

## Implicit Meanings in Fictional Conflict Discourses: Insights from two Nigerian Novels

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### Abstract:

Research on Chimamanda Adichie's literary works has been devoted to the investigation of the thematic, stylistic, lexico-semantic, discursal and pragmatic features of her texts. While the pragmatic studies of the texts have examined implicit and explicit meanings, including explicit thematisation of conflicts, in them, very little attention has been paid to the contextual examination of implicit contents of conflict discourse in her texts. This study is therefore a pragmatic exploration of implicit meanings in conflict discourses in Adichie's novels. It identifies the types of conflict that emerge in the texts and determines how they implicitly facilitate access to conflict-related thematic orientation of Adichie. All the conflict-motivated discourses in the two novels of Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus (PH)* and *Half of a Yellow Sun (HYS)*, \*constituted the data for the study. These were analysed using insights from Gricean theory of implicature, which served as the theoretical framework for the study. The results indicate that pragmatic inference contributes to the realisation of implicit meanings in three broad types of conflict in the data, namely, domestic conflict, religious conflict and ethnic conflict, especially with the engagement of figurative expressions with additional meaning and non-figurative expressions with additional meaning. Figurative expressions (non-literal language usage in the data) manifest as figure of speech, especially metaphor, and proverbial expression, flouting the maxim of manner to give off implicitly thematised conflicts, namely, resistance against domestic violence, conflict of religious faith/belief, and sentiment of tribal differences. Non-figurative expressions (literal uses of language) however go with additional meanings, flouting the maxim of quantity to implicitly thematise such conflicts as clash in domestic lifestyle, conflict of religious belief, resistance against religious imposition and tribal clash-motivated inhumanity. The link between conflict types and implicit meanings in Adichie's novels obviously aids a pragmatic understanding of conflict-related issues in the texts. It therefore demonstrates the capability of

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Gricean pragmatics in the realisation of implicit meanings in conflict discourses in novels.

**Keywords:** Adichie, conflict discourses, implicit meanings, thematised conflict, conflict types, novels

### 1. Introduction

In linguistic research, conflict discourse has only recently experienced an upsurge of interest, recognising conflict situation as an unavoidable occurrence in human co-existence. Studies on conflict in linguistic scholarship within and outside Nigeria have shuttled between “natural conflict (conflict relating to the physical world) and preternatural conflict (conflict relating to the spiritual world)” (Osunbade, 2012: 139–140). These studies have concentrated on the structural elements of conflict, the communicative strategies of conducting/thematising conflict, and western and indigenous means of conflict resolution/mediation, from the discursal, stylistic and pragmatic perspectives.

However, while the pragmatic efforts have been devoted to the exploration of orientation to face negotiation in disagreement and of the explicit contents of conflict discourses, little attention has been paid to the contextual examination of implicit contents of conflict discourses. This study therefore fills this gap, being a pragmatic exploration of implicit meaning in conflict discourses in Adichie’s novels, *Purple Hibiscus (PH)* and *Half of a Yellow Sun (HYS)*. It identifies the types of conflict that emerge in the texts and determines how they implicitly facilitate access to conflict-related thematic orientation of Adichie. The two novels were selected having won the prestigious Commonwealth and Orange Broad-band Awards. Their choice was also informed by the little attention paid to them in pragmatic scholarship and the consideration for their relevance to the conflict-espousing socio-cultural milieu in which they were set.

All the characters’ conflict-motivated discourses in the novels constituted the data for the study. These were sampled given that conversations which the characters have with one another are significant for understanding the thematic foci of Adichie in her novels, being ultimately a part of the message from the author to the reader. The conversations are those between family members (e.g. father/mother and children, husband and wife, cousins, etc.), friends, colleagues, boss and subordinate and neighbours. The study therefore promises to demonstrate the pragmatic input of the link between conflict types and conflict-related issues among these characters in the texts.

