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A Linguistic Analysis of Wole Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero*

Abstract. The application of linguistic theories and concepts as tools for analysis of literary works provides one of the most fascinating and illuminating insights into how they may be read, interpreted, and understood. This assumption underlies the objective of this paper in which I attempt to explicate an interpretation of Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero* through an application of the pragmatics tool of presupposition. Thus an attempt is made in this paper to present a linguistic analysis of the play by an examination of its meaning potentials in terms of presuppositions. In this regard, utterances of two major characters, Jero and Chume, his Assistant, are selected and analysed. It may be interesting to note that fictional characters express presuppositions as much as people in real life. Thus this study is a presentation of an interface between linguistics and literary works. In this linguistic study, literary discourse is exploited using the pragmatic concept of presupposition which underlines and underpins the explanatory adequacy of its explication. Stimulating insights are presented in the interpretation and understanding of Wole Soyinka's *Trials of Brother Jero* as a piece of dramatic discourse which constitute and promote the interface of linguistic science and literary science.

Keywords: meaning potential, presupposition, pragmatics, dramatic discourse.

Introduction

The study of how language is used in practical or real life situations may be appropriately referred to as pragmatics. Thus all actual uses (including in literary works) of language come under the purview of pragmatics. Moreover, every use of language can be described as a speech event or discourse. Hence literary works are more or less forms or types of speech events or discourses. In this light, presupposition as a conceptual pragmatic tool appears to be adequate, useful and appropriate for an insightful and illuminating explication of literary and non-literary works. This perhaps makes Elam's claim very apt: "Whatever the properties ascribed to dramatis personae as individuals in a fictional world, and whatever personal, ... social and other roles they are seen to fulfill as functions of dramatic structure, it is in the first instance as participants into speech events that they are usually perceived" (Elam 1980: 36).

In fact, all literary uses of language may be said to be subject to some kind of linguistic enquiry or investigation. Thus it seems productive to employ the linguistic/pragmatic tool of presupposition in the analysis of Wole Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero*, a play. This approach may shed some light in terms of how the play may be interpreted, perceived and comprehended by its readers/audiences.

This view is well-butressed by Elam's explication that dramatic speakers are expected "to produce utterances which are informative ..., 'true' with respect to the dramatic world (unless strategically insincere), comprehensible and relevant to the occasion" (see Elam 1980: 173). Thus, whether in fiction or in real life, the use of language tends to signify the relationship between interlocutors as interactional and transactional. In this regard, in both literary and non-literary discourses, people are seen to employ language to establish or contract relationships which are based on mutual understanding or common / shared values. In this paper, I attempt to investigate, analyse and explicate features of presupposition in selected speeches or discourses of two major characters (Jero and Chume) in Wole Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero*.

The choice of literary text was warranted by the fact that *The Trials of Brother Jero* is a popular comedy in the language (perhaps it is the only work by Wole Soyinka that is written in simple English!) of the masses. Its audiences tend to cut across social and intellectual classes. Moreover, though it was published in the early 60's, it is very relevant to the contemporary socio-political and religious situation in Nigeria. The choice of the two characters was determined by their roles as protagonist (Jero as a charlatan) and antagonist (Chume as a victim). An extract from the play is considered sufficient in order to explicate the features of pragmatic tools. The extract is reproduced in the Appendix to allow the reader to consider it in its entirety.

The actions, in a play, embody what the play is about. Thus, according to Richard Gill, a plot is about what the characters are up to, what they want and what they do to achieve their goal (see Gill 2006: 104). Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero*, portrays the protagonist, Prophet Jero, as charlatan who attempts to achieve his ambition as an important and distinctive prophet by appearing immaculate in a velvet cape, which he had not yet paid for, and articulate in prophecy. His ultimate ambition is to be called the Velvet-hearted Jeroboam, Immaculate Jero, and Articulate Hero of Christ's Crusade. The scene starts with Prophet Jero, a much altered man with his clothes torn and his face bleeding, asking his Assistant, Brother Chume, to dismiss the congregation. In their discussions, it was revealed, to the reader or audience, that it was Brother Chume's wife that Prophet Jero had an unpleasant encounter with that morning. It was also revealed that, initially, the prophet was not aware that that woman was Brother Chume's wife. Ironically, Brother Chume had come to report the wife's cruelty to the prophet oblivious of the fact that Jero was actual the man the wife had forced him to carry her to his place to collect the money she was owed. Brother Chume needed the prophet's advice on how to discipline the wife and would be glad to exchange his own marital troubles with the prophet's crosses. Paradoxically, the prophet's advice changed from prayer and forgiveness to punishment and the use of whip as soon as Jero realised whose Chume's wife was. In the next subsection, I intend to examine the relationship between linguistic form and literary form as some kind of discourse.

