

## PARADIGM SHIFTS IN THE YORUBA ANTHROPONYMS: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS ON YORUBA REINCARNATED-CHILD'S NAMES

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**ABSTRACT:** *The main thrust of the paper is the illumination of the interactions between the language use and the Yoruba cultural anthropology as attested to by a set of Yoruba names known as the àbíkú (reincarnated child's) names. The names are considered as registers because they aptly identify discourse that occurs in particular recurrent situations within the contexts of the people's social experience and beliefs. The factors that make the usage of these names to become atrophied are identified to illustrate the paradigm shifts in the people's cultural anthropology. In doing this, the sociolinguistic values of Yoruba names are expatiated and categorized to elicit the contemporary perception of the names. The study found that àbíkú names stand out linguo-culturally in Yoruba onomastics and are significantly complex to be merely positioned within either the purview of core linguistics or socio-religious perspectives alone as their expositions also include anthropological identities and situational parameters of variation. Among other things, this verbal text provides unique opportunities for the people to externalize social- psychology to capture the name giver's emotions and in the process, aptly casts identifiable marks on the bearer, thus stratifying the society in a way. Conclusively it is contended that this brand of name-words represent the signposts which encode the social perceptions on certain individuals and episodes of enduring identities in the past which have now been regrettably eroded and debased by critical waves of the so-called modernity.*

**KEYWORDS:** Yoruba, Child Name, Language, Linguistic, Africa Language

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### INTRODUCTION

Linguists observably posit that every language has two main aspects: one, its role as an agent that enables man to communicate (interact) with one another in his daily encounters and struggles to find means for survival. This prime function of language is assumed to be the cognitive aspect; the expression of ideas, concepts, thoughts, etc. The engagement is found to correspond with the purpose of language as the vehicle for the expression of thoughts and articulation of logic.

The second aspect of language is its role as a carrier of history and culture that are the components of discourse that have been built into the process of communication as texts materials over the ages. Two interlocking processes are also involved in this second aspect: it is evaluative as these thoughts are found to convey attitudes, values and perceptions. The other aspect of the process is the affective dimension which engages in the transmission of emotion and feelings. It is found that every language encapsulates these various dimensions at varying depth and width.

Naming culture and practices (Onomastics) in African societies specifically articulate the preceding aspects of language functions as they reflect not only the particular information on

the people's culture but they also encode factors relating to the parent's (name-giver's) social, economic, political and spiritual circumstances. The components of discourse in naming also involve utilizing the morpho-semantics of the language structures to lexicalize the bearer's past, present and the future.

*Àbíku* names, which are the object of this study, are the names given to the children that are believed to be members of a group of spirit-nymphs in Yoruba anthropology. These children, however, take on mortal existence that is why they are born like normal human beings at first instance but only to die at the time specified by the celestial group which is usually shortly after and return to their group. The anthropology of Yoruba names encodes certain powers that are believed to be potent enough to prevent the parents of the outer-world (in the celestial/spiritual realms) from causing incessant premature deaths to the child. It also entails an attitudinal perception if parents of such children have suffered a lot of loss and delay before they are able to procreate or have suffered from infant mortality. The children born after such experiences are usually given funny, survival or death-prevention names believed to be either preventive, protective or that can eliminate totally the re-occurrence of such premature death. A child who is so observed to be shuttling from the heavens and the earth due to such premature deaths are regarded as *àbíku* in Yoruba cultural-anthropology and are given atrophied types of names. The principal focus of this paper therefore, is the explication of the discourse engagements on such names within the contexts of their cultural backgrounds and the contemporary perceptions of the names in the modern world where such names have become almost a moribund civilization. The preceding explorations were carried out within the context of critical discourse analysis with a view to explicating the paradigm shifts in the Yoruba Onomastics. In the final analysis, attempts were made to reflect on the interlocking impacts of their neglects on the language and the society at large.

It is very paramount to state from the outset that the veracity of the claims expressed above on this type of children could be said to be speculative if the claims are to be contextualized within the model of the Western world cultural perspectives. This is because to date, no account of *àbíku* nymph-spirit has been freely given by a real participant of the nymph-spirit to uncover the mystery. The second declaration is that scholarly works on the topic could be approached from either the anthropological perspectives or seen as a register in the genre of a related discipline of discourse. The present study, however, is intended to be carried out within the general frame-work of critical discourse analysis and not an anthropological nor a cultural exposition per se. However, the depth of its relatedness to language and the explication of Yoruba names shall be made explicit in the subsequent sections.

