

Conversational Competence as a Criterion for Marital Peace and Harmony: A Speech Act Analysis of Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*

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Abstract

Marriage is a bonding activity in continuous sustenance between a conventional man and a woman (or women) and vice versa. A couple in a marriage contract ought to have common interest and respect for each other. And they ought to converse with each other on the atmosphere of reciprocal reverence. A couple who exist, however, solely for their own selfish gratification is not experiencing a full and sated life together. And soon enough, such couples are bound to break apart. Using the play, *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* by Ola Rotimi, this paper beams a panoramic view on how the knowledge and compliance to Grice's "Conversational Maxims" can aid in the fostering of marriages in Nigeria. Showcasing the conversations of Major Rahman Taslin Lejoka Brown and his wives in the aforementioned play with Paul Grice's conversational maxims as yardstick, this paper reveals how Brown's conversations with his wives constantly resulted to conversational implicature, thus serving as a blue-print on how couples should not converse in marriages so as to avoid conflict and/or divorce as seen in the play.

1. Introduction

No single factor does more to give a marriage joy or to keep it both a venture, virtue and an adventure in mutual fulfilment than a shared commitment to being truthful and polite in conversations about issues. This may well mark the hub of human interaction. The activities of human interaction are based on a language behaviour called communication. Communication is a delicate social interaction and equally, especially in marriages, a negotiation that follows, particularly, some norms which makes it both desirable to the parties involved, and also, felicitous to the language of such communication in use. Nonetheless, each time a marriage partner opens up a conversation with the other partner, he or she imposes on the other his or her linguistic identity and purpose, otherwise known as linguistic face. And every party to a conversation, perhaps, would like to adopt mitigating or facing strategies to maintain a polite balance or discover a rude or an impolite utterance from the conversation involved (Jackson & Peter, 2011). The assumption in every marriage communication, therefore, becomes that partners intend to mean things which the spouses accept and or understand through the process of trying to work out the intended meaning of what have been said. But, since this becomes partially or, at times, totally impossible, the reason becomes that the norms guiding conversational constructions generally, have been violated thus, resulting to the strenuous inferring or presuming of the metaphorical meaning of the speaker or even a failure to do so by the hearer, otherwise known as implicature.

Furthermore, when couples communicate, they constantly encounter utterances that are confusing, especially when such utterances are standing alone out of context. When such utterances are put into context, however, the couple can interpret the words and phrases in a way that make them understand the intentional meaning of their spouses' utterances. The reason is that, speakers and hearers, according to the American philosopher- linguist Paul Grice, operate under the cooperative principle, which means that both speaker and hearer converse with good intentions. In other words, the speaker utters words and phrases in order to deliver a message to the hearer, who interprets a meaning with the knowledge that there is a message behind the utterance. Conflict, however, results when the reverse becomes the case. Therefore, couples, especially the young ones, keep the scent of intimacy in the family diffused to a long-lasting degree or to older age by adhering to the maxims governing conversation, even though, as commonly obtainable, they may not be sentient of the existence of such maxims. It is the failure in adhering to these maxims, as often found in marriages, which leads to conversation implicatures.

In the context of this study therefore, we see that most of the conversations done by Lejoka Brown and his second wife, Sikira, resulted to conversational implicatures. In the case of Liza, his second educated wife, we notice several occasional conversational implicatures but which, towards the end of the story, we see how a come-back move towards the obedience of the maxims (or some of them at least) aided in the healthy recovery of the marriage, though with its attendant casualties.

2. Framework

In buttressing this point, Grice (1967) had introduced four basic conversational maxims to show what

goes on in conversation. They are maxims because they could be broken. A speaker might fail to observe a maxim but still get the intended meaning through to the hearer. Failing to observe a maxim is often referred to as 'breaking a maxim'. They are maxims of: quality, quantity, relation and manner. According to Agbedo (2012:3), Grice's theory of conversation "starts with a sharp distinction between what someone says and what someone 'implicates' by uttering a sentence." He further adds that, what someone says is determined by the conventional meaning of the sentence uttered and contextual processes of disambiguation and reference fixing; what he implicates is associated with the existence to some rational principles and maxims governing conversation. These conventions or maxims, Agbedo notes further, have to do with the "*quantity* or (informativeness), the *quality* (truthfulness), the *manner* (clearness) and *relevance* of conversational contributions."

