GAP-FILLING AS AN EXPLICATURAL STRATEGY IN FICTIONAL DISCOURSE: THE EXAMPLE OF CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE'S *PURPLE HIBISCUS*

Adeniyi Osunbade, PhD

English Unit, Department of General Studies
Ladoke Akintola University of Technology
PMB 4000, Ogbomoso, Nigeria

ABSTRACT: *Two notable approaches have preoccupied the analysis of Adichie's Purple Hibiscus (PH) in humanistic scholarship, namely, the literary and linguistic ones, with greater attention from the former. Linguistic studies on PH have largely benefitted from the stylistic, discoursal and pragmatic perspectives. This paper complements the pragmatic attempts in its adoption of Sperber and Wilson's relevance theoretic notion of explicature in carrying out a pragmatic investigation of how gap-filling is deployed to recover explicit meanings of conversations with respect to Adichie's thematic foci across the discourse domains of conversations in PH, sampling forty percent of the transactions in the novel. The findings reveal the recovery of the themes of domestic discourse and resistance against domestic violence in Domestic Discourse (DD); leadership crisis, which features as deprivation of the citizens social amenities on the one hand and corruption on the other in Political Discourse (PD); and rejection of religious imposition in Religious Discourse (RD) as part of the communicated assumptions in characters' utterances in the text. The paper concludes that this relevance-constrained cognitive investigation of explicatures of conversations in Adichie's PH facilitates access to a contextually derived espousal of domestic, political, and religious matters in this text, thereby providing a better access to the overall interpretation of the text.*

KEYWORDS: Gap-Filling, Strategy, Fictional Discourse, Adichie, Contextually Derived, Explicit Meanings

INTRODUCTION

Literary discourse can be construed as the discourse of literature. Viewing it as existential discourse, Grill (2011) opines that a literary discourse captures how a person existentially captured an event. He maintains that it is an existential experience of a given situation and it is different from other discourses, as it is a very specific articulation. Thus, a literary discourse is best characterised as one dealing with the refraction of the existential experiences of human beings in all types of human situations.

Studies have paid attention to the exploration of different types of literary discourse identifiable in humanistic literature, namely, transactional, expressive and poetic ones. Linguistic studies on transactional literary discourse, for instance, have concentrated on such discourses of business communication as advertising (cf. Piller 2003, Babatunde and Ayodele 2010), editorial articles (see Ansary and Babaii 2004, Odebunmi 2007, etc.); those on discourse of expressive literary discourse have explored errors/deviations in students' essays (Phillips 1992, Nael & Hijjo 2013), structures as well as language use in academic essays abstracts (cf. Lores 2004, Pho 2008, Suntara and Siriluck 2013); while studies on poetic literary discourse have been devoted to the application of linguistic theories to the genres of drama (Adegbite 2005, Adeniji 2009), poetry (Widdowson 1984, Freeman 2005) and prose (Tunca 2008, Osunbade

2010). Within the genre of prose, the analysis of fictional novels of different authors across the globe has received more scholarly attentions, especially with respect to how language is used to communicate various themes and ideologies of the authors as significant parts of their messages to the readers, towards refracting the realities of the totalities of the identifiable existential human experiences.

With respect to Adichie's novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, which serves as my data source for the present study, linguistic scholarly works have been carried out from different perspectives, namely, stylistic (Tunca 2009, Ibhawaegbele and Edokpayi's 2012), pragmatic (Osunbade 2010) and discoursal (Udumukwu 2011, Lawal and Lawal 2013). Tunca (2009) is a stylistic analysis of *Purple Hibiscus*, which concentrates on Kambili's use of language to facilitate a deep understanding of how the thematic notions of freedom and oppression are woven into the novel, especially with recourse to Fowler's theory of "mind-style". Ibhawaegbele and Edokpayi's (2012) study focuses code-switching and code-mixing as stylistic devices in three Nigerian prose fiction, among which is *purple hibiscus*. Osunbade (2010) explores contextual enrichment of referring expressions in utterance interpretation in *Purple Hibiscus*, adopting Sperber and Wilson's (1986) Relevance Theory to aid character presentation, location of settings of events, indexing of specific events/objects and to achieve cohesive effects in the advancement of the plot of the novel as well as to reveal the thematic foci of the author. Udumukwu (2011), however, analyses *Purple Hibiscus* with consideration for issues of ideology, adopting element of voice as a strategy for the constitution of the interplay of subject and interpellation.

