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Research Article

Discourse as Ideology: A Feminist Study of Selected Conversation from Andrew Kure's *Harvest of Woes*

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Abstract

This study examines discourse from an ideological perspective, via an analysis of family conversational exchange which is typically issues-laden. John J. Gumperz, cited in Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen and Heidi E. Hamilton (2001, p. 218) submit that "to interact is to engage in an ongoing process of negotiation, both to infer what others intend to convey and to monitor how one's own contributions are received. In other words, what is at issue is shared or non-shared interpretations rather than denotational meaning." To convey message, participants of discourse use language in specific forms (discourse strategies) as a demonstration of both linguistic and communicative competence. The study hinges on three theoretical frameworks: Gender Mainstreaming Theory, Critical Social Theory and Standpoint Theory), Gender Mainstreaming Theory captures the fundamentals for effective feminist struggles, as evident in personality traits of articulate feminsts. The Critical Social Theory holds the view that gender discrimination is the product of social structures, but can be condemned and abolished, regardless of its dimensions or domains. Standpoint Theory is germane to this study because it elucidates the implications of social variales in the literature of feminism. This study concludes that feminism is one of the ideological perspectives of discourse, and its thrust is to explore discourse in the emancipation of the female folk from suffocating culture-driven gender discrimination through the instrumentality of language: skillful use of speech acts that convey discrete disourse strategies. The discourse strategies used in the conversation include: recall, clarification, justification, imposition, comparison and reiteration.

Keywords: discourse, feminism, Gender Mainstreaming Theory, Critical Social Theory, Standpoint Theory, *Harvest of Woes.*

1. Introduction

Feminist studies are immersed in a common subject: female subjugation across domains of society. This study is poised to reveal not just the discourse features of text, but also to present an overview of feminism which is a front-burner topic in the linguistic study of literary and non-literary discourses. In the family conversation that constitutes the corpora of this study, language use relates with the intriguing components of the notion's "feminist" and "feminism"; to understand the intriguing conceptualization of these notions, the categorization and focus of feminists are instructive. Feminists are categorized discretely as a reflection of their focus and ideological stance. Thus, feminism is an articulate and purposeful struggle against repressive tendencies within or outside a family setting. The different categories of feminist struggles that abound in the literature have "the struggle for gender equality" as core theme. No doubt, gender discrimination can be unleashed from varied domains, including family setting. Considering the dynamics of social structures (practices), systems and values, a discourse analysis of feminist themes in conversations is a productive way of explaining the link between language and the socially realistic phenomena that language picks from the universe of discourse. Across genres, language use is explained in terms of a functional perspective as in pragmatics and discourse analysis. In this study, the concept of feminism is investigated in its interlocking facets; meaning, dimensions, implications, among other variables which conceptualize discourse as an ideological construct.

2. *Harvest of Woes*

Harvest of Woes is an unpublished manuscript of Andrew Kure's novel. It narrates Tamuna's ordeal. Tamuna struggles for survival in the city of Lagos, and becomes a successful man. However, he is jailed for trading in prohibited drugs. After coming out of jail, a new "chapter" begins in his life. His wife, Adu, works with a construction company. The couple often quarrels over one issue or the other. When the conflict between Tamuna and his wife worsened, an extended family meeting was conveyed. In the meeting, Tamuna's father and his son's wife clash over issues that have feminist underpinnings.

3. Feminism

Feminism is often defined based on women's individualistic experiences. In this sense, the definition of the term changes over time. Sarah Delaney McDougall (2012) cites Chatman Nahal who defines feminism as "a mode of existence in which the woman is free of the dependence syndrome. There is a dependene syndrome: whether it is the husband or the father or the community or whether it is religious group, ethnic group. When women free themselves of the dependence syndrome and lead a normal life, my idea of feminism materializes." Commenting further on feminism, Sarah Delaney McDougall (ibid.) submits that "the term 'feminism' has been derived from the Latin word 'femina', meaning woman and was first used with regard to the issues of equality and women's Rights Movement. The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'feminism' as a state of being feminine or womanly. The Webster's Dictionary defines the term 'feminism' as the principle that women should have political rights equal to those of men. Tori Mori says that the words 'feminist' or 'feminism' are political labels indicating support for the aims of the new Woman's Movement which emerged in the late 1960s[1]." Fundamentally, feminism is about politically or socially motivated ideological movements with common objectives; achieving gender equality in all spheres of society, in terms of multifaceted benefits. Javeed Ahmad Raina (2017) corroborates this claim. McDougall (ibid.) examines feminism within the concept of:

using voice;

