

A Pragmatic Assessment of the Polarity and Modality in J. P. Clark's "Streamside Exchange"

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Abstract—Sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic features as established by elements of Modality and Polarity usually constitute a crucial part to explication of the language of literary texts. In J.P. Clark's poem, "Streamside Exchange", the special application of transitivity as indicated by lexico-semantic features offers a peculiar reading which yields insightful meanings. At a superficial level of reading, there appears, as many scholars hold, an apparent simplicity of texture or wording. However, at a more informed examination of the poem, there is a display of compelling complexity especially at the levels beyond lexis or wording. The interactive session reflects a structural dichotomy between the interrogative MOOD of the child's statement, which is polar in nature, and the response of the bird which displays a combination of declarative and imperative features. The study is mainly for a clearer understanding of underlying linguistic features in the short conversation between the child and the bird that feature as interlocutors. Moreover, the analysis is also in partial response to previous readings and rendition of the text, particularly the substitution of 'shall' with 'has' in latter versions of the poem which has shown remarkable accounts that appear less objective if reviewed from a purely linguistic approach.

Index Terms—streamside exchange, polarity, modality, mood

I. INTRODUCTION

Conversation or dialogue as a mode of communication demands a great application of the principle of rhetoric on the part of interlocutors. Thus, in an attempt to be successful with their enterprise, interlocutors must, as a matter of necessity, consciously commit specific linguistic investments into the discourse at hand. The implication of this to an analyst of a text is that, sometimes, he/she must go beyond the intrinsic and apparent features of the text to account for other linguistic factors underlying the structure and component of a speaker's utterance. In a way, this stand agrees with the opinion of Birch (1989) when he posits that: "the critical study of language is a study not just of the structures of language and texts, but of the people and institution that shape the various ways language mean" (p. 167). In this respect, a critic or analyst must regard the text as an expression of "ideologically loaded structures and meanings, not of innocent, arbitrary, random structures" (p. 167), Birch continues.

The features of a conversation are often conditioned by the context of speech and the fact that every speech event takes place in an ideological or cultural background. The poem, *Streamside Exchange* presents a discourse situation where it can be adduced that there are certain motives behind the 'marked' Modal and MOOD structure of the conversation between the bird and the child. As it is apparent, the child presents a polar structured interrogative whereas the bird responds in a form of answer adequate for a WH question.

II. SYNOPTIC READING OF SSE

SSE uses a conversation between a child and a bird to make a statement about an issue of life. The issue at hand is the transient nature of human existence. The child speaks in the first stanza wherein it makes a humble enquiry as to whether its mother would come back on the day of the conversation. From what one can make of the child's question, it might be said that its mother had 'travelled', or, as characteristic of such event (surrounding the sudden unavailability of its mother) it had been told in euphemistic terms that its mother had embarked on a journey. As Vincent & Senanu (1976) explain, it can be discerned from the question that the child is confronted with the dismal realities of "loneliness, anxiety, uncertainty" and the fear that its question may draw a negative response, NO (p. 129).

The second stanza features the bird's response. However, rather than confirm the child's fear that its mother had embarked on the journey of no return, or reassure the child that it needs not to be afraid, the bird goes on to undertake an elucidation on the transitory nature of *tide* and *market* as well as the corresponding movement of *mothers*. Thus, polarity which is indicated in the modal interrogative element in the child's statement, 'will', and requires a confirmation or repudiation rather instigates a response of a hanging (arguable) possibility in the presentation of 'shall' in the bird's response.

Interestingly, and this shall constitute a part of our inquest in the poem, there are two concurrent versions of the poem, SSE. The first version as presented in the initial edition in which the poem was contained ends in:

And so **shall** your mother

This particular version occurs in John Pepper Clark (1965) Ogunbiyi, (1974), Dokun Oni (1987) Vincent & Senanu (2005) Donatus Nwoga (2005) Murana (2010). The other edition, which incidentally has gained no less a popularity than the initial one, ends in:

And so **has** your mother

Apart from this version being adopted in one of Clark's volumes of poetry, Full Tide (2010), as published by Mosuro, it has also been applied in analysis by Abiodun Adetugbo (1971), Romanus Egudu (1977) Luke Eyo (2005).

