

## Socio-Pragmatic Insights into Adichie’s Half of a Yellow Sun

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### Abstract

*The present study focuses on a socio-pragmatic perspective within Discourse Analysis. Grounded in the theoretical frameworks of Grice’s Cooperative Principles (1975), Conversational Implicatures (Levinson, 1983, 2000), and Politeness Principles (Levinson, 1978; Leech, 1983), it examines five selected excerpts from Adichie’s Half of a Yellow Sun to illuminate the varying strategies through which interlocutors navigate language according to shifting conversational contexts. Following a systematic corpus selection process, the quantitative analysis and interpretation of findings reveal how characters work cooperatively to achieve mutual understanding within conversations, often generating different implicatures. The findings suggest that an utterance’s conversational significance is shaped entirely by its specific context of use. Consequently, this study underscores the essential recommendation that, for effective communication, conversational participants must attentively utilize contextual cues to construct and interpret utterances’ ad hoc conversational values, thereby fostering mutual understanding and common ground.*

**Keywords:** Pragmatics, Unstated Information, Discourse Analysis, Implicatures, Conversational Values

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

In human communication, the exchange of messages and meanings is a distinctive and defining feature, setting humans apart from other species. Beyond a mere transfer of information, conversation serves as a crucial mechanism for sustaining interpersonal relationships and fostering social cohesion. While the process of encoding meaning depends on a speaker’s choice of words, the interpretation of this meaning often surpasses the speaker’s control, as listeners rely on contextual clues to derive implications. These dynamics, where the intended meaning diverges from literal language, present a rich field for socio-pragmatic analysis, particularly within Discourse Analysis.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* provides a fertile ground for exploring the complexities of socio-pragmatic interactions. Set against the backdrop of the Nigerian Civil War, Adichie’s novel captures a spectrum of conversational exchanges shaped by socio-political tensions, cultural differences, and interpersonal relationships. Characters manage these complexities using language that conveys more than its literal content, thereby generating conversational implicatures and reflecting Grice’s *Cooperative Principles* (1975) and the Politeness Principles outlined by Levinson (1978) and Leech (1983). Within this literary context, conversations are rich and diversified by the participants’ constant use of pragmatically enriched language to maintain harmony, assert identity, and negotiate meaning.

### Problem Statement

While extensive literary analyses have been conducted on *Half of a Yellow Sun*, few studies approach the work from a socio-pragmatic lens, particularly in exploring how conversational exchanges reveal unspoken social norms, power dynamics, and cultural sensitivities. As characters attempt to communicate within rapidly changing contexts, the implied meanings within their interactions present a complex layer of interpretation that

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transcends literal expression. This study addresses this gap by examining how Adichie's characters use language to convey social cues and adapt their conversational strategies to shifting relational and contextual demands.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to provide a socio-pragmatic analysis of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, focusing on how characters negotiate meaning within varied conversational contexts. Grounded in Grice's Cooperative Principles, Levinson's Conversational Implicatures, and the Politeness Principles, this research aims to uncover how characters manage conversational implicatures and adjust their language to achieve mutual understanding. By analyzing selected excerpts from the novel, the study highlights how these of conversation contribute to the overall narrative and character development in Adichie's work.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions are formulated to give an orientation to the study:

How do characters in *Half of a Yellow Sun* utilize socio-pragmatic strategies to navigate conversational contexts and achieve mutual understanding?

In what ways do conversational implicatures and politeness principles shape the interactions among characters, reflecting broader social and cultural dynamics in Adichie's narrative?

This study is structured into four main points: a brief literature review, a theoretical framework, a socio-pragmatic analysis of the selected corpus data, and a discussion of findings. Through this approach, the study seeks to deepen the understanding of the socio-pragmatic dimensions of discourse in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, offering insights into how language functions as a tool for social guide and meaning-making.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Analyzing discourse from a socio-pragmatic perspective requires researchers to examine two key aspects of meaning: (1) the inherent meaning within words and their syntactic structures (semantic implications) and (2) the contextual meaning derived from the functionality or conversational value of language. The former is traditionally within the scope of Semantics, while the latter belongs to the field of Pragmatics, specifically Pragmasemantics. This study focuses on the second aspect, conducting a pragmatic analysis of discourse.

