

A Pragmatic Study of Characters' Names in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not To Blame*

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Abstract

*Several studies have been carried out on Ola Rotimi's works using different literary and linguistic criticisms to the exclusion of the author's onomastic resources. This study is an attempt at filling this gap. The study takes an onomastic approach to the exploration of Ola Rotimi's *The gods are not to blame*. All the major characters' names in the text are given quantitative and qualitative analysis, based on the pragmatic principle of speech acts by Austin (1962). Thus, through the application of the theory to the characters' names, we may establish that rather than mere entertaining his reader/audience, the playwright, through his use of names, oftentimes prescribes, informs, asserts and predicts among others. Thus the study has, pragmatically proved the efficacy of the speech act theory that in saying something, we do something else (Austin, 1962). Furthermore, the study has demonstrated that the text possesses taxonomy of onomastic resources which can be classified as: the role names, real names and nicknames. The real names have the highest frequency of eleven (46%) among others. This therefore attests to the words of Izevbaye (1981) that fictional names are taken from the actual names in use and that names in African setting, are carefully constructed "in a semantico-syntactic sense to manifest specific meanings" (Oyeleye, 1985, p. 138).*

Keywords: Onomastics, Ola Rotimi, Speech Acts, Gods, Odewale

Introduction

Ola Rotimi is one of the few authors whose works have not enjoyed quantitative approach from linguistic-onomastic researchers. In fact, none, to the best of my knowledge, has ever approached Rotimi's *The gods are not to blame* from an onomastic (study and science of names) point of view. The present study is an attempt to fill this gap. The study adopts Austin's (1962) speech act theory as its major theoretical framework among others. This is because the underlining principle behind speech acts is that in saying something, we do something else. Given that words perform actions in this sense, contextually, a name which subsumes an utterance, is therefore performing certain action(s) in the universe of the text, *The gods are not to blame*.

A Synopsis of the Text

The gods are not to blame, a tragedy patterned after Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, has its setting in a Yoruba town of Kutuje. The land is being bedeviled by serious plagues. Everybody, including the king, begins to look for a solution to the problem. This prompts King Odewale to send Prince Aderopo to Ile-Ife in order to seek for divination from the Ifa Oracle. The Priest puts it succinctly, "We have sent Aderopo to Ile-Ife, the land of Orunmila, to ask the all-seeing god why we are in pain." (p. 12). Unfortunately, Aderopo returns and refuses to divulge the information received from Ile-Ife. King Odewale therefore decides to send for the Ifa Oracle diviner, Baba Fakunle from Oyo. On arrival, Baba Fakunle refuses to solve the riddle. This infuriates Odewale who feels that the diviner has teamed up with Aderopo, his (Odewale's) perceived enemy. The conflict between the duo of Odewale and Fakunle degenerates into physical assault which is a demonstration of hubris (i.e. hot temper) in the king.

From this point, the play metamorphoses into a flashback which eventually reveals Odewale's past as the accursed child who would kill his father and marry his mother. Having been caught in this web, Odewale realises that he has brought misfortune upon his people. He, therefore, blindfolds himself and abdicates the throne for an unknown destination while Queen Ojuola (Odewale's mother and wife) commits suicide.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework apt for the present study is the Speech Act theory which was propounded by the British Philosopher, J.L. Austin in *How to do things with words* (1962). According to Austin, words do not just occur in vacuum, they are used to perform certain action(s) like requesting, begging, commanding and naming. Initially, Austin recognizes both the constative and performative verbs. Constative verbs are used for making statements. Alternatively, performative verbs are used for performing actions and they can be verified contextually to know whether the conditions surrounding their utterances are felicitous or not.

Therefore, Austin proposes three acts within the general scope. These are; the locutionary act (i.e. the real utterance or writing), the illocutionary act (i.e. the function performed by the utterance/locution) and the perlocutionary act (i.e. the effect of the utterance on the listener).

Literature Review

Apart from Adeoye (1972), one of the pioneer approaches to proper naming by the Yoruba Africans is (Akinaso, 1980) who evokes the dichotomy between the Africans and Europeans over the issue of semantic relevance of proper names. This is with a view to deconstructing the argument put up by scholars such as Kempson (1977) who submits that "Proper names do not have senses. They are meaningless marks. They have denotation but not connotation" (Kempson, 1977, p.14). As observed by Akinaso (1980), European personal names are "lacking in semantic content" because they "do not give direct information about the event they commemorate" (Akinaso, 1980, p.301). He maintains that the Yoruba African personal names are elaborate in linguistic structure and have socio-cultural relevance. Based on the above, names in many African cultures are carefully constructed "in a semantico- syntactic sense to manifest specific meanings" (Oyeleye 1985, p.138; Oyeleye, 1991, p.16). The argument is relevant to the present study because our primary text (*The gods are not to blame*) is authored by an African of Yoruba descent and most of the characters' names meant for analysis are informed by the Yoruba lexico-semantic contexts.