The Interface Between Linguistics and Literary Works

Linguistics, the scientific study of language, seems to be concerned with all aspects of description, analysis and explication of the form, structure and function of language in theory and application. In this regard, it seems appropriate to examine the form, structure and function of language in literary works. By this approach, it may be possible to provide a significantly illuminating insight into the interface between linguistics and literature as a verbal art. Since all uses, forms and functions are of interest in linguistics and its application, the use of language in literary works, such as drama, prose and poetry, appears to be one of

the most significant expressions of human social and emotional communication. This communication is seen to take the form of verbal and non-verbal art that is embedded in the mutual, collective and common values, knowledge, practices et cetera of the speech community of the interlocutors. Thus all literary uses of language may be described as exposition of linguistic discourse. Nigel Fabb's explication of the literary form is instructive as follows: "Verbal behaviour is the production of texts, products which have verbal form in the media of writing or speech. Some of those texts are verbal art, also called "literature": they are literary texts. Literary texts have linguistic form because they are texts (the product of verbal behaviour), and they also have literary form (Fabb 1997:1-2).

Boulton (1977: 1) makes a bold attempt to distinguish drama from other forms of literature in his insightful argument that:

There is an enormous difference between a play and any other form of literature. A play is not really a piece of literature. A true play is three-dimensional; it is literature that walks and talks before our eyes. It is not intended that the eye shall perceive marks on paper and the imagination turn them into sights, sounds and actions; the text of the play is meant to be translated into sights, sounds and actions which occur literally and physically on stage. Though in fact plays are often read in silence, if we are to study drama at all intelligently we must keep this in mind.

What Boulton (1977: 97) seems to point out succinctly is that "A PLAY is its dialogue". What is important here is that, in a play, characters use language pragmatically as in real life unlike in other genres like prose or narrative poetry where the personae is the narrator talking about himself and/or others. The narrator here may be the first person, omniscient, third person or effaced narrator. The point is thus that the audience or the reader/hearer is exposed to fictional scenarios through the eyes and words of the narrator. In a play, the verbal communication involves verbal exchanges that can be described as interactional or transactional in nature. The success of this communication may be said to depend largely on whether or not the hearer /listener understands the message or information the speaker intends to convey. This idea is well noted by Fabb (1997:10) when he argues that communication may sometime be imprecise and, therefore, unsuccessful.

Communication can be vague. For example the speaker may say 'my love is a red red rose'. The hearer may use this as evidence that the speaker intends to tell him that the loved person is beautiful, precious, will not live forever, and so on: the analogy with a flower means that various characteristics of the flower will be carried over to the loved person. Successful communication involves the hearer reconstructing some of these thoughts and attributing them to the speaker: the communication is successful with different sets of thoughts. There is no single tightly constrained set of meanings intended, just some sets of meanings which can be inferred from the utterance.

Thus one can assume, based on Fabb's argument, that the utterances of the protagonists and antagonists in plays can be studied using relevant theories of or concepts in pragmatics. Insights from an application of pragmatic theories and concepts, such as presupposition and implicature, ultimately provide some useful illumination in one's attempt to understand how language is interpreted and understood by interlocutors. A pragmatic analysis of the literary form should be as informative, insightful and discursive as a study of any other form of language use. This assumption is premised on the argument that a valid theory of or concept in language must be able to account for all or at least most of the possible recurrent or regular or irregular patterns as well as available choices. Hence if a theory of language is able to account for one form or function of language it should be able to account for all other forms or functions (see Halliday 1973).

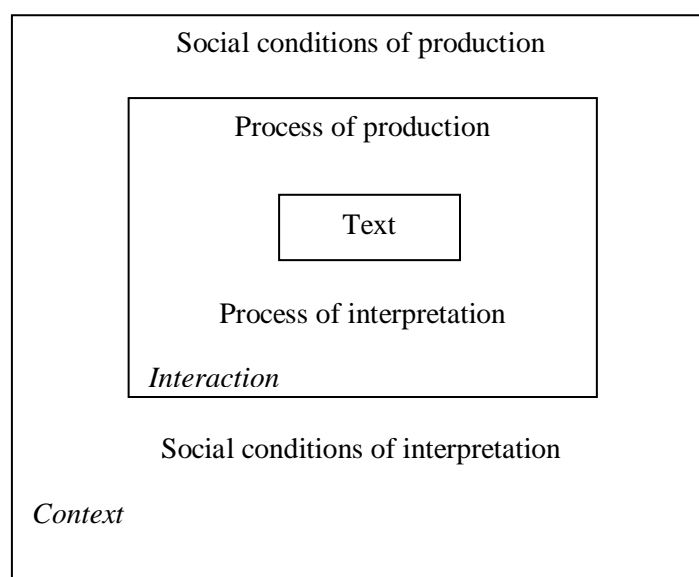
This point is germane here because of the fact that I am primarily interested in 'understanding how a particular function of language is determined linguistically' (see Birch 1989:119). In this regard, I am talking about the literary function of language. Grice's maxims