However, as the foregoing reveals, to the best of our knowledge, no pragmatic investigation of gap-filling in the recovery of the explicit contents of characters' conversations in *Purple Hibiscus* has been attempted in linguistic scholarship. The present study therefore fills this gap. Our choice of Adichie's *PH* is further spurred by two factors. The first is our recognition of the literary ingenuity of Adichie, especially as a young Nigerian writer who emerged on the literary scene to record success that eludes most of his contemporaries. The second is the novel's ingenious refracted representation of the domestic, religious and political experiences of Nigerians, which earned it the prestigious Commonwealth Award as contemporary classic novel. For data, forty percent of the conversations in the novels, determined by transactional boundaries, across the different domains of discourse we identified in the novel were sampled and subjected to content analysis with the aim of identifying the explicated speaker's meanings in them through the explicatural theoretical tool of gap-filling. This is ultimately significant for aiding a better understanding of Adichie's thematic foci in the novel within the tenets of African literature, especially as applicable to the Nigerian situation.

Fictional Conversational Discourse and Discourse Types

Fictional discourse is the discourse of fiction. According to Boulton (1980), fiction can be referred to as "an imaginative form of narrative, one of the four basic rhetorical modes conceived by the artist to illuminate some truth about the human condition". Fictional discourse is therefore the use of language in fictional works to copy reality. The fact is that language may be deployed via dialogue in fiction such as it is in drama, or through narrative as well as conversational mode commonly found in the novel, which is a prominent genre of fiction. Fictional conversational discourse, which is central to the present study, however, refers to characters talk or direct speech in the novel, being an archetypal representation of everyday

talk in the author's fictional universe. In rendering the conversational discourse, a fictional writer appeals to "a special kind of realism, a special *kind* of authenticity, in representing the kind of language which a reader can recognise as being characteristic of a particular situation" (Leech & Short 2007: 129).

The fact, however, is that the writer of a novel as a literary fiction does not aim at a completely realistic representation of the features of ordinary conversation, given that real conversation is not likely to be promising material for literary employment, as it is largely sloppy, banal and ill-organised (Leech and Short 2007:131). Usually, obviously lacking therefore are such features of normal non-fluency as hesitation pauses, false starts, syntactic anomalies, etc. As Leech and Short (2007:130) say, "these features are non-fluent in the sense that they fall short of an 'ideal' delivery, and yet they are normal in the sense that they occur habitually in speech". Their absence thus indicates "an idealised picture of the coherence of conversation" (Leech and Short 2007:133), which is a notable feature of fictional conversational discourse.

Significantly, it is typical to find in novels conversations of the characters captured in direct speech and a robust narrative portion, usually much more elaborate than the conversational portion (see Boulton 1980:33). Nevertheless, the use of fictional speech known as "conversations" remains an important discourse style used by a novelist in conveying a significant portion of his/her message to the reader(s) (Ibid 2007:128). Conversations, essentially, take place between characters in the novel and these conversations are, of course, embedded within the talk between the narrator and his/her interlocutors.

Notably, in conversation, different types of discourse provide the background for the discussion of different topics. Sarangi, who popularises the notion of discourse type, defines discourse types as the specific manifestations of language forms in their interactional contexts (see Sarangi 2000). Construing discourse type as a way of characterising forms of talk, I have used the notion of discourse types broadly in an earlier study to capture routine communicative activities in everyday settings (see Osunbade 2013: 46). Such settings indicative of different discourse types in our data in the present study are therefore the domestic, political and religious ones.

Thematic Contexts of Adichie's Novels and Summary of *PH*

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has been described by scholars as a relatively new voice of Nigerian literature whose literary success has eluded most writers in the post-colonial Nigeria, given her literary ingenuity (see Heather 2005, Bruce 2006). She has written drama, prose, and poetry, but she is better known as a novelist on the popularity of her award winning novels. It is therefore relevant to attempt a thematic contextualization of her novels, so as to reveal how her novels are accommodated within the African worldview and mirror different experiences of Africans as illustrated with Nigeria. Our contextual consideration here is thus limited to the thematic milieu within the fictional universe of *purple hibiscus* and *half of a yellow sun* Adichie has refracted in the development of African literature.

With respect to her thematic context, Adichie draws upon personal experiences, to a certain degree, in the explication of her themes. Mainly, her novels are a product of socio-political as well as historical experiences of Nigeria, being reactions and counter reactions to socio-political events in the country. For instance, *PH* (2003) presents the chaotic state of post-independent Nigeria as well as Africa in general, orchestrated by tyrannical military leaders. This experience is projected through the family of Eugene, who draconically rules his family,

yet appears as a societal model. Foregrounded in the novel is the embodied experience of female characters in Nigeria, thereby thematising domestic violence vis-a- vis gender brutality as we have in the situations of Kambili and her mother, Beatrice, who suffer untold brutality in the hand of Eugene, Kambili's father and Beatrice's husband, especially on domestic and religious matters that should not result in abuse. The family eventually reacts to the unending violent abuse by resisting his abusive moves and violating his order openly or silently. Thematic foci such as resistance of violence, rejection of imposition, etc. thus become manifest in the text. The romantic feelings of Kambili, her heroine, for Father Amadi, a young priest and the love of Ifeoma for her father and her children are equally depicted to lend credence to the thematisation of love in the novel.