- opportunities (in feminist activities);

- valuing self and other women;

 - believing in oneself;

- feeling comfortable as a woman;

- sense of fullness and completeness;

- women with diverse perspectives;

- lived experiences; and

- investing into the future of women.

4. "Discourse" and "Discourse Analysis"

Discourse is human interactions in the forms of spoken or written communication. Brown and Yule (1983, p. 1), opine that discourse is "language in use." The concepts of "text" and "discourse analysis" accentuate the claim by linguists, that language use is not arbitrary (cf. Fowler (1981) and Adegbija (1999)). According to Ruth Wodak and Martin Resigl, cited in Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen and Heidi E. Hamilton (ibid. p. 385) note that "we obviously need to think about what our 'text' is about, since clearly what a person is talking about has a bearing on what is said and how it is said. We also need to think about who said it, or who wrote it or signed it, who is thought, in its particular socio-cultural context, to be responsible for what it says, who the intended audience was and who the actual hearers or readers were, because who the participants in a situation are and how their roles are defined clearly influence what gets said and how. We need to think about what motivated the text, about how it fits into the set of things people in its context conventionally do with discourse, and about what its medium (or justify a certain social status quo (and 'racialized', 'nationalized' and 'ethnicized' identities to it). Third, they are instrumental in transforming the status quo (and 'racializing concepts', nationalities, ethnicities related to it). Fourth, discursive practices may have an effect on the dismantling or even destruction of the status quo (and of racist, nationalist, ethniticist concepts related to it). According to these general aims one can distinguish between constructive, perpetuating, transformational, and destructive social macrofunctions of discourse." Discourse analysis is the analysis of the organizational structure of interactions /talks/communication particularly through the instrumentality of linguistic resources.

Discourse is often understood within social structures. Societal value systems reflect the justification of staus-quo (discursive practices) which contradict the beliefs of feminists. Ruth Wodak and Martin Resigl, cited in Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen and Heidi E. Hamilton (ibid., p. 385) submit that "discursive practices are socially constitutive in a number of ways: first, they play a decisive role in the genesis and production of certain social conditions. This means that discourses may serve to construct collective subjects like 'races', 'nations', 'ethnicities', etc. Second, they might perpetrate, reproduce, or justify a certain social status quo (and 'racialized', 'nationalized' and 'ethnicized'

identities to it). Third, they are instrumental in transforming the status quo (and 'racializing concepts', nationalities, ethnicities related to it). Fourth, discursive practices may have an effect on the dismantling or even destruction of the status quo (and of racist, nationalist, ethniticist concepts related to it). According to these general aims one can distinguish between constructive, perpetuating, transformational, and destructive social macrofunctions of discourse."

5. Theoretical Frameworks

Three theoretical frameworks are use in this study to capture the two basic purviews of the study: discourse analysis and feminism.

5.1 Critical Social Theory

Peter Okpeh (2017) gives elaborate perspectives on the Critical Social Theory:

Rooted in Marxist in Marxist ideology and the literary traditions of literary criticism, Critical Social Theory, according to Leonard (1990), attempts to critique historically based social and political institutions that oppress people, while at the same time having a situated practical intent to decrease such oppressions. The theory, according to Powers and River (1980), emerged from the Marxist studies of social research established in Frankfurt School. Although the theory, in Held's (1980) opinion is most associated with Jurgen Habermas, its primary authors are Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Lowenthel and Pollock. Multi-disciplinary in contents, the theory has as one of its chief goals, the advancement of the emancipatory role of knowledge. Leonard (2003) opines that when the theory is applied to classroom discourse, it will help to broaden students' horizon of possibility and expand their sense of a larger humanity, consequently liberating them from the confines of their common sense. Adorno (1979) remarks that criticalness of the theory hinges on its commitment to "expose the dialectal tensions in modernity such as between authoritarianism and enlightenment. Powers and Rivers (1980) note that Critical Social Theory describes how people, groups exist in relation to the historically based dominant ideologies that structure their experience. This, perhaps, is why the theory advocates the bringing about of self-liberating practices among people, using awareness of oppressive conditions, brought to light through research. Horkheimer, one of the founding fathers of the theory notes, concerning its critical nature, that it seeks to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them. One of the ways by which the theory hopes to facilitate this liberation is by challenging the representation that encourages opressive ideologies, and so make people the victims of exploitation. The influence of Critical Social Theory on CDA is seen in the former's commitment to the liberation of people from ideological bondage, imposed on them by society, by presenting them with a more objective and realistic interpretation of social realities which is the goal of CDA.

5.2 Gender Mainstreaming Theory

Gender mainstream fosters feminist struggles against male-dominance. Sarah Delaney McDougall's (ibid. pp. 153 and 157) reports on the theory:

> … gender mainstreaming can have a greater impact on the generation of more gender-equal society to the extent that it is capable of incorporating feminist perspectives in the political debates … Gender mainstreaming implies shift towards a broader concept of gender equality, that explicitly targets patriarchy by tackling the multiple interconnected causes that create an unequal relation between the sexes in the areas of family, work, politics, sexuality, culture and male violence … It rquires a focus on gender and not nly on women, which implies that changes in men's lifestyles are also necessary … Reference on gender issues and considerations on how to limit the differential impact of prvisions on women and men should be found in all policy areas. There must be evidence that the mainstream political agenda has been reoriented by rethinking and rearticulating policy ends and means from a gender perspective and prioritizing gender over competing objectives...

5.3 Standpoint Theory

Feminists, from classical to contemporary era frown against the exclusion of women from key positions in society. A more gender-encompassing theory, Standpoint Theory basically advocates the inclusion of sexes in spheres of nationhood. According to Tracey Owens 2000, p. 32), "in general, Standpoint Theory … advocate the inclusion of all people and perspectives rather than reifying the status-quo or inverting the correct hegemonic order. Further, it focuses on how the circumstances and culture of one's life influence her or is perspectives, values, beliefs." Scholars acknowledge the roles of social variables (sex, gender, ethnicity, etc.) on the perspectives that people have and how they function in social structures. For example, Wood (1994, p. 51) submits that "Standpoint theory focuses on how gender, race, class and other social categories influence the circumstances of one's lives, especially the social positions they have and the kinds of experiences fostered within those social positions[2]."

6. Presentation and Analysis of Data

This section of the study presents and analyzes the data.

6.1 Presentation of Data

Tamuna's Father: My wife was insisting that three children are enough for the family. Who married her into the house? It was me, and I wanted seven children. Even the three children she had at that time, were females. Who will farm for us? Who will defend our clan? Who will inherit the throne? I am not surprised that my son is going through all these troubles. He married a *bookuru* against our tradition: a well educated wife. He abandoned our beautiful village virgins. His wife is even challenge us in this meeting. I know she is a Christian. Our ancestors did not go to church. We have the god of our land and the priests are there. Woman, my son, Tamuna, is not from a Christian home. You should practice your husband's religion.

Tamuna's wife: Being a woman is not about being inferior. I have a father. He does not share your perspectives. He believes his own daughters can marry the men they love. That was why I was released for your son in marriage. My father is a literate civil servant. My mother is an illiterate trader. What a peaceful home of ours!

