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AN ETHNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF SELECTED YORUBA PROVERBS IN POLITICAL MEDIA CHATS: A CASE STUDY OF GOVERNOR OLAGUNSOYE OYINLOLA

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ABSTRACT

Language is a powerful tool politicians employ to woo the hearts of electorates and sell their candidature to them. Governor Olagunsoye Oyinlọla, an astute politician and erstwhile governor of Ọṣun State, Nigeria, is one of such politicians who demonstrate their linguistic prowess during their interaction with the masses. Much scholarly attention has been devoted to the analysis of proverbs in Yoruba language in particular as well as in other languages. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, none of such works focused on the proverbs used by Ex-Governor Olagunsoye Oyinlọla in the programme 'Open Forum'. This study examines the use of proverbs by Governor Olagunsoye Oyinlọla on a television programme, 'Open Forum' aired on Ọṣun State Broadcasting Corporation (OSBC), within the purview of Dell Hyme's Ethnography of Communication in order to bring to the fore, the aesthetic and persuasive values inherent in proverbs as a means of beautifying language. The data analysed in this study comprised twenty purposively selected proverbs employed by Oyinlọla on the programme. The analysis was based on the appropriateness of the proverbs to their contexts of usage. These proverbs were classified into 4 groups which are: (i) Proverbs that depict some Yoruba beliefs (ii) Proverbs that warn and caution (iii) Proverbs that express power-relationship, and (iv) Proverbs associated with self-evaluation. The first group of proverbs was used to justify some of the activities of his administration while in government and to pledge his commitment to improving the lots of the people he was governing. The second group was used to warn those who were vandalising government's infrastructure and the opposition party. The third group of proverbs was used to express disappointment at the attitude of the opposition party, respect and veneration for the retired military officers and the traditional rulers who were precursors of modern democracy. He used the fourth group of proverbs to assess his performance in office. Linguistic skills entail more than the mastery of a linguistic code that allows the language user to produce sentences that are grammatical, they also involve knowing how to use language, spiced with proverbs and idiomatic expressions, in different social settings.

Keywords: Yoruba Proverbs, Ethnography of Communication, Open Forum, Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlọla, Ọṣun State of Nigeria

1. Introduction

Every human society has devised a means of coping with everyday linguistic dynamics through the use of proverbs. Proverbs constitute collective representation of their way of life. They form part of the core aspects of discourse in African societies. African proverbs are short, witty and pithy statements with implicit truths. They are a distillation of the wisdom of the people derived over the ages from careful observation of everyday experience, involving human beings, nature and animals, as well as natural phenomena and social events.

People's rich heritage, experience, custom, oral tradition and values carried down the ages are vividly captured in proverbs. The significance of proverbs as an art does not lie in their literary value alone, but also rests on the plank of language use and social relevance. Indeed, language underlies all other devices employed in literature, oral or written. This work is an attempt to analyse selected Yoruba proverbs used by a politician to explain certain controversial issues to his people during his tenure as governor in his state.

The effective mastery of proverbs helps to facilitate good interaction and better understanding among people in the society. Ventola (1979) opines that 'to communicate appropriately with the members of the society, it is not enough to learn to formulate message intelligibly, something more is needed, a knowledge

of what kind of codes, channels and expressions to use in what kind of situation, to what kind of people'. For the sociolinguist therefore, it is important to know the language and study it as a formal system, as well as a means of social interaction and to know the conventions of use which govern the selection of well-formed sentences to a particular situation. This is the central concern of sociolinguistics and that is why it has been described as the study of language in operation.

2. Literature Review

Literature abounds on proverbs in different cultures as a result of this fact; one may be tempted to conclude that there is virtually nothing new in the aspect of research on proverbs. For instance, see Finnegan (1970), Delaṇọ (1972), Ogunsina (1983), Olatunji (1984), Nwachukwu (1990), Mieder (1993; 1994; 2015), Seitel (1994), Akporobaro and Emovon (1994), Oyishoma (2003), Yina (2004), Magwire (2005), Hymes (1962), Oluwadoro (2017a) and so on. The ethnographic framework has equally been used in the analysis of songs as well as other discourse. Oluwadoro & Ajayi (2016) and Oluwadoro (2017b) belong to this category.

Olujinmi (2012) opines that proverb is a universal phenomenon, globally valued from the ancient to the present age. As a result, it has attracted the attention of many scholars from different disciplines, such as religion, philosophy, history and particularly, linguistics and language studies. An attempt is made here to summarise some of the works. A few of these works look at proverbs in different cultures, while some of them examine proverbs specifically in Yoruba cultures. For example, Seitel (1969), Kirshenbiatt-Gimbleth (1973), Finnegan (1981), and Akporobaro, *et al.* (1994) have examined the concept in different cultures in Africa and beyond. While Finnegan (1981) examines proverbs generally in African culture, Seitel (1969) focuses on the social use of proverbs from a metaphorical perspective. Kirshenbiatt-Gimbleth (1973) takes a semantic perspective of proverbs generally. Akporobaro, *et al.* (1994) examined how proverbs are used in different countries of Africa. According to them, the Lamba of Central Africa use proverbs to make oblique and tactful remarks, especially in a situation calling for advice.

The Nyanja of Malawi and Zambia, on their own apply proverbs for oracular purposes, designed only for the comprehension of the elderly. The Fante of Ghana deploy proverbs as an instrument of child rearing, entertainment and value orientation. The Akan of Ghana see proverbs as sources of aesthetic composition in communication as well as an instrument of persuasion, social recognition and discourse embellishment. The Igbo in Nigeria see proverbs as a principal means of making points forcefully as well as channels through which images are communicated. They use proverbs to perform illuminative and corrective functions. They are also seen as the exclusive reserve of the wise and elderly people. Other writers and scholars like Chinua Achebe (1958; 1968) and Nwachukwu-Agbada (1990) have corroborated these views about Igbo proverbs.