## 2. Literature Review: Linguistic Studies on Conflict

Conflict has been construed as any adversarial social action involving two or more actors, with the expression of differences often accompanied by intense hostilities (Jeong, 2010: 3). Most significantly, conflict arises from the failure to manage antagonistic relationships, especially spurred by cultural diversity and opposing political interests, which often result in intra/inter-communal rivalries. In some situations, religious, language and racial differences have pitched various rival groups in a struggle for power and territorial gains in many parts of the world. Linguistic conflict, however, refers to “any type of verbal or non-verbal opposition, ranging from disagreement to disputes, mostly in social interaction” (Kakava, 2001: 650). Studies on conflict in linguistic scholarship have explored the linguistic and structural properties of conflict (cf. Pomerantz, 1984; Baym, 1996; Ononye and Osunbade, 2015), communicative strategies of conducting/thematising conflicts (cf. Schiffrrin, 1985; Johnstone, 1989; Muntigl and Turnbull, 1998; Osunbade, 2012), and language use in conflict negotiation and resolution (cf. Edner, 1990; Maley, 1990).

Pomerantz (1984) studies some features of dispreferred turn shapes with respect to agreeing and disagreeing with assessments. Conceptualising a dispreferred action as one that is not “oriented to” the talk as it was meant, she observes that when conversants feel that they are expected to agree with an assessment, yet disagree with it, they usually express their disagreement with such forms of delay as initial silence in response to forthcoming talk and repair initiators. Pomerantz finds out that dispreferred actions are structurally marked and they display certain ‘dispreference features’ such as “delays, requests for clarification, partial repeats, and other repair initiators and turn prefaces” (1984: 70). Demonstrating disagreement with assessments is therefore revealed as an essential feature of dispreferred turn in social interactions.

In a discursual study of dialogue, Schiffrrin (1985) examines the organisation of everyday argument. She identifies two types of arguments, namely, rhetorical and oppositional arguments, which serve to reveal the speaker’s constant “negotiation of referential, social, and expressive meanings” (1985: 45) within the context of the disreputable position. In her own study, Johnstone (1989) focuses on linguistic strategies and cultural styles for persuasive discourse. She posits that certain cultural styles correlate with certain persuasive strategies employed by the speakers in a given context of conflict, identifying three types of strategies: quasilogic, presentational, and analogical; and mapping them into different cultural styles based on conceptual correlates. The study concludes that the choice of a particular strategy

may rest on cultural disposition, and that cross-cultural misunderstandings are rooted in people's failure to adapt to and understand different persuasive strategies.

Muntigl and Turnbull's (1998) study is a pragmatic exploration of the conversational structure of disagreement sequences with consideration for orientation to face negotiation. They argue that facework is a major determinant of the type of turn sequences a speaker usually engages in disagreement discourse. Four types of disagreement are identified in the study; these are: irrelevant claims, challenges, contradictions, counter claims. The study concludes that the more a second turn threatens the face of the speaker who makes a claim as a first turn, the more likely it is that the third turn will contain further support of that first speaker's claim.

In another pragmatic endeavour, Osunbade (2012) is devoted to the investigation of how language is used to explicitly thematise conflict across the discourse types in conversations in fictional texts. Adopting Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory (RT), the study reveals three conflict-related thematic foci: domestic conflict, religious conflict and ethnic conflict as parts of the explicatures of characters' utterances in the texts, recoverable fairly differently through gap-filling, reference assignment and bridging. The study concludes that this cognitive investigation of explicatures in fictional discourses is significant for aiding a context-driven understanding of conflict-motivated domestic, religious and socio-political experiences of the characters in the texts.

Ononye and Osunbade (2015), however, investigates the lexical choices in the newspaper reports on Niger Delta conflicts (NDCs) to establish their link to specific stylistic strategies used by the reporters in naming the entities in the discourse and aid a full understanding of how news texts are used to influence the readers' perspectives of the conflicts. Forty reports on NDCs published between 2003 and 2007 were sampled from four Niger Delta-based newspapers (*The Tide*, *New Waves*, *The Pointer* and *Pioneer*) and subjected to stylistic analysis, with insights from Jeffries' critical stylistics model and Osundare's concepts of style and aspects of stylistics discourse. The findings account for the naming of two entities, namely, the news actors and their activities, in the discourse through the naming strategies of labelling and nominalising. Labelling is characterised by two lexical choices: emotive metaphors and qualifying adjectives used in evaluating the entities named while nominalising is marked by two lexical patterns: plain and converted nominal forms employed to reduce the impact of the news actors' activities. The study concludes that naming strategies in ND-based reports on NDCs are motivated by reporters' covert goal to influence the

readers' views of the conflicts, toward attenuating their effects on the people.