6.2 Analysis of Data

Tamuna's father does not think his son's wife has the right to respond to his comments. One speaker should not dominate another in a conversation. Doing so is a violation of the Cooperative Principle (cf. Grice 1975) The Cooperative Principle of conversation is a rational conversational behaviour expected of participants of discourse. There should be turn-taking. Considering the psychological context of the discourse (tense situation), preventing one's interlocutor from responding to accusations, is unfair. Accusations against Tamuna's wife, are the reasons for the family meeting, yet she is not expected or allowed to defend herself through clarification. Men believe that women should be quiet in a gathering or meeting. Such an inhuman treatment is informed by socio-cultural values of society (anti-female sentiments). Sarah Delaney McDougall (ibid. 3373) submits that "the fundamental belief behind feminist theory is that from the beginning of human civilization, women have been given a secondary status by masculine-dominated social discourse and western philosophical tradition. The history of every civilization shows that women have always been subordinated to apposition where they have no means to reclaim their unique identity unless and until they re-visit the history, explore it and finally re-establish it through their own experiences and insights. In order to explore their own unique identity, women have to defend themselves against the male-informed ideas and beliefs that are passed down from generation to generation. These beliefs have produced dominant systems by creating female subjects who are conditioned to accept the values of the system. The physical universe is also dishonoured and exploited by men through an analogous exploitation that women are subjected to, reducing both to the docile entities and selfless artifacts. So, in all these three areas – historical traces, philosophical or epistemic tradition or ecological inhalation, men have gained immense control to maneuver the dominance over women as well as nature. To put it more simply, the historical insignificance of women force them to rely and derive existence in relation to men. The epistemic and philosophical system has largely regarded women as non-entity, secon mistake, non-existent creature or a sexual object that oscillates between libido and envy. The third exploitation corresponds to natures exploitation, because women have always been compared to nature that are serene, cool, and ir-resistive – loving, caring, clay, earth, moon and reproduction and nurturing. The feminist thinkers call these notions into question by showing a protest an resistance to masculine coded codes of conduct … Therefore, feminist literary theory is the extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical framework to analyze causes behind women's inferior status and to explore the literary tradition of women …"

Tamuna's father holds the view that it is compulsory for Tamuna's wife to be converted from Christian religion to her husband's religion (paganism) in the name of marriage. In the constitutions of modern nations, there are fundamental human rights which include freedom of religion. If Tamuna's wife willingly abandons her own religion and becomes an adherent of her husband's religion, it will not be viewed as imposition or a demonstration of male-dominance. In agitating for gender equality, feminists do not try to claim that females are superior to males in issues of society, such as sharing of opportunities and state resources. The focus of the feminist ideology is that same regard shoud be given to men and women in society, as opposed to age-long societal traditions which give preferences to men, despite their individual shortcomings. See Devajit Mohajan and Haradan Kumar Mhajan (2022) for critical perspectives on oppressive tendencies and agitations by women. According to Debra Jackson (1997) cited in Sarah Delaney McDougall (ibid. p. 7), "feminism was born as a response to oppression."

Cultures of the world do not give women the opportunity to enjoy dignity of "self". Thus, feminists agitate to reposition "self and identity"; texts, discourses or conversations reveal this claim. Sanjit Chakraborty (2017, p. 32) avers that "… the central concern of feminism is the unequal power hierarchy which governs our society due to the gender divisions. And this hierarchy in ower relations has gven rise to a paradoxical phenomenon in the world of feminism …" Tamuna's father holds misleading conservative ideas, despite his education. It is wrong for him to think that life is all about who will farm or defend a clan. Unfortunately, great importance is given to these erroneous perspectives in African setting, to the detriment of females. Females are considered less relevant (if relevant at all) in a family. Child-bearing, child-nurturing and good home management transcend the issues being emphasized by Tamuna's father. See Peters et al. (2008) for perspectives on power and oppression as feminist themes. It is commonly believed that female children take good care of their aged parents. If this is true, Tamuna's father should be asking the question: Who will take care of my

son in his old age? Sanjit Chakraborty (ibid. p. 33) posits that "feminits dislodge the view that men's qualities are the major and most important human attributes. According to Sanjit Chakraborty (ibid. p. 33), "… men are considered to possess the traits of reason, intellect, bravery, courageousness, dominance, and so on. These traits essentially belong to the human class. On the contrary, women qualities include being kind, emotional, sympathetic, caring, gentle and submissive. Women possessing these traits are regarded as being ideal in our traditional societal structure. But these trademark qualities which are leveled for the whole of woman class are not regarded as "ideal qualities". In the mainstream domain of human culture, feminine qualities for which a woman becomes a genuine woman are not thought as worthy enough to stand as par with masculine qualities …"

Tamuna's wife made it clear to her father-in-law that she was born into a family void of discrimination because of the non-conservative views of her parents. She deploys language for the liberation of "self". Harro (2000, p. 463) opines that "liberation means challenging systemic assumptions, rules or roles that are flawed."

