

Deictic Centre And Pragmatic Implications In Remi Raji-Oyelade's Poetry

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Abstract: Deixis is essentially core to pragmatics and it is deployed in poetry to achieve various ends. This study investigated deictic centres and pragmatic implications in Remi Raji-Oyelade's poetry. Working within the traditional classification of deixis, that is, person, time, and place deixis, and context in pragmatics, ten poems, five from each, were purposively selected from Remi Raji-Oyelade's first two anthologies of poems – *A Harvest of Laughters* (1997) and *Webs of Remembrance* (2015) – because of their thematic relevance and deployment of deictic tokens. It was found out that: the poet chronicled his personal involvement in the political, social and economic happenings in his country. He also projected himself, through the use of deixis, into experiencing his friends' dehumanisation in the hand of the military rulers. More so, it was revealed that the poet conflated his identity with that of the leadership in order to lampoon and expose the inhumane treatments of the citizenry by the corrupt political/military and religious leaders. Deploying inclusive plural pronouns, the poet encouraged the citizens to be critical and tactful in choosing competent hands to man their destiny and resources of the country

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I. INTRODUCTION

Poetry, as a major genre of literature, has been observed to employ linguistic tools in a radical way to project the intended messages, aesthetics and emotional state of the poet. Dasyilva and Jegede (2005:13) aver that "poetry often makes use of sounds which are carefully selected and organised to give harmonious appeal through repletion, or metrical patterns, or rhythmic flow". This means that words are not just sewn together without a critical and careful consideration of their semantic, pragmatic and aesthetic effects in poems. Ogunsiji and Ogungbemi (2016:377) see poetry as discourse which "deploys language in a special way to express intense feelings." They further explain that poetry is usually metaphorical. Experience expressed in poetry "can be intensified and enhanced through feelings that dictate it and that which communicates and the economy and resonance of language" (Ogunsiji and Ogungbemi, 2016:377).

Therefore, a poet is a skilful wordsmith who conveys beautifully powerful messages with the use of few words. Poems are written in Africa to meet the needs and yearnings of the people. What is known today in the literature as Modern African Poetry "is a product of conflict political schisms and experiences which have characterized the African world since the coming of the Europeans in the sixteenth

century" till date (Dasyilva and Jegede, 2005:99). More so, Tar Tsaaior (2005) in Olaniyan (2013:) opines that "an authentic African poetry is, essentially, that which draws its afflation, sensibility and vision as well as themes, imagery, tropes and entire worldview from the quotidian realities and chequered experiences of Africa's historical continuum."

II. DEIXIS AND PRAGMATICS

"Deixis belongs with the domain of pragmatics, because it directly concerns the relationship between the structure of language and the contexts in which they are used" (Levinson, 1983:55). Deictic elements, which can, to a large extent, be referred to as indexicals or indexical expressions are "a particular kind of referential expression which in addition to the semantics of their 'naming', their sense, include a reference to the particular context in which that sense is put to work." (Mey, 2001:54). Therefore, deictics are said to be "linguistic pointers which orientate reference in an utterance to the 'contextual coordinates of the utterance.'" (Mey 2001; Adetunji 2006)

Deictic elements are "pragmatically determined" because they depend on the context of use and who uses them. (Mey 2001). Mey further explains that "we can think of such expressions [deictic elements] as 'pointers', telling us where to look for the particular item that is referred to. It is however crucial to know who is pointing and to this, Mey (*ibid.*) opines that "since all 'indexing' or 'pointing' is done by human beings, and therefore all pointing expressions have to be related to the uttering person, pointing in a particular place and at a particular time." More so, Levinson (2004:97) claims that deixis "introduces subjective, attentional, intentional and, of course, context-dependent properties into natural languages."

From the foregoing, it is clear that deixis is largely contextually embedded which makes it a core aspect of pragmatics. Yule (1996:3), cited in Osisanwo (2003:56), sees pragmatics as "the study of speaker meaning, contextual meaning, how more gets communicated than is said, and the study of the expression of relative distance". Also Yule (2010:128) defines pragmatics as "the study of 'invisible' meaning, or how we recognise what is meant even when it isn't actually said or written". He explains that "speakers (or writers) must be able to depend on a lot of shared assumptions and expectations when they try to communicate" in order to understand the "invisible' meaning that is communicated by interlocutors or text participants.

