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# Eliciting Acts as Cultural Reflectors in Wole Soyinka's *Childe Internationale*

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Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa, and it is a well-known developing country with hundreds of indigenous tribes, cultures, languages and dialects.<sup>1</sup> The Hausa and Fulani occupy the northern part of the country, while the Yoruba live in the southwest. Most of the Igbo people live in the southeast. The multilingual nature of the country made it difficult for any of the indigenous languages to be chosen as a *lingua franca*, and this made the English language (from Nigeria's colonial heritage) emerge as the official language of the country. Although educational policy encourages the learning of indigenous languages for mutual understanding and French for interactions with its French-speaking neighbors, many people still find the learning and speaking of English fashionable and very desirable. Some families do not stop even at making sure that their children attend schools where English is used as a medium of expression, but send their children abroad to be educated in the White man's land. To such parents, this is a more honorable thing to do. It is however unfortunate to note that some such parents become disappointed in the end, because some children come back totally alienated from their indigenous cultures and belief systems. Through writing on gender roles, marriage, and family, Toyin Falola notes that these institutions reflect the impact of modern changes on the survival of traditional social organizations.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from being a biological unit, the family as a universal institution is also a social unit. Families in Nigeria are known and identified by name, religion, occupation, etc., and they produce and socialize children.<sup>3</sup> However, the influence of a foreign culture has brought in a new appreciation or interpretation of the culture(s), languages, styles of dress, and behaviors that affect most families either negatively or positively. It is the general belief in most parts of Nigerian society that there must be discipline, mutual understanding, and respect among family members and this should be maintained at all times. Falola notes that the Nigerian society uses patriarchy, which gives more power to men in terms of decision-making.<sup>4</sup>

In Nigeria, the interpersonal relationships emphasize respect, which can be shown through greetings, terms of address, or general behavior as indicated by a specific culture. For example, one must not address elders or senior people by their first names. Among the Yoruba, greetings and the manner of greetings are very important. As a matter of fact, failure to greet or answer when greeted is seen as a sign of contention, and failure to greet in the proper way is seen as a sign of disrespect or pride. Such an attitude is immediately scolded by calling to order the person concerned. Western civilization in Africa has, however, created a new kind of culture that is neither truly indigenous nor totally Western. Many young Nigerians who have had the opportunity to travel abroad have had problems striking a balance between their indigenous culture and the Western culture. The clash of cultures sometimes leads to open confrontations between the custodians of the African culture (parents and elders) and the new generation youths who no longer see the need to operate from their roots or even see anything good in the indigenous languages, traditions, and beliefs. It is in response to some of these issues that Wole Soyinka decided to use drama to ridicule this kind of undesirable attitude in the lives of present-day Nigerian youths.

### **Drama as a Literary Weapon**

Registers of language that all human beings are exposed to are intimate, casual, consultative, formal, and frozen.<sup>5</sup> Martin Joos, as cited in *Language: Introductory Readings*, says that language users in different societies shift between these registers of language as due. Literature belongs to the frozen register where the dynamics of the speaker/listener are represented as writer/reader. Generally speaking, language has many structural possibilities that are subject to

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<sup>1</sup> Toyin Falola, *Culture and Customs of Nigeria* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 116.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 117-118.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Harvey Daniels, "Nine Ideas about Language," in *Language: Introductory Readings*, eds. Virginia P. Clark, Paul A. Eschholz & Rosa F. Alfred (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 24.

change, because style and change are features of language that occur quite often. In written texts, writers use different styles and features from various aspects of literary language and linguistics to drive home their points.

One of the linguistic features of language used in the book *Childe Internationale* is elicitations. John M. Sinclair and Malcolm R. Coulthard, in their study of classroom discourse, classify the term “elicitation” as one of the classes of “acts” in the exchange structure of the classroom.<sup>3</sup> In her work on exchanges in the ESL classroom, Moji Olateju also notes that elicitations and hearing checks are indispensable acts in ESL classrooms.<sup>4</sup> These two “acts” also occur as features of the dialogue in Soyinka’s *Childe Internationale*. Sinclair and Coulthard note that elicitation can be realized by questions that are used to demand responses, which could be verbal or non-verbal.