It is thus clear from the foregoing that there is a dearth of pragmatic study on how conflict, which is usually spurred by differences in cultural orientation and religious disposition as well as opposing political interests, is implicitly accounted for as having implications for human peaceful co-existence and social change in the authors' fictional universe. This study, therefore, fills this lacuna, using Adichie's novels as data base.

### **3. Summary of Texts**

Adichie's novels project the socio-political malaise of the modern world (especially, Africa's at large and Nigeria's in particular). They are mainly pre-occupied with the exposition and condemnation of all forms of social, political, economic and religious ills in the society with a view to improving human conditions.

In *PH* for example, the oddities in Nigeria are fictionalised. Eugene archetypically represents (both within the family and society at large) the tyrannical, anarchical-cum- draconian leaders that rule Nigeria. Being a wealthy man who subscribes to conservative Catholic orientation, Eugene tends to uphold moral standards. He uses his newspaper, *the standard*, to challenge the socio-political problems and abuse of power associated with the governance in the post-independent Nigeria. However, his domestic life is dictatorial and abusive just as the leaders whom he condemns with his paper. His wicked nature is attested to by his trait of constantly maltreating his wife and children, causing them both physical and psychological imbalances. After spending holiday with Eugene's sister, Ifeoma, these victims of Eugene's brutalities eventually liberate themselves from his authoritative grip. Kambili slowly rediscovers her voice and desires freedom from her father's control; Jaja starts to display defiance; and their mother also starts being disobedient to her husband. Consequently, Eugene was poisoned so as to ensure their "freedom" from his inhumane acts towards them; the freedom being what 'Purple Hibiscus' metaphorically connotes.

*HYS* x-rays Nigeria in the 1960s as a turbulent, tension-soaked, country resulting from the conflict between the Hausa and the Igbo who attempt secession from Nigeria after the widespread massacres of their people in the North, leading to the civil war civil tagged "Biafran war". Nigeria blows up when the Igbo attempt a coup against the Gowon-led Hausa in government, and the Hausa retaliate with a sweeping massacre that starts in the North. The conflict later on turns into a full-fledged war. Consequently, the lives of many Igbo are lost, but their determination

and optimism propel them to retreat to Eastern Nigeria where they hope, abortively, to form the Independent Republic of Biafra.

#### 4. Gricean Theory of Implicature

The theoretical notion of implicature was developed by H. P. Grice. Conceived in Grice's second approach, Grice (1975) identifies two types of implicature, namely conventional implicature and conversational implicature. Conversational implicature is focussed in our discussion here, being the implicature type adopted in this study given its more important status in Grice's proposal. In Grice's proposal, it is established that, typically in conversation but not confined to conversation, communicative utterances are in accordance with a general principle of cooperation called the Co-operative Principle (CP). This principle ultimately presupposes that communicators should be helpful (that is, co-operate with each other) in their conversational contributions. According to Grice (1975:45), the CP states thus:

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

Grice supports this principle with four maxims. These are:

**1. Quantity Maxim:** Be just informative as required

Within the conversation, the participant should be as brief as possible.

**2. Quality Maxim:** Say only that which is true or for which evidence is available.

With this maxim, within the conversational context, the speaker should not claim to know more than he does so as to be helpful to the co-participants by not mis-leading them.

**3. Relation Maxim:** Ensure that you are relevant

The participants are expected to concentrate on the subject being handled at a particular stage and not introduce extraneous items into the conversation.

**4. Manner Maxim:** Be perspicuous.

This maxim relates to "the how" and not "the what" of what is said. The speaker is expected to be perspicuous, avoid obscurantism, ambiguity and prolixity; and be orderly (see Odebunmi 2003: 64).

