has happened (bad news). For example, if somebody dies, somebody misses a great opportunity, a game escapes from a hunter or escapes from his trap or snare, etc, the person that suffers the loss or the person that is affected may use the interjection "*págà*" (two syllables). In essence, "*págà*" captures a wide range of situations.

"*Pagidari*" is an interjection used only in a very restricted situation. It generally means somebody of importance, a weighty or a very influential person has died. When "*pagidari*" is uttered in Yorubaland, a competent speaker of the language will not ask "what has happened?" but rather "who has died?" In other words, "*pagidari*" is not a universal interjection. The full form of this interjection is "*pagidari igí dá*" (*pagidari a mighty tree has fallen*).

Conclusion

This paper discusses various communicative and emotive functions of two universal primary interjections which are "*Oh*" and "*Ah*" in the context of their usage. The work is significant in the sense that the text which serves as our source of data is written by a non-native speaker of the English language. This is an indication that "*Oh*" and "*Ah*" are universal interjections rather than English language specific.

Furthermore, for the simple fact that the interjections are made to perform different functions in context as revealed in the interactions of the character shows that the writer or author of the text for analysis is competent in the use of these universal interjections. The author has contributed to scholarship by identifying additional emotive or informative functions which "*Oh*" and "*Ah*" can perform in the context other than the ones identified by Olateju (2006), Hismanogalu (2010) and Nforbi et al (2016). In other words, we have discovered that "*Oh*" and "*Ah*" can convey emotive and informative

functions of desperation, disappointment or lack of interest and caution or warning which have probably not been identified in the literature before. However, the most important contribution of this paper to scholarship is in the analysis of the functions of “Haba”, “Yeeparipa”, “Yee”, “Paga” and “Pagidari” which are all language and culture specific. Apart from “Haba” which has its origin in Hausa language, all others are Yoruba language and culture specific. They are all informative interjections.

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