

A Cooperative Principle Analysis of Greg Mbarjiorgu's Wake up Everyone

Attabor, Ocheja Theophilus

Department of English and Literary Studies, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Kogi State
University, Anyigba-Nigeria

Abstract: *The paper is an application of Cooperative Principle to dramatic conversation using Greg Mbarjiorgu's play, Wake Up Everyone. The play is an ecological play in which fictional Ndoli land is faced with flood related disaster and the dialogue between Prof Aladinma and the Chairman determines the fate of the community. If communication is to be effective and successful, then interlocutors should cooperate in talk exchanges. However, people fail often to cooperate in talk exchanges by not observing the Maxims. Our analysis is purely textual and qualitative and the primary source of data is Wake up Everyone. We chose the dialogue between Prof. Aladinma and the Chairman of Ndoli local government on pages 13-18 as resources for analysis. There are 32 speech contacts between them all in Act one, Scene one which were analyzed in line with H.P Grice' Cooperative Principle in which seventeen speeches failed to cooperate while fifteen speeches cooperated. In our findings, most of the Chairman's contributions reflect looting and embezzling disposition which some Nigerian public servants and politicians glamorize today at the expense of the plight of the masses by not cooperating in talk exchanges. We concluded that expressions do not reflect intentions and it is evident in those dialogues.*

Key words: *Implicatures, maxims, cooperation, non-observance*

Introduction

Opinions of scholars are diverse on the issue of Pragmatics. Holmes (1992 p.357) stated that "Pragmatics is concerned with the analysis of meaning in interaction" But further studies show that "Pragmatics studies the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society" (Mey 1993:6). Therefore Pragmatics is the extended analysis of meaning beyond grammar and word meaning to the relationship between the participants and the background knowledge they bring to a situation. Homes (1992) noticed that context of situation is one of the crucial factors in Pragmatics when it comes to interpreting what is meant. This can be further expatiated using the sentence *I can hear someone talking*. This sentence is amenable to different meanings depending on the speaker. The meaning it gives if uttered by a teacher in a classroom setting is different from the meaning it gives when uttered by one of two police officers investigating an empty house, or when uttered by two abandoned kidnapped women in a forest.

All speech occurs in an interactive context in which the discussants make choices from the linguistic system including lexical and grammatical choices that express appropriate meaning. Pragmatics studies how the transmission of meaning depends not only on structural and linguistic knowledge (e.g. grammar) of the speaker and listener, but also on the context of the utterance. In this respect, Pragmatics explains how language users are able to overcome apparent ambiguity, since meaning relies on the manner, place, etc of an utterance. It is against

this background that this paper investigates language within contextualized parameters (dramatic conversation) using Greg Mbarjiorgu's Wake Up Everyone as primary source and H.P Grice's cooperative Principle as Theoretical Framework.

Cooperative Principle

Human beings communicate daily and when they do this, they ought to cooperate otherwise communication will be difficult and will yield poor results. Grice (1975) developed the Cooperative Principle to account for the level of cooperation existing amongst people in talk exchanges. "Conversation is a cooperative activity in the Gricean sense" (Wardhaugh, 2006, p.293). The tenet of Cooperative Principle is that people should cooperate in speech for effective communication. That is why it explains, according to Thomas (1995, p.56) "how a hearer gets from what is said to what is meant, from the level of expressed meaning to the level of implied meaning". Grice (1975, p.47.) advised that "Make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose of the talk exchange in which you are engaged". This cooperation in speech has further "been elevated to the status of independent principle by Grice (1975, 1989) whose Cooperative Principle consists of four pragmatic sub-principles or maxims-[quantity, quality, relation and manner]" (Mey, 2001, p.72).

The Maxim of Quality states that people should try to make their contributions one that is true, devoid of false believe and inadequate evidence. While the Maxim of Quantity says that people should be informative in any discourse for the purposes of the conversation they are engaged by not saying too much and too less, the Maxim of Relevance says people's contributions should relate to the discourse. The last, being the Maxim of Manner, emphasizes perspicuousness and frowns at ambiguity and obscurity of expression. The maxims are not a guideline for social behaviour or etiquette which dole out instructions to speakers about the way to become very moral and polite discussants but they only describe the accepted features of successful cooperative communication irrespective of their syntactic appearance.

However, participants in talk exchange may not observe these maxims and this can show up in five ways: flouting, violating, infringing, opting and suspending (Thomas, 1995). Flouting is the non-observance in which the speaker doesn't intend to mislead or deceive but to intentionally not observe the maxims in order to generate implicatures. The term "Implicature" was introduced to account for the additional level of meaning generated through non-observance of conversational maxims; that is to say, how the hearer goes from the level of expressed meaning to that which is implied. Following Thomas (1995, p.58), "To imply is to hint, suggest or convey some meaning indirectly by means of language...to infer is to deduce something from evidence (this evidence may be linguistic, paralinguistic or non-linguistic). An inference is produced by the hearer." A flout occurs when a speaker intentionally fails to observe a maxim with the mind to generate implicature. In other words, it is the blatancy of non-observance that generate implicature.

