
The Language of Satire in Nigerian Politics: A Study of the Syntactic Parameters in Wale Okediran's *Tenants of the House*

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Abstract

In every society, language serves as the means of human communication and interaction for establishing and maintaining social relationships. Language is the literary and linguistic tool which literary artists deploy for the conveyance of their individual artistic visions and sensibilities in literature. Political corruption is the major cause of the socio-political problems in Nigeria. The contemporary Nigerian literary artists deploy the language of satire as a means of exposing the socio-political problems responsible for poverty and underdevelopment in Nigeria. Moreover, they advance the measures to proffer lasting solutions to the socio-political problems, in order to usher in growth and development. Nigerian political leaders are exploitative and corrupt. They are not only exploiting Nigerians, but have plunged them into abject poverty and hardship through corrupt practices and bad governance. Unlike what obtains in many developed countries, politics in Nigeria like in most African countries is characterized by corrupt practices due to avarice and greed associated with political leadership. Employing content analysis, this article examines Wale Okediran's satirical use of the language of politics in *Tenants of the House* for aesthetic as well as communicative purposes.

Keywords: Language, Nigerian politics, Satire, Wale Okediran, Corruption, *Tenants of the House*

Introduction

Generally, literary artists deploy language as a literary tool to convey their artistic visions in literature. The artists draw upon

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their personal experiences in the society to reflect the lives of the people in their literary works through language. Osunkentan affirms that literature is the window, through which the writer projects into the totality of human experiences (313). There is, therefore, a close and complex relationship between literature, language and society. Every writer deploys language resources in a manner that his or her messages are best conveyed. In this regard, Widdowson claims that there is always a struggle by the creative writer to devise language patterns that will convey his or her individual artistic vision (15). Syntax involves the way words are arranged in sentences and every language has its way of word ordering. Chomsky defines syntax as the study of the principles and processes by which sentences are constructed in particular languages (1). A writer utilizes syntax in fashioning out his or her works according to his or her message.

Satirical language is a literary tool through which literary artists expose and condemn the vices in the society aimed at correction and engendering positive changes, for a better society and development. Adeoti and Elegbeleye assert that satire is an acceptable expression of anxiety felt by the satirist at the encounter of deviation from norms and a means of coping with it (310). The contemporary Nigerian artists such as Wale Okediran, Joseph Edoki, Bamdele Thomas, Chimamanda Adichie, among others, employ the language of satire in literature, to address the socio-political problems in Nigeria. They advance suggestions aimed at proffering solutions to the problems in order to promote growth and development in the country. This accounts for the relevance of literature and the literary artists to every society.

This article examines how Wale Okediran deploys the language of political discourse replete with political features satirically in *Tenants of the House* to expose political corruption and the atrocities of Nigerian political leaders. In many of his literary works, Okediran mirrors and exposes the ills in the different areas of the Nigerian society. As a former member of the House of Representatives in Nigeria between 2003 and 2007, he portrays in *Tenants of the House*, the vices in Nigerian politics based on his personal experiences. The major thematic

preoccupations of *Tenants of the House* are corruption in politics, tenure prolongation, greed, betrayal, deception, retributive justice and political awareness. Wale Okediran displays a linguistic and stylistic craftsmanship in his various texts, matching different situations with appropriate language codes to convey his artistic visions. In *Tenants of the House*, the novel under study, he deploys the language of politics which is specifically for political discourse. It is characterized by peculiar features subsuming propaganda, persuasion, as well as deception structured to X-ray the Nigerian political system. The ability of a writer to deploy appropriate linguistic features to convey his or her artistic visions in literary texts makes him or her good writer. Therefore, the need for appropriateness in language use to serve different purposes in texts cannot be over emphasized. This gives credence to the assertion of David Crystal and David Derek that there are appropriate linguistic manners for the different types of situations in which language is used (4).