### **Concept of Yoruba Proper names**

The analysis of *àbíku* names as an aspect of name-practice among the Yoruba calls for a deep understanding of the whole conceptual framework of the Yoruba names /proper names in clear perspectives as meaning:

*A word or phrase that identifies a specific person or place. A proper name (therefore) connotes a reference to an individual, not to a member of a class* (Crystal, 2001:112)

By and large, it is found that the characteristics and structures of Yoruba language permit its usage to express name-words as a body as well as a vehicle of knowledge. By its being a body of knowledge means that the folk-knowledge and different aspects of the Yoruba socio-cultural

values are couched and contained in the names. Similarly, its being a vehicle of knowledge means that the Yoruba names do transmit and convey several aspects of the folk-knowledge across to varying generations. These are what mark them out as a people. In that regard, it is contended that:

*The coding of information into personal names is based on the lexical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic rules of the Yoruba language. Akinnaso (1980:277).*

Ogunwale (2003:37) further opines that:

*Data on Yoruba proper names can provide basic information about the language not only because of the insightful features they exhibit in the Yoruba concatenative morphology, but also because of the way their analysis requires a complex approach combining syntax, semantics and morphology.*

The preceding submissions have been expressively analysed in a number of our earlier studies such as Ogunwale (1999, 1996, 2000, 2003, 2012a, 2012b and 2013). In those studies, attempts were made to demonstrate the features of Yoruba language as depicted by the name-words using the specific aspects of naming with particular reference to place, personal, plants and domestic animals' name-word configurations.

In another context however, Marmaridou (1989:355) discusses the general structures of proper names in human communication. He contends that although proper names are mainly used to identify individuals uniquely and therefore have a clearly referential function, another of their uses is connotative. This, according to him, is made possible when a proper name represents a symbol of whatever characteristics, events or time which a specific individual or place may at one time or the other have been associated with. In support of the postulation, Eḱundayo (1976:11) specifically contends that certain sociological inhibitions bar some words from participating in the configuration of personal name-words as they are highly restrictive and selective both in linguistic and sociological contexts. These appear so in view of the facts that vulgar/indecent and condemnable words are barred from being used as personal and place names. Besides, name words are absolutely apt and pithy. The paradox in the data of *àbíkú* name-words discussed in the present paper is that most of them are condemnable and dirty words, and so; they are peculiar types of names. As a result, the known factors about the configuration of Yoruba name- words make their type of names to be quite intriguing and calls for scholarly explication. That is exactly what we do in the present study.

Observably, the Yoruba proper names that are represented in the study are partially metaphorical in meaning. Essentially, therefore, the analysis of the preceding two uses of proper names identified in the first paragraph above (referential and connotative) has to do with whether proper names have meaning; *i. e.* whether their referential and connotative uses are related or not; and if so, how? Aspects of this contention have been addressed in Latima (1989:5) where names are described as signifying nothing and are assumed to be without any semantic contents. It is further observed that the issue of meaning content in naming has generated lots of controversies in the literature. (cf Lyons 1987), Halliday (1979), Bigelow (1978), among others). The present study, however, attempts to pick holes in the claims because the Yoruba *àbíkú* names encode arrays of social and psychological meanings which are lucidly explicable in linguo-cultural contexts. The specific argument of this paper is that the Yoruba proper names do perform more than pragmatic functions of labeling the individuals for identification than how they do so in some other societies. It is contended that these

uniqueness are made possible through the embedded concatenative morphological structures of the language which forms the repertoire from where the name words are fabricated. The body of this repertoire is discussed in the next paragraph:

### Derivational Structure of Yoruba Proper Names

In an earlier study<sup>1</sup>, attempt was made to demonstrate that Yorùbá name-forms could be generated from two basic syntactic rules as given in [1].

- [1] (a) Noun → Name  
(b) Sentence → Name

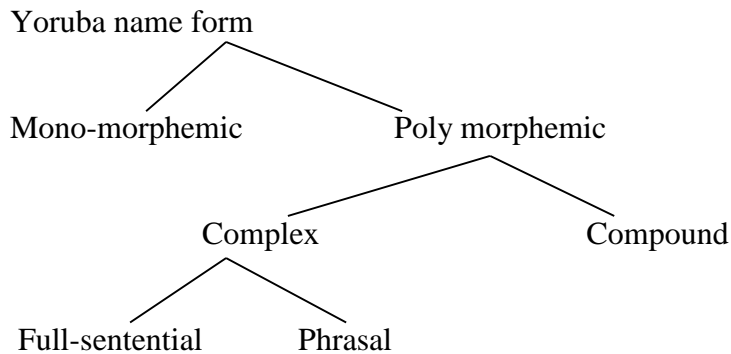
Having reduced a sentence name- words into a morphological word, the structure of its forms can further be roughly given as:

$$X[+Lexical] \longrightarrow H(Y)$$

The above configuration means that at the lexical level, the structure of a Yoruba name is: a head (H) i. e. a centre word with optional complement (Y). This center word is usually the theme<sup>2</sup>, i. e the subject while the compliment can be given as the predicate. The framework given in [1] can be further illustrated by [2a and b]

- [2] (a) (i) Òjọ - name of a male child born with part of the umbilical cord wound round his neck.  
(ii) Àjàyí - name of a child born with face turned downwards.  
(iii) Èkó - a place/personal name. This is another name for Lagos.  
(b) (i) Oyèèsòro - the contest for the chieftaincy title was (could be) difficult  
(ii) Ọdétúndé - the hunter god has come into the family again  
(iii) Tinúọlá - the inner feature of affluence  
(iv) Akin-ọlá - hero of affluence

The illustrations in [2] suggest that the morphological structures of Yorùbá names can be broadly reduced to mono-morphemic and poly-morphemic types. It is further observed that the poly-morphemic name-forms (as in 2b) can be sub-divided into complex; under which we have on the one hand, full sentential (cf 2b (i) ) and 2b (ii) ) and phrasal (cf 2b (iii) ) name-forms on one hand, and compound names, on the other hand (cf 2b (iv)). The preceding description is illustrated in figure [A] below:

**Figure A**

As it would be shown in the analyses, figure [A] explicates all the Yoruba names discussed in this paper. This claim, in part, agrees with Obieng (2001:114) that:

*Structurally, African names range from single words, phrases, and sentences.*

Different syntactic structures are found in Yoruba names as depicted above to support Obieng as quoted above. Such structures include clipped verbal elements such as clausal elements in like adverbial, prepositional and nominal clauses. The full sentential structures do take the form of imperatives, rhetorical questions and other forms of structures within the language system to similarly support the above claims. Looking into the word structures of the names, however, we find the followings:

### **Mono-morphemic type**

These are *Ìgè* (a child born with his or her legs coming out first during birth) *Ìdòwú* (a child born after a set of twins), *Òjó* (a child who faces down immediately after birth), *Àiná* (his female alternant). Names in this category are just about a dozen or so in their entirety. However, there are also the metaphoric types of Yoruba ascribed names. The class of name are all mono-morphemic in structure. Their examples include *Adágún* (Lake) *Wúra o* (Gold), *Fàdákà* (Silver), *Ògídán* (Elephant), *Òmírín* (Wolve), etc. Corpora in this category are therefore finite. Incidentally, they are peculiar register types of names in the sense that they either relate to certain factors at the time of birth (e.g twins and other birth omens) or they are ascribed to an individual at later age as a result of the namers' keen observations on the physical and attitudinal characteristics of the child after birth. Names in this category are *Ìdòwú*, *Òjó*, *Olúgbódi*, *Òkẹ́*, etc.

### **Poly-morphemic types**

The poly-morphemic types are those names with sizeable number of morphemes. Corpus in this class is infinite because it is possible to create more of them using the morphological repertoires available in the language. This makes all socially acceptable remarks and comments to be structured into a name. It is observed that there is no Yoruba name with less than two syllables as a result, the Yoruba name words are found to be morphologically robust to encode arrays of meanings-social, historical, religious, political, etc.

Ogunwale (2003:133) attempts to further bifurcate the poly-morphemic types of Yoruba names into *complex* and *compound* forms. The complex type can be *phrasal* like *Bámitálé* (stay with me till old age), *Kóláwólé* (Bring forth fortunes into the family), *Sónibáré* (Be cautious of who to associate with) and they can also be *sentential* like *Ọmóbóníkẹẹ* (this child arrives when there are still people to pet her/him on ground), *Adéwálé* (Heir of crown arrives), etc. Another complex name-form is the *compound* type such as *Ọlálólú* (the honour of the Lord), *Ayòadé* (the joy of crown), *Adédògún* (the crown of Ọgún- god of iron), etc. They have N-N structures like *Adé (N) + Ọlá (N) = Adéọlá*.

In specific terms, the study on *àbíkú*-names expounds the contributions which the study of language-use and structure are capable of making to the general understanding of a Yoruba man and the anthropological factors associated with the language use in the mass society. This factor is concerned with how social meanings are constructed, conveyed and negotiated through the Yoruba names. In other words, language is viewed as a phenomenon that is grounded in social experience. Naming is therefore a linguistic system of information packaging. It will also be demonstrated in this paper that Yoruba names crystallize the interface between the people's linguistic and their socio-cultural configuration. These very important observations are noted as not being pan-cultural because some other cultures, especially critics from the western world would argue:

*What is in a name?*

*Must a name mean something?*

*Akinaso, 1983:62*

To anybody asking such question about Yoruba names, several explanations could be offered. For instance, Yoruba names could act as carriers of faith and destiny, depending on the semantic values adduced to the names. They can be used to explain the pedigree of individuals and are also capable of being used to close or open doors of fortunes. Irrespective of other aspects of the human personalities of an individual, people may grow love or hatred on account of what they know and believe about a particular name.

Analytic works in the areas of morpho-semantic and anthropological purviews as contained in Yoruba proper names is relatively scanty in the language scholarship. Those that are available are limited in scope and content because they typically ignore the dialectic interface between cultural anthropology and linguistic identities inherent in these particular types of names among the people.

The lexical items used as *àbíkú* names do challenge the people's folk-psychology, value system, ethics, theosophy, etc. Suffice it to say, however, that there is no theoretical limit to the amount of socially acceptable information the Yoruba proper names could communicate. It is upon these notions that we shall limit our discussion to only those key factors of the people's folk-psychology as highlighted in the component of names articulated in the immediate preceding paragraph. For reasons of clear presentation, let us first examine the general nature of the Yoruba personal names in the perspectives of anthropolinguistics using the *àbíkú* names. This is with a view to capturing the fact that language is a cultural behavior with many interesting connections to other aspects of human actions and thoughts.

## The Yoruba Anthroponyms

At this juncture, it is expedient to discuss the form and content of Yoruba anthroponyms for the purpose of foregrounding *àbíkiú* names within the contextual framework of the Yoruba socio-cultural philosophy. In the Yoruba traditional setting, there are typical sets of names for the royal family, the nobility, the king-in-council, the valiant, professional practitioners, religious groups, etc. Each of them has specific codes that make the names of their members identifiable and discernible. They are thematic codes. For example, royalty is signified by *adé* name tags, nobility by *olá*, chieftaincy by *oyè*, the valiant by *akin*, etc. These are the means through which the people in the society are specifically delineated and the paradigm is culturally maintained and linguistically sustained.

