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A Discourse Analysis of Language on Domestic Violence

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Abstract: Language, a verbal symbol for communication and interactions in families, determines either the atmosphere of peace or domestic violence among couples. Appropriate or inappropriate linguistic and paralinguistic cues control marital bliss or turbulence in every family. This study investigates the use of verbal and non-verbal language on domestic violence in Nigeria and the Republic of Congo. Data were collected from reported and observed cases of domestic violence among couples in Nigeria and the Republic of Congo. The Simple Random Sampling Technique was used in gathering data from *Part One of House on Fire*, a Mount Zion Film Production from *Youtube*. This is a qualitative-descriptive research that adopts an ex-post facto design. Conversation Analysis, Ethnography of Communication and content analysis were used in data analysis of this study. One of the major findings was that domestic violence among the couples in Nigeria and the Republic of Congo is a product of misuse of verbal and non-verbal language by either of the spouses. The study therefore recommends that appropriate communication strategies, language skills and love speeches should be expressed often by couples. Couples should deliberately project the right facial expressions, body language, movements, touch and 12positions often especially when there are disagreements at home. By so doing, domestic violence may be reduced or minimised.

Keywords: Language, domestic violence, communication strategies, paralinguistic cues, contexts.

Introduction

Language lies in the core of domestic interactions and communication universally. It is a powerful tool in building or destroying families' love and togetherness. In other terms, language should be consciously understood and appropriately used at every interactive and communicative event at homes for the making of an amiable family and society at large. All aspects of language (the phonological, syntactic, morphological, semantic, etc.) should be understood by couples and applied accordingly. However, misinterpretation of words and expressions, inappropriate choice of words, hasty, disrespectful and abusive styles of speaking in the family are some causes of domestic violence. As such, language functions maximally in spousal conflicts' resolutions or escalations depending on how it is used as is the Nigerian and the Congolese societies where the investigation has been conducted. This research aims at identifying the aspects of language and choice of words predominantly used which inflame domestic violence in Nigeria and the Republic of Congo. In addition, it attempts to proffer solutions to how domestic violence can be avoided or minimized through the use of appropriate language and communication.

The investigation is substantiated with the data collected from domestic interactions in Brazzaville (the Republic of Congo) and from *Part One of House on Fire*, a Mount Zion Film Production (Nigeria) from *Youtube*. The approaches used in the investigation include Conversation Analysis, Ethnography of Communication, and content analysis.

1. Domestic violence defined

The World Health Organization (WHO, 1996) defines domestic violence as

Any form of physical, psychological or sexual violence that affects subjects who have, had or intend to have an intimate relationship, couple or subjects who have within their family relationships of parental or affective nature .

According to the results of the most recent Afrobarometer (2024[online]) survey in the Republic of Congo, approximately four out of ten respondents report that violence against girls and women is common in their community. More than half believe it is justified for a man to use physical force to discipline his wife. Following (N. A. Ose , 2009, p.1), *domestic violence is a global phenomenon and an issue of global concern ; and not just a Nigerian problem* (O. Cosmas, 2022[online]). It is very rampant and prominent in Nigeria and other parts of Africa (Editor, Wikipedia). For A. U. Kelly (2011), it has received an *increasing public and academic*

attention in the past several decades . In the same way, B. Nwannekanma (2022 [online]) reports that Anambra is notorious for domestic and gender-based violence in homes, churches, offices, markets, motor parks and even in commercial buses. In Lagos and in all states in Nigeria, cases of domestic violence are in upsurge. Confirming these, C. Oguamanem(2022) submits that it is a worrisome trend in Nigeria.

The causes of domestic abuses are not far-fetched; infidelity, poverty, incompatibility, suspicion, jealousy, intolerance, disrespect, barrenness ,wrong choice of partners and choices based on excessive love for money, the wealth, educational status of the spouses, delay in getting life partners, and most importantly inability of spouses to choice appropriate words to use at the right time in the right contexts.

