

**THE SYSTEMIC MANIFESTATION OF GENDER POWER: A BOUNDARY
EXTENSION STRATEGY IN *ẸFÚNŞETÁN ANÍWÚRÀ***

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Abstract

Ideologies that promote unequal power relations are more or less structured in the fabric of the various world social systems. Among such ideologies is the issue of gender ideal which has favoured patriarchy and subjected women to extreme subordination for hundreds of years. To some extent, language has been very effective in contesting this social injustice. Thus, this study, using Lazar's (2007) Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) as a theoretical framework, has analysed selected discourse exchanges in the epic movie, *Ẹfúnşetán Aníwúra*, to weigh systemic power manifestations in varied contexts where unequal gender ideologies are contended. The work finds that gender power manifestations can be incited in feminine exchanges through discursive behaviours such as denigration, self-aggrandisement and blasphemy. It also reveals that insults, abuses, curses, accusations, counter accusations, threats, metaphors and incantations are among the linguistic tools women have been exploiting to hit gender barriers in their quest for equality. Essentially, the research concludes that although the women's linguistic choices for fighting injustice could be very potent, their overstretching the capacity of those choices paradoxically fortifies masculine resistance and incites gender dominance struggles

Keywords: Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), Systemic Power Procedure, Patriarchy, Masculinity and Femininity.

Introduction

One of the phenomena that are seemingly common to world cultures, and possibly as old as man, is the patriarchal ideal. Singh (2016) describes patriarchy literally as the system that sets up the father – a man – as a central figure and the woman more or less peripheral. This culture elevates virtues that are associated with masculine and debases those that are associated with feminine. Urbain (2018) states that the ideal of patriarchy is not limited to female oppression; rather, the culture promotes a system whereby certain beliefs and individual actions benefit the male folks over their female counterparts. A way of life as such systematically accommodates various ideological patterns of perceptions, expectations, practices and policies that have evidently perpetuated gender inequality.

Although patriarchy has succeeded across the globe for many centuries, the contemporary world has witnessed some opposing philosophies and agitations which persistently challenge the old order through propagation and entrenchment of equal representation, women's emancipation and empowerment ideals. Either explicitly or otherwise, the feminist agitations have greatly supplanted much of the ideology that has hitherto favoured masculinity. Meanwhile, despite the popularity of the feminist ideologies around the world, certain gender boundaries that underline masculine superiority still exist and operate. Meanwhile, as Holmes (2007) observes, women have continued to hit the gender barriers by speaking in some way that pushes and tests the boundaries to contest the status quo. Consequently, such discursive actions have reinforced the limits at which men could accept the

women's behaviour and that, by extension, has created some level of gender power struggle. Contexts for testing such contests abound in the human history and the story of *Efúnṣetán Aníwùrà* is not in any form an inferior case. In essence, this paper considers it necessary to evaluate the systemic gender power manifestations in selected discourse exchanges in the epic movie, *Efúnṣetán Aníwùrà*. It is therefore in the interest of the study to:

- i identify the discursive behaviours that can incite gender power manifestations in feminine discourse exchanges.
- ii state the linguistic gender boundaries that are demonstrated in the epic movie.
- iii enumerate the linguistic tools that women use to hit gender barriers in their agitation for equality as shown in the selected exchanges.
- iv explain how linguistic choices can reinforce the limits of acceptable feminine discursive behaviours.

Unarguably, several researches have been carried out on the personality of Madam *Efúnṣetán Aníwùrà*, the former *Ìyálóde* of *Ìbàdàn*. For example, Okunola and Ojo (2012a) carry out *A Socio-Historical Crime Review on Efúnṣetán Aníwùrà, Basorun Gáà and Àare-Àgò-Ògúnrindé Ajé*. The work invokes warnings on the dangers of political power abuse. Okunola and Ojo (2012b) also study the *Negative Life Events and Aggressive Behaviour of Efúnṣetán Aníwùrà*. Their research diagnoses the effects of *Efúnṣetán Aníwùrà*'s psychological problem on the society and her end. In addition, Ilesanmi (2014) studies *Efúnṣetán Aníwùrà: A Psycho-Historical Exploration of Women's Psychopathology*. The researcher adopts a psycho-historical exploration of oral and written records to establish the mental health impacts of patriarchy and male chauvinism on African women's psycho-social well-being. Meanwhile, this current study has a slight departure from the cited works. While the existing studies assess historical records on Madam *Efúnṣetán*

Aníwùrà to project the socio-cultural and psycho-historical problems of women in Africa, this paper examines the discursive exchanges in the dramatic documents on the epic figure to underscore the various levels of systemic gender power manifestations within and outside Yorùbá social system.