Commenting on the weakness of the maxims, Levinson (1983) observes that trying to meet the Gricean standard is like living in a philosopher's paradise, though the maxims clearly spelt out the way conversations can be carried out most efficiently, rationally and cooperatively. He maintains that Grice himself did not idealize that

such maxims should be fully realized, but rather that they can be sometimes deviated from. As Grice himself observed, it is deviations of this nature that necessitate inferences, which he dubbed an implicature or a conversational implicature. Gricean pragmatics therefore involves a theory of inference that hearers draw to arrive at a full understanding of what a speaker meant by an utterance, especially in those cases where what is meant goes well beyond the literal meaning of what is uttered (Kearns, 2000: 254).

In the development of the implicatural theory, scholars have noted that failure to observe a maxim to generate an implicature can occur, while still obeying the cooperative principle (see Thomas, 1995; Kearns, 2000). Thomas (1995) discusses five ways in which the maxims may not be observed, as identified by Grice, namely, flouting a maxim, violating a maxim, infringing a maxim, opting out of a maxim and suspending a maxim. A maxim is flouted when a speaker “blatantly fails to observe a maxim at the level of what is said with the deliberate intention of generating an implicature” (Thomas, 1995: 65). Flouts can exploit all the maxims, i.e. quantity, quality, relation and manner. Flouts exploiting the maxim of quality occur when an untruth is said or when the utterance cannot be adequately proved. Flouts that exploit the maxim of relation occur when conspicuously irrelevant responses are given to questions or queries. Flouting the maxim of quantity involves a speaker giving more or less than the required information in particular situations (Thomas, 1995: 65–71).

Infringing a maxim involves “a non-observance [which] stems from imperfect linguistic performance rather than from any desire... to generate a conversational implicature” (Thomas, 1995: 74). A maxim can be infringed as a result of incompetence in a language, psycho-social impairment, cognitive impairment or incapability to speak clearly. Opting out of a maxim means that “the speaker is unwilling to cooperate in the way the maxim requires” (*Ibidem*). A maxim is suspended when the non-fulfillment of maxim is by participants, and therefore does not generate any implicature (Thomas, 1995: 76).

However, according to Thomas (1995: 65):

the situations which chiefly interested Grice were those in which a speaker **blatantly** fails to observe a maxim, not with any intention of deceiving or misleading, but because the speaker wishes to prompt the hearer to look for a meaning which is different from, or in addition to, the expressed meaning.

Thomas’ submission thus indicates that the most important category of non-observance of the maxim in Gricean account is flouting a maxim,



especially to generate additional meaning called *conversational implicature*. The present study therefore touts the line of Thomas, while drawing theoretical insights from this Gricean implicatural approach, given its capability to account for how implicit meanings can be recovered in discourses.

## 5. Analysis and Findings

The analysis reveals that three broad types of conflict feature in the data, namely, domestic conflict, religious conflict and ethnic conflict; and the findings show that pragmatic inference contributes to what is implied in these conflict types with the engagement of figurative expressions with additional meaning and non-figurative expressions with additional meaning. Figurative expressions are non-literal language usages in the data which manifest as figure of speech, especially metaphor, and proverbial expression, flouting the maxim of manner to give off implicitly thematised conflicts, namely, resistance against domestic violence, conflict of religious faith/belief, and sentiment of tribal differences. Non-figurative expressions, which dominate the data, are literal uses of language that go with additional meanings, flouting the maxim of quantity to implicitly thematise such conflicts as clash in domestic lifestyle, conflict of religious belief, resistance against religious imposition and tribal clash-motivated inhumanity. These features are taken in turn.

### 5.1. *Implicit Meanings in Domestic Conflict*

Domestic conflict (henceforth DC), in the present context, refers to disagreements/ differences that concern family lives and domestic experiences of the characters in the novels. It is a significant conflict type that emerges in the data, indicating that humans constantly have conflicting ideas over a number of domestic issues. Two sub-types of domestic conflict are thus thematised in the data: resistance against domestic violence and clash in domestic lifestyle.