of cooperation may be relevant here since speakers must first cooperate before they can communicate. And the point is that, whether in life or in fiction, cooperative principle seems to come to play. Thus, as a matter of fact, it comes to play in all cases of verbal or sometimes non-verbal exchanges or discourses (see Jianmin 1999: 8). In essence, in all aspects of verbal communication or discourse, Grice's cooperative principle tends to be applicable but for this study only presupposition is employed because it tends to be both adequate and appropriate to explicate the goal as well as the aim of this paper.

In every communication, the interlocutors tend to be concerned with the way information is organized. Thus any form of communication, such as dialogues, poetry, drama, prose, memos, letters, commentaries, etc. in any linguistic form or language can also be described as a piece of discourse.

In his work, *Language and Power*, Fairclough (2001: 16, 18–19) provides a fascinating conception of language as discourse, language as a form of social practice. In an attempt to make clear what discourse is, he differentiates discourse from text. To him, "a text is a product rather than a process – a product of the process of text production." In his work, the term, discourse, is used to refer to the whole process of social interaction of which a text is just one element – the visible, final one – of discourse. This process is said to include both process of production and process of interpretation, for which the text is a resource. In this regard, drama is taken as a text.

Thus a dramatic discourse may also be seen as involving two types of social conditions: (1) social condition of production and (2) social conditions of interpretation; which relate to three different "levels" of social organization, the level of the social situation, or the immediate social environment in which the discourse occurs; the level of the social institution which constitutes a wider matrix for the discourse; and the level of the society as a whole. In sum, discourse can be described as the relationship between texts, interactions and contexts. Fairclough (2001: 25) illustrates this in the following diagram:



On the basis of Fairclough's (2001) illuminating argument, drama is the most immediate, impactful type of discourse.

An Overview of Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero* as a Dramatic Work

The play, *The Trials of Brother Jero*, was first published in Great Britain in 1964 by Oxford University Press. The Nigerian edition was published in 1981 by Spectrum Books Limited. The cast comprises the following: Jeroboam (Brother Jero), a Beach Diviner; Old Prophet, his mentor; Chume, assistant to Jeroboam; Amope, his wife; a trader; the Penitent, a woman; the angry woman, a tough mamma; a young girl; a drummer boy; a man and an old couple (worshippers) In the play, Brother Jero had a fine velvet cape, but he had not yet paid for it. This is the origin of one of the troubles referred to in the abstract.

Methodology/ Presentation of Corpus

The corpus of my analysis is taken from pages 30 to 32 of the text (the main part of Scene Three), *The Trials of Brother Jero* and it is attached as appendix. Only a sample of my data is actually extracted for the purpose of my analysis since it tends to suffice for the explication of pragmatic features. The turns in speaking are serially numbered. Each text of the corpus is organised into clausal structures. These are then organised into their phrasal and categorial units in the analysis. However, since we are dealing with discourse, only the clausal and phrasal structures are considered for analysis. The excerpt is as follows:

(Brother Jero has just come in view. They all rush to help him back into the circle. He is a much altered man, his clothes torn and his face bleeding.)

1. JERO *(slowly and painfully):*

Clause 1: Thank you, brothers, sisters.

Clause 2: Brother Chume, kindly tell these friends

Clause 3; to leave me.

Clause 4: I must pray for the soul of that sinful woman.

Clause 5: I must say a personal prayer for her. (*Chume ushers* them off. They go

reluctantly, chattering excited.)

Clause 6: Prayers this **evening**, as usual.

Clause 7: Late afternoon.

2. CHUME *(shouting after):*

Clause 1: Prayers late afternoon as always.

Clause 2: Brother Jeroboam says

Clause 3: God keep you till then.

Clause 4: Are you alright, Brother Jero?

3. JERO

Clause 1: Who would have thought that....

Clause 2: she would dare lift her hands against a prophet of God!

