A Pragmatic Analysis of Language As A Mechanism For Peaceful Interaction: A Case Study of *When Women Go Naked*

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Abstract

Most parts of the world today are enveloped in conflict caused by personal ambitions, selfishness, economic disasters, religious beliefs, gender discrimination, ideologies, unequal distribution of natural resources, and many more daunting causes. The effect of these conflicts has led to several losses of lives and properties, stunted socio- economic growth and development. The question is what can be done so that the world enjoys living that is more peaceful and less conflict prone. The popular adage 'the pen is mightier than the sword' provides the solution. Pen symbolises the appropriate choice of linguistic codes to communicate messages. Language is not simple an instrument of messaging but also a device for the expression of an individual's thought and feelings; a reflection of a speaker's inner sensitivity and mood. This study, using the play *When Women Dance Naked* as data, sets out to examine the language used during conflict situation and its effect on the relationship between interlocutors. The study, using multifaceted approaches, reveals that when speakers resort to the use of positive words that respect the addressee's self-esteem, peace is developed and maintained. While the use of negative and downgrading codes fuel hatred and accelerate conflicts. The study concludes that appropriate choice of linguistic codes is essential in order to building, development and maintenance peace. Language can be used not only as a weapon of reconciliation where there is disharmony or conflict but also as an implement to create and deescalate conflict which can wipe out an entire family or society.

Keywords: Peace, Conflicts, Gender discrimination, Rapport, Offensive words

1. Introduction

1.1. Background to the Study

Most parts of the world today are enveloped in conflict caused by personal ambitions and selfishness as well as economic disasters, religious belief, tribal differences, discrimination, ideologies, unequal distribution of natural resources, and many more daunting causes. The effect of these conflicts has led to several losses of lives and properties, stunted socio-economic growth and development. The question is what can be done so that the world enjoys living that is more peaceful and less conflict prone. The popular adage 'the pen is mightier than the sword' tend to provide the solution. Pen symbolises the appropriate choice of linguistic code to communicate messages. In other words, the language used to communicate can be used positively (choosing a non-killing and pacifiers words) or negatively (using degrading words) The use of negative language has the potential to diminish or completely eradicate the peace and tranquillity between language users. Thus, there is a tight relationship between language and conflict intensification. It is pertinent to emphasise that conflict is an element that must play out where two or more persons or parties come together. According to Vilendrer 'Conflicts are part of life like salt in the soup' (n. p). Thus, conflict is part and parcel of a normal society where there exists genuine interaction. The crucial aspect is to know the cause and how to deal with it so that it does not escalate.

The term conflict is defined and construed in various perspectives. There is no generally accepted definition of the term. Afzalur views conflict as "an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement or dissonance within or between social entities." Nicholson, on the other hand, opines that conflict is an activity which occurs when people or group make conscious effort to carry out mutually inconsistent acts regarding their wants, needs or obligations. For Nicholson, conflict is a product of escalation of a disagreement. In line with Nicholson, Online Cambridge Dictionary defines it as 'an active disagreement between people with opposing opinions or principles'. This definition considers conflict as differences in choices made. In other words, conflict is a situation in which there is an escalation of incompatibility of opinion or action, (wants, needs or obligations). Broadly, conflict is seen as a situation in which two persons or parties disagree or they are at variance in their views, or actions. Although there is no uniformity of definition of conflict, a major thread that run through most definitions is the fact that conflict is a scuffle and a clash of interests, ideas, views, or even ideologies.

There are different types of conflicts, ranging from individual to group, intrapersonal/intragroup to interpersonal/intergroup. The classification of conflict depends on both the persona, the structure and the root cause of the conflict. Some researchers have identified the possible causes of conflict from different perspectives. Vilendrer lists five main causes of conflict to include

 i) information conflicts: occur when people have different or insufficient information, or disagree over what data is relevant,

 ii) values conflicts: occur when a person or party tries to impose its values on others or claims exclusive right to a set of values

iii) interest conflicts: occur when there is competition over perceived or actual incompatible needs such as money, resources, or time

iv) relationship conflicts: occur when there are misperceptions, strong negative emotions, or poor communication

v) structural conflicts: when oppressive behaviours are exerted on others. Sometimes, it is as a result of little resources or opportunity available to many personas. And other times, conflict behaviour is caused by organization structures. (https://www.vilendrerlaw.com)

Six forms of intragroup conflict are discussed in Wikipedia are:

i) Content conflict arises when individuals desire to handle similar issue in different ways.

ii) Relational conflict arises when individuals are incompatible and the expression of resistance leads to friction, frustrations, annoyance, and irritations.

iii) Process conflict occurs when there are differences in handling a group's task in terms of the methods and group procedure.

iv) Task conflict occurs when there are disagreements in viewpoints and opinion about a particular task to be performed in a group.

v) Affective conflict is a negative kind of conflict which is characterised by individual's suspicion, distrust, and hostility. It is an emotional conflict which occurs due to interpersonal incompatibilities and disputes.

vi) Cognitive conflict arises when there is difference in perspective and judgement leading to positive tension in the performance of a group tasks.