Dramatic texts are written in the form of exchanges in which characters interact and speak in turns. Some of the exchange or dialogue features that characterize dramatic texts are elicitations, informatives, hearing checks, and directives (See details of these in Sinclair and Coulthard (below), Olateju (below), and Deirdre Burton).<sup>5</sup> Karenne Sylvester Kalinago in particular notes the major role of communicative language skills in both role play and real play.<sup>6</sup>

In Soyinka’s *Childe Internationale*, it can be observed that more than any other interactive device, “elicitation” as an act plays a major role in presenting the cultural conflicts in the book. This paper therefore attempts to do a functional analysis of the different types of elicitations, with reference to the characters in the text and how they affect the culture of the Yoruba people in Nigeria.

### Literature as Discourse

Foucault sees literature as a free zone where all kinds of discursive games can be played.<sup>7</sup> He also notes a subversive category of literature that transgresses and exploits the position of discursive detachment to cross any boundary by writing on any issue. Some dramatic texts that carefully present societal problems fall into this category. Deleuz Guattari<sup>8</sup> notes that through literary discourse, literature forms a rhizome with the world. He notes that a rhizome is a subterranean stem with a hidden net of roots differing from common roots, bulbs, and tubers. With its open root system, it can be connected to any other thing. To this scholar, literature as a rhizome always has multiple entryways. Reading *Childe Internationale* reveals yet another skillful device; that is, the use of “elicitations” as a linguistic device that not only adds to the beauty of the book as a literary piece, but also presents a menacing societal problem in a subtle, satirical, and interesting way without concern for who is offended in terms of status.

### Discourse and Conflict

Christina Kakavá notes that status negotiation has been one of the most commonly cited meanings of conflict between children and adults, and it is believed that drama often presents

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<sup>3</sup> John M. Sinclair and Malcolm R. Coulthard, *Towards an Analysis of Discourse: The English Used by Teachers and Pupils* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 28.

<sup>4</sup> Moji Olateju, *Discourse Analysis: Analysing Discourse in the ESL Classroom* (Ile-Ife, Nigeria: Obafemi Awolowo University Press, 2004), 57-60.

<sup>5</sup> Deirdre Burton, “Towards an Analysis of Casual Conversation,” *Nottingham Linguistic Circular* (1978), 7-164.

<sup>6</sup> Karenne Sylvester Kalinago, “Drama in Business English Language Classroom-Presentation Script,” Accessed June 19, 2008. <http://kalinago.blogspot.com>.

<sup>7</sup> Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?” in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, eds. Robert Con Davis & Ronald Schleifer (New York: Longman, 1989), 268-275.

<sup>8</sup> Sten Pultz Moslund, “Literature as Discourse Illustrated in an Analysis of the Discursive Strategies in Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*,” in *Towards an Analysis of Discourse Strategies*, eds. Moji Olateju, Rotimi Taiwo & Adeleke Fakoya (Nigeria: Olabisi Onabanjo University Press, 2007), 52.

conflicts between people or ideas.<sup>9</sup> The audience/reader becomes involved in the actions and dialogue on stage or in a book as a result of the manipulation of her or his emotions.

For a reader to appreciate the discourse and conflict in the text, particular attention must be paid to the characters, situations depicted, conflicts presented, and their final resolutions. Gbemisola Adeoti and Samson Elegbeleye note that Wole Soyinka has explored the mechanism of satire more than any other African writer in his response to the multifaceted problems confronting contemporary Africa.<sup>10</sup> They further note that Soyinka uses satire as an artistic means to capture reality. In *Childe Internationale*, the conflict (of ideas, cultural practices, etc.) is between a politician and the rest of his family. The clash of cultures and ideas that occur between the politician and the rest of the family demands that he compromise his stand as the head and breadwinner of the family, which he is not ready to do. He tries to solve this problem through negotiation by elicitation, but this does not work.

