

Semiotics of Symbolic Wordplay in the Selected Yorùbá Sports News on Radio Stations in Ibàdàn, Òyó State, Nigeria

Luqman Abisola Kiaribee, Òşun State University, email: luqman.abisola@gmail.com.

Monsurat Oritoke Alabi, University of Ibadan, email: alabioritoke@gmail.com

Abstract

Language use in news broadcasting is mainly determined by the themes of discussion. The general belief is that the language of broadcasting is primarily simple, noncritical and self-explanatory. Language use in Yorùbá sports news in recent times has deviated from this norm, making the language of broadcasting more critical. This makes the literary use of language in Yorùbá sports broadcasting apparent. Among the literary expressions employed in making the language of sports news aesthetic is symbolic wordplay. Since the use of this Yorùbá traditional literary device is evident in Yorùbá sports broadcasting, there is a need to study and explain the motive of its use, the forms and the meaning it generates. Three Yorùbá sports news broadcasters were purposively selected from two radio stations across Ibàdàn metropolis. Two sports news reports were collected from each of the selected broadcasters. These served as the study's primary data. The study's secondary data included Yorùbá oral materials used in the analysis. Structuralist semiotics was employed for data analysis. This study revealed that the use of symbolic wordplay is common among the Yorùbá sports news broadcasters. This is employed to signify different things that are central to the news reports. The device constitutes one of the major literary devices employed in Yorùbá sports news broadcasting. The study also affirmed that symbolic wordplay is more used in reporting the Barclays Premier League than other football competition, and it is a means of creating humour in sports news broadcasting.

Keywords: *broadcasters; Ibàdàn; radio stations; symbolic wordplay; Yorùbá sports news*

1. Introduction: Historical Overview of Sports News and Analysis in Yorùbá Language

According to Etika and Edwin (2018), radio and television are considered broadcasting media. Both of them are tools mainly employed to deliver information to the public. It must be stated that before the establishment of radio and television stations, telegraph and telephone were the first two systems of communication used by the British colonial government in the British-colonised West African countries, including Nigeria (Adéjùmò, 1974). Telegraph, as a means of public information in Nigeria, dates back to 1895. The first recorded use of wireless telegraphy in Nigeria occurred in 1913. These two systems of communication developed into wired wireless, a system also known as Wired Radio and the Radio Distribution Service (RDS). Through this, news from Great Britain was reported in the British colonies. The news reports at this time do not exclude sports news since sports, after politics, is the second most important aspect of international relationships (Ibagere, 2015). With the birth of broadcasting stations in 1933, news reports in Nigeria became more popular. In 1951, the Nigerian Broadcasting Service was inaugurated (Etika & Edwin, 2018). Through the existing broadcasting stations, the news of Emmanuel Ifeajuna, the first Nigerian and the first black person to win a gold medal in the Commonwealth Games in 1954, was reported throughout Nigeria. Also, the news of Hogan Bassey's success as the first person of Nigerian descent to become a world boxing champion in 1957 also gained public attention through the radio stations existing during the period. These sports news reports were made before Nigeria's independence in 1960. With the establishment of the first television station in 1959 (Kur & Nyekwere, 2015), sports news across the country was broadcast on local television stations. As noted by Eco (2015), television stations contributed immensely to the development of sports in Nigeria around the 1980s, with much focus on football.

Nigerians nowadays show much interest in football compared to other games. Many of them are supporters of different national and foreign football clubs. Since the news of football club competitions is broadcast on national radio and television stations in English and in various indigenous languages,

Nigerians listen to them and even make comments whenever permitted. It must be clarified that it is not only football news that is presented in English and indigenous languages on Nigerian broadcasting stations; other sports news like boxing, table tennis, lawn tennis, and swimming, among others, are also broadcast, but the most popular sports news on Nigerian broadcasting stations is football news.

After national and state news broadcasts on radio and television stations in Nigeria, sports news is also reported. It has become the tradition of Nigerian radio and television stations to broadcast the indigenous language version of the news broadcast in English. This, without doubt, has helped sports news broadcasting in the country. Apart from reporting sports during national and state news broadcasts, there also exist special programmes predominantly dedicated to sports news. These programmes are mainly sports analysis. According to Kíaribèé (2012), Larry Izamoye on Brila F.M. 88.9 in the year 2000 was one of the foremost sports analysts who popularised this culture. An example of such sports programmes in Yorùbá language is "*Lóri Ọdàn*" (On the pitch), a programme started by Gbénga Adékòyà (Bòbò Nice) on Ogun State Television Station, Abẹ̀òkúta in 2003. During an interview session held with Gbénga Adékòyà in the year 2012, he explained that he was the one who started the Yorùbá version of the sports programme on mass media in southwest Nigeria when he worked with the Premier F.M. 93.5 Ìbàdàn in 1991. He added that there was a fifteen-minute section dedicated to sports news and analysis in the daily early morning programme "*È ẹ́ jí iré*" (Do we wake up well?) of the station. When the programme stopped, he moved to OGTV in 2003, where he continued an independent Yorùbá sports programme with the name "*Lóri Ọdàn*" (On the pitch). As of today, many Yorùbá sports analysts are on different radio and television stations across Nigeria doing different Yorùbá sports news and analyses. Many of them are on social media like Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp. Sọlá Ayégbajéjé, Kólá Ọmótòşò and Babatúndé Saheed are among the renowned Ìbàdàn-based sports news broadcasters who present their sports news and analyses in Yorùbá language on radio and television stations in Ọ̀yọ́ States.