Longman's Dictionary (2003) asserts that a proverb is a short, well-known statement that gives advice, or expresses something that is generally true. This view was supported by Baldick (2004). Some scholars have also studied Hausa proverbs. Some of these are: Kirk-Greene (1966), Bada (1995), Dahin (2002), Muhammad (2013), and Umma (2014). Bada (1995) examines Hausa proverbs (Kari Magana) from a literary perspective of their theories, functions and poetic devices. Kirk (1966) did a compilation of five hundred Hausa proverbs. Auchan (2001) did a similar compilation on English and Hausa proverbs with specific reference to the Kaduna variety of Hausa. Umma (2014) explores the potentials of Hausa proverbs as a pedagogical tool in learning Hausa as a second language. Muhammad (2013) and Jang (1994) studied Hausa proverbs from a syntactic perspective of their structure.

Previous studies on Yoruba proverbs focused on compilation,

interpretation and translation into English. See Crowther (1852), Delano (1966), Bada (1979), Bello and Olowookere (2003).Beier and Gbadamosi (1959) opine that the ideas contained in Yoruba proverbs reflect their worldview. They discuss the veiled language in which the moral intent is conveyed as well as the feelings contained in proverbs. As for Bamgbose (1968) and Olatunji (1984) they focus on the analysis of the structure of Yoruba proverbs. Raji-Oyelade (2004) is a post-modernist analysis of Yoruba proverbs. Ojoade (2004) examines the internationalism rooted in proverbs. Adejumo (2009) attempts an analysis of Yoruba fauna proverbs in relation to the issue of power and authority. Adeleke (2009) discusses the invaluable nature of proverbs in the historiographic studies of Yoruba. Olujinmi (2012) sees proverbs as a veritable mine in which one can acquire economic empowerment and management for successful business enterprise in the contemporary society. All these scholars view Yoruba proverbs as the property of the society, so that every effective user must rely on the society to draw volumes of materials from observable relationships and experiences existing within the society of human, animal and climate. They equally believe that in Yoruba society, proverbs constitute a powerful rhetorical device for shaping moral consciousness, opinions and beliefs.

Okekunle (2014) examines the sociolinguistic functions of proverbs in Yoruba and other cultures. According to her, they contribute a repertoire of axioms encoding cultural beliefs and epitomising cultures. They express not only a people's inherited wisdom and code of behaviour; they also give information, advice, rebuke, praise and lamentation. They are derived from and bound by socio-cultural experience. Matters are easily handled and rifts settled by people who are versed in proverbs. With regard to the sources of proverbs, scholars believe that many of them are from myths, religious beliefs, stories of wars in the past, historical, cultural values and so on.

Attempts have also been made by scholars to classify proverbs on the basis of the functions they perform in the society. For instance, Olatunji (1984) believes that proverbs perform a prescriptive function in that they outline a rule of conduct. According to him, proverbs serve as social charters, to praise and extol what the relevant society considers to be virtuous (e.g. integrity, respect for elders, consideration for others, cooperative attitude, hard work, tactfulness, honour and regard for promises made, etc.); as well as condemn vices (e.g. laziness, uninformed interference in other people's affairs, greed, pride, dishonesty and so on). Sodipe and Odejobi (1984) subdivide Yoruba proverbs into five categories. These are:

- Proverbs that advice
- Proverbs of explanation
- Proverbs of encouragement
- Proverbs of warning, and
- Proverbs of rebuke.

Apart from Sodipe and Odejobi (1984), other scholars have examined the issue of classifying proverbs according to the functions they perform. For example, Ademowo and Balogun (2004) examine the values of proverbs with regard to the concept of development in Africa. Ajayi, Lawal and Raji (1997) studied selected pairs of Yoruba proverbs from a pragmatic perspective. Olujinmi's (2012) utilitarian value of Yoruba proverbs to entrepreneurship agrees with his predecessors above on the significant functions of proverbs both to the Yoruba as well as other societies. Finally, it is noteworthy that a few scholars have also examined proverbs from Hymes' ethnographic perspective. Notable among such authors is Arewa and Dundes (1964). However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no scholar has examined the proverbs used by Prince Oyinlọla from an ethnographic perspective. He stands to be corrected. What the researcher has done in this work is to examine how Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlọla (former Governor of Osun State, Nigeria) has manipulated the Yoruba

language, embellished with proverbs to address different situations that arose during his governance of the state. As an astute politician, he used proverbs to woo the hearts of his people and sustain their support during his tenure. This is what this piece contributes to scholarship.

2.1 Background to the Study

Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlọla emerged as the Governor of Ọṣun State, Nigeria in April, 2003. In 2004, the Ọṣun State Broadcasting Corporation (OSBC), henceforth, OSBC introduced a 6 programme tagged 'GbàgedeỌrọ' (Open Forum). The basic aim of the programme was to give the governor the opportunity to talk to the citizens of the state about the activities of his government. The first few editions of the programme were conducted in the English language. But since an overwhelming majority of the citizens of Ọṣun State speak the Yoruba language, the medium of communication was changed to Yoruba. The Governor of the State then, Prince Oyinlọla featured on the programme answering questions posed by the citizens. It was held every last Saturday of each month.

As a linguist, the researcher was impressed by the Prince's ability to carry the native wisdom beyond the palace and his ability to add to his reservoir of proverbs, poetic language and folklores. His mastery of the Yoruba language spiced with appropriate proverbs is outstanding. He equally speaks impeccable English. His mastery of the Yoruba language (especially idiomatic expressions) was usually and quickly brought to the fore, whenever he needed to address the public. On several occasions, he had answered difficult questions with witty comments, using his good mastery of the Yoruba language to diffuse tension. It was this attribute that motivated the researcher to examine some of the proverbs used by the Prince from an intellectual perspective.