To Grice, the reflection of conversational implicature is based on the evidence of the common knowledge of what the speaker has said; the linguistic and extra linguistic context of the utterance, general background information and the consideration of the 'Cooperative Principle (CP)' (Agbedo, 2012). It is the conforming of conversations to these maxims that the CP is pragmatically enforced. To show further this stand, however, a peep into some literature and the theoretical bases of conversational maxims would be most welcome.

3. Literature and the theoretical basis for conversational maxims

In the 17th century, several philosophers such as Descartes, Leibniz, and Komensky had been concerned with the deliberate construction of a "perfected" language. These attempts resulted in the creation of several artificial languages. The concern of those scholars was, however, not so much the ordinary communicative function of language, but rather its pedagogical use. However, J.L. Austin, a philosopher at Oxford University (1940s-1950s) who was interested in language, laid the groundwork for what was to become Pragmatics. He wanted to know how humans communicate as efficiently as they do. In the early 20th century, other philosophers were interested in creating an ideal language, but Austin wanted to know how humans manage to communicate despite the imperfections in language. One important reason for why Austin was interested in language was that "he was "convinced that we do not just use language to *say* things (to make statements), but to *do* things (perform actions)" (Thomas, 1995:31). This action of utterances is captured by the discipline- Pragmatics.

Aitchison (2003:104) reveals that, "Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics which studies how speakers use language to achieve their goals and how hearers interpret the meaning the speaker wishes to convey." This notion was developed by other researchers after Austin's death. A conversation depends not only on the speaker, who is trying to deliver a message, but also on the hearer, who draws a conclusion from the implication of the utterance, depending on the context in which it occurs. This thus signifies that Pragmatics deals with speech acts (Thomas 1995). Speech Acts, as defined by Finegan (1994:335), are "actions that are carried out through language". For Chaika (1994: 468), Speech Act is a "way of doing things with words." The statement below presents us with a perfect example:

I now pronounce you husband and wife!

With these words uttered, the couple are married, i.e. the speaker performs an act with his words. Some speech acts have to be carried out under certain conditions called *felicity conditions*. A felicity condition, according to Grundy (1995: 209) is "a condition which must be in place for a speech act to be performed appropriately". The words uttered in the statement above must be uttered by a priest, a justice of the peace or a rabbi and two witnesses have to be present for the act to be valid (Finegan 1994). This understanding implies that conversations have conventional platforms upon which implicatures may not occur, or may be made mild even if they do occur.

In addition to the above views, we find a striking semblance between Grice's principle of conversation and Tauli's (1968) principle of language planning. It is generally agreed that in order to make a constructed language easy to learn, it has to be simple and regular in its grammatical structure and its lexical items should have a high mnemonic support value for the prospective learners. Tauli summarized the principles that should be obeyed when constructing a language from a scratch into a verisimilitude of Grice's own conversational principles. In making comparison between the two, Tauli abbreviated the two elements of his principle into C-clarity and E-economy while Grice represents the elements of his own principle with: N-quantity, Q-quality, R-relation and M-manner. In trying to establish what should be said in a conversation, both theorists posit as follows:

Tauli:

C - The expression must convey to the listener all the meanings intended by the speaker.

E - The expression must not convey more meaning than necessary.

For Grice:

N - make your contribution to a conversation as informative as required and do not make it more informative than required.

Q - do not say what you believe to be false or do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

R - be relevant.

On how it should be said, Tauli avers:

C - The statement must contain redundancy and the greater the possibility of semantic confusion, the greater must be the difference in expression.

E - The expression must be the shortest possible and the more frequent the expression the shorter it must be.

For Grice on how it should be said:

M - Avoid obscurity of expression, avoid ambiguity, be brief and be orderly.

As seen thus, Tauli's principle corresponds with that of Grice's, although both arrived at this connection from different vantage points. Grice's notion about good conversation corresponds with Tauli's principle, both of which hold that in order for a language to function well, it must make a well behaved conversation, and vice versa. The implication of these two principles is that our utterances must be made in just the perfect and appropriate way in all ramifications. We ought to say no more and no less than we are supposed to so that our listeners can construe us.