Patriarchal Relations in Yorùbá Social System

According to Rawat (2014), patriarchy represents a social and ideology system in which men (who are referred to as patriarchs) are superior to women. Walby (1990:20) conceptualises it as "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women." The social structures that pervade in a system as this promote the ideology of men naturally occupying dominant positions which every woman has to subject to. Walby (ibid.) further classifies patriarchy under six structures of:

- i. *patriarchal mode of production*: which emphasises the undervalued work of housewives who form the producing class as against their husbands who make up of the expropriating class.
- ii. *patriarchal relations in paid work*: which describe patriarchal relations on paid employments that grant worse jobs and less pay to women than men who offer the same jobs.
- iii. *Patriarchal relations in the state*: which present the state as an instrument of patriarchal interests for being slow in intervening in cases of injustice against women.
- iv. *male violence*: which describes the ill treatments men usually mete out to women.
- v. *patriarchal relations in sexuality*: which approve and practise heterosexuality over any other sexual form as a societal norm by promoting objectification of women to male gaze and gratification tools.

- vi. *patriarchal relations in cultural institutions*: which regulate women's behaviour in public places.

For domestication of the structures, Familusi's (2012) opinion is of immense value. He mentions that the Yorùbá nation, like other male domineering nations of the world, is not exempted from patriarchal practices because Yorùbá women, too, are to a large extent, disadvantaged socially, politically, economically and religiously. The experiences of gender marginalisation are also somewhat linguistically driven within the system. Hence, Familusi (ibid.) itemises the ways by which language contributes to the realisation of Walby's (1990) patriarchal structures in Yorùbá social system. These include:

- i. *announcement of the birth of the girl child*: which usually lacks much enthusiastic reception.
- ii. *proverbs*: like "Adékúnlé ni orúkoṣòkùnrin; Adétúlé ni orúko obìrin," suggesting that "while a male child populates the family, a female one depopulates it." or "Obìrin kii jé 'kúmólú," meaning, "A woman cannot be the leader."
- iii. *taboos*: like "Bí obìrin bá fì ojù kan Orò, Orò yòò gbé e." That is, "Any woman that dares coming in contact with the Orò deity must be put to death."

The examples overtly reflect some linguistically coded Yorùbá ideologies that empower masculinity, on the one hand, and disempower femininity on the other, thereby widening the boundaries of gender inequality in the people's social system. Although such linguistic choices have favoured patriarchs for hundreds of years, historical records and recent women's agitations, which are basically discursive constructions for change, have made contraction of the widened gender boundaries in the system inevitable. Sisson and Iverson (2014) aver that the possibility

of constructing alternatively concealed discourses has made women's resistance of patriarchal power unavoidable. The alternative discourses have therefore systematically reduced the popularity of the existing masculine ideologies, thereby challenging such cultures like those in the Yorùbá social system that promote gender inequality. In effect, gender power struggle has to manifest, particularly that neither of the gender units can operate effectively in isolation from each other. Hence, during interactions in various linguistic contexts, representatives from each of the gender divides usually manifest struggles for power or their group's interests. Because struggles for domination this way "are always and everywhere contextual . . . (and) Power, along with structures of domination, is implicated in concrete situated social practice" (Davies 1988:99). This work relies on selected social contexts in *Efúnṣetan Aniwurà* to analyse discursive behaviours that contain implicit and explicit complexities of gender power in social interactions.

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Lazar (2007) proposes Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA). The model is a nexus of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and feminist studies, which aims at advancing rich and nuanced analyses of the complexities of power and ideology in discourses that contain hierarchically gendered social orders. Lazar (ibid.) builds the feminist perspective of CDA on a five-step principle of:

- i. *feminist analytical activism*: to critique discourses that sustain a patriarchal social order.
- ii. *gender as ideological structure*: to view the conception of gender as an ideological structure that divides people into two classes of men and women upon a hierarchical relation of domination and subordination respectively.
- iii. *complexity of gender and power relation*: to examine the difference and

diversity among “women” (and “men”) and the pervasiveness of subtle discursive workings of modern powers in many contemporary societies.

- iv. *discourse as a (de) construction of gender*: to review the discursive constructions that reflect how being a woman or a man is projected in particular communities of practice.
- v. *critical reflexivity as praxis*: to emphasise that the practice of FCDA should provide knowledge that can shape people’s subsequent social processes and practices.

Since the model combines the tenets of CDA and feminist ideals, this paper considers evaluating the rationale for FCDA and its principles as discourse praxis to showcase different levels of gender power manifestations in social interactions. It critiques the traditional norms that are obtainable within and outside Yorùbá social system on gender domination and subordination, using discursive excerpts from the epic movie, *Efúnṣetán Aníwùrà*. The model of FCDA is consequently adopted as the theoretical framework for the study.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The analytical procedure adopted in this paper is Holmes’ (2007) *Systemic Power Procedure* under which the system of doing power is captured in directives, management of meetings, systemic interactions and overly/covertly gendered discourses in unequal encounters. Therefore, in the subsequent analysis, the data are grouped according to the prevalent contexts of unequal encounters in the dramatic document. However, to establish a common ground for the database that represents a general knowledge on the nomenclature of the epic movie and the personae it substantiates, the analysis fundamentally builds on the historical context of *Efúnṣetán Aníwùrà*’s life. The document is thereafter divided into several

sub-contexts. Each of the sub-contexts represents an unequal gender encounter. This is followed by an excerpt(s) of a discursive interaction(s) which is analysed according to the context of utterance to reveal the levels of power manifestation and elements of unequal interaction it contains.

