A DISCOURSE-STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF MOOD STRUCTURES IN SELECTED POEMS OF J.P. CLARK-BEKEDEREMO

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Abstract

From available literature, J.P Clark-Bekederemo's poetry has not been extensively studied from a linguistic perspective. Previous studies on the poet's work have concentrated on the literary and thematic features of the texts. The present study, therefore, examines mood structures (i.e. a grammatical category that pertains to the clause), in the poetry, in order to determine how language is used to express the manner of speaking of interlocutors, and their roles, judgments and attitudes in specific discourse contexts. Through the aid of Halliday's systemic functional Grammar, particularly the tenor aspect of the interpersonal 'metafunction' (other metafunctions being ideational and textual), the study highlights the nature of dialogue (i.e. mood structures) between interactants in the poetry, in relation to social contexts. The discourse-stylistic approach adopted for the study, enables us to examine what is communicated (i.e. discourse) and how it is communicated (i.e. stylistics).

Introduction

J.P. Clark-Bekederemo is certainly one of the major personages in contemporary African literature. This thesis stems from the historicity and all encompassing nature (i.e. poetry, prose, drama, and criticism) of his works. Fundamentally, it also stems from the quality and volume of criticisms which his works have evoked globally, for about five decades now. Bruce King (1971) captured this fact, quite aptly, when he described the subject as, "perhaps the best example of all round man of letters." However, unlike the works of other writers of his generation (i.e. Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, Niyi Osundare, etc), it is obvious that J.P. Clark-Bekederemo's poetry has not been given intensive linguistic investigation, most of the works on his poetry are thematic and literary in focus. In fact, Eyoh's (1997) *J.P. Clark-Bekederemo's Poetry: A Study in Stylistic Criticism* is of far-reaching importance, as it remains the only full-scale linguistic investigation into the writer's poetic idiolect. The limitation of this work, however, is its triadic focus i.e. to show the phonological, lexical and paralinguistic affective levels of language use in the poetry. The present study seeks to extend the linguistic exploration of the poet's work, by applying discourse-stylistic parameters to the study of mood structures in the poetry.

Theoretical Foundation

According to Stubbs (19:1), discourse is concerned with the "... organization of language above the sentence or above the clause and therefore... larger linguistic units such as conversational exchanges and written texts". This implies that, discourse is basically concerned with linguistic structures that are larger than the boundaries of a sentence or utterance (i.e. conversation and narratives), and can be presented in two basic forms spoken and written, both of which have definable communicative function. This further implies that it involves the use of language in society as an interactive too, which involves the speaker and listener, on one hand, and the writer and reader, on the other. The fundamental point is that, in both instances, we can only decode the meaning intended by the communicant from a vast range of variable sentences.

Stylistics, on the other hand, is the branch of general linguistics that focuses on style (i.e. the manner of a speaker's or writer's linguistic expression), particularly in works of literature. Cluett and Kampeas (1979) refer to it as the study of the "tangible manifestation of style." According to Allan B. et al (1988), it is,

> *A branch of linguistics which studies the characteristics of situationally distinctive use of language with particular reference to literary language and tries to establish the principles capable of accounting for the particular choices made by individuals and social groups in their use of language.*

The critical point is that, stylistics emphasizes structural analysis and the social role of language and uses the techniques and concepts of modern linguistics to reveal function and meanings for the texts it analyses (Opara, 2005; Oyeleye, 1997; Fabb, 1997; Leech and Short, 1985).

The Discourse-stylistic approach adopted for this study, is subsumed within the functional linguistic tradition. Basically, it is concerned with the identification, description and explanation of stylistic features in a given text or discourse situation. According to Opara (2005), the double-barreled model is "... a new area of research with great potential for the researcher, as it explains the relationship between language and literary studies." The scholar explains:

> *Discourse Analysis and Stylistics are broad-based disciplines which deal with the functional aspects of language. While D.A. analyses what is communicated in Discourse, Stylistics analyses how it is communicated. The two disciplines often interact with each other. Thus Discourse-Stylistics is concerned with the analysis of communication to reveal its function, using various tools of interpretation including textual peculiarities. Such analysis enables us to appreciate style.*

The critical point is that, the model enables the analyst to establish both the discourse and pragmatic features of the text and the stylistic features. The comprehensive character of this model enables the analyst to examine the complex and varied linguistic structures and relations and modes of meaning making in discourses such as poetry, drama, and prose fiction. It provides an effective linkage between language and literature, by its adoption of pragmatic and stylistic parameters for the investigation of the form and function of language use, in specific discourse situations. Unlike other modem linguistic models, which study invented or isolated aspects of language (i.e. aspects of words- morphology, and their combination into sentences- syntax), Discourse-Stylistics examines the form and function of linguistic constructs which are beyond the sentence in specific social, cultural or historical contexts, as explored in a given discourse. In other words, the model is a discourse-based stylistics. The concept of Discourse itself originates from the discovery that language operates within a pragmatic context and that it is necessary to delineate and apply that context to its explication. This explains why sub-disciplines of Discourse Analysis, such as pragmatics, conversation analysis, speech act and ethnography of speaking (i.e. co-operative principle), are relevant *functional* approaches to language study.