In *HYS*, which is the second novel of Adichie, she underpins such themes as domestic conflict, love, inequality, tribalism, corruption, inhumanity and ethnic conflict in her presentation of Nigeria in the 1960s as a turbulent, tension-soaked country as a result of the conflict between the Hausa and the Igbo who sought to secede from Nigeria after the widespread massacres of their people in the North, leading to the war of succession tagged "Biafran War". Generally, Adichie's novels project the socio-political malaise of the modern Africa at large and Nigeria in particular. Her thematic pre-occupation with the exposition and condemnation of all forms of social, political, domestic, and religious ills in the society are however with a view to improving the condition of humans.

PH, which is our data source for this study, presents the political, domestic and religious experiences in Nigeria. The agonising pain of traumatic experiences of the draconian leaderships (both within the family, through the family of Eugene Achike; and society at large) being experienced by Nigerians are captured. Eugene is an archetype of the wealthy man is the society. He is religiously conservative, within the Catholic tradition and he appears to uphold moral standards, by using his newspaper, *the standard*, to challenge the socio-political oddity and abuse of power that characterizes the governance in the post-independent Nigeria. However, he is as draconian and abusive as the leaders whom he attacks, as he constantly batters his wife and uses other violent means to correct members of his family, causing them both physical and psychological destructions. Following exposure to a life-affirming and positive disposition of their aunt, Ifeoma, to her family during a holiday they spend with her, the children eventually desire freedom from their father's subjugation. kambili begins to voice out, Jaja starts to be defiant and consequently, their mother too starts to disobey her husband. Beatrice ends up poisoning Eugene so as to secure their freedom, which 'Purple Hibiscus' metaphorically connotes, from his inhumane acts towards them, not minding to face the wrath of the law.

Relevance Theoretical Notion of Explicature

To provide the essential theoretical background for the examination of gap-filling in the recovery of thematic concerns of the author in our data, insights are drawn from the theoretical concept of explicature as advanced by relevance theorists.

The concept of explicature was coined by Sperber and Wilson in their relevance theory (henceforth RT) to account for the search for relevance as a basic feature of human cognition which communicators may exploit in acts of communication (see Sperber and Wilson 1986, Wilson and Sperber 2006). RT's central claim is that the expectations of relevance raised by an utterance are precise and predictable enough to guide the hearer toward the speaker's meaning, especially on the explicit side (Wilson and Sperber 2006:607). These explicit sides

of utterances technically dubbed explicatures are assumptions derived by pragmatic enrichment of the linguistically encoded logical forms of utterances (see Carston 2006:645). They are constructed inferentially by using contextual information to complete and enrich the logical forms encoded by utterances into complete propositional forms. They are thus composed of a combination of linguistically encoded and contextually inferred conceptual elements (Papi 2009:157).

Literatures on relevance theory have noted that explicatures are relevance-constrained; that is, the principle of relevance is able to constrain the process of enrichment into explicatures, so that the logical forms are prevented from being overloaded (cf. Sperber and Wilson 1986, Cartson 2006, Papi 2009). Significantly, the linguistic decoding of an utterance in the enrichment process takes cognizance of varying degrees of processing efforts, especially depending on the complexity of the utterance involved. As such, the higher the processing effort, the lower the relevance of the utterance and vice versa (see Yus 1999, Papi 2009). According to Papi (2009:158), the processing efforts have reliance on the context of assumptions against which the cognitive impact of the utterance can be assessed to derive an explicature and these assumptions are usually either set up on the basis of pre-existing assumptions or other possible ones drawn from the physical environment of the conversation. The fact is that the interaction of explicature with the contextual assumptions required for a complete interpretation of the speaker's intentions involves the application of varying inferential rules (Papi ibid). Human cognitive system therefore necessarily limits the enrichment to the context which provides the relevant proposition, that is, the most economically processed as well as the informationally richest one (see Sperber and Wilson 1986, Papi 2009).