Leech and Short (2007, p. 233) assert that:

The pragmatic analysis of language is the investigation into that aspect of meaning which is not derived from the formal properties and constructions (from: words, phrases, sentences...), but from the way in which utterances (language in use) are used and how they relate to the context in which they are uttered. (Our own emphases are bracketed)

In other words, pragmatic analysis has to do with the interpretation of language used in certain conversational contexts that call for utterance interpretations. In the same vein, Levinson (1983: 27) affirms, "Pragmatics is the study of deixis, implicature, presupposition, speech acts, and aspects of discourse structure", to show that pragmatics manacles some particular and specific aspects of language. As for Gazdar (1979:2), "pragmatics, for a natural language, concerns 'illocutionary force', 'implicature', 'presupposition' and 'context-dependent acceptability'". According to Richards & Schmidt (2002:122), implicature relates to "an unwritten rule about conversation which people know and which influences the form of conversational exchanges." By way of exemplification, let us consider move A and B in the following exchange:

A: Let's go to the movies.

B: I have an examination in the morning.

As can be noticed, B's reply sounds sharply discordant from A's offer. Given that the sequence features an invitation to go to the movies, the logically expected reply should be a straightway acceptance or refusal/rejection to fit the Gricean 'maxim of relevance or relation'. However, B's involvement can sensibly

be understood as a motivated reply. Not only does his contribution stand for a soft rejection, but it also provides the substantial mobile lurking behind his option. The other unsaid dimension of the very response is that it reveals how much committed B is to his studies, proving that his examination matters more for him than going to the movies for any leisure. Both of these deductions substantiate Yule's (1996:127) concept of "invisible meaning", Horn & Ward's (2004/2006:1) "meant-but-unsaid" or Green's (2006:179) "implicit content". Meanings of such a type as are coaxed out of contextual clues are 'implicatures' by essence, while the juggling process to arrive at the result is known as "inference" (Gumperz, 1982a; Yule, 1996). Gumperz (1982: 2) refers to it as "The ability to see beyond surface content". Meyer (2009:47) also argues in the same vein that: "What people actually intend their utterances to mean is often not spelled out in the words they speak or write". Overall, a concluding contention about this process of meaning negotiation or calculation falls to Meyer (2009: 48) and reads as follows:

The interpretation of a sentence goes beyond understanding its meaning at the level of grammar. We need to understand the entire social context in which a sentence was uttered, a different level of interpretation that is studied within pragmatics, which explores the role context plays in the interpretation of what people say.

From a practical perspective, Akogbeto and Koutchadé (2013) analyzed pragmatic features in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* (1995). Through an analysis of selected excerpts from the novel using Searle's (1975) taxonomy of speech acts and Grice's conversational implicature theory, they demonstrated that understanding the illocutionary force of utterances depends on the hearer's linguistic and cultural background, as well as knowledge of the immediate local context.

From these scholars' viewpoint, analysing meaning in actual communicative situations requires examining the speaker's intentions and meaning as they are shaped by the conversational context. Conducting such research involves the formal study of utterance meaning and the properties of speech acts as instances of language in use, along with an understanding of language users' intentions.

Within the framework of discourse analysis, meaning interpretation is governed by conditions or forces known as locutionary (grammatical meaning), illocutionary (related to language roles or functions), and perlocutionary (linked to the hearer's reactions). Additionally, certain psychological rules or conditions are necessary from both the speaker and the hearer before and during the conversational event. Moreover, interactants must consider each other's social status. The psychological rules or conditions referenced here primarily relate to Conversational Implicatures, the Cooperative Principle, and the Politeness Principle. Together, the Cooperative Principle and Politeness Principle elucidate how speakers communicate ideas in ways that establish various types of relationships with their hearers.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework that underpins this study leans on three essential concepts: Conversational Implicature, Cooperative Principles and Politeness Principles.

### **Conversational Implicature**

'Conversational Implicature' is the meaning that can be indirectly figured out from what is overtly said. For Yule (1996: 134), it is the indirect or implicit meaning of an utterance as is derived from the speech context and which is not present from its conventional use. Indeed, he claims in this regard that: "Understanding how people communicate is actually a process of interpreting not just what speakers say, but what they intend to mean."