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

About three issues instigate or motivate this research. The first, which should just be given a mention in passing, is a repudiation of the opinion of Eghagha (2004) that nothing productively novel or significant might come out of contemporary explication of the works of iconic authors like Clark, Achebe and Soyinka. According to him, contemporary analysis of these iconic writers only offers "a rehash of old and sometimes pedestrian critical ideas" (p. 484). Thus, this work undertakes to demonstrate that much is yet to be discovered and discussed in extant works of creative writers such as Clark. Secondly, and this pertains to SSE, as popular as the poem is among Clark's numerous works, scholars have tended to ignore the significant import of the substitution of *shall* with *has* in current versions of the poem. It is a surprise that no other scholar, as far as we know, has questioned the implication of the adjustment in meaning which this surgery has effected on the poem. Finally, we do not believe, as Eyo, Adetugbo and Egudu hold, that the poem, SSE, is enacted with simplicity. This is because, based on transitivity or ideational function, the poem is full of complexity.

IV. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as propounded and popularized by M.A.K. Halliday offers us the theoretical framework for our discourse. In this respect, we rely on the framework for analytical methodologies and taxonomy. We are inclined to apply the SFL as framework because as a grammatical model it easily accommodates an analytical process which often juxtaposes text and context with a view to arriving at the meaning or message of a given text. This reliance on text and context is germane to any productive assessment of the true import of linguistic forms. In other words, because of this inclination towards a marriage of context (culture) and text (language), SFL offers the first theory of choice if access to meaning and message at various strata of language use are the main target of a linguistic assessment such as being done in this discuss.

V. MOOD

Mood (usually and hereafter to be written with all the letters in the upper case) is a feature in language which mandates that an utterance is either a declaration, interrogation or a command. According to Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) the MOOD "has sometimes been called the 'Modal' element; but the difficulty with this is that the term 'modal' is ambiguous, since it corresponds both to mood and modality" (p. 113). The import of this explanation is that often people confuse the terms, mood and modality. In this discourse, the two terms are treated as two non-confusing and distinct terms. In a broad classification, the system of MOOD is divided into two hence Halliday and Matthiessen's summation that "(a) major clause is either indicative or imperative in MOOD" (p. 24). It is therefore within the indicative MOOD that one gets the command or the interrogative essence. Structurally, and as a element of the clause, the MOOD is captured in the combination of the Subject and Finite. Thus, in the structural configuration of SFPCA, the F (Finite) in association with the S (Subject) establishes the MOOD. Diagrammatically, this can be represented in a tabular form as shown below:

Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement	Adjunct
MOOD		Residue		

(Adapted from Halliday, 2004/Thomas Bloor & Meriel Bloor, 1995)

In an adaptation of this representation to a feature of SSE one would have:

Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement	Adjunct
MOOD		Residue		
We know (SF)		the knife scar (C)		

Finite	Subject	Predicator	Complement	Adjunct
MOOD		Residue		
Will mother (FS)		come back today (PA)		

However, the interrogative MOOD is somehow related to the declarative because the former usually presents an inversion of the latter.

Mother will come back today ----- **Declarative**

Will mother come back today? ----- **Interrogative**

Mother shall go like tide and market ----- **Declarative**

Shall mother go like tide and market? ----- **Interrogative**

VI. MODALITY

As has been inferred in the earlier exposition on MOOD, Modality is a term that seem to correlate to three different ideas or application. First, it is, to some analysts, the concept or term used to capture issues related to Mood and modal auxiliary verbs. Secondly, and this is as it is applied by Crystal and Davy (1979), modality is used in the sense where it can be a derivative of 'mode'. Mode in this sense is with respect to form or typology. In other words, Crystal and Davy are concerned with modality as the choice which motivates a language "user to adopt one feature or set of features rather than another, and ultimately to produce an overall, conventionalized spoken or written format for his language, which may be given a descriptive label" (p. 74). As it is conceived in SFL, Crystal & Davy's idea of modality is certainly not a true reflection of the term. Crystal & Davy are referenced here in order to point out the fact that modality can easily be misconstrued if not distinguished in terms of the exact application.