Tenants of the House is about Nigerian politics generally regarded as a "dirty game". In the text, Okediran paints an ugly picture of Nigerian politics which is characterized by diverse forms of corrupt practices all of which are inimical to the progress of democracy and the development of the country. No wonder then that Nigeria, formerly acclaimed "The Giant of Africa" has nothing to show for its acclaimed greatness. Okediran exposes and ridicules the corrupt Nigerian political leaders, the perpetrators of political vices, corruption and bad governance. Since the novel satirizes the ills in Nigerian politics and advances suggestions on the way forward, it can possibly prick the consciences of political leaders in Nigeria in particular and African corrupt politicians in general, thereby salvaging African politics. Moreover, as a linguistic approach to the study of a literary text, this article would serve as a springboard for further studies in the linguistic analysis of African literary texts.

A Syntactic Analysis of *Tenants of the House*

Although, the language of a literary text is studied at the graphological, phonological, syntactic and lexico-semantic levels, this article is limited to the study of the significant syntactic

features in the text and their artistic functions. Halliday asserts that syntax weaves into a single fabric the different threads of meaning that derive from the variety of linguistic functions (346). It forms the root of the novelist's creative productions. We begin the study of the language of political discourse in the novel under study with the analysis of the functional sentence types deployed by Okediran to convey his artistic visions. In the course of this discussion, the characteristic features of the language of politics, and how they are deployed to convey meanings and messages are highlighted and explicated. This study hinges on the Neo Firthian systemic model of grammar for its analysis.

Functional Sentence Types

Declarative Sentences

Quirk sees a declarative sentence as a sentence with a compulsory subject preceding a verb (386). Declarative sentences are deployed to convey information. Below are some instances where Okediran deploys declarative sentences in the text for communicative purposes.

The road here was hard. To get my nomination confirmed at the constituency level had been a fierce struggle. I had to cough up half my annual income for the nomination but it was not enough. (3-4)

Elizabeth had told me what to do to win future elections. "Fertilizer," she whispered to me urgently... Hugh! Loads of fertilizer is what you North need. Money, money, money is the fertilizer of politics. Sam, don't be a small boy... "How many Reps make it back? Only two out of ten. Sam, Sam, Sam, and how many times did I call you? You want to make it back?"

The sentences above are a few instances of Okediran's deployment of declarative sentences, which serve communicative functions to convey his artistic visions in the novel. He vividly paints an ugly picture of the Nigerian political system, exposing and ridiculing the corrupt Nigerian political leaders and their nefarious activities. With the declarative sentence in samples 1 and 2, the author portrays the role money plays in Nigerian politics. To get nominated at the primaries or elected into any political position at the constituencies or the various levels of government in Nigeria requires huge sums of money. Therefore, only the rich can afford political positions. For instance, in extract 1, Hon. Samalu representing Kaduna State in the Federal House of Representatives states that he has to pay the sum of half a million naira, to get his nomination confirmed at the constituency level. Moreover, votes are cast for the highest bidders during elections. The implication is that such political leaders who spend so much money during elections are bound to recover their money by all means when they eventually occupy political positions. They resort to looting the treasury and siphoning public funds and constituency allowances to the detriment of the citizens. The consequences of this trend are inimical to growth and development of any society, and must be checked.

The irony of the place of money in Nigerian politics is that the patriotic Nigerians with the interest of the country at heart, who would have performed well in government for the growth and development of the nation, are denied the opportunity to occupy political positions. The reason is that they cannot afford to buy their way through financially. In Nigeria, political leaders do not play politics to serve the people, but for the selfish interest of amassing wealth. That is why they are never committed to the people. The implication of the corrupt practices in government is that Nigeria has remained underdeveloped and the people are subjected to poverty and hardship. In X-raying the Nigerian politics, Okediran portrays the neglect of the rule of law and due process in taking important decisions on issues of national interest. He condemns in totality the incessant impeachments of political leaders in Nigeria without concrete evidence and due process. He lampoons the corrupt leaders who conspire to impeach others,

especially those of the opposition parties. As prevalent in Nigerian politics from experiences over the years, the corrupt leaders plant their stooges in important political positions for their selfish interests. Cases abound in Nigeria where Presidents, Governors and even Local Government Chairmen influence appointments into positions. The few members of the opposition parties who occupy important positions are subjected to victimization. In the novel, President Oneya, the Nigerian President tries to plant a stooge that he can manipulate as the Speaker of the House of representative, in order to actualize his nefarious activities in office. To achieve his aim, he conspires with some dubious members of the House such as Hons. Winike, Elizabeth, Kasali among others, as conveyed in the declarative constructions below.