Deborah Tannen, in a series of studies on communicative strategies for handling conflict as cited by Kakavá, notes that boys and girls, as well as men and women, use different strategies to engage in conflict in both casual and professional settings.<sup>11</sup> She notes that boys and men tend to engage in direct confrontations or use opposition as a way of negotiating status, whereas girls and women try to avoid direct confrontation. Below is an example from the text:

Politician: What is all this about? It is either she was given a report or she was not. Were you given a report?  
 Titi: Gee Dad you sure are persistent.  
*(Gets off her chair and begins to limber up in balletic movements.)*  
 Politician: Did you get a report? An end-of-term report? Yes or No, Pass or Fail.  
 Wife: Oh Kotun, you do keep on so. Don't you realize she'll show it to us when she's ready?  
 Politician: *(flabbergasted)* When she is ready?  
 Wife: So don't keep on about it. You'll only aggravate her resistance mechanism.  
 (1)

In this excerpt, the politician's stance is a direct confrontation with what he feels is out of place as the daughter demonstrates insensitivity to her school reports. While the wife tries to avoid direct confrontation, the politician expresses his emotions loud and clear by shouting for and demanding the daughter's report card, which is the evidence of a term's work at school.

There is definitely a clash of cultures, desires, and ambitions in addition to a generation gap in the play, and the African man wins in the end in that he is able to flog out the waywardness and lack of discipline from both mother and daughter. This is part of the African belief that if the family will remain as an undivided unit, someone (usually the father) must take the lead, as no African man, no matter how poor, wants to be seen as incapable of directing his family affairs.

### The Data

The play *Childe Internationale*, written by Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka, was first published in 1987.<sup>12</sup> It appeared first as a stage play in 1964, and since then, *Childe Internationale* has been a popular choice for school acting. The play is short—it is a single scene of about twenty-six pages. It has only four characters: the politician; his wife, Titi; their daughter; and Alvin, Titi's

<sup>9</sup> Christina Kakavá, "Discourse and Conflict," in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, eds. Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen & Heidi Hamilton (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 659.

<sup>10</sup> Gbemisola Adeoti and Samson Elegbeleye, "Satire as Anxiety Reduction Technique: A Case Study of Wole Soyinka's Drama," in *Perspectives on Language and Literature*, eds. Moji Olateju & Lekan Oyeleye (Ile-Ife, Nigeria: Obafemi Awolowo University Press, 2005), 303-321.

<sup>11</sup> Kakavá, "Discourse and Conflict," 656.

<sup>12</sup> Wole Soyinka, *Childe Internationale* (Ibadan: Fountain Publications, 1987). When citing passages from the edition of the play, the author includes page numbers (in parentheses) next to each passage.

American boyfriend. It is important to note that both the politician and his wife are not given any personal identity in terms of names. The writer created these personalities to represent any African man in any position of authority, either at home or in the public. The politician could stand equally for any African man with a family, and the wife could also stand for the wife of any African man, whether political office-holder or traditional title-holder. Wole Soyinka is an accomplished author and playwright who has successfully mastered both the Yoruba and the English languages and cultures and has demonstrated this in his many writings. Wole Soyinka is capable of entering not only into the world of the adults, but also that of the youth and children. His writings appeal to a wide variety of readers, and his plays are enjoyed by both young and old, no matter their religious or ethnic backgrounds.

In *Childe Internationale*, the writer brings to the fore a pathetic situation in an African family where the man feels insulted and disturbed as a result of the unruly behavior of his wife and daughter who have just returned from Britain. The daughter has imbibed the Western way of life and finds it difficult to come to terms with the indigenous African culture and practices. Instead of allowing the situation to get the better of him, the politician finally decides to apply (probably as the first and a temporary measure) the traditional method of discipline, which is applying a few lashes of the cane to his wife and daughter to bring them back to their senses.

Taking into consideration the fact that Western civilization has done us both good and bad, the playwright uses “the good,” i.e., the writing mode, to expose some of the “bad” that Western civilization has done, especially to the young ones who have totally relegated the good side of the African culture to the background and have taken up Western culture. This false acculturation has produced half-baked individuals who are neither well-grounded in the essentials of the African culture nor the nitty-gritty of Western civilization and culture. The unfortunate result is that although some of them feel they have imbibed much of the Western cultural practices and feel they have become a part and parcel of the West, the Western world does not see them that way. They are seen as Black Americans or Black Britons or just Blacks.

Reading *Childe Internationale* is fun. The play is a comedy, and the writer’s satirical humor and skillful use of the English language enable the reader to experience the rich details and literary quality that have distinguished Wole Soyinka as an accomplished, world-acclaimed writer.

