

## Conversational Implicature in Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*

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### Abstract

In speech situations, the message a speaker wishes to convey is not always hinged on only the linguistic items that make up his or her utterance. Hence, the speaker's intent sometimes differs from the linguistic items that make up his/ her utterance and this, if not sorted out, hinders effective communication. This intended meaning is referred to as implicature. With the application of the cooperative principle proposed by H.P Grice, this paper analyses the implicature in the response to questions in the drama texts, *The Lion and the Jewel* by Wole Soyinka. The purposive sampling method of research was used. The findings of the study reveal that the speakers flout/violate the maxims of the cooperative principle and as such implicature is generated. The playwright's themes, characterization and style are projected via the implicature. This shows that there are intended meanings in utterances which delay communication process and they can only be worked out using Grice's theory of conversational implicature.

### Introduction

One expresses one's feelings or communicates one's ideas by uttering them in sentences. However, people need to follow things beyond words in the process of communication. They need to know how to say something as well as when, where and to whom to say it. Therefore, communication is much more than putting some words in a linear order to form a set of items. The foregoing explains that the meaning of a sentence is not always determined by the grammatical structure of the sentence but by a lot more than the meaning of sentences or words. By his or her sentence, a speaker may mean more than what he or she actually says. This can produce an implied meaning. Suffice it to say then that the effectiveness of a communication process is hinged on interpreting not just what speakers say but what they intend to mean. Therefore, to achieve a good and effective communication, one looks beyond the linguistic items that make up an utterance. This is why this paper tends to explore those meanings that are outside the co-text of Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* via the study of implicature, the speaker intended meaning.

The language in daily conversation which is so real and natural is also found in drama or play. Drama, as literary work, is a portrait of real life. So the dialogue, the imitation of speech, also reflects real form of communication. In *The Lion and the Jewel*, the characters in their dialogues, violate the cooperative principles thereby generating implicature.

### Statement of the Problem

The normal expectation in conversational discourse is that participants should be co-operative. This makes for easy interpretation of meanings that are not stated in the linguistic items used by a certain speaker. Literary writers have, in their works, made their characters involve in conversations, where additional uncommunicated meanings are intended by the speakers.

Inability to understand these hidden meanings in conversations impedes or delays communication process.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The objective of this study is:

- to provide interpretation of Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* based on the violation of Grice's Cooperative Principles, and
- to show that the flouting of the conversational maxims generated the required conversational implicatures in the texts.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

Primarily, the superordinate maxims of the cooperative principle, proposed by Grice, guides the analysis while content analysis approach of the qualitative research method indicates observances and/or violations of the cooperative principles and thereby project the conversational implicature derivable. The researcher used purposive sampling technique to identify the response to questions in the two texts under study.

### **Conversational Implicature**

According to Grice, conversational implicature arises when the producer of an utterance violates one of his four maxims. He observed that conversational implicatures are typically connected to what is said rather than the way it is said so that it is not possible to find another way of saying the same thing which simply lacks the implicature in question (39). Violating a maxim is a covert non-observance of a maxim. In violating a maxim, the speaker will be liable to mislead.

According to Levinson, there are two types of conversational implicatures derived from an assumption that the speaker is observing the maxims and those derived on the basis of the speaker flouting a maxim. Hence, the two types are called particularized conversational implicatures and generalized conversational implicatures. Particularized conversational implicatures are analyzed with references to special background knowledge. Yule states that most of the inferences are assumed in very specific context in which conversation takes place (42). The analysis of conveyed meaning requires such inferences that give rise to particularized conversational implicatures. Some responses may seemingly deviate from the maxim of relevance but can be inferred to be relevant considering the mutual background knowledge.

### **Grice's Theory of Conversational Implicature**

Herbert Paul Grice's theory of conversational implicature. The theory of conversational implicature, stemming from interpersonal rhetoric, is hinged on what he referred to as the cooperative principle. He argues that our talk exchanges do not just consist of a succession of disconnected remarks rather they are cooperative efforts in which participants follow particular purpose and mutually accepted direction. In other words, participants in a conversational exchange are expected to observe a general principle so as to maintain a rational, suitable or effective exchange of information.

A great range of implicature depends on the assumption that interlocutors will in general proceed in the manner that these principles prescribed. When a participant in a conversation then fails to observe a maxim of the cooperative principle, he/she generates conversational implicature. Since it is expected that participants in a talk exchange are being cooperative, it follows that for a conversational implicature to be worked out, one has to first analyse the observance of these

maxims. This accounts for the relevance of the cooperative principle in the analysis of conversational implicature.

It is believed that conversation is a cooperative behaviour and therefore proceeds by rules of cooperative conduct. Grice called this the cooperative principle. This principle involves “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 26). Grice considers that a good conversation must fulfill the conversational goal. He defines four basic maxims of conversation as guidelines of the effective co-operative use of language. They are maxim of quantity, quality, relevance and manner. Grice states, ‘The maxims are in fact not arbitrary conventions, but rather describe rational means for conducting exchange’ (103).

### **An Overview of *The Lion and the Jewel***

Wole Soyinka’s *The Lion and the Jewel* comically explores tradition versus modernity through the major male characters. The Lion, Baroka, uses the wisdom of old to secure himself, Sidi, the Jewel, as a wife. This is what Lakunle, the school teacher, with his little learning and a touch of civilization finds difficult to accomplish. Lakunle, a village school teacher loves Sidi, a beautiful and shrewd village girl and wants to marry her. However, he refuses to pay her bride price because he considers it an archaic tradition. Sidi does not love Lakunle. She finds him and his ideas about making her a modern, western bride obnoxious. Nonetheless, she plans to marry him if he can pay the bride price according to the village tradition. This way, culture and tradition prevail over civilization and modernity.