Domestic violence has multiplying, unending and overflowing disadvantages and woes on couples. A lot of them have received various forms of physical, psychological, social, financial, moral injuries; and sometimes, these lead to untimely deaths. Sometimes, e-journal and print journals report these ugly occurrences (which are too many to be counted). According to WHO (2022) one in three women suffer domestic violence in their lifetime. A lot of these have not been reported due to where they occurred and the willingness of the affected parties or outsiders to do so. Having explained the term domestic violence, we shift to language and its characteristics .

2. Language and its characteristics

Language is man's greatest tool in carrying out all activities of man on earth. It is what clearly distinguishes man from animals. Many philosophers and linguists such as Aristotle, Sapir, Bloomfield, de Saussure, Block & Trager, Chomsky, Derbyshire and many others have proposed different definitions of language. Actually, language is a verbal symbol used by speech communities for interactions and communications. It is a tool whereby human beings apply in communication everywhere and in different situations for various purposes , and for as many times as they want to do so. Moreover, Language is a system of verbal communication that is conventional, dynamic, distinctive, and universal in nature. It is also a means of conveying our thoughts, ideas, feelings and emotions to other people (Imam, 2019); a system of human communication that consists of the structured arrangement of sound (Richards & Schmidt, 2014). According to (Finegan, 2014, p.6), *language is used in contexts and can be better viewed as a three-sided triangle comprising expression, meaning ad context*. Expression comprises words,

phrases, sentences, intonation and stress. Meaning refers to the senses and referents of expression of elements; and context means the sound situation in which expression is uttered; and this includes what has been earlier expressed. It is also seen as a set of elements, a system of rules used in combining linguistics elements into “patterned expressions that serve to accomplish specific tasks in specific contexts (p.9).

As far back as 1921, Sapir (1921, p.7) defined language as:

a purely human and noninstinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols. These symbols are... auditory and they are produced by the so-called “organs of speech.” There is no discernible instinctive basis in human speech as such, however much instinctive expressions and the natural environment may serve as a stimulus for the development of certain elements of speech.

In a nutshell, besides language being purely human, it is a non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of vocabulary produced symbols . In the same line, (Pyles and Ageo, 1971) aver that it is a conventional and an arbitrary system of communication used in human linguistic community. According to Crystal (2001, p.1), language is an expression of cultural identity, a medium of international and national intelligibility, a means of enabling individuals and countries to open doors to a wider cultural and communicative world.

Besides, language has characteristics and some linguists have pointed these out for ages. Many scholars such as (Finegan, 2014, p.9; Yule, 2006, p. 9 -10; Imam, 2019, p. 8-9) have identified such language features as: displacement, arbitrariness, productivity, discreteness, cultural transmission, duality, etc. According to (Daniel, 2018, p. 11-12), language is conventional, arbitrary, human, dynamic; it is said to have forms; and is adaptive, can be learnt, is pluralistic, cultivated and can die. First of all, the conventional nature of language means that a group of people agree on the symbol to be use as language. In other words, people unanimously created their symbols and agree on how to use them. Cultural transmission refers to the transfer of people’s norms and values (way of life) through language.

However, Halliday (2009, p. 63) classifies the functions of language into seven namely the instructional functions, regulatory functions, representational functions, heuristic functions, interactional, imaginative functions and personal functions.

Later Halliday and Mathiessen (2004) mention that there are three metafunctions of language: the ideational function, the interpersonal function and the textual function. The

ideational function focuses on the use of language to express human experiences and name things. The interpersonal functions mean the use of language to enact social relationships with people around us ; and the textual functions underscore the fact that language is used to organise discourse and create continuity and flow in our texts or in conversations.

Ultimately, J.L. Austin(1962) postulates a conceptual category called illocutionary acts as being instrumental in the deployment of language power. Supporting the author, A. Duranti (1997, p.19) writes: words carry with them a power that goes beyond the description and identification of people, objects, properties and events.