Sọlá Ayégbajéjé and Kólá Ọmótòşò were doing their sports news programmes during the first period of this study's data collection (year 2012) on Amúlúúdùn 99.1 F.M., Ìbàdàn. Both were doing the programme interchangeably throughout the days of the week. This programme is a station's programme. When Sọlá Ayégbajéjé started the programme on Monday, Kólá Ọmótòşò continued on Tuesday. This is how the programme is held between 8:05 am and 8:30 am every day. Babatúndé Saheed broadcasts his sports news programme called "*Lóri Pápá*" (On the pitch) on Fresh F.M. 105.9 every day between 12:00 pm and 12:30 pm, also during this period.

The language used while broadcasting their sports news is Yorùbá. At times, they code-switched and code-mixed with English if there was a need to do so. Language use in news broadcasting is mainly determined by the themes of discussion. As mentioned above, the language of broadcasting is primarily simple, non-critical and self-explanatory. Language use in a special manner may be "an obstacle to communication" (Kangiwa & Koko, 2021: 669) in mass media. A systemic functional grammar which is understood by the audience is required in news broadcasting (Aporbo, 2023). These norms have been deviated from in Yorùbá sports news radio broadcasting. Literary language is used not only for informative purposes but also for aesthetic purposes, hence the use of symbolic wordplay in sports news. Literary language is critical and non-casual. The use of literary language as done in this type of Yorùbá sports news has become a lacuna which requires scholarly attention in order to underpin the motive of its use and the underlying meaning of the usage. Therefore, this study aims to uncover factors responsible for the use of symbolic wordplay in Yorùbá sports news and the symbolic meanings this language use could generate.

2. Literature Review: Language Use in Sports News Broadcasting

As stated above, a systemic functional grammar which is understood by the audience is required in news broadcasting (Aporbo, 2023). Aporbo's examination of discourse analysis of news broadcasting shows that the use of negative adjectives and disjunctive syntax in news broadcasting will continue to create misinformation. He, therefore, states that it is necessary reporters act upon the already existing internal legal framework of communication in news reports. Kangiwa and Koko (2021) also explore

the use of Nigerian languages in mass media. These researchers emphasise that language has the potential to create mutual intelligibility on one hand and could generate misunderstanding on the other hand, depending on the use. As a result, Kangiwa and Koko (2021) explain that positive national language use as a means of communication in mass media is required and should be promoted. However, the scholars support the constant use of Nigerian indigenous languages in mass media to save them from dying. It is very apparent that the perception of the scholars reviewed above is in support of the formal use of language in mass media so as to improve its communicative function.

Considering the primary motive of mass media, it is indisputable that mass media is a means of disseminating information for national and societal promotion. This primary function has been greatly moderated through the use of language across the world. Hamood (2023), while explaining the language use in media, states that oblique language is used in news broadcasting. Among the linguistic devices Hamood states that broadcasters employ in recent times are idiomatic compounding and rhetorical expressions to make news broadcasts more interesting and memorable. Hamood's analysis reveals that ellipses are the most employed expressions in the news bulletins of the news radio stations. This is an attempt to promote the station as well as the broadcaster, most especially in recent times when sport has become a prominent business enterprise. In the light of this, Arne and Helland (2011) argue that sports news broadcasting is playing an important role in national development, as it has integrated several business activities in the media industry. To sustain audience and customers' patronage, several technicalities have been incorporated in sports broadcasting. Martin (2015), while supporting this opinion, states that language is used in reporting sports headlines in Kenya to incite and captivate sports audience, to make soccer look like a battle and a matter of revenge in order to raise people's tension. In doing this, several literary devices like idiomatic expressions, metaphoric and hyperbolic expressions are employed. Sufa and Liusti (2022) also maintain that figurative language styles are used in sports news, including simile, metaphor, personification, allusion, eponym, epithet, irony, cynicism, sarcasm, satire, innuendo, synecdoche, metonymy and antonomasia. They also argue firmly that the most employed figurative expression is metaphorical figurative language.

2.1. Symbolic Wordplay

According to Olátúnjí (2005:36), "... wordplay is the juxtaposition of lexical items which are somehow similar in shape, to produce an effect of verbal dexterity". Olátúnjí (2005) defines symbolic wordplay as a literary device that is based on playing the sound of a lexical item, which is a noun, with the sound of a verb that shares some syllabic similarities with the noun, on the attribution of the activity or virtues suggested by the verbal element to the object signified by the noun. Olátúnjí (1972) has earlier mentioned something similar to this. What this implies is that there is an interconnection between the syllable of the lexical item (noun), which is used to create verbal dexterity, and the meaning implied by the verb. The verb shares some similarity features from the meaning of the word or syllabic element(s) of the lexical item it was played on. With this, the action suggested by the verb is symbolically embedded in the noun. As a result, listeners who are familiar with such usage would have arrived at the meaning even before the verbal item to which the noun is applied is mentioned. Ògúndèjì (1991) explains that this type of wordplay is common in *òfò* (Yorùbá incantatory poetry). Considering the combined words in 'symbolic-wordplay,' "symbol" is the third element of object in Pierce's sign's trichotomy. It is a sign that has a relationship of arbitrariness or is conventionally related to its object. As a result, a symbol does not have any sense of physical link to its object but is culturally or conventionally associated with it. Because of the consideration of cultural arbitrariness in interpreting the signification of 'symbolic wordplay,' cultural factors play important roles in the interpretation of this device.