Other categories of conflict which can occur at the intragroup and intergroup levels as discussed in Wikipedia are

i) Conflict of interest is involvement in multiple interests which could possibly corrupt the motivation or decision-making.

ii) Cultural conflict is a type of conflict that occurs when different cultural values and beliefs clash.

iii) Ethnic conflict is conflict between two or more contending ethnic groups. Intergroup conflict is conflict between two or more groups

iv) Organizational conflict is discord caused by opposition of needs, values, and interests between people working together.

v) Role conflict involves incompatible demands placed upon a person in a manner that makes accomplishing both troublesome.

vi) Social conflict is the struggle for supremacy or autonomy between social classes. Work–family conflict involves incompatible demands between the work and family roles of an individual. (https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/conflict_process)

These various forms of conflict are often intertwined especially in a group. Put differently, two or three forms of conflict can co-occur in a given context.

Cultural believe are passed down to upcoming generation through language usage. In Igbo culture, the use of proverbs is very prominent, especially among the elders. Such is the case of *When Women Go Naked*, which forms the data for this study. The play reflects the cultural believe of Igbo society as well as some extremists in the community. The images that features in the proverbs tend to be gender bias. In addition, the culture of male child more importance than female child escalates the conflict in *Umundiagu* community. The culture and ideologies of gender discrimination escalate and brew conflict in the society.

Most often, creative writers are influenced by the happenings in their immediate society. Hence, the issue of conflict in *When Women Go Naked* is a reflection of the large society – Nigeria. According to Agbara (2019) '… the subject matters and themes in creative writings almost always reflect the socio-cultural and political happenings in the society as well as societal norms and believes' (180). Thus, the escalation of lack of peace in *Umundiagu,* due to the selfishness of the protagonist and the culture of gender discrimination, is a miniature representation of Africa community.

The study sets out to analysis how the effect of wrong choice of words and the cultural believe in male dominance in *Umundiagu* community, an Igbo society, not only brewed conflict among the villagers but also led to the death of many villagers. Thus the paper delves into the multifaceted ways in which language influences peaceful interaction, conflict resolution and empathy.

1.2 Language

Language is such an important component of human life that it intermingles with every aspect of human society. It is not just an instrument of self-expression but also a window to the inner self of the individuals. It is a reflection of a speaker's inner sensitivity and mood, which could be negative or positive. In like manner, it contributes or shapes how humans perceive the wold around them. Hence, language is seen as playing an essential function in shaping the way peace can be achieved locally and globally.

Furthermore, human language flourishes with understatements, allegories and imageries which when put to use can create harmonious situation or otherwise. Thus, words used by a speaker may appear to be insignificant. However, a deeper scrutiny could reveal its connotative meaning, which may bring about peace building or destruction (disharmony). Usage of words and their connotative meaning can prompt negative differences among the interlocutors and this can lead to conflict in the family and the community. Beyond its role in conveying information, language serves as a powerful mechanism for promoting peaceful coexistence and fostering understanding among individuals and communities.

Language is used for varied functions. It is not only 'an instrument of self-expression, … used to perform all kinds of activities ranging from social … and political issues … (Agbara, 2018c, 2) but also 'an instrument of culture and values dissemination (Agbara 2022, 222) as well a tool for building lasting peace, if probably used. Language being a cultural heritage and an integral aspect of any culture plays a fundament role in the maintenance and development of peace in every society. Similarly, language usage and its associated

signification is strongly influenced by the socio-cultural values and beliefs of the humans.

In like manner, language plays a very vital role in (de)escalating peace development and maintenance. Adedemeji (2021) observes that language used can 'deform' interlocutors when used negatively. According to him, 'The destiny of our common humanity all depends on our words' (n. p). He went further to argue that language is the instrument through which human can 'create relationships and damage friendships, build bridges and erect walls…. make peace, express aggression, fuel conflict and declare war.' (n. p). Thus, language is the all in all for human co-existence for peace, harmony and progress. While language is a powerful tool for peaceful interaction, it is not immune to pitfalls such as misunderstandings and misinterpretation. Hence language users must be careful in their choice of words if they want to achieve peaceful interaction.