We adopted M.A.K Halliday's systemic functional linguistics as the theoretical model for the study, in view of its emphasis on the correlation between form and function, particularly in relation to the three 'metafunctions' of language which the model espouses viz: ideational, interpersonal and textual. The interpersonal 'metafunction' is specifically relevant for our analysis, as it emphasizes the tenor aspect of context which relates to the degree of familiarity, or otherwise, between interlocu*tors,* their roles, comments and attitudes in the given discourse situation. According to Leech and Short (1985), it concerns the relation between language and its users, communicates the speaker's attitudes and influences the behaviour and attitudes of the hearer. Systemic functional linguistics generally relates structural analysis to meaning and social context (Oyeleye, 1998, Melrose, 1995; Opara, 2005). Halliday's emphasis in this theory is that language structure reflects the social use to which it is put.

The Concept of Mood Structure

The mood system *is* one of the propositions of functional systemic *linguistics (i.e.* the Interpersonal 'metafunction' of language), which we have adopted for the present study. It facilitates our ability to account for the various options that are available to the speaker in the use of language (Osisanwo, 2003). According to Alo (1998: 55),

> *The sentence, for example, may be used to approve or disapprove, to express doubt, to ask questions or give answers; to greet, instruct, or to command others; to include others within the social group or to exclude others from it. These various uses or functions of the sentence correspond to grammatical categories which are called declarative (statement sentence): imperative (commands, requests) and exclamatory (exclamation).*

The mood system operates in three ways viz: mode, mood proper, and modality.
Mode refers to the manner or way of speaking or writing. If the speaker or writer is assertive, he is using the indicative mood; if asking a question or interrogating, we talk of the interrogative mood; and if he issues a command, we talk of the imperative mood; while an expression of a wish is classified in the optative mood. Mood proper, on the other hand, refers to

> *....verbal categories relating to the grammatical status of the sentence. In this dimension, an independent sentence is declarative (indicative) but an embedded subordinate clause may require the subjunctive form as in Romance languages. An embedded sentence may also have special non-finite forms, such as infinitive, participle or gerund (Opara, 2005).*

The last concept in the mood system, modality, refers to the network of meanings that lie between positive and negative, YES and NO. These meanings can be expressed in four ways, to approximate "the probability or frequency of an event and the obligation or the inclination of a person to perform an action" (Opara, 2005). According to Melrose (1995), these judgments can be expressed by modal verbs such as may or must, adjectives like probable or required, and modal adjuncts such as maybe or always (see Opara, 2005). According to Halliday (2000:359), modality comprises four sub-systems viz: probability (i.e. certain, probable, possible), usuality (i.e. always, usual, sometimes), obligation (i.e. required, supposed, allowed), and inclination (i.e. determined, keen, willing). There are two types of modality: modalization (epistemic modality) and modulation (deontic modality). Modalization has to do with the degree of validity, probability or certainty that a speaker attaches to his propositions or observations. In modulation, we talk about the "degree of willingness, readiness and inclination of proposals and offers or willingness to do or give" (Opara, 2005). Both modalization and modulation are politeness strategies in discourse.

Opara (2005) contended that mood structures indicate how speakers and listeners, and writers and readers, use language for expressing themselves in verbal exchanges. This implies that mood structures in speech or writing, reflect interactional or interpersonal meanings. In other words, the speaker or writer can choose between declarative, interrogative and imperative sentences and also decide whether to front the subject or the finite according to the "type of exchange going on, the roles of the participants and attitude and judgment of the speaker" (Opara, 2005; see also Bloor and Bloor, 1995; Lipson, 2002). Opara (2005) adds that,

> *The choice of each of these moods (i.e. declarative interrogative, imperative) involves further choice to be made, for instance, the choice of representing or not representing the subject. The choice of each of these moods involves further choices to be made, the interrogative mood demands further choice between yes/no questions, wh questions and so on.*