2.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The rate at which the youths of today neglect aspects of their cultures has been noted with dismay. Public figures, politicians, even the traditional rulers who are supposed to be custodians of the cultural heritage of their people are not helping matters by their attitude towards the native language. Some of those traditional rulers, for instance, have cultivated the habit of using English as the medium of addressing people during traditional festivals. Many politicians, who spoke the Yoruba language to canvas for the votes of the electorates, when elected into their offices, would switch to the use of English, thus excluding the people who elected them into office. This is what Bamgbose (2000) describes as language and exclusion. Adeniran (2005) and Owolabi (2006) equally frown at this attitude. The general aim of this paper is to examine how Prince Oyinlọla was able to manipulate the Yoruba language, embellished with proverbs to handle certain delicate issues during his tenure. The work has the objectives of analysing the proverbs used by this politician from an ethnographic perspective, examining their meanings in their various contexts and to discuss their appropriateness to the situations at hand.

3. Theoretical Framework

Hymes (1964) proposed what he refers to as ethnographic framework. The scholar was one of those who believe that communicative competence takes precedence over linguistic competence. According to him, ethnography of speaking (communication) accounts for the various factors that are involved in speaking. It describes all the factors that are relevant in understanding how a particular communicative event achieves its goals.

According to Holmes (2008:365-66), the analysis of communicative events involves the following components:

i. Genre or type of event: e.g. phone call, conversation, business meeting, lesson, interview, blog, political discourse.
ii. Topic of what we are talking about: e.g. holidays, sport, sociolinguistics,

politics.

iii. Purpose or function: the reason(s) for the talk e.g. to plan an event, to catch up socially, to teach something, to persuade someone to help you

iv. Setting: where the talk takes place – e.g. at home, in the classroom, in an office.

v. Key or emotional tone: e.g. serious, jocular, and sarcastic.

vi. Participants: characteristics of those present and their relationship – sex, age, social status, role and role relationship: e.g. mother-daughter, teacher-pupil, TV interviewer-interviewee and audience.

vii. Message form, code and/or channel: e.g. telephone, letter, email, language and language variety, non-verbal.

viii. Message content or specific details of what the communication is about: e.g. organising a time for a football match, describing how the tap works, explaining the activities of the government.

ix. Act sequence or ordering of speech acts e.g. greetings, meetings turn taking rules, ending a telephone conversation.

x. Rules for interaction or prescribed orders of speaking: e.g. who must speak first, who must respond to the celebrant at a wedding, who closes a business meeting.

xi. Norms for interpretation of what is going on: the common knowledge and shared understandings of the relevant cultural presuppositions: what we need to know to interpret what is going on: e.g. that 'how are you?', does not require a detailed response in most western English-speaking societies but it does in a Yoruba-speaking community, that it is polite to refuse the first offer of more food in some cultures. Perhaps for convenience, Hymes captures his proposition with the acronym, SPEAKING:

S – Setting or scene (context), see (iv) above
P – Participants (interlocutors), see (vi) above
E – Ends (purpose, function, reasons for the talk), see (iii) above
A – Act sequence or ordering, see (ix) above
K – Key (the tone, manner, spirit) with which what is said is said, see (v) above
I – Instrumentalities (code or channel), see (vii) above
N – Norms of interaction, see (xi) above
G – Genres, see (i) above

In Hymes' (1974) review, he adds 'T' as the ninth variable. According to him 'T' stands for 'topic', that is the topic being discussed, see (viii) above.
Applying this framework to the proverbs analysed in this paper, the setting of the programme 'Open Forum' was a big hall, adjacent to the Governor's Office at the State House in Ọ̀ṣogbo, Ọ̀ṣun State, Nigeria. The time was between 10.00am - 11.00am every last Saturday of the month. The participants were the Governor, his Deputy, the Personal Assistant to the Governor, Ọ̀ṣun State Broadcasting Corporation Crew and the people who were in the hall with them, as well as the general public watching the programme on their television sets or those listening to the programme on their radios.

The ends (that is the general goal) of the programme was to provide the governor the opportunity to keep the people of Ọ̀ṣun State abreast of the activities of his government. However, each proverb used had a specific goal. We shall see this in the analysis.

The act sequence comprises the general introduction, in which the OSBC Crew introduced the governor to the audience, after this the governor would greet his audience (that is, the general public) and thank them for their support for his government. Then, the OSBC Crew would talk about the general goal of

the programme as highlighted above. They would also talk about specific areas of concentration for the day, that is, aspects where questions were going to be entertained in each programme. This would be followed by questions and answers. Questions would first be entertained from the people in the hall (the immediate audience), then questions from the general public through the use of the telephone. The Governor would be given some time to respond to each question as he wished. It was in the process of answering these questions that he made use of the proverbs analysed in this work.

The key applies to the tone and manner in which the governor answered the questions that were posed by the people. The general tone of the programme was that of cordiality, he was very cordial with his audience. In this dimension, the governor presented his explanation, in a persuasive manner, appealing to the people to continue to support his administration. His tone was also that of commitment to the people's welfare. However, each proverb that was used had a specific tone. We shall see this in the analysis below:

Instrumentalities refer to the medium through which a speech is made, verbal or written. In this case, most questions were asked and answered verbally. However, some were read out by the crew (the ones sent through text messages) and the governor answered them verbally.

The norms have to do with interaction and interpretation of speech. They refer to the form of behaviour that accompanies language. Some of these are speaking turns, loudness, interruptions and pauses. With regards to the programme 'Open Forum', participants took turns in asking their questions. Interruptions were not allowed. The governor would then take his time to provide answers to each question as it came.