## Elicitations

Questions are everyday occurrences in conversation. Often, societal expectations, demands, pressures, and personal problems can generate questions both verbal and non-verbal. Questions are important because they reveal all kinds of things about individuals, groups of people, families, society, and the world at large. Questions are usually asked to obtain information, broaden knowledge, deepen understanding, learn the state of things, unravel hidden intentions, and assess and ascertain given social standards and their implications on a society. Questions can lead to the explanation of an idea or purpose, the examination of a situation, or exhibition of an action as a reaction to a response.

In developing a functional description for questions, Amy Tsui notes that an examination of questions shows that the term “question” has never been clearly defined, in that it has been used only as a semantic category by scholars.<sup>13</sup> For example, Randolph Quirk et al. (1972)<sup>14</sup> and Randolph Quirk et al. (1985)<sup>15</sup> refer to questions as a semantic class that is primarily used to seek information on a specific point. They made classifications of “yes/no” questions, “interrogative” (who, what, when, etc.) questions, “alternative” questions, and “exclamatory” questions

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<sup>13</sup>Amy Tsui, “A Functional Description of Questions,” in *Advances in Spoken Discourse Analysis*, ed. Malcolm Coulthard, (London: Routledge, 1992), 89-110.

<sup>14</sup> Randolph Quirk, et al., *A Grammar of Contemporary English* (London: Longman, 1972), 389.

<sup>15</sup> Randolph Quirk, et al., *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (London: Longman, 1985), 804.

according to the responses expected. Tsui notes that the characterization and classification of questions by Quirk et al. is very unsatisfactory, in that although they claim these classifications were made according to the expected response, very often, precedence has been given to syntactic form rather than the expected form.<sup>16</sup> John Lyons characterizes “question” as an utterance with a particular elocutionary force.<sup>17</sup> To him, the difference between a question and a statement is that the speaker does not know the answer to his question. He notes that questions are normally associated with the expectation of an answer from the addressee.<sup>18</sup> However, to Tsui, this association is conventional and independent of the elocutionary force of the question, and this makes the issue of questions a halfway-house between a syntactic category and a category of discourse.<sup>19</sup> However, to Burton, the logical form of the question is a “request.”<sup>20</sup> Others characterize questions as a kind of directive, on the grounds that a directive is an instruction to perform something, and a question is an instruction to make a verbal performance. Sadock, while giving a critique of questions as a type of request, points out that it is wrong to say that all questions are to be considered as “requests” for information.<sup>21</sup> Tsui also notes that sometimes an utterance is defined as a question because it is interrogative in form, and sometimes because the questioner expects an answer or some verbal performance from the addressee.<sup>22</sup> This means that the term “question” is sometimes taken as a syntactic category and sometimes a discourse category, and this makes the term vague and ill-defined.

Tsui, however, argues that questions have a different discursive function or consequence from requests and should therefore not be subsumed under either “requests” or “directives.” Tsui proposes “elicitations” for those utterances that elicit solely a verbal response.<sup>23</sup>

The term “elicitation” was first introduced by Sinclair and Coulthard, who describe it as “an act which functions to request a linguistic response.”<sup>24</sup> To them, the response may also include a “non-verbal surrogate,” such as a nod or raised hand. The term “elicitation” is therefore seen as a discourse category that can be used within the classroom or outside of it to “elicit” an obligatory verbal response or its non-verbal surrogate, which is what this scholar has considered in this work.

Tsui identified six subcategories of elicitations according to the different expected responses: *inform*, *confirm*, *agree*, *commit*, *repeat*, and *clarify*.<sup>25</sup> In this work, this scholar has also been able to identify the six categories that Tsui identified, along with four others that are text-based. It should be noted that this examination of eliciting acts is to demonstrate the use of language in specific instances in a text meant to address specific socio-cultural issues, hence, the presence of other specific subcategories of elicitations.

The section below focuses on the subcategories of elicitations in the text, based on the interlocutors’ reasons for eliciting and the responses. This is partly in line with Lyons, who notes that the speaker should not know the answer to his question.<sup>26</sup> In *Childe Internationale*,

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<sup>16</sup> Tsui, “A Functional Description of Questions,” 89-110.

<sup>17</sup> John Lyons, *Semantics*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 755.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Tsui, “A Functional Description of Questions,” 89-110.