While some members such as Hon. Kasali suggested that we could go ahead and fabricate some ~~sins~~ against the Speaker, Hon. Winike observed that the ~~term~~ found guilty of acts inimical to the interest of the House in the constitutional provision for the impeachment was enough cover for us. (41)

She told me, ~~we~~ have flushed out Yaya. It's just a matter of time. His replacement ~~is~~ this handsome man. He will take care of us. ~~There~~ are powerful forces behind us. The President, Sam, The President is behind us. ~~(10- 11)~~

However, I reminded the meeting that we had no concrete evidence against the speaker to warrant his impeachment. ~~Don't~~ forget that that Section 5 subsections (1) and (3) of the constitution is clear on the conditions that must be met before a speaker can be impeached. ~~(40)~~

House in extract 3, they are bent on impeaching Speaker Yaya. In these excerpts, Okediran ridicules Nigerian corrupt leaders, and clearly paints a clear picture of Nigerian politics generally regarded

as a dirty game. However, he calls on Nigerians to rise up and resist any corrupt government and all forms of oppression, deploying persuasion, and an important feature of the language of politics put into use in the excerpts below. The Deputy Speaker manipulates and convinces the demonstrators, especially the youths invited to demonstrate against the impeachment plan. He highlights the reasons why the President's attempt to impeach the duly elected Speaker should be resisted at all cost saying:

...what we are witnessing in our own parliament is of great concern to all. We call ourselves giants of Africa but what we are doing to ourselves in the name of democracy is, to say the least degrading. The tragedy of it all is that our President, who is supposed to be an impartial umpire in the whole situation, has chosen to take sides.
(104-105)

... This is in pursuit of his selfish interests. The President has personally taken over the attempt to sack the speaker illegally. This is where you come in. You are now the only people who can save the country from ignominious descent into chaos and instability. You alone can lead the country in the march to the promise land of peace and prosperity. Ladies and gentlemen, your finest hour has come. You dare not fail, the whole world is watching and Nigeria is waiting...
(106)

In above samples, the deputy Speaker deploys persuasive language in his speech. He manipulates, convinces and moves into action the demonstrators, especially the youths invited to demonstrate against the impeachment plan against the duly elected Speaker. Highlighting the reasons why the President's selfish plan must be resisted at all cost, he succeeds in inciting them against the

President and his cohorts. In these excerpt, the author encourages Nigerian youths, emphasizing the fact that as the leaders of tomorrow they should stand up to their responsibilities, and resist any acts capable of disrupting Nigerian democracy. Moreover, he admonishes Nigerian political leaders to give democracy a chance to survive for the interest of the general public and national development.

Deploying declarative sentences with their informative and assertive functions, Okediran also exemplifies how the language of politics can be put to manipulative use by politicians. We observe this in President Oneya's speeches in the excerpts below. The author deploys this to portray deception, characteristic of Nigerian politics and the corrupt leaders. Let us examine the following excerpts.