Dell hymes alludes to the performative nature of language in the conception of his analytical apparatus of language in a sociocultural context known as the ethnography of communication. The author believes that one of the main functions of language is to accomplish an action. Consistent with the study of language in context, A. Ngalouo-Antso (2018, p.346) gets in a word on the subject when he writes: *the deployment of language power is a culturally dependent mechanism.*

As such, to a certain extent, language by its nature offers to perpetrators resources to victimize or to cut down to size and inflame domestic violence within families. Having elucidated language and its characteristics, we focus on language use in domestic violence in the next section.

3. Language use in domestic violence

Language serves both transactional and interactional purposes in all domestic affairs in families. It is directly or indirectly used in verbal or non-verbal messages. Spoken, written and gestural forms of language are germane in family's interactions and transactions.

Language used by spouses for communication, expressions of thoughts, exchange of ideas, feelings and for carrying out almost all domestic activities are mainly verbal (spoken). Its uses determine home's atmosphere. Language is used as an instrument that originates, creates, fuels or quenches spousal domestic violence. If what couples have in mind are not openly expressed in language, domestic abuses will be minimised.

Negative and harsh words rendered in high tones are responsible for 80 percent of spousal domestic conflicts in Nigeria. The language used in domestic violence is informal and abusive in nature. Many times the people involved only talk before they think and in such an illogical manner insults are the order of the day.

Domestic violence is known as spousal abuse, intimate partners' violence, dating violence, family violence, domestic abuse and marital violence (Cosmas, 2022). The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines domestic violence as physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse; and as abuse that happens between two people in a close relationship. It is considered as a violation of human rights (Bowman, 2003); "a climate of fear and disempowering restrictions that threaten and affects one's selfhood, psychological well-being, health, economic". (Kelly, E32) states that it is demonstrated in heterosexual and same-sex relationships, committed and dating/casual relationships, current and terminated relationships. The choice of inappropriate language is one of the contributable factors to the domestic violence. Where hate speeches full of abusive words are employed, there is bound to be upheavals and spousal abuses. In other words, there is a strong relationship between inappropriate words and domestic violence. The expressive forms that provoke domestic violence are discussed in section 5. Prior to that, we embark first upon the approach to the investigation.

4. Approach

The approach to the present investigation is holistic consistent with the examination of language is a sociocultural context. The data under consideration are artistic and rendered as part of discourse, and call for conversational analysis which to some extent merges as an integral part of Hymes' ethnography of communication.

4.1. Discourse

Discourse is a polymorphous concept used in all fields of human endeavours that apply language verbally and non-verbally. As we glean from G. Yule (2006, p. 124), *discourse is usually defined as 'language beyond the sentence' and the analysis of discourse is typically concerned with the study of language in text and conversation*. For T.A. van Dijk (1997, p. 2), *discourse is a complex phenomenon; its notion is essentially fussy. It is a popular term used in a variety of ways* (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000, p.1125).

As a methodological and theoretical concept, discourses both construct and represent the social world ; and thus can be referred to as constitutive, dialectical, and dialogue . It includes such features as opening and closing, turn-taking, repair mechanism, conversation, discourse participants, holding floor, selection of the next speaker, overlapping, topic negotiations, speech errors, role sharing , talk initiation, etc. (Kamalu & Osisanwo, 2015, p. 187).

4.2. Conversation Analysis

Conversational Analysis (CA), also known as talk-in-interaction (M. Haakana et al, 2016), is said to have emerged from the sociology lectures by Harvey Sacks between 1964 and 1972. It stems from the conceptions of Conversation analysts also known as ethnomethodologists who concentrate on methods that people apply in interactions' and what people do with words in natural environment. CA concentrates on the organisation and “structuring of conversation, and not so much its correctness” (Kamalu & Osisanwo, p. 179). It centres on spoken social interaction and concentrates on interactional concepts and patterns such as turn taking, opening and closing of conversations, topic initiation, negotiation and management, repair mechanism, summons, talk elicitation and reception of conversational information.

