

Ideational Representation of Domestic Violence in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

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Abstract

Language is a means of representing and portraying real and imaginary events, ideas, and relations or states of being. This paper is a linguistic study of ideational meanings in the novels under study. The aim of this paper is to find out how the writer's linguistic choices serve as a means through which social meanings and experiences are expressed and understood using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics Theory. This study offers explanations for the lexicogrammatical choices the authors made and how they are analyzed to portray the intended meaning of the authors. The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods to study the problem. The data comprise twenty-five (25) clauses purposively culled from the novels. Textual data were analyzed based on the aim/objectives of the study and the theoretical framework adopted. The study reveals that both authors used material and mental processes to depict the participants' physical and mental ordeal (domestic violence) in the hands of a man she calls father/husband. The study recommends that further investigations should focus on the interpersonal and textual meanings of the same studied excerpts to help in getting to the core meanings embedded therein.

Keywords: Ideational meaning, SFL, process types, domestic violence, gender.

Introduction

Language enables its users to express knowledge of their cultural and social world, including the day to day activities in the home and society. Literary texts contain the speakers'/writers' experiences and worldviews; that is, the aspect of the reality the literary writers wish to portray. African literature is a general exploration of linguistic features and/or treatment of how language is strategically used to better express thematic preoccupations of writers. Therefore, this study examines ideation as a linguistic tool for inferring or retrieving the social meanings encoded in the novels under study adopting the theoretical framework of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics. In essence, the study investigates how Chinua Achebe and Chimamanda Adichie have employed language in their novels *Things Fall Apart* (TFA) and *Purple Hibiscus* (PH) respectively, to project the unique ideological configurations of gender and domestic violence in their attempt to represent the goings on in society.

The study will also identify the forms, causes, effects and how to curb this social vice eating up society known as domestic violence. In the sections that follow, the concept of gender based domestic violence will be reviewed, the data for the study will be presented, analyzed, discussed and findings presented and finally, conclude the paper.

Gender-Based Domestic Violence

In this paper, the different definitions of domestic violence will be reviewed. Different authors give various definitions of domestic violence. To Nwankwo (2003), it refers to "a violation of human rights", and refers to any abusive treatment of one's family member by another, thus, violating basic human rights. Oyelade (2012) agreeing with Nwankwo adds that "it's physical, sexual, emotional, economic, psychological action or threats that influence another person. It includes any behavior that isolates, frightens, terrorizes, threatens, hurts, injures or wounds and controls another person negatively. This shows that domestic violence is the intentional and persistent abuse of anyone in the home in a way that causes pain, distress or injury. Similarly, De Vries (2002) asserts that "violence is an illegitimate force that is exerted physically or otherwise by one thing, event, group or person and perhaps, word and object on another". Clearly, Scott and Marshal (2009) note that "domestic violence is specifically male violence (physical or psychological) against women".

The definition of domestic violence by Scotland and Marshal above show that there is a disparity in the victimization and experience of violence between male and female. In Nigeria and beyond, females usually, are victims of domestic violence. The males are the major perpetrators of this crime while the females are usually at the receiving end. This situation is predominant in societies where patriarchy is cultural like the case of Nigeria. To this effect, Cutterman (1991) notes that gender based violence is an "economical, physical, social and mental suffering imposed on women by their gender counterpart" – All these violation of the fundamental human rights of women "wears many faces"

Forms of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence against women has many forms which include, physical violence, sexual violence, economic coercion, emotional and verbal abuses. These forms of violence according to WHO (2005) include hitting, slapping, beating, throwing of objects, pushing, kicking, shooting, choking/burning, suffocating, and strangling. Sexual violence includes, being physically forced to have sexual intercourse.

Verbal, emotional and psychological violence involve using degrading language, insult, criticism or name calling, screaming, harassing, refusing to talk, humiliating the victim privately or in the presence of other people, blaming the victim for the abusive behavior, controlling where the victim goes, who he/she talks to and what he/she does, accusing the victim of infidelity to justify the dictators controlling and abusive behaviours.