<sup>20</sup> Deirdre Burton, “Towards an Analysis of Casual Conversation,” *Nottingham Linguistic Circular* 7, no. 2 (1978), 131-164.

<sup>21</sup> Jerrold Sadock, *Towards a Linguistic Theory of Speech Acts* (New York: Academic Press, 1974), 168.

<sup>22</sup> Tsui, “A Functional Description of Questions,” 89-110.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> John Sinclair and Malcolm Coulthard, *Towards an Analysis of Discourse: The English Used by Teachers and Pupils* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 28.

<sup>25</sup> Tsui, “Description of Questions,” 89-110.

<sup>26</sup> Lyons, *Semantics*, 755.

unexpected verbal and non-verbal responses generate much status friction between the members of the family in the narrative.

### **Subcategories of Elicitations in *Childe Internationale***

#### *1. Elicitation for genuine information:*

Wife: Oh she's already started dating.

Politician: Dating? What is that one?

Wife: Dating. Boyfriends. Parties—you know all that sort of thing. She writes all about it in letters. (1)

The politician's wife gives him information on the word "dating," which has to be explained to the husband who claims either ignorance of it or a lack of understanding of what the word has to do with his daughter.

#### *2. Elicitation out of surprise:*

Politician: Isn't it a boarding school?

Wife: You forget it's a mixed school. They go to pictures and hold dances. (1)

Surprised that the daughter has started having boyfriends while at school, the politician tries to find out if this is the latest practice in boarding schools.

#### *3. Elicitation for confirmation:*

Wife: But that's it in front of you.

Politician: This one? But he knows I don't like cocoyam [a special kind of tuber common in Africa] and this one even looks unripe.

Wife: (*with withering contempt*) It is not cocoyam. That's something special I prepared for Titi's welcome lunch. (1-2)

The politician seems to be confused about the type of food offered him. To him it looks like cocoyam, but the wife corrects him and confirms that it is not.

#### *4. Elicitation out of disdain:*

Politician: Potatoes eh? It looks like that ball they use for table tennis?  
(*makes motion of playing ping-pong*). (2)

The politician doesn't like English dishes, and so elicits out of disdain in an attempt to make a mockery of the English dish set before him.

#### *5. Elicitation for agreement:*

Politician: --Oh—er—do you think Godwin can make me some Eba?

Wife-----Can't you manage just this once?

Politician: Look, I don't mind doing it another time-----

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Politician: Enh, can't you make it yourself? Eba only takes a few minutes or is there no soup in the house?

Wife: -----I'm tired. I've spent the whole day----

Politician: Ah well, I go manage am so [I will manage it]. (6)

In the extract above, the politician tries to reach an agreement with his wife on the menu although what he is offered does not please him. His attempts to elicit for a clear understanding of the situation throughout the play fall on deaf ears on the part of his wife and daughter. In fact, at one point, he almost resigns to fate before he later decides to approach the issue the traditional way. Below is another example from the text:

Titi:----(*sits and puts her feet on a corner of the dining table*)

Wife: Don't put your feet on the table.

Titi: Oh, I'm tired.

(*Daddy firmly pushes her feet off the table.*)

Titi: What did you do that for?

(*Puts her feet back on the table. Dad stares in disbelief, pushes his food away and turns for solace to his notes.*) (7)

The politician is so frustrated by his daughter's lack of respect for him as a father that he turns to his notes, especially as the mother also fails to discipline the daughter at this time.

#### 6. Eliciting with a hearing check:

Politician: En-enh? And he's coming to dinner tonight?

Titi: Oh yes, I've invited him. (15)

"Hearing checks" are discourse fragments or backchannels in the indigenous language, i.e., Yoruba language, uttered when interlocutors want to find out whether they heard each other correctly. "En-enh?" in the example above is just to confirm that the speaker heard what was previously said correctly. The politician is surprised that the daughter has a boyfriend, which totally goes against the African culture of purity and sanctity for women before marriage. Girls are expected to keep themselves pure until after traditional marriage. It is believed that a girl going about with a boyfriend cannot keep herself pure.

#### 7. Elicitation for service to be rendered:

Politician: Enh, can't you make it yourself? *Eba* only takes a few minutes or is there no soup in the house?