You see, many people are blind to the fact that our democracy is...is...like a premature baby. It needs intensive care, incubation, nurturing .(68)

...For a strong democracy ...continuity is the word... Rather than change the current government, the position of many Nigerians is that, we good people should continue the good works for a good four more years. We shall be in office for another four years. (139)

In these samples, President Oneya deceitfully and indirectly introduces to the Speaker his plan to remain in office for additional four year tenure as the President of the country. He tries to convince the Speaker of the need for the continuity of his administration since according him it would give him the opportunity to execute his party's manifesto. In this extract, the author utilizes the informative nature of the declarative constructions to ridicule and condemn the corrupt Nigerian leaders, and portray their deceitful, greedy and avaricious characters. The President's reason for the proposed tenure

prolongation is deceitful. It is only an attempt to further enrich himself and his cohorts; there is no guarantee that the programmes his administration could not execute in his two tenures in office would be executed within an additional tenure. The President further ridicules himself in the following extract, saying:

... I also want you to know, my dear Speaker that we shall all be beneficiaries of the continuity agenda if it sails through (139-140)

In this excerpt, Okediran depicts the desire of African leaders to plant themselves as life Presidents in office to continually amass wealth. This is an ugly trend in Nigerian/African politics, borne out of greed and materialism that must be addressed and eradicated to move democracy forward.

Moreover, the author exposes and condemns in the novel under investigation the atrocities in Nigerian Houses of Assembly, the Federal House of Representatives and the Senate where corruption, deception, betrayal and lies are prevalent. For instance, the Speaker confirms the acts of deception and lies in Nigerian politics when he asserts that there is no truth in Nigerian politics, but only compromise. This is in response to Hon. Samuel Bakura's question whether he wants to know the truth about the tenure prolongation Bill. Acts of deceit abound in Nigerian politics. For instance, during campaigns prior to elections into the different political positions, Nigerian politicians make lots of promises to the electorates whose hopes they dashed as soon as they occupy political positions, because such promises are never fulfilled. Rather, the citizens are plunged into more problems by the same political leaders they vote into political position due to the greed and corruption prevalent in Nigerian politics. Little wonder then that the country has remained underdeveloped despite the abundance of petroleum, the most valuable mineral that has led to the development of other oil producing countries of the world.

However, Okediran expresses hope in African democracy in the text deploying declarative sentences. He commends the efforts of the patriotic legislators in the Houses of Assembly, Representatives and the Senate, especially Hon. Samalu for their patriotism. Hon. Samalu gives the idea of passing a bill geared towards resolving the incessant perennial conflicts between the Kachia farmers and the Fulani cattle rearers in Northern Nigeria. Despite the people's loss of faith in the deceitful and corrupt political leaders, and initial suspicion of Hon. Bakura's motives as stated in the excerpt below, they become excited by Hon. Samalu's patriotic gesture. In the words of Hon. Bakura:

The Fulanis surveyed me warily, answered my questioned tersely and held their bodies rigidly. They saw me as a stranger and wondered at my motives. But, when my colleague, Hon. Baba Muhammed, a Fulani, came and talked to them, they warm to me. They thanked me for the sponsorship of a bill to put an end to their clashes with the farmers. The meeting was an eye-opener. I had not guessed the Fulani was so hard done by. They were a people beset with troubles and oppressed by the authorities. Little wonder they so aggressive. (150)

The farmers, elated that their dire plight had finally come to the fore hunter of legislative activity, promised to attend the event in large number. (141)

It is important to state here that the initiative of Hon. Samalu is a step in the right direction towards proffering solutions to the nagging problem of perennial conflicts in Northern Nigeria, and ushering in lasting peace in the area. This idea is very necessary considering the losses that Nigeria has incurred in terms of lives and properties in Northern Nigeria over the years, due to such conflicts. With declarative structures, Okediran does not only commend the patriotic law legislator, but encourages other African

politicians to emulate his patriotic gesture, rather than seeing political positions as avenues of amassing wealth. The author also reiterates the need for the political leaders to pay regular visits to the people at the grass root. Such visits will give them opportunities to be acquainted with the needs of, and the problems confronting the people in order to alleviate their sufferings.

The Interrogative sentences

The author also deploys interrogative sentences, which Jayanthi Murthy opines are sentences used for asking questions (76). Okediran advocates peace and condemns acts capable of causing chaos in the society in *Tenants of the House*. Below are instances of the author's use of interrogative sentences to stress the need for peace in the novel.