Resistance against domestic violence is a DC-related theme sometimes communicated implicitly, in *PH*, using figurative expressions, with the maxim of manner being breached. The example below can be considered:

- Example 1 : (Background: Kambili is hospitalised after being brutalised by her father and Auntie Ifeoma visits her in the company of Father Amadi)
- Mama (T<sub>1</sub>) : (addressing Auntie Ifeoma and Father Amadi) At first, they could not find a vein and I was so scared.
- Father Amadi (T<sub>1</sub>): Kambili, Kambili. Are you awake?
- Auntie Ifeoma (T<sub>1</sub>): *Nne*, Kambili, nne.
- Mama (T<sub>2</sub>): The medication knocks her out.
- Auntie Ifeoma (T<sub>2</sub>): (Clutching Kambili's hand): *Nne*, your cousins send greetings.



- They would have come, but they are in school. Father Amadi is here with me.
- Kambili: (attempts to open her eyes but too weak to)
- Aunt Ifeoma (T<sub>3</sub>): (Facing Beatrice) This cannot go on, *nwunyen*. *When a house is on fire you run out before the roof collapses on your head.*
- Mama (T<sub>3</sub>): It has never happened like this before. He has never punished her like this before. (*PH*, p. 208–209)

In order to safeguard future occurrence of domestic conflict in Beatrice's house, Ifeoma, (her sister-in law) addresses the proverbial saying in the second segment of the utterance in her T<sub>2</sub> to Beatrice at Kambili's bedside at the hospital:

*When a house is on fire you run out before the roof collapses on your head.*

In the proverbial usage above, a metaphoric mapping is employed to focus on the gravity of the conflicts between Beatrice and Eugene. The marital life of Eugene and Beatrice which suffers unending hardships orchestrated by Eugene is, thus, metaphorically presented as a house which is on fire. Obviously, the intended meaning of this proverb is obscure, suggesting a flout of the manner maxim. Reliance on shared cultural knowledge for the understanding of the implied meaning is, therefore, necessary.

The fact that Ifeoma produces the proverbial utterance indicates that she expects Beatrice to draw the inference that “a serious, conflict-induced, problem is in need of an urgent solution”, given her belief that she (Beatrice) already has this assumption among her existing assumptions. The proverb is, in effect, an exhortation to act fast before a conflicting situation becomes irrevocable. Hence, the implicature is that *Beatrice is urged to protect her children and herself from Eugene's perpetual act of violence before the situation becomes more serious.* With the proverbial expression, “when a house... collapses on your head”, which employs metaphor to give off this implicature, Ifeoma proclaims her Igbo identity, and plays a significant role in indirectly motivating Beatrice to resist her husband's act of violence. The thematised conflict of resistance against domestic violence is thus implicitly drawn on by the proverb.

In another transaction between Kambili and her cousin, Amaka, Kambili implicitly communicates a thought that reveals her family's domestic lifestyle and their adherence to it to underpin the thematisation of class in domestic lifestyle between herself and her cousin, using non-figurative expression which flouts the quantity maxim:

- Example 2: (Background: Amaka strikes a conversation with her cousin, Kambili, on the topic of watching TV).
- Amaka (T<sub>1</sub>): You have satellite here, don't you?  
 Kambili (T<sub>1</sub>): Yes.  
 Amaka (T<sub>2</sub>): Can we watch CNN?  
 Kambili (T<sub>2</sub>): *We don't watch a lot of TV. (PH, p. 79)*

In this exchange, Amaka asks if they can watch CNN but instead of simply saying “no”, Kambili engages, in her second turn (i.e.T<sub>2</sub>), an indirect answer to Amaka’s utterance: “We don’t watch a lot of TV”. This utterance flouts the quantity maxim in its being less informative in the context of use. Kambili informs Amaka that they (i.e. Jaja and herself) do not watch alot of TV, demanding her to implicitly access the information that:

*They cannot watch CNN.*

This information, expected to be accessed with the advantage of Amaka’s shared knowledge of Kambili’s regimented lifestyle, is then needed for the understanding of clash in domestic lifestyle as the thematised conflict in the conversational context.