The mood system is diagrammatically represented below:
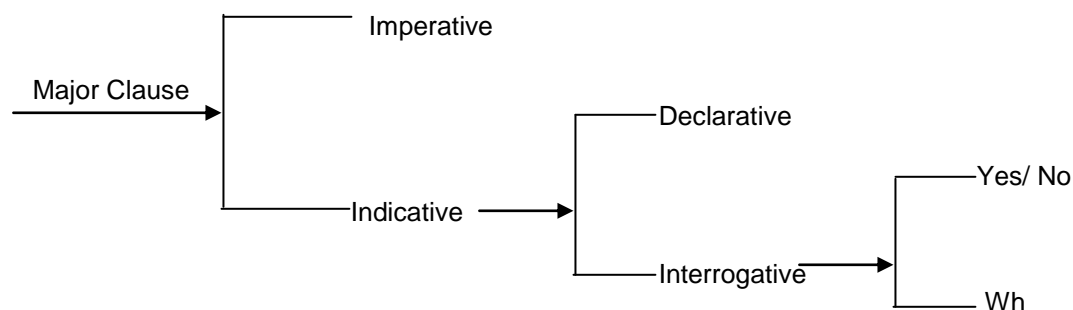
The crucial point is that an author chooses from the mood system of a language to precisely encode his message and attitude in a given discourse. Lipson (2002) contends that the mood a speaker or writer chooses plays a critical role in decoding his argument or contention. Generally speaking, mood analysis is more applicable to free or major clauses (see diagram above) i.e. those that can stand by themselves as a complete sentence. A poetic discourse is composed dominantly of minor clauses. In spite of this, it cannot be said that a poetic discourse does not have meaning exchange. No matter how it appears, a poem is organized as an interactive event, an act of speaking in which the speaker adopts a speech role and assigns to the audience or reader a complementary role (see Halliday and Mathiessen, 2004: 106).

Brief Biography of the Poet

Born December 6, 1933 in Kiagbodo in the Ijaw area of present-day Delta State of Nigeria, to Ijaw and Urhobo parents (His father was Ijaw and mother Urhobo), Johnson Pepper Clark-Bekederemo had his primary school at Okrika (1940-1948) and Jeremi (1948), before proceeding to Government College, Ughelli, for his secondary education (1948-1953). He attended the University of Ibadan between 1955 and 1960. At Ibadan, together with a handful of other writers, he played a prominent role in establishing Nigeria and the continent of Africa as one of the major centres of Literature in English in the twentieth century. Of his Ibadan years, Wren (1984) remarks that Clark-Bekederemo "showed the most precocious talent that West African literary history had yet seen." The poet has worked as an information officer, journalist, and University professor. Apart from his poetry, Clark-Bekederemo is also a frontline African dramatist and scholar.

He has also written a novel (travelogue) *America, their America*(1964) , which is an account of his sojourn in America as a Parvin fellow at Princeton University (1962-63)

Contextual Issues in the Poetry

That language and context are two inseparable phenomena is a fact that has been long standing and established (see Leech, 1983:13). Morley (1985: 4) points out that, "context serves to itemize those aspects of the situation which have a bearing on the form used". The critical point in that, context is an important aspect of language use. As we shall demonstrate in the analysis of the texts, the true meaning of a text can be thought of as a relationship between its linguistic elements and whatever contextual evidence is available for clarifying it. In J. P. Clark-Bekederemo's poetry, certain variables constitute the context of situation. These include: genre type, background experiences of the poet, socio-political realities, and subject-matter.

Textual Analysis

Following the foregoing preliminary discourse, we shall now analyse J.P. Clark-Bekederemo's poetry in terms of their nature of dialogue or mood structures. Our analysis will foreground the primary categories of mood (i.e. declarative, interrogative and imperative, etc.), but their sub-categories will also be referred to. It is also noteworthy that J. P. Clark-Bekederemo has been writing poetry for over five decades (1958-2010). His oeuvre is so expansive that a study of this scope cannot refer to all his published volumes. We have, therefore, purposively selected poems from five of these volumes for our analysis viz: *A Decade of Tongues* (1970, containing poems written between 1958 and 1968), *Casualties* (1970), *State of the Union* (1985), *Once Again a Child (2004),* and *A Lot from Paradise* (1999). We believe that these illustrative examples effectively represent the significant mood structures in the poetry under study.

Indicative Mood

Indicative mood is a super-ordinate grammatical notion for the expression of statement (declarative) and a question (interrogative). The difference between the two is indicated by the order of subject and finite. If the structure reflects subject before finite order, the mood is declarative. On the other hand, if the order is finite before subject, it is an interrogative mood. According to Allan 1986:173), explicit performative verbs occur in utterances using the indicative mood Osisanwo, 2003).