Blakemore (1992:102) has established that enrichment captures the *whole essence* of relevance theory, especially in its emphasis on the development of an initial assumption schema to a fully elaborated propositional form; and according to (Odebunmi 2007: 85), this enrichment accounts for the recovery of explicature through such pragmatic processes as gap-filling, reference assignment, bridging, disambiguation. Within RT, gap-filling, which is the explicatural strategy focused in this study refers to "a fully inferential grammatically-induced contextual completion of incomplete logical form of an utterance" (Osunbade 2013:49). The word gap itself is a term in linguistics that refers to the absence of a linguistic unit at a place in a pattern of relationships where one might have been expected (see Crystal 2008: 205). The term occurs in relevance pragmatics to presuppose the absence of a context-determined assumption which can be inferentially recoverable in the logical form of an utterance. A 'gap' in RT tradition appears in the incomplete propositional form. Therefore, a case where an essential piece of information must be recovered by the hearer is not considered as gap if it is not usual to provide this information explicitly. The implication of this assumption is that what is explicitly encoded in the linguistic form of the utterance is devoid of certain elaborations needed to make it logically complete. As will be clear from the analysis that follows, the strategy involving context-assisted elaborations of such incomplete explicitly encoded information is therefore what is referred to as gap-filling.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Our study finds out that the explicatural strategy of gap-filling features fairly differently across three discourse types in *PH* to explicitly project different thematic foci of Adichie in the novel.

Gap-filling in Domestic Discourse in *PH*

Domestic discourse (henceforth DD), in this study, is conceived of as a discourse that borders on family lives or the totality of the domestic experiences of the characters in the novels. Within the context of DD in our data, two thematic foci of Adichie manifest, namely, domestic violence and resistance against domestic violence. The theme of domestic violence in *PH* is associated with Eugene and it manifests in his cruel abuse of his family, resulting in physical and psychological pains. This theme carries the largest proportion of the total themes relating to DD in the text, and its recovery is largely enhanced by gap-filling, given that Eugene, who indulges in violent acts against his family, autocratically ensures that his wife and children remain silent over the subject of his brutalities. The following instance can be considered:

Example 1:   (Background: Eugene threw his heavy missal at Jaja in annoyance and broke Beatrice's figurines. After a while, Kambili raised the issue of the broken figurine).

Kambili: *Will you replace the figurines $_\Lambda$*?

Mama (Beatrice): Kpa. I will not replace them.

(*PH,* p.15)

In example 1 above, Kambili and her mother (Beatrice) operate within the domestic context of social interaction, and Kambili makes a proposition which reveals her father's condemnable violent behaviour by engaging an elliptical construction. By ellipting the adjectival clause, "which papa broke", in her utterance, Kambili seems to avoid implicating her father in his act of violence as a result of fear. The ellipted part therefore, pragmatically indicates that the actualisation of the process of "doing" (in this context, the process of breaking the figurines) is being caused by a participant (the agent) whose identity must be left hidden. Kambili's ploy of leaving Beatrice to fill in the slot left open in her utterance, assisted by contextual variables, ultimately depicts how the cruel abuse of Eugene creates a suffocating atmosphere in his home, and forces his family to perpetual silence. This understanding assists Beatrice to cognitively tackle the question "which figurines?" in supplying the ellipted clausal part, since it satisfies her (Beatrice's) presumption of relevance. To recover the proposition in Kambili's utterance therefore, the adjectival clause "which papa broke" becomes necessarily supplied, especially with consideration for the shared knowledge of the conversational situation.

Guided by contextual evidence, Beatrice then recovers the following proposition as the right one expressed by Kambili:

Will you replace the figurines which papa broke?

This enriched proposition enhanced by gap-filling ultimately has implications for the projection of the theme of domestic violence in *PH*; and the pragmatic effect achieved by the recovery of the proposition necessitates the response given by Beatrice, trivialising the loss.

Resistance against domestic violence is another noticeable thematic concern of Adichie, with respect to DD, in the transactions in *PH*. Projected through the characters of Jaja, Kambili and Beatrice, who are the victims of Eugene's abuse, the theme records an equally high occurrence, suggesting a relatively high discomfort on the part of these characters with Eugene's unending

abuse. A notable explicatural strategy involved in the recovery of this theme throughout the novel is gap-filling. This is illustrated, using the example below:

Example 2: (Background: Kambili and Jaja were looking at the painting of their late Grandfather, Papa – Nnukwu, which Kambili brought from Nsukka when their father, Eugene, entered the room and destroyed it).

Eugene (T_1):   Who brought that painting into this house?

Kambili and Jaja (T_1): (simultaneously) me.

Eugene: (snatched the painting from Jaja and destroyed it)

Kambili (T_2): *No $_A$*! (gathering the pieces)

Eugene (T_2):   (hitting her with his leg) Leave it!