Economic coercion includes preventing the victim from obtaining employment or education, withholding money or prohibiting access to family income thereby, making the victim ask or beg for money, stealing money, refusing to share or contribute to household bills, and treating the victim like a servant.

A combination of factors contributes to the high rate of domestic violence in Nigeria which includes low tolerance and refusal of wife to submit to husband's authority. Peace and Paymer (1993) assert that "inequality of women and gender socialization of females and males contribute to the causes of domestic violence". The cultural practices across Nigeria, position men as the head of the family and a semi-god; men are viewed as leaders, they have absolute control over women and no one dares to question their authority. Again, sexual misconduct by either of the couple, conflict between work and domestic duties by wives, high level of ignorance, poverty, anger, jealousy and interference by in-laws among other things could be possible causes of domestic violence. All these factors can be avoided because of their adverse effects on the victim.

Adekola and Falase (2006) opine that women facing domestic violence often suffer physical and psychological consequences which usually affect their behavior and productivity. They also revealed that domestic violence negatively correlates with women participation in community development.

The impact of domestic violence on victims can result in acute and chronic mental health problems, death, divorce, aggressiveness, apprehension or fear, state of helplessness, anger, anxiety, depression and suicide. Violence against women is a universal problem that must be universally condemned as it would be difficult to find one woman, whom at one point or another in her life, had not been intimidated, humiliated, abused and so on.

This paper is set out to examine the choices made by Achebe and Adichie in the novels under study to show how the authors represented violence in the families of Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* and Papa Eugene Achike in *Purple Hibiscus*. In analyzing the ideational meaning in the

selected novels, the paper will examine the lexico grammatical choices the authors made and how they reflect the experiences of reality of the writers. The study will among other things, find out the numerous expressions that reflect domestic violence in the novels, identify the process types found in the clauses and their frequency and highly the extent to which the ideational metafunction as a linguistic tool can infer and reveal theme of a novel. The essence of this study is to get at the intended meaning of the authors easily and clearly.

The study will expose the students, readers and teachers to how clauses are analyzed using the framework of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) to arrive at meaning of the text easily. This is possible because SFL prioritizes systems such as mood, aspect and transitivity and the delicate meanings and features that realize them. Also, this paper will help the reader appreciate the creativity, beauty and style of writing of Nigerian authors.

This paper will focus on the semantic and lexico-grammatical features of the clauses in the selected novels using the framework of systemic functional linguistics by Michael Halliday. The reason is to find out how the process type of the verbal group of the clause, the participants and circumstances found in the clauses have helped in bringing out the meaning intended by the writers for easy understanding of the novels. The analysis of a major theme in the novels using a linguistic tool will help the reader to expand his or her knowledge of the novels under study. It will further explain what the writers want the reader to know and also reveal some meanings for grounded.

The ideational metafunction is that part of SFL which deals with how language is used to encode our cultural and individual experiences. It also deals with the expression of environmental phenomenon through actions, events, states, relations, attributes as well as expression of our inner consciousness. In a nutshell, transitivity expresses process, participants, and the circumstances. Hence, its application on the theme of the novels will reveal actions, events among others that the writer used words to represent. Hence, its application to theme of the novels is a step in the right direction.

Methodology

This study aims at examining ideation as a linguistic tool for inferring or retrieving the social meanings encoded in the novels under study. In line with the aim of this study, two excerpts (twenty five clauses from each novel) 25 excerpts have purposively been selected and analyzed in the light of SFL (transitivity) theoretical framework the ideational (experiential) meaning theoretical framework to show how the authors have linguistically encoded meanings through the lexico-grammatical choices made to portray gender based domestic violence in their novels. This study is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research. Hence, it will adopt a textual analytic method. Textual data will be analysed in line with the purpose of the study and theoretical framework adopted. The data will be orderly arranged and presented in tables to display the frequency of the process types in compact form for further analysis and clearer

interpretations. The study through the analysis, discussion and findings will reveal the message the authors conveyed. The two excerpts were analysed in line with the Systemic Functional Linguistic framework. As a descriptive research, the study adopted both qualitative (to aid in obtaining the frequency of the process types) and quantitative method which provided avenues to revealing meanings. The frequency of occurrence the process type will be obtained through simple percentage.