Another important feature of Yoruba names is the issue of meaning. Apart from a dozen or so of mono-morphemic type of names, all other Yoruba names are lexical words and are decomposable into morphological units. This makes the word-stock of Yoruba names to be considerably large. The Yoruba morphological repertoires provide avenues for re-contextualizing names to afford freshness and avoid unreasonable cliché. The understanding of Yoruba names is not so straight forward, however, because of the impacts of a number of socio-cultural and linguistic considerations that are involved, (see for examples, Ogunwale (2012a and b). In the works cited above, it is contended that in order to understand the richness and beauties of Yoruba names, you will also need to know the linguo-cultural entity of the people.

In that sense, therefore, names are found to function like the thread in the eye of a needle which can make the needle easily recoverable and aptly identifiable. The culturally initiates will identify your family/home condition and status, your regional area within the Yoruba nation and your ancestral religion and the socio-psychology of your parents on hearing your name. Of more relevant to the present discussion is the fact that certain sociological inhibitions set some restrictions on the nominal that do not conform to the characteristics of Yoruba naming word-stock. Depending on the bearer's socio-political class, professional group, religious affiliation, etc, the individuals in the society therefore, can be stratified according to the different phyla signaled by the theme labels associated with such socio-political and religious class, following Faleti (1997:14ff).

It is contended that names with *Adé* (crown) theme: These are names given to the prince and princesses e.g. *Adébáyò* ("crown meets happiness at home"), *Adékúnlé* ("crown fills the house"). *Adéníkèṣé* (crown has petting). -

Names with *Oyè* (chieftains) theme: These are names of the people from the political class – the king-in-council and other paramount community leaders. e.g. *Oyèyemí* ("chieftaincy befits me"). *Oyèwùmí* ("I admire chieftains"). Names with *Olá* (nobility) theme. These are people born in to the wealthy families within the society. They may not necessarily belong to a political class, e.g. *Oládélé* ("Affluence reaches home). *Olásayò* ("Affluence engenders happiness"). Names with *Akin* (valiant) theme: These are people (only masculine) born by those children whose parents have distinguished themselves during the emergencies like war or when the community was attacked by terrible demons or carnivorous animals. Only a male child is christened *Akin* in Yoruba society. Examples of such names include *Akínyemí* ("valiant befits me") *Akíndolú* ("valiant turns a king-pin), *Akínrèmí* (valiant consoles me), etc. The next category of names are the deities initial -names. These are themes pointing to the sundry deities attached to the traditional professions. For example, hunting (*Ògún*), drumming (*Àyàn*)

Carving (Ọ̀nà) etc. For instance, farmers depend on *òrìṣà-oko* (farming deity) and *Ọ̀pá* (staff) happens to be its emblem. So, farmers christen their children *Ọ̀pá* – names, e.g. *Ọ̀pákúnlé* (“òpá fills the house”) *Ọ̀gúntúndé* (the god of iron has reincarnated) *Ọ̀gúnkúnlé* (“Ọ̀gún fills the house”), *Ọ̀gúndayọ̀* (*Ọ̀gún* turns to be the source of happiness).

The sixth category of names comes into existence through the configuration and intertextuality of the above five themes.

By inter-textuality, I mean a situation where for example, *ọ̀lá* inter-twines with *oyè* through marriage (as in *Ọ̀láoyè*, *Oyèbóla* etc). A man from a royal family marrying a woman from the family of the valiant may give names such as *Adélákin* (crown has valiant), *Akinadé* (A valiant of royal type) etc to their child. In another circumstance, a name may be supplied from the family of the child's father and additional name coming from the mother's side, e.g. *Akinpluse adé-Akinadé* (valiant with a touch of crown) etc. Aside from just the above two themes (*Adé* and *Akin*), the intersection may occur within any other members of the set. The configurations above may produce names such as : *Ọ̀lá+ògún* (the child is affluenced by *Ọ̀gún* ancestry) and *Ọ̀gúntóyè* (*Ọ̀gún* is as prestigious as chieftains), *Adésakin* (having crowns performs feats) and *Akínlàdé* (valiant is equal to having crown), *Oyèèsọ̀lá* (chieftains provides affluence) and *Ọ̀ládoyè* (affluence turns chieftains), *Ifátọ̀lá* (ifá-god of Yoruba wisdom- is equal to being affluent) and *Ọ̀lá-ifá* (the influence of ifá), *Awóyẹ̀mí/Odùyẹ̀mí* (Awo /Odù- (another names for ifá-befits me), etc.

It will be observed that by the time each of the above first five categories of names interact with one another, the word-stock of Yoruba personal names will turn out to be remarkably sizeable.