Kambili (T_3): (crying) *No $_A$*!

(Eugene (T_3): What has gotten into you? What is wrong with you?

(*PH*, pp. 205-206)

In the above instance, Eugene and her children's exploration of the context of domestic discourse has a significant implication for the explication of the theme of resistance against Eugene's violence. The fact is that the painting of Papa-Nnukwu which Kambili brings from Nsukka is being destroyed by her father, Eugene. This is, however, met with resistance indicated by the negative monosyllabic word of protest "No". When Kambili says "No" while reacting to Eugene's destructive move-cum abuse, her intention is to communicate her displeasure with his acts, but given that the father's constant abuse seems to have created a tongue-tying effect on her, she results to the construction of the proposition elliptically.

Eugene understands, as he processes Kambili's utterances, that there is ellipsis of the proposition "don't destroy the painting" as well as "don't beat me" in her T_2 and T_3 and that to recover the propositional contents of the elliptical constructions, he is expected to enrich the logical forms of the utterances through gap-filling. With the right assessment of the situational knowledge, Eugene correctly fills the slots left open in Kambili's emotional outbursts with the expressions "don't destroy the painting" and "and don't beat me respectively". Thus, the explicatures (i.e. contextual effects) recoverable are:

(i)   No, don't destroy the painting, and
(ii)   No, don't beat me.

These recovered explicatures with least processing efforts, no doubt, depict a vehement verbal challenge/resistance of the father's inhumane act on the part of Kambili and covertly reveals the theme of resistance, especially against domestic violence in the novel. Kambili's protest therefore becomes a source of strength for her, as she begins to emancipate herself from the shackles of her father's subjugation. However, given that Kambili has internalised her father's authority such that she neither challenges nor questions him, this resistance takes him aback, as he wonders what gives her the effrontery.

Gap-filling in Political Discourse in *PH*

Our findings further show that matters relating to politics are also communicated as explicatures in *PH,* suggesting that political discourse (PD) emerges in the novel as well. PD is operationalised in our context as a discourse that fictionally refracts the portrayal of civic experiences of the characters, with respect to the leaders' approaches to governance in the universe of the text. In *PH*, PD prominently anchors the theme of leadership crisis, which features as deprivation of the citizens social amenities on the one hand and corruption on the other. The thematic focus on leadership crisis in *PH* indicates Adichie's rejection of socio-political condition of the Nigerian society vis-à-vis bad governance. To explicate this theme, elliptical constructions are notably favoured, and consideration is necessarily given to gap-filling in gaining access to the theme. The examples that follow demonstrate this:

Example 3: (Jaja and Obiora were having a discussion about a student riot that takes place in the University at Nsukka as a result of lack of social amenities).

Jaja (T_1): What was the riot about?

Obiora (T_1): *$_A$Light and Water*.

Jaja (T_2): Oh! (*PH*, p.131)

In the conversational instance above, two citizens of Nigeria, who are still in the secondary school, engage each other in a conversation bordering on the menace of poor governance on the part of the leaders. Equipped with the knowledge of the political situation in the country which triggers the students' demonstration in the University, Obiora answers Jaja's question regarding the cause of the riot in question with a phrasal form. Though the linguistic properties of Obiora's utterance provide only very skeletal clues to the proposition the hearer (Jaja) is to reach, the utterance succeeds in broaching the subject of leadership crisis. Obiora's utterance being a phrasal form, Jaja's enrichment process therefore involves supplying a subject noun phrase as well as a verbal anchor to fill the gap. Given that Jaja's utterance already provides an immediately accessible antecedent for the interpretation of the phrase "light and water" in Obiora's utterance, the interpretation that is preferred on the basis of accessibility to show the index of Jaja's understanding is that "the riot was about light and water". On the assumption that Obiora's utterance has been relevant, and is presenting information which yields adequate contextual effect, Jaja, then, through gap-filling, construes him as expressing this enriched proposition. Evidently, from his T_2, the cognitive effect this recovery achieves in him is an expression of disappointment at the leader's non-challant approach to the people's welfare. Of course, the nominal slot "the riot" supplied depicts violence necessitated by leadership crisis, which is a major thematic focus of Adichie in the text. This theme is therefore harboured in the explicature recovered by Jaja.

The recovery of the yoke of leadership problem through gap-filling is further reflected in example 4 below:

Example 4:(Background: Following a coup, as Eugene was scanning through the pages of a newspaper, he saw a disappointing article, and communicated his sentiment to his daughter, Kambili)

Eugene (T$_1$):   (Reading out a caption) "Change of Guard!" what a headline. They are all afraid. Writing about how corrupt the civilian government was as if they think the military will not be corrupt. This country is going down, way down.