The genre here was that of interviews through the use of question and answer mode. It also involved telephone calls through which the general public was allowed to ask their questions directly. Some made use of text messages to ask their questions. All these questions were then addressed verbally by the governor.

The 'topic' refers to specific issues involved, that is, the focus of the questions that attracted the proverbs used by the Prince. Each proverb was targeted at a particular activity on which a question was raised by the participants. We shall see this under the analysis.

According to Holmes (2008), explicitly identifying the components of a communicative event in this way has proved particularly useful in describing interaction in unfamiliar cultures. The framework highlights features that contrast between cultures e.g., the different ways that legal proceedings or celebrations are conducted, or contrast in how meetings are run. It also provides a way of analysing events that are unique to a particular culture.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

In this paper, twenty proverbs grouped into four different categories on how the Prince used the proverbs in different context are analysed as follows:

(1) Proverbs that Depict Certain Yoruba Beliefs

(i)

Ẹni	tí	kò	kú	rí,	yóò	sùn	rí
person	that	Neg	die	before	Fut	sleep	before

'He who has never died must have at least slept once.'

S – This proverb was used at an edition of the programme 'Open Forum'

P – The speaker here was the governor, while the hearers were the participants of the programme, as well as the people that were listening to the programme.

E – The proverb was used by the Governor in response to the provision of welfare package for students such as books and bursary as an idea borne

out of his personal experience as a pupil. He did not enjoy those privileges as a student and that affected him adversely. So, he did not want his people to have that negative experience.

A – The question and answer mode was observed.
K – The general tone was that of commitment
I – The verbal method of communication was used.
N – Polite conversation.
G – Political discourse cum interview/question and answer.
T – Provision of books and bursary for selected pupils.

(ii) **Aṣọ tó bá kángun sí éegún là**
cloth Pron dis/morph handy to masquerade Prog
ń pè ní jẹpẹ.
Foc/Pron call is singlet

'The garment that is most handy for the masquerade is usually called the shortest singlet.' (This refers to the cloth that touches the body of the person who carries the masquerade).

S – The setting was at an edition of the programme at the Governor's Office.
P – The speaker was the governor, while the listeners/hearers were the participants as well as the people that were listening to the programme.
E – The proverb was used by the governor in response to his choice of individuals who represented Osun State at the Constitutional Conference in 2005. He was being criticised by the opposition that he used politics in the selection. The governor used this proverb to justify his action.
A – The question and answer mode was employed here.
K – The tone was that of explanation/self-defence.
I – The verbal method of communication was employed here.
N – Polite conversation.
G – The genre was that of political discourse cum interview/question and answer.
T – Nomination of representatives for the constitutional conference in 2005.

(iii) **Éegún tí ó bá kọkọ jó, ìran**
masquerade that Pron dis/morph first dance performance
ni ó wò ní gbẹhìn.
is Fut watch at last

'The masquerade that leads the dancing train will become a spectator at the end'.

S – The setting was at the programme 'Open Forum'.
P – The governor was the speaker while the participants were the hearers/ listeners.
E – The proverb was used by the governor in response to the issue of the television station in Iwo. He pledged to ensure that Iwo television station would be the best among its equals. And that, by the time the station would be completed; it would beat its predecessors in beauty and quality.
A – Question and answer mode.
K – The tone was that of commitment
I – Verbal method of communication.

N – Polite conversation.
G – The genre was that of political discourse cum interview/question and answer.
T – The proposed New Television Station in Iwo.

(iv)

Bí		**ó**	**ti**	**mọ,**	**ni**	**ó**	**mọ,**	**ọkọ**
dis/morph		**Pron**	**Perf**	**little**	**Foc**	**Fut**	**little**	**groom**
ìyàwó	**yoo**	**ṣe**	**ìlọ́dìí.**					
Bride	**Fut**	**do**	**wrapping**					

'However little the wrapper is, the bridegroom must wrap his waist with it.'

S – At the programme 'Open Forum'.
P – The governor was the speaker while the participants were the listeners/ hearers.
E – The governor was referring to the provision of mini water dams in the rural areas which is a necessary commodity, no matter how small.
A – Question and answer mode.
K – The tone was that of commitment.
I – Verbal method of communication.
N – Polite conversation.
G – The genre was that of political discourse cum interview/question and answer.
T – Provision of Mini Water Dams in some villages.

(2) Proverbs that warn/caution

(v)

Èepà	**ń**	**pa**	**ara**	**rẹ,**	**ó**	**ní**	**òun**	**ń**	**pa**
worm	**Prog**	**kill**	**self**	**it**	**Pron**	**say**	**it**	**Prog**	**kill**
ajá.									
dog									

'While trying to kill the dog, the worm does not know it is trying to commit suicide'. (Because, once the dog dies, the worm dies with it).

S – An edition of the programme 'Open Forum'.
P – The speaker was the governor while the hearers were the participants.
E – The proverb was used by the governor in response to vandalisation of government properties; those doing such were not hurting anyone, but themselves.
A – Question and answer mode.
K – The tone was that of condemnation.
I – Verbal method of communication.
N – Polite conversation.
G – The genre was that of political discourse cum interview/question and answer.
T – Vandalisation of government infrastructure.

(vi)

Ẹkùn	**kò**	**gbọdọ**	**pa**	**ajá**	**ọlúọdẹ.**
leopard	**Neg**	**must**	**kill**	**dog**	**chief-hunter**

'The Leopard must not devour the hunter's dog'.