Wife: Oh Kotun----(*complains about not wanting to prepare Eba*) (6)

The politician seems to be denied the enjoyment of his favorite dish, *Eba* (usually prepared from cassava), and therefore asks if his wife could not prepare it herself. The wife declines, and he eventually has to ask the houseboy to prepare it because of his wife's reluctance to do so. The wife offers him potatoes, which the politician refuses to eat.

#### 8. Elicitation out of irritation and annoyance:

Politician: Eh—enh? And he's coming to dinner tonight?

Titi: Oh yes, I've invited him.

Politician: With whose permission? Did you first get your mother's permission or my own?

Titi: Oh isn't he such a square?

Politician: What is that? What is she saying? (15)



In this excerpt, both father and daughter elicit in annoyance. The politician gets irritated when his daughter announces that her American boyfriend is coming to their home for dinner without the permission of the parents. For the daughter to have a boyfriend at that young age is disturbing to the father, and to say he is coming to their home for dinner without the consent of the parents is disgusting to him.

#### 9. Elicitations in Pidgin English:

Pidgin English emerged as result of the contact between the English language and some indigenous languages in Nigeria. It is freely spoken in many parts of Nigeria, usually among the less educated and middle-class people. Pidgin is a contact language used for communication among people who have no other common language. Occasionally, Pidgin English is used among the highly educated in casual conversations and is sometimes used to create humor or trivialize serious social or political issues in Nigeria. In *Childe Internationale*, the politician probably code-switches to Pidgin English out of frustration while commenting on his daughter's questioning attitude regarding many socio-cultural and religious issues, including the existence of God. Below are examples:

Wife: Please----Kotun. Let her ask her questions. It is only natural at her age.  
Politician: "Questions way no get head?" [useless questions]  
Titi: But Dad-----  
Politician: Oh shut your "mouth!"  
Wife: Kotun. I've warned you. Don't give this girl a complex.  
Politician: "Wetin be dat one again?" [What is that again?] (11)

\* \* \*

Politician: My father did not just shout at me. He went and bought a megaphone so that he can "megashout" at me, but my initiative still put me where I am today and "na my initiative bring you here." And if I may say so, as I remember the matter, "na my initiative press the button wey bring that one into the world."  
(10)

The politician is obviously disappointed and disturbed that part of what his hard-earned pounds has bought him are insults from the people closest to him. It was not surprising when he code-switches to Pidgin English and notes in one of the excerpts above that it was his "initiative" (his zeal and demonstration of his manhood) that brought in the woman to be his wife and brought their daughter into the world as well. It was also his "initiative" that trained both wife and daughter in the White man's country, the result of which is disobedience and a lack of respect for him as a father and a husband.

#### 10. Elicitation in Yoruba:

Elicitations function in various ways. Some can engender strife and can bring about different reactions from interlocutors. One of the reactions could be code-switching at will to the indigenous language, e.g., Yoruba, especially when interactants feel they are not well understood, when they are annoyed, or when they find the English language inadequate to express their feelings. The multilingual nature of Nigeria as a country encourages code-switching at will for various reasons ranging from surprise to annoyance, all in an attempt to express one's feelings. This is evident in turns of the character of the politician in *Childe Internationale*. Below are examples:

Titi: Well, he eats almost anything you know—of course as long as it isn't native food. Mind you, he likes "deudeu."  
 Wife: Well I'll see what I can do.  
 Politician: "Ewo le tun npe ni 'deudeu'?"  
 Titi: "Deudeu?" Fried plantains of course.  
 Politician: You mean "dodo?" (14)

Being multilingual, the politician uses both the English and the Yoruba languages to elicit responses from members of his family. There are, however, some ideas that are better expressed in the indigenous languages for better comprehension, and this he does occasionally. The politician speaks in Yoruba when the daughter's pronunciation of *dodo* (fried plantain) is a far cry from its Yoruba pronunciation. This shows part of the daughter's alienation from her roots in that she can no longer pronounce Yoruba words correctly (or pretends not to know their pronunciation) and no longer takes delight in African dishes.