Theoretical Framework

The study relies on M.A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Halliday (1994) identified three 'meaning potentials'- ideational, interpersonal, and textual and named them 'meta-function'. For Halliday, these meta-functional lines are unified within the structure of a clause and language is viewed as a meaning-making resource and involves exchange of meanings in a social context. The focus of this study is on ideational (experiential) meaning.

Experiential meaning according to Eggins (2004) has to do with the grammatical resources of people. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004). "The ideational metafunction is the function through which the speaker or writer embodies in language his experience of the phenomena of the real world; and this includes his experience of the internal world of his own consciousness; his actions, cognitions and perceptions and his linguistic acts of speaking and understanding". Again, Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) view experiential meaning as one that reflects the contextual value of 'field' through participants, circumstance and process types (material, mental, relational, verbal behavioral and existential).

The ideational meta-function is sub-divided into two, namely –experiential and logical. Experiential meaning expresses the happenings, the content – worldviews/experiences of reality which is understood through such questions as, who is doing what? To whom, where and when? The logical on the other hand deals with the ways in which clauses are connected to each other. First, they are connected through a system that describes the type of interdependency between clauses.

Secondly, the logico-semantic system describes the type of meaning relationship between linked clauses (Eggins, 2004). At the lexico-grammatical level, ideational meanings are expressed through transitivity.

Transitivity Analysis of Selected Excerpts

As mentioned earlier, the two sets of excerpts analyzed have been drawn from the novels under study. While first section of the excerpt (comprises 25 clauses) from Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the second section of the excerpt was culled from Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*".(25 clauses) Each of the selected excerpt has been divided into its constituent clauses. Again, the process in each clause and their frequency are noted.

Table 1 below shows the statistical summary of the number of processes in the selected excerpts (See Appendix A)

Table 1: Statistical Summary of Process Recorded in the Excerpts

	Process Types/Participants	TFA	Percentage	PH	Percentage
1	Material Actor Goal	14	56%	10	40%
2	Relational Carrier Attribute	2	8%	3	12%
3	Mental senser	6	24%	5	20%
4	Verbal Verbiage Sayer Recipient	3	12%	4	16%
5	Behavioural Behaver Existential Exis	-	-	3	12%

The statistical summary of process type table above shows an overview of the transitivity features as evident in the excerpts from the two novels. A careful look at the results obtained reveals that Existential process did not reflect at all in the two novels. Behavioural process type reflected only in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* but not in *Things Fall Apart*.

The most predominant process type in the overall excerpts is the material followed by mental and verbal. In these process types and in the overall excerpts, materials processes are noticeably topping the list with an aggregate number of twenty four (24) out of fifty (50) processes representing 48% of the overall process types recorded in the novels under study. This implies that the two writers have carefully chosen some words to represent concrete/physical actions and experiences of reality through their characters. Mental process ranked second with 22% of the overall recorded processes. This suggests that the participants in both excerpts are perceptively, cognitively, affectively and intellectually involved in the matters dealt with by the authors. Verbal processes came third with a total number of seven processes and 14% recorded. This indicates that the texts deal largely with verbal actions. The 'sayings' were majorly reported or quoted. Next is the relational process types which appeared five (5) times viz 10% and lastly, behavioural process which only appeared three (3) times viz 6%. Owing to the insignificant number of the relational and behavioral processes, they will cease to be mentioned.