However, even if we choose our words in the most economic way, most of our utterances will still contain a lot of redundancy, as Tauli believes. Nevertheless, in most instances, we can elaborate our utterances in such a way as to narrow down the meaning of sufficiently general lexical items as much as is required for the situation at hand (Greenberg, 1963). Thus, for example, instead of just a noun, we may use a noun phrase with an appropriate adjective or demonstrative. When the intended meaning transcends a "natural" subdivision of reality but is narrower than what can be expressed by a more general lexeme that covers all of the intended meaning, we need to coordinate several expressions. The need for increased elaboration in this case is basically in agreement with Grice's maxims. We have to be more elaborate if we want to express an unusual idea.

About Tauli's redundancy, a certain amount of redundancy is necessary in order to communicate successfully in various non-optimal situations, such as in a noisy environment, or when the listener cannot see the speaker, when he is at a great distance from him, when he has a hearing loss, or when trying to task his or her brain etc. Also, Grice's maxim "Be brief" corresponds to two of Tauli's four principles of economy telling us that an expression should be as short as possible and, especially, that the more frequent the expression the shorter it must be. These theorists and their principles supply us with a robust base to dissect our topic of discuss more appropriately.

4. Conversational maxims

The maxim of quantity, for instance, has it that spouses should make their contributions to a conversation as informative as is required and, equally, not to make such contributions more informative than is required. The maxim of quality enjoins that spouses should make their contributions factual. They must not say what is believed to be false or what they lack adequate evidence of. Moreover, while the maxim of relation demands that what spouses contribute should be relevant in all ramifications to the context of the conversation involved, the maxim of manner mandates that spouses must be perspicuous in their contributions; they must refrain from obscurity of expressions and abstain from ambiguity. In this paper, we dissect the marital conflict of Lejoka Brown to critical assessment from the Gricean eye.

However, in order to go further in this discourse, it would be most pertinent to discuss the concept of marriage in full vis-à-vis digging deep into the nooks and crannies of the aforementioned maxims while contemporaneously, tethering a synergy with the play under analysis. Particularly also, the subject of assessment in this paper is the altercations or the rude and impolite manner of the conversations held by Brown and his wives in the play. In doing this, we try to ascertain the level at which the couple, or polygamous family, adhered to or violated the rational principles governing normal human relations.

5. Etymology and concept of marriage

The word "marriage" first appeared around 1250-1300 CE and found its origin from Middle English *mariage*. This in turn is derived from Old French *marier* (to marry) and ultimately Latin *marītāre* meaning to provide with a husband or wife and *marītāri* meaning to get married. The concept of marriage varies according to different cultures, but is usually an institution in which interpersonal relationships, usually intimate and sexual, are acknowledged. Marriage (also called matrimony or wedlock) is a social union or legal contract between spouses that creates kinship. Such a union is often formalized through a wedding ceremony. In terms of legal recognition, most sovereign states and other jurisdictions limit marriage to two persons of opposite sex or gender in the gender binary, while some allow polygamous marriages. Such is the case with the Islamic culture.

Anthropologists have proposed several competing definitions of marriage so as to encompass the wide variety of marital practices observed across cultures. Mair (1972) as cited in Akubue (2006:80), defines marriage as "a union between a man and a woman such that children born by the woman are recognized legitimate offspring of both parents." Westermarck (1921) defined marriage as a more or less durable connection between male and female lasting beyond the mere act of propagation till after the birth of the offspring. The anthropological handbook *Notes and Queries* (1951) defined marriage as "a union between a man and a woman such that children born to the woman are the recognized legitimate offspring of both partners." This implies that Marriage creates new social relationship and reciprocal rights between the spouses, between each and the kin of

the other. It also establishes what will be the rights and status of the children when they are born (Mair, 1972). It gives the parties involved equal rights of a single unification that engulfs or overrides the existence of their dual entity.