4. CHUME

Clause: Women are a plague, brother.

5. JERO

Clause 1: I had the premonition this morning

Clause 2: that a woman would be my downfall today.

Clause 3: But I thought of it only in the spiritual sense.

6. CHUME

Clause: Now you see how it is, brother Jero.

7. JERO

Clause 1: From the moment I looked out of my window this morning,

Clause 2: I have been tormented one way or another by the Daughters of Discord.

8. CHUME (*eagerly*):

Clause 1: That is how it is with me, Brother.

Clause 2: Every day.

Clause 3: Every morning and night.

Clause 4: Only this morning my wife made me

Cause 5: take her to the house of some poor man,

Clause 6: who she says owes her money.

Clause 7: She loaded enough on my bicycle

Clause 8: to lay a siege for a week

Clause 9: and all the thanks I got was abuse.

9. JERO

Clause 1: Indeed it must be a trial, Brother Chume...

Clause 2: and it requires... (*He becomes suspicious.*)

Clause 3: Brother Chume, did you say that

Clause 4: your wife went

Clause 5: to make camp only this morning at the house of a ...of someone

Clause 6: who owes her money?

10. CHUME

Clause 1: Yes,

Clause 2: I took her there myself.

11. JERO

Clause 1: Er...indeed. (*Coughs.*)

Clause 2: Is ...your wife a trader?

12. CHUME

Clause 1: Yes.

Clause 2: Petty trading, you know.

Clause 3: Wool, silk, cloth and all that stuff.

13. JERO

Clause 1: Indeed.

Clause 2: Quite an enterprising woman. (*Hems*)

Clause 3: Er...where was the house of this man...

Clause 4: I mean, this man

Clause 5: who owes her money?

14. CHUME

Clause 1: Not very far from here.

Clause 2: Ajete settlement,

Clause 3: a mile or so from here.

Clause 4: I did not even know

Clause 5: the place existed until today.

15. JERO (*to himself*):

Clause: So that is your wife....

16. CHUME

Clause: Did you speak, prophet?

17. JERO

Clause 1: No.

Clause 2: no.

Clause 3: I was only thinking of

Clause 4: how little women have changed since Eve,

Clause 5: since Delilah,

Clause 6: since Jezebel.

Clause 7: But we must be strong at heart.

Cause 8: I have my own cross too, Brother Chume.

Clause 9: This morning alone I have been thrice in conflict with the Daughters of
Discord.

Clause 10: First there was...

Clause 11: no, never mind that.

Clause 12: There is another

Clause 13: who crosses my path every day.

Clause 14: Goes to swim just over there

Clause 15: and then waits for me to be in the midst of my meditation before my eyes....

18. CHUME (*to himself, with deep feeling*):

Clause: I'd willingly change crosses with you.

19. JERO

Clause: What, Brother Chume?

20. CHUME

Clause: I was only praying.

21. JERO

Clause 1: Ah.

Clause 2: That is the only way.

Clause 3: But er ...I wonder really

Clause 4: what the will of God would be in this matter.

Clause 5: After all, Christ himself was not averse to using the whip

Clause 6: when occasion demanded it.

22. CHUME (*eagerly*):

Clause: No, he did not hesitate.

23. JERO

Clause 1: In that case, since, Brother Chume, your wife seems such a wicked, willful sinner,

Clause2: I think....

24. CHUME

Clause 1: Yes,

Clause 2: Holy one...?

25. JERO

Clause: You must take her home tonight....

26. CHUME

Clause: Yes....

27. JERO

Clause: And beat her.

28. CHUME (*kneeling, clasps Jero's hand in his*):

Clause: Prophet!

29. JERO

Clause 1: Remember,

Clause 2: it must be done in your own house.

Clause 3: Never show the discord within you family to the wor.. .ld

Clause 4: Take her home and beat her. (*Chume leaps up and gets his bike.*)

Presupposition in Dramatic Discourse

In any linguistic enterprise, effective communication tends to depend, to a large extent, on the shared knowledge or values that exist or prevail contextually among interlocutors. It is this shared knowledge or values that enhance the interlocutors' correct interpretation of each other's utterances and messages as well as their understanding by their audience. It is on this assumption that the pragmatic notion of presupposition rests (see Fairclough, 2001; Osoba, 2014b). George Yule regards the assumption that the hearer and the speaker have about what they assume to be true as presupposition. To him, "When a speaker uses referring expressions like *this*, *he* or *Shakespeare*, in normal circumstances, she is working with an assumption that the hearer knows which referent is intended.... What a speaker assumes is true or is known by the hearer can be described as a presupposition (Yule 1996:134).