4.3. Ethnography of Communication

Ethnography of Communication (EC) is also known as Ethnography of speaking. It originated in 1960s and 70s by Dell Hymes; it is an analysis of language based on socio-cultural setting. It deals with communication of verbal and non-verbal speech events. It focuses on the idea that meanings of utterances are understood based on communication events. Hymes observes that participants link their contents of utterances and other verbal, vocal and non-vocal cues with background knowledge (kamalu & Osisanwo, p. 174). Hymes avers that every description on ethnography of communication should provide data based on **five** interwoven parameters namely, the linguistic resources, accessibility to the speakers, the rules of interpretation, the supra-sentential structure and the norms of interaction. He further maintains that for every speech event, the ethnographer is expected to provide data based on what is coined as SPEAKING, i.e.:

S – Setting
P – Participants
E – Ends
A – Acts
K – Key
I – Instrumentalities
N –Norms
G –Genre

Here, setting involves the time and place that speech events take place. Participants are actors or people that are take part in the speech events such as the “interactors” and “interractees”; ends mean purposes or goals that the interactants will want to achieve at the end of their interactions. Acts are both form and contents of the messages; key is the tones, sad or friendly used in passing

the messages across; Instrumentalities are verbal, non-verbal and physical channels or routes that messages passed through. Norms refer to the cultural systems that modulate and modify what should be said and what should not be said. Genres are the textual forms used in sending the messages across among the interactants. Now that the conversational analysis and the ethnography of communication have been described, we turn to methodology.

5. Methodology

The research adopts a descriptive survey method/design. Data were collected through simple random technique from *House on fire 1*, a Mount Zion Film series produced by Evangelist Mike Abayomi Bamiloye, a Nigerian film actor, dramatist and director (Wikipedia). Having watched the film, the researcher randomly selected the extracts from the film using convenience method, the author wrote the dialogues and presented them before their analysis using CA and EC. Data were presented accordingly in excerpts which contain uneven dialogues; each discourse is numbered (in parenthesis) for comprehensive analysis. In addition, the data gathered from the Republic of Congo consist in the daily scenes of domestic violence.

5.1. Scenes of domestic violence in Nigeria

Data Presentation and analysis : House on Fire (Excerpt from Part 1)

Excerpt 1

Iyabo: Dear, I thought you have dressed up (1).

Are you not going for the party? (2)

Kunle: I don't feel like going to any party. (3)

I just want to spend some time with these children at home within this weakened.(4)

Kunle: Maybe we should send for Bayo, let him join us this weekend. Maybe tomorrow

morning, and we will spend a lovely time as a family. (5)

Iyabo: Well, it's a good idea, but you should have informed me before now (6)

Ehe, and that doesn't stop us from attending the party tonight (7)

Edward and Kenny will feel hurt if we are not there tonight (8).

Analysis of Excerpt 1

Excerpt 1 opens with felicitous interactions between Iyabo and Kunle (Husband and wife); from the opening word, "Dear" rendered in a soft and low tone, it is obvious that the interlocutors are in good mood. It is the relaxed position of Kunle on a cushion in their

sitting room that necessitate Iyabo to add (2) with the realization that Kunle may no longer be interested in the party. Here, there is a gap (a break) in the interactional and communication flow in (2) and (3) and this leads to the gradual movement of these adjacency pairs from felicity to infelicity. Iyabo's rhetorical question in (2) suggests the non-vocal disposition of Kunle to her statement in (1).

Kunle changes his mind from the already planned party without the intention of Iyabo (who has already dressed up for the party). Instead of giving tangible reasons from the onset of their dialogues, he gives a flimsy reason as shown in (3). If Kunle had offered a hedge, this conflict wouldn't have escalated. His second (seemingly strong reason is in (4) does not solve the escalation because at this point Iyabo is already irritated. This suggests that the positioning of expressions is essential in managing domestic conflicts. Here, domestic violence strives where inappropriate words are applied. The sequential implicature of this seems to suffer as the previous knowledge is being jettisoned and ignored. In (5) he suggests another speech event to be engaged in without the agreement of his wife. He does not allow Iyabo to take her turn immediately he objected to embarking on the party.