To functional grammarians, Modality is a system in language which imbues a proposition or utterance with any of the features including potentiality, probability, certainty, 'arguability', assurance or possibility. The system of Modality is usually established by means of modal auxiliary verbs. Modality indicates the opinion, view or disposition of the speaker in a normal/unmarked declarative. Modality is related to polarity. Halliday and Matthiessen explain that modality is established by features which function as "intermediate degrees" between the positive and negative poles in polarity. In furtherance to this explanation, they assert that "(w)hat the modality system does is to construe the region of uncertainty that lies between 'yes' and 'no'" (p. 147).

VII. COMPLEXITY IN THE CHILD'S STATEMENT

In SSE, the entirety of the child's statement, taken as one periodic sentence, is an interrogative. This interrogative essence constitutes the core of the child's linguistic investment in the process of the exchange. In other words, the preceding structures – in their own accounts, distinct and autonomous – are illustrative of the application of information structure to account for foregrounded politeness phenomenon. There are three parts to the statement presented in the child's section of the exchange. The first section is a group complex; the second, an imperative clause complex and; the third section, an interrogative clause. These three perform three distinct functions of *title/greeting*, *prayer* and *request*. However, of all these three sections, the core of the *linguistic investment* of the child is the *request* which gives the entire statement its interrogative essence.

The titular element is a politeness phenomenon, a kind of face saving device. It is an indexical feature that indicates a relation of the context, the text and the participants – in this case, the interlocutors. Peter Grundy notes that in applying a politeness phenomenon, the "speaker is attempting to create an implicated context that matches the one assumed by the addressee" (p. 187). The child being the speaker, recognizes that it 'stands in relation x to the addressee (bird) in respect of act y'. The child is the one who seeks information, being the less informed and in need of something from the bird; it has to apply the basic principle of communication to the limits of its knowledge of the use of language as a system, hence, the politeness phenomenon in the title/greeting addressed to the bird.

Apart from the complex of process and participants, another complexity in the child's section of the speech event can be recognized in the circumstantial feature.

(Sitting) all day (+) long

On hook (+) over grass

These are descriptive in their function as they relate to the identity of the other interlocutor beyond the possibility of a doubt. The addressee refers to a bird, but not just any bird; it is a river bird, the one *sitting all day long*; besides, it is the bird *on hook over grass*. The qualifying elements here indicate descriptive as well as circumstantial functions. (river, sitting, all day long, on hook, over grass). Thus, it is not just 'all day' but "all day" plus "long"; and not just 'on hook' but also "over grass". This reference to circumstance, as a feature of transitivity, marks out the bird and establishes an interpersonal relation between it and the child. There is specificity of address as the addressee cannot be mistaken.

The second segment of the child's statement, in similarity to the first, also presents a complex. However, the complex is in contrast to the first in two ways. One, what is presented here is *clause complexity* rather than that of *group*; and *process* more than *circumstance*. Clausal complexity further generates another complexity registered in the MOOD. Thus, the second segment consists in two distinct components of differing MOOD statuses. The first component is in the imperative whereas the second is in the interrogative. It is worthy of note that within the first component is encased a structure of circumstantial function, a rank-shifted element, 'that pass'. There is a replication of circumstantial function to a lesser degree. The Adjunct, 'of all that pass', in itself, presents a complex: (i) *of all* (ii) *that pass*. The second component of the imperative MOOD complex is indicated in the verb, 'say'. The verb, 'say' in terms of

transitivity is similar to 'sing' because both lack any direct nominal reference as Complement. Moreover, the two verbs are paradigmatically related since their occurrence can be represented in a vertical or substitutionary order. However, in normal applications of the terms, 'say' is somehow different. Unlike 'sing', 'say' cannot be used without a Complement both in the imperative and the declarative MOOD. What this implies is that, with 'say', there must be an obligatory Complement. In other words, 'sing' is 'superior' to 'say' in transitivity because if its application is stretched (including as a command) it can be analyzed in the light of all the levels of linguistic structures of English, including morpheme, word, group and clause. A choir conductor may say:

(Shall we) sing (a song)

(Let us) sing (the song)

Sing (the song we have been rehearsing) – said as a single word command

This is not the same with 'say'. As has already been stated, 'say' cannot assume a single word command. It must require an obligatory Complement.