Odebunmi (2008) examines the pragmatic functions of crisis-motivated proverbs in Ola Rotimi's *The gods are not to blame*. The study reveals that crisis-motivated proverbs, as deployed by the author, are both social and political, and are "characterized by praxis such as those of counselling, cautioning, challenging, veiling, persuading, prioritizing, encouraging, threatening and admitting" (Odebunmi, 2008). The study introduces another dimension into language teaching via the instrumentality of proverbs while the present work seeks to analyze language from the onomastic perspective. The work further differs from the present in theoretical framework. While it takes Mey's (2001) pragmatic acts to analyze proverbs in the text, we are adopting Austin's (1962) Speech act theory to analyze characters' names in the same text.

Odebode (2010) studies naming patterns during Yoruba wars from a sociolinguistic perspective. He discovers four naming systems. These are: naming due to- the cause of the war, the nature of the war, the leader of the war and the setting of the war. He contends that war related names among the Yoruba, do not just occur in a vacuum. They serve as instruments of memorability and historicity to "validate and perpetuate historical facts traceable to prolonged wars" (Odebode, 2010, p. 217). The study is related to the present research because it is based on names in Africa. But they are different in a number of ways. First, while the present study deals with (human) characters' names, the former deals with war-related names. In addition, the present study deals with a literary text, the former deals with historical accounts.

Powell and Karraker (2013) research on young adults' responses to infant names in the United States of America. They discover that adults with certain personality traits have preference for certain infant names, than their colleagues without such traits. Such individuals "may be more inclined than others to like, and perhaps select for their own infant, unusual or less popular names" (Powell and Karraker 2013, p.137). Furthermore, they contend that although infant anthroponyms do impact adults' perceptions, it is not as strong as physical appearance which seem to have a greater control. They maintain that a name, being the very first information that participants in a communicative encounter first learn about each other even before meeting one-on-one, might direct the course of relationship. Their research is commendable as it relates to timely incident(s) not only in the United States but also in Africa. However, while the study is based on generic naming in a real society, the present research focuses on literary onomastics by unraveling character's names in an African contact drama text.

Onomastic Contexts

It is insightful to note that most fictional names stem from real names because drama imitates realities. Therefore, scholars (Izevbaye 1981, p. 168; Dasylva 1999, p. 9; Ogunsiiji 2001, p. 197) have identified two major contexts that inform the naming art. They are the sociocultural and literary contexts. Among the Yoruba Africans, traditionally, a male child is christened on the ninth day and a female, on the seventh day. During the ceremony, a child is given an anthroponym (personal name) which indicates his birth circumstance(s), history and religion among others. The name further expresses the hope and aspiration of the name-givers. Thus naming takes place during christening ceremonies. However, the art, in a literary sense, involves the herculean task performed by an author in forming and developing characters as well as assigning roles to them.

As the name-bearer grows up, his/her character may fall short of the parents' expectation. Therefore, when a name-bearer falls short of his natal name, the society will interpret his character and give him a new name befitting his attributes. This new name, according to Izevbaye (1981, p. 168) is a "nickname". That is why the *Webster's Universal Dictionary and Thesaurus* (2003, p. 328) says a nickname is 'a substitute name, often descriptive, given in fun'. *The Chambers Dictionary* (2003, p. 106) also affirms that a nickname is 'a name given in contempt'. Similarly, characters in literary contexts that lose their real identities to official names are role performers or title-holders. This is why Izevbaye (1981, p. 168) finally submits that "whatever difference exists between literature and life can be explained as a difference of the contexts in which naming takes place".

Data Analysis

The names selected for our analysis have been classified as: the role names, real names (anthroponyms) and nicknames. Each of them is given an in-depth exposition based on the

principle of Speech Acts by Austin (1962). This is done in order to unravel their illocutionary significance.

Narrator

As the name suggests, this character introduces the play at the beginning (see prologue on page 3). He performs his role succinctly by giving the plot a background in order to aid the reader/audience's heuristics. His choice of words indicates the beginning of an action; thereby giving the play an expected introduction and narrativity. He speaks:

The struggles of man begins at birth
It is meet then that our play begin with
the birth of a child.
The place is the land of Kutuje.
A baby has just been born
to King Adetusa and his wife Ojuola,
the King and Queen of this land of Kutuje. (p. 3)

The playwright adopts the African oral narrative technique by introducing this character. It is a common style among the Yoruba Africans to have a narrator and a participating audience during evening story sessions particularly, the moonlit play. The name therefore presupposes that a play is in offing and it is expected to be narrated by somebody. Since this narrative role has been prescribed from the outset, we may submit that the illocutionary act of the name is prescribing.