Pioneer works relating to Conversational Implicatures involve Levinson (1983, 2000) and Grice (1975). Grice has observed that Conversational Implicatures generally occur when the meaning expressed by language users is not directly encoded in the words they have openly uttered. It is then an act of meaning one thing by saying something else. From the foregoing, Grice's concept of implicature in conversation refers to the meaning that

is inferred or implied beyond the explicit meaning of the words used by the speaker. The meaning conveyed by a speaker is encoded in the lexical choice s/he has made but the understanding of this, as unveiled by the hearer most often goes beyond the words uttered. Such an inter-dependence among the three entities proves that there is no binary or one-to-one relation between what a speaker means when s/he utters something and the meaning of his/her sentences hearer grabs. This is, simply put, the basis of the pragmatic concept of conversational implicatures. Grice accounts for the principle of implicature as a broad area covering indirect answer to question (as below), figurative speeches such as irony and metaphor, non-logical readings of logical words and much else (Allot, 2010:92). Here is an illustration.

A: "Are you going to church now?"

B: "I have a presentation tomorrow"

In this short conversation, B's response is inappropriate to A's question because it is a 'yes/no question (polar question). It is then up to A to interpret or grasp a probably 'No intention' in B's reply. A is expected to perceive the reason given in what B said. Explicitly, B is indirectly saying 'No' by letting A discover that he has a presentation the following day and he is busy learning for that purpose. Such discovery of meaning by A is implicature. Therefore, Grice identifies two types of implicature qualified as conventional and conversational.

Conventional implicatures are always indicated by the presence of linguistic expressions like but, even, therefore, and yet while conversational implicatures vary from a speaker A to a speaker B according to contexts of use (Meibauer, 2011). The interpretation of a conversation does need anything extra-textual before being plausible. This means that the meaning is carried out beyond the words used in the sentences or propositions. Reversely, semantic implications or logical meanings stand independent of the cooperative principle and contextual indications since everything is explicit.

As for Conversational implicatures, they are propositions we convey in daily conversations. They "are not explicit in our utterances but are merely implied by them. Sometimes, we can draw such inferences only by referring to what has been explicitly said, to some conversational principle. In certain of these cases, we are dealing with the conversational implicature" (Bilmes 1986:27). Conversational implicature can thus be viewed as the way hearers understand an utterance in a conversation in accordance with what they 'expect' to hear. Consequently, implicature means an allusion which a speaker indicates intentionally by means of language. In this case, the message that the speaker utters may be understood by the hearer except when the latter refers to some invisible aspects or context of the utterance. Grice (1975) distinguishes two subcategories viz. Generalized Conversational Implicatures (GCI) and Particularized Conversational Implicatures (PCI).

It is worth mentioning that the GCI entails the presence of marked expressions that call for marked interpretations in the utterances of the speakers. They imply the enrichment of what the speakers said. The manifestation of GCI relates to the maxims of manner and quantity. This arises without any particular context and special scenario being necessary. For instance, let's consider the following example:

A: Have you swept the rooms?

B: I've swept the living-room.

From this example, it can be figured out that B has not swept the bedroom as it is not mentioned in her answer. The information or inference of generalized implicature is obtained by using word, which expresses one value from scale of values. Some examples are: all, always, some, few, sometimes, generally, etc. In the previous example, one may think it more valuable for B to say: "Not all the rooms but only the living-room is swept. Particularized Conversational Implicature (PCI) in opposition to GCI, is context dependent.

### **Cooperative Principle**

More often, we all know how to make a conversation with others. However, few people can expound what is necessary to have a conversation going on wheels. Grice (1975), in his 'Logic and Conversation', noticed that human language is a creative and flexible system that makes communication, but for the communication to be not only possible but also successful, it should possess certain qualities. Grice (1975) proposes that in ordinary

conversation, speakers and hearers share a Cooperative Principle (CP). The CP itself stands as follows, “Make your conversation contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (Grice, 1975: 45). It implies that speakers need not supply information they can assume that hearers already have.

Grice (1975) also analyzes cooperation as involving four Maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation or Relevance, and Manner. Speakers give enough and not too much information to accord the maxim of quantity. They are genuine and sincere, speaking truth or facts to meet the maxim of quality. Utterances are related to the context of the speech to fill the maxim of relation. Speakers try to present meaning clearly and concisely, avoiding ambiguity to satisfy the maxim of manner. His cooperative principle assumes that language users tacitly agree to cooperate by making their contributions dovetailed with the discourse context as is required by the current stage of the talk or the direction into which it develops. Hence, “the use of conversational maxims to imply meaning during conversation is called conversational implicature, and the co-operation between speakers in using the maxims is sometimes called the co-operative principle” (Richards & Schimdt, 2002:122).