Discussion

This section presents a deeper interpretation and understanding of the novels under study. The interpretation of the results obtained is going to revolve round the material, verbal and mental processes along with their respective participants and attending circumstances.

The result shows the domination of material process in the novels. Material process represents the doings, happenings and actions of the characters as depicted by the authors in the novels. Their predominance in the excerpts show that the authors prioritized realistic actions in the novels. Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*, made use of effective material processes than ineffective material process. Some of the examples of the effective material processes are seen in excerpts 3, 17 and 18.

Example

1. Okonkwo (**Actor**(**bit**) (**material**) his lips (**goal**)
2. When she returned (**cir: Time**) he (**Actor**) beat (**material**) her (**goal**) very heavily (**Cir:manner**)

Achebe in examples 1 and 2 above made the choice of material processes like ‘bit’ and ‘beat’ which are highly effective and goal oriented, to show how the actions of his major character in the novel, Okonkwo, affected Okonkwo’s tongue and wife.

Similarly, Adichie used, material processes like ‘lowered’ ‘titled’ and ‘poured’ which are active to represent concrete physical actions of Papa Eugene Achike against his daughter Kambili for sleeping under the same roof with her grandfather (Papa Nnukwu) who happens to be a heathen. For instance:

3. He (**Actor**) lowered (**material**) the kettle (**goal**) into the tub (**cir: location**).
4. Tilted (**material**) it (**goal**) towards myfeet (**Cir:location**)
5. He (**Actor**) Poured (**material**) the hot water (**goal**) on my feet (**cir: location**), slowly (**cir: manner**).

In excerpts 24, 25 and 26, the characters were also seen as the ‘Actor’ and used a singular pronoun ‘I’ showing that the participants are directly involved. For instance,

6. I (**Actor**) shall not eat (**material**) in the house of a man (**cir:location**) who has no respect for our gods and ancestors.
7. I (**Actor**) stepped (**material**) into the hub (**cir:location**). However, processes like shall not eat and stepped did not extend any action to other entities in the clause.

Achebe and Adichie, through the lexico-grammatical choices of ‘beat’ and ‘poured’ revealed the violent actions of Okonkwo against the wife and Papa Eugene against his daughter. This indicates that transitivity choices can reveal theme of a novel. I will at this point, state that the novels under study have theme of domestic violence. Again, through the actions performed by Papa Eugene, Adichie is showing how fanaticism can be deadly.

The use of mental processes like ‘saw’, felt, heard, notice, watched and material processes like ‘beat’, poured, tilted, depicts the victims physical and mental ordeal in the hands of a man she calls father/husband. The psychological damage the victims sustained in these awful encounters informed their passive attitude in the novels.

The verbal process deals with the process of saying or telling. They indicate speech “a kind of inner speech’ (Bloor and Bloor, 1995). Typical verbs as verbal processes in the novels under study are ‘asked’, ‘said’. Their use in the novels is meaningful (act) of communication). There are however other verbs used as verbal process to express different shades of meaning and function as speech acts with illocutionary force indicating the way the writer wants his utterance to be understood. Such verbs are ‘declare, shouted, threatened, thundered, roared...’ the participants in the verbal process are the sayer, verbiage and receiver/recipient. Instances of verbal process in the novels are:

8. “Where is Ojiugo?” (**verbiage**) he (**sayer**) asked (**verbal**) his second wife (**reserver**)
9. “You knew your grandfather was coming to Nsukka” (**verbiage**) did you (**receiver**) he (**sayer**) asked (verbal) in igbo (**cir:manner**).