Kambili (T$_1$):   *God will deliver us* ∧.

Eugene (T$_2$):   Yes! Yes! He will deliver us from them.

(*PH*, pp.25-26)

Example 4 represents an interesting instance of gap-filling vis-à-vis the recovery of the speaker's intention bordering on the projection of the theme of leadership crisis. Motivated by a caption read in the newspaper, Eugene expresses his bitterness about the corrupt nature of their leaders in the conversation above. In Kambili's contribution to the topic, she passes a complementary remark, engaging an elliptical construction, which renders her explicated proposition both structurally and semantically underspecified:

God will deliver us.

The addressee, Eugene, recognises that the propositional content of Kambili's utterance is contextually constrained by the ellipsis of a salient completive, and to recover her intention, he immediately draws on his shared knowledge of the topic of discussion as well as the corrupt nature of the leaders generally, which is available in his cognitive pool. He then correctly matches the structure "God will deliver us" with the phrasal completive "from corrupt leaders", thereby establishing the relevance of the utterance. This cognitive task results in the enrichment, with little processing effort:

God will deliver us from corrupt leaders.

The understanding of this interpretation is demonstrated in his eventual reaction to Kambili's opinion in the conversation "Yes! Yes! He will deliver us from them." An access to the theme of leadership crisis, especially corruption, as a bane to socio-political growth in the country is therefore facilitated.

Gap-filling in Religious Discourse in *PH*

Religious discourse (henceforth RD) is equally found in *PH*. RD, in our context here, refers the discourse that depicts subjects relating to the character's faith/belief in God or gods. The manifestation of this discourse type in our data testifies to Adichie's preoccupation with the exposition of the complementary role of religion in the traumatic experiences of Africa, and the attack of religious imperfections. The thematic concern of Adichie that RD relates to which is recoverable through the gap-filling strategy is rejection of religious imposition.

Given that the major victims of religious imposition, e.g. Amaka, Beatrice, Kambili, Jaja, etc are generally not comfortable with the experience, attempts are sometimes made at resisting the imposition, thereby projecting the theme of rejection of religious imposition some contexts of religious discourse in *PH*. The example below makes this clear:

Example 5:   (Background: Father Amadi handed Amaka a pieces of paper containing English names from which she could choose for her confirmation in the church in line with the Catholic doctrine)

Amaka (T$_1$):	*I told you I am not taking English name $_\Lambda$, father*.
Father Amadi (T$_1$):	And have I asked you why?
Amaka (T$_2$):	*Why do I have to $_\Lambda$*?
Father Amadi (T$_2$):	It is the way it is done. Let's forget if it is right or wrong for now.
Amaka (T$_3$):	When the missionaries first came, they didn't think Igbo names were good enough. They insisted that people take English names to be baptised. Shouldn't we be moving ahead?
Father Amadi (T$_3$):	It is different now, Amaka. Don't make this what it's not. Nobody has to use the name. Look at me, I've always used my Igbo name, but I was baptised Michael and confirmed Victor.
Aunty Ifeoma (T$_1$):	Amaka, Ngwa, pick a name and let father Amadi go and do his work.
Amaka (T$_4$):	*What is the point $_\Lambda$*, then?
Father Amadi (T$_4$):	What the church is saying is that only an English name will make your confirmation valid.
Amaka (T$_5$):	Chiamaka says God is beautiful. Chima says God knows best, Chiebuka says God is the greatest. Don't they all glorify God as much as Paul and Peter and Simon?
Aunty Ifeoma (T$_2$):	(With a snappy tone) *Ogini*! You don't have to prove a senseless point here! Just do it and get confirmed, nobody says you have to use the name!
Amaka (T$_6$):	*Ekwerom*, *I do not agree $_\Lambda$*. (*PH,* pp. 265-268)

This conversation involves Amaka, Father Amadi, and Aunty Ifeoma discussing the issue of the confirmation name, which Amaka is obligatorily expected to choose to validate her confirmation in the church. This is ultimately met with Amaka's disapproval. To reiterate this position, Amaka's T$_1$, T$_2$, T$_4$ and T$_6$ demonstrate the pragmatic engagement of elliptical constructions to habour suggestive meanings. In her T$_1$, Amaka says "I told you I am not taking English name, father", leaving out a slot be be filled by Father Amadi. Given the shared knowledge of the topic of the discussion, Father Amadi has no difficulty in filling the gap with the qualifier "for my confirmation", and this necessitates his response that "And have I asked you why you don't want it?" Amaka goes ahead to interrogate the need for the choice of an Igbo name in her T$_2$, ellipting this controversial issue. For the propositional content of this construction to be fully recovered, Father Amadi who takes the next turn immediately understands that the verb "take" as well as the nominal group "an English name for the confirmation" must be supplied to give the explicature:

Why do I have to take an English name for the confimation?