2.2. Theoretical Framework: Structural Semiotics of Language Use

According to Walle, Willems and Willems (2006), linguistic structuralism is defined as a set of general principles and opinions believed by notable European linguists of the inter-war period who were all profoundly influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course de linguistique générale*. Language, according to Walle *et al.* (2006), is a system of signs. These signs to Saussure establish the relationship

between the concepts of language meaning (the signified) and the language sounds (acoustic images), (the signifier). According to Eco (1976) and Walle *et al.* (2006), Saussure postulates that both the signifier and the signified are inseparable. As noted by Selden and Brooker (2005), Saussure views linguistic items as symbols which do not correspond to their referents but which are signs of two parts (signifier and signified). A signifier is the sign vehicle, while the signified translates the thought or the referent of the signifier. Signifier is a linguistic mark, while the concept engendered by this mark is the signified. Saussure is also of the opinion that the relationship between signifier and signified is logical to the idea and sound that connects them. He, however, postulates a theory called "semiology", which he defines as a scientific study of sign system. Semiotics or semiology, is conceived as an independent terminology and as one of the most fruitful concepts derived from general structuralism.

Coupled with the signifier and the signified, the interrelationship between language and sign system accounts for the realisation of some concepts. Among these are the *langue* and the *parole*, the synchronic and the diachronic language use, and the syntagmatic and the associative words relation. Saussure's concept of language, according to Walle *et al.* (2006), is divided into two. These are *langue* and *parole*. *Langue* could be simply defined as a social, essential, passive and conventional sense of language meaning. This is general and societal, and it is not individual-oriented. On the other hand, *parole* is individual, accidental, active and not conventional language perception. *Parole* can also be defined as the individual realisation of the system in actual instances of language (Selden & Brooker, 2005). Users of language tend to make what is general, societal and conventional personal and individual. This is possible as a result of language codification and estrangement. Thus, general and familiar words are made personal and unfamiliar in a literary sense, and this is where sign system featured in literary language use.

Another of Saussure's concepts of language and sign systems is the diachronic and synchronic language meanings. While explaining the relationships between these concepts, Walle *et al.* (2006) define synchronic language perspective as a means of studying language meaning at a specific point in time. Diachronic, on the other hand, is a study of language meaning and how it changes over time. Language changes over time, but the context in which language is used matters the most, because the communication space contributes immensely to language meaning. Lotman (1990) calls this language-context relationship the semiotics of space (semiosphere). According to Walle *et al.* (2006), Saussure differentiates between two classes of language relationships. These are syntagmatic and associative relations. Syntagmatic relations are possible arrangements of linguistic units on the linear axis of speech construction. This is a relationship of signs in the speech chain. That is, the syntagmatic relation among the language units that constitute a speech form. This has to do with what comes before or after each unit of a speech form and the relationship involved. Associative relationship is the relationship between a sign and other signs that are not involved in a speech situation. These are signs that are based on memory and can replace units involved in a given speech. This associate relation is very important because it makes meaning-making in language use possible. In modern linguistics, the distinction between the construction of sentences and the association of meaning is better referred to as syntagmatic and paradigmatic language relationships.

Though structuralism and semiotics are interrelated as shown above, there still exist lines of delineation between the two. Structuralist literary analysis aims at examining the features involved in the language use of literature. Semiotics, on the other hand, moves beyond the level of linguistic features of literature as it examines signs and signification possibilities which may exist outside the linguistic boundary. As applied in this study, signs and significations are examined from the structuralist and semiotic language perspectives.

3. Research Method

3.1. Context

This study adopted a descriptive literary design. It is based on Yorùbá language use in local sport news broadcasting. The research area is Ìbàdàn metropolis, Òyó State, Nigeria. The two radio stations involved are Amúlùúdùn Radio, 99.1 MHz, Mòníyà and Fresh 105.9 FM, Challenge, Ìbàdàn. The study, though, is literature-based; its scope covers broadcasting as its primary data is collected from radio stations' programmes.

3.2. Participants

Three Yorùbá sports news broadcasters are purposively selected from two radio stations across Ìbàdàn metropolis. Two sports news reports are collected from each of the selected broadcasters. The sportscasters were also interviewed. Fixed interview sessions were also conducted with six audiences of the programmes; two audiences for each of the programmes. These serve as the study's primary data. The study's secondary data include other Yorùbá oral materials used in the study's analysis.

3.3. Procedures

The study's primary data were collected using recording devices during the live programmes of the selected sports news. These occurred on September 9th and October 10th, 2012 (Şolá Ayégbajéjé's sport news), August 20th and September 9th, 2012 (Kólá Ọmọ́tósọ's sport news) and July 5th and 7th, 2020 (Babátúndé Saheed's sport news). Interview sessions were also held with the sportscasters and six members of their audiences. The study's secondary data constitute the relevant Yorùbá oral materials found related to the arguments established in the study in an attempt to state the exact significations of the signs used by the broadcasters. The study employed a descriptive approach of data analysis, using structuralist semiotics as a theoretical framework.

4. Data Analysis

Sport news broadcasters like Şolá Ayégbajéjé, Kólá Ọmọ́tósọ and Babatúndé Saheed employ symbolic wordplay in casting their sport news. The use of this literary device is central to these broadcasters. The device is mostly employed when the report of clubs' football fixtures or the news of the played matches is given. The following is an example of symbolic wordplay in announcing a football match fixture.