As noted earlier, linguistic messages are designed based on the assumptions about what hearers are already familiar with. These assumptions are based on the shared knowledge or values that exist among interlocutors but may sometimes be mistaken. Yule (1996:132), Palmer (1996:166), Mey (2001: 28) and Levinson (2003: 167–176) provide illustrative accounts of the notion of presupposition. Levinson illuminates a set of important distinctions and alternative approaches adopted by linguists as follows:

1. the distinction between logical implication or entailment and presupposition (in the work of Frege and Strawson)
2. the contrast between assertion and presupposition (again in the work of Frege and Strawson)
3. the issue of whether it was proper to think of presupposition as a relation between sentences (as Frege sometimes did) between statements (as Strawson held) or between speakers on the one hand and assumptions on the other (as Frege did, on other occasions).
4. the issue of whether the apparent ambiguity of negation between a presupposition-denying sense and a presupposition-preserving sense is to be thought of as a scope distinction (a structural ambiguity) or lexical ambiguity.
5. the possibility that apparently background assumptions, presuppositions, could in fact be viewed as assertions of entailments (meaning that one thing is part of another thing), on a par with the rest of a sentence's meaning(Russell's approach) (Levinson 2003: 173).

In addition, he lists a certain range of presuppositional phenomena that had been adduced in the philosophical literature which includes the presuppositions of

- a. singular terms, e.g. definite descriptions, proper names

b. quantified noun phrases, e.g. "All of John's children" can be claimed to presuppose "John has children" (Strawson 1952).

c. temporal clauses (as in Frege's example quoted above).

d. changes of state verb: e.g. "Bertrand has stopped beating his wife" can be claimed to presuppose "Bertrand had been beating his wife" (Sellar 1954).]

From his explication of the various approaches to and distinctions (Frege and Strawson, Strawson (1952), Russell, Sellar (1954) of presupposition, Levinson (2003) identifies two distinct kinds of presupposition in natural languages: (1) *semantic presuppositions* expounded by Strawson (1952) and (2) *pragmatic presupposition* as expounded by Keenan (1971).

In the summary of his explication of semantic presupposition, Levinson (2003: 204) clearly argues and asserts that: "Semantic theories of presupposition are not viable for the simple reason that semantics is concerned with specification of invariant stable meanings that can be associated with expressions".

For this reason, and others catalogued by Stalnaker (1974); Kempson (1975), Wilson (1975) and Boer and Lycan (1978), semantic theories of presupposition have been abandoned and replaced or substituted with *pragmatic presupposition* whose basic concepts are appropriateness (or felicity) and mutual knowledge or common ground or joint assumption. This is indicated in his definition which states that:

An utterance A pragmatically presupposes a proposition B if A is appropriate and only if B is mutually known by participants.

Thus by uttering a sentence whose presuppositions are, and are known to be, false, we are merely producing an inappropriate utterance, rather than (on the semantic view) to have asserted a sentence that was neither true nor false (see Osoba 2014b). The point, as noted by Fairclough (2001:127), is that "Presuppositions are not properties of texts; they are an aspect of text producers' interpretations of intertextual context." Thus the utterances of dramatic personae may be accepted as been appropriate as textual discourse. The approach I have adopted in the analysis of Soyinka's play is that of *Pragmatic Presupposition* for the reason that it is more relevant and provides a sound basis for the explication and analysis of my dramatic discourse corpus.

Analysis

It is important to note that several presuppositions can be read into an utterance based on its historical series or backgrounds. According to Fairclough, it is also important to note that "As in the case of situational context, discourse participants may arrive at roughly the same interpretations or different ones, and the interpretation of the more powerful participant may be imposed upon others" (Fairclough 2001: 127). This provides the foregrounding of the analysis of Soyinka's play.

Among the presuppositions in Clause 1 of Utterance 1, "Thank you, brothers, sisters." are: "I am grateful to you, brethren.", "I appreciate your kind gesture.", "You are nice brethren", "You brethren deserve gratitude or appreciation." These presuppositions are deductive from our common knowledge of the historical context of the utterance. Having waited for their prophet for hours, the brethren must be appreciated for their patience. But the tone of the utterance, which sounds hesitant, may also presuppose the need for them to leave

the prophet alone. Hence, the presuppositions of "Please go now."; "It is time you leave."; "See you soon." can also be read into the utterance.