With this implicitly conveyed information, Kambili’s pragmatic intention is to make it manifest that they (her brother and himself) operate a domestic lifestyle consistent with their father’s scheduled routine dictates. Her implicit refusal to consent to Amaka’s idea of watching TV exposes her unquestionable internalization of her family’s set standard of living and her dogmatic adherence to them. A clash in domestic lifestyle is thus inherently depicted; hence, Adichie’s focus on it as a thematised domestic conflict in *PH* is implicitly demonstrated in the implicature derived.

### **5.2. *Implicit Meanings in Religious Conflict***

Religious conflict (henceforth RC) is operationally conceived as verbal or non-verbal disagreements/differences within characters’ religious experiences in the novels. It manifests in the data given the multi-cultural/ multi-religious lifestyles of the people fictionally represented in the novels sampled. Two manifestations of the conflict are implicitly thematised in the data, namely, conflict in religious faith/belief and resistance against religious imposition.

Conflict in religious faith/belief mainly manifests in the relationship between the adherents of Christianity such as Eugene, Catholic priests, Ifeoma, etc. and those of traditionalism represented by Papa-Nnukwu (Eugene’s father) and Anikwenwa. Example 3 below depicts Eugene’s excessive adherence to his Catholic faith with both non-figurative and figurative expressions being engaged to implicitly reveal his behaviour as well as serve as thematic hint. While the implicit meaning

communicated using non-figurative usage flouts the maxim of quantity, that which is communicated via figurative expression flouts the maxim of manner:

- Example 3: (Background: Anikwenwa, an old man of Eugene's father age-grade who also holds to the traditional Igbo religion of Odinani enters Eugene's compound in Aba, and Eugene sends him away).
- Eugene (T<sub>1</sub>): *What is Anikwenwa doing in my house? What is a worshipper of idols doing in my house?*
- Anikwenwa (T<sub>1</sub>): Do you know that I am in your father's age group, *gbo*? Do you know that I sucked my mother's breast when your father sucked his mother's?
- Eugene (T<sub>2</sub>): Leave my house!
- Anikwenwa (T<sub>2</sub>): *Ifukwagi! You are like a fly blindly following a corpse into the grave!*
- Eugene (T<sub>3</sub>): Just leave my house! (*PH*, p. 69–70)

Eugene chases Anikwenwa away from his compound as a result of the differences in their religious beliefs, engaging non-figurative expressions in his T<sub>1</sub> to condemn his religious belief in idol worshipping. Here, the quantity maxim is not observed, as Eugene gives less information than the situation demands, and an implicature is generated. To reach this implicit meaning, Anikwenwa is expected to infer that *he (Anikwenwa) is a worshipper of idol* and derive the implicature that *he (Anikwenwa) should leave Eugene's house, given their religious differences*. Anikwenwa understands this communicated implicit meaning and draws on the proverbial expression in his T<sub>2</sub> to (figuratively) condemn Eugene's rudeness to him being his father's age mate. The introductory Igbo expression "Ifukwagi" meaning "look at you" is contextually engaged to create a background emphasis for the reproach implicitly conveyed in the proverb engaged. Flouting the maxim of manner in its non-explicit nature, which requires socio-cultural knowledge to interpret, the proverb makes an effective recourse to the image of a fly blindly following a corpse into the grave to underscore the degree of Eugene's fanatic portrayal of the conflict in religious faith between himself and Anikwenwa. This is, of course, targeted at giving the hearer access to inferential computations that will act as premises in reaching Anikwenwa's intention.

The fact is that no overt communication of Anikwenwa's intention is made, but riding on contextual assumptions provided by both cultural and situational knowledge viz: "one who stubbornly refuses to take other people's advice leads himself to destruction", the relevance of the proverb reinforces Eugene's understanding. The implicatural content of the proverb thus constitutes no hurdle to Eugene. He understands, by inference, that the implicit meaning that: "his (Eugene's) conflicting

adherence to the foreign religion’s fanatical norms will mark his undoing” is being conveyed by Anikwenwa. The thematic significance the implicitly communicated meaning achieves is, evidently, to reinforce the theme of conflict in religious faith/belief.