2.1 Types of Deixis

Three traditional types of deixis have been identified in the literature, namely: personal deixis; spatial deixis; and temporal deixis. Personal deixis is “realized through personal pronouns in several contexts of use. The first person pronoun includes the speaker, the second person includes the addressee, but the third person excludes both the speaker and the addressee” (Odebunmi and Olaniyan, 2006:140). In the same vein, Adegoju (2014:46) explains that “the classification of person deixis on the basis of number and person – first person *I* (singular) and *we* (plural); the second person *you* (singular) and *you* (plural); and the third person *he*, *she*, and *it* (singular) and *they* (plural) – is purely a grammatical issue.” Therefore, “it is from the speaker’s perspective or point of view that we would understand best the referents of the personal indexicals which the speaker employs. The speaker is thus the deictic centre of an utterance” (Adetunji, 2006:180).

Temporal deixis, also called time deixis, concerns mainly the encoding of temporal points within the utterance. It is grammaticalised in tense and the deictic adverbs of time (Green 1992). Further, Green explains how difficult is it to differentiate between deictic and non-deictic usages of terms. He cites Levinson (1983) who says:

Both time and place deixis are greatly complicated by the interaction of deictic co-ordinated with the non-deictic conceptualisation of time and space. To understand these aspects of deixis in depth it is first necessary to have a good understanding of the semantic organisation of time and space in general (Green 1992:15).

Temporal deictics are divided into three categories “of ‘past’ (before the moment of utterance, ‘present’ (at the moment of utterance) and ‘future’ (after the moment of utterance) (Adetunji 2006:181). He argues further that “since it is as the moment of utterance that we encounter it, temporal deictics are usually balanced against, and interpreted as ‘present tensed locutions’” (Smith 1989, Adetunji 2006). Odebunmi and Olaniyan (2006:138) assert that temporal deictics are represented “as diurnal and calendrical units, and ultimately refer to the roles of participants.” In addition, Levinson (2004:114) illustrates that:

Hence *now* means some span of time including the moment of utterance, *today* means that diurnal span in which the speaking event takes place, and *is* predicates a property that holds at the time of speaking. Similarly we count backwards from coding time in calendrical units in such expressions as *yesterday* or *three years ago*, or forwards in *tomorrow* or *next Thursday* (italics his).

Spatial deixis “is the encoded location within the deictic field of the utterance and like time deixis is significant because of the basic fact that all utterances take place within spatio-temporal frames” (Green, 1992). “Objects in spatial reference are either described/named or simply located. Either referencing is achieved through demonstrative and place

adverbials” (Odebunmi and Olaniyan, 2006:139). Temporal deictics can be located either proximally or distally. Instances of these are: *here*, *this*, *these* for proximity, and *there*, *that*, *those* for distality; depending on the location of the speaker at the time of utterance. Elaborately, Odebunmi (2001), cited in Odebunmi and Olaniyan (2006:139) expatiates that *here* “often involves a participant, in active or passive terms, in the event described, but *there* may not achieve this at equal frequency with *here*.” He reveals that *here* may not necessarily mean the opposite of *there* as in an example: *Here is the news*. He explains that “the whole expression could graduate to such meaning as (the imperative) *Listen to the news [as being read by me]* and if replaced by its contextual antonym *that*, that is, if we have *that was the news*, could mean *you have just listened to the news* (Odebunmi and Olaniyan, 2006:139).

III. REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Adetunji (2006) examines the use of deixis – personal, temporal and spatial deictic features as a way of including and excluding people/oneself in a political discourse. The study uses two contextually and thematically different speeches of Olusegun Obasanjo as its data source. The first speech, which was delivered at Harvard University (U.S.A) in 2000 and titled: “Nigeria, Africa, and the World: A New Dawn”, and the second, “State of Emergency” in Plateau State of Nigeria in 2004. In the first speech, it is found out that the deictic centre is nearer the plural “we” than the usual singular “I”; for the purpose of convincing and probably manipulate the audience to reason like him and help him in sharing the load of responsibility. Conversely, the deictic “I” dominates the discourse because the speaker speaks from a personal point of view in verbalising a particular conviction. However, the temporal deictic elements in the two speeches are similar: the spatializers are in little quantity in the speeches.