King Adetusa

This character appears as Old Man in the flashback on page 46 of the play-text. He is attacked and eventually killed by Odewale on his farm for "digging up my [Odewale's] sweat!" (p. 45) and for mocking his tribe. Odewale speaks, "The Old Man should not have mocked my tribe. He called my tribe bush. That I cannot bear." (p. 50). The king's name is Adetusa, a Yoruba expression which denotes "crown is digging up holes." It should be noted that holes are mostly found in the bush and are homes to dangerous animals like snakes, scorpions and crabs. Meanwhile Odewale is referred to as a scorpion by Alaka on page 42 of the text. As a king, Adetusa does not walk alone. He has to be accompanied by his retinue of bodyguards. The latter were hypnotized with sleeping charm by Odewale (see page 47 of the text). Reminiscing on the incident, Odewale tells Alaka:

I went to my farm one morning. And what did I find?...
First this man... short, an old man. In his company, all
over the farm, people-all sorts of people, armed with hoes.
On my own farm. And what were they doing? **Digging up
my sweat! (p. 45, emphasis mine)**

From the foregoing, we may deduce that Adetusa lives up to his name-- a crown is digging up holes in the farm of a "scorpion." The illocutionary act of the name therefore is affirming/informing. The situation is felicitous enough because the king (accompanied by his bodyguards) is indeed found digging up holes in Odewale's farm. However, it should be recalled that the gods have foretold that if Odewale as an infant is not killed, he would live to kill his father (King Adetusa) and marry his mother (Queen Ojuola).

Queen Ojuola, Adetusa's wife

The name, Ojuola derives from the Yoruba saying, "Oju eni maa la a ri iyonu" (S/he who will be great will see troubles). Although the full rendition of the name is "Ojuolape" (The eyes of wealth are complete), the playwright probably clipped it to reflect the former. Initially, she and her husband (Adetusa) have been warned that unless they killed their weird child, he would grow to marry her and kill the king. To heed this warning, Gbonka, one of King Adetusa's bodyguards was asked to kill the baby. But the man handed the baby over to hunter Ogundele who later taught him the art of hunting. Later, the boy (Odewale) killed his father and married Ojuola. Their union was blessed with four incestuous children. This incident therefore plague the land of Kutuje. It also brings about the conflicts (Odewale versus Aderopo, Odewale versus Baba Fakunle and Odewale versus Alaka) in the play. The fact that she witnesses all these conflicts before realising eventually that her son is also her new husband partly complicates her tragic fate in the play and partly corroborates the fact that she lives up to her name. She therefore commits suicide in the end of the play. The illocutionary acts of the name are therefore predicting, informing and asserting. It forewarns that anyone who wants to see the truth will pass through travails.

King Odewale, successor to Adetusa

The name of this character is also a Yoruba expression which denotes the hunter comes home. As an evil child destined to kill his father and marry his mother, Odewale decides to change this fate by running away from his supposed home. He was warned against this act as follows:

VOICE: 'You have a curse on you son.'

ODEWALE: 'What kind of curse Old One?'

VOICE: 'You cannot run away from it, the gods have willed that you will kill your father and marry your mother!'.....

ODEWALE: 'What must I do then not to carry out this will of the gods?'

VOICE: 'Nothing. To run away would be foolish...Just stay where you are. Stay where you are... stay where you are...' (p.60)

But he thought that by running away, he would escape the gods' verdict. Unknown to him, the father he runs away, the closer he is to his destiny. He believes that "the world is struggle" (p.6). Thus, he met the people of Kutuje in conflict with the Ikolu men and assisted the former in defeating their enemies. Therefore, the Kutuje people "broke tradition and made me (**Odewale**), unasked King of Kutuje" (p.7, emphasis mine). He was given the name (Odewake) by hunter Ogundele who brings him home from the bush where he should have been sacrificed. As a hunter, he is belligerent and bellicose. He is hot tempered. He makes Baba Fakunle feel his sword while attempting to kill the seer on page 27 of the text. This made Baba Fakunle to retort, "Go on, touch me. Call up your raw anger, and in the blindness of it, strike me dead!" (pp.27-28). He is called scorpion by Alaka who says, "...tell him the Farmer wants to see the Scorpion!" (p.42).