By comparing her own father with Tamuna's father, Tamuna's wife unleashed a thought-provoking condemnation on the personality traits of her addressee (Tamuna's father). Her message is clear: discrimination is not always informed by societal practices. Rather, it is a product of individual's attitudes towards social practices. Deeply engrossed in conservative beliefs, Tamuna's father does not even think females should be given quality education. In some cultures, females are either denied education or prevented from having quality education. In such cultures, quality female education is viewed as ideal for males, whereas when females are given quality education, it is viewed as a threat to a family/home/marriage. This explains why females are denied high positions in governments even when they are more qualified than their male counterparts for such positions. Like Tamuna's father, some traditions or men view women as mere sexual objects. Men often believe their wives should give birth to as many children as they want, regardless of the health challenges of such wives. Unfortunately, most women comply. But if a wife wants more children contrary to her husband's wish, the reverse is the case. Gender discrimination in a family is worsened by beliefs in societal values and traditions. This view corroborates Sarah Delaney McDougall (ibid. p. 18) who notes that conservative beliefs are "those that value traditional values and beliefs that men should remain dominant in society."Like Adu, Tamuna's wife, women who have acquired certain level of feminist consciousness (experienced feminists) repel gender discrimination. According to Homes and colleagues (cited in Sarah Delaney McDougall (ibid.), experienced feminists are "women who discovered feminism between the late 1960s and early 1980s. Emerging feminists were defined as women who had begun to identify as feminists within their last two years of their doctoral program at the time of the research study".

The culture that a home or marriage has not achieved its purpose in childbearing unless it results in the birth of a male child is wong. Tamuna's father wanted more children because his wife had no male child. He was fortunate that Tamuna was eventually born. The desperate desire for a male child has resulted in polygamous marriages. In saying, "My wife was insisting that three children are enough for the family", the speaker deploys "recall" as a discourse strategy. The questions asked by Tamuna's father (Who married her into the house? Who will farm for us? Who will defend our clan? Who will inherit the throne?) are rhetorical (discourse strategy).

The encoder of "I am not surprised that my son is going through all these troubles", used a "cause-effect phenomenon" as a discourse strategy for the purpose of blaming the sufferer of Adu's actions. The sentences that make predictions about "marrying a Christian" and "abandoning traditions and village virgins" capture the use of "imposition" as a discourse strategy. In the conversations, there are instances where the participants used the same discourse strategies (clarification, justification) for same purpose: defending "self". The encoder of "My father … He believes his own daughters can marry the men they love. That was why I was released for your son in marriage. My father is a literate civil servant. My mother is an illiterate trader. What a peaceful home …" deploys comparison as a potent discourse strategy to condemn the addressee.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigates the perspective that discourse is essentially the construction of ideologies from the dynamics of social structures. In the analysis of data, discrete discourse strategies are deployed to convey feminist themes and tendencies, thus revealing feminism as one of the ideologies that discourse addresses. The discourse strategies (a total of eight) and their functions in the conversation are presented in table 1 below:

Serial Number	Discourse Strategy	Function
1.	Clarification	- for making clarification - for persuading
2.	Recall	- for subjugation
3.	Justification	- for defending self
4.	Cause-effect Phenomenon	- for blaming
5.	Comparison	- for condemning

6.	Rhetorical Question	- for clarification
		- for defending self
7.	Reiteration	- for making emphasis
8.	Imposition	- for subjugating