*Ó yá o! Barclays Priemier League máa wáyé lóni! Liverpool máa gbàlejò Swansea City 7:45pm! Fàákája máa bẹ láàrin Stoke City àti Chelsea lóni! 3pm ni. **Lóni náà ni Aston Villa máa sí filà lóri Southampton láago méta ọsán!** Reading lóni máa gba West Brom lálejò láago méta ọsán náà ni! Ìjàkú akátá máa bẹ sílẹ láàrin Sunderland àti Westharm United láago méta ọsán! Fulharm yòò lẹ kítípí pẹlú Wigan Athletic láago méta ọsán òní...!* (Ayégbajéjé, 22/9/2012 in Kíaríbẹ̀, 2012)

It has started! The Barclays Premier League will occur today! Liverpool will host Swansea City at 7 pm! There will be a match between Stoke City and Chelsea today. It is today that Aston Villa will play Southampton at 3 pm! Reading will host West Brom at the same time! There will be a tough match between Sunderland and Westharm United at 3 pm. Fulham will play against Wigan Athletic at 3 pm....!

Şolá Ayégbajéjé in the above excerpt reports the Barclays Premier League match fixtures, but when he gets to the point of announcing the match between Aston Villa and Southampton, he employs symbolic wordplay. The expression “*Lóni náà ni Aston Villa máa sí filà lóri Southampton láago méta ọsán!*” is a symbolic wordplay. The /f/ sound in “*filà*” is played on the /v/ sound in the name of the football club “Aston Villa”. The wordplay is possible here because both sounds are fricatives. If we do a literal translation of the words in the expression, the meaning of this usage would be “It is today that Aston

Villa will remove the cap on Southampton's head at 3 pm!". "...*ṣí filà...*" (remove one's cap), as it is used in the expression, is symbolic. In the Yorùbá social context, if a contestant removes the opponent's cap at the point of competition/quarrel, it means the doer has posted a great challenge to the opposition, expecting a serious fight in response. As a result, "...*ṣí filà...*" as employed in the above context is a social indexical sign, signifying a challenge in expectation of a vital fight back.

We can also point to another example of this literary device employed by Ṣolá Ayégbajéjé on the 21st of October, 2012. Ayégbajéjé was reporting the football match between Manchester United and Everton. The match was won by Everton with one goal to nil. Marouane Fellaini scored the lone goal. Ṣolá reported this while saying that:

Gbogbo Manchester United! E tún ti bèrè sí ní je èfó tètè. Kí lẹ tún fí ṣewó lánàá? Manté, pèlú gbogbo owó tẹ ẹ ná! Manté, ṣé kì í ṣorì àwọn Arsenal ló mú un yín? Manté, sàà titun! Kí ló dé? Sàà titun, èfó tètè lẹ tún máa je lósè yìi? Èyí tẹ ẹ je ní sàà tó kọjá rẹ é o! Manté, kí ló dé? Kí ló dè è!!! Kí ló dé tẹ ẹ tún tẹ lánàá lówó Everton pèlú gbogbo àwọn agbábòlù tẹ ẹ kó sówó iwájú! Manté, ẹ tún tẹ!

Manchester United Football Club! You have started to eat African spinach again. What did you start the season with yesterday? Manchester United, with the huge amount of money you spent! Is it not Arsenal's spiritual head that is making you perform badly? In this early stage of the season! What happens? At the early stage of the season, you were defeated? This was what happened to you last season! What happened to you, Manchester United? Why were you defeated by Evaton yesterday, with all the players you have at the front line? Manchester United, you lost again!

In the above excerpt, Ayégbajéjé makes a jest of Manchester United football club for losing the match against Everton at the early stage of the season. He translates the club's name, Manchester United, into Yorùbá through the word borrowing process. The first syllable /ma-/ and the last /-ter/ were used by the sportscaster to form the new Yorùbá word (Manté). He converted the /n/ sound in 'Manchester' to a syllabic nasal sound /n/ and employed it as a continuous tense marker. What this signifies is that the action the reporter wants to use the new word to portray is continuous; it does not just happen; it has been happening for some time in the past and may not likely stop till the end of the session.

Coming back to the element of symbolic wordplay in the excerpt, the expressions "*E tún ti bèrè sí ní je èfó tètè. Kí lẹ tún fí ṣewó lánàá*", "*Manté, sàà titun! Kí ló dé? Sàà titun, èfó tètè lẹ tún máa je lósè yìi?*" and "*Manté, ẹ tún tẹ!*"; The last syllable of the borrowed word "Manté" is played on the syllables of the last word in the noun phrase "*èfó tètè*". The last syllable of "Manté" and both syllables in "*tètè*" have some consonant and vowel sounds in common. These are /t/ and /ɛ/ sounds. What makes the difference between "-tẹ" and "*tètè*" is that, morphologically, "-tẹ" is a monosyllable while "*tètè*" is a bisyllable. Secondly, the /ɛ/ in "-tẹ" carries a high tone while both /ɛ/ sounds in "*tètè*" carry low tones. As a matter of fact, "Manté" and "*tètè*" are independent words with different meanings. Because some of the sounds in both words share some similar characteristics, and the fact that they are used closely together in a set of sentences describing the same thing, makes them be considered as being used to play on one another. In this situation, *èfó tètè* is played on *Manté* because it comes after it in the usage. Also, what actually makes the usage a symbolic wordplay is that once *èfó tètè* is mentioned, one would think of the noun *Manté*, and this will make one think that "-tẹ" in the word iconises Manchester United football club's fall of disgrace. Considering the sentence, "*Manté, ẹ tún tẹ!*" (Manchester United, you lost again!), the focus of the sportscaster for playing "*èfó tètè*" on "Manté" becomes apparent. The word "*tẹ*" as used in this sentence could either mean "to fall into disgrace" or "becomes tasteless". Whichever, both have negative meanings when used to describe human or non-human beings' performances among the Yorùbá people.