Say (something)

Say (it)

Say (yes or no)

Say (that she would return)

Say (I need not worry) etc.

The imperative MOOD complex features a conjunction, 'and'. 'Sing to me a song' and 'say (if my mother will come back today)'. Due to the fact that the statement is a continuous flow of speech, the final clause, in the interrogative MOOD, can be viewed as a Complement to the word, "say". It is what comes after "say", just as "to me a song" comes after 'sing'. It is evident that there are two commands, if the MOOD elements in the second segment are given independent considerations. However, concomitantly, the two verbs, 'sing' and 'say' are unified in their role because what is *to be said* should be contained in the *song*. They present what Yankson (1987) recognizes as *coupling* (Yankson, p. 7). Stylistically speaking, the two verbs are, as can be said, both syntagmatically and paradigmatically related. Syntagmatically, the flow of imperative MOOD, that is, the statement as a command, can be realized as:

Sing to me a song and (in that song) say if mother will come back today

Thus, this reflects a chain or vertical flow of transitivity. However, at the paradigmatically or horizontal level, the word, *sing*, if stretched in application, can make a rough substitute for "say".

Sing to me that (if) mother will come back today

Far from the positions of Eyo (2005) and Egudu (1977), the statement of the child, as the preceding analysis accounts, presents a compound complexity both in transitivity and in MOOD. One may agree with Nwoga that to a cursory observer, "SSE has (a kind of) *deceptive* simplicity" (p. 181). A more careful observation will present a clear complexity in not just the form of the text but also the conversational implicature derivable from the text. But linguistically speaking, it may not be generally acceptable that "the statements (in the poem) are given with all simplicity" (p. 184) as Adetugbo holds. Simplicity can only be ascribed to the text on the basis of its *wording*. Viewing the text as an illustration of simplicity is, by most accounts, pedestrian. By *wording* it is meant that the poem uses only simple (morphologically non-complex) words except in the application of the term, *sitting* (and in some considerations, *cannot*). However, the fact that all the words in the poem except *sitting* (and *cannot*) are morphologically simple does not indicate that the *text* as a whole is simple in all linguistic accounts. Simplicity and complexity in language go beyond wording. They include both pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic features indicated in the text as an illustration of a process or instance of locution. More of this complexity will be easily appreciated in the course of this discourse.

VIII. JUSTIFICATION OF MODALITY IN THE CHILD'S STATEMENT

The presentation of Modality in what constitutes the core of the child's speech is marked. This is because the feature and function of Modality here can only be derived in a reversed MOOD of the interrogative structure to the original declarative.

Mother will come back today

In such a declarative as cited above, 'will' presents certainty but at the same time imbues the expression with a kind of arguability (see Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004, p. 115). However, applying the modal auxiliary in the interrogative, as the modal function demands and because of its Polarity, what the child requires is an affirmation or repudiation, YES or NO. This is why one may be inclined to observe that the bird's response is marked. The question is:

Will mother come back today?

Normally, the answer should be:

Yes, she will; or

No, she won't.

If certainty was established with the adequate response, and by adhering to the principle of Polarity, it "would have foreclosed further enquiry and...may have clinche(d) the exchange and (made) it impossible for anything more to be said" or thought as Vincent and Senanu explain (p. 129). But the bird deliberately violates the basic demand of the polar interrogative by putting forward a response that is adequate for a WH structured question. The disconnect in

MOOD with respect to the bird's response is however compensated in Modality when it (bird) uses 'shall' – a stronger form of *will* – as the verb finite in the last part of its reply.

IX. MOOD AND MODALITY IN THE BIRD'S RESPONSE

A MOOD complex is presented in the bird's response. The statement incorporates two MOOD forms – declarative and imperative. Here, there is a concatenation if it is noted that the features of MOOD and Modality are strongly linked.