The application of the backchannels in (6) , (7) and (8) indicate that Iyabo understands exactly what Kunle says but she is not ready to give in. she rendered this in a mid-high tone which suggests that she is still hopeful that Kunle may understand her stand in this speech event. It can be deduced that if Edward and Kenny feel hurt, their friendship with Iyabo might not continue any longer. Iyabo seems to be afraid of this and does everything possible to prevent this.

Excerpt 2

*Kunle: I don't feel like going
anywhere this night, I want to rest
tonight, that's all (9)
Iyabo: Ok, you can stay, I will go!
(10) I have an appointment with my
friends and we have decided to meet at
the party tonight. (11)
Kunle: You mean you will go to that
party without me? (12)
You will go alone (13)*

*Iyabo, you will go alone to that party
without me? (14)
Iyabo: What do you expect? (15)
Am I a kid? (16)
Ah, I can't just waste this
weekend just like that; (17)
I have to be there tonight
because I don't want to disappoint
those friends of
Mine (18)*

The contractions (don't and that's) applied in (9) makes the conversation highly informal thereby allowing the participants to flow freely. Kunle's choice of words, "that's all" acts as an intensifier and shows his authoritative use of words as final; the implication is that Iyabo is only wasting her time talking because none of her contributions is meaningful and useful to Kunle. Having realised this, Iyabo utters a possible terminator, Ok, at the onset of (10) and an imperative emphaciser in (10). Her follow up expression in (11) is to help her to drive up points.

Kunle reacts ferociously; possible because the cultural norms frowns at women doing things without the consents of their husbands. This energises him to utter (12) a rhetorical question, (13) a pseudo elicitation and a stressed interrogation in (14). Kunle utters (12) to (14) in a very high tone indicating that Iyabo cannot attend the party without him.

Iyabo refuses to adhere to his early threat that his words were final by uttering her rhetorical elicitations in (15) and (16). She didn't even allow Kunle to take his turn by adds (17) and (18), backchannels to ensure that she achieves her goal. It can be deduced that Iyabo's mind is completely submerged in her desire to attend the party and as such no excuse is tenable.

Excerpt 3

Kunle: Those friends, those your lousy friends of yours. (19)

Iyabo I suspect those friends of yours (20)

Iyabo: Kunle, don't get there. Kunle, don't go there! (21)

Kunle: Don't go where? (22)

Iyabo: Don't go there at all this evening (23)

Kunle: Don't go where (24)

Iyabo: Don't go there at all (25)

Kunle: Don't go where; look I said we should spend time as a family this weekend with our children. They are going back to school on Sunday. Let's spend time with them before they go back on Sunday. (26)

Iyabo: And I am saying, these children are no more kids, they are grown up. They know how to play and relax without us being around them. And I have to be at the party tonight. If you don't go then, I will go alone (27).

Kunle's reactions to Iyabo's emphatic expressions in (19) and (20) are quite suggestive. Kunle might have been pissed off about the chattering attitudes of Iyabo's friends and feels that this was the right time to tell Iyabo to disassociate from them. However, he should

have known that the right words said at the wrong time equally has wrong implications on the listeners.

The deictic words, “there and where” used repeated in (21) to (26) indicate that Iyabo has a strong affinity with her friend and would not allow anything to truncate that bond. Kunle, on the other hands, is not comfortable with such an association and as such repeated resists it. Again, his commanding tone and the choice of words in (26) seems to be the source of Iyabo’s anger; and this informs her feedback in (27). In addition, struggle for power and supremacy is demonstrated through the choice of negative words here; this choice encourages spousal domestic violence.

Excerpt 4

Kunle: Iyabo, come back here, you are not going anywhere (28).