Though one would have expected that because Manchester United football club have eaten *èfó tètè* (African spinach), they will win all their games. This is because there is a Yorùbá proverb that reads "*tètè kì í tẹ lówùjọ èfó*" (African spinach does not fall into disgrace amidst the group of vegetables).

Tètè in this regard would have symbolically signified Manchester United football club if the club's rich history of football achievement is put into consideration. In this sense, other football clubs would, therefore, symbolise other types of vegetables which African spinach was said would not fall into disgrace amidst. But this is not the case. The implication of this is that it is not the Yorùbá symbolic meaning of *tètè* that concerns Ayégbajéjé the most in the usage; what actually concerns him at the semiosphere are the sounds that made up *tètè*, which the presenter was able to play on with the sounds in “Manté” and “tè.”

Kólá Ọmótọ̀sọ̀ also employs this device in his sports news presentation. Consider the examples below from Kólá Ọmótọ̀sọ̀’s sports news report on the 20th of August, 2012, about the Super Falconet's match.

*Ààmi ayò tí ò látatì, ni egbé agbábọ̀lù Falconet ti ilẹ̀ wa Nàìjíríà fì borí àwọn ojùgbà wọn tilẹ̀ Korea Republic. Nígbà tí ifẹ̀sẹ̀wọ̀nsẹ̀ dé iṣẹ́jú méèédógún, fifteen minutes ni Ngozi Okobi, ló mi àwọn, àfì jùà, eré ni wọn pè é. Ifẹ̀sẹ̀wọ̀nsẹ̀, ó tún tè sí iṣẹ́jú mé-tà-dín-ní-àádórin, òun ni Desire Oparanozie bá tún mi àwọn, àfì jùà.... E jẹ́ kí n máa sọ fún yín pé ifẹ̀sẹ̀wọ̀nsẹ̀ yòò tún sún sí iwájú fún idije FIFA Under 20 Women World Cup lónì ní tí ò nítí dọ̀lẹ̀... Àmọ̀ láàárọ̀ téní, àwọn àtí America ó kojú ara wọn. Tó bá ti wá dì ní déédé agogo mọ̀kànlá láàárọ̀ yìi, **orílẹ̀-èdè Argentina àtí Canada òun ni wọn yóó máa ká ẹ̀ní ara wọn nílẹ̀** nígbà ilẹ̀ China yóó máa ẹ̀ ifànfà pẹ̀lú orílẹ̀-èdè Germany....*

It was two goals to zero that the Falconet football team of our country, Nigeria, defeated their counterpart from the Republic of Korea. It was when the match reached fifteen minutes that Ngozi Okobi scored, and they thought it was a joke. When the match also reached sixty-seven minutes, Desire Oparanozie scored another goal... Let me also tell you that the football competition for the FIFA Under 20 Women's World Cup continues today, not tomorrow... This morning, they will be playing America. When it is eleven o'clock this morning, the Argentine and the Canadian under-20 football team will be removing one another's mat while China will be quarrelling with Germany...

The excerpt above is loaded with many figurative expressions, which would not be examined here in order to focus on the study's objective. What concerns us the most is the last statement employed to report the fixture in this competition. The statement is “*Tó bá ti wá dì ní déédé agogo mọ̀kànlá láàárọ̀ yìi, orílẹ̀-èdè Argentina àtí Canada òun ni wọn yóó máa ká ẹ̀ní ara wọn nílẹ̀* nígbà ilẹ̀ China yóó máa ẹ̀ ifànfà pẹ̀lú orílẹ̀-èdè Germany....” (When it is eleven o'clock this morning, the Argentine and the Canadian under-20 football teams will be removing one another's mat while China will be quarrelling with Germany....). The syllable /ká/ (means to remove) is symbolically played on the syllable Ca- /kæ/ in the noun "Canada" (A country in North America). It is the /kæ/ syllable of the noun "Canada" that motivated the choice of the verb in the expression “*ká ẹ̀ní ara wọn nílẹ̀*”. This is intentionally done by the sportscaster to make the reported news look interesting and aesthetic.

The expression “*...ká ẹ̀ní ara wọn...*” (to remove one another's mat) is idiomatic and symbolic. It is idiomatic because the expression's meaning is not suggested by the string of lexical items in it. However, it is symbolic because in the Yorùbá cultural context, removing each other's mats is an indexical signification of a fight. The sense which could be deduced from the idea of removing one another's mats is that the people involved are no longer tolerating one another and are fed up with each other. So, removing one another's mat as it is used here is indexically signifying a fight, a quarrel or a misunderstanding. The fight meant by the sportscaster is not, in actual sense, a real fight but a tough football competition.