Odebunmi and Olaniyan (2006) investigate perspectivisation in fiction: a deictic study of Wole Soyinka’s *Ake*. The study concentrates on the degree at which deictic features influence character projection in fiction. It reveals that through person, place and time deictic tokens, which make the proximal and distal references, the author exhibits such functions of deixis as expressing characters’ involvement in issues/events, seeking other characters’ views or involving them in issues, keeping other characters or their actions in view, bringing other characters into view, focusing, specifying or seeking a location and stating time. Also, Ayeomoni (2012) does a graphostylistic analysis of selected poems in Remi Raji’s *Webs of Remembrance*. The study adopts the linguistic framework of graphostylistics and following Halliday’s (1971) and Mukarovsky’s (1964), concepts of foregrounding and deviation. It is found out that the selected poems manifest deviations using various graphological features: punctuation, capitalisation, hyphenation, spacing and internal norm. The study shows that the devices used by the poet capture the messages of the poems which are basically on condemnation and apprehension of the evils, atrocities, oppression and

injustice perpetrated by the erstwhile African political leaders, both at home and abroad, and advocates the need for revolutionary change.

Yeibo (2013) studies deictic and stylistic functions in J.P. Clark-Bekederemo's poetry. The study shows the stylistic value of deictic words in encoding or reinforcing aspects of meaning and aesthetics in Clark-Bekederemo's poetry. It is found out that lexico-grammatical patterns of language use have the potential to combine with other elements of language to convey textual message and also achieve artistic beauty. From a literary angle, Olaniyan (2013) examines the image of the society in Remi Raji's *Gather my Blood Rivers of Song*. It explores the link between Raji's milieu and poetry. It is revealed that Remi Raji indubitably pictures socio-political realities within his social context. Further, leadership failure, misgovernance, act of betrayal, moral decadence, religious bigotry, incessant loss of lives and socio-political turbulence are the images which have lately ravaged the Nigerian society.

More so, Egya (2009) studies political poetry in contemporary Nigerian literature using the example of Remi Raji's poetry. The study identifies Remi Raji as one of the irrepressible poetic voices in the decades of military dictatorship in Nigeria. Using Marxism and new historicism as theoretical framework, the study reveals that Raji's poetry perform two functions: one, it attacks the "military emperor" and his acolytes who are responsible for the despoliation of Nigeria; two, it sympathises with the oppressed populace and offers them an optimism to enable them keep dreaming even in the face of tyranny. Stylistically, Adegaju (2014) examines person deixis as discursive practice in Nigeria's "June 12" conflict rhetoric. The paper sources its data from the speeches of some political figures in the 'battlefront' of the unprecedented power tussle between the military and civilians in Nigerian political history between 1993 and 1998. Using the tools of Critical Discourse Analysis, the paper explores person deixis as a discursive strategy appropriated for ideological purposes in the power play. It finds out that the political figures – Babangida, Abiola and Abacha – seek to reproduce 'dominance' in a bid to control the cognition and actions of their audiences by deploying personal deictic elements.

IV. BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF THE POET

Remi Raji is the pen name of Aderemi Raji-Oyelade, born in 1961 in Ibadan, Nigeria. He is a poet whose poems have won national and international awards. His volumes of poetry include *A Harvest of Laughters* (1997), *Webs of Remembrance* (2001/2015), *Love Song for my Wasteland* (2005), *Gather my Blood Rivers of song* (2009) and *Sea of my Mind* (2013). He is a Professor of English and African Literature in University of Ibadan where he teaches African and African-American Literature, and Creative Writing. He was a former Dean, Faculty of Arts and former National President of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA). As one of the established poets in the contemporary times in

Nigeria and Africa, Remi Raji's poetry is worth studying because of the aesthetic and pragmatic use of poetry to correct, satirise and lampoon highhandedness and demonic selfishness in the corridors of power in Nigeria. His poetry has been studied from mainly literary and some linguistic perspectives but the present study critically studies his poetry from deictic angle which is embedded in pragmatics.