Iyabo: What is your problem? Yeh! Ahah Kunle, what is your problem? (29)

Kunle: Look Iyabo, you must learn to respect your husband’s opinion; you are not going anywhere this night. Yes (30)

Iyabo: Ok! Ok! You too must learn how to respect your wife’s opinion (31)

Kunle: Iyabo (32)

The cultural norms of most Africans and in particular Nigeria (Yoruba) here, place men in advantaged position of thinking that they are highly valued above women; and as such Kunle did not hesitate to demonstrate these through his commanding tones in (28). He might have realised that the society will possibly blame a disobedient wife rather than a husband who does the same. Again, the fact that the couples do not use any pet name, rather their first name suggests their overt seemingly equality (they created for each other) and perhaps lack of respect for each other.

The show of undeniable inequality which can be easily recognized in Nigerian context (as naturally created phenomenon by its environmental based cultures) might have gingered Kunle’s masculinity expressed through his intonations. The shouting high tone employed in (29) shows that Kunle does not care about the appropriate choice of words which might have ameliorated the almost fuming Iyabo. Imperatives used here necessitates domestic abuse (of Iyabo’s right of movement). The application of backchannels (yeh, ahah) in (29) indicates that the speaker is deeply affected by Kunle’s orders in (28). Kunle

tries to make Iyabo understands (in 30) that the society expects her to submit to him but Iyabo is not ready to respect such norms as seen in her reaction in (31). Iyabo's response sends shocking reflection on Kunle utters (32), an elliptical representation embedded with meanings; one of which may be a call for Iyabo to recognise the consequence of her actions.

5.2. Scenes of domestic violence in the Congolese society: data Presentation and analysis

Scene 1

Dali (husband): Nga ãηgel, dza ãηgel' aye (4 times)

Sorry for women who observe food taboos.¹

Epon (wife): Hẽ! ye nga lomẽ owo?

Now, are you mocking at me? ²

Me bẽ nzĩn'aye bvoo.

Can you sing your song again for me? ³

Wẽ "nga ãηgel, dza ãηgel' aye"; hẽ?

That's "sorry for women who observe food taboos", isn't it? ⁴

Dali: mẽ esa esee, mẽ eli kena ye mparonkã, be ntsũ nkjõ na ndzuõ.

I just joke. I had only 5,00francs (\$2) and I bought the piece of freshwater eel. ⁵

Epon: onge be ya lome owo?

And then you make fun of me? ⁶

Mẽ wẽ ke nzo atalamẽ keke dza wẽ.

As if I used to starve at my parents.⁷

Ye be ya kaamẽ onkya.

So, you take me for your slave here.⁸

Abial'okaa ebru ende ke ta nde fe wẽ.

If you dislike a woman her parents will never throw her away.⁹

Dali: kena m'esee bvi esa mbuu, yebe yayẽ omõ.

I just joke, now you're talking nonsense.¹⁰

Scene1 analysis

The scene takes place at *Dali*'s residence in Gamboma, the Capital of Nkeni-Alima province (Republic of Congo). The participants include *Dali* (husband) and *Epon* (wife). Both are native members of Ngungwel community. The interaction is held in *Engungwel* (Teke, B.70).

One afternoon, Dali returned from the state market carrying a plastic bag containing a piece of freshwater eel. He handed it to his wife, murmuring an ironic chant to mock her for being forbidden to eat such a fish due to a hereditary taboo. His wife retorted to his mockery.

Dali opens the conversation an ironical song to ridicule *Epon*: *Sorry for women who observe food taboos* (L1). Embedded in the song are both aspects of irony: situational and linguistic. First, Dali is aware that eating eel is part of hereditary that taboos all *Ngungwel* women must observed. Moreover, it is believed that if they eat it, not only they will eventually lose their eyelashes later on, but they will also lose their weights severely. Transgressing that taboo, means to some extent, violating the cultural norms of *Ngungwel* community. In addition, *Epon* could not expect her husband to buy eel for both of them. Therefore, she is disappointed. Worse enough, far from apologizing, Dali mocks at his wife through his improvised ironical song, and thereby revealing his nastiness.

Epon feels offended and replies to such a verbal attack so as to preserve her dignity (6-7) as a spouse and to defend her gender (8).

Dali could be kind and respectful to avoid hurting *Epon*. Unfortunately, his verbal abuses result in a quarrel.