Every society has recognized procedures for creating such relationship and rights, and for making it known that they have been created. Marriage, being one of the procedures, becomes a uniting of two persons into a bond of oneness. They become one in purpose, in interest, in flesh, in economics, in a familiar group and in name (Beauchamp, 2008). The intimacy which is enjoyed by this couple interlocks their beings into a bond which overcomes their separateness. Because a marriage is usually formalized at a wedding or marriage ceremony, the ceremony may be officiated either by a religious official, by a government official or by a state approved celebrant. The horizontal union of marriage is a beautiful thing. If you can make a visual picture of a man and woman joining hands, you see a horizontal, unbroken line. All the interaction and communication which flows back and forth along this line is necessary and essential for them to maintain a healthy marital situation. At any point, however, one or both of them could break this line by refusing to keep the harmonious giving-and-taking very seriously. For example, when a husband and wife communicate fully about all activities of their day, especially in a 'couple-like' manner, they stay current and knowledgeable about each other. If, however, one partner decides to withhold a part of his or her experience, the line weakens at one link. If that is a volatile area, like perhaps finances, or sexual feelings, polygamy (as is found in the play with Lejoka Brown, to name only a few), the consequences of that weak link could become a break in the line. A deep commitment between two lives will not stand long with a break in this line before the relationship suffers or fails. This became what happened with Lejoka Brown and Sikira, his third wife.

5.1 Patterns of marriage

There are two major patterns or types of marriage namely: monogamy and polygamy. Monogamy is the marriage of one man to one woman. Although a great percentage of the world's marriage population is monogamous, some others are polygamous (Oke, 1984) in Akubue (2006:81). Monogamy is the most prevailing form of marriage available. However, polygamy on the other hand means a multiple or plurality of marriage. It is the marriage of one individual to two or more women or the marriage of one woman to two or more men contemporaneously. This is evident in the play under analysis. In the play, we see Major Lejoka Brown in a polygamous marriage with Elizabeth, Mama Rashida and Sikira. Other types of marriages however, according to Akubue (2006:82) are: Affinal marriage (which consists of Levirate and Sororate marriages), Ghost, Kinship and Inheritance marriages.

An affinal, said he, is a relative by marriage. At times, marriages by affinal take place especially on the death of one's spouse. The main function of affinal marriage is to ensure the continuity of the family, or to allow procreation for people who are still young. Levirate marriage is a situation whereby a man marries his elder brother's widow i.e the wife of his deceased brother (as Major Lejoka Brown did in the play by marrying his late brother's wife, Mama Rashida). Sometimes, a man may marry his father's widow, but not his own mother and cannot marry those widows who are senior to his own mother. Such marriages apply only to the younger wives of his deceased father. In some African societies, it is usual for a man to marry a girl of the same age as his children or even his grandchildren. When he dies, these wives are transferred to his older son(s). In the case of Sororate, however, a man marries the sister of his deceased wife. Her marriage to her brother-in-law keeps up a tie of friendly alliance between the in-laws.

Ghost marriage is a type of marriage done when a man suddenly dies before his marriage arrangements have been completed. It could also take place in a situation where a man has only daughters or that his sons died before they grew up. In such situations, it is the duty of his kinsmen to marry a wife to his name. The children of this marriage will count as the dead man's children. This is referred to as ghost marriage. Kinship marriage, on its own, simply means relationship by blood. Kinship provides means of transmitting status and property from one generation to another (Onyia, 1999). In marriages, there are elements that aid in the sustenance of such marriages just like there are those that cause breakdown, failure, conflict and or divorce. These elements are hereunder discussed under the following subheadings.

5.2 Causes of marital conflict

Although no two situations are alike, there are some common patterns that often result in marital conflict. According to Relationships Coach (2010), the following are major causes of marital conflict: Unacknowledged or unresolved anger or resentment, the experience of boredom in marriages, over-addiction (even to work or ambition), poor communication skills and narcissistic personality style. To Meyer (1999), the following are major causes of marital breakdown: irritating habits, time apart, household responsibilities, expectations and personality conflict. Also, supporting these marital conflict-causing elements, Tynsiac (2012) adds that breakdown in financial communication is a cause that must not be overlooked.