Another example of symbolic wordplay in Kólá Ọmótọ̀sọ̀’s sports news featured in the news he reported on 26 September 2012, as shown below:

*Ojọ̀ tí lọ, mò n lọ ilẹ̀...! E le pe Kólá Ọmótọ̀sọ̀ fún ikéde àtí ipolówó ojà nìkan, 08057189123! Adékólá Ọmótọ̀sọ̀ lorúkọ̀ tẹ̀mì! E ẹ̀ pàdẹ̀ ẹ̀níkejì mi lóla, Sọ́lá Ayégbajéjé! Ó yá nígbà yẹn Ẹ̀un Ojọ̀ tí n múlẹ̀ kò jẹ́ kí wọn ó rí àwọn mi! **Ó mú jàbùlání kò jàbọ̀ lówó ẹ̀!** Dáúdà Abimbólá,*

akònimòn-òngbá tó n ́ se dáadáa niyẹn. Lóri ọwọ yẹn, èmi àtiyìn ó pàdé lójọ Friday lóri ọwọ yẹn! Ó le wòyàn jù! (Kíaribèé, 2012.41)

Time has gone, I'm going home...! You can call Kólá Ọmótóşşó for announcement and advertisement only, 08057189123! Adékólá Ọmótóşşó is my name! You will meet my colleague tomorrow, Şolá Ayégbajéjé! Now Şeun Ọjó is keeping my goal post so that I would not concede! **He keeps *Jabulani*¹ Perfectly!** Dáúdà Abímbólá is a coach who is performing well. With that, you and I shall meet on Friday! You stare too much!

Kólá Ọmótóşşó is rounding off the sports news of the day. After he had made the closing announcements, he acknowledged Şeun Ọjó, one of the people working with him on the programme. He described him as a good keeper who keeps *Jabulani* perfectly. During the early stage of the World Cup hosted by South Africa in the year 2010, according to Bloomfield (2010), *Jabulani* is described by many players as a ball which movement is unpredictable, particularly for keepers, because it is really difficult to judge its trajectory. So, for a keeper to keep *Jabulani* perfectly, such a keeper must have been a very good and professional keeper. Extending the meaning of *Jabulani* to mean a possible disturbance which could feature in a programme, as done here, is what Riffatarré (1978) called expansion of meaning. *Jabulani*, as employed in this semiotic space, is then a symbolic signifier of unwanted situations, difficulties and disturbances which are not easy to manage, and which could only be properly managed by an experienced manager.

The words “*jabulani*” and “*jabó*” in “*Ó mú jàbùlání kò jábó lówó è*” are symbolically played on one another. We got to know during the course of our research that the short form of *Jabulani* is *jabu*. If this is the case, the user has, therefore, carefully played the two words together. The “*jabu*” and “*jabó*” might not have the same origin, but when considering their sounds, they share some features in common. Looking at the morphology of both words, the sounds that make the difference in both words are vowels /O/ in “*jabó*” and /u/ in “*jabu*”. It must be pointed out that though these two vowels are independent sounds, they still share some features in common; they are back round vowels. This is what makes the pronunciation of the word (*jabó*) very close to the word (*jabu*). This similarity is exactly what makes the wordplay possible in the usage. Considering the unmanageable feature of the ball *Jabulani* while trying to keep by keepers and its trajectory complication and inconsistency, *Jabulani*, therefore, directly connotes the meaning of the verb “*jabó*” (to fall off from one’s hand) in Yorùbá language. By extension, “*jabulani*” as it is played on with “*jabó*” is then a perfect signifier of the act of falling off (*jabó*), difficulties and obstacles that are capable of disrupting the sport news programme, which the sportscaster acknowledges his goalkeeper (programme editor) to be very good at managing them.

Babátúndé Saheed is also among the sportscasters who are fond of using this symbolic wordplay. In his sports news of 11 July 2020, there are examples of symbolic wordplays. Let's consider the excerpt below as an example:

*È jẹ ká lọ sòrílẹ èdè Itàlòóóó, nínú ìdíje Serie-A. Lazio yóó gba Sassuolo lálejò. Aago mérin kojá ìşéjú méeédógún nì. Ikò Spezia àti Roma, àwọn méjèjè yóó mú nńkan nílẹ láago méfà àbò. Juventus! **Ijà tó fa lánńtá dání láàrin Juventus àti Atalanta**, ìyẹn di aago mėsàn-án ku ìşéjú méeédógún.*

Let's go to Italy, to the Serie A football competition. Lazio will host Sassuolo. The time is a quarter to four pm. Spezia and Roma will play at half past six pm. Juventus! The fight that carries a kerosene lantern along will happen between Juventus and Atalanta, which will come up at a quarter to nine pm.