The axiom 'Pen is mightier than the sword' is a powerful symbol of the influence of linguistic codes as a powerful tool. Like sword, words play a crucial role in accelerating or diminishing hostility in a conflict situation. Adedimeji (2021) observes that

> The language we use significantly affects the life we live and the world we create around us. This is because language is our instrument of thought, with our words translating our innermost feelings into actual reality. Language forms, informs, reforms and transforms us. When negatively used, it also 'deforms' us. (n. p)

Thus, words are the reality of a speaker's frame of mind whether peace or conflict mood. The choice of words by a speaker during interaction validates the speaker's attitude to the situation. Hence, it has been argued that 'there is an intimate link between how one communicates, and the conflicts created… a strong relationship between the language used and conflicts caused and escalated' (Minute Mediation, np). To support this notion, Jocelyn Wright in an interview on Peace Linguistics says 'Our values, attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs are shaped, mediated, and conveyed through language, so language awareness is key, … to countering prejudices and stereotypes … as well as deficit mindsets'. (n. p).

Consequently, to develop and maintain a less conflict prone (peaceful) world, language users must reduce the use of 'negative' language that can kill an individual's self-esteem and use more of 'positive' language that can calm the nerves even in the midst of hostility.

2.1 Methodology

The study utilises eleven purposive selected utterances in the play *When Women Go Naked*, as data. The play sets in *Umundiage* community, a farming society whose major produce is palm oil. *Oganaigwe* (*Ogana*), the protagonist and the wealthiest man in the community, stirs up the death of his seven female children and his wife due to his selfishness and negative ambition. The play is centred mostly on the issue of gender discrimination and female relegation. The play is a minuscule depiction of not only Nigeria, but also Africa society. Utterances that contain 'name-calling', offensive and downgrading words are selected and analysed. To effectively analysis the effect of language on peace building / maintenance, the study uses a multifaceted approach – Rapport Management Theory and Systemic Functional

Linguistics (SFL).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a theory of language that centres on the notion of language function. The theory deals with the relationship between social contexts and linguistic aspects during interaction, spoken or written. (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In Systemic Functional Linguistics, texts are regarded as pieces of communication constructed for social purposes. The core concepts of SFL are language as functional and language as meaning-making (Halliday, 1978). It is an interface between choices of words and how they are structured and the meaning made by those words. The notion of name-calling, negative and positive words are coined from SFL theory of language. Naming (name-calling) has effect, which could be negative or positive on the addressee. Negative words refers to words that reduces the self-image or face sensitivity of the addressee. Positive words, on the other hand, do not diminish the self-image of the addressee. Thus, depending on the wordings when addressing the other interlocutor, conflict may be developed, heightened, maintained or resolved. Addressee' self-esteem is a very important issue in every communication. Wrong handling of self-esteem can lead to conflict. The studies analysis the effect of naming-calling, use of positive and negative words during interactions as depicted in the play '*When Women Go Naked.*

Rapport Management (RM) Theory, developed by Spencer-Oatey (2005, 2008), arose as due to the perceived shortcoming from other theories of politeness. It deals with interpersonal aspect of communication among acquaintances. The theory is based on the proposition that linguistic codes can be used to create harmony/disharmony among interlocutors. It is believed that 'language is used to construct, maintain and/or threaten social relationship' (Spencer-Oatey, 2008:12), as reflected in our data for analysis. RM identifies the basis for rapport to include face sensitivities, sociality rights and obligations, and interactional goal.

Spencer-Oatey (2008) identifies three methods through which rapport can be threatened. They are i) face-threatening behaviour: a situation in which the addressee loses his/her 'face' or credibility by being criticised or opposed; ii) rights-threatening /obligation-omission behaviour: a situation in which the addressee's sense of social entitlement is infringed upon; iii) goal-threatening behaviour: an act which impedes the actions another interlocutor wants to achieve. Spencer-Oatey (2008) classifies factors that can influence the use of rapport strategies to include rapport orientation, contextual variables and pragmatic principles.