Historical Context of Efúnṣetán Aníwùrà

The biography of Madam *Efúnṣetán Aníwùrà*, like many other oral documentation traditions, is of different versions. In line with the thesis of this paper, the dramatic biography of the epic figure that is made popular by Prof. Akinwunmi *Ìṣòlá* – a renowned playwright, actor, dramatist, culture activist and scholar – is given preeminence over the other historical records. Along this line, Okunola and Ojo (2012), citing Ogunleye (2004), Osewa (2005), Washington (2005), Ajayi (2005), Fadare (2007) and Ilesanmi (2010), mention that *Efúnṣetán Aníwùrà*, *Ìyálóde Ìbàdàn* (the Minister of Women Affairs in *Ìbàdàn*) migrated from *Ègbaland* (*Abéòkúta*) to *Ìbàdàn*. She had hundreds of slaves and many other individuals under her control. *Efúnṣetán* was a very notable woman farmer and entrepreneur whose wealth and fame extended to the Europeans on the Nigerian coasts at the pre-colonial time. She was ranked among the social, economic and political elite of Yorùbá race at the time.

In addition, she extended credit assistance in the forms of arms and ammunition as well as personnel from her slave coffles to Yorùbá warlords, like *Ààrẹ Látòòṣà* (the Yorùbá Generalissimo at the time), for military expeditions. All this, together with some magical prowess and affluence, bestowed on Madam *Efúnṣetán Aníwùrà* a high level of authority through which she exhibited powerful, fearsome, terrific, rich, audacious and daring discursive behaviours to test the Yorùbá patriarchal traditions as demonstrated in the following analysed discourses.

Context A

Ìyálóde Èfúnṣetán Aníwùrà is returning from an engagement. She is flanked by a group of women – her contemporaries and some of her female slaves – and a group of drummers who are primarily on the entourage to praise her. Èfúnṣetán is giving reports on issues that had been discussed at Ìbàdàn traditional council meeting she had attended with Ààrẹ Látòòṣà (the Generalissimo) and other male chiefs as they move along.

Discourse

- **Èfúnṣetán:** *The Ààrẹ is at it again.*
- **First Woman:** {Exclaiming} *What is it now?*
- **Èfúnṣetán:** *He snubs me! {Demonstrating disdainfully}*
- **1st Woman:** *Why?*
- **2nd Woman:** {They usually} *slight on women.*
- **Èfúnṣetán:** *It's Ado war problem, but we've begged him.*
- {Hey!} *No more begging I supplied the ammunition and food and then massage his ego?*
- **2nd Woman:** *There are too many wars.*
- **Èfúnṣetán:** *You are right and it wasn't his turn anyway Látòòṣà became Òtún only because Àjòbọ was exiled.*
- **All the Women {apart from the slaves}:** *That's correct!*
- **Èfúnṣetán:** *And he {Látòòṣà} deliberately chose a war title.*
- **Ààrẹ Ònàkakanfò** *title, notorious for attracting wars.*
- *I can no longer cope with the expenses.*
- **2nd Woman:** *Even his chiefs are fed up.*
- **1st Woman:** *Let's just wait and see while they fight themselves.*
- **Èfúnṣetán:** *Wait? Wait is expensive.*
- *My drummer{s}! {She gives a signal that they should start praising her.}*
- **Drummers:** *the peacock . . . Queen of birds.*

Èfúnṣetán opens the conversation and dominates the entire exchanges in the discourse. She does not only demonstrate calculated leadership traits among her contemporaries, but also presents an aura of proportional social stand against Látòòṣà, the Ààrẹ Ònàkakanfò (Generalissimo), to say nothing about the other male chiefs in the Council. She unequivocally reports to the women that */The Ààrẹ is at it again/{line1}* with emphasis on “again” to suggest that she has always been in altercation with Ààrẹ. 1st Woman, like the other women, is therefore curious about the cause of the current conflict by enquiring, */What is it now?/ {line2}*. The women explicitly demonstrate some emotional reactions and perplexities that are common to female folks when they are confronted with masculine ego {lines 3 – 5}. However,

while the women are perplexed, Èfúnṣetán is not. Instead, she is aggressive and resistant */ . . . we've begged him (Látòòṣà)/(Hey!) No more begging/ {line 6 – 9}* because */I supplied the ammunition and food/* and critically querying what could be Látòòṣà's expectation */and then massage his ego?/*. Èfúnṣetán's boldness arouses enthusiasm in her followers who consequently express solidarity, shouting */That's correct!/{13}*. She finally rules that, since */ . . . he (Látòòṣà) deliberately chose a war title/{line 14}*, */I can no longer cope with expenses/{line 16}* for */Wait is expensive/{19}*. She then commands */My drummer(s)/ {line 20}* to start praising her */the peacock . . . Queen of birds/{line 21}* to deride her male counterparts in the Council.