The drama ends with a marriage dance where the gods of fertility are invoked as Sidi marries Baroka, the village Bale.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis covers data presentation and analysis. Here, the data presentation contains quotations from the text under study. These quotations are the ones containing questionings/answering expressions and the description of the context situations.

### **Implicatures Generated by Violating the Maxim of Quantity**

#### **Sample Data 1:**

SIDI: (*seeing that Baroka seems to be in a better mood, she becomes somewhat bolder. moves forwards-saucily.*) Is this also a day off for Baroka's wives.

BAROKA: (*looks up sharply, relaxes and speaks with a casual voice*)  
No, the madness has not grapple them.

In the earlier dialogue, Baroka tries to explain why his house seems empty at the time of Sidi's visit. He recalls that his servants were prevailed upon to form the Palace Workers' Union, and so have a day off. In this conversation Sidi then inquires if Baroka's wives have a day off too on the same day. In Baroka's response, there is the evidence of flouting of the maxim of quantity. Instead of him to say No as that is the truth of the case, he gives additional information.

This simply implicates that Baroka still has firm grip on his wives.

**Sample Data 2:**

SIDI: (with amazement) Is not Baroka's image in the book at all?

SECOND GIRL: (contemptuous) Oh Yes, it is. But it would have been much better for the Bale if the stranger had omitted him altogether. His image is in a little corner somewhere in the book and even that corner he shares with one of the village latrines.

The three village girls that come to tell Sidi of her image in the stranger's book are busy commenting on Sidi's picture. The Third Girl informs Sidi that the Bale glues his eyes on Sidi's image while the First Girl says that the Bale is jealous. With the above information, Sidi wonders if Bale's image did not appear at all in the strangers book. She then asks the girls the question in the dialogue above. The Second Girl responds to the question but she flouts the maxim of quantity by adding something else to the answer she is meant to give. She would have stopped at 'Oh yes, it is' as that answers the question they are asked. She gives more information which generates an implicature.

The implied meaning in this case is that the girl is happy that the Bale is relegated to the background in the book brought by the stranger and they esteem their fellow village girl more than Baroka, the Bale.

**Sample Data 3:**

SIDI: The book? Did you see the book? Had he the precious book that would bestow upon me beauty beyond the dreams of a goddess? For he said the book which will announce this beauty to the world. Have you seen it?

THIRD GIRL: Yes, Yes he did. But the Bale is still feasting his eyes on the images. Oh, Sidi he was right. You are beautiful. On the cover of the page is an image of you from here (touches the top of her head) to here (her stomach) and in the middle leaves from the beginning of one leaf right across to the end of another.

Three village girls come to tell Sidi about her in the book brought by the stranger. In this conversation, Sidi inquires of the girls if they have seen the book and if the stranger actually brought the book with him. The third girl's response flouts the maxim of quantity. She provides more information than is required.

This implicates that the Bale is picking interest in Sidi whose picture appears on the stranger's book.

**Conversational Implicature Generated by Flouting/Violating the Maxim of Quality**

**Sample Data 4:**

BAROKA: You are hazy with denial. For how indeed could Sadiku, since I told her nothing of my mind, but my daughter, did she not, perhaps...in ventsome tale? For I know Sadiku loves to be All-knowing.

SIDI: She said no more, except the Bale Begged presence.

Baroka sensed from Sidi's earlier speech that she is aware of the 'secret'- his assumed impotency. He then tries here to find out if Sadiku tells her anything about that. Sidi's response here violates the maxim of quality veiling the truth. She is aware of the 'secret' but refuses to say it.

This implies that Sidi has a plan she wishes to execute.

### **Implicature Generated by Flouting the Maxim of Manner**

#### **Sample Data 5:**

BAROKA: She says... that I am old, that I am much too old? Did a slight unripened girl say this of me?

SADIKU: My lord, I heard the incredible words with my ears and I thought the world was mad.

In this conversation, Baroka asks his first wife, Sadiku what Sidi says about his proposal. He does not find the answer he gets palatable. He then asks Sidi again to be sure he hears her correctly. Sadiku's response in this dialogue flouts the maxim of manner. She does not specifically say what Sidi says.

The implication of this response is that no one speaks evil of the Bale

#### **Sample Data 6:**

SADIKU: (*gleefully*) Well, will you be Baroka's own Jewel? Will you be his sweetest princess, soothing him on wet nights? What answer shall I give my lord?

SIDI: (ways his finger playfully at the woman) Ha ha Sadiku of the Lion's wives. You'll make no prey of Sidi with your wooing tongue. Not this Sidi whose fame has spread to Lagos and beyond the seas.

Sadiku tries to woo Sidi for her husband, Baroka. She inquires of the answer she will give to her Lord as regards Sidi's acceptance of his (Bale's) proposal. Sidi's response flouts the maxim of manner. She does not give the answer directly and this makes Sadiku to keep persuading her to say yes to the proposal.

The conversational implicature here is that Sidi does not want to marry the Bale.

### **Conclusion**

This study analyses the implicature in the question/answer dialogues in Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* using Grice's Cooperative Principle. The characters in the plays try to convey their implied meaning by flouting/violating the maxims of the Cooperative Principle. The results show that both African and non African writers employ pragmatic approach in their presentation of characters talk exchanges. The readers are left to work out the implied meanings in the utterances of different characters. These implied meanings can only be effectively worked out using Grice's Cooperative Principle.

The characters in the text violate the maxims for different reasons. This paper illustrates some examples selected from the texts to prove that the cooperative principle plays an indispensable role in the analysis of conversations. There is no difficulty in understanding the implicature through Grice's Cooperative Principle. According to the Cooperative Principle and the violation

of the maxims, this paper shows the characters' implied intention and helps the readers to better understand the themes, the plot and characterization in the two texts under study.

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