Speaking on resentment, one spouse may have a feeling that *she or he is not getting enough attention or love from the other*, or sense that she or he is not a priority in the life of the spouse who may be much focused on career, work, other women or even ambition. Where one partner is also seen as being overly controlling or "in charge" of the home life including discipline, as seen in the case of Brown in the play, we notice marital

breakdown. The experience of “Boredom” in a marriage is caused by lack of emotional intimacy, lack of the sense of feeling accepted and loved by the spouse with all arising from such factors as partner’s self-esteem and the purpose for entering such relationship in the first place. Narcissistic Personality Style refers to a spouse who is so excessively self-involved and ego-centric that he or she does not seem to have any regard or compassion, or time for the needs or desires of others, including those of his or her spouse or partner. There is usually a total absence of guilt, remorse, concern or shame for unfaithful or inappropriate behaviour in this type of individual (Relationship Coach, 2010). Poor communication skills, on the other hand, involve the dearth of the appropriate way of talking to partners. It is the lack of disagreeing with partners over an issue in a healthy way. Time apart and a lack of quality time together serve to get people out of sync with each other. Also, talking on expectations, we find out that we all go into marriage with certain expectations. Most of the time, marriage is the opposite of what people expected. People romanticize marriage and become disillusioned once those romantic expectations are not met. Unmet expectations are also a major source of conflict in marriages.

5.3 Resolving marital conflict

Conflicts in a relationship need to be first identified. It is when they are known that steps towards their solutions could be adopted. On unresolved resentments, the mutual communication and consideration of feelings is a functional step towards attaining peace and happiness. For problems in a marriage or intimate relationship stemming from virtually all the conflict-causing elements, a polite communication of mutual interests by the partners and or the tenacious adherence to the common rational conversational conventions is a sure way to marriage sustenance and peaceful relationship between and among the couples. From this vantage point therefore, we shall examine the conversational implicatures in the play, *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* by Ola Rotimi and ascertain the extent to which it fits into the origin and indications of the Gricean maxims.

6. Data presentation

Lejoka Brown is a former Army General who later left the army after the Congoan War to take after his father’s cocoa farming. He is caught up in a polygamous marriage of three wives, supported by the Islamic custom. Of his three wives, Mama Rashida (who was the oldest wife of his late brother who died in a train accident) was married to him by his father thus, conforming to a marriage type called Levirate. He himself married Sikira, his third wife and daughter of the president of Nigerian Union of Market Women, Madam Bambina Ajanaku, just for the sheer motive of attracting the majority women votes to himself. His second wife, Elizabeth and a Catholic as against his Moslem belief, is studying medicine in America and does not know that her husband has other wives other than her.

We see the despotic character of Lejoka Brown in his conversations and how his various conversations with his wives, beginning with his third wife, Sikira, went not in tandem with the maxims of conversation, thus resulting to several implicatures. For instance, in Act 1 Scene 1, we see Brown explaining to his friend and lawyer, Okonkwo, about his marriage escapade and how his second wife, Liza, to his great discomfort, was coming home that evening. Sikira enters and asks him whether it was in good light that he received a cablegram from his servant, Polycarp, some minutes ago but Brown responds to her in a very unfriendly and less couple-like manner. The excerpts: Sikira: “Polycarp said you got a cablegram. I hope it is nothing bad.” Brown: “thanks for your concern.” And he added when he saw that Sikira was still lingering around, “I said thanks for your concern. A-ah! Polycarp brought a cablegram, yes. Is your name Rahman Lejoka Brown?” No sooner had Sikira gone away than Brown said to his friend, “I married that problem only four months ago.” Referring to his wife as a problem to an outsider is a violation of marital conduct which indicates that there is a dissatisfaction in his choice of Sikira for a wife.

Also, in Act 2 scene 1 and continuing in scene 111, we see Liza sewing a dress for Sikira while Mama Rashida tended to her eggs. As they all converse, Liza tells Sikira that both men and women are created equal. This was in response to Sikira who told her that she (Liza) wanted to leave or divorce their husband, Brown. Her words: “well, it all goes to prove that Mr. Rahman Lejoka Brown does not have any respect whatsoever for my feelings. Why, I believe a woman must try to be a loving, loyal wife and all that. On the other hand, the husband must try to show some respect for the wife. After all, when we boil it down, men and women are all created equal...” Moreover, Sikira seizes this opportunity to conceptualise and project to Liza the idea of forming a women party that will allow the freedom of women from the “despotic” hands of their husbands, since men and women are created equal.