Context B

Ìyálóde Èfúnṣetán's son-in-law, Olálékan visits her to pay obeisance. She is in a room in her house, pampering Olálékan's wife, Tóoyòsí, who is heavily pregnant. Olálékan is in a prostrating posture throughout the conversation with Èfúnṣetán Aníwùrà.

Discourse

1. **Olálékan:** (Prostrating) *Greetings, mother-in-law.*
2. **Èfúnṣetán:** *Olálékan, why are you just coming?*
3. **Olálékan:** (Reverently) *No, I came earlier with my friends.*
4. *We've stocked the house with firewood.*
5. **Èfúnṣetán:** *Good, now get the women in your household to fetch water.*
6. *Tooyosi is naturally exempted.*
7. *Hurry up!*

While Olálékan is observing the Yorùbá tradition that “Orò ni àna,” meaning, “a

man should treat his in-laws as semi gods,” Èfúnṣetán shows a little concern; rather, she accuses him of coming to her house later

than expected / . . . *why are you just coming?*/ {line 2}. Despite the accusation, the man remains in a reverent posture and humbly defends himself to win Efunsetan's favour /*No, I came earlier with my friends//We've stocked the house with firewood*/ {line 3 and 4}. Efunsetan acknowledges Olalékan's gesture, but

building on the rights the tradition affords her, she reverses the patriarchal order by explicitly giving directives /*Good, now get the women in your household to fetch water//Hurry up*/ {lines 5 and 7}, thereby playing out domination rather than suffering subordination.

Context C

At the entrance of Elder Odegbàrò's house, the elder, a close ally of Ààrẹ Látòòsà, has been waiting for his wife, Àjilé, who has gone on a visit to Efunsetan Aníwúrà without her husband's approval.

Discourse

- | | |
|--|---|
| i. Àjilé: Hello, I'm back. | ix. You know there is friction between her and Ààrẹ. Please, I don't want trouble. |
| ii. Elder Odegbàrò: Did you inform me when you (were) leaving? | x. Àjilé: Like what? |
| iii. Àjilé: But you weren't around at the time. | xi. Elder Odegbàrò: Stop asking stupid questions. |
| iv. Elder Odegbàrò: And you couldn't wait for me? | xii. Àjilé: (Combatively) You pay Ààrẹ visits yourself. |
| v. Àjilé: That is not possible. | xiii. Elder Odegbàrò: We are childhood friends. |
| vi. You go on your hunting trip and I visit my friend, Ìyálóde. | xiv. Àjilé: Well, that goes for Ìyálóde and myself, too. You are always finding faults with me |
| vii. That is the point. | xv. Elder Odegbàrò: You will end up disgraced |
| viii. Elder Odegbàrò: Your visit to Ìyálóde is a cause for concern. | xvi. {Àjilé disrespectfully leaves for the house and closes the door on her husband}. |

The opening of the conversation /*Hello, I'm back*/ {line 1} reveals Àjilé's little regard for her husband. Although Elder Odegbàrò attempts to exhibit some patriarchal power /*Did you inform me when you (were) leaving?//And you couldn't wait for me?*/ {lines 2 and 4} to query his wife's audacity, the wife frankly contests the order with /*That is not possible*/ {line 5} and remains headstrong all through. In maintaining parallel power dispositions and boundaries between both of them, she generates successive counter points from lines 6 to 16 against all the domineering facts cited by Elder Odegbàrò and consequently subdues his ego by

accusing him of consistent fault finding attempts {line 17}. She seems to push the gender barrier quite far when she disdainfully leaves and closes the door on her husband {line 19}. The exchanges suggest that Àjilé might not have been demonstrating the high level of audacity toward her husband before. Her relationship with Ìyálóde Efunsetan should be a great factor in this case. This suggests that when gender equality agitators overtly promote their ideologies in the public space, the confrontational and emancipation effects of their actions are mostly subtly operational at a very minute family level.

Context D

Ìyálóde Efunsetan's younger brother is on an early morning visit to her. He knocks on the door repeatedly to gain entrance into Efunsetan's house.