1. Do you want the country on fire? (167)
2. What will our people say when they hear you have given their right on a platter of friendship to a President who does not really like you and but for God's mercies would have thrown you off the Speaker's chair?

Samuel, are you really a politician? Have you forgotten the saying, No permanent friendship, only permanent interests? Let me tell you, it is a truism. (167)

3. What? I thought; A gun here? (1)
4. Lizzy, ah, ah! Why? The speaker is your friend. Why do you want him out? I don't get it. (10).

In sample 1, Hon. Bakura expresses his anger at the Speaker for his support of President Oneya tenure prolongation plan, and reiterates betrayal as a feature of African politics in excerpt 4. In Nigeria, there are cases where close friends and relatives become enemies due to their different political interests. They betray one another irrespective of their close relationships as depicted above. For example, in sample 4, Hon. Samalu expresses his surprise with an interrogative sentence due to Lizzy's involvement in the plan to

impeach Hon. Yaya, the Speaker. He wonders why Lizzy, a friend of the Speaker could conspire with the dubious legislators to impeach him. Asked the reason for the betrayal of a friend, Lizzy reiterates the fact that there is no permanent friend in politics, but permanent interest saying: Samuel, are you really a politician? Have you forgotten the saying, No permanent friendship, only permanent interests? (167)

In his attempt to proffer solutions to Nigeria's political problems in the novel, Okediran condemns and discourages tenure prolongation, which has posed serious threats to peace in African countries in general. The interrogative sentence below has been made by the Speaker in his attempt to discourage President Oneya from the idea of constitutional amendment designed to prolong his tenure in office. This is because of the strong oppositions such move would generate, especially from the Northerners to whom the Presidency is zoned. The Speaker enumerates the problems and the resistance that tenure prolongation would generate, especially from the press and Northerners who are bound to resist the move should the Bill be passed saying: They will launch maximum battle against any force, movement, personality or amendment that want to deny them their Presidency. They will not agree. They will stir up things. They will work up a storm (141). Similarly, the authorial voice declares:

The media attacked the third- term agenda in their editorial after editorial.

Cartoonists had a field day satirizing the agenda and columnists saw no merit whatsoever in it. (192)

But due to his greed, President Oneya ignores all warnings, and he justifies his plan for tenure prolongation when in an attempt to convince the legislators to support him, he says:

All over Africa, our leaders are very much aware of the urgent need of continuity. This is why, in Uganda and Algeria, Presidents Yoweri Museveni and Abdelaziz Bouteflika respectively were able to get their third-term tenure. In nearby Niger, the President is currently organizing mass rallies in all the provinces of the country to support the constitutional change which will give him his third term in office. (179)

In above extract, Okediran portrays tenure prolongation as a serious threat to the democratic process and peace. He conveys the various problems associated with attempts at tenure prolongation by African leaders. Due to such attempts in the past, Sudan and Egypt among other African countries had been plunged into endless wars, which claimed precious lives and properties.

Bribery and corruption are features of Nigerian politics, which the author condemns in totality. As earlier stated in this study, Nigerian politicians are so greedy, avaricious and money conscious that they involve themselves in terrible acts to amass wealth. This accounts for the sudden change of the corrupt legislators of the House of Representative in support of the constitutional amendment Bill initiated by President Onyea for his selfish interest. Even the Speaker who strongly opposes the President's plan turns around over night to champion the same cause that he has earlier opposed. The gift of money President Onyea promises the Speaker and other corrupt legislators is responsible for their sudden change and support for his tenure prolongation plan. The Speaker himself confirms this when he says to Hon. Bakura who expresses shock at his sudden change towards President Onyea's plan: Now, as the Tenure Prolongation Bill sails through, it's honey for us all. We shall all smile (167).