He is referred to as a thief and a goat by Old Man on page 47 of the text. He proves his hunting background by confronting the Old Man and his three bodyguards simultaneously and defeating them. He equally recites a lot of incantations (see pages 47-49) which is characteristic of the Yoruba hunters. As a weapon man, he says, "Ogun...I have used your weapon, and I have killed a man." (p.49). He even threatens to kill Alaka when the latter reveals to him that Ogundele was not his real father on page 62 of the play-text. Eventually, he left his Ijekun-Yemoja for Kutuje after killing a man (who later turns out to be his father). Getting to Kutuje, he is enthroned as the new king and as customs demand, he must marry the old queen (his mother), thereby fulfilling his destiny. He speaks:

For eleven years now,
I, Odewale,
the only son of Ogundele,
have ruled Kutuje
and have taken for a wife,
as custom wishes,
Ojuola, the motherly Queen (p.7)

The locution, the hunter has come home, therefore, has an illocutionary act of informing. Notice that hunter in this sense indicates the belligerent child who should not have been allowed to live.

Aderopo, son of Adetusa and Ojuola

As his name suggests, Aderopo (crown replaces) is expected to replace the tragic King Odewale who abdicates the throne for an unknown destination. Aderopo was born after Odewale to King Adetusa and Queen Ojuola. He is named so based on the Yoruba belief in reincarnation and that when you lose a child, another one will definitely reincarnate to replace the lost one, hence the illocutionary act of informing underlining the name. It should be recalled that there has been an order from the royal family to kill the first child (Odewale). Therefore, it is with the

hope that the former child is dead that Aderopo was born and so named. Narrator captures the situation with the following extract from the text:

NARRATOR:...Priest bears boy to Gbonka
the king's special messenger,
and orders him to go into the bush
with the little boy to the evil grove...
But Obatala, God of creation
has a way of consoling the distressed.
Two years later,
**King Adetusa and his wife Ojuola
have another son, Aderopo,
to fill the nothingness left behind
by the first.** (pp.3-4 emphasis mine)

Notice the contrast in the two names: Odewale and Aderopo. The former was given the name by hunter Ogundele who picked him up from the bush. Thus he was named "a hunter has come home." The home meant here was initially that of the Ogundeles. However, destiny had it that the child will eventually come to his original royal home. Consequently, Odewale's name reflects hunting profession, having lost his identity to circumstance surrounding his birth. It was in a bid to resolve his conflict of lost identity that he has to step upon many toes in the play. On the other hand, Aderopo's name reflects royalty because he was born, named and raised in Kutuje Palace. This is why he is refined in his approach to issues, particularly, that of unraveling the cause of the plague in Kutuje and the killer of the former king. When he arrives from Ile-Ife, he refuses to talk to King Odewale because he (Aderopo) has already known that the king is the culprit. The following lines from the text explicates the contrast between the two men:

ODEWALE: My people, I beg of you, plead with him, or
I shall lose my temper soon!...
OJUOLA: Pray, son, tell us the word from Ifa. No matter
how bad it is, we are ready to hear it.... To remain
silent is to make light of the troubles in the land.
ADEROPO: I am not making light of them, Mother. It is that
the word is hard that must be said. (p. 20)

From the conversation, we may establish that names function as textual and social DNA (Odebode, 2010, p. 168) to showcase the bearers' traits, backgrounds, professions, instincts, religions and history among others. They carry an incredible amount of discursive information which elucidates their meanings in African socio-cultural contexts. Naming transcends ordinary labelling or identification. Corroborating this, Ogunsiji (2001) points out that names do not only identify people; they "historicize, socialize, spiritualize and influence people psychologically" (Ogunsiji 2001, p.32).

Ogun Priest

This is a role name. Characters in literary contexts that lose their real identities to official names are role performers or title-holders (Izevbaye 1981, p. 168; Dasylva 1999, p.9; Ogunsiji 2001, p. 197). For instance, First Chief, Second Chief, Third Chief and Royal Bard in this play are all role names since their real names are concealed within the context of the play. Although Odewale refers to this character as Baba Ogunsomo (p.71), we are left in doubt as to whether the name belongs to him or his child. This is so because it is customary for the Yoruba to refer to someone by the name of his child as a marker of deference. But granted that he responds to the king's call on page 71 by answering "Yes, my lord" (p.71), we may analyse the name Ogunsomo as a contraction of the Yoruba expression "Ogun se omo" meaning, the god of iron has designed or produced a child. The speech act undertone of the name will thus be informing. However, since the playwright has chosen to use the role name, Ogun Priest, we may subject our further analysis to the role (s) being performed by the bearer in the context of the play. As a priest, it was his duty to perform certain purification rites. It is also part of his duty as an ogun priest to be involved in anything that has to do with the use of iron weapons. This is why he was the one that actually prepares Odewale as an evil child for sacrifice as follows:

NARRATOR: Priest of Ogun ties boy's feet
with a string of cowries meaning
sacrifice to the gods who have sent
boy down to this earth (p.3)