Discourse

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Efunsetan: Who is it? Who wants to tear down my door? | 4. Akínkúnlé: It is Akínkúnlé, your brother. The day has broken. |
| 2. Akínkúnlé: It's me. Good morning! | 5. Efunsetan: So what? Must you then disturb my sleep? |
| 3. Efunsetan: Who are you? And why can't you stay in your house? | 6. Don't kill me with your troubles. |
| | 7. Are you coming in or not? |

8. **Akínkúnlé:** *But I didn't know you've opened it (the door).*
9. **Ẹfúnṣetán:** *Don't stain my mat with your feet.*
10. *What new request brought you?*
11. *Money or cloth?*
12. **Akínkúnlé:** *Must I now walk on my hands just to visit you?*
13. *I've come to inform you about your son's illness.*
14. **Ẹfúnṣetán:** *My son, or yours?*
15. **Akínkúnlé:** *Okay, Délé, my son is ill.*
16. *I want you to know before I visit him.*
17. **Ẹfúnṣetán:** *So I must come along or what?*
18. *Or why have you disturbed my sleep?*
19. *I wish him speedy recovery and safe journey?*
20. **Akínkúnlé:** *How could I visit him without informing you?*
21. **Ẹfúnṣetán:** *What a wretched man.*
22. *Starting off my day with such nonsense.*
23. *His son has taken ill, so he has to disturb my days.*
24. *Is that his way of showing off with his son?*
25. *knowing the tragedy that just befell.*
26. *But God, how could you be so cruel?*
27. *Snatching the life of my only daughter (that you gave me while she was being delivered of a child)*
28. *Then you rule from up there and I rule down here*
29. *From now on, any slave that gets pregnant will deliver the baby in hell.*
30. *And any slave that fathers a baby will be beheaded.*
31. *Oh! But you're so merciless.*
32. *Okay, two can play at the game!*
33. *I will show you how wicked I too can be.*
34. *Yes, the show has just started.*

The encounter in this context is between a brother, Akínkúnlé and a sister, Ìyálóde Ẹfúnṣetán. The Yorùbá cultural system empowers the male over the female regardless of whether the female is older or younger. However, the reverse is the case in this context. Ìyálóde Ẹfúnṣetán enjoys ascendancy over Akínkúnlé who relies on the former for survival. No wonder he needs Ẹfúnṣetán's approval to visit his ailing son. The discourse therefore illustrates how wealth and affluence promote excessive power manipulations, on the one hand, and underrate the sustenance of tradition on the other. While Akínkúnlé exhibits satisfactory tact {lines 2, 4, 8 – 12 and 13}, Ẹfúnṣetán keeps confronting him with piercing questions {lines 1, 3, 5 – 7, 10 – 11, 14, 17 and 18}. It seems Akínkúnlé, too, is insincere in seeking Ẹfúnṣetán's approval to visit his ailing son, Délé. His request could have been exploitive, to obtain /*money or cloth*/ {line 10} or to covertly exhibit some patriarchal ego, /... *showing off with his son*//*knowing the tragedy that just befell*

Context E

A meeting of community elders with Ìyálóde Ẹfúnṣetán in the latter's house very early in the morning. The meeting is organised to plead for pardon on behalf of one of Ẹfúnṣetán Aniwùrà's slaves (Adétutù) who is pregnant against her order. All the elders are males. While all the men are seated, Ìyálóde Ẹfúnṣetán opens the conversation in a standing posture.

Discourse

1. **Ẹfúnṣetán:** *Welcome! It's rather early.*
2. **1st Elder:** *Why don't you sit down? {Ẹfúnṣetán sits}*
3. *The elders want {to have} a word with you.*
4. **Ẹfúnṣetán:** *I hope it's not serious.*
5. **2nd Elder:** *It's not so serious.*

me/{lines 24 and 25}, that is, the demise of her only child.

Since she has no control over the second assumption, Ẹfúnṣetán is evidently hit at her weakest point – loss of her only child. She therefore extends the contest to/. . . **God, how could you be so cruel?//snatching the life of my only daughter . . .** /{lines 26 and 27}. Considering her inability to establish a contact with God, she obtrusively negotiates power with the Supreme Being {lines 29 and 34} Whom she also attempts to reprimand {line 33}. Ìyálóde Ẹfúnṣetán consequently expands manipulation of gender power by

- i. pronouncing that /*from now on, any slave that gets pregnant//will deliver the baby in hell* {lines 30 and 31}.
- ii. ruling that /... *any slave that fathers a baby will be beheaded* {line 31}.
- iii. explicitly challenging God that /... *you're so mercilessly//I will show you how wicked I too can be//Yes, the show has just started/* {lines 33, 35 and 36}.