To justify his sudden change and support for the President despite his earlier attempt to impeach him, the Speaker says to Hon. Bakura: Samuel, are you really a politician? Have you forgotten the saying, No permanent friendship, only permanent interests (167). Another sensitive issue that poses threat to peace in

Nigeria, which Okediran satirizes in the text deploying rhetorical questions, is political violence. Here, rhetorical questions function as emphatic declaratives even though structurally they are wh-questions that require no responses. Generally in Nigerian politics, incessant cases abound where legislators who engaged in heated debates while sitting in political chambers resort to physical combats, the use of guns and other dangerous weapons. These often result in serious injuries and sometimes deaths in extreme cases. In the extracts below, the author expresses Honourable Samalu's surprise on discovering a gun in Hon. Elizabeth Bello's handbag in the chamber of the Federal House of Representatives. Asked by Samalu whether she had had any occasion to use the gun, she responds also in a rhetorical question aggressively asking: "What the...what kind of question is that? Am I a bumbling starter? You think that I am a newcomer in politics like you?" (3). Expressing the need for her possession of a gun in the chamber of the Federal House of Representatives, Hon. Elizabeth emphasizes saying: "Hear this, and hear it well. To kill is a crime: to kill at the right time is politics" (3). In these samples, the author emphasizes the seriousness of political violence among Nigerian politicians and condemns it in its entirety.

In the text under study, Okediran also portrays cowardice and eye service as features of Nigerian politics as conveyed in the example below. As Hon. Bakura reluctantly honours the invitation by his State Governor, Alhaji Salusi Muhammed, the Governor seizes the opportunity to persuade him to support the President's tenure prolongation Bill against his conscience. He confesses to Hon. Bakura that he is in support of the Bill, not because he likes it, but to avoid victimization, since some Governors that are opposed to the Bill have been severely dealt with as depicted in the sample below.

...I am sure you know what has been happening to some of my Governor colleagues who openly criticize the Bill?... You know, in politics, self-preservation is the first rule, so we need to safeguard our jobs first...In addition, Honorable, it is a

good opportunity to make a tidy half a million dollars. Think of what that kind of money will do for you. So, my brother, even though you don't belong to our party, I advise that you to support this Bill. In fact, your bag of money is in my office across the lawn. Once you sign for the Bill, you can go home with the money. (246)

From the sample above, the Governor's effort at persuading Hon. Bakura to support President Oneya is informed by his desire to retain his position as a Governor and his materialism. In this extract, Okediran lampoons African politicians who sell their consciences for positions and material gains. It is important to state here that Okediran does not only capture materialism in African politics, but portrays the poor image of African political leaders. Similarly, the author utilizes a rhetorical question to reiterate the poor image of Nigerian political leaders, referring to them as dangerous and unreliable characters as captured in the excerpt below. Batejo and Hon. Bakura fall in love and decide to get married. But Batejo's declaration of her love for, and intention to marry Hon. Samuel Batura, a politician, earns her the wrath of her elder sister who asks: ...this fellow is also a politician, those dangerous and unreliable characters? (239). She rebukes Batejo for ever contemplating marriage to a politician, referring to politicians as dangerous and unreliable characters. Batejo's sister's violent reaction is informed by the poor image of, and general impression about politicians in the society.

Exclamatory Sentences

Exclamatory sentences are used to express feelings of surprise, joy, shock and excitement among others. Below is an example of the author's use of this functional sentence type.

You fool, you idiot, you brainless fool, you fell into a trap; now I am done for! was all President Oneya could say as he stared at the television screen. (306)

In above sample, the author reiterates the biblical fact that everyone is rewarded according to his or her works. In the extract, President Oneya heaps insults on Senator Smollet as he watches him on the network news offering bribe to the legislators on his behalf, an action that spells the President's final doom. Moreover, the newscaster has also announced the addition of the offence of perverting justice to President Oneya's long list of impeachable offences. Senator Smollet who has been running the illegal errands for the corrupt President is also humiliated. With the use of the exclamatory sentence in this excerpt, the author ridicules the corrupt President and his cohort, Senator Smollet, to public disgrace and humiliation at the end of the novel. This is aimed at discouraging other political leaders from corrupt practices.