Those presuppositions make the next two clauses in the utterance appropriate. Thus Clause 2 reads "Brother Chume, kindly tell these friends..." and Clause 3 "...to leave me". What is presupposed in Clause 1 is explicitly stated in Clauses 2 and 3 of Utterance 1. But Clauses 4 and 5, which read "I must pray for the soul of that sinful woman." and "I must say a personal prayer for her", have different presuppositions which can only be interpreted or understood in the light of the previous stage direction or non-verbal context which states that Brother Jero was *a much altered man with his clothes torn and his face bleeding* as he entered the stage. This presupposes that he had had a bad encounter before entering the church. From Clauses 4 and 5, his sad encounter with a sinful woman is presupposed. Other presuppositions such as "I am a prophet of God, who needs to pray for the souls of sinner so that God can forgive them their sins."; "As a prophet, I need to pray to be able to forgive the woman who has done harm to me"; "I am a true prophet, I pray and I forgive." Similarly, Clauses 6 and 7, "Prayers this **evening**, as usual." and "Late afternoon." simply presuppose that Prophet Jero prays regularly especially in the evening or late afternoon. This seems to restate the previous presuppositions, "I am a true prophet, I pray."

In sum, Utterance 1, with its seven clauses, can be said to presuppose that Prophet Jero is a true man of God who appreciates his congregation, forgives those who offend him and prays regularly, especially in the evening, with his congregation. This presupposition is what Brother Chume, his interlocutor, is likely to understand Brother Jero's first utterance to be.

Utterance 2 is made by Brother Chume in reaction to Brother Jero's first utterance. The utterance contains four clauses. The first two simply re-echoes the presupposition in Brother Jero's first utterance. The third clause is a prayer which presupposes that Brother Chume also prays for and wishes the congregation well. The last clause is a direct question which presupposes that Brother Jero is not alright.

The third utterance is made by Brother Jero and contains two clauses. Clause 1: "Who would have thought that..." and Clause 2: "she would dare lift her hands against a prophet of God!" have the presupposition of "No one lifts their hands against a prophet of God." And since the woman in question had lifted her hands on Prophet Jero two things could be also presupposed by the reader or audience: (1) The woman did not know that Brother Jero is a prophet and (2) Brother Jero is not a true prophet. These two presuppositions are deductive based on the historical context as well as the textuality of the third utterance. It is only in this context that the utterance can be appropriate. The fourth utterance is made by Chume and contains only one clause. It is an explicit statement about Chume's general perception of a woman which presupposes that women are a nuisance! This may also presuppose that Chume is married; that Chume's wife is troublesome. These presuppositions may be seen as foregrounding future revelations about the relationship between Chume and his wife as well as the relationship between her and Brother Jero.

Utterance 5 is made by Brother Jero and contains three clauses. The first two clauses presuppose that the Brother actually expects a sad encounter with a woman that morning. In the third clause, the presupposition of a spiritual encounter rather than a physical one is deductive. It is also presupposed, based on our common knowledge of the Bible, that Brother Jero must have a temptation, that morning, through a woman which would cause him to sin. This interpretation is appropriate based on the foregrounding of the fourth utterance made by Brother Chume. But Utterance 6, made by Brother Chume, contains only one clause and tends to reinforce the presupposition that women are evil in his preceding utterance 4. It also

presupposes that his perception that women are naturally or generally bad is true. This verbal interaction between Jero and Chume follows the principle of conversational turn-taking such that when Jero makes a statement Chume re-echoes it, performs it or responds to it in the most appropriate way. Thus in Utterance 7, which contains only two clauses, Jero reminisces about the premonition he had had before his encounter with the "sinful woman", in Utterance 1 Clause 4, who is subsequently presupposed as one of the "Daughters of Discord" in Utterance 7 Clause 2. Little wonder, he must say a personal prayer for her. From this, it becomes clear to the audience that Jero is oblivious of the fact that the woman he had an encounter with is Chume's wife. Thus Jero's ignorance is presupposed in that light. Paradoxically, Chume, Jero's Assistant, himself is unaware that the "sinful woman" and one of the 'Daughters of Discord' is his own wife.

However, Jero's ignorance soon vanishes in Chume's response in Utterance 8. This utterance, which contains nine clauses, narrates Chume's irritating experience because how he was coerced to carry her and her luggage on his bicycle to lodge in front of one of her debtors' house without any gratitude or appreciation. Thus, in this utterance, Chume's ignorance of the wife's debtor as Jero is presupposed. It implicitly expresses the presupposition that Chume's wife is a trader who is owed by some of her customers. It also expresses the presupposition that Chume's wife is a troublesome woman. Clause 8 of the utterance presupposes that she is not only worrisome but also warlike.