However, we see the following conversation between Brown, Liza and Sikira when Brown comes in to find Sikira, raising one of his party posters and chanting freedom party songs for women. Brown to Sikira: “Your legs: those of a baby antelope...zigzag in movement. What’s the matter?” Also referring to the dress which Sikira is wearing, sewn for her by Liza, Brown says: “what is that partly-hatched lizard dress for?” In response to that, Sikira says: “It is my dress for the election victory celebrations.” To this, Brown commands, “Go take the rag off.” The manner of addressing his wife shows total insult and disrespect. However, Sikira, who is now unhappy about this, complains that “This is the type of dress they wear in America and England...” Irritated by this response Brown barks, “The devil take you and your America!” Sikira responds, “...it is always

do as you say. Always command, command, command! Why don't you show some respect and let me do as I want, just once!" Moreover, the last stroke of provocative remarks by Lejoka Brown that broke the back of calm and tolerance from Sikira into making her pack her loads and leave the house of Brown is: "You are", says Brown, "one of the crazy headaches I've been crazy enough to get into my crazy head! Now get out of here!" Sikira packs her load after this and leaves for her mother's house, where she later forms a women party and overthrows Brown afterwards. But before she leaves, she throws back at Brown: "Men and women are created equal!"

Also, we find such conversational implicatures between Brown and Liza in the following ACTs and Scenes. For instance, in Act 1, scene 2, Liza finds out, when she comes back home after her studies, that Brown lied to her and did not tell her that he had other wives. When Brown however enters, the following response met Brown's questions after a long abrupt and deprecating response. According to Liza, "When I, Elizabeth Tayanta married you in the Congo, ... never did I once imagine that I was doomed to become one of your three sacrificial slaves in this...nauseating, clay-walled, gas chamber!" Brown's response to a further remark by Liza who had told him to stop shouting because she hated "washing her underwear in public" went thus: "My dear woman, I am not underwear!" Brown calls Liza a witch who wished his death and on other occasion, particularly in ACT 2 scene 111, he tells Liza "I am very happy too woman. Very happy indeed to notice that you have become used to this 'gas chamber' house so much that you have now begun a communist-manifesto class in it." Also in scene 1V, Liza enters in a conference room and finds some party members and gentle men of the press lying prostrate on the floor under the alacritous command of Brown. Baffled by this sheer assault on the neatly dressed men, she inquires from Brown, "What is this? ... a military exercise?" In response to this however, Brown says to her, regardless of the nosy ears of the men present, "Go to your room! I said go you cheap, street woman!" Consequently, with wounded dignity and a mud of ignominy thrown at her by this show of shame, Liza leaves in chaotic anger to also pack her load and, *Ce Fini!* (it is finished). All these altercations are against the conversational maxims which Grice believes leads to peace and harmony among participants and thus the resultant effect. We still later on find Liza throw this remark at Brown, "you've now become a depraved, no-good scoundrel with the tastes of a pig, obsessed with the putrescent values of a maggot! Now, get out of my way!" This is in no way a representation of what a woman should tell her husband in a normal marriage.

Viewed against the backdrop of the comments, we shall at this juncture, subject the Brownian verbal fisticuffs with his wives to a critical analysis from the theoretical standpoint of Paul Grice's conversational maxims. By doing this, we determine the extent to which such conversations conformed to or violated the Cooperative Principle (CP) tethered to the conversational maxims of quality, quantity, manner and relation. The resultant benefit of this line of action is however, hatching the study into being a blueprint for making a peaceful home void of marital conflict.

6.1 Textual analysis: The Gricean maxims

Major Lojoka Brown's Utterances.