Imperative Sentences

Okediran utilizes imperative sentences, which are deployed to give orders or commands in the text. Below are few examples of the author's deployment of imperative sentences as a stylistic strategy.'

When Beatrice saw the gun, she let out an ear splitting. *Put that thing away!* she shouted. (305)

You fool, you idiot, you brainless fool, you fell into a trap; now I am done for! was all president Oneya could say as he stared at the television screen.(306)

In the imperative constructions above, Okediran also conveys the theme of retributive justice. Despite the huge sum of money President Oneya has spent bribing the legislators to vote against the motion for his impeachment, they disappoint him due to the bad image he has given to Nigeria with his tenure prolongation Bill. Humiliated and devastated, the President attempts suicide with a gun. In sentence 1 above, his wife, Beatrice, orders him to put away his gun as he attempts to shoot himself. The author makes President Oneya to reap the fruits of his corrupt practices in this extract.

Tenses

This is a term used in grammar to indicate the time of an action or event (Murthy Dakshina 151). In a language, tenses are of three major classes, namely, the present, past and future tenses. Below are examples of Wale Okediran's deployment of the different types of tenses in the text under investigation.

Present Tense: the present tense is used to indicate actions which take place at present as exemplified below:

Regrettably, seven years later, these expectations are far from being met. Corruption remains entrenched and endemic. (252)

With the recently opened chapter in the political history in Nigeria and the swearing in of President Ambrose Oneya as the Nigerian President, as presented in the novel, Nigerians are hopeful for a better future. They expect uninterrupted power supply, improved and accessible healthcare system, improved infrastructure, job opportunities, security of lives and properties and quality education at all levels. But the corrupt political leaders dash their hopes because seven years later, none of their expectations has been met. Instead, the people are subjected to worse conditions due to the corruption that has remained entrenched in Nigeria. For instance, the roads and railway are now in worse condition, education has gone out of the reach of the people, and Nigerian Universities are poorly funded. Moreover, there is mass termination of employment, high cost of petroleum products and inflation generally. All these are consequent upon the corruption of President Oneya's administration, which accounts for the strong opposition against the President's tenure prolongation plan.

Past Tense

Dakshina opines that "When a verb is used to show that an action was completed, it is known as past tense" (150). Okediran makes profuse use of sentences in the simple past tense in *Tenants of the*

House because it is the basic style of storytelling as the narrator recalls the event in the past, even though its present relevance is the focus of the narration. We examine below some of the sentences in the past tense deployed for stylistic purposes.

Alhaji Musa Adamu, ardo Fulani, said ÷ Allah be praised!ø(148)

The Fulani Naborado spoke and spoke, pouring out their hearts in a litany of grievances. Their leader, the Seriki Fulani, Alhaji Adamu, expressed their anger and bitterness at what he considered their neglect by their elected leaders. His voice reached a high pitch. ÷All they wanted is our votes. Those Politicians. Vote for us! Have a good life! Vote for us! Milk and honey will flow! But once they are voted in, they become deaf and dumb to our plight...you wouldnø even see them... only civil servants haunting us all over for cattle tax!...(150)

The author deploys the exclamatory sentence in the past tense above to express the excitement of Alhaji Musa ardo, the Fulani leader on hearing that Hon. Samalu has sponsored a Bill to end their perennial clashes with the farmers. Moreover, the Honourableø visit to their community gives the Fulanis an opportunity to put in writing, and send to the committee for public hearing in the House of Representatives, their grievances, demands, observations and recommendations. Okediran portrays the ill-treatment and injustice to which the Nigerian populace are subjected as a result of neglect and abandonment. Political promises are never fulfilled and public funds meant for public projects and programmes are diverted into the personal bank accounts of political leaders. The implication is that the same people who vote them into political positions face abject poverty and hardship. A Fulani leader narrates the bitter experiences and ill-treatment of his people by their political leaders who ought to

be their representatives and ~~eyes~~ in government in the extract above.

Future Tense

The future tense is used to express future events as exemplified in following sentences.