Titi: Oh don't be so silly Daddy. Everybody gives birthday parties.  
 Politician: (*stops, aghast*) *Ki lo wi un? Enh? Mo ni ki lo wi un?*  
 Titi: Everybody gives birthday parties-----  
 Politician: What did I hear before that?  
 Titi: Oh I said don't be silly.  
 Politician: (*slowly putting down his briefcase*). *Iya e, iya to bi o sinu ko to so fun mi ki ng.* "Don't be silly." You hear? [Your mother cannot say "Don't be silly" to me.]  
 (14)

The politician code-switches immediately in annoyance to the Yoruba language in the text above (the language of the immediate environment) when his daughter says, "Don't be silly" to him. Below is a table showing the number of elicitations per character.

**Table: Total Number of Elicitations per Character in the Text.**

Character	Total Number of Elicitations per Character	% of Total Elicitations
Politician	63	54.782
Wife	25	21.739
Titi	24	20.869
Alvin	3	02.608
<b>Total</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>100</b>

From the table above, the total number of elicitations is 115, and out of these, the politician elicits 63 (54.78%) times. His wife makes 25 (21.73%) elicitations; Titi has 24 (20.86%) elicitations; while Alvin, Titi's American boyfriend, has 3 (2.60%) elicitations. Alvin probably has very few elicitations because he makes a brief appearance before he is chased out of the house for lack of courtesy. Actually, Alvin's three contributions are elicitations that are rude in nature and structure, causing the politician to send him out of the house. Below are Alvin's contributions:

Alvin: That your old man?  
 Titi: Yes.

Alvin: Hey Pop. Your daughter tells us you're a Big Shot in the government. Is that true or is she just bragging?

Politician: And I hear your father is a big shit in your embassy. And now get back to him and tell him to get you some home training and clean your anus for you.

Alvin: Gee—real cave types your folks eh Tits?

Politician: GET OUT!

Wife: Now you see what you've done? You're going to make your daughter a laughing-stock of the whole school. (18)

Alvin makes a brief appearance and is chased out by the politician for being rude. It is unfortunate to note that the politician's wife does not see anything wrong in Alvin's rude behavior, but gets annoyed with her husband's reaction to Alvin's rudeness. The politician's wife's and Titi's total number of elicitations are close, probably because they think alike and they see life differently from how the politician sees it.

One evidence of confusion in an individual, especially one who has been uprooted from his cultural base, is the frequency of elicitations in his interactions. Some individuals pretend not to know or see things that are obvious in their culture, while others are so alienated from their culture that they don't seem to understand why certain things are done the way they are done. Most of Titi's elicitations are made out of ignorance, and so they are fact-finding. Titi elicits on socio-cultural issues and African traditional religious matters that are confusing to her. Below is an example:

Titi: Mummy, is it really true that we still have primitives who can make rain fall?

Wife: Some people make that claim.

Titi: But it's all superstition. I suppose there are still superstitious natives about. Why doesn't the government educate them? (19)

To Titi, natives are "primitives," and the best way to make them forget their primitive or native tendencies and beliefs is to educate them. The Collins Electronic Dictionary defines primitive as "a simple stage of development" or "crude," whereas "native" means "relating to a place where a person was born," "born in a specified place," "originating in," "inborn," "person born in a specified place," or "member of the original race of a country." Confusing these two words on the part of Titi is also evidence of the misrepresentations of her people and culture to which she has been exposed.

The politician, on the other hand, has close to half of the total number of elicitations. For example, the preponderance of his elicitations partly signals his confusion. He just cannot believe that only a short period at school in England could snuff out courtesy and home training in his daughter. This is a child who has just returned home from a boarding school; she is expected to greet her parents properly and show appreciation for the money they spent to send her abroad. She must be reminded to show courtesy when greeting her father, and she displays her waywardness by not greeting him properly and later, by putting her feet on the dining table on which her father's food is placed. In Africa, it is customary for the young person to show courtesy when greeting the elderly person, especially in Yoruba land, where girls are expected to kneel down and boys to prostrate when greeting elderly people. Titi has to be reminded to do that, but despite the reminder, she refuses to greet her father the African way. Instead, she moves near her father and gives him a peck on the cheek, and this makes the politician sad as a father. Below is an example from the text:

Wife: Hello darling. Did you have a good term?

Titi: Smashing (*waves from afar*). Hiya Dad. How's politics?  
(*Dad freezes in horror.*)

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Politician: Are you not going to greet your father properly?