For the purpose of this study, only rapport orientation is employed in the data analysis. Spencer-Oatey (2008) posits that four types of rapport orientations could guide interlocutor use of rapport management strategies. These are rapport enhancement - an act of strengthening harmonious relations, rapport maintenance - an act of maintaining/protecting harmonious relations, rapport neglect - a display of lack of interest in the quality of relations between interlocutor, and rapport challenge orientation a show to challenge or impair harmonious relations. (p.32)

3. Data Presentation and Analysis

Excerpt 1:

OGANA: (Stops. Looks at the women in anger.) Each time I fire shots from my gun,

the bullets hit the plantain tree. The worst waste of wealth is shooting the

plantain tree.

UGOLI: Ogana, when have you become a lizard?

OGANA: (Angrily.) Eh? (Beats his chest simultaneously say.) Me. Lizard?   (p.12)

Ogana refers to the arrival of a new baby girl in his family as a waste because he was expecting a baby boy. He, therefore, refuses to rejoice with the women who came to rejoice at the birth of a new-born baby. Instead, he refers to the new baby girl as 'plantain tree', which symbolises non-lasting plant. He uses a negative symbol to show his displeasure. This made the leader of the women to refer to him as 'lizard'. Referring to *Ogana* as 'lizard' escalate the conflict situation. Thus, both *Ogana* and *Ugoli* failed to establish rapport in their interaction. *Ogana* creates conflict of interest as well as value conflict and relational conflict between himself and the women,

Excerpt 2:

OGANA: What is it?

UGOLI: Why did you choose to frighten the women who have come to sing and

rejoice?

OGANA: Sing and rejoice for what?

UGOLI: For the new seed in your family?

OGANA: Why I choose to frighten them you ask?

UGOLI: Yes.

OGANA: Have I frightened them?

UGOLI: Yes

OGANA: How?

UGOLI: When you gun sounded as if you wanted to shoot bird …

OGANA: But even the birds you talk about, are they not trespassers on the tree?

OGANA: Well, the tree can decide to be unfriendly with the birds. If you say I frightened the women, then they deserved it.

UGOLI: In that case, you are unfriendly. …   (p. 14-15)

In this datum, *Ogana* refers to the women as trespassers because he is disappointed with the

sex of the baby his wife was delivered of. He, therefore, transfers his anger and disappointment to all the women folk. *Ogana* is impolite to the women and sees them as unwelcomed guests. Thus, through his choice of words and disregard for the women's sociality rights and obligations, he paves the way for a conflict situation between himself and the women of *Umundiagu*. This situation is characterised by value conflict and relational conflict.

Excerpt 3:

UGOLI: (Calls his name in full, stressing it.) O-g-a-n-a-ig-w-e! (He stops.) Remember, there is no business more important now than this new seed from your farm. *Nwamma's* fertile ridge housed the seed, though. (Demonstrates.) Not without the manure your long hoe added. My fellow women, is it not so?

ALL WOMEN: (Concur in unison.) That is it ooo.

OGANA: (His deportment becomes unwelcoming. As OBIAGELI moves to him, and makes to hand the baby over to him. …) Away with that plantain generation! Enough of that! Enough of that I say! Hear your song. (Mimics) ….   (p. 17)

Ugoli, leader of the women, makes the move to manage rapport by using positive wording 'this new seed from your farm' to create rapport enhancement. *Ogana*, however, is still obstinate, displays rapport neglect orientation, uses negative wording 'away with that plantain', and he makes caricature of the women's song. Through *Ogana's* lack of face sensitivity behaviour and disregard for associative rights of the women folks, the conflict between him and the women becomes deeper. Social conflict and conflict of interest is formed due to *Ogana* refusal to accept the kind gestures from the women.

Excerpt 4:

OFODILE: Ogana, no marksman aims at his visitors.

OGANA: That is when they are not bad visitors.

OFODILE: I have never been declared a bad guest by any of my host in Umundiagu.

NNADOZIE: Neither have I been declared so too.

OFODILE: As you can see, we have visited with good legs. There is happiness that your family has brought a new life to our land. (Goes to admire the baby.) ADAOMA, beautiful daughter, welcome (Tries to shake OGANA.)

OGANA: (Refuses to shake him.) If that is why you have come, then you have no mission here.   (p. 20)

In this interaction, *Ogana* calls *Ofodile* and *Nnadozie* 'bad visitors'. However, the two visitors refuse to be angry and display rapport maintenance through their wording '…with good legs…. happiness that your family has brought a new life to our land.' This positive wording angered *Ogana* the more and said 'you have no mission here'. Thus, *Ogana* displays rapport neglect orientation; he has no interest in the quality of relations between him and his visitors.

Through these harsh words and irrational behaviour, he flags off social conflict, value conflict, and conflict of interest.