6. *Ìyálóde, may God grant you good health.*
7. *May your good name remain intact.*
8. *The issue is delicate.*
9. *We have come to beg you.*
10. *It concerns Akínkúnlé {your younger brother}.*
11. **Efúnṣetán:** *Akínkúnlé? I'm lost.*
12. *Why don't you clarify things.*
13. **3rd Elder:** *It's Adétutù's case, your slave girl.*
14. **4th Elder:** *Indeed any slave that gets pregnant {will surely die}.*
15. *But we implore your mercy.*
16. *as this involves Akínkúnlé..*
17. **2nd Elder:** *Please, pardon her for our sake.*
18. **Efúnṣetán:** *So Akínkúnlé is the culprit!*
19. **All the Elders:** *That's the point!*
20. **4th Elder:** *Pardon them, please.*
21. **Efúnṣetán:** *What rudeness!*
22. *What embarrassment!*
23. *Your mission is unbefitting.*
24. *What insolence!*
25. *For one, Akínkúnlé lacks {respect}.*
26. *How could he descend so low . . .*
27. *Don't you realise that these slaves were {bought with my money}*
28. *and it's nobody's business*
29. *what I do with my slaves.*
30. *{I can kill or set any of my slaves free}.*
31. *I'm surprised that you elders could {embark on*
32. *inconsequential errands as this}.*
33. *{Look} the die is cast, I'll advise you {to forget about that}*
34. *I've condemned Tutù to death {and you already aware*
35. *that whatever I, Efúnṣetán, says is irreversible}.*
36. **1st Elder:** *Efúnṣetán, please, pardon them for the sake {of these*
37. *Elders and Almighty God}*
38. *Please, Ayoka.*
39. **Efúnṣetán:** *Now I can see that you've {not understood me very well}.*
40. *When I take decisions, I don't {reverse them}.*
41. *If you call God down to beg me I will not be deterred.*
42. *Now, I believe you understand?*
43. **All the Elders:** *Now we understand.*
44. **Efúnṣetán :** *Tutù will be executed today.*
45. *Thanks for your concern.*
46. *Sorry breakfast is not ready.*
47. **5th Elder:** *{As they rise to go} Wait let me give her a piece of advice.*
48. *Only God is immortal.*
49. *The world may turn around.*
50. *{Efunstan} to be forewarned is to be forearmed.*
51. *Gentlemen let's go.*
52. **Efúnṣetán:** *Say whatever you wish {if I've ever consulted you for help}.*
53. *{Shameless human beings}.*
54. *This will make me speed up {the execution}.*
55. *{Whosoever is not comfortable with my decision*
56. *among you should commit suicide}.*

In the excerpt, both the elders and Efúnṣetán appear at first to be in agreement as reflected in the development of the discourse {lines 1 – 11} until the elders grant Efúnṣetán's request {line 12} of clarification {lines 13 – 20}. The extension of gender power boundaries gradually emerges as alternatives to the elders' systematic style to control Efúnṣetán in her discursive choices /. . . *rudeness!*/. . . *embarrassment!*/. . . *your mission is unbefitting!*/. . . *insolence!*/. . . *Don't you realise that these slaves were {bought with my money?}/*{I can kill or set any of my slaves free}/. More explicitly, Efúnṣetán insults the elders, /*I'm surprised that you elders could {embark on inconsequential errands as this}/* {lines 21 – 32}.

While Efúnṣetán chips away from an acceptable social behaviour in this instance, she steadily slips into exercising a supreme authority thus /*{Look} the die is cast . . ./I've condemned Tutù to death and . . ./*

. . . *whatever I, Efúnṣetán, says is irreversible//When I take decisions, I don't {reverse them}//If you call God down to beg me, I will not be deterred//Tutù will be executed today/* {lines 33 – 35, 40, 41 and 44}. She hits the elders with derisive words at the close of the discourse, /*Thanks for your concern//Sorry, breakfast is not ready/* {lines 45 and 46}. Efúnṣetán is somewhat conscious of her uncompromising stance and complements her discursive choices with a domineering posture upon the elders who have so far been speechless on their seats. However, contesting the humiliation, the elders identify that she is out-of-line in the discourse, first, by rising to their feet and subsequently pronouncing the consequences of her overstressing the threat of dominance {lines 47 – 51}.

Her uncle, too, who is the oldest and leader of the elders, using a stereotypically masculine language, exploits Efúnṣetán's

panegyric {**line 38**} to covertly appeal to her conscience. Nevertheless, despite implicitly acknowledging that she has transgressed social hierarchical norms and caused her visitors' discomfort, *Ẹfúnṣetán*

leverages on the physical context, which is her territory, to control the discourse context and to refuse finally the negotiation of power the patriarchs have sought for {**lines 52 – 56**}.

Context F

Ẹfúnṣetán's house is surrounded by an angry mob because she has just successively killed three of her slaves. The first of the murdered slaves, Adétutù, is accused of getting pregnant while the other two, Awèrò and Itáwuyì, have attempted to assassinate Ẹfúnṣetán through food poisoning. In the event of that, Látòòṣà, in company of another chief, is in Ìyálóde Ẹfúnṣetán's house to compel her to go into exile. Ẹfúnṣetán's closest friend, Àjilé, foresees the impending challenge and advises her to flee but Ẹfúnṣetán will not cowardly yield despite the challenging circumstances. The contest begins when both Ẹfúnṣetán and Látòòṣà have a contact inside the latter's house.