S – An edition of the programme 'Open Forum'.
P – The speaker was the governor while the listeners were the participants.
E – Governor Oyinlọla's use of this proverb reflects his definition of workers as an` important segment of the society that must be duly

protected. In this context, the leopard is the opposition waiting to kill the dog symbolised by the Governor, belonging to the chief – hunter(s) (ọlúọdẹ) who are the workers. The Governor here saw the masses and workers that voted him in as the chief-hunters, he saw himself as the sacred dog that belongs to the chief-hunters. The leopard dares not kill the chief-hunters' dog

A – Question and answer mode.
K – The tone was that of warning and caution.
I – Verbal method of communication.
N – Polite conversation.
G – The genre was that of political discourse cum interview/question and answer.
T – Suspected attack by the opposition party (AC).

(vii)

Ọwọ	**tí**	**ó**	**bá**	**dì**	**ilẹ**	**ni**	**èsù**	**ń**
hand	**Rel**	**Pron**	**meet**	**bind**	**ground**	**is**	**devil**	**Prog**
bẹ	**lọwẹ.**							
Plea	**engage**							

'An idle hand is a ready tool for the devil'.

S – An edition of the programme 'Open Forum'.
P – The speaker was the governor while the participants were the listeners.
E – The proverb was used by the governor to reflect his commitment to job creation, a factor that led to the creation of 'Oyin-corps' scheme as a way of engaging the youths in productive ventures, this would prevent them from going into crimes.
A – Question and answer mode.
K – The tone was that of commitment.
I – Verbal method of communication/seriousness.
N – Polite conversation.
G – The genre was that of political discourse cum interview/question and answer.
T – The Oyin Corp's Scheme.

(3) Proverbs that express power relationship

(viii)

Ewúrẹ̀	**kò**	**ní**	**òun**	**kò**	**ṣe**	**ọmọ**	**ìyá**		
goat	**Neg**	**does**	**it**	**Neg**	**do**	**child**	**mother**		
àgùntàn,		**àgùntàn**		**ló**	**ní**	**ìyá**		**òun**	**kò**
sheep,		**sheep**		**Foc**	**say**	**mother**		**it**	**Neg**
bí	**dúdú.**								
born	**black**								

'The goat does not claim not to have any biological link with the sheep. It is the sheep that says its mother never gave birth to black specie.'

S – The proverb was used at an edition of the programme 'Open Forum'.
P – The speaker was the governor, while the hearers were the participants of the programme.
E – The proverb was used by the governor in reference to the bitter opposition of the Action Congress in Osun State with the People's Democratic Party and the Federal Government. According to him, all his efforts to accommodate the opposition were frustrated. He was ready to work with the opposition for the progress of the state.
A – The question and answer mode was observed.
K – The tone was apologetic.

I – The Verbal means of communication was observed.
N – Polite conversation.
G – The genre was that of political discourse cum interview/question and answer.
T – Relationship with the opposition party – Action Congress (AC).

(ix) **Gbogbo ìṣègùn ló mọ ojú òsanyìn, gbogbo**
all herbalist Pron know eye horoscope all
babaláwo ló mọ ojú ara wọn.
Ifa-priests Pron know eye self them.
'All herbal doctors are accustomed to the horoscope and all genuine ifa priests know one another intimately'.

S – At an edition of the programme.
P – The speaker was the governor, while the participants were the listeners.
E – The governor used this proverb to comment on military retirees, because he also used to be a military man. So, he sees himself as one of them.
A – Question and answer mode.
K – The tone was that of cordiality/intimacy.
I – Verbal method of communication.
N – Polite conversation.
G – The genre was that of political discourse cum interview/question and answer.
T – Relationship with military retirees.

(x) **Àgbọ̀nrin tó sò pá, ayọ̀ ọlọ́dẹ ni.**
deer Rel/Pron bear hernia happiness hunter is/cop
'The deer with an enlarged scrotum is the delight of the hunter'.

S – The setting was at the programme 'Open Forum'.
P – The speaker was the Governor, while the hearers/listeners were the participants of the programme.
E – The Governor made use of the proverb while referring to the administration of Governor Bisi Akande, which refused to accept anything from the federal government, and fought all stakeholders in the state, a factor which paved way for the People's Democratic Party to emerge as the winning party in Ọṣun State.
A – The question and answer mode was observed.
K – The tone was that of fun, derision and sarcasm.
I – The Verbal method of communication was employed here.
N – Polite conversation.
G – The genre was that of political discourse cum interview/question and answer.
T – Relationship with the opposition party.

(xi) **Ká sọ pé alángbá yóò pa ejò, òwe**
to say that lizard Fut kill snake proverb
apárá ni.
joke is
'It is a joke to speculate that a lizard can kill a snake'.

S – At an edition of the programme.
P – The Governor was the speaker, while the participants were the listeners.
E – The proverb was used by the Governor to directly attack his opponents, and to allay the fears of his followers who were speculating that the opponents would destroy him. He sees himself as invincible.
A – Question and answer mode.
K – The tone was that of boastfulness and self-confidence.
I – Verbal method of communication.
N – Polite conversation.
G – The genre was that of political discourse cum interview/question and answer.
T – Threats from the opposition party.

(xii) **Kí** **àgbàdo** **to** **dé** **ayé,** **nǹkan**
before/dis **maize** **dis/morph** **reach** **earth** **something**
ní **adìyẹ** **ń** **jẹ.**
is **chicken** **Prog** **eat**
'Before the advent of maize, chickens fed on something else'.

S – At an edition of the programme.
P – The Governor was the speaker, while the participants were the listeners.
E – The Governor made use of the proverb in response to the role of traditional rulers as pre-cursors of modern government, hence they should be venerated because of their importance as stabilising factors for good governance. They should not be relegated by politicians.
A – Question and answer mode.
K – The tone was that of reverence and veneration.
I – Verbal method of communication.
N – Polite conversation.

G – The genre was that of political discourse cum interview/question and answer.
T – Relationship with traditional rulers.