Excerpt 5:

OGANA: Here he goes again

NNADOZIE: Goes where again?

OGANA: Delaying me with roundabout talks.

NNADOZIE: Ogana, Ofodile is elderly and has to talk the way elders talk.

OGANA: Do elders rigmarole and go roundabout before they can talk?   (p. 22)

Ogana displays rapport neglect orientation towards his visitors. He shows no interest in the quality of relations between him and them. His choice of downgrading words threatens the face sensitivity of *Ofodile*, an elder in the community. *Ogana* regards *Ofodile'*s use of proverbs, a characteristic of the people of *Umundiagu*, as 'roundabout talk' and 'rigmarole'. *Ogana* use of downgrading words paves the way for role conflict and social conflict.

Excerpt 6:

OFODILE: You know the custom, Ogana, we are in your house. I should not remind you to offer us kola.

NNADOZIE: At least we should thank Chukwu for our life and the new life he has added to us in Umundiagu through your household.

OGANA: (Angrily.) Did I call you to come and thank Chukwu for the so-call life?   (p. 25)

Ogana and *Ofodile* do not share interactional goal, which is a necessary aspect for the establishment of rapport between interlocutors. The visitors have come to express the intention of *Ofodile'*s son intend to marry *Ogana's* niece, *Udenkwo*.   *Ogana* is not interest in the issue of marriage. Hence, *Ogana's* impolite behaviour towards his visitors. *Ogana* also uses downgrading term to refer to the new born baby girl by referring to the child as 'the so-call life'.   *Ogana* creates a social conflict and relational conflict between himself and his visitors.

Excerpt 7:

OGANA: Do you want to marry a woman who will fill your home and world with misfortune?

UDUNNA: Misfortune? I don't understand.

OGANA: You can see they are celebrating it.

UDUNNA: Celebrating what?

OGANA: The burden!

UDANNA: Which burden? You are confusing me.

OGANA: Well, I cannot be a party to that. …you will aim at a pear tree and your bullets will hit a plantain tree.

UDUNNA: I am still confused.

OGANA: Do you want to cultivate yam and harvest cocoyam?   (p. 31)

In this excerpt, *Ogana* uses negative and downgrading words 'misfortune', 'burden' and 'cocoyam' to discourage *Udunna* from marrying *Udenkwo* who is his niece. *Ogana* shows goal-threatening, right-threatening and face-threatening behaviour toward *Udunna* in order to achieve his goal of ensuring that Udenkwo is not married. This lack of appropriate rapport construct and maintenance deepened the conflict between *Ogana* and his niece on one hand, and with *Ofodile* family, on the other hand.   *Ogana* uses harsh words to pave the way for value conflict, social conflict, role conflict and conflict of interest between himself and *Udanna, Udenkwo*, and *Ofodile* family.

Excerpt 8:

OGANA: That is the tantrums of a **defeated poor man**.

UDANNA: (To OGANA.) Choose your words when you talk to my father.

OFODILE: Udanna, do not get angry over what you are not supposed to get angry.   (p. 40)

*Ofodile'*s attempt to maintain rapport with *Ogana* is regarded by *Ogana* as defeat. So, he refers to *Ofodile* as 'a defeated poor man'. The use of downgrading and negative words to describe his father causes disharmony between *Ogana* and *Udanna* as he cautions *Ogana* saying 'choose your words…' Ordinarily, one would have expected *Udanna* to have high regard for his so-call father-in-law to be. However, the wrong choice of words by *Ogana* made *Udanna* to forget the purpose of the visit and to protect his father's face. This further deepens the different conflicts created by *Ogana* between the two families.

Excerpt 9:

OGANA: I do not blame you. What I will still tell you is that it is only poverty that

drives a man to think the way you are thinking.

UGOLI: Wealth does not warrant the misuse of words. (p. 43)

*Ogan*a uses downgrading words on his visitor – he refers to *Ofodile* as a poor person whose thinking capacity is affected by poverty. Again, *Ogana* choice of words depicts his poor rapport managements – he displays his rapport neglect and face-threatening act towards *Ofodile*. Although, his wife, *Ugoli*, cautioned him; *Ogana* was not remorseful.   With his negative words he widens the conflict already established.

Excerpt 10:

UDENKWO: If all the lights are put off, who will put off the moon?

OGANA: That is a very foolish question.

UDENKWO: Is it more foolish than the warning that all lights in Umundiage must

go off?

OGANA: More disregard for the doctrine of Ayaka. It is lack of respect.