Discourse

- | | |
|--|--|
| i. Àjilé: {My friend!} You must flee at once. | xxvi. Látòòṣà: {You've forgotten that} the lettuce keeps to its |
| ii. The town's people are coming {in multitude}. | xxvii. habitat; you are a fish out of water and so, you are finished! |
| iii. They are coming to sack {your house}. | xxviii. Ẹfúnṣetán: Látòòṣà, you forgot that I am a crab and not fish. |
| iv. Ẹfúnṣetán: Flee to where? Me, flee? | xxix. Látòòṣà: You are a crab? |
| v. {I have to know what will make me flee}. | xxx. Ẹfúnṣetán: Right! |
| vi. I am in my house. | xxxi. Látòòṣà: That's why your life, like the crab's feet, is useless. |
| vii. Àjilé: {Ha! My friend!} You can still escape. | xxxii. Your achievement, your effort on this city is like crab oil. |
| viii. {Please} flee now. | xxxiii. Who can {cook with crab oil?}. |
| ix. Ẹfúnṣetán: Thanks for the concern. | xxxiv. The other Chief: Nobody! |
| x. You may leave now. | xxxv. Látòòṣà: Fine, but the crab itself {is meat}. |
| xi. This is conspiracy! | xxxvi. Ẹfúnṣetán: But you are a lizard. |
| xii. Látòòṣà wants no rivals. | xxxvii. Látòòṣà, you dare not entre the crab's hole and even if you turn to a snake I'm immune {to you}. |
| xiii. On my installation, they all congratulated me. | xxxviii. Látòòṣà: Your crab oil must have entered into your eyes. |
| xiv. And now that I've made it, they are jealous. | xxxix. If not, you would have seen that I am a huge stone. |
| xv. They say that I punish{ed} evildoers | xl. Ẹfúnṣetán: No stone can roll itself. |
| xvi. that I bought with my money. | xli. Látòòṣà: You lie! The people of Ìbàdàn {have moved me} |
| xvii. Látòòṣà wants to ruin me. | xlii. and now, I roll over and crush you, the crab. |
| xviii. Látòòṣà: You are responsible for your misfortune. | xliii. You are finished! |
| xix. Ẹfúnṣetán, you are finished! | At this point, Ìyálóde Ẹfúnṣetán walks out on Látòòṣà into her room and commits suicide. |
| xx. Ẹfúnṣetán: Látòòṣà, you are finished! | |
| xxi. Látòòṣà: Ẹfúnṣetán, you are a dead leaf; I'm water. | |
| xxii. Ẹfúnṣetán: Yes, but I am at the top of the river and | |
| xxiii. before you can reach me, the water will have dried up. | |
| xxiv. Látòòṣà: You lie. Dead leaves don't sink; they float. | |
| xxv. Ẹfúnṣetán: So, I am water lettuce. | |

This contact marks the climax of the contest, which has been mostly discursive, between Ìyálóde Ẹfúnṣetán and Ààrè Látòòṣà – femininity and masculinity – in the dramatic documentation on the life history of Ìyálóde Ẹfúnṣetán Aníwúrà. Ẹfúnṣetán matches her actions with her words by not bowing to the intricacies of patriarchal traditions, which Látòòṣà represents, despite the advisory pressure

from Àjilé {**lines 1 to 3, 7 and 8**} that she should avoid the contact. Somehow, Àjilé's placatory advice weakens Ẹfúnṣetán's doggedness. Thus, in a moment, she feels that she has passed over the acceptable social gender boundaries {**line 15 and 16**}. She however accuses the exponents of the social system of insincerity, inequity, conspiracy, jealousy and unappeasable desire to ruin her {**lines 11 to 14 and 17**}.

At this point, Látòòṣà interrupts Èfúnṣetán's soliloquy and exonerates himself and the system from her woes {line 18}. He also explicitly pronounces her fall which the latter does not only reject but also overtly requite on the former {lines 19 and 20}. The rest of the exchanges in the discourse are manipulations and contests for dominance. At the stage, the contenders exploit a series of metaphorical sources like *dead leaf, water, river, fire, lettuce, fish, crab, crab oil, lizard, snake and stone* {lines 21 to 43} to assert their individual superior tendencies while they operate gender in the background. They, therefore, test power within an equal length and reach a height in which elements are invoked to generate supernatural hegemony. Evidently, Èfúnṣetán demonstrates exceptional repressiveness against Látòòṣà through metaphorically embedded incantations. Nevertheless, she is somewhat overwhelmed because her adversary, Látòòṣà, /a huge stone/, has been moved by the people of Ìbàdàn to "roll and crush" her {lines 42 and 43}.