You cannot know – declarative

Ø should not bother – imperative

Tide and market...mother – declarative

The verb-finites *cannot* and *should (not)* are elements of Modality as well as contributory factors in the MOOD quality of the structures. Thus, the concatenation earlier on noted is in the fact that the verb elements incorporate both MOOD and Modality. In the latter part of the statement, the verb element, *shall*, presents Modality by implication. It incorporates MOOD and Modality because it indicates both Finite and Predicator. In terms of Modality, it relates to the quality of *potentiality* inherent in the clause. In simple terms, what is indicated has the potential and essence to occur. With respect to MOOD, the structure is declarative. Stylistically, there is an evident foregrounding of the information structure. The core (given) of the structure is essentially the last line of the entire statement taken as a unit.

Your mother shall (come and go)

This core is however delayed until the end of the statement. The participants, *Tide* and *market* as well as the processes, *come* and *go*, assume fronted presentation in spite of their logical value as elements of comparison. It can be said that this is marked or foregrounded because "thematic patterns are not optional stylistic variants; (but) are an integral part of meaning of language", (Halliday, p. 134). It is not the purview of this paper to explore the semantic and lexicogrammatical significance of the placement of participants with regard to thematic and rhematic functions. However, it is necessary to add that the bird downplays or de-emphasizes the participant status of *your mother* by pushing it further away from the beginning of the sentence.

X. MODALITY, READING AND RENDITION OF SSE

This research has made a significant discovery with regard to the reading and rendition of the poem, SSE. By reading, it is meant the interpretation generated in the appraisal of a text. Rendition refers to the way – graphically and graphologically – a text is presented in its original or other versions/editions. The discovery made in rendition of SSE is the substitution of *shall* with *has* in some extant and current versions of the poem. This substitution is the basis of the reading generated in the proposition of *finality* and *fatality* as espoused by nearly all scholars who have critically examined SSE.

Modality entails the enactment of a proposal or proposition. In relation to Finiteness and Polarity, and according to Halliday and Matthiessen, Modality makes the proposition arguable by "giving it a point of reference in the here and now" (p. 115). As they further explain, a proposition is therefore "arguable through being assessed in terms of the degree of probability or obligation that is associated with it" (p. 115). The proposition made in the bird's response is:

Your mother shall (come and go)

which leaves room for conjecture, uncertainty and *arguability*. It is not, as Eyo (2005), Egudu (1977) and Adetugbo (1971) present in their reading and rendition that:

Your mother has (come and gone).

The feature of the restored verbal elements, *come* and *go* as against *come* and *gone* places a question mark on the aspectual significance of these verbs. To an extent, the verbs, *shall* and *has*, belong to the same category. They are basically auxiliary verbs and both indicate finiteness. But, that is where their comparison ends in this context. On the one hand, the verb, *shall* is a modal auxiliary that can indicate Modality in a proposition. On the other hand, *has* is a primary auxiliary by which tense, aspect and agreement can be established. In other words, *has* establishes *primary tense* (Halliday) rather than Modality. As already stated, both indicate finiteness in the restored rendition of the clause. This finiteness, in relation to MOOD, may present Modality or primary tense. If *shall* is retained as it is in the original version of the text, Modality – which "gives room for arguability" (Halliday and Matthiessen) – is established; but if *has* replaces *shall*, primary tense – which "forecloses further argument" (Vincent and Senanu) – is indicated. Therefore, the finiteness of *has*, as applied, is established in its contribution as a primary tense, while that of *shall* is maintained in its Modal value.

XI. FATALITY AND TRANSITION IN THE READING OF SSE

There is a general opinion among analysts of this poem that SSE presents the issue of transition, fatality and the incapacity of man as a subject of nature in his efforts at changing the natural course of events. The topic is death, hopelessness and the entire collection (ART) of which the poem is a part "connotes the solitude, the helplessness, or the impotence of mortals caught up in the vicissitudes of life" (Maduka, 1984, p. 22). It is also accountable that "there is a strong plaintive and *fatalistic* note about this poem, clearly emphasized by the reply" (Vincent and Senanu, 1976, p. 129). But, in the poem's original version, the bird did not indicate through a concluding proposition that transition **has**

taken place. It rather enlightens the child on the proclivity of the participants in the clause, including *tide*, *market* and *mother* with respect to transition. However, it is conceivable that the general perception that the bird made a final statement which sealed any hope on the part of the child would have, perhaps, led to the substitution of the verbs (so that the text would clearly say what literary critics have agreed that it says). This is how *reading* affected *rendition*. This revised rendition is evidently what motivates Egudu, ever before Clark revised and adopted the popular version, to conclude that “the child’s mother *has* completed her rounds, and is therefore gone forever, hence the perfect tense” (p. 31) in *has*, when, as a matter of fact, the bird neither implicitly or explicitly asserted nor declared that this was so, and there was no “perfect tense” but a modal auxiliary in *shall* in the original version of the poem.