Disappointingly, this account of his sad experience with his wife is dismissed and termed as a "trial" by Jero in Utterance 9 Clause 1. The audience is most likely to interpret this response to mean that Jero is a true prophet who follows the biblical injunction of forgiveness and seeing sad experiences as trials that must be patiently endured. Clause 2 is an unfinished statement which may be seen as an ellipsis that can be filled as "...patiently endured." This seems to lead to a pause as a result of Jero's sudden realization of the fact that the woman whom Chume refers may actually be the sinful woman whom he owes and who had earlier assaulted him in his house. Thus clause 1 presupposes that Jero is a true prophet while clause 2 presupposes his suspicion of who Chume's wife is. As a result of this suspicion, Jero asks Chume a direct question in clauses 3 to 6. Chume's affirmative response in Utterance 10 clearly confirms Jero's suspicion to be true which presupposes that Jero is not the man of God that Chume regards him to be. The presuppositions of shock and surprise are expressed in the following Utterance 11 in which Jero deduces correctly that that woman is Chume's wife in the first clause and asks a question in the second to confirm his initial suspicion that she is a trader to whom he owes money. This is the "someone", Chume is not sure of in Utterance 9 clause 6, "who owes her".

Socially and contextually, Chume's ignorance is presupposed in two ways. One, he is ignorant of the identity of the man who owes his wife money; two, he is ignorant of the fact the man is Brother Jero. But Jero, through his subtle interrogation of Chume in Utterance 9 Clause 6 and Utterance 11 Clause 2, is able to deduce and confirm that the woman is Chume's wife and a trader. In spite of this deduction and confirmation, Jero wants to be doubly sure. So he asks further probing questions in utterance 13 to ascertain the exact location of the debtor's house. Chume's answer in Utterance 14 makes Jero certain that that woman is actually brother Chume's wife. This knowledge, in a way, seems to give Jero leeway because, earlier, Chume had complained about his ungracious, ungrateful and combative wife to him. This is perhaps why he mutters the clause, "So that is your wife..." in Utterance 15 to himself but loud enough for Chume to notice. Thus this utterance presupposes that Jero is now aware that the "sinful woman" is Chume's wife. Naturally, it is impossible for him, as a self-acclaimed prophet, to suggest that a man should seek revenge for an evil done to him whether justly or

unjustly. Little wonder, before now, he had counselled Chume to accept his predicament as "a trial" which presupposes that both Jero and Chume belong to the Christian faith. And, perhaps, this is why when Chume then asks in Utterance 16, "Did you speak, prophet?" he quickly, in the first three clauses of Utterance 17, denies speaking claiming that he, Jero, "... was only thinking of how little women have changed since Eve, since Delilah..." But the audience and Jero, himself, know that he has told a lie. Thus, to the audience, Utterance 16 presupposes that Jero is not the true Christian he claims.

The presuppositions of insincerity, lust and charlatanism become visible as Jero, in Utterance 17 Clause 9, begins to narrate his encounter, "This morning alone I have been thrice in conflict with the Daughters of Discord." Socially, we can interpret his utterance as mumbo jumbo, a deliberate attempt to deceive Chume. This is because he lumps a trader who makes legitimate efforts to collect the money he owes her with two other young women who are passersby after whom he lusts. He wants Chume to believe that these are trials and crosses and that is why, in Utterance 18, Chume says he will be glad to exchange crosses with the prophet. This might presuppose that Chume had other things in mind. This, as contextually expected, is promptly denied when Jero questions him in Utterance 19. Chume's response in utterance 20, "I was only praying", is not surprising. Both the prophet and his assistant are now confirmed as liars and charlatans because, earlier, Jero had attempted to deceive Chume and, now, Chume attempts to deceive Jero.

The presupposition of insincerity is further heightened and buttressed by subsequent utterances of Brother Jero. For instance, in the first two clauses of Utterance 21, Jero concurs with Chume that the only solution to their trials and crosses is "...praying." But from the third clause of the same utterance, he is no longer sure or certain what the will of God would be. This perhaps prepares the leeway for him awkward, who initial adverb needed, initially preaches tolerance, endurance, forgiveness and prayerfulness, to now advocate punishment for the "sinful woman" who has now become a "willful sinner". Thus insincerity and hypocrisy are both presupposed here because Jero simply demonstrates here that he does not want to pay the money he owes Chume's wife but also wants her punished, though indirectly, for daring to ask for her money. This is why he counsels Chume, in the last clause of Utterance 29, to "Take her home and beat her." His reason for suggesting that is "Never show the discord within you family to the world." This is because he wants to cover up his indebtedness to Chume's wife. Up to this point, Chume is unaware of the relationship between Brother Jero and his wife. His assumption is that Jero has given a sincere instruction as a prophet of God. Chume's simplicity and idiocy are presupposed in his own utterances that describes Jero as the "Holy one..." (Utterance 24) and "Prophet" (Utterance 28). This is the height of callousness demonstrated by many so-called prophets in our society.