(xiii) **Ojú** **là** **á** **kọ́** **tẹ́,** **ká** **tó**
eye **Foc/Pron** **Hab** **first** **lay,** **before/Pron** **dis/morph**
tẹ́ **ẹní.**
lay **mat**
'Look carefully at the environment before you spread your mat (there could be harmful elements like scorpions on the floor)'.

S – At an edition of the programme.
P– The speaker was the Governor, while the participants were the listeners.
E – The proverb was used by the governor when he was speaking about defectors from other parties to the ruling party. He was trying to imply that the party welcomed sincere people who would not create problems for the party. However, his party should be careful with the type of politicians they admit to the ruling party.
A – Question and answer mode.
K – The tone was that of caution.
I – Verbal method of communication.
N – Polite conversation.
G – The genre was that of political discourse cum interview/question and

answer.
T – Defectors from opposition party.

(xiv)	**Òsùpá**	**wa**	**yo**	**lókè,**	**ajá**	**ò**	**báà**	**gbó**	**di**
	moon	**our**	**shine**	**above**	**dog**	**Neg**	**Adj/Marker**	**bark**	**till**
	ọ̀la,	**òsùpá**		**wa**	**kò**	**ní**	**wọ**	**òkùnkùn.**	
	tomorrow,	**moon**		**our**	**Neg**	**Fut**	**enter**	**darkness**	

'Our moon is shining brilliantly in the sky, if the dog barks till daybreak our moon shall never fade into darkness'.

S – At an edition of the programme.
P – The Governor was the speaker while the hearers were the participants.
E – The Governor's use of this proverb was in response to the blackmailing attitudes of his opponents, that no matter what they do, he had come to stay in power and would surely finish his tenure successfully.
A – Question and answer mode.
K – The tone was that of boasting and self-confidence.
I – Verbal method of communication.
N – Polite conversation.
G – The genre was that of political discourse cum interview/question and answer.
T – Relationship with opposition party.

'xiv' above is actually an adaptation. The original proverb goes thus:

Òsùpá	**yọ**	**lókè,**	**ajá**	**ń**	**gbó,**	**gbígbó**	**ajá**
moon	**appear**	**above**	**dog**	**prog**	**bark**	**barking**	**dog**
kò	**dí**	**òsùpá**		**lọwó**			
Neg	**hinder**	**moon**		**hand**			

'The barking of the dog will not prevent the moon from shining'.

The governor adapted it carefully to imply that his success cannot be hindered by his opponents.

(4) Proverbs Associated with Self-Evaluation

(xv)	**Bí**	**a**	**mú**	**ẹyin**	**ní**	**ọwọ́**	**ọ̀tún,**	**táa**	
	if	**we**	**hold**	**egg**	**in**	**hand**	**right**	**Conj/Pron**	
	mú	**ẹyìn**		**ní**	**ọwọ́**	**òsì,**	**táa**	**fi**	
	hold	**palm-seed**		**in**	**hand**	**left**	**Conj/Pron**	**use**	
	ẹ̀yìn	**rìn**	**láti**	**Ìyìn-Èkìtì**	**táa**	**fi**	**dé**	**Ìsẹ́yìn,**	
	back	**trek**	**from**	**place-name**	**until**	**we**	**reach**	**place-name,**	
	ẹni	**tí**	**ò**	**ní**	**yin**		**ni,**	**kò**	**ní**
	person	**Rel**	**Neg**	**Fut**	**praise**		**person**	**Neg**	**Fut**
	yin	**ni.**							
	praise	**person**							

'If you hold an egg in your right hand, and hold a palm seed in your left hand, and retreat from Iyìn-Èkìtì to Ìsẹ́yìn, those who will not appreciate you will not. He played upon the morpheme '-yìn' which he used as a suffix seven times. These are instances of pun.

S – The setting was at an edition of the programme.
P – The Governor was the speaker, while the participants were the listeners.
E – The proverb was used by the governor in response to critics about his

administration, no matter how hard he tried, not everyone will be pleased. According to him, his projects were laudable, but the opposition was contemptuous and disdainful. He would not allow the attitude of the opposition to frustrate him.

A – Question and answer mode.
K – The tone was spiteful and carefree.
I – Verbal method of communication.
N – Polite conversation.
G – The genre was that of political discourse cum interview/question and answer.
T – Criticism from opponents.

'xv' above is actually an adaptation. The original proverb says:

Bí	**a**	**fi**	**ilé**	**pọn**	**ọtí,**	**bí**	**a**	**fi**
if	**we**	**fill**	**house**	**with**	**drinks,**	**if**	**we**	**litter**
ọnà	**ro**	**ọkà,**		**ẹni**	**tí**	**kò**	**níí**	**yó**
road	**make**	**yam-flour,**		**person**	**that**	**Neg**	**that**	**full,**
kò	**níí**	**yó**						
Neg	**Fut**	**full**						

'However bountiful the entertainment is in a feast, those who will not be satisfied will not be satisfied'.

The governor used a literary device 'pun' for comic effect on the morpheme, 'yin' and its allomorphs.

(xvi)	**Fòkì**	**fòkì**	**imú**	**ìyàwó,**	**ó**	**yá**	**ju**	**yàrá**	**òfìfo**
	ugly	**ugly**	**nose**	**wife,**	**Pro**	**better**	**than**	**room**	**empty**
	lọ.								
	than.								

'However ugly the wife of a man might be; that man is better than a bachelor'.

S – An edition of the programme 'Open Forum'.
P – The Governor was the speaker, while the participants were the listeners.
E – The Governor used the proverb in response to the 'Oyin-corps scheme', in which graduates were employed for a stipend. He insisted that it was better than not having any employment at all.
A – Question and answer mode.
K – The tone here was that of self-aggrandisement.
I – Verbal method of communication.
N – Polite conversation.
G – The genre was that of political discourse cum interview/question and answer.
T – Oyin Corp's Scheme.