Discussion

The epic movie, *Èfúnṣetán Aníwúrà*, by Akinwunmi Ìṣṣòlá is more than an immortalisation of Ìyálóde Èfúnṣetán Aníwúrà. It is indeed an allusion into the historical records to describe the epoch of women's emancipation struggles from the patriarchal dominance in human social system. It therefore portrays a springboard for inciting feminist ideals of:

i. **Critiquing Behaviours that Sustain Patriarchal Social Orders:** The Context A discourse affirms that relations of power systematically privilege men. Despite Èfúnṣetán's contributions in supplying /... the ammunition and food/ {line 8} to support Látòòṣà at war, the latter interprets the gesture as a right due to him. Látòòṣà is also reported to have snubbed {line 3} and expected Èfúnṣetán to beg {line 6} and /massage his ego/ {line 7}. However, the women

in the context criticise Látòòṣà's egocentric intricacies and effect some transformation against the status quo thus: /{Hey!} No more begging//That's is correct!//I can no longer cope with the expenses/ {lines 7, 13 and 16}. In the same vein, Àjílé queries her husband's orders to stop her from enjoying her right to movement and association {lines 3, 5 – 8, 12, 14, 16 and 17 of Context C}.

ii. **Overt Issuance of Directives:** In the discourse of Context B, there are evidences that Yorùbá social system, for example, does not subjugate women in all ramifications. The culture, in this case, empowers in-laws, to some extent, to lord over their sons-in-law. Èfúnṣetán overtly manifests the legitimised institutional authority by issuing directives in the form of unmodified imperatives /*Olakunle, why are you just coming?//Good, now get the women in your household to fetch water*/ {lines 2 and 5 of Context B} and /*Don't kill me with your troubles//Are you coming in or not?//Don't stain my mat with your feet*/ {lines 6, 7 and 9 of Context D} to indicate her upward position from a subordinate {woman} to a superior {mother-in-law/wealthy elder sister} over a son-in-law and a poor younger brother respectively. In fact, the younger brother, Akínkúnlé, may not be able to visit his ailing son "without informing you. . ."

iii. **Confrontational Discourse Working:** The complexity of the nature of power is manifested in the discourses of Contexts D, E and F. In the exchanges, Èfúnṣetán flouts rules guiding hierarchically gendered social arrangements. Her flouting the rules is both psychologically and socially motivated. In the discourse of Context D, she is seemingly subjected to the realities of social ridicule and psychological imbalance after the death of her only child {lines 22 – 25}.

Consequently, she cannot resist chipping away systematically from socially acceptable discursive behaviours in the three contexts. Hence, she overstretches her attempts to withstand and demystify the social and supernatural ideals that disempower women. She subsequently slips into contending the hegemonic space with man and God.

Findings

The work evaluates the systemic gender power manifestations in social systems that subjugate women by analysing selected discourse exchanges in the epic movie, *Efúnṣetán Aníwúrà*. It establishes that language has been a viable defensive tool for women against patriarchal tendencies and that when women overstretch the capacity of the tool, they paradoxically fortify masculine resistance and incite a fierce gender dominance struggle. Consequently, the study has made the following findings.

- i. The work finds that gender power manifestations can be incited in feminine exchanges through discursive behaviours such as *denigration /I'm surprised that you elders could embark on/inconsequential errands as this//Thanks for your concern//Sorry breakfast is not ready//Shameless human beings/ {Context D, lines 31, 32, 45, 46 and 53}, self-aggrandisement /whatever I, Efúnṣetán, says is irreversible//When I take decisions, I don't reverse them/ {Context E, lines 35 and 40} and blasphemy /But God. . // you're so merciless//I will show you how wicked I too can be//Yes, the show has just started/ {Context D, lines 26, 33, 35 and 36} /If you call God down to beg me I will not be deterred/ {Context E, line 41}.*
- ii. The study establishes that *requesting* patriarchal approval for every action {Context C}, *extolling* patriarchal dynasty and statesmanship, and the

Supreme God {Context E, lines 47 – 51}; and culturally *affirming* communal rules {Context F, lines 40 – 44} are linguistic gender boundaries demonstrated in the movie.

- iii. In the selected exchanges, the research identifies *insults, abuses, curses, accusations, counter-accusations, threats, metaphors and incantations* as some of the linguistic tools women use to hit gender barriers in their agitation for equality.
- iv. The research reveals that linguistic choices can reinforce the limits of acceptable feminine discursive behaviours when the rules of *requesting* patriarchal approval and *extolling* patriarchal dynasty and statesmanship, and the Supreme God; and culturally *affirming* communal rules are flagrantly floated in those choices.

Conclusion

Unequal power relations can be measured on different scales across the globe. Much more evident among such is gender ideology. Apart from dividing the world population along masculine and feminine lines, the ideology mostly empowers men and disempowers women, particularly in cultures where patriarchy holds sway. As this work reveals, language has been very viable in achieving the goals of social emancipation and transformation for women in this regard. Its exploitation has afforded effective covert and overt critiquing of unequal social order that promote masculinity over femininity as demonstrated in the analysis of discourse exchanges in the epic movie, *Efúnṣetán Aníwúrà*. The study therefore uncovers the linguistic choices women make to fight the social injustice of gender inequality. It also emphasises certain linguistic boundaries women have to respect in their contest for equality. The paper concludes that women's failure to recognise the essence of those boundaries will fortify masculine resistance and incite much more fierce gender dominance struggles.

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