The leading functions of participants in the novels are “Actor” and “goal”. Halliday (2004) notes that these participants enact various roles and functions in association with the material process to represent experiences, actions, and activities in the society/family like ‘beating’, ‘pouring’. ‘Actor’ is the one who is the doer of the action in a clause whereas ‘goal’ is that entity that is affected by the action of the verb in a clause. Actor enacts as subject while the goal enacts as the object. In the novels examined, the actions of Okonkwo and Papa Eugene Achike were highly effective while the actions of Kambili were ineffective. The reason is because of the transitivity choices the authors made in describing the actions of the male characters in the stories. This helped in bringing out unequal and sharply skewed distribution of power among different characters. While the female is shown as powerless and ineffective, the males exert their power and domination over the females. The transitivity pattern of the authors are in complete consonance to represent the experiential world of the stories.

In addition, senser, according to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), is one of the functions of participant which is associated with mental process. The Sensors involved in the mental activities are ‘saw, felt, know, heard, notice’ among others. The implication or rather the function of these participants is that the authors through the participants, made the readers to feel and learn from

the evils prevailing by the severe stressful period the participants were going through and think of sustainable solutions so that Nigeria can systematically get cured of its social vices.

The authors used the verbiage to depict what was said (the message): ‘Sayer’ as person or thing that does the saying. ‘Saying’ as revealed in the result is mainly by humans. The ‘Receiver/Recipient’ is the one to whom the verbalization is addressed. In essence, verbiage is the content of what is said, whether direct or reported and recipient is the receiver of the utterance.

The most frequently used circumstance in the two novels are location and manner. The authors used location to show the very position (setting) where the action took place. They also used the circumstance of ‘manner’ to describe the way the evil (action) was carried out.

Conclusion

The study examined ideation as a linguistic tool for inferring or retrieving the social meanings encoded in the texts under study. The theme of gender-based domestic violence was explored in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*. The social evil of domestic violence is rampant in Nigeria and has been of great concern to governments, individuals and groups. Literary discourse as a form of representation also draws attention to this same phenomenon. Consequently, a linguistic study of ideational meanings in the texts under study enables the analyst to find out how the writer’s linguistic choices serve as a means through which social meanings and experiences can be expressed and understood.

The study explored instances of violence against women in the *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus* which ranges from battering to near homicide especially in Okonkwo’s family and Papa Eugene Achike’s family. Battering of the female folk by Okonkwo and Papa Eugene led to their downfall from heights they had attained. For instance, Papa Eugene’s wife had to poison Eugene’s food with the slightest opportunity she had which led to Eugene’s untimely death when she remembered how harshly he maltreated her. Wife /daughter battering among the Igbos is not condoned. The authors, through the lexico-grammatical choices they made, were able to portray and arrive at this gender-based violence in the novels.

Preventing domestic violence against women requires sustained and systematic efforts at the levels of families and relationships, communities, institutions and societies. Men should be oriented on the dangers of domestic violence.

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Appendix

Excerpt 1: *Things Fall Apart* (Page 23-24)

“Where is Ojugo?” (**verbiage**) he (**sayer**) asked (**verbal**) his second wife (**receiver**); who came out of her hut (**cir:loc**) to draw water from a gigantic pot in the shade of a small tree in the middle of the comp (location). She has gone to plate her hair” (**verbiage**). Okonkwo (**Actor**) bit (**Material**) his lips (**goal**) as anger welled up within him (**cir: manner**). “Where are her children? Did she take them (**verbiage**) he (**sayer**) asked (**verba**) with unusual coolness and restraint (**manner**). “They are here (**verbiage**) answered (**verbal**) his first wife Nwoye’s wife (**sayer**). Okonkwo (**actor**) bent (**material**) and looked into her hut (**cir: location**). Ojiugo’s children (**actors**) were eating (**material**) with the children of his first wife (**cir: accompaniment**). “Did she ask you to feed them before she went? (**verbage**). Yes, led Nwoye’s mother, trying to minimize Ojiugo’s thoughtlessness (**verbiage**). Okonkwo (**senser**) knew (**material**) she was not speaking the truth (**phenomenon**). He (**actor**) walked (**material**) back to his obi (**god**) (**cir:location**) to await Ojiugo’s return. And when she returned (**cir: time**) he (**actor**) beat (**material**) her (**goal**) very heavily (**manner**). In his anger (**manner**) he (**senser**) had forgotten (**mental**) that it was the week of peace. His first two wives (**Actors**) ran (**material**) out (**location**) in great alarm pleading (**manner**) with him that it was the sacred week. But Okonkwo