Scene 2

Opango (singing): *Sa mẽ gnwa mbala nta ando mpoo*

Let me get drunk and forget abuses. 1

Sa mẽ gnwa mbala nta ando mpoo

Let me get drunk and forget abuses. 2

Antsamekũ : *Haa ! ando mẽn ye mota mpoo obvie gnwi ba ama ?*

Hey! What abuses do you want to forget by drinking too much alcohol? 3

Opango : *Ando m'okyri.*

Societal matters. 4

Ale onkã ye pje ke mboyi , kẽn mẽ emekpa me nza

Had it not been for you who serve me some food, I would have already starved. 5

Onkã wi bãmẽ, ye nki yinda onge yi mbvel,

As for the so-called wife of mine, with a long neck like an antelope.6

Abe ku afi okoo mendoa kena bweemẽ mẽndza.

She'd better pack her things and leave instead of having me starved. 7

Mbowa: *Agnwa mba ka pi.*

If we get drunk keep quiet. 8

Scene 2 analysis

This interaction involves three participants: *Opango* (husband), *Mbowa* (wife), and *Antsamekũ* a neighbour). In evening *Opango* is sitting under the veranda in his compound in Brazzaville. The participants speak Lingala one of the national language spoken mainly in the northern district of Brazzaville and the northern regions of the Republic of Congo. According to Guthrie's classification (1948), *Lingala* is a Bantu language of the C30 Bangui-Ntomba group.

Opango, a civil servant arrives at home and complains about her wives' misbehaviour. She is a seller at evening market and she always cooks late in the night. That is why *Opango* prefers to be in a drunkenness when he comes back home. However, he constantly praises his neighbour who serves him food, to the detriment of his wife, whom he does not hesitate to insult and whom he thinks deserves to be repudiated.

In scene 2 *Opango* uses an insult to belittle and threatens to repudiate her his wife (7). Thus, *Mbowa* rejects violently and carelessly pretending that her husband is but a mere drunkard (8). In one word, the prevailing atmosphere has nothing to do with togetherness and love needed within an ideal couple's life.

Scene 3

Mbaambu: *Ah! Mere, ngai na lembi.*

Hey! My wife, I'm exhausted. 1

Otia ngai mayi na douche bongo na polisa nzoto.

Please, bring a bucket of water in the shower for me. I want to take a shower. 2

Aka: hum, soki ngai penza mwa ya Itua Hausa, to ko tala esika ngai nako mema yo mayi na douche.

If I'm really Itua Hausa's daughter I will not do anything. 3

E....bongo, esika owuti kuna, osokoli te pona nini.

Now tell me, why couldn't you take a shower where you have been. 4

Scene 3 Analysis

Scene 3 is performed in at the residence of *Mbaambu and Aka, his wife*.

She heard that her husband is in love with another woman in the neighbourhood. She expresses her discontent to the rumour. Aka displays her verbal abuses out of jealousy (3-4). This is the lack of self-control. Such defaults are opposed to the qualities required for the making an ideal couple.

Scene 4

M.J. : Yaya, ngai namoni kaka banda lelo, biso na yo to zala « chacun pour soi » .

Yo ozali retraitsé kasi ngai nazali na famille na ngai.

Soki na zwi mwa eloko na ngai, na lambi pona ngai moko.

Yo pe soki ozwi eloko na yo olambi pona yo moko.

[My husband, I belief that from now on we stay on the basis of “each one for oneself” principle.1

You’re a retired civil servant, but I have to assist my parents. 2

So, if I buy some food, I cook for myself. 3

Likewise, if you buy some food, cook for yourself as well. 4]

Adake: Na landi yo malamumu te; bandela nanu.

I don’t catch very well; would you please say it again? 5

M.J.: Eh, na lobi, soki na zwi mwa lifuta na ngai, na sali mwa zando na ngai, nyoso na ko lamba ezali ya ngai.

Ezala petrole na réchaud, soki na silisi ko lamba nako balola yango na ndutu na bomba.