(xvii)	**Ìdọbálẹ**	**ti**	**mọ**	**éjò**	**ní**	**ara.**
	prostration	**Perf**	**stick**	**snake**	**in**	**body**

'The snake is used to prostrating'.

S – At an edition of the programme.
P – The speaker was the Governor, while the hearers were the participants.
E – The proverb was used by the governor to comment about his respect for elders and traditional rulers, it is a habit which he has cultivated

from childhood as a Prince. It was a response to those who were criticising him for always prostrating for traditional rulers. In Nigeria's constitution, the governor is superior to traditional rulers.

A – Question and answer mode.
K – The tone here was that of humility and respect.
I – Verbal method of communication.
N – Polite conversation.
G – The genre was that of interview/question and answer.
T – Respect for traditional rulers.

(xviii)	**Inú**	**dídùn**	**níí**	**mú**	**orí**	**yá.**
	stomach	**sweet**	**Foc/Pron**	**take**	**head**	**fast**

'Happiness is a motivation'.

S – At an edition of the programme.
P – The speaker was the Governor, while the listeners were the participants.
E – The Governor made use of the proverb to comment about the performance of teachers in response to his government's welfare policy on education. According to him, teachers who were negligent before had changed; they were now committed to their duties because of his government's welfare schemes.
A – Question and answer mode.
K – The tone here was that of joy and appreciation.
I – Verbal method of communication.
N – Polite conversation.
G – The genre was that of political discourse cum interview/question and answer.
T – Welfare package for civil servants.

(xix)	**Òogùn**	**tí**	**èèyàn**	**bá**	**ń**	**lò**	**tí**	**ó**
	drug	**Rel**	**human**	**dis/morph**	**Prog**	**use**	**Rel**	**Pron**
	bá		**bá**	**èníyàn**	**ní**	**ara**	**mu,**	**èeyàn**
	dis/morph		**meet**	**person**	**in**	**body**	**suit,**	**human**
	kìí	**fí**	**sile.**					
	Neg	**put**	**down.**					

'A prescription (drug) that ensures good health is not discarded'.

S – At an edition of the programme.
P – The speaker was the Governor, while the participants were the hearers.
E – The Governor used this proverb in reference to how confused his opponents had become on account of his good performance and why the people were in full support of him. In his own opinion, he was performing very well to the admiration of the people, so the people were in his full support.
A – Question and answer mode.
K – The tone here was that of self-aggrandisement.
I – Verbal method of communication.
N – Polite conversation.
G – The genre was that of political discourse cum interview/question and answer.
T – People's support for government.

'xix' is an adaptation of another proverb:

Òrìsà	**tí**	**ó**	**bá**	**gbeni,**	**ènìyàn**	**kii**
god/idol	**that**	**Pro**	**if**	**support,**	**person**	**Neg**
fi	**síle**					
put	**down**					

'One does not discard the god that favours him'.

(xx)	**Omi**	**ẹkọ,**	**ẹkọ**	**ni**	**(iṣẹ**	**tí**	**aya**	**gómìnà**
	water	**pap,**	**pap**	**is,**	**(work**	**Rel**	**wife**	**governor**
	bá		**ṣe,**	**ti**	**ìjọba**		**ni)**	
	dis/morph		**do,**	**poss**	**government**		**is/cop)**	

'The pap and its water are the same; the activities of the governor's wife are part of government's programme'.

S – At an edition of the programme.
P – The Governor was the speaker while the participants were the listeners.
E – The proverb was used by the Governor in response to questions on the Operation of Women and Children Development Initiative Foundation (WOCDIF). An organisation founded by the governor's wife. Indirectly, the governor was saying that the projects of the foundation were being sponsored by his administration. So they are part of his achievements.
A – Question and answer mode.
K – The tone was that of boasting.
I – Verbal method of communication.
N – Polite conversation.
G – The genre was that of political discourse cum interview/question and answer.
T – Activities of the governor's wife.

'xx' is an adaptation of the proverb:

Omi	**ẹkọ,**	**ẹkọ**	**ni.**
water	**pap,**	**pap**	**is.**

'The pap and the water are the same'.

The Prince adapted the proverb by adding the clause in brackets.

5. Discussion/Critique

As could be seen above, the selected proverbs were classified into four groups:

(i)	Proverbs that depict some Yoruba beliefs	–	4
(ii)	Proverbs that warn/caution	–	3
(iii)	Proverbs that express power relationship	–	7
(iv)	Proverbs associated with self-evaluation	–	6
	Total	**–**	**20**

The Prince used the first group of proverbs to justify his actions and to pledge his commitment to introducing welfare projects that would benefit the people of Ọṣun State. The general tone here was that of self-justification and commitment.

The second group of proverbs was used to warn those who were vandalising government's properties and the opposition party in Ọṣun State, that is, the Action Congress (AC). The general tone here was that of caution and condemnation.

The third group of proverbs expresses power relationship. These proverbs expressed the attitude of the governor towards: (i) the opposition party,

(ii) the retired military officers, and (iii) the traditional rulers. According to him, he was willing to tolerate the opposition party and relate with them as partners in progress, but their attitude was negative. His tone here was both persuasive and self-confident. To the retired military officers and the traditional rulers, he showed his respect and humility. His tone here was that of cordiality and reverence.

The fourth group of proverbs was associated with self-evaluation. In his own opinion, he was trying, as much as he could, to take care of the people through his projects, but the critics, especially members of the opposition party were contemptuous. He would not allow their criticism to frustrate his government. His general tone here was that of satisfaction (at his 'laudable' projects) and self-aggrandisement. It is necessary to explain that proverbs are not context-fixed. The classification done here was based on the context in which the governor used them. It does not necessarily mean that someone else cannot use these proverbs in other contexts.