### **Politeness Principle**

Pioneers of the Politeness Principle (*PP*) involve Brown & Levinson (1978) and Leech (1983). They claim that interlocutors need to prove polite to each other during a conversational act. Regarding how self-respect stands central to shaping interpersonal meaning, scholars have identified the concept of *Face* (Leech, 1983; Yule, 1996; Stockwell, 2007). In fact, the *face* of a person relates to the image of his self-prestige and dignity. Stockwell (2007: 223) refers to it as “What you lose when you are embarrassed or humiliated in public”. Thus, two polar variants are identified in the concept: a positive *face* and a negative *face*. One’s *face* is positive when one maintains and manifests membership in a social group. This variant shows up in altruist, lovely and sociable people. Reversely, one’s *face* is negative when one displays individualism and a sense of seclusion from other social fellows. As to ways how social interactions can bear on people’s *Face*, the authors have distinguished favourable from disfavourable deeds. This differentiation leads to such sub-concepts as *face-saving acts* (i.e.; acts/behaviours protecting or catering for a person’s social image) and *face threatening acts* as meant to harm the social prestige of one’s interlocutor. Such acts include rebuking, defaming, denigrating and any other kinds belittling a person’s personality). In a much further attempt, Leech (1983) itemizes the *PP* into such sub-aspects as maxims of agreement, of generosity, approbation, modesty, sympathy, and tact. These sub-variants are all meant to display face-saving acts or to avoid frustrating a speech addressee. However, it matters to mention that the validity of this principle is also to be relativized. The issue of politeness is not a standard fact, but rather a culturally changing construct.

### **Research Methodology**

To substantiate the operative conditions of this study, five systematically selected excerpts from the novel are analysed to demonstrate how characters use language to achieve their communicative objectives. To maintain a well-defined research methodology, these selected passages are segmented into adjacency pairs and presented in tabular format, allowing for a clear and systematic analysis of the corpus data. For each excerpt, the relevant conversational maxims are identified, with attention given to instances of adherence or violation, thus enhancing the analytical approach to the data. This is followed by an interpretation of the findings, leading to an overall assessment and concluding recommendations.

## **ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

**Table 1: Reckless and apologetical early life of a village boy in city**

Passage itemized into Sequences	Utterances	Maxim	Compliance	Flouting
Sequence1	'Good morning, Sah.' 'There is a strong roasted-chicken smell here.' 'Sorry, Sah,'	Relevance Manner	✓	✓
Sequence2	'Where is the chicken?' Ugwu fumbled in his shorts' pockets and brought out the chicken pieces.	Relevance	✓	✓
Sequence3	'Do your people eat while they sleep? Master asked. He was wearing something that looked like a woman's coat and was absently twirling the rope tied round his waist. 'Sah?'	Relevance	Elicitation	
Sequence4	'Did you want to eat the chicken while in bed?' 'No, Sah?'	Relevance	✓	
Sequence5	'Food will stay in the dining room and the kitchen.' 'Yes, Sah.'	Relevance	✓	

**Source:** Data collected from page 9. (Our own tabulation)

This passage numbers five sequences of adjacent pairs. It involves two sub-classes of conversational maxims: Relevance and Manner. The predominance of occurrence falls to the first type: Sequences2 through 5 versus only one Manner-type to be seen in Sequence1. As all orders or commands come from his Master and Ugwu has but comply by a binary response as either “Yes, Sah” or “No, Sah?”, one can sense out of this conversation an asymmetrical interpersonal tenure of Master-to-boy type, with the second proving quite submissive to the first. Besides, the sharp dominance of compliance in Ugwu’s answers couples with the flouting displayed in Sequences 1 and 2 to better highlight Master’s ascendancy over the boy. Actually, to Ugwu’s greeting move as “Good morning, Sah”, Master rather opposes a deviating remark as “There is a strong roasted-chicken smell here.” To this patronizing statement, Ugwu can but reply apologetically as “Sorry, Sah”, which presumes him not only to be recognizing himself faulty, but also begging for mercy. Sequence2 comes in to afford further evidence to the contention. So, to a question as “Where is the chicken?” is opposed a gesture-reply as “Ugwu fumbled in his shorts’ pockets and brought out the chicken pieces.”