The preceding explanation on the interplay of different themes in the name-words results into a situation where it becomes imperative for each family to be identified with at least one out of the many configurations and makes the inter-textual characteristics of name- words that communicate items of cultural values, (in the names such as *Ọ̀mọ̀lábáké*-it is having children that we should esteem), *Ọ̀mọ̀yájowó*-Having children is preferable to money) proclamation of the measure of standard (in the names such as *Iwalewa*-good characters are the personification of beauty), evaluating the direction/motion of social well-beings (in the names such as *Olagòkè/Ọ̀lápòsi* –affluence keeps increasing), *Ọ̀ládélé* (affluence has visited the family), *Adéwuyì* (crowned heads engender reputations) and assessing the parameters of individual successes/achievements as in *Mopélọ̀lá* (I measure up to standards in terms of affluence), *Adéyanjú* (royalty settles everything), etc.

Besides, patronyms (i. e. using one's father's name as part of one's name) as it is in the culture of certain people in the western world and as being copied in our society today, is observed to be a foreign culture and alien to the Yoruba people in the context of their language-use. In the pre-colonial era, if the traditional chanters wanted to trace the provenance/ancestry of an individual for emotional, social or more importantly, to support or determine the qualification of a nominee into a political stool, they only use panegyrics (*Oríkì i. e* verbal salutes) to trace the lineage of such person. It is the neo-colonial impact of taxation which necessitated the compilation of a list of all taxable adults within and through each quarters/family head that required the name of such head to stand as the arrow-head for identification. A surname stands as a head word under which other tax payers will be subsumed. We hinted in an earlier work on Yoruba place names that residents of a particular quarter/compound are traditionally found to be an offspring of the same ancestor. Therefore; they have the same fore-father's name. The

need for the use of surname had never been in vogue before then. However, it is observed that the use of surnaming as it has become an aspect of our contemporary naming practice will soon make individual's father's name to get loss. This is because some surnames are fore-father's names and not real individual's father's names.

Putting the Yoruba *àbíku* names into insightful perspectives need be highlighted to enable us underscore the depth of its relevance in the Yoruba cultural anthropology in the past and even now that there seems to be paradigm shifts in the usage of this name-words. This particularly relevant in view of the fact that many surnames that appear inexplicable to the rising generation of Yoruba youths are of this class. Therefore, we need to present our data first.

### Data Base

The data involved in the analyses of this study are:

Ààtándàré, Ajáriungbé, Abíná, Ajá, Ajítóní, Arádojo, Asínwòó,

Aájúwò, Àkísàtán, Ànwòó, Àndùú, Ayélàágbé, Ajéígbé, Bámitálé, Bánjókòó,

Bíòbákú, Bíòkú, Báyéwú, Dèíndé, Dáííró, Dúrójayé, Dúrósinmí, Dúrówojú,

*Elédè, Èkúnsúmi, Fídímáyé, Ikúforíjì, Ikújòòrè,, Ìgòsídì, Ikúmapàyí, Ikúkòyíi, Ikúpamítì, Kilàńkó, Kúèèsàn, Jáyésinmí, Jènríogbéjò, Ikúsàánú, Ikúyínínù, Kalèjayé Kògbòdòkú, Kòkúmó, Kòsókó, Kòtòyèèsí, Kúyè, Kàsímòowòó, (ikú) Làmbè, Mákòó (mí ni ẹrù lọ) Máboòbùnjé, Málòmó, Ọkọya, Ọkúta, Rótímí, Rógbuyì, Ọjọyẹ, Orúkótán, Síwóníkú, Yémiítàn.*

Although the preceding list is not exhaustive because I am aware that there may be other *àbíku* names not yet discovered by the present researcher, but it is hoped that those presented are vast enough for a good scholarly discussion. I also need to declare that both the primary and secondary sources of data were employed to make the study comprehensive and reliable. For example, *àbíku* names were selected from the graduation list of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria from 1984 to 2014. Oral interviews were also conducted using five speakers within each of the eighteen principal dialect-areas of Yoruba<sup>2</sup>. The age grades of our respondents ranged from sixty to eighty-five years. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Office was also consulted where we extract relevant voters' names. The Yoruba Names Dictionary of Babalola and Alaba (2003) was also consulted. We did all these to free our claims from mere intuition as a native speaker of the language and to probe Èkundayọ (1976:14) who posits certain selection restrictions for the Yoruba name words.

### Contextualising Àbíku Name-words as Registers and Critical Discourse Materials

The term discourse analysis is used in the literature in various ways and perspectives (cf Fowler (1991), Kress, Leeuwen and Dijk (1993) Grunther et. al (1993), Wodak and Martins (1999), Blommaert (2005) etc. Similarly, the term Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is being employed in this paper, is not a homogenous concept in discourse analysis. However, the two prominent approaches are those of Fairclough (1995), which explains discourse to be very related to the Halliday systemic functional linguistics and the discourse historical method of Wodak et. al. (1995), which is related to text planning. Observably, the two theories are derived from the theories of ideology, genre theory and the philosophical traditions.