XII. MODALITY AND INTERPERSONAL RELATION IN THE QUESTION AND RESPONSE

Considering the power equations and in justification of the form (polarity) of the interrogative, it is possible to draw some inferential discourse-oriented conclusions. It may be said that the child recognizes its position as the human (cream and commander of all creation) and expects deference from the bird. Thus, it does not want an explanation since the bird may be incapable of giving one; it needed a *yes* or a *no* reply.

In ordinary conversations, certain factors may condition the choice of an interlocutor to adopt the polar question type. One, it may be that the enquirer only needs a straightforward response without explanations. It may also be that the enquirer recognizes the responder’s linguistic incapacity – he/she may be sick, tired, or not proficient in the use of the code with which interlocution is being carried out. Anxiety or impatience may also stimulate an enquirer to adopt the polar question type. Moreover, and this is very significant in consideration of the form and import of the bird’s reply, an interrogator often uses the polar structure to establish his/her interpersonal status as the one in-charge; or the one who needs to do the real talking, while the hearer tags along with the required response, in this case, *yes* or *no*.

Jef Verschueren, writing on what informs ‘style and linguistic codes’ in normal conversations, observes that language is employed by interlocutors “to interactionally generate the meaning of their social world and to negotiate mutual investment in the linguistic market place” (p. 119). Also, Bloor and Bloor recognize that “(t)he extent to which language determines, rather than simply represents, experience is one of the major questions in ...linguistics” (p. 108). In other words, language is not only used to *represent* but also applied to *determine* how interlocutors interpret and react to the verbal enactments of fellow interactants. This meaning of a social world and *mutual linguistic investment* as construed or interpreted by it, perhaps, informs the bird’s informal and somewhat inadequate response. Its reaction could have been motivated by the reason of the fact that it resented the child’s assertion of a linguistic authority over it (bird), hence the non-correlative form of the response. Verschueren further explains that the structure of a text in an interlocutory context can be applied to “restore a threatened power relationship”. In this sense, the bird uses a face saving device to restore the significance of its status as the more informed one between the two interlocutors. Hence, it ignored the polarity of the interrogative, which requires a *yes* or a *no* answer, and goes on to demonstrate superiority in knowledge by undertaking an elucidation.

XIII. TENOR OF DISCOURSE AND INTERPRETATIONAL BREACH

Considering what has been said, it is conceivable that the child’s choice of the polar question is not motivated by the power equation, but its anxiety and impatience in trying to solve the riddle regarding its mother’s whereabouts. However, the child inadvertently commits a face threatening act by directing a polar question to a more informed and perhaps older interlocutor. We are inclined to believe that the child’s face threatening act was unintentional since it had adopted a politeness phenomenon as a prelude to its question. It ‘hailed’ the other interlocutor with a title, *an oriki/itu aha*. Therefore, the child could not have in the same breath occasioned to ‘insult’ or denigrate the bird’s sense of importance by trying to establish superiority over the bird. Hence, there seems to be a breach in interpretation as the bird gets the wrong pragmatic message.

The bird tries to restore its threatened status both in the MOOD structure and in the interpersonal relation in the sense that:

1. it does not salute or give title (*oriki*) to the child;
2. it deliberately avoids the use of a nominal co-referential, except in addressing the child;
3. all reference to the child is with direct personal pronouns (you, your);
4. the only nominal co-referential to the child is axiomatic of an abusive expression in the social context of its application, *your mother* (nne gi, iya e); and
5. the bird, as earlier stated, addresses a polar question with a response adequate for a WH structured interrogative.