(**carrier**) was not (**relation**) the men to stop beating somebody half way though nor even for fear of a goddess (**attribute**). Okonkwo's neighbours (**senser**) heard(**mental**)his wife crying(**phenomenon**). And sent (**mater**) their voices (**goal**) over the compound walls (**location**) to as why it was the matter. Some of them (**actor**) came (**material ineffect**) over to see things for themselves (**location**). It (**carrier**) was unheard of (**relational**) to beat somebody during the sacred week (**cir: time**). Before it was double(**cir: time**) Ezeani (**Actor**) who was the priest of the earth goddess Ezeani (**Actor**) called (**material**) on Okonkwo (**goal**) in his obi (**location**). Okonkwo (**Actor**) bought (**material**) kola nut (**goal**) and placed (**material**) it before the priest (**location**). Take away your kola nut. I (**actor**) shall not eat (**material**) in the house of a man (**location**) who has no respect for our gods and ancestors. You (**carrier**) have committed a great evil (**phenomenon**). He (**actor**) brought (**material**)down his staff heavily (**manner**) on the floor (**location**).

Excerpt 2: *Purple Hibiscus*(200-201)

“Climb into the tub” (**verbiage**) Papa (**Sayer**) said (**verbal**). I (**Actor**) stepped (**material**) into the tub (**cir-location**). I(**Actor**) did not know (**mental**) what he was going to do to me..(**phenomenon**). It (**carrier**) was (**relation**) easier when I (**senser**) saw (**metal**) a stick (**phenomenon**) because I could rub my palm together and tighten the muscles of my calves in preparation. He (**sayer**) had never asked (**verbal**) me (**receiver**) to stand inside a tub (**cir:location**). Then I (**senser**) noticed (**mental**) the kettle on the floor (**cir:location**) close to Papa's feet (**cir:location**). Papa (**actor**) picked (**material effective**) it (**goal**) up (**cir:location**). You knew your grandfather was coming to Nsukka (**Verbiage**) did you (**receiver**) not” he (**sayer**) asked(**verbiage**)in igbo (**cir:manner**). Did you pick up the phone and inform me of this (**verbiage**). “You knew you would be sleeping in the same house as a heathen?”(**verbiage**). “So you saw the sin clearly and you walked right into it” (**verbiage**). I (**behavior**) nodded “yes papa (**behavior**). “Kambili, you are precious (**verbiage**). His voice (**behavior**) quavered (**behavior**) now like someone speaking at a funeral (**cir:manner**) choked with emotion (**manner**). “You should strive for perfection. You (**receiver**) should not see sin and walk right into” (**verbiage**). He (**actor**) lowered (**material**) the kettle (**goal**) into the tub (**location**)/titled (**material**) towards my feet (**location**). He (**actor**) poured (**material effective**) the hot water(**goal**) on my feet (**location**, slowly (**manner**). He (**actor**) was crying (**material ineffective**) now (**cir:time**) tears streaming down his face (**cir:location**) I (**senser**) saw (**mental**) the moist stream before I saw the water (**phenomenon**). I (**senser**) watched (**mental**) the water leave the kettle; flowing almost in slow motion in an arc (**manner**) to my feet (**location**). The pain of contact (**carrier**) was (**relation**) so pure so scalding (**attribute**). I (**senser**) felt (**mental**) nothing for a second (**phenomenon**). And then (**cir:time**) I (**behave**) screamed (**behavior**). That is what you do to yourself when you walk into sin. You burn your feet” (**verbiage**) he (**sayer**) said (**verbal**)