V. METHODOLOGY

The poems analysed in this research were drawn from Remi Raji's two earliest anthologies of poems with the titles: *A Harvest of Laughters* (1997) (henceforth HoL) and *Webs of Remembrance* (2001/2015) (henceforth WoR). Five (5) poems each were purposefully selected from the texts, namely: in HoL, "Old havocs", "On behalf of silence" "Here they lie" "Siren sense I" and "A dozen monologue", and, in WoR, "My soul is stitched", "Malediction for a maximum ruler", "Farewell to myth I", "An african voting game" and, "A song for bandits" – making a total number of ten (10) poems. This was necessitated by the deployment of deictic elements in the texts and the thematic preoccupations of the selected poems. The deictic elements in the selected texts were focalised by rendering them in bold font. The analytical framework used in analysing the poems was the concept of deixis and context in pragmatics.

VI. DATA ANALYSIS

6.1 Person Deixis

Person deixis is the most preponderant in the poems as Remi Raji utilises different types of pronominal elements to achieve various pragmatic effects and implications. Personal deictic elements in the texts can be classified thus:

(i) first person pronominal forms; (ii) second person pronominal forms; and, (iii) third person pronominal forms. Each of these is taken in turn below:

6.1.1 First Person Pronominal Forms

This is further divided into two parts, that is, first person singular pronominal forms and first person plural pronominal forms. The poet employs both the subjective first person singular pronoun *I* and its objective and possessive forms – *me* and *my* – respectively. They are used mainly to show personal involvement of the poet persona in the topic of discourse in the poems. The deictic elements used thus reveal that the poet chronicles the political, social and economic happenings which he experiences or the ones that his friends experience; as this will be shown presently. The following excerpt from "Malediction for a maximum ruler" can be considered:

Write the poem, the Wind hailed **me**
Chew the bones and drink the blood
... But **I** tried most in vain
to kill this knifing nightmare

I tried in vain to slash the cursing tongue

(WoR, p.34)

In this excerpt, the poet reports his “encounter” with a natural force which can be seen as supernatural because, *Wind* is an abstract noun but it is used through the graphological tool of capitalisation and it is given the ability to command which only human beings can do. The poet is commanded to “write the poem”. Even though it is not explicitly stated but from the context of the poem, it is interesting to note that *the Wind* – since it is the giver of the command – can be said to have taken the attribute of a first person. But for the fact that it is the poet that is telling his encounter, the deictic centre shifts from *the Wind* to the poet which is captured as *me*. Also, as stated above, the imperative given to the poet makes him to intimate his reader with the struggle he goes through in heeding the command. This is shown in the use of the first person subjective singular pronoun *I*.

However, in the poem titled: “My soul is stitched”, the poet employs the use of the first person singular pronominal forms *I*, *me* and *my*. Although it is the poetic voice that talks in the poem but the experiences rendered therein are for Kunle Ajibade. See the excerpt below:

because **I** broke the emperor’s
testicles in a nutshell
crash of screaming songs
they covered **my** head
with ash, hot as hell
because **I** rode in a paddle
of proverbs against the aching
currents of an envious sea
they tore **my** sails
and drowned **my** voice

(WoR, p.26)

As the poet signals that the poem is for Kunle Ajibade, it is thus important to know the historical context of the poem for better explication in order to understand the pragmatic implications of the poem. Kunle Ajibade is a Nigerian journalist, editor and author who, in 1995, was jailed for life on charges of treason by the military regime led by General Sani Abacha. The historical context shows that where the first person pronouns – subjective and possessive – are used, the deictic elements locate Kunle Ajibade. Also the determiner *the* used to modify *emperor’s testicles* is very significant for it is not just any emperor that is being pointed to but the one that cognitively and socially known by the poet and his reader. *The emperor* thus refers to General Sani Abacha whose testicles, Ajibade broke through his actions, especially writing against and decrying the inglorious military regimes in Nigeria and Abacha led Supreme Military Council in particular.

Conversely, the poet introduces a change in the poetic discourse with the use of a coordinating conjunction *but* in line 17. This can be considered:

But because **my** soul is stitched

to rivers of songs

they cannot kill the truth

of **my** liquid lore.

And because **my** soul is sown

In rivers of songs

I’ve grown deep

Deep against the toxic tide

of their feudal wreckage.

My soul is stitched

to the fate of sonorous rivers.