Maintaining her stand on not taking an Engish name for the confirmation, Kambili also asks, in her T_4, "What is the point, then?", ellipting the proposition "in picking a name I will not use". Father Amadi understands this proposition as the one intended by Amaka with the assistance of the co-text (especially his own earlier expression in T_3 "that nobody has to use the name..."), and reaches its force as refusal to comply with the doctrine of the church. Efforts by Amaka's mother and Father Amadi to persuade her to yield to the demand of the church, however, prove abortive. In fact, when Father Amadi reiterates that only an English name will make her confirmation valid in his T_4, and Amaka's mother (Aunty Ifeoma) urges Amaka to choose a name, even if she will not use it afterwards, Amaka totally refuses, retorting:

> "I do not agree"

Ifeoma, to whom this utterance in Amaka's T_6 is directed, equally recognises that the utterance necessarily requires to be enriched by filling the ellipted part with the particle "to" and the noun phrase "the choice of an English name". The explicature "I do not agree *to the choice of an English name*" is then recoverable by the addressee (Ifeoma). The recovery of explicatures in the utterance above is assisted by both the preceding discourse and the understanding of the situational context of use. The eventual enrichment of the proposition in Amaka's utterance in her T_6 complements those in her T_1, T_2 and T_4. All the enrichments derived then serve to make her communicative intentions pragmatically manifest to project the theme of resistance in the novel. These enrichments reveal Amaka's refusal to choose a confirmation name as a vigorous movement of resistance against the former colonizer's religious imposition. Her unwillingness to comply with the authoritarian demands of the Catholic for an English name for confirmation also demonstrates her opposition to the reproduction of colonial schemes in Africa. She basically does not want any domination to be exerted over the African facet of her identity.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored how pragmatic inferences have aided the interpretation of the explicit contents of conversations in different contexts of use in *PH*, using the pragmatic strategy of gap-filling, within the theoretical tradition of relevance theory. The study has demonstrated that the logical form of an utterance is usually an incomplete proposition, which necessarily generates expectations that activate the hearer's search for the fully elaborated speaker's meaning. It ultimately reveals that such search for the speaker's meaning is a demonstration of communicators' relevance-conscious postulation of the relevance theorists, as it aids characters in our data to inferentially enrich the logical forms of co-interlocutors' utterances in the conversations through gap-filling. Significantly, the enrichments realise fully propositional cognitive effects or interpretations that project the different thematic concerns of Adichie across the three discourse types that feature in our data as part of the explicatures of characters' utterances in *PH*.

This relevance-driven investigation of the explicatural strategy of accessing the right information communicated by characters in conversations in Adichie's P*H*, therefore, manifests the pliability of the pragmatic approach to the espousal of domestic, political and religious matters in this text. The study thereby aids the overall interpretation of the thematic undertones of Adichie in the text and equally contributes to existing works on the cognitive processes involved in the comprehension of literary discourse.

REFERENCES

Adegbite, W. (2005). Pragmatic tactics in diplomatic communication: a case study of Ola Rotimi's *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi*. *Journal of pragmatics*. (37)pp.1457-1480.

Adeniji, A. (2009). The pragmatics of voices in the non-marxist plays of Femi Osofisan: the case of fairwell to a cannibal range. In Akin Odebunmi, Arua E Arua, and Saila L. Arimi (eds.). L*anguage, gender and politics: A festchrift for Yisa Kehinde Yusuf*. Lagos: CBAAC, pp. 407-424

Adichie, C.N. (2003). *Purple hibiscus*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books. Reprinted 2006. Lagos: Farafina.

Ansary, H and Babaii, E. (2004) .The Genetic Integrity of Newspaper Editorials: A Systemic Functional Perspective. *Asian EFL Journal*, 6:1-28.

Babatunde, S. T. and Ayodele, D. S. (2010). An ethnographic study of NAFDAC adverts in Nigerian pidgin. Papers in English and Linguistics, pp. 95-107.

Blakemore, D. (1992). *Understanding utterances: an introduction to pragmatics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Boulton, M. (1980). *The anatomy of prose*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Limited.

Bruce, K. (2006). Listening to the silence as a form of oppression and a mode of resistance in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple hibiscus. English in Africa* 7.1: 1-21.