The bird does all these in order “to restore a threatened power relationship” (see Verschueren, p. 119) and not because Modality or MOOD requires the form and content of the kind of statement it puts forward. Here, what motivates the bird is the sociopragmatic consideration by which one interlocutor is expected to defer to the other. Naturally, the one who seeks to be informed should defer, by means of pragmalinguistic features, to the interlocutor who is to inform. The consequence of the pragmalinguistic feature of the child’s statement, as perceived by the bird, is that the latter feels that the former is trying to denigrate its status. The subject matter, here, is indicated in the field of

discourse, the latter of which is a session of exchange (question and answer) between the child and the bird with regard to the movement of the child's mother. Underlying the exchange is the statuses of the interlocutors. One is an anxious child, a human; whereas, the other is a bird, a participant who bears the information sought by the child. The different statuses are maintained through *face*, the latter of which, according to Brown and Levinson, is "the public self-image that a speaker wants to claim for himself" (p. 61). The bird, therefore, pragmatically restores its threatened face by 'giving it back' to the child in a way to indicate superiority. Its response is offhanded, informal and without any embellishment of courtesy in comparison to that of the child. In a matter of fact attitude, it addresses the child's incapacity as well as the futility of its attempt to comprehend the subject of discussion. This, the bird does in emphatic negative and positive clauses:

You cannot know (negative)

And should not bother (negative)

Tide and market come and go (positive)

And so shall your mother (positive)

Somehow, one cannot overlook the relative significance of the transitivity deployed in the bird's section of the "exchange". The tables below feature the participants and processes captured as transitivity in the bird's response to the child's simple question.

TABLE OF TRANSITIVITY IN THE BIRD'S RESPONSE IN SSE (PARTICIPANT)

S/N	Participant	Thematic status	Nature	Process	Process type
1	You	Theme component	Human/animate	know/bother	Mental (negative)
2	Tide	Theme component	Inanimate	come/go	Material (positive)
3	market	Theme component	Inanimate	come/go	Material (positive)
4	your mother	Rheme component	Human	come/go	Material (positive)

TABLE OF TRANSITIVITY IN THE BIRD'S RESPONSE IN SSE (PROCESS)

S/N	Process	Type	Polarity	Co-reference
1	know/bother	Mental	Negative	Child
2	come	Material	Positive	Tide, market, your mother
3	go	Material	Positive	Tide, market, your mother

It is evident that the bird attributes a negative mental process to the child which indicates that it (the child) lacks rather than possesses a capacity or quality. This reference to the child's inability emphasizes or underscores the bird's superiority. Indirectly, and by the account of this transitivity, the bird communicates that those who have the ability to do things are the inanimate participants (tide and market) and "your mother". The pejorative essence of the bird's response is intensified by the fact that a correlative compound process, "come and go", applies to both the child's mother and *tide & market* the latter of which are inanimate participants.

XIV. CONCLUSION

It is usually the case that rendition often precedes and generates wrong reading as our account has tried to demonstrate. However, in SSE, it is suspected, and this is our strong position, that forced reading actually led to a popular change in the form of the text. I see the substitution as popular because even one of Clark's latest publishers, Mosuro, (see Clark 2010), has adopted the version that contains *has*. It is also possible that Clark instituted or is aware of this substitution, but one is inclined to believe that he is either unaware of the resultant pragma-semiotic effect of the revised rendition or has decided to leave critics to sort out the issues with respect to meaning, message or interpretation. It is a surprise that the obvious differences in rendition, with respect to the two versions of the poem, have escaped the notice of critics and analysts in spite of the fact that this text is one of Clark's most popular poems. In other words, until this present discourse, no other scholar has undertaken to question the implication of this surgery on one of Clark's most popular poems.

Far from what is generally believed by analysts of SSE from a literary perspective, the poem presents complexity. The complexity in the poem is not just in the content of the text but also on the functional interaction of the linguistic features that constitute this content. Thus, as our discourse has shown, there is complexity in transitivity as well as complexity in MOOD and Modality. Although, at the morphological level, it is possible to observe simplicity in the *wording*, however beyond this level, there is a great degree of complexity both at the syntactic level and at the level of metalinguistic features. This paper does not represent an exhaustive linguistic account of the features in SSE. So many features, especially with regard to lexical content, are deliberately left out for further studies.

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