[Yes, I say, if I have my wage, I buy some food and cook for myself. 6

I will also pour the kerosene from the stove and save it into a small bottle. 7]

Adake: Ah, bongo, okosakana to okoloba ya solo?

What, are you joking or are you serious? 8

M.J. : Ah vieux Adak, na sakana pona nini?

Ezali ya solo.

[Elder ADaKE, why joking? 9

No, I'm not, I'm serious. 10]

Adake (soaked): Merci, na yoki.

Thanks, I understand. 1

Scene 4 analysis

Adake is the husband and *M.J.* is his wife. *Adake* is a retired civil servant. However, *M.J.* is still a teacher. They live in the same house with *M.J.*'s step-son, that is, the son of *Adake* with his deceased ex-wife. Recently, that 20-year-old boy was found guilty of embezzling funds from his employer. Consequently, *Adake* is helping his son repay the debt owed to his employer. *M.J.* feels that her husband is doing too much and no longer contributing enough to the household. Therefore, she expresses her concerns.

M.J. tender in her discourse (1- 4; 6 -7) which foreshadows incongruity. To *Adake*, it might be a mere banter for the words pushed forwards by her spouse covers ingratitude. *M.J.* had suffered from mental troubles and *Adake* willingly supported his beloved spouse financially by paying for her treatments. Now with the delay in pension payments for the retirees, *M.J.* unveils her selfishness towards her husband. Therefore, *Adake* (11) fakes happiness while he hides a deep disappointment in his heart.

6. Summary of Findings

The analysis of data gathered from excerpts from *House on Fire, Part 1* and the scenes of daily scenes in the Republic of Congo illustrate spousal abuses due to misused of words, wrong positioning of words in utterances, miscommunications; and the lack of self control in verbal interactions. These led to disrespect of spousal status (by the couple), and gaps in communication as major sources of couples' abuses. The study therefore revealed that misuse of high tones and imperatives inflamed domestic violence. However, the right positioning of words used in expressions is essential in managing domestic conflicts. The work further found out that breaks in interactional, transactional and communication flows are potential ignition of spousal domestic violence. Likewise, spousal domestic violence is orchestrated by heated arguments and hate speeches by the spouses before abuses are carried out.

In addition, the study further reveals that linguistic, nonlinguistic and paralinguistic induced domestic violence have replicating negative effects on the society and the nation at large; as some of these abuses directly and indirectly affect couples' interactions and transactions

with others outside and in their places of work. This work also shows that spousal abuses do not create chance for turn-taking rules as everyone eagerly forces himself or herself to grasp the available (none available turns to talk in order to drive home his/her points. This often results in overlaps and hence confused interactions.

Conclusion and recommendations

Language plays a crucial role in spousal communications; it ignites, softens and promotes spousal domestic violence if not understood and properly used. It may also eradicate marital abuses if the reverse is the case. Thus, where spouses allow communication gaps to strive, domestic violence may unnoticeably and gradually sping up. Spousal negative choice of words, inappropriate application of hate words, unchecked commanding tones and imperatives and heated arguments inflame marital domestic violence.

The study therefore recommends that couples should deliberately learn how to apply all levels on language (such as phonological, syntactic, semantic, morphological, stylistic and pragmatic levels) when communicating with each other at home. They should also incorporate and apply the eight C's of communication (i.e. consideration, courteousness, clarity, completeness, conciseness, concreteness, candidness and correctness) into their daily communications. In addition, when there are heated conflicts, one party should be silence and/or walk away from the ongoing turbulent scenes. The governments in Nigeria and the Republic of Congo should formulate a policy that mandates each couple to go for marital counselling; promulgate laws that mandate couples to pass counselling examinations and establish platforms for continuous counselling before and after marriage. There should also be religious groups, social, political groups that check martial conditions of each couple intermittently. Then, foundations for conflict resolutions and re-habitation centres should be constructed for toxic relationships and partners (where they will be made to understand themselves and proper language use is being taught). It is advisable that where domestic violence cannot be resolved, separation is recommended.

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