(WoR, p.26)

With all the battery and punishment meted to Kunle Ajibade, he remains resolute and courageous. At this point it is instructive to pay attention to the change in tense of the poem. Hitherto, the poem is rendered in the past tense but from line 17 till the end, the poem is in present tense. The fusion of personal and temporal deictics shows the never-dying spirit and determination with singularity of purpose displayed by Kunle Ajibade in fighting for the course of the truth and social justice.

Other instances of the use of first person singular pronominal forms are in “A song for bandits” (WoR, p. 49), “Old havocs” (HoL, p. 18) and “On behalf of silence” (HoL, p. 55).

On the other hand, first person plural pronominal forms are also deployed by Remi Raji for particular pragmatic implications. The deployment of these deictic elements is explicated presently. The poet uses the deictic terms to conflate himself and the people of Nigeria; thereby creating a sense of belonging with them and showing that he also shares their pains, and advising them to rise up to resist and reject self-serving tyrannical and dictatorial leadership. Osundare (2007:7) vehemently declares that:

a real writer (poet) has no alternative to being in constant conflict with oppression. Like the prophet of the Old testament, he is the guilty conscience of the king, his words the nagging, unremitting images in his minds, his words are incitement to revolt, to disrupt the deathly equilibrium, the mendacious “peace and stability” of a truly violent system.

More so, the use of the inclusive *we* and *our* shows collective responsibility and solidarity with the people. This is evident in the lines from “An african voting game” below:

We have opened **our** bellies

where the jackals strut, **we** have asked

a fester of flies to heal **our** wounds
we have ordained the village thief
 as the banker of barns and trinkets.

(WoR, p.44)

In the excerpt, the poet – speaking as the conscience of the society without excluding himself – reveals the negative choices made by the people. Through the use of the deictic elements *we* and *our*, Remi Raji wants the society to reflect on the past negative choices of leaders and to be critical and careful in making future choices of leadership. The situation portrayed in the excerpt is akin to the contemporary realities in the Nigerian socio-political space where “a fester of flies” are asked “to heal” the nation’s wounds and “the village thief” is appointed as the banker and keeper of the national treasury. Even though the poem was written about two decades ago, its poignancy and relevance to the present situational predicament of the Nigerian nation cannot be relegated to the background.

In the same vein, in the poem “A dozen monologue”, Remi Raji extensively uses the first person subjective plural pronoun *we* which he interesting and creatively pitches against the third person subjective plural pronoun *they*; as all but one of the lines is not deictically anchored. While the former, that is, the inclusive *we* locates the people and the poet, the latter – *they* – points at the leadership. In the poem, Remi Raji counterbalances the activities of the ordinary people in the society who are struggling and eking out a living for themselves with the atrocities of the leadership that is ever posed to keep frustrating the effort of the people. See the excerpt below:

we mine the coal
they spend the gold
we mint the coins
they spend the notes
we mend the bridge
they break the dam
we mind the gate
they break the door
we till the land
they loot the soil

Instead of relieving the masses of their burdens by creating social amenities and enabling environment for the society to flourish, the leaders, like slave drivers, add more pains and shame to the burden of the people. Throughout the poem, *they* – the leaders – are represented in negatives. They are the looters, hunters, spenders, breakers, strainers, murderers of the people and their resources.

Contrarily, the inclusive deictic elements are also deployed by Remi Raji to satirise, chide and reveal the highhandedness nature of the leadership in the poem titled “Siren sense I”. Unlike what is obtainable in the immediate cited poem, here, the poet conflates his identity with the leadership in order to mock it. The first few lines of the poem read:

Brother man, be warned or
 begone when you see **us**
our naked lights above
 koboko clubbing bayonet banning
 when you smell **us** meandering
 through the road madness
 of a mutinous market.
 Begone brother man
 from the track of state.
 Does it matter
 if **we** pilot a snoring V.I.P.
 like a brutal virus
 across your busy heartland?

(HoL, p.60)

In this poem, the leadership is portrayed as terrible, callous and unconcerned with not only the wellbeing of the citizens but also goes ahead to kill any citizen who may stand on the road/way while the leadership is being conveyed by its conveyers. The deployment of these deictic elements by the poet in marrying his identity with the leadership’s makes his choices to be very significant and exposing the demonic disposition of the leadership.

Other instances of the use of first person plural pronominal forms are “On behalf of silence” (HoL p.18), “Here they lie” (HoL, p.57).