From this conversation between Master and Ugwu about the ‘roasted-chicken’, it can be noticed that something is missing in Ugwu to react promptly to Master’s questions. In the light of Conversational Maxims, Master has put all the required information so that Ugwu could easily grasp or understand his questions. His contribution satisfies the maxim of quantity. Master is saying what is true (roasted-chicken smelling), but Ugwu feint not to get it once. His elicitation question features hypocritical hedging and violates the maxim of quality. Looking at the maxim of relevance and manner, his question hardly satisfies them. Altogether, in the first part of this conversation, Cooperative Principles have been respected.

In this second part of the same passage, which is about ‘sleeping with chicken issue’, the maxim of Manner is flouted because of the ambiguity and unclearness or clarity in the question by Odenigbo considering the status of Ugwu as inferior to his master’s. This infringes the Manner-maxim and helps to get the boy entrapped all the more as he has had to bring the chicken pieces out of his pockets. This maxim’s infringement has thus served to play a trick on the boy. We then assume that as the vocative form ‘Ugwu, my good man’ has served to lull the boy into complying with Odenigbo’s expected answer.

By considering both sides of this conversation, one comes up with understanding that Ugwu’s matter to react promptly has not been found in Politeness, but in the maxim of Manner causing Particularized Conversational Implicature. Although Master has successfully completed Cooperative Principles, Ugwu looks confused and asks Master to repeat the question but, indirectly and politely, (“Sorry, Sah?”). Regarding the Quality-maxim, it is found that the question features some apparent truthful remorse.

**Table 2: Featuring a Teacher-to-learner tenure**

Passage itemized into Sequences	Utterances	Maxims	Compliance	Flouting
Sequence1	Do you know where Congo is? Master asked. 'No, sah.'	Relevance; Quantity; Quality & Manner	✓	
Sequence2	Master got up quickly and went into the study. Ugwu's confused fear made his eyelids... He pointed with his pen...	Relation Manner & Quality		
Sequence3	This is our world, although the people who drew this map decided to put their own land on top of ours. There is no top or bottom, you see'. Master picked the paper and folded it,... 'Our world is round, it never ends. Nee anya, this is all water, the seas and oceans, and here's Europe and here's our own continent, Africa, and the Congo is in the middle. Further up here is Nigerian...where we are.' He tapped with his pen. 'Yes, sah'.	Relevance; Quantity & Quality	✓	

Source: Data collected from page 10. (Our own tabulation)

Though this passage involves just three sequences, it proves rich enough with all types of conversational maxims. All four types identified by Grice (1975) are present. Aside from Sequence 2 where the boy's gesture in "He pointed with his pen" proves him hypocritical and violates the Quality-Maxim, all other contributions are well dovetailed to afford a smooth working dialogical exchange. There is good cooperation, then.

This passage is about "Where is Congo?" which has not lasted long because Master has been as informative as required, truthful, clear, orderly and relevant in his unique and opening question as to locating Congo. Ugwu too, in responding has been brief and truthful. In Sequence1 Master's involvement proves brief but clear enough to meet the boy's easy understanding. Thus, his reply is clear of any hedging: "No, Sah". The clear-cut nature of the reply also proves the boy to be sincere. Any other way round would feature hypocrisy. But in Sequence 2, as Master got up to reach the study, fear has caused the boy to point his pen to something he has just confessed not to know. This gesture, though relating to the question stands ambiguous and prove the boy not to be veridical at this point. Maxims of Quality and Manner are thus all violated or flouted. In sequence3, Master provides plenty of geographical explanations about the location of Congo on the earth before re-stating his very initial question. Thenceforth, the boy's reply now turns positive and proves him to have eventually gained the correct ability to tell the location of Congo on the earth. There is good evidence then sense out that the lesson is known to him. A logical inference to draw directly from the fact is that clarity of instruction or explanation favours smooth conversation and oils mutual understanding. The whole scenario substantiates the merits of good explanations in any pedagogical context.