The trends in the two works point to the fact that discourse as a concept cannot exist without social meaning and that there must be a strong relation between linguistics, social structure and the context. The practical relevance of critical discourse analysis is enormous in that it concerns with practical social problems: the usability of its findings to proffer solutions. Our justification for deploying critical discourse analysis for the explication of *àbíkú* name-words, therefore, is specifically justified from two stand points: the first is the possibility of using the word *critical* both in evaluative and non-evaluative ways. It is in terms of the second sense as meaning critical thinking, careful and systematic, self-conscious thinking; without any necessary evaluative goals in mind; that the word is being used here. In that sense, a critical discourse analysis could be said to be self-reflective if it reflects the interest on which certain text is based and it takes into account the historical and social contexts of interaction. The second stand point is premised on Johnstone (2008:9) who argues that discourse materials are of many kinds, including texts, oral traditions, proverbs; *sometimes materials consisting of words alone* and sometimes other modalities. In addition, discourse probes ``why is this stretch of discourse appears the way it is? Why is it no other way? Why these particular words in this particular order *and usage*? `` , etc. The preceding foregrounding therefore makes discourse to be interdisciplinary in nature and allows *àbíkú* name-words to be a plausible corpus of data.

Interestingly, the historical accounts and the social interactions can be extrapolated from the situational parameters of variation which we find in the *àbíkú* name-words and usage. Biber (1994:40-1) would readily support this argument if we specifically relate *àbíkú* name-words contextually and take them as registers. As registers, their occurrence with name-words means that they only label children born in specific situations. It is on those bases that we establish the following situational parameters of situations to validate and adopt *àbíkú* names not only as registers but also as plausible data for critical discourse analysis.

### **Data Analyses in the contexts of Critical Discourse**

The preceding illustrations of critical discourse analysis also confirm Johnstone (2008:10) claim that discourse is shaped by its medium and medium on the other hand, shapes the praxis and possibilities of discourse such that the discourse of *àbíkú* name-words are the peculiar expressions which are distinctively meant for the purposes of denouncing infant mortality through the use of Onomastics. In that sense, some words are recontextualized to function in strange communication domains. The next aspect of our work in this paper therefore concerns situating specific *àbíkú* names in the data within varying discourse expositions, as described in our preceding discussion on discourse science. Now, we start with the data relevant to appeals.

### **Àbíkú names which encode Appeal Expressions**

Every Yoruba man desires to have sustainable children who will later take after him because one is not successful until he is survived by children of his own blood. Having an heir is therefore the prayer of every Yoruba family. To ensure this, passionate appeals are made to both the *àbíkú* children and their divinities; because these mysterious beings are believed to possess certain super-natural powers (spirits) that control them. Appeals are made to them to live on with the parents and stop shuttling from the heavens and the earth. Communicative characteristics of the participants are at work here. The discourse is sometimes abridged and addressed to self as in *Abiina* (although he has already been born, (*we don't know yet what follows*)), *Àsi-ń-wòó* (we keep watching) *we are yet to be convinced that he would stay*), and sometimes addressed to other people, as in *Bíòbákú* (If he does not die) (*he would definitely live long*). At times, the audience is not particularly specified, as in *Kilàńkó* (*what is it that we*

give name to). These various *àbíké* names are further contextualized and classified based on their contents.

Other names having appeals in their contents include:

- (i) *Mádojútimí* - (don't put me into shame)
- (ii) (íkú) *Làmbè* - (it is death) that we are appealing to (for the spare of this child)
- (iii) *Bamtale* - (stay on with me till my old age)
- (iv) *Ikúmápàí* - (may death never snatch this away)
- (v) *Kalèjayé* - (settle down to enjoy live)
- (vi) *Máboòbùnjé* - (don't waste the herbal medicine being dispensed on you)
- (vii) *Jènrìogbéjò* - (permit me to be your dance partner)
- (viii) *Dúrosaró/Dúrosinmí/Dúrójayé* (be alive to practice smithy/be alive to succeed me, be alive to enjoy life)

Observably, the preceding category of names is all appealing to specific targets either directly or indirectly. In certain examples, appeals are made directly to either the divinity of infant mortality (as in iv and iv) or the child itself (cf i, iii, v, vi, viii) to kindly stop the tortures of visiting the parents with infant mortality.

### **Àbíké names having nauseating sorts of meanings**

These are “do-your-worst” brand of names which are given the *àbíké* children with the hope that they would feel disgraced and debased, and so stop shuttling the heavens and the earth. The names are meant to be provocative to the spirits of the *àbíké* and as a result, they are direct opposites of the items of names in the subsequent section below. The present category of names is given after series of repeated infant mortality have been experienced by a mother that made the parents to feel disgusted since there is a limit to human perseverance and endurance. The circumstances and personal relationship that produce this kind of discourse are those that devoid respect, endearment, petting, favour, etc, to produce apprehension and insults. As a result, **Omọ yí** (this child) *kòtòyèsí* (is not worth respect) is a repulsive sort of name; which ordinarily would not be given to a loving, respectful child. Other examples include:

- (i) *Elédè* (pigs) (ii) *Ajá* (dogs), (iii) *Ajáriungbé* (food for the dogs), (iv) *Ekúlujú* (it is rats that inscribed the eye-sockets), (v) *Okóya* (the hoes that we can use to dig the graves have broken
- (vi) *Okúta* (stones), etc.