Babátúndé Saheed, in the above excerpt, is announcing the Serie A match fixture of the day. The match between Lazio and Sassuolo, and also the one between Spezia and Roma, was announced. While

¹ The word, as explained in an article (*Jabulani*) on babynames.com, is a Zulu word that means rejoice or happy. The football used in the World Cup hosted by South Africa in 2010 was named *Jabulani*.

announcing the football match that will take place between Juventus and Atalanta, the sportscaster describes the match as “*Ìjà tó fa láńtá dání láàrin Juventus àti Atalanta*” (The fight that carries kerosene lantern along will happen between Juventus and Atalanta). We should firstly mention here that the match that will actually happen between the two teams is not a fight in a real sense, but a football competition. The sportscaster intentionally selects the word “*ìjà*” (fight) instead of “*eré*” (play or match) because of the expression “*fa láńtá dání...*” (that carries kerosene lantern along...) he employed. He does this purposely for two reasons. The first is that the game will be played in the evening when the skies must have gotten dark, especially when there is no electricity. The lantern that the sportscaster is pointing to in this context is the actual kerosene lantern (or other forms of lantern) that the football viewers carry along while going to viewing centres or coming from the place late in the evening, when the atmosphere is dark. Secondly, if the game referred to as a fight by the sportscaster is considered with a kerosene lantern, which usually generates heat when it is on, what the lantern in the semiotic context of a fight is signifying is the prediction of how tough this match would be. The lantern, therefore, becomes an indexical signifier of the hotness and toughness of the predicted match. Because the usage “*...fa láńtá dání*” (... carries kerosene lantern along) is capable of generating more than one meaning as it does here, then the expression is a dual sign.

Like the expressions analysed before, the words “*láńtá*” and “Atalanta” in the excerpt above are symbolically played on one another. The words “*láńtá*” and “*-lanta*” in the Atalanta are of the same spelling and pronunciation, though they are words of different languages. It is the name, Atalanta, that brings about the choice of “*láńtá*” (a borrowed form of lantern in English) by the user. So, the user, as a result of this, purposely selects “*láńtá*” to be able to play on Atalanta in order to do two things at the same time: to bring about the effect of wordplay and to predict the toughness of the match. Another instance where Babatúndé Saheed makes use of symbolic wordplay is in the sports newscast on July 5th, 2020, featured in the excerpt below:

*Ó yá páápààpáá, torí pé lánàá, up Chelsea! Omọ oba Dòşùmú, Chelsea Àjùmòbí bread gbogbo Amúlóko! Olálékan Oláanúkan niye-èn! Òtúnba Mùtù Owóyemí.... Number one ni ò. Gbogbo Chelsea ní Ìjọba Ìbílẹ̀ Egbédá, kò sólúwa è pátápátá kiàfàtàmala ní tilétoko! Sẹ ẹ mọ pé Egbédá nílẹ̀, ó tún lóko! Ní tilétoko, òun ni number one! Ẹ má jẹ n tàn yín! Chelsea na Watford! **Ìwàkuwà bí ọkọ tí kò dára nì Chelsea wà wọn lánàá!** Àmì ayò mèta sodo ni. Ẹyin Chelsea, ọrọ mètamèta yìi, ẹ ẹ maa mójú tó o ní ò!*

Now quickly, yesterday, up Chelsea! Prince Dòşùmú, Chelsea Àjùmòbí bread of the whole Amúlóko! That is Olálékan Oláanúkan! Òtúnba Mùtù Owóyemí.... He is the number one. All Chelsea fans at Egbédá Local Government, no one can withstand you everywhere! You know that Egbédá is both the home and the village! Everywhere in Egbédá, he is the number one! Do not let me deceive you! Chelsea defeats Watford! They drove them roughly like a bad car yesterday! They defeated them with three goals to nil. You, Chelsea fans, in this case of three goals, you must find a solution to it!

The sportscaster compares the way the Chelsea football team defeated the Watford football team to how a bad car is driven roughly. A bad car is driven roughly because the driver will not mind if it gets spoiled, since the car is already bad. In this case, the Watford football team is not a car which could be driven. The sportscaster knew this; he just intentionally selected the verb “*wà*” (to drive) because he wanted to play on the name of the club so as to make a jest of them. The verb “*wà*” (to drive) is then played on the “*Wa*” of the syllable “*Wat*” in the title of the football team “*Watford*”. The verb “*wà*” is also played on the noun “*ìwàkuwà*” (rough driving), which was used to describe how Watford was defeated. “*Wà*” (to drive) that was used to play on the name of the club “*Watford*” and the noun “*ìwàkuwà*” (rough driving) in this instance is indexically signifying the football possession and the domination of the Chelsea football team over its opposition (Watford) which makes it possible for Chelsea to defeat her with three goals to nil.

5. Discussion of Findings

In this paper, it has been established that language use in news broadcasting requires simple and non-critical expression. It has also been discussed that this norm has been deviated from in Yorùbá sports news broadcasting. This is because symbolic wordplay is employed in the sports news of three notable sportscasters within Ìbàdàn metropolis. These sportscasters are Ṣolá Ayégbajéjé, Kólá Ọmótọ́ṣọ́ and Babatúndé Saheed. Because literary and critical language use is employed in Yorùbá sports news broadcasts, it is required that scholarly attention be paid to the modes of expression, the motive of use and the possible meaning the usage could generate. This study has shown through its analysis how these are realised in Yorùbá sport news broadcasts. The study's data analysis shows that symbolic wordplay is more commonly used in announcing the results of the played matches and match fixtures. Out of the six examples of the symbolic wordplays analysed, three were used to report the results of the played matches, while two were used to announce match fixtures. The remaining one is used to make a closing remark.

Symbolic wordplay is more commonly used in reporting the foreign league football competition than the local league football competition. This is evident in our data, out of the six examples of symbolic wordplays analysed from the three sportscasters, four were used to report foreign football league results, while only one was used to report the result of an international competition. The remaining one is neither used to report local, foreign, nor international competition. We also find out that symbolic wordplay is more used in reporting Premier League football competition than other football leagues, either local or international. This is because out of the six examples of symbolic wordplays analysed, three were used in reporting the "Premier League" football competitions, one was used to report "Serie A" football competitions, one was used to report international games, and the other one was not used to report any football league competition.