*Analysis and results derived from extract 3*

**Table 3: Featuring a tenure of emancipated interpersonal relations**

Passage itemized into Sequences	Utterances	Maxim	Compliance	Flouting
Sequence1	'Did you go to school?' 'Standard two, sah. But I learn everything fast.'	Relevance; Manner & Quantity	✓	✓
Sequence2	'Standard two? How long ago?' 'Many years now, sah. But I learn everything very fast!'	Relevance; Manner & Quantity	✓	✓
Sequence3	'Why did you stop school?' 'My father's crops failed sah.'	Relevance & Quantity		✓
Sequence4	Master nodded slowly. 'Why didn't your father find somebody to lend him your school fees?' 'Sah?'	Relevance	Elicitation	
Sequence5	'Your father should have borrowed!' Master snapped, and then, in English, Education is a priority! How can we resist exploitation if we don't have the tools to understand exploitation?'	Relevance Quantity		✓

	'Yes, Sah!' Ugwu nodded vigorously...			
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**Source:** Data collected from pages 10-11 (Our own tabulation)

Five sequences of adjacent pairs can be identified in this passage and are marked with a predominant attitude of maxim flouting. Relevance; Manner and Quantity are the three types to be noticed and are more often violated. The blackout absence of Quality-Maxim proves the contents of the passage to be quite subjective, setting some doubt about the veridicality of the meanings being traded. Also, the flouting of the Manner-Maxim alludes to some deliberate option preferred by interlocutors to hedge about their conversational intents, rather than call a spade by its true name. Only the relation-Maxim is respected twice in sequences 1 and 2 to set the dialogue in motion. Elicitation comes out in sequence4 from the boy as a ground confusing attitude meant to create imbroglio as to understanding or not a though-clear question as “Why didn’t your father find somebody to lend him your school fees?” This is just an elusive way to feint providing any expected answer.

In this passage about Ugwu’s schooling, Master has tried to be as informative as required, true, relevant and clear enough. Nevertheless, Ugwu, from the first step of the conversation, flouts the Maxim of manner. To the question: Did you go to school? Ugwu has failed to provide a straight answer. Even to the following question, he also flouts manner, leading Master to indulge in implicature. However, Master has nodded and tries slowly to understands it. Then Master himself has flouted the maxim of manner because he seems to be ambiguous and unclear in Ugwu’s mind that school fees could be lent. For this reason, he puts clarification question, which is nodded at by Master. Master provides therefore more information as required before Ugwu could answer “sah”, though stands for no logical answer indeed.

Master, in correcting simultaneously his maxims failure, in making his best to build up implicatures, enables this conversation to run its course and makes and it performance successful.

*Analysis and results derived from extract 4*

**Table 4: Featuring a friendly interpersonal tenure**

Passage itemized into Sequences	Utterances	Maxim	Compliance	Flouting
Sequence1	'Can you make tea?' 'No, sah. But I learn fast,' Ugwu said. The singing...	Relevance & Quantity	✓	✓
Sequence2	'I eat mostly at the staff club. I suppose I shall have to bring more food home now that yo/u are here.' 'Sah, I can cook.'	Quantity & Relevance	✓	✓
Sequence3	'You cook?' Ugwu nodded	Relevance	✓	
Sequence4	'Well,you can cook your own food then,' Master said. 'Write a list of what you'll need.' 'Yes, sah.'	Relevance	✓	
Sequence5	'You wouldn't know how to get to the market, would you? I'll ask Jomo to show you.' 'Jomo, sah?' Jomo takes care of the compound. He comes in three times a week.	Relevance & Quantity		✓
Sequence6	'Funny man, I've seen him talking to the croton plant.' Master paused. 'Anyway, he'll be here tomorrow.'	Relevance		✓

**Source:** Data collected from page 12. (Our own tabulation)

Passage 4 is broken into 06 adjacent pairs involving predominantly Relevance and Quantity Maxims. While the relevance-type functions to cements involvements from either interlocutor to build up a coherent conversation, the Quantity-Maxim is bluntly violated everywhere. The best share of this violation rather falls to the boy who often happens to say much more than he is asked. This prolixity stands quite symbolical of the fair-play relational climate linking him now to his Master. There is no clue of any ascendancy or submissiveness. The boy feels pretty free to tell or over-tell his mind to his Master. The relation between them has turned balanced and democratized all the more since all age or rank gaps look bridged or overlooked.