Before rounding off this paper, let us do a critique of the contexts of the usage of the proverbs;

Proverbs (i) - (iv): The Prince's use of these proverbs was actually an attempt to counter critics of his government's activities. It was said that most of his so-called projects were politically discriminatory. For instance, the distribution of books and bursary was said to be conditional. Parents of benefitting children must provide evidence of their loyalty to the ruling party (PDP). Whereas, the Action Congress's (AC) free education programme was for all children regardless of their parents' political affiliation. The same thing applies to the selection of individuals who represented the state at the Constitutional Conference in 2005 as well as the provisions of water dams in the rural areas. Those rural areas that were known to be sympathetic with the opposition party did not benefit from the project.

Proverbs (v) - (vii): It was believed that the governor wrongly assumed that those who were vandalising government's properties were agents of the opposition party. However, this was not really so, those who were involved, were actually believed to be sent by members of the ruling party who were aggrieved; especially because they felt that despite their support for the party, they were not reaping the 'dividends' of democracy. His reference to the opposition party as 'the leopard' and himself as 'the sacred dog' was motivated by the fact that there was an attempted assassination against the governor which failed. The assassins were suspected to be hired by the opposition party to carry out the dastardly act. At the long run, it was discovered that the person responsible was an insider of the ruling party who contested with the governor at the primary election (intra-party election). The beneficiaries of the Oyin-corps were also members of the ruling party. The summary of all these is that the governor's activities were aimed at benefitting the supporters of the ruling party; others were discriminated against. This was not so under the administration of his predecessor whose programmes and projects were beneficial to all and sundry.

The proverbs in the third category; (viii) - (xiv), were used as a direct attack on the opposition party. Under normal situation, when there is a ruling party, there should be an opposition party; otherwise, the ruling party would become autocratic and irresponsive to the yearnings of the citizens. Apart from that, it was suspected at that time that the ruling party did not win the election as it was claimed. The election was actually manipulated by the civil servants (note, the researcher was a secondary school teacher at that time in Osun State) to rig out the former governor (Adebisi Akande). His offence was that he was not spending the entire subventions, coming from the federal government on the civil service. A certain percentage was being used for projects that would benefit the entire citizenry. That is reasonable because only about 30% of the population

were civil servants; the remaining 70% were farmers, traders or craftsmen and women. So the opposition party actually won the election. As expected they were aggrieved. This anomaly was actually repeated in 2007 when Governor Oyinlọla re-contested. The opposition party went to the electoral tribunal and her candidate, Engineer Rauf Aregbesola was declared governor, so Prince Oyinlọla was sacked.

Items (ix) and (xii) were actually directed at the traditional rulers and military pensioners. It was a fact that the governor manifested a deep reverence for these groups. First, he, himself is a Prince, brought up in the palace. In fact, it was a popular talk then, and even now that, when the incumbent traditional ruler in Okuku (Oyinlọla's town in Osun State) dies, Prince Oyinlọla would be the heir apparent. As for the retired military officers, Oyinlọla himself retired from the military, after serving as the Military Administrator (equivalent to the governorship position). So, as a retired military officer, he should be sympathetic to his colleagues. There is nothing extraordinary about that.

As for the proverbs in the fourth category, that is, (xv) – (xx), it is a normal thing for an individual to assess his performance. Whether the assessment is objective or not is another thing. It is apposite at this point to say that Prince Oyinlọla's government in Osun State was benevolent to the civil servants, who constituted the minority. The researcher actually benefitted from his gestures. First, he cleared all the arrears owned by his predecessor's government and eventually, he increased their salaries. But the problem was that majority of the citizens did not benefit much. In fact, they were regularly complaining and protesting through any available medium. When he was sacked, there were open celebrations. People took to the streets to sing and rejoice. His successor (who is still the ruling governor), Engineer Aregbesola was given an overwhelming reception. So, if the researcher would not be selfish, he would not give a positive appraisal of Oyinlọla's so-called laudable programmes and projects. That explains the use of the word 'self-aggrandizement', which does not correlate with the opinion of the majority. Indeed, through the projects, several millions of naira was misappropriated by the government and it nearly led to the prosecution of Prince Oyinlọla. However, as a crafty politician, he decamped to his former erstwhile opposition party – Action Congress (AC).

Prince Oyinlọla demonstrated his good mastery of the Yoruba language through his dexterous use of proverbs. As part of this study, interviews were conducted with one hundred adults – ranging from 45-70, who regularly listened to or watched the programme. While twenty of them claimed that they liked the programme because it kept them abreast of the activities of the government of the day, eighty of them claimed that they were attracted to the programme (Open Forum) because of the proverbs used by the Prince.

6. Conclusion

Proverbs will continue to attract attention, because their messages are interwoven with striking effective linguistic devices. They feature in all aspects of life; they are hardly out of fashion. This is the reason why we must strive to preserve our proverbs because they are part of our cultural heritage and linguistic prowess. They are timeless economic resources in the transmission of ideas. They are very informative as they provide access to the traditions and the popular beliefs of a community. In conclusion, proverbs have a preservative value because their continued use and transmission to the younger generation would lead to the preservation of our language and culture. The inference we could draw from this, is that, parents and other caregivers should cultivate the habit of consciously teaching their children proverbs as part of their efforts at transmitting our language and culture to the upcoming generation.

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Glossary of Abbreviations
Below are the glossaries of abbreviations used in the work:

Adj.	Adjective
Comp.	Complementiser
Conj.	Conjunction
Foc	Focus marker
Fut	Future marker
is/cop	copula 'is' verb
Morph	Morpheme
Neg.	Negation
Perf.	Perfective marker
Prog.	Progressive marker
Pron	Pronoun
Rel	Relative marker