Major Lejoka Brown's utterances with his wives at several, if not all occasions, are always provocative to his wives. From all perspectives, his statements run against the grains of the Grecian cooperative principle and violate the conversational maxims. The CP, which requires interlocutors to make their 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 they are engaged, does not license Brown to violate the conversational maxims governing communication (Agbedo, 2012). Brown trespasses his rational bound and the reciprocal or mutual 'interactiveness' that should exist in marriages, thus breaking all the maxims. He is supposed to be a very good, loving and caring husband to his three wives but while he loves Liza so dearly, he hates Sikira and only likes Mama Rashida, not as a wife but because she is virtuous. This is not ideal! To Ingram (2003:58), "The best the world can offer as a model for marriage involves two people who are trying hard to please each other." She continues that "when we go the other route and make our personal fulfilment the goal of every relationship, it never works out." Brown went his route and made his personal ambition - politics - the goal of his marriage. Consequently, his marriage did not work out, especially with Sikira. de Angelis (1996:230) remarks that "a healthy relationship is based in part on the commonality you share with your partner - mutual interests, beliefs, taste in style and reference points." Brown has no common meeting point of interest of any sort with his wives. "Your values determine many aspects of your personality, including how you treat other people..." Brown places much value on his political ambition than on his wives, particularly, Sikira. This is evident in his reason for marrying Sikira. Brown does not love Sikira but marries her in order to gain a monopoly of votes from the union of market women, the leader being Sikira's mother. Because Brown does not love Sikira, he thus treats her like a slave who is bound to be disposed as soon as his political interest is achieved. This atmosphere of selfish interest further compounds Brown's conversations with Sikira and finally culminating into altercations that constantly violated the conversational maxims. Supporting this point, the book of Romans, in the Christian Holy Bible, has it in chapter two, verse nine that, "Love must be sincere... Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; Honor one another above yourselves" (12: 9-13). Of the three wives of Lejoka Brown, only Mama Rashida could be said to be somewhat exempted from among those who broke the maxims. Let us subject the responses of

Sikira and Liza to Brown's remarks to the maxims and equally see how they either supported or violated the tenets of the maxims.

The most obvious structure of conversation is that individuals take turns to speak, that is "holding the floor" while the other participants listen and await their turn (Grice, 1976). However, in a situation involving couples for instance, if the husband is speaking and the wife is also stubbornly imposing her own speech or vice versa, where both parties begin to raise their voices so as to monopolize the floor; where this continues for more than three clauses, it becomes rude and may lead to conflict between the couples. With this development, the couple or either of the partners is bound to break the maxims governing conversation, particularly, the maxim of manner. In the play, we see Sikira impose her newly got ideology of the equality of men and women in the remarks from Brown, thus increasing Brown's anger and breaking the maxim of manner. This conversational implicature is also seen in Brown's responses to Liza at several conversations.

Another type of conversation that breaks the maxim of quality for instance is in the case where, in the conversation, the awaiting participant tolerates an ambiguity, lies or lack of clarity from the other speaker for several turns in the hope that all will eventually become clear, factual or reliable so long as the topic is maintained. Conflict or implicature however culminates when the speaker attempts to force a premature end to the topic or an abortion of it and or introduce a new one so as to avoid being caught up with his or her lies or even, for the sheer reason of trying to confuse the listener. This is often regarded by the other party as being rude or evasive of the truth. This development breaks the maxim of quality. In the play, Brown lies to Liza about his other wives. He did not tell Liza that he had a wife already at home, compliments to Islamic culture. This thus, violates the maxim of quality which enjoins that partners should be sincere in their conversations with each other.

Giving credence to the above point, Barbara adds that, "it is very tempting to downplay your religious convictions or spiritual beliefs when you suspect that standing by them might alienate your partner." She urges partners not to give into the temptation to be dishonest. Brown was supposed to share his religious marriage affiliation with his elder brother's oldest wife to Liza even at the beginning of their relationship as this would have averted his later altercations with her.

According to de Angelis, "A marriage is a partnership, a union, not a battleground. The moment you stop treating one another with love and respect your marriage ceases to exist" (1996:342). Brown does not love Sikira and he does not respect Liza either. Because marriage is a way of loving, honoring and celebrating your partner day by day as your expression of your commitment to one another, as Barbara posits, couples must therefore know that the active participatory process of marriage is not the making of it to look like a boring and static state. The marriage of Brown to Sikira is an exemplar. Taking the maxim of quantity for instance, it requires the speaker to give the right amount of information when he or she speaks, which means not to be too brief or to give more information than the situation requires. Brown breaks this maxim in the response he gave Sikira when she asked him about the cablegram he received. He did not give her the required, complete information she needed hence the conflict and dissatisfaction.

Also, bringing the maxim of relation into focus, we see how Brown yet breaks this maxim in the play. The maxim of relation has it that the speaker's contributions to a conversation must be relevant to the context and situation in which the utterance occurs (Thomas, 1995). When towards the end of the play, we see Brown coaching Liza on how to be defendant should the Government come to demolish their house and Okonkwo his friend enters, Brown interpolates "Egg treatment", the interpolation confuses Liza but even though she asked for explanation, Brown was not forthcoming with an answer. This is a negation of the maxim. Having drawn the analysis thus far, it would be pertinent to see some implications of Browns marriage display to contemporary marriage homes.