Table 1: Discourse Strategies in the Conversation

In the conversation, Tamuna's wife' disposition is in tanem with the common views about experienced feminists. She is articulate, courageous and vocal. These attributes do not imply that she is an irresponsible and disrespectful wife. Sarah Delaney McDougall (ibid. p. 13) submits that "… general evaluations of feminists included being perceived as more logical, realistic, intelligent, caring, flexible, comforting, good, and fascinating. Behaviorally, feminist was perceived as more aggressive, extroverted, involved in activism work, more likely to be working outside the home, more opinionated, forceful, ambitious, independent, career-oriented, strong, non-comforting, assertive, and energetic." As articulate human rights activists, feminists are aware and mindful of status-quo in society, and therefore explore their knowledge for a result-oriented struggle against male domination. The attitudes of women towards social structures influence the tenacity of their feminist activities. This study reveals feminist discourse and discourse in general, as having external relevance since thy pick social structures that capture dicrete subjects. The analysis of data reveals that indeed, discourse is situated, and this relates with the topic that is engaged. For example, in a domestic context (as in a family meeting) where issues are being resolved (as in Tamuna and his wife's conflict), feminism-related matters are not unthinkable. In this regard, discourse is essentially about reference-making on discrete themes ncluding gender inequality. Thomas (1984, p. 74) rightly notes that discourse analysis is "that aspect of linguistics which is concerned with the study of socially situated speech … united by an interest in extended sequences of speech and a sensitivity to social context." Discourse features of a conversational exchange reveal functional perspectives of language. The participants of a conversational exchange use language to perfrm discrete speech acts e.g. to condemn, to reject, to ascribe, to inform, to clarify and to describe issues. See Bach and Harnish's (1979) for speech act categories and their meanings. The different aspects of feminism in the literature, accentuate the cross-disciplinary nature of discourse. The literature holds the view that discourse is cross-disciplinary. This is expected because discourse is indeed, ideological Brown and Yule (ibid.) posit that "the term, 'discourse analysis', has come to be used with a wide range of meanings, which cover a wide range of activities. It is used to describe activities at the intersection of disciplines as diverse as sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, philosophical linguistics and computational linguistics. Scholars working centrally in these different disciplines tend to concentrate on different aspects of discourse. Sociolinguists are particularly concerned with the structure of social interaction manifested in conversation and their descriptions emphasize features of social context which are particularly amenable to socio-logical classification. They are concerned with generalizing across 'real' instances of language in use, and typically work with transcribed spoken data. Psycholinguists are particularly concerned with issues related to language comprehension. They typically employ a tight methodology derived from experimental psychology, which investigates problems of comprehension in short constructed texts or sequences of written sentences. Philosophical linguists, and formal linguists, are particularly concerned with semantic relations between constructed pairs of sentences and with their syntactic realizations. They are concerned, too, with relationships between sentences and the world in terms of whether or not sentences are used to make statements which can be assigned truth-values." Research domains evolve to cope with changing societal phenomena. The cross-disciplinary feature of discourse analysis is the product of its evolving nature[3]. This study defines feminism from actual language use in relation to what the literature views as basic attributes of a feminist, thereby providing critical perspectives on the term "feminism".

Notes

[1] In addition, Sarah Delaney McDougall (ibid. p. iii) reports that definitions of feminism can be categorized thus: (1) Working Towards Justice, (2) Valuing Self and Other Women, (3) Women with Diverse Perspectives, (4) Relevancy in Personal Lives, (5) Future Orientation, and (6) Changing Understandings of Feminism."

[2] According to Allen, Brena J. Mark P. Orbe and Margarita, Refugia Olivas. (1999), "Feminist standpoint theory "seeks to expose oth acts of oppression and acts of resistance by dienfranchased persons to describe and discuss their experiences with hope that their knowledge will reveal otherwise unexposed aspects of social order."

[3] Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen and Heidi E. Hamilton (ibid., p. 1) submit that "discourse analysis is a rapidly growing and evolving field. Current research in this field now flows from numerous academic disciplines that are very different from one another. Included, of course, are the disciplines in which models for understanding and methods for analyzing discourse first developed, such as linguistics, anthropology, and philosophy. But also included are disciplines that have applied – and thus often extended – such models and methods to problems within their own academic domains, such as communication, cognitive psychology, social psychology, and artificial intelligence." Given the evolving and cross-disciplinary nature of discourse, approaches to discourse analysis are products of its cross-disciplinary and evolving nature.

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