Resistance against religious imposition is sometimes the thematised religious conflict in *PH*, and non-figurative expressions are prioritised in communicating it as an implicit meaning necessitated by a flout of the quantity maxim. Example 4 can be considered.

- Example 4: (Background: Amaka was asked to choose an English name for her confirmation in the church, but she declined)
- Father Amadi: Amaka, have you chosen an English name for your confirmation?
- Amaka: *Why do I have to, Father? When the missionaries first came, they didn't think Igbo names were good enough. They insisted that people take English names to be baptised. Shouldn't we be moving ahead?*
- Father Amadi: Don't make this what it is not. You don't have to use the name. Look at me, I've always used my Igbo name, but I was baptised Michael and confirmed Victor. (*PH*, p. 255)

This transaction reveals that Amaka is expected to choose an English name for her confirmation, but she declines. Instead of saying “no” which would be as informative as required for the current purpose of the conversation, Amaka says:

Why do I have to, Father? When the missionaries first came, they didn't think Igbo names were good enough. They insisted that people take English names to be baptised. Shouldn't we be moving ahead?

With this utterance, Amaka supplies information not as informative as the situation demands, thereby triggering off the search for the right implicit meaning. Amaka’s response to Father Amadi’s question starts with a rhetorical question, challenging the need for choosing an English name for the confirmation. It also ends with another rhetorical question, which further challenges the continued imposition of English names on Africans under the cover of validating their baptism. The interrogatives serve to give off implicit meanings by aiding access to the inferences provided by the propositional contents of other sentences (i.e. sentences 2 and 3) of the utterance thus:

- (i) Earlier missionaries condemned Igbo names to favour English names.
- (ii) English names were forced on the people during baptism.

Drawing these inferences make it easy for Father Amadi to recover the implicatures below as the ones rightly intended to be communicated by Amaka’s rhetorical utterances:

- (i) Amaka has not chosen, and is not choosing an English name for her confirmation.
- (ii) It's time Africans stopped adopting English names for confirmation.

These demonstrate that Amaka totally objects to any alteration of her African identity, especially by resisting to be renamed. As such, the thematic implication derived from the implied meaning above is that Amaka is in conflict with the Catholic's practice of imposing baptismal names on Africans as a neo-colonisation strategy, which it seems to depict.

### 5.3. *Implicit Meanings in Ethnic Conflict*

Ethnic conflict (henceforth EC), in the present study, refers to disagreement/clash between two groups of people with different racial and linguistic heritage in Adichie's fictional society. Its emergence in the data, especially in *HYS*, portrays the tyrannical trauma of inhumanity associated with turbulent, tension-soaked, Nigeria as a result of the tribalism-motivated conflict between the Hausa and the Igbo who seek to secede from Nigeria after the widespread massacres of their people in the North, leading to the war of succession tagged "Biafran War". Sentiment of tribal differences and inhumanity spurred by tribal conflict are therefore the EC-based conflicts that manifest in the data.

Sentiment of tribal differences is an ethnic conflict which manifests in a significant way in the data. To communicate this thematised conflict, figurative expression is employed, flouting the maxim of manner to give off implicit meaning. Let us consider example 5:

- Example 5: (Background: Olanna was in Mohammed's house in Kano when ethnic riot started)
- Mohammed (T<sub>1</sub>): They're rioting.  
 Olanna (T<sub>1</sub>): It's the students, isn't it?  
 Mohammed (T<sub>2</sub>): I think it's religious or ethnic. You must leave right away.  
 Olanna (T<sub>2</sub>): Mohammed, calm down.  
 Mohammed (T<sub>3</sub>): Sule said they are blocking the roads and *searching for infidels*. Come, come (He went into the room and came out with a long scarf) wear this, so you can blend in.  
 Olanna (T<sub>3</sub>): (Jokingly) I look like a proper Hausa muslim woman now.  
(*HYS*, p. 149–150)