6.1.2 Second Person Pronominal Forms

Remi Raji also uses second person pronominal forms in his poetry. While *you* is used five (5) times in the poem “Farewell to myth I” he uses its possessive counterpart *your* nine (9) times in the same poem. The personal deictic elements deployed here point at the god – Olokun – who is being questioned for leaving his children and allowing marauding leaders and their weapons of death to defile and maim his children. The poet, through the use of the deictic elements, indicts the god of ineptitude, cowardice and even powerlessness. See the excerpt below:

Where are **you**, oh Olokun
 They rape **you** and raid **your** children
 And rig rods of crude pain in **your** veins.

Where are **you**, Olokun
 Watch them shell and loot the gold in the swamp
 Merchants & Mechanics of thorns
 Watch them burn the helpless air.

(WoR, p.36)

The historical context is also important for the poet shows that this poem is written for Oronto Douglas who was a leading member of Environmental Rights Action (ERA) and close to the late Ken Saro-Wiwa – a Nigerian environmental activist and writer who was executed by the Abacha’s military government in 1995.

Further, Remi Raji deploys personal deictics *you* and *your* to refer to his reader. Through imagination, the poet addresses the reader directly while conflating himself as one of the leaders or the soldiers. This is captured in the poem “Siren sense I”. As said earlier, by using the inclusive deictic elements *we, us, our*, the poet creatively mocks the leadership whose soldiers/police/convoy drive with reckless abandon on the Nigerian roads. He is therefore, having projected himself into the psyche of the leaders through the use of inclusive pronouns, cautioning *Brother man* who can be said to be the reader that is being referred to by the deictic term *you* to be careful when he sees the convoy of the leaders meandering in order not to become one of their victims. Quoting the latter part of the poem is very instructive here:

Does it matter
 if we bloodied **your** blind bats
 with a generous volley
 of stray bullets?
 Dear brother man
 begone or be deaf
 if **you** wish a fated date
 with the dead at heaven’s gate,
 or **you** just love being maimed
 without a fee being named?

6.1.3 Third Person Pronominal Forms

The deictic elements used here are mainly *they, them* and *their*. In most cases in the poems, *they* and *their* point at the political and religious leaders and their cronies and messengers who are used to oppress, control and dehumanise the ordinary people. Significantly, the deployment of these deictic words is for negative construction and representation of the leadership. Some instances in the poems are given below:

because I broke the emperor’s
 testicles in a nutshell

crash of screaming songs
they covered my head
 with ash, hot as hell
 because I rode in a paddle
 of proverbs against the aching
 currents of an envious sea
they tore my sails
 and drowned my voice
 because I caught our drunken gods
 in a beastly pose
 and sold the canvass
 to sneering mortals
they scattered my flesh
 to dragon streams...

(WoR, p.26)

The third person plural pronominal words in this poem serve as instruments of oppression and subjugation in the hands of the political and military leaders who will stop at nothing to obliterate any opposing views to their misgovernance and maladministration.

The religious leaders are not so different from their political counterparts as Remi Raji portrays their hypocrisy in the poem titled “Old havocs”. See the excerpt below:

Each drum each dance, each gong each song
 each libation of our lunar rites
 resurrect the first speck of wreath-loving ghosts
 who never won a war
 who preyed on the peace-meal of our flesh.
 So **they** stay
 in the frivolous fright and faith of men
they build unending castles
 of **their** second coming...
 OOSANLA! ALLAH! HOSANNAH!
 hollow men with livid faiths
 with pleading venoms in golden teeth
 cannot smell **their** chaos in the piss of rain.

(HoL, pp. 18-19)

Here, the poet reveals the hopeless state of the society by questioning the rationale of the religious leaders for giving false hope and prophecies to the people for the purpose of

preying and exploiting them. None of the three major religions in the country is left out without being questioned. This is clear in the use of Oosanla, representing the traditional religion; Allah, the Islamic religion; and Hosannah, the Christian religion.