Different complex meaning derivations were generated through the use of symbolic wordplay in Yorùbá sports news broadcasting, as revealed in the data analysis. This includes a social indexical sign of challenge in expectation of a vital fight back, a disgraceful fall, a tough football competition, obstacles that are capable of disrupting the sports news programme, prediction of the toughness of a match and football possession and domination. The motive behind the use of symbolic wordplay, as revealed during the time of our research, is for station promotion and aesthetics. This is discussed more in the concluding part of this study.

6. Conclusion

The study is limited to Yorùbá sport news radio programme broadcasting of some selected broadcasters in Ìbàdàn, Nigeria. The language of news is expected to be simple, non-critical and self-explanatory as discussed above. This is not the situation of things in sports news broadcasting in Yorùbá language nowadays. Sports news has become an aesthetic where non-casual, critical and literary expressions are foregrounded. This might be seen as a misplacement of priority because news is supposed to be informative and not for aesthetic purposes. On the other hand, the use of noncasual, critical and literary expressions may not be totally considered a misplacement of priority when other factors apart from the informative function of news are considered. Our interview with some audience of Yorùbá sports news revealed this. The audiences of this type of sports news are supporters of different Barclays Premier League and other European leagues' football clubs. This audience primarily makes jest of one another, most especially when their football clubs are defeated. During interview sessions held with the selected sportscasters, we were informed that the aim of creating light jests, which supporters of each of these football clubs make against their opposition after defeating them, formed the basis of their sports news. They claim that their style of Yorùbá sports news was initiated to gain audience, not only for the sports programme but also for their various radio stations. In this situation, sports news is employed as a means of gaining more audience by the sportscasters, through their use of language, for their programmes and for the radio stations. Therefore, sports news in this regard is not only employed for informative purposes, but also as a means of creating language aesthetics and station promotion. It is required that the language of broadcasting on Yorùbá sport news television programmes be studied. This will unveil

new broadcasting technicalities that have been introduced to complement the traditional sports news broadcasting styles.

7. References

Adéjùmò, J.A. (1974). *The development of radio broadcasting in Nigeria, West Africa* (Unpublished masters' thesis), (North Texas State University).

Aporbo, R.J. (2023). Discourse analysis of news broadcasts, *Canadian Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 3(3), 1-10.

Arne, H.S. & Helland, K. (2011). Sports broadcasting: An accelerator of business integration in the media industry, *Nordicom Review*, 32(2), 17-33.

Bloomfield, S. (2010). World Cup 2010: Is *Jabulani* Ball Bad or Good for the World Cup?" The Christian Science Monitor, available at: <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2010/0618/World-Cup-2010-Is-the-Jabulani-ball-bad-for-the-World-Cup>.

Eco, U. (1976). *A theory of semiotics*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Etika, D.N. & Edwin, E.A. (2018). Broadcasting media as tools for promotion of indigenous language in Nigeria: A study of Hit F.M Calaba, *International Journal on Transformations of Media Journalism and Mass Communication*, 3(1), 32-43.

Hamond, A.S. (2023). Language devices used in the news bulletins of the top five news radio channels, *Annals of the Faculty of Arts*, 51, 153-166.

Ibagere, E. (2015). The role of television in sports development in Nigeria, *Arts and Design Studies*, 30, 9-17.

Kangiwa, N.M. & Koko, M.S. (2021). Language and Nigerian media, *International Journal of Advanced in Engineering Management*, 3(11), 667-671.

Kíaríbèé, L.A. (2012). *Àmúlò Èdè nínú Ìròyìn Eré Ìdàráyá: Şólá Ayégbajéjé àti Kólá Ọmọtoşo Gégé bí Àpẹẹrẹ* (unpublished manuscript) (University of Ìbàdàn).

Kur, J. & Nyekwere, E.O. (2015). Television broadcasting and the democratization process in Nigeria: The successful and unsuccessful story, *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 5(4), 116-146.

Lotman, Y.M. (1990). *The universe of mind: A semiotics of culture*. Bloomington, IN: and Indiana University Press.

Martin, B.O. (2015). *Use of Language in sports headlines reporting soccer in Kenya* (Unpublished masters' thesis) (University of Nairobi).

Ògúndèjì, P.A. (1991). *Introduction to Yorùbá oral literature*. Ibadan: University of Ibadan Centre for External Studies.

Ọlátúnjì, O.O. (1972). Symbolism in Ọfọ, Comments on the paper delivered by A. Ọlábímtán, *Proceedings of the staff seminars of the School of African Asian Studies* (University of Lagos), 142-155.

Ọlátúnjì, O.O. (2005). *Features of Yorùbá oral poetry*. Ìbàdàn: University of Ìbàdàn.

Riffatarre, M. (1978). *Semiotics of poetry*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University.

Selden, R. W. P. & Brooker, P. (2005). *A reader's guide to contemporary literary theory* (Fifth edition). Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Sufa, D.P. & Liusti, S.T. (2022). Use of figurative language in sports news on news portals, *Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Language, Literature and Education*, 15-25.

Walle, V.J., Willems, D. & Willems, K. (2006). Structuralism, in *Handbook of Pragmatics*, 10, 136, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1075/hop.1-.str.1>.