7. Implications of the Play for contemporary marriages

The divorce population is the fastest growing marital category in the world today, especially with celebrities. In 1970 and 1996, the total number of divorced people in the United States was 4.3 and 18.3 million (Ingram, 2003). In Nigeria, though such level of divorced persons is not yet reached, the number is greatly increasing. Sadly however, despite this continuous growth of marital accident, we still find out that the victims lack the knowledge or refuse to acknowledge the presence of the dangers, damages and casualties which such break-ups litter behind. It is in this vantage point that Ingram submits that we not only deny the rampant presence of divorce in our society but we also work hard to cover up the devastating effects. And, the effects of this break-up manifests in different ways. For instance, according to Ingram (2003:29), "After divorce, one-third of all women find themselves living at or below the poverty level at some times in their lives. This is one of the effects divorce can cause. She continues that "fractured relationships between in-laws and friends create ever-widening circles and continue throughout life."

In the case of children (in a family where children already existed before the divorce) and according to Hetherington, a divorce researcher and professor at Virginia, quoted by Wollersten in Ingram (2003:36), "In short term, divorce is always troublesome to children." Supporting this, Wollersten adds that "The negative impact of family break-ups continue well into adulthood." These children therefore develop such a hauntingly

erroneous consciousness that part of them are always waiting for disaster to strike. They live in dread that some terrible loss will soon change their lives for bad; they live in constant fear of being abandoned, even when they need company most. In a situation where these children are thus abandoned, they conclude that they are not lovable and this notion affects their later relationships during their adulthood.

Furthermore, de Angelis (1996:65) concludes that “if you conclude that you were not lovable as a child, you may have a difficult time attracting love” or even sustaining it in a marriage. For Sikira to have had some kids with Brown and divorced him the way she did, means that her kids would suffer afterwards. In a similar light also, we humans are relational beings. We were made by God to love and be loved. We crave the intimacy, acceptance, security and significance that flow when we bond in mind, heart and body with a member of the opposite sex (Ingram, 2003). We long to love and we long to be loved, cared for and respected especially in marriages during our conversations with our spouses but we do not seem to know how to do it. Falling in love and getting married is the easy part of a relationship but building and sustaining such marriage takes hard work (de Angelis, 1996). So, it becomes a bonus to the love existing in the family when the couple learn to accept each other as one; respect each other and communicate in an atmosphere of reciprocal reverence.

Considering the implication of polygamous marriage to a family, we find out that no polygamous marriage has ever stood for an ideal marriage pattern. The wives would always be cantankerous to one another and the precipitation of this altercations would be reflected on the husband and, by extension, the marriage immediately breaks apart. Such is the case with Brown and Sikira in the play. Also, the implication of neglecting the marital needs of spouses or one spouse overriding the needs of the other with his or her personal interest or ambition is very devastating to the marriage such that when such marriages break up, its pieces are never spotted anywhere. This is why couples must adhere to the conversational maxims so as to remain bonded in their marriage and, by extension, make the world a better place for living.

8. Conclusion

We can understand how to communicate effectively and sustain our marriages or even save it from submerging in the sea of marital quagmire because pragmatics has become a part of linguistics. Moreover, Austin, Tauli and Grice, among others, have had a massive impact on today’s pragmatics. However, Grice’s maxims and the cooperative principle which formed the foundation-substrate upon which this discourse was based are used not only to understand how we communicate but also why and when we are uncooperative, especially in marriages. When we converse, we constantly fail to observe some maxims governing conversations and which thus, leads to communication imbalance. However, in order to emphasize a message, create irony or to avoid unpleasant situations; in other words, to communicate effectively, strict adherence to the conversational maxims becomes a sure step to take.

Having seen how Lejoka Brown’s conversations with his wives resulted to many conversational implicature and equally having a deep discussion-bite into the subject - marriage, this paper concludes by enjoining all couples to seek and adhere to the Gricean principle of conversation so as to have a sustained marriage or home.

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