Conclusion

Our examination of presuppositions in the 29 utterances of the extract from Wole Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero* points to the fact that it is possible to explicate literary/dramatic discourses from a linguistic perspective. Just as in real life, presuppositions abound in the dramatic text that we examined. The initial utterances of the interlocutors trigger in the reader or audience positive presuppositions that are appropriate in light of their religious setting. Thus the social background of the characters helps in our understanding and interpretations of the presuppositions inherent in their utterances. For instance, the presuppositions of appreciation, meekness and prayerfulness are initially portrayed. But gradually, the presupposition that women are evil is expressed. Chume's ignorance of the true relationship

between Jero and his wife is offered to the audience for them to construct a presupposition. Jero's ignorance that the woman he had had an encounter with earlier that is Chume's wife is also presupposed. In the end, after his knowledge of the fact that the "sinful woman" is Chume's wife, Jero's callousness is presupposed. All in all, an insightful interpretation of the dramatic text is provided, by this linguistic analysis of the excerpt of Wole Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero*, showing a subtle interface between linguistic and literary methods.

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Appendix

(Brother Jero has just come in view. They all rush to help him back into the circle. He is a much altered man, his clothes torn and his face bleeding.)

JERO (slowly and painfully): Thank you, brothers, sisters. Brother Chume, kindly tell these friends to leave me. I must pray for the soul of that sinful woman. I must say a personal prayer for her. (*Chume ushers them off. They go reluctantly, chattering excited.*) Prayers this evening, as usual. Late afternoon.

CHUME (*shouting after*): Prayers late afternoon as always. Brother Jeroboam says God keep you till then. Are you alright, Brother Jero?

JERO Who would have thought that she would dare lift her hands against a prophet of God!

CHUME Women are a plague, brother.

JERO I had the premonition this morning that a woman would be my downfall today. But I thought of it only in the spiritual sense.

CHUME Now you see how it is, brother Jero.

JERO From the moment I looked out of my window this morning, I have been tormented one way or another by the Daughters of Discord.

CHUME (*eagerly*): That is how it is with me, Brother. Every day. Every morning and night. Only this morning my wife made take her to the house of some poor man, who she says owes her morning. She loaded enough on my bicycle to lay a siege for a week, and all the thanks I got was abuse.

JERO Indeed it must be a trial, Brother Chume...and it requires... (*He becomes suspicious.*) Brother Chume, did you say that your wife went to make camp only this morning at the house of a ...of someone who owes her money?

CHUME Yes, I took her there myself.

JERO Er...indeed. (*Coughs.*) Is ...your wife a trader?

CHUME Yes. Petty trading, you know. Wool, silk, cloth and all that stuff.

JERO Indeed. Quite an enterprising woman. (*Hems.*) Er...where was the house of this man...I mean, this man who owes her money?

CHUME Not very far from here. Ajete settlement, a mile or so from here. I did not even know the place existed until today.

JERO (*to himself*): So that is your wife....

CHUME Did you speak, prophet?

JERO No. no. I was only thinking of how little women have changed since Eve, since Delilah, since Jezebel. But we must be strong at heart. I have my own cross too, Brother Chume. This morning alone I have been thrice in conflict with the Daughters of Discord. First there was ... no, never mind that. There is another who crosses my path every day. Goes to swim just over there and then waits for me to be in the midst of my meditation before my eyes....

CHUME (*to himself, with deep feeling*): I'd willingly change crosses with you.

JERO What, Brother Chume?

CHUME I was only praying.

JERO Ah. That is the only way. But er ...I wonder really what the will of God would be in this matter. After all, Christ himself was not averse to using the whip when occasion demanded it.

CHUME (*eagerly*): No, he did not hesitate.

JERO In that case, since, Brother Chume, your wife seems such a wicked, willful sinner, I think....

CHUME Yes, Holy one...?

JERO You must take her home tonight....

CHUME Yes....

JERO And beat her.

CHUME (*kneeling, clasps Jero's hand in his*): Prophet!

JERO Remember, it must be done in your own house. Never show the discord within you family to the world. Take her home