6.2 Time Deixis

In Remi Raji's poetry, the temporal adverbs *now*, *then*, *today*, and *yesterday* are sparingly used. In poems where they are used, Remi Raji employs them "to situate the event and issues highlighted in the poems within specific time frames or periods" (Yeibo, 2013:9). The deployment of these temporal deictic terms helps the poet to extensively comment on the social and economic realities of the Nigeria society which are captured in the poems in order to bring about a positive and radical change in the country. Instances in the poems are excerpted below:

We have opened our bellies
 where the jackals strut, we have asked
 a fester of flies to heal our wounds
 we have ordained the village thief
 as the banker of barns and trinkets.
Now, if the boxer bites below the belt?
 Or if the referee throws a deadly fist
 And gives a casino man the knife to stab the Bank?
 Or if tongues bite themselves in brawls?

(WoR, p.44)

The use of the temporal deictic element *now* helps the poet to show the relationship between the actions of the people who he refers through the inclusive *we* and the consequence of their actions of appointing and electing wrong persons in political offices who end up adding more problems to the burden of the citizens. This is further reinforced with the use of present tense to capture the cause-effect relationship of their actions and their consequent results; thereby calling the people to make better choices and saddle capable and competent hands with societal responsibilities. More so, the temporal deictic word *then* is used to achieve the same purpose in the poem titled: "A song for bandits". Let us consider this:

When the hour of hunger descends on the homestead
Then the farmers talk of rains long expected
 When the hour of hunger descends on the homestead
Then the hunters dream and sing of fertile traps
 (**Then**) the king's men mumble an abundance of promise
 When famished children howl through empty nights

(WoR, p.49)

6.3 Place Deixis

Like the temporal deictics, spatial deictics are minimally employed in the poems. Spatializers such as *this*, *these*, *those* and *here* are used to show proximal and distal locations of the items or things being identified in relation to the deictic centre. Yeibo (2013:7) explains that "proximity could be determined either by the poet's physical position or mental or imaginative position". This means that the poet can be in a particular and imagines himself being in another place which makes him to use proximal terms in relating to the imagined location. In the poem, "Malediction to a maximum ruler", the poet, having been raining curses on the emperor – the despotic rulers such as Sani Abacha, Idi Amin, Jean-Bédél Bokassa, Samuel Doe, Mobutu Sese Seko and others – declares in the latter part of the poem:

In the emperor's trail
 let there be a conference of curses
 In the tyrant's praise
 let cannons of fake biographies be burnt
 And on the terrible soil
 which swallowed the pig
 let an epitaph of piss be written:

Here Rots Nebuchadnezzar Forever

King Of Looters; He Wrote His Name

In Blood, On Rivers Of Blazing Shame

Here Lies The Curse Forever (WoR, p. 35)

The choice of the proximal deictic *here* is to foreground the debilitating catastrophes caused by the maximum rulers to their people and the poet's involvement in experiencing the injustices against the citizenry makes the malediction forceful. Little wonder, Remi Raji introduces the poem with the following words:

And for those who still suffer from the shadows and knocks of tyrants, this poem is recommended as morning meal, daily; preferably, the last stanza should be read aloud, with or without 'Amen' (WoR, p. 35).

Furthermore in the poem, "Here they lie", the poet deploys spatializers to portray how close he is to the location of the subject being discussed. In the poem, *here* and *this land* denote Nigeria where politicians, every four-year, come with their falsehood and lies to hoodwink and deceive the electorate to voting for them and after which they disappear. The poet cautions the electorate to be wary of these politicians who have nothing to offer but are only interested in perpetuating and safeguarding their hegemony. See the excerpt below:

on my land, every fool is a trickster.
 the season of subterfuge is **here**
 the season of tricks is ripe,
 its fruits of falsehood ripened
 by rumours of politics.
 on **this** land built on rocks of lies,
 there's always a lispng fool
 who shows you the keys of heaven
 and asks for the door from strangers.

(HoL, p.57)

VII. CONCLUSION

In this study, the importance of deixis in pragmatics has been established and deictic elements, since they are contextually embedded, are deployed in Remi Raji-Oyelade's poetry to achieve various ends. The study reveals that person, time and place deictic elements are employed by the poet. It finds out that the poet uses the elements to chronicle his personal involvement and that of his friends in the socio-political happenings in the Nigerian society. Also, the poet uses the deictic elements to criticise, satirise, lampoon and expose the hypocrisy of the political/military and religious leaderships in the country while encouraging the citizens of the country to be tactful and critical in choosing competent hands to manage the resources of the country.

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