As he puts it, ~~we~~ shall follow due process because we want to ensure that Nigeria survives this crisis. Without due process, political conflict easily graduates to political warfare. (260)

I will return the money, I said...you are joking Samuel, you can be killed. ~~I don't~~ care dying for my conviction, especially having realised that I have been misled all along. (62- 63)

Despite the degree of moral decadence in politics, the author expresses hope in African politics. This is due to the fact that there are still some political leaders who exhibit exemplary qualities, and believe in following due process by upholding the democratic procedures established by the constitution, and the norms of equality, transparency and fair play. For instance, in sample 1 in the future tense, the Speaker and the Senate President promise to ensure that due process is strictly followed during the debate on the Constitutional Amendment Bill with the inclusion of the tenure Prolongation Bill championed by the President. That they stand their ground on the long run to ensure that the Bill is not passed is an indication of their patriotism.

In the second excerpt, Okediran puts to stylistic use the informative nature of the declarative construction in the future tense, to emphasize the need for African leaders to shun corruption and embrace patriotism. In his discussion with the Hon. Speaker, Hon. Samalu realizes that he has been deceived into supporting the avaricious legislators sponsored by the President to impeach the

Speaker. Despite the threats from his friend, Hon. Elizabeth, he decides to return the bribe he had earlier collected in error, quit the corrupt group in support of the Speaker in his determination to move Nigerian democracy forward as declared in sample 2 above. His decision to quit the group of corrupt and materialistic legislators is borne out of his patriotism. Here, Okediran stresses the need for patriotism in politics to steer African democracy on the path of maturity and progress.

Persuasive Language

Another feature of political discourse put into use in the text under study is persuasion. In the sample below, the Deputy Speaker tries to manipulate and convince the demonstrators, especially the youths to stop the impeachment plan against the Speaker. He gives the reasons why they should resist the President's attempt to impeach the duly elected Speaker at all cost saying:

...what we are witnessing in our own parliament is of great concern to all. We call ourselves giants of Africa but what we are doing to ourselves in the name of democracy is, to say the least degrading. The tragedy of it all is that our President, who is supposed to be an impartial umpire in the whole situation, has chosen to take sides. (104-105)

The Deputy Speaker coughed slightly and continued. "This is in pursuit of his selfish interests. The President has personally taken over the attempt to sack the speaker illegally. This is where you come in. You are now the only people who can save the country from ignominious descent into chaos and instability. You alone can lead the country in the march to the promise land of peace and prosperity. Ladies and gentlemen, your finest hour has come. You dare not fail, the whole world is watching and Nigeria is waiting... (106)

In above samples, Okediran uses persuasive language to move the demonstrators into action. He also condemns the atrocities of Nigerian political leaders who plant their cohorts in important political positions for their selfish interests. Cases abound in Nigeria where Presidents, Governors and even Local Government Chairmen influence appointments into positions. The few members of the opposition parties who occupy positions are subjected to victimization. In the extract, the Deputy Speaker tries to manipulate and convince the demonstrators particularly the youths deploying persuasive language to incite them against the President. He advances the reasons why they should resist his attempt to impeach the duly elected Speaker of the House of Representatives. Moreover, the author encourages Nigerian youths, emphasizing the fact that as the leaders of tomorrow, they should stand up to their responsibility to resist any acts capable of disrupting Nigerian democracy.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that many contemporary Nigerian literary artists are preoccupied with issues bordering on the socio-political problems in Nigeria, the consequences of political corruption in their works, with a view to proffer solutions to the problems for the growth and development of Nigeria. Wale Okediran, one of Nigeria's prolific writers X-rays the Nigerian political system, ridicules and condemns the political leaders and their corrupt practices. He emphasizes the need for the leaders to be patriotic, shun corruption, and pursue people-oriented programmes and policies to promote the growth and development of the country. In doing this, Okediran deploys significant syntactic strategies, including functional sentence types and tenses, to satirically convey his artistic visions in the novel, *Tenants of the House*.

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