Wife: Go and give your father a big kiss.  
*(Titi runs over, kisses him while he shrinks back.)*  
 Titi: Jealous old thing.  
*(Dad continues to stare in horror. She sits and puts her feet on a corner of the dining table.)* (7)

Furthermore, the politician cannot believe that the school where he sends his daughter permits social activities that encourage children to develop love relationships at a tender age. Below is an example:

Politician: Isn't it a boarding school?  
 Wife: You forget it's a mixed school. They go to pictures and hold dances. (1)

The wife corroborates this by enumerating some of the school's activities that encourage this kind of relationship and behavior in which she obviously sees nothing wrong. To her, they are the eye-openers to true civilization, and her daughter should not be denied these experiences. As a result of his confused state of mind, the politician asks a lot of questions in his attempt to try to understand or bring sanity to the confused situation around him, but all to no avail until he applies the traditional method of discipline (on his wife and daughter), which is caning.

In most parts of Africa, the man is the head of the home and he is expected to be able to manage his home in terms of provision for members of the family, enforcement of appropriate discipline, and recognition of the laws and customs of the land so that he can be a respected member of his society. However, in a situation where a man cannot perform these duties, he becomes faceless before his peers, and he is regarded as a weak person.

The contextual parameter used in this text as a form of disengagement from the conflict is the traditional method of discipline that the politician resorts to at the end of the play, because the situation is fast getting out of hand. He has no intention of disciplining his wife, but the conspiracy between the wife and the daughter in lack of discipline makes him discipline with the wife, who finally cooperates and then makes the daughter submit to fatherly discipline (the application of a few lashes of the cane). This action confirms the fact that the father is the head of the family and has the absolute right to run his family the way he feels best.

It is important to note that the African concept of discipline is different from that of the Western world. In Africa, wife beating, although not good, is not strange, and it is actually seen as a way of keeping wayward women under control. If Wole Soyinka had seen the phenomenon of the waywardness of cultural "albinos" (Black people who want to look and behave like White people) forty-six years ago and recommended the traditional form of discipline to bring them back to their senses, one wonders what he would recommend as discipline for the present "coconuts" (people who are Black on the outside but White or want to be totally White on the inside) who demonstrate an inability to speak their native dialects or language, to greet the African way, eat African dishes, or dress the African way. Such people see nothing good in anything and everything that is African in terms of names, culture, food, religion, etc.

Titi represents present-day children and youth in Africa whose social and self-consciousness have been totally bastardized. Their dress sense has been thrown to the dogs, and what is regarded as real African social values and religious beliefs have been labelled "primitive" and something not worthy of association.

Dennis J. De Haan, the world Radio Bible Class teacher, noted in 1986 that all too often, children are left for women to encourage, warn, teach, counsel, and raise. To him, these are marks of a troubled society, and when a civilization becomes characterized by selfishness, sensuality, materialism, and violence, the care of children is abandoned by the fathers. He affirms that the father's wisdom and instruction are vital to children as they grow. De Haan also makes reference to marmosets (squirrel-sized monkeys), siamangs (members of the ape family), seahorses, and jacanas (robin-sized wading birds) in terms of one human quality they all have—the male of each of these species takes care of its young.

Wole Soyinka seems to say that the African man has something to learn from these creatures that take up their fatherly responsibilities as they should and not allow the negative influences of civilization to destroy the sanctity of the family structure and society. The African man may need to discipline his own family to protect his home and society from the invasion of a foreign culture that may put him in a sorry state, remove his pride in himself, and render him incapable of controlling his home.

### **Conclusion**

The above discussion highlighted the different ways in which Wole Soyinka has used elicitation as both a discourse strategy and a literary device to create humor from the serious family and societal problem of cultural alienation that has resulted in a lack of respect for tradition, disrespect for parents, waywardness, ignorance of basic social norms, ethics, religion, and others. Soyinka seems to say that for sanity to return to the family structure and the society of contemporary Africa, the father, who is the traditional head of the family, must as a matter of urgent necessity take up or revive the fatherly role of maintaining and enforcing discipline in the home, and this will improve society at large. If in 1964, Wole Soyinka recommended paternal discipline as the immediate solution to the problem of socio-cultural and religious pollution caused by the infiltration of a foreign culture, then he would probably recommend more in this present age of technological development. Although technological advancements and Western education bring good, they also have a negative influence on the younger generation in Africa, as this has resulted in pride and arrogance on the part of these youths.