UDENKWO: If such disrespect is against the doctrine of darkness, I will never

repent.   (p. 86)

In this excerpt, both *Udenkwo* and *Ogana* failed to utilise Rapport management strategy. *Ogana* negative word when he refers to *Udenkwo's* question as being 'foolish'. *Udenkwo,* on her part responded with negative words, she claims that *Ogana'*s directives that all lights should go off is 'more foolish'. This response angers *Ogana* who considers *Udenkwo* as being disrespectful. The exchange of negative words between these two interlocutors escalated the conflict between them.

Excerpt 11:

OGANA: …What? Oil inside a calabash?   This is madness.

OFODILE: Perhaps they want you to drink palm oil like palm wine.

UGOLI: And should keep it to offer to your guests too.

OGANA: You see why I they are mad. Have you ever seen a host offering his guest oil?
(p 92)

Ogana refers to the action of the women who brought tribute to him as 'madness'. He could have used positive wording to show his displeasure at the type of items brought as tribute. He regards the women as 'mad' women. Thus, further escalates the several forms of conflict and the lack of rapport between him and the women.

4. Discussion of Findings

Umundiagu community in *When Women Go Naked* experience several forms of conflict due to the irrational use of words by the main character in the play, *Ogana*. The conflict created as a result of his wrong choice of words ranges from intrapersonal to interpersonal conflict. Other forms of conflict include value conflict, informational conflict, social conflict, relationship conflict, conflict of interest, content conflict and affective conflict.

Ogana, is not neither concerned about resolving little disagreement through choice of appropriate words, nor is he bothered about the use of rapport management all through his dealings and interactions with others. Every effort made by other interlocutors to have positive and harmonious interactions with him through the use positive and upgrading words failed. Out of the eleven excerpts used as data for this study, only two excerpts (1 and 10) show that the other interlocutor responded to Ogana rapport neglect and face threatening

behaviour in like manner. *Ogana* is incapable of desisting from dressing other interlocutors down; he disgraces and undermined their self-worth.

Ogana communication is characterised by Rapport threatening behaviour.   Face threatening behaviour is seen in his interactions with the village women, his visitors – *Ofodile* and his friends and *Udenkwo*; right threatening/obligation behaviour – this characterised his interactions with the women, *Udenkwo* and *Udunna* who wanted to marry *Udenkwo*, his niece; and goal threatening behaviour – this is revealed in his communication with the women, *Ofodile, Udenkwo* and *Udunna*. His lack of Rapport management strategies led to his sad end. *Ogana* use of negative and downgrading words not only deformed him but also wrecked his entire family.

He was troubled because he has no male child to inherit his 'wealth', which he acquired in a dubious manner. His solely interest was on how to become a wealthy and powerful king. This made him to have no regard for peaceful interactions. He uses downgrading and negative words, which put him into conflict with others. His use of lots of offensive words as well as name-calling such as 'trespassers', 'bad visitors', 'roundabout talk', 'rigmarole', 'so-call life', etc. deepens the conflict between him and the elders of the community as well as the women. These conflicts eventually lead to the death of his two wives, seven female children and three male children.

5. Conclusion

The paper views *Umundiagu* community in *When Women Go Naked* as a miniature world where the wrong use of language has generated diverse conflicts. This study demonstrates that language plays an important role in shaping the way conflicts are unfolded and resolved. In addition, there is a close connection between how one communicates, and the conflicts created.   In as much as disagreement is part of communal living, individual could choose appropriate diction once there is a disagreement, in order not to escalate it into complex and indeterminable conflict. In other words, there is a strong relationship between the language used and conflicts caused and escalated. Wrong choice of words and irrational behaviour can make a simple disagreement to become a conflict. The disagreement in *When Women Go Naked* escalates into an unresolved conflict due to *Ogana* inappropriate use of diction and irrational behaviour. *Ogana'*s poor Rapport management deepened the conflict between him and his community members including his immediate family members. And this eventually led to the death of all his wives and children.

Language reflects the inner feelings of the users as validated by *Ogana* who all through his interaction his choice of words reflects his antipathy, anger, lack of respect to his immediate family and the entire community. These resentment and anger made his interactions with others to lack of rapport management. His inner self is not at peace due to his strong desire for a male child to inherit his wealth. Hence, the choice of words he uses to communicate is harmful and thus, fuel negative emotions, resentment and bitterness between him and others. These emotions coupled with unresolved conflicts linger on to the point where his

relationships with the entire community were destroyed.

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