As Ogun priest, he alludes to fresh wine which is one of the ingredients used in sacrifice to Ogun on page 19 of the text. He is also the one that spearheads the sending of Aderopo to Ile-Ife for Ifa divination on the problem in Kutuje (see page 12). His role here thus indicates that there is harmony among African Yoruba deities. For instance, the gods wish Odewale dead, Obatala provides Aderopo. Ogun Priest could not handle divination. His is only execution, hence Aderopo is sent to Ile-Ife. Later, Baba Fakunle (the soothsayer) has to be brought from Oyo. Finally, Ogun Priest is the first person to be summoned among the chiefs present when Odewale is giving his final words. The king enjoins the Priest and other chiefs to give his mother/wife a befitting burial. Odewale speaks: "Pray, give her--my wife--my mother--pray give her a burial of honour." (p.71). From this quotation, we may submit that another major role of the Priest is to perform the traditional burial rites. Due to the fact that his roles have been prescribed, the illocutionary act of the role name therefore is prescribing.

Baba Fakunle, a soothsayer

Fakunle is another Yoruba expression which denotes the Ifa Oracle fills my house. It's combination with the word "Baba" (Old Man) in this context is significant to our analysis. It indicates that the bearer is a very old man. He speaks to Odewale's bodyguards, "Handle me gently, I pray you, for I am full of years." As evident in the text, Baba Fakunle is even being led

by a boy. But as the saying goes, old age is synonymous with wisdom, the character seems to be the last hope of the Kutujes during their crisis. This is why the old man is sent for. Although blind, Baba Fakunle has a kind of "inner eyes" as a soothsayer. Thus he must have gained a lot of experience from the Ifa-Oracle that has filled his whole entity with wisdom and discretion. Odewale attests to this when he says:

Baba Fakunle,
Oldest and most honoured
of all Seers
in this world,
Baba Fakunle,
blind but all knowing: (p.25)

Furthermore, First Chief also corroborates the wisdom of Fakunle and the fact that he is being guided by god. He posits: "Aged keeper of all secrets known only to the god who is your master, you the watchman, Baba Fakunle, it is you we greet" (p. 26). As a corollary, Second Chief also affirms that Fakunle has strange powers as follows: "We beg of you, Old One, help us with your strange powers" (p.26). Fakunle lives up to his name because he scarcely allows them to stop praising him before cutting in to say that he smells the truth as he comes to the land. He therefore warns Odewale not to come near him and he orders his boy to lead him home away from the palace (p.27). He demonstrates his wisdom by refusing to talk to the king. But when the king forces words from him, he calls him bedsharer. He warns Odewale wisely as follows:

...You force words from me again you...you bedsharer!
...King Odewale, King of Kutuje, go sit down in private
and think deep before darkness covers you up...think...
think...think! (p.29).

In the normal characteristics of an African seer, he warns Odewale proverbially to think three times. He is fearless and he delivers his message succinctly. However, the hubris (hot temper) in Odewale would not allow him to listen to the warning of the old man. From the foregoing, we may infer that the name with the bearer's actions is felicitous enough to have earned it an illocutionary act of asserting.

First Chief, Second Chief, Third Chief

These are other groups of role namees. The playwright probably introduces them to corroborate the Yoruba saying that "Oba kii pe meji l'aafin, ijoye le pe meta l'aafin." This means there cannot be two kings in a palace, but there can be three chiefs in a palace. The major role of the chiefs is to serve as advisers and supporters to the king just as the chiefs in our text have done in different contexts in the play. For instance when the townspeople are complaining about deaths and plagues in the land, the First Chief tries to calm them while announcing the presence of the king. But this is greeted with an insult from First Citizen. The three chiefs are so shocked

that the three of them retort "Aha!" simultaneously (see page 9). Subsequently, Second Chief announces to the people that, "We have sent for Baba Fakunle, the greatest of all medicine men in this world. He will be here soon." (p.12). First Chief reinforces this by asking the people rhetorically, "Which of you knows where Aderopo is now?" (p.12). Because the chiefs are loyal to their supportive role prescription to the king in the play context, we may submit that the illocutionary act of the name(s) is prescribing. Finally, chiefs enthrone and invest a king (see page 7). They are also involved in the burial rites of a king or queen (see page 71).

Iya Aburo, a mad woman

This nickname stems from the Yoruba expression "E je ki a pe were ni oko iyawo, ki o le je ki a ri ile gbe," meaning let us call the madman a bridegroom in order to have peace. The Yoruba have a way of addressing people in different circumstances. This is why this character is given this name "iya aburo" which denotes the mother of the younger one. Such names are also used for strangers in Yorubaland. The speech act of the name is thus deceiving/mocking.