### **Mollifying category of Àbíké names**

The analysis of discourse in the present paragraph points to the relationship between the addresser and addressee. The addressee is adjudged to be more powerful or possess more specialist knowledge because it has higher status and more experiential knowledge and control. Remember we have said that *àbíké* children belong to the spirits; thus the participants (parents/namer) are observed to share certain knowledge about the limits of each other. One of such knowledge is that the spirits (addressee) possess super powers that could be super imposed at will thus creating fears in the minds of the parents (addresser). However, having sustainable

children is the desire of every parent. To that effect, the set of names here are articulated to make the nymphs/the divinity feel less angry so that they could allow the children to live on with their parents and stop shuttling from the heavens and the earth. The names in this category are pacifying, assuaging and appeasing set of names most of which are observed to be imperative sentences. The semantic contents of the names categorized as mollifying are those we hope to explicate in the present section. Such names include:

- (i) *Jénríqgbéjò*- (allow me to be able to dance with you)
- (ii) (ikú) *Làmbè* – (it is death) that we are appealing to (for the spare of this child)
- (iii) *Ikúsàánú*- (death, have mercy)
- (iv) *Bamtale*- (stay on with me till my old age)
- (v) *Ikúmapàyí*- (may death never snatch this away)
- (vi) *Báyéwú* (grow/develop with live)
- (vii) *Málòmó* (stop shuttling)

Observably, the present category of names are putting the minds of the namer at rest, knowing that the nymph-spirit is the superior target and the discourse are directed to either the divinity or the child itself; to kindly drop the torture of visiting the parents with infant mortality.

### **The Àbíké petting- names**

Parents of *àbíké* children resort to sincere petting when all other deliberate discourteous means (like 6. 2) could not produce the desired results of stopping *àbíké* infant mortality. In this set of discourse, performative verbs are found to be copiously used as registers. As a result, the interpersonal authoritative- relationship between the deity and the namer evidently attests to the psychological engagements of the participants showing that one is at the mercy of the other; and in this context it the parent that is seeking for the kindness. Our examples are presented as follows:

- (i) *Mààkó* (mi leru lo) - (please, desist from looting my properties)
- (ii) (**Qm**) *Dèìndé* - ( child, please, return (home) / (or assertive statement-child returns home)
- (iii) *Málòmó*- (stop shuttling)
- (iv) *Ajítóní*- (one who wakes up today)
- (v) *Yémiitàn*- (stop deceiving/ cajoling me)
- (vi) *Kògbòdòkú*- (it should not die)
- (vi) *Siwoniku*- (stop your deadly activities)
- (vii) *Fìdímáyé*- (stay put on earth)

**Parental declarative discourse- names**

The incapacitated circumstances of the *àbíkú* parents underlie the essence of most declarative expressions that are contained in the set of names outlined in this category. It is observed that the setting of this particular group of discourse and its communicative functions tend to identify the language structure as being declarative. Also, the language use and functions uniquely agree with the essential features of corpus of registers which *àbíkú* name words portend to serve. Our examples include:

- (i) *Ajèùgbé* - (good ventures should not go down the drains)
- (ii) *Ayélàágbé*- (find habitation on earth)
- (iii) *Ọkọya* (the shovel/ hole (for digging the graves) has torn
- (iv) *Ikúèèsàn* (dying is not a better option)
- (v) *Èkúnsúmi* (I feel disgusted by incessant lamentation)
- (vi) *Meèrókọ* (I can no more find shovel/ holes for digging the graves)
- (vii) *Àkísàtán* (there are no more rags to be used as coffin sack- cloth

**Assertive Hope- sustaining names.**

The powerful nature of words is put to bear here. The parental expectations are high. As a result, the corpus here are those found to employ interlocutionary aspects of speech acts which contain any of the following discourse praxis: informative, concessive, commissive, disapproval, forecast, predictive, stipulative, etc. The names are found to be assertive from the namers end, each corpus signifying the semantics of the verbs outlined above.

- (i) *Ikúforíjì* (death forgives/pardones (this)
- (ii) *Ikúdáyìró* (death spares/retains this)
- (iii) *Ọjóyẹ* (postponement of appointed date
- (iv) *Ikúkòyí* (death rejects this)
- (v) *Ìgbékòyí* (grave-yards rejects this)
- (vi) *Aájúwò* (it will support caring)
- (vii) *Kúyẹ* (death is suspended)
- (viii) *Kòkúmọ* (it no more dies)
- (ix) *Kògbọdòkú* (it should not die)
- (x) *Ajèùgbé* (money/venture is responsive. It deserves good returns)
- (xi) *Àtànḁáre* (dunghill has vindicated (us)
- (xii) *Kàsímáawòó* (lets keep our fingers crossed, hoping for its survival )

(xiii) *Asinwoo* (we are still keeping our fingers crossed/still hopeful)

(xiv) *Ikúpamítì* (death abandones me)

### Entreative - names

The corpus in this category is emotionally requesting that the other participant in the Communication, that is invariably superior, be willing to oblige certain things requested in the names. Obligations are therefore, involved in the set of names. It appears the *àbíké* is deified and the parents are looking up to it as a semi-god, begging it. The examples below illustrate the situations where compassions are being sought in form of prayers.