Weeks after the second coup in the country which leads to the death of many Igbo soldiers, the Northern Nigeria become highly volatile. Riots leaving a number of Igbo dead are staged, causing serious unrest. The interaction above between Olanna and Mohammed, her ex-Hausa boyfriend, is an indictment on the condemnable tribal sentiment that orchestrates the ethnic riot that eventually blows into a full-fledge war in

the country. This idea is communicated, using metaphor in Mohammed's T<sub>3</sub>:

... *searching for infidels.*

The figurative expression engaged here flouts the maxim of manner, as it is not immediately clear what the metaphor means, necessitating a generation of implicature. With the advantage of the situational knowledge, Olanna eventually understands that by “infidels” the Igbo are implied in the present context to underpin tribal differences. She therefore agrees to disguise as a Hausa Muslim in order to escape. By metaphorically condemning the Igbo as infidels, tribal differences therefore becomes covertly portrayed as a barrier to ethnic unity in the country fictionally portrayed in the text.

Also, implicitly communicated using non-figurative expression is the theme of inhumanity spurred by tribal conflict, with the quantity maxim being flouted. This is shown in the example below:

- Example 6: (Background: As the Biafran war become more serious, two American journalists came to Biafra, visited a refugee camp and one of them, Charles, the redhead, interviewed a refugee)
- Charles (T<sub>1</sub>): Are you hungry?
- The refugee (T<sub>1</sub>): Of course, we are all hungry.
- Charles (T<sub>2</sub>): Do you understand the cause of the war?
- The refugee (T<sub>2</sub>): *Yes. The Hausa vandals wanted to kill all of us, but God was not asleep. (HYS, p. 380)*

Example 6 reveals that rather than relying on the propaganda from the media, some American journalists did visit Biafra so as to gather first-hand information about the Biafran war. This endeavour takes Charles, the redhead, one of the journalists, to a refugee camp to interview the refugees. In an interview with a woman with one arm (suggesting that she is a real casualty of the war), he elicits information about the cause of the war and the woman answers enthusiastically, flouting the maxim of quantity:

*Yes. The Hausa vandals wanted to kill all of us, but God was not asleep.*

Obviously, the woman's contribution here is too informative than required in the context of communication. Having said “yes” which is sufficiently relevant to the question asked, she goes ahead to accuse the Hausa of holocaust, which is believed to have catalyzed the war. Assisted by inference, Charles would be expected to reach the additional meaning communicated here that: “the Hausa are inhumane”. Hence, tribal conflict-motivated inhumanity is favoured in the implicature derivable.

## 6. Conclusion

This study investigates the pragmatics of implicit meaning recovery in conflict discourses in Adichie's novels, *PH* and *HYS*. The study adopts Gricean pragmatics, which accounts for context-driven meaning, and posits that what a speaker means in addition to what they say is the extra-information inferentially assessed in conversations. The analysis reveals the manifestation of three broad types of conflict in the data, namely, domestic conflict, religious conflict and ethnic conflict; and the findings show the contribution of pragmatic inference to the assessment of implicit meanings in these conflict types with the engagement of figurative expressions with additional meaning and non-figurative expressions with additional meaning. Figurative expressions, being non-literal language usages in the data, manifest as figure of speech, especially metaphor, and proverbial expression, flouting the maxim of manner to give off implicitly thematised conflicts, namely, resistance against domestic violence, conflict in religious faith/belief, and sentiment of tribal differences. However, the dominant non-figurative expressions in the data, being literal uses of language that go with additional meanings, generally flout the maxim of quantity to implicitly thematise such conflicts as clash in domestic lifestyle, conflict of religious belief, resistance against religious imposition and tribal clash-motivated inhumanity.

This study on the exploration of the link between conflict types and implicit meaning in Adichie's novels aids a pragmatic understanding of conflict-related issues in the texts. It therefore demonstrates the capability of Gricean pragmatics in the realisation of implicit meanings in conflict discourse in novels.

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