This conversation is still about Ugwu’s ability to cook. Master’s questions match with Cooperative Principles except from Jomo’s name called by him, which is strange to Ugwu. Master, from this step of the conversation, violates the maxim of quantity. This failure (not as informative as required) causes Ugwu to seek information about the strange name (by Jomo, sah?). Master’s awareness of his failure from himself tries to supply the odd by providing full information about Jomo to Ugwu. Ugwu, in putting the next question infringes the maxim of quality and that of manner due to the imperfect command of language (untruthfulness and unclearness).

These maxims, once infringed, oblige Master to put a clarification question (Wood?). Ugwu’s answer in his mind attends to solve the infringement in providing more details about what he meant by wood in accordance with the maxim of quantity. Master has then used particularized implicature to understand what he is meaning. To make him sure that he has got it, he adds “Oh yes, shelves” to correct the infringement, and then promises that he will speak to Work Department. These utterances match with Cooperative Principles which allow Ugwu to answer “Yes, Sah”.

Here, both parties have failed during the conversation. Concerning Master, there is violation of maxim of quantity, whereas the infringement of maxim of quality and that of manner hails from Ugwu’s side. However, they have finally succeeded in correcting their failures in order to reach their common conversation point. They finally ended joyfully and accordingly without verbal confrontation or attack either.

*Analysis and results derived from extract 5*

**Table 5: Featuring some patchwork tenure in a dangling marital life**

Passage itemized into Sequences	Utterances	Maxim	Compliance	Flouting
Sequence1	“Are we still trying to have a child?” ...” Of course we are,” he said. “Or aren’t we?”	Relevance & Quantity	✓ & Elicitation	
Sequence2	Olanna said nothing... A foggy sadness... He certainly had been rocked.	Relevance & Quantity	✓	✓
Sequence3	Ugwu came in to clear the table. “Get me some brandy, my good man,” Odenigbo said. “Yes, sah.”	Relevance	✓	
Sequence4	Odenigbo waited for ..... He said “I asked Richard to stop coming here.” “What happened?” “I saw him on the road near... and told him off.”	Relevance & Quantity		✓
Sequence5	“What did you say to him?” “I don’t remember.”	Relevance		✓
Sequence6	“You don’t want to tell me.” “I don’t remember.”	Relevance		✓
Sequence7	“Was anybody else there?” “His houseboy came out.” They sat on ... he had.	Relevance		✓
Sequence8	“I never blamed Amala,” she said. “It was to you that I had given ..... I blame only you. Odenigbo placed his hand on her thigh.	Relevance	✓	

**Source:** Data collected from pages 245-246. (Our own tabulation)

Passage 5 encompasses eight (08) adjacent pairs. The conversational trade at stake here involves Odenigbo and Olanna as husband and wife. The predominant conversational maxim is of Relevance-type Flouting and compliance are equally shared about it by three rounds apiece. Quantity-Maxim shows up three times (in Sequences 1, 2 and 4) while Manner and Quality-Maxims are definitely absent. These facts prove the conversation to be casual and its contents quite subjective. Though the equality featured in the reciprocal compliance and flouting of Relevance-Maxim points some display of democratized marital life, the total absence Manner and Quality-maxim sets some doubt as to the dosage of sincerity binding this couple. The passage seems to allude to some cheating impetuses, given none of the involvements relates to a frontal matter-of-fact declaration. Hedging and feinting are characteristic features of most responses and offer good supporting evidence to doubt as to truthfulness of the love binging up this couple.

This last conversation is about Reconciliation. It takes place between Odenigbo and Olanna. Odenigbo as well as Olanna are involved from the very beginning of this conversation. The abrupt shifting of Odenigbo to his last warning to Richard flouts the maxims of relevance and Quantity because it compels Olanna to search for more information about another matter being just introduced. Without delaying, she seeks this information by asking Odenigbo (“what happens?”). Odenigbo in the following first, second, and third question steps, violates the maxims of quantity and quality; causing implicature to Olanna. To grab the implicature and make him match with the maxim of manner, Olanna in her turn puts three different questions (“what did you say to him?”, “You don’t want to tell me?” and “Was anybody there?”) before Odenigbo could finally utter: “His houseboy came out”.

This utterance matches up with the maxim of quality and relevance but is still violating the maxims of quantity and manner because Odenigbo is not yet as informative as required. He is still remaining unclear in his answer. Once more again, Olanna thinking that Odenigbo did not have the right to harass Richard, to direct his anger at Richard, becomes aware of Odenigbo’s ambiguity (anger). She directly takes turn by showing that she does not direct her anger at Amala, asserting that she has blamed only the latter. This assertion responds to the maxims of quantity, quality and relevance and causes Odenigbo to place his thigh: First act of reconciliation. Olanna then adds that he has to vent his anger on her instead of Richard. Toward this conclusion from Olanna and after so long silence, Odenigbo has deliberately and truly uttered “I want to be angry with you”.