Declarative Mood

The poems in the texts under study are dominantly declarative in their mood; this relates to the poet's imaginative convictions and highlights the point that the poems are dominantly statements of experience. Their sentences or tokens consist of elements of three kinds-predicator, complement and adjunct. The first poem in each of the volumes we have adopted for this study reflects this pattern. One of them i.e. "A pledge" *{Once Again a Child),* is analyzed below to show or reflect their semantic and functional structure.

A Pledge

> *Reading again, in my season of dust Timothy O' Sullivan's account of Hardy's*
> *life, I told myself, from now on, I would make a poem of every matter of*
> *interest I can salvage from the stream of my life.So here is my story at source.*

The poem is analyzed in detail in the table below:

1.	Reading again, in my season of dust timothy O'Sullivan's account of Hardy's life				⟸	Mood Adjunct
	I S	Told P	Myself C^E →		⟸	Mood Predicator
	From now on, I would make a poem of every matter of interest I can salvage from the stream of my life				⟸	Proper Declaration
2	So	here	is	my story at source	⟸	Expressing obligation and inclination arising from the mood adjunct
	Mood Adjunct Conjunction theme	S	P	C		

(Table I, showing three elements in the declarative mood)

As shown in the analysis above, the poem is composed of two declarative sentences. The element of the first declarative sentence serves in the unfolding of an experience. It serves to orient or induct readers into the course of the poem. It is, therefore, realized as the mood adjunct. The clause that follows is the predicator of the entire declarative mood. The proper declaration that follows, serves the discourse function of impressing readers/audience to model the experience described in the exchange.

The second declarative sentence is a resultant mood from the first. The sentence serves in placing the poet's stories in the category of Timothy O'Sullivan's account. The first declarative sentence, therefore, serves in preparing a prior context leading up to that categorization and in establishing a positive reason or platform for the subject of his stories.

Interrogative Mood

In the words of Halliday and Matthiessen (2004:75), the typical function of an interrogative clause is to ask a question; and from the speaker's point of view, asking a question is an indication that he wants to be told something. A question can be open-ended or close-ended. It is open-ended when it searches for a missing information in an indefinite manner. This type of question is known as WH question. On the other hand, a question is close-ended when what the speaker wants to know is the POLARITY 'yes or no' A close reading of the poems in the selected volumes of poetry for this study, reveals that question utterances are sparsely used by the poet. This may be due to the fact that the poems are not primarily expository but narrative. However, in its few instances, it is clear that interrogative mood contributes to the intelligibility of J.P. Clark-Bekederemo's poems under study. In the humorous poem "What Did You Do to Me?" *(A Lot from Paradise),* for instance, there is the WH interrogative – "What did you do to me that although we hardly touched....?" In this question, the speaker demands explanation without indicating the kind of answer required. In the context of this poem, the question serves the discourse function of registering the speaker's mood of surprise in the mind of the hearer and thereby evoke similar feelings from him/her.

Similarly, in "An Old Man on Trial" *(A Lot from Paradise),* the poet laments the difference between old age in the past and old age in the present. The basic message of the poem is that, in the present time, old age is not something that is worth praying for. In passing this message, the poet does not only rely on negative declarations but also deploys the WH interrogative: **"**So, how shall I call again upon God oh, my father, When the gift you were given to enjoy in your time is today a curse in my hands?" The discourse implication or function of this interrogative mood is that, old age that was once a gift, is now a curse. By framing it as a question, the poet welcomes opinions from the reader but does not require them because he has used the question form in stamping precisely this personally established opinion. In this and other poems, where this mood structure is found, the interrogative sentence serves in enhancing the rhetorical quality of J.P. Clark-Bekederemo's poetic idiolect.

Imperative Mood

Imperative sentences are sentences that function as commands. An imperative sentence can be mild, for instance, when it is used to request; it can also be brusque, compelling the hearer to take a definite action. Or it can be negative, leaving the hearer to take any decision desired. According to Osisanwo (2003), there are jussive and non-jussive imperative moods as in,
  i.   Get out (Jussive).
  ii.   Let her go (non-jussive).

According to the scholar, in jussive, the listener is the performer of the action of the utterance, while in non-jussive; neither the speaker nor the listener is the performer of the action. The jussive mood can include or exclude the speaker from the action performed, as in:
 i.   Walk out! Jussive (Exclusive)
  ii.   Let's walk out (Jussive inclusive)

Osisanwo explains further that, in the non-jussive mood also, there is some difference. This can be seen in the two examples below:
  i.   Let him get out of the room
  ii.   May the new session bring us success
According to the scholar, in both examples, we can see that neither the listener nor the speaker is involved in the action. This makes the utterances non-jussive.