Adewale, Adebisi, Oyeyemi, Adeyinka, royal children

These are flat characters. They are introduced by the author for us to know the names and number of the incestuous children Odewale has from Ojuola. Their names are however significant because they indicate royalty unlike their father's name which indicates hunting. Adewale means the crown has come home. His name is parallel to his father's. Ironically, this could have been Odewale's real name provided he was born spotless. Adebisi denotes another crown has been added here. Oyeyemi means honour or crown befits me. Adeyinka is a Yoruba expression for crown surrounds me. All the names have informing as their illocutionary acts.

Akilapa, Bokini, Labata, Agidi, royal bodyguards

These are a set of nicknames given to royal bodyguards in our play. Akilapa is just describing the bearer as someone who has thick and muscular hands. Bokini (or Borokini) is a description of a wealthy and heavily built man. Labata denotes in the mud. The name is probably describing a man who is agile and who cannot be hindered by the gully or mud. Agidi denotes stubbornness. So, the bearer, being a bodyguard must have been somebody who is stern and stubborn in nature. The illocutionary act underlining the names is describing/asserting. The bearers live up to their nicknames by their readiness to run to Ilorin (later changed to Ipetu) at the request of King Odewale in search of Gbonka, the man who came to report King Adetusa's death in the following exchange:

ODEWALE: Where is the man who came to report his death?

OJUOLA:...The last I heard was that he live in Ilorin, far, far, away.

ODEWALE: I want him here!

OJUOLA: But my lord Ilorin is a far-

ODEWALE: Now! I must see him before I sleep! [calling]
Agidi! Labata! Akilapa!...
You leave for Ilorin now...
And you must come back before the moon stands
straight in the sky
BODYGUARDS: Ah! (p.55)

When the journey is eventually changed to Ipetu where Gbonka now lives, the king says, "I want him here. Now!" and the trio of Agidi, Akilapa and Labata respond, "Very well, your highness" (p. 56) while they rush out to produce Gbonka. Odewale is still busy talking to Alaka on the same spot when Akilapa enters and says, "My lord, we've come back from Ipetu" (p.62). This action is a demonstration of agility and athletic prowess possessed by the bodyguards which, consequently, is a confirmation of their nicknames.

Abero, Odewale's second wife

Like Aderopo, Abero is a name which indicates reincarnation. It is a Yoruba expression that affirms that the bearer is being begged to stay alive. The character is flat as she rarely appears in the play. The playwright introduces her to showcase the patriarchal and polygamous system of marriage, particularly, among the kings and chiefs in Yoruba land. The speech act of the name is pleading.

Alaka, Odewale's boyhood friend

This Yoruba name "oni aka" (Alaka for short) is an assertion which denotes the owner of the barn/vault. It is borne mostly by rich farmers and hunters as a marker of deference. The name-giver (probably the parent) has been able to establish a settlement, hence, he chooses to demonstrate this in the name given to his child. The bearer in our text attests to this in the following conversation between him and Abero:

ABERO: The king asks what is your name?
ALAKA: Go back to him, tell him the Farmer
wants to see the Scorpion! (p. 42)

It should be noted that Alaka refers to himself as the farmer and Odewale as the Scorpion in the extract above. The subsequent exchange between the two men clarifies the argument better:

ALAKA: Scorpion! My child, Scorpion!
ODEWALE:...A-ah! Alaka, son of Odediran! (p.43)

Apart from being a farmer, Alaka further confirms that he is a hunter when he is explaining the circumstance surrounding Odewale's ancestry on page 63 of the text. He speaks: "Hunting. I was hunting with my master Ogundele" (p.63). Eventually, he also confirms Odewale's ancestry

which has been a bone of contention to the king and his subjects. Based on the above, we may establish that the illocutionary act of the name is asserting/confirming.

Royal Bard

This is another role name. It prescribes the bearer's profession as his name is concealed in the play, hence an illocutionary act of prescribing underlining it. In the traditional African society, the Royal Bard is needed to entertain guests and praise the king. at times, he serves as the king's "alarm clock" by being the first person to wake him up with his songs of praise. The character performs his role by praising King Odewale thus:

ROYAL BARD: There are kings and there are kings.
King is greater than King,
It is not changing into the lion that is hard,
it is getting the tail of a lion,
Odewale, King, son
of Ogundele,
You will last long to rule us:
kolanut lasts long in the mouths
of them who value it! (p.7)