(i) *Ikúyínínù* (death leaves it alone)

(ii) *Ọmọ - jẹnríogbéjọ* (child, allow me to dance/sing lullaby with you)

(iii) *Ọmọ- Rótímí*

(iv) *Rógbuyì* (stay/live to be famous/popular)

(v) *Dúrówojú* (stay/live to look at my face)

(vi) *Jáyésinmi* (allow people to have peace of mind)

(vii) *Ikúsàánú (mi)* (death please, have mercy on me)

(vi) *Ikúmapàyí* (death don't kill this)

The illustrations cited above show the awesomeness of *àbíké* deity among the Yoruba people and the esteem accorded them in order to have sustainable children instead of having just a born –to –die. As they are, some of them belong to more than a single category thus pointing to the fact that there is no extent the namer could not go to ensure that these children consent to their requests.

### Table Showing the Extrapolation of Our Analysis

The table given below summarizes the aspects and functions of participants (namer and the named) that are involved in the critical discourse of *àbíké* names illustrated so far in this study:

#### ASPECT FUNCTION

Addresser Emotive, Expressive, Affective

Addressee Conative

Context Referential, Cognitive, Denotative

Message Registers (name-words)

Contact Phatic, Interaction Management

Code Metalinguistic (dealings and relations)

The model of our extrapolation presented above is informed by how shifting from one speech event (with which these corpus were known before) to another circumstantial event defines the discourse role assignments that are newly allotted to each corpus. For example, by emotive, expressive and affective functions we mean that the name giver aims at the direct expressions of his attitude/perception to the issues of infant mortality and its deity in the situational contexts as contained in the names. Conative focuses on the deity of *àbíkú* nymph/ person (s) been addressed into doing something or tricking /persuading them into it. Most typical of this function is the use of vocatives, entreaties, appealing statements; requesting the participants to accent to certain requests and obligations. The context dimension of discourse as demonstrated in the *àbíkú* text, however, involved focusing the object, topic, content of discourse chosen by the namer which is the concept of *àbíkú*. And the message contains the perception of infant mortality becoming a nymph - idol. The situational parameters of variation focus on the various contact elements of the situation. Focus on the linguistic code is the circumstantial entities of *àbíkú* name words. This is the primary purpose of this aspect of language use. The above explanations aptly summarize our thesis of discourse in this study so far.

### ***Àbíkú* names and the Contemporary Yoruba Sociolinguistic Space**

Having taken us through the concept and perception of *àbíkú* names among the Yoruba, a word or two on the contemporary status is also deemed important. Observably, some Yoruba traditional names that are *àbíkú* name word are being changed while some others are being dropped for reasons of linguistic alienation and culture subversion. The accounts of these phenomena have been discussed in some depth in Ogunwale (2014). The contemporary Yoruba people who initially bear *àbíkú* names publicly denounce them because they would not like people to know that they are in the group of reincarnated children; so they change such names through classified advertisements in the daily news papers. And more importantly, parents themselves no more give *àbíkú* names to their children thus shifting the boundary stakes in Yoruba socio-cultural anthroponyms. Much besides, infant mortality rates have drastically reduced among the people and the traditional belief in it that makes the Yoruba people to deify the phenomenon has drastically dwindled. Modern medical science has revealed that by and large, it is the sickle-cell diseases and its complications that are responsible. It has almost become a common knowledge that the genotype of the parents and unscathed health-care delivery are the determinant factors for the insurgence of infant mortality.

### **CONCLUSION**

In this paper, several aspects of Yoruba names ranging from their linguo-structural contexts to the socio-cultural backgrounds have been explored. It is found that these factors foreground their configurations and perceptions. It also argues that the names go beyond identification tags to include discourse capacities of soliciting, condemnation, interpersonal- authorities, predictions, entreaty, etc, that determine the discourse functions of *àbíkú* names. However, paradigms shifts are being manifested through the tide of modernity which is fast eroding the *àbíkú* name- forms usage in Yoruba onomastic space. Besides, influence of modern health care is making the incidence of infant mortality which is considered the veritable factor for *àbíkú* insurgencies among the families to dwindle. The contention of the paper, however, is that even when this practice is no more common, this aspect of Yoruba culture should be documented as part of our tradition as they form aspect of the factors that mark us out as a people.

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## End-Notes

1. While discussing "A Pragmalinguistic Study of Yoruba Proverbial Names", Ogunwale (2012c) attempts to provide the syntactic framework for different structures of Yoruba names. The content of the framework is repeated in figure A to afford easy follow-up.
2. Examples of such themes are illustrated while given the six different phyla through which the Yoruba name words could be distinguished. These phyla include Akin, Adé, Oyè, Qlá, etc A more lucid explanation on this is discussed in paragraph 3.
3. A dialect continuum is defined in Bamgbose (1966:2) as a group of geographically contiguous and linguistically related dialects. Yoruba is the native language of the Yoruba people who constitutes one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria. The language is spoken by over 20% of the Nigerian population. It is also found to be one of the three principal languages designated as 'national languages' in the Nigerian constitution. Others being Hausa and Igbo. Its dialects include: : Àkókó, Èkìtì, Ọyó, Òńkò, Àwóri, Ìjẹbú, Àkúrẹ̀, Ìlájẹ, Ègbá, Onḍó, Ìjẹ̀sà, Ifẹ̀, Ìgbómìnà, Ìkálẹ̀, Èkìtì-pupa, Èkìtì Ìlájẹ, etc.
4. Ogunwale (2012b) expatiates various reflections of discourse assignments in the configurations of Yoruba personal Names.