Carston, R. (2006). Relevance theory and the saying/implicating distinction. In Horn, R. H. and Ward, G. (eds.). *The handbook of pragmatics.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 633-656.

Crystal D. (2008). *A dictionary of linguistics and phonetics.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Freeman M. H. (2005). The poem as complex blend: conceptual mappings of metaphor in Sylvia plath's "the applicant", *Language and literature*, 14(1), 25-44.

Grill, H.S. (2011). *Literary discourse*. Accessed from http://literarydiscourse.net/fqs/fqs-eng.htm

Heather, H. (2005). Coming of age: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and the voice of the third generation. *English in Africa* 5.1:1-19.

Ibhawaegbele, F. O. & Edokpayi, J. N. (2012). Code-switching and code-mixing as stylistic devices in Nigerian prose fiction: A study of three Nigerian novels. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 2(6), pp. 12-18.

Lawal, M. and Lawal, F.A. (2013). Language and ideology in Chimamanda Adichie's *purple hibiscus.* Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, (13)1,pp.8-16.

Leech, G. and Short, M. (2007). *Style in fiction: a linguistic introduction to English fictional prose*. 2*nd ed*. Harlow: Pearson Ltd.

Lores, R. (2004). On RA abstracts: from rhetorical structure to thematic organization. *English for specific purposes*, 23, pp 280-302.

Nael F. M. Hijjo, M.A (2013) A morphosyntactic analysis on Malaysian secondary school students' essay writing in English class. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 3(11)286-291.*

Odebunmi, A. (2007). Explicatures and implicatures in magazine's editorials: the case of the Nigerian TELL. *Perspective on media discourse*. R. Taiwo, A. Odebunmi, and A. Adetunji. Eds. Muenchen: LIMCOMGmbH. 84-99.

Osunbade, A. (2010). Contextual enrichment of referring expressions in Ngozi Adichie's *purple hibiscus*. Papers in English and Linguistics. 11, pp.146-166

Osunbade, A. (2013). Gap-filling and meaning recovery in conversations in Adichie's *half of a yellow sun.* Marang: Journal of Language and Literature. 23, pp.43-58.

Papi M. B. (2009). Implicitness. In Verschueren, J. & Ostman, J. (eds.) *Key notions for*

pragmatics. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp. 139-159.

Phillips, U. (1992). The major patterns of lexical deviation in the written English of Nigerian secondary school pupils. *New Day University Journal of English*, 3(1),pp. 20-45.

Pho, P. D. (2008). Research article abstracts in applied linguistics and educational technology: a study of linguistic realizations of rhetorical structure and authorial stance. *Discourse Studies*, *10*(2), pp. 231-250.

Piller, I. (2003). Advertising as a site of language contact. Annual review of applied linguistics, 23, 170-183

Sarangi, S. (2000). Ats, Dts and international hybridity: the case of generic counselling. *Discourse and social life*. S, Sarangi and M, Coutthard. (eds.) Harlow: Longman, 1- 27.

Sperber, D. and Wilson, D. (1986). *Relevance: communication and cognition*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Suntara, W. & Siriluck, U. (2013) .Research article abstracts in two related disciplines: rhetorical variation between linguistics and applied linguistics. English language teaching, 6 (2), pp. 84-99.

Tunca, D. (2008). Style beyond borders: language in recent Nigerian fiction. Ph.D. Thesis. Universite de Liege, Belgium.

Tunca, D. (2009) An ambiguous "freedom song": mind-style in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *purple hibiscus*. *Postcolonial Text,* (5)1, pp. 1-18.

Udumukwu, O. (2011). Adichie's p*urple hibiscus* and issues of ideology in the constitution of the Nigerian novel. *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde,* 48(1), pp. 184-204.

Widdowson, H.G. (1984). The deviant language of poetry. Explorations in applied linguistics. Vol. 2. Oxford:OUP.

Wilson, D. and Sperber, D. (2006). Relevance Theory. In In Horn, R. H. and Ward, G. (eds.) .*The handbook of pragmatics.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 607-632.

Yus, F. (1999). Misunderstanding and explicit/implicit communication. *Pragmatics* 9.4: 487-517.

About the author: Adeniyi Oluwagbemiga *Osunbade* holds the B.A (English) degree of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, and M.A and Ph.D. (English) degrees of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. His research interest lies in pragmatics and interactional linguistics. He is a Senior Lecturer in English at the Department of General Studies, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso, Nigeria; a Dissertation fellow of the African Humanities Programme of the American Council of Learned Societies (AHP-ACLS) and an AHP-ACLS Doctoral fellow alumnus at the Department of English and Linguistics, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South-Africa.