Townpeople, Drummers

These are other sets of flat characters who are role performers. Their anthroponyms (personal names) are concealed from the reader/audience. Since our primary text has to do with the issue of royalty, it is necessary we have townpeople and drummers. This is based on the Yoruba proverb that "ilu kii wa, ki o ma ni olo" (there cannot be a town without a ruler) and "orin ni siwaju ote" (songs precede intrigues). Thus, as we have a king, we also have the subjects who are referred to as : First Citizen, Second Citizen, Third Citizen, Fourth Citizen; First Woman, Second Woman, Third Woman, Iya Aburo and Townpeople (see pages 9-15) in the universe of the text. Apart from the palace where drummers are mostly found, the Yoruba also believe that drummers and musicians add joy to the society, hence they are called "amuludun" (celebrities or those who spices the society with life and fun). There are also families of professional drummers. These are identified with names such as Ayangbemi (drumming rewards me), Ayantayo (drumming worths being celebrated), Ayanyemi (drumming befits me). Since Townpeople and Drummers are designed as role names in this context, their illocutionary undertone is prescribing.

Summary

Our analysis so far, can be summarized as follows: Twenty-four names, taken from the primary text (*The gods are not to blame*), are analyzed. The names are divided into three: role

names, real names and nicknames. The result is diagrammatically represented with Table 1 as follows:

Table 1: A Table Indicating Naming Typology

Role Names	Real Names	Nicknames
Narrator	Adetusa	Iya Aburo
Ogun Priest	Ojuola	Akilapa
First Chief	Odewale	Bokini
Second Chief	Aderopo	Labata
Third Chief	Baba Fakunle	Agidi
Royal Bard	Abero	
Townsppeople	Alaka	
Drummers	Adewale	
	Adebisi	
	Oyeyemi	
	Adeyinka	
Total: 8	Total:11	Total:5

From Table 1, we may establish that out of the twenty-four names studied, eight are role names, eleven, anthroponyms or real names and five, nicknames. Furthermore, we attempt a statistical analysis the names via a frequency and percentage distribution represented in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Frequency and Percentage of Names

Name Type	Frequency	Percentage
Role Names	8	33
Real Names	11	46
Nick Names	5	21
Total	24	100

Table 2 indicates that the frequency of the role names studied is eight. This translates to 33%; real names attract eleven in frequency (an indication of 46%) and nicknames have five (21%). The situation is captured with a line chart in Fig. 1 below:

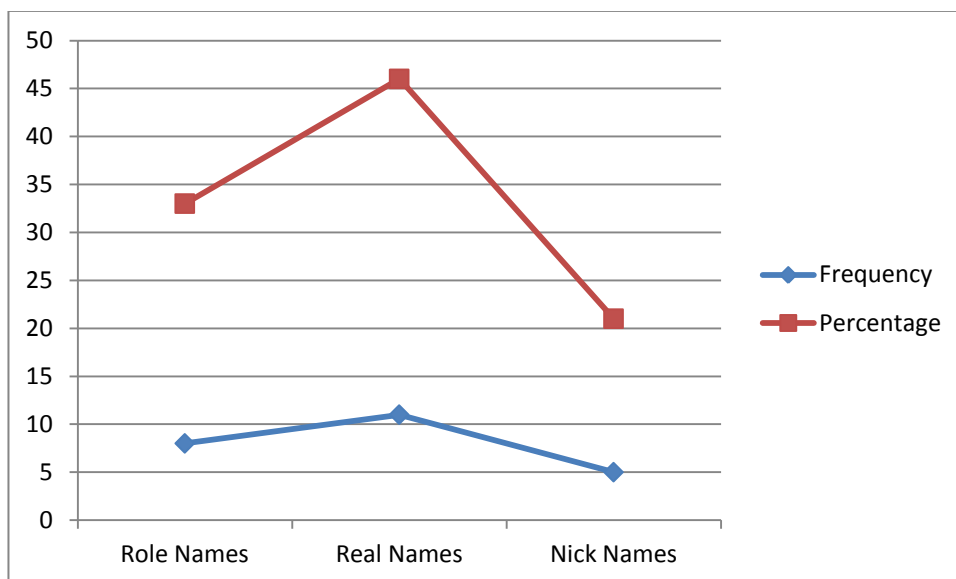


Fig. 1: A line chart showing percentage and frequency of names

From Fig. 1, it should be noted that the red line which appears on top (over the blue line), indicates percentage; while the blue line stands for frequency. Furthermore, an attempt is made at analysing the statistical distribution of the illocutionary acts inherent in the names. The result is represented in Table 3 as follows:

Table 3: Illocutionary Acts' Distribution

Name	Illocutionary Act
Narrator	Prescribing
King Adetusa	Affirming/Informing
Queen Ojuola	Predicting/Informing/Asserting
King Odewale	Informing
Aderopo	Informing
Ogun Priest	Prescribing
Baba Fakunle	Asserting
First Chief	Prescribing
Second Chief	Prescribing
Third Chief	Prescribing
Iya Aburo	Eulogising/Deceiving
Adewale	Informing
Adebisi	Informing
Oyeyemi	Informing
Adeyinka	Informing