The difference in the two utterances is that, while in both utterances, both the speaker and the listener are not involved in the action, thus making them non-jussive optative clauses, in the second utterance, the performer of the action is not stated, though it is entailed that there is an unseen or invisible performer of the action. It is, thus, a wish or a prayer. This makes it a non- jussive volitive clause. The six options available to the speaker within the mood system are presented below:
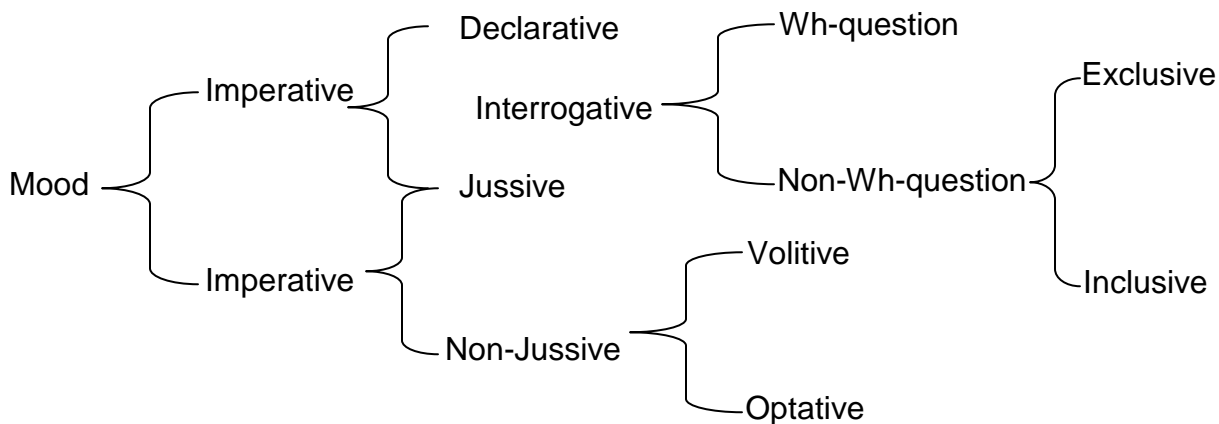
(Source: Osisanwo, 2003: 72.)

The crucial point in the present study is that, J.P. Clark-bekederemo's poetry shows significant aspects (i.e. both mild and brusque forms) of the use of this device. For instance, in "Cave Call" *(A Decade of Tongues},* which relays the poet's adventures and experience in the "meandering incubus caves of Manhattan", there is the use of the imperative prepositional phrase (i.e. the predicator "hold" and preposition "on") "Hold on" "Hey, there, hold on" (p. 56), in the 24th and 25th lines. The desperate context "At one blink, lights go out, and/Willy-nilly, the beast is tugging/Me blind by the front into his bowels /of night", indicates that the sentences serve the illocutionary function of commanding, requesting, or appealing to the poet-persona (or the beast) to stop further action. All these are sub-types of the imperative mood. It is also jussive (exclusive) in the sense that the speaker (i.e a voice) is not involved in the action of the verb in the utterance. The repetition of the imperative phrase in the context performs the discourse and stylistic function of emphasis.

Also, in "Incident at the Police Station, Warri" *(Casualties),* the poet uses another imperative prepositional phrase "Lie down", which serves the discourse function of a command. This discourse function is overtly embedded in "Cracks the order" (i.e. it implies a command). It is used by a policeman against a prisoner who has been sentenced to some strokes of the cane on his bare buttocks, in public glare. We can also see in this context that the listener alone performs the action of the imperative phrase, thus, it is also jussive (exclusive).

In "A Hymn for a Friend in His Losses" *(State of the Union),* J.P. Clark-Bekederemo highlights the limitations and helplessness of man in the face of his losses, even though he overestimates his powers: "God, how can we dream/we swim a sea who cannot cross a stream". The poem is actually a praise song (i.e. hymn) to God whose potentials and capabilities are infinite and limitless, in contrast to man's. The imperative "Praise Him!", which ends the poem, confirms this point. The critical point here is that "Praise Him" serves the discourse function of a subtle Jussive (Inclusive) mood, as both the speaker and the listener constitute humanity and thus, should be involved in the action of the utterance.

Conclusion

In the foregoing discourse, we have examined various mood structures (i.e. declarative, interrogative and imperative moods), in J.P Clark-Bekederemo's poetry, with illustrative examples from volumes that cut across the different periods of his creative career. The study posits that poetic discourse has meaning exchange, since it is an interactive event in which participants play various roles, and that the different mood structures adopted   by speakers/writers are dependent on the goals or purposes of language use in specific discourse situations

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