Those allegations from both lines up with all four maxims, given that they are as informative as required, true, relevance and clear. Besides, this declaration from Odenigbo showing defenselessness incited Olanna to kneel before him and to unbutton his shirt. This turns the scene into romance and ended by love affair: Second act of reconciliation.

Odenigbo, in this conversation, has generated implicature by violating maxims of quantity and manner; but Olanna, due to her education level (Sociology Professor) which is far beyond Ugwu’s, has succeeded to understand the implicatures and clear up the ambiguities to create normal atmosphere of conversation between Odenigbo and herself.

## **DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

Overall, the five passages at stake in this study feature two major categories of interpersonal relations. While data in passages 1 through 4 depict undulating relations between a Master (Odenigbo) and his houseboy (Ugwu), the fifth passage deals with some juggling patchwork toward reconciling a marital life as is showcased through the relational climate between Odenigbo and his wife, Olanna.

At the first level, the boy’s connection with his master has experienced great quality improvements, given that the early fright weighing over the new city-boy has taken no long time to vanish. Odenigbo has proved so much affable to the new village-hailing lad that his integration in, and adaptation to, city realities are oiled for swift attainment. It is very important to know that Ugwu is a village boy from Opi who later becomes a servant in Odenigbo’s house. Under Odenigbo and his wife Olanna’s guidance, Ugwu is afforded a chance to continue his education, and his literary skills are shown to go progressing throughout the novel, considering some passages from the extracts. The whole plot in these passages offers a good tuition as to managing housemaids or lads. It is a call for attitudinal change and trend re-orientation in the field. Those young people too are children to some parents and do have a right to good education to build up a happier future for themselves and for their families. There is a great need to reckon that pervasive practices in the housekeeping job as quite unfair and identify ways and means to get them recalibrated. No true and sustainable happiness and a community development can be achieved with any so sharply asymmetric well-being. The gap urges to get relatively bridged for enhancing shared welfare: the most alert way to warrant social security indeed.

As for the reconciliation patchwork between Odenigbo and his wife, Olanna’s kneeling down to her husband till having the whole debate merge into a love affair is symbolical of African ‘Womanism’ as is willed by Adeleke (1996) as well as Acholonou’s (1995) ‘Motherism’. As a matter of fact, in chastising the airtight radicalism featuring Buchi Emecheta, Molaria Ogundimu-Leslie and Ama Atta Aidoo’s westernized feminism, Acholonou (1995: 92) contends that “they have misunderstood feminism to be synonymous with confrontation, militancy

and aggression.” Considering the case at stake in this study, any such radicalism could have spoiled the marital relation and provoked divorce, the consequential aftermaths of which are far ranging and unpredictable. As a result, far from any sign of weakness, this show of flexibility displayed by Olanna is a telling option meant by the writer to poke up resistance to break in African marital couples. Indeed, divorce is a danger to children’s education and a poison to community development even more since educational flaw in children greases the land for licentious adulthood to help social insecurity flourish.

## CONCLUSION

The present study has conducted a pragmatic analysis of selected excerpts from Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*, focusing specifically on contextual meaning—namely, what the characters aim to achieve with their utterances and how hearers interpret these intentions. The study also examines the general principles that guide these inferences. It is thus concluded that effective communication relies not only on general knowledge of social conventions but also on specific understanding of the local context of each utterance.

Through a content analysis, the study reveals how various implicatures are realized in the selected dialogues. Pragmatic elements such as Conversational Implicatures, Cooperative Principles, and Politeness Principles are applied to interpret the implied meanings conveyed by the characters. This approach sheds light on how language is used by the characters as a tool for social integration and harmony during the challenging period of the Nigerian Civil War. Moreover, the study highlights the profound influence of social status and the power of utterances in everyday language use within African societies, particularly in Nigeria.

Finch (1997/2003, p. 127) asserts, “Much of our linguistic life is spent trying to either understand others (our interlocutors) or to make sure that they understand us.” This mutual understanding is essential for fostering communal well-being in every respect.

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