Akilapa	Describing/Asserting
Bokini	Describing/Asserting
Labata	Describing/Asserting
Agidi	Describing/Asserting
Abero	Pleading
Alaka	Asserting/Confirming
Royal Bard	Prescribing
Townspeople	Prescribing
Drummers	Prescribing

Table 3 showcases the names and their attendant illocutionary acts in the order in which they appear in our data analysis. The result is further dissected into frequency and percentage distribution of illocutionary acts represented in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Frequency and Percentage of Illocutionary Acts

Illocutionary Act	Frequency	Percentage
Prescribing	8	33.33
Affirming	1	4.16
Predicting	1	4.16
Informing	6	25
Asserting	5	20.83
Deceiving	1	4.16
Pleading	1	4.16
Confirming	1	4.16
Total	24	100

Table 4 indicates the eight major illocutionary acts studied. It should be noted that we have cases of few names attracting more than one illocutionary acts (e.g. King Adetusa, Queen Ojuola, Alaka) in our data analysis. However, in such situations, the principal illocutionary act is selected. Therefore, the eight illocutionary acts in Table 4 are: prescribing, which has a frequency of eight (33.33%); affirming, predicting, deceiving, pleading and confirming which have one frequency (4.16%) each; informing which attracts a frequency of six (25%) and asserting which, having appeared five times can be ascribed a frequency of five (20.83%). This analysis is represented with a line chart in Fig. 2 as follows:

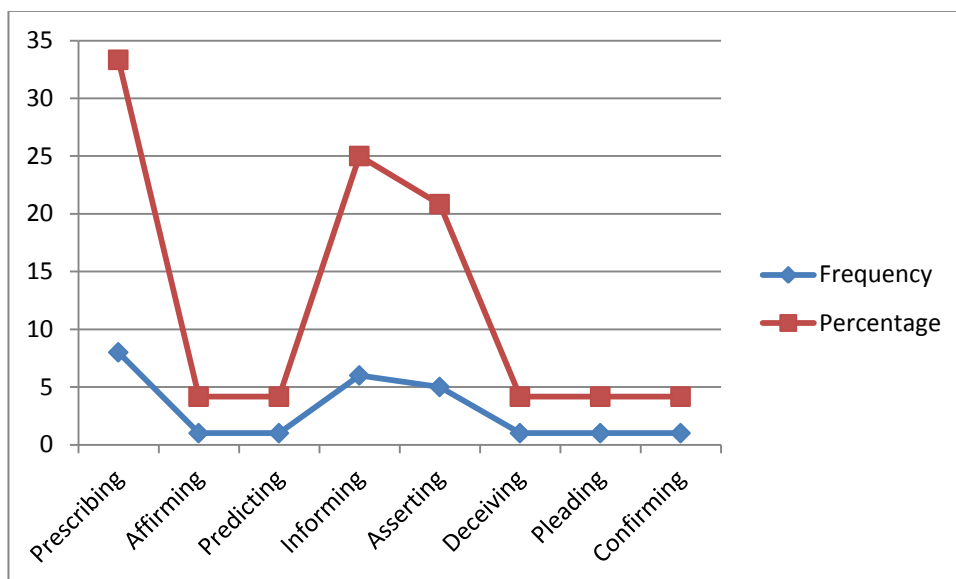


Fig. 2: A line chart indicating frequency and percentage of illocutionary acts

As shown in Table 4 and Fig.2, the analysis indicates that the illocutionary act with the highest percentage (33.33%) is prescribing. It is followed by informing (25%). Asserting comes third (20.83%). Others have 4.16% respectively. Therefore, we may establish that the playwright, as the master namer, is prescribing roles for his characters in the universe of the text. The sole purpose of this character formation is to inform the reader/audience oftentimes in an assertive way, hence, the preponderance of the informing and assertive illocutionary acts.

Conclusion

This study has pragmatically proved the efficacy of the speech act theory that in saying something, we do something else (Austin, 1962). Thus, through the application of the theory to the different names deployed in *The gods are not to blame*, we may establish that rather than mere entertaining his reader/audience, the literary artist, Ola Rotimi, through his use of names, oftentimes prescribes, informs, asserts and predicts among others. Furthermore, the study has demonstrated that the text possesses a taxonomy of onomastic resources which can be classified as: the role names, real names and nicknames. The real names have the highest frequency of eleven (46%) among others. This therefore attests to the words of Izevbaye (1981) that fictional names are taken from the actual names in use and that names in African setting, are carefully constructed "in a semantico-syntactic sense to manifest specific meanings" (Oyeleye, 1985, p. 138).

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