The remaining four forms of non-observance of the maxims are instances where speakers fail to cooperate (or observe the maxims) not because they plan or intend to generate implicatures. However, flouting is most important to this study because it is where a speaker openly fails to cooperate (to observe a maxim) not with mislead and deception aforethought but just that a speaker wants to jolt the hearer's feeling into searching for meanings (extra) which are very different from the expressed meaning or are in addition to the expressed meaning.

The Play's Short Background

Wake Up Everyone is an ecological play in which climate change is the focal point. It reflects both natural and man's technological invention and its negative effects on environment leading to tsunami, earthquake, erosion, flooding, global warming, etc. Greg Mbarjiorgu uses Professor Aladinma, a retired Professor of Agriculture to influence the Chairperson of Ndoli Local Government Area to construct dykes and to advise communal farmers to use organic waste and also plant stronger, non genetically modified organism (GMO) seeds to boost food production. But Edwin Ochonkeya, the Local Government Chairperson paid deaf ears and when the flood swept the land eventually, the farmers were distilled into rage seeking revenge on him.

Discussion

The first non observance of the maxim is found in the opening dialogue between Prof. Aladinma and the Chairman in which the former wishes to warn the Chairman of the danger besetting the community following climate change. But he preferred to be uncooperative in his speech. His speech did not sound like one wanting to offer remedial information to the local government Chairman on the impending danger of climate change on Ndoli land, he rather sounded declarative. He sounded as if the Chairman has also been enjoying similar background information as he. The speaker failed to make his 'contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which' he was 'engaged.' By this, it is meant he has flouted the maxim of manner since his statement is filled with obscure expression, ambiguity and prolixity. In turn, the Chairman understood speech (1) as mere declarative sentence; consequently, he cooperated in speech (2). But Provoked that the Chairman failed to understand his position (caused by obscure expression, ambiguity and prolixity), Prof Aladinma retorted in speech (3) where he has not exactly stated his intention but busy with circumlocution. He flouts the maxims of quantity and manner in the sense that his statement is over-informative for the current talk exchange and it is also full of ambiguity, obscure expression and prolixity respectively. In response to *speech (3)*, Chairman retorted in **speech (4)**. However, Prof Aladinma failed to answer how the world problems today are caused by man and how 'man can still find solutions to them', rather he avoided the question in (speech 4) generated by the last sentence in (speech 3) by telling Chairman that he foresees flood in Ndoli land looking at the likely overflow of the river. He also hinted that the farmers are complaining of unproductive farmlands and fishless rivers and streams. This means that (speech 5) has no relation with (speech 4 and 3). It further means that the speaker has flouted the maxim of relation in speech (5).

From the foregoing, it is clear that the chairman has understood the position of Prof Aladinma which is the fact that the river has begun to overflow its bank and when this happens, flooding and its accompanying disaster are imminent. But the Chairman feigned ignorant by stating in **speech (6)** that: "You are predicting a flood simply because local farmers and fishermen are complaining?" This is a case of flouting the maxim of relation because he asked an irrelevant question arising from speech (5). In speech (5), the main information which should concern the Chairman is that Ndoli land, which is under his control, will soon be hit by flood following the river overflowing its banks, and not whether farmers and fishermen have started complaining. Notwithstanding, Prof Aladinma answered the question and consequently flouted the maxim of quantity in the bid not to flout the maxims of quality and relation respectively. A

speaker flouts the maxim of Quantity by blatantly giving either more or less information than the situation demands (Thomas, 1995, p. 65). Here Prof Aladinma gave more information than required. It is important to note that it is as a result of a clash between the maxims of Quality and Relation that the speaker blatantly gave more information than the question in speech (6) demanded and this is captured in speech (7). In speech (8), the Chairman has understood and has come to appreciate the contributions of Prof Aladinma in terms of educating the local farmers agriculturally. However, the Chairman blatantly implied that there cannot be flood in Ndoli land. To him, this is not a serious issue. By this, he has flouted the maxim of Quality. The fact that they have never experienced flood and that his parents never told him of any doesn't mean that flood in Ndoli is impossibility. He lacks adequate scientific evidence and explanation. In speech (9), Prof Aladinma inferred correctly. He got the implicature generated in speech (8) that flood in Ndoli is impossibility since 'they have never experienced flood' and that 'his Parents never told him of any'. Prof countered this position by saying that other people's experience can be looked at citing other coastal areas like Lagos, Calabar... where there have been flood disaster. He further implied that the Chairman should act fast else something untoward might happen when he said 'I'm only opting for a preventive measure' and this was understood immediately by the Chairman leading to **Speech (10)** 'So how do you want us to help?' In reaction to this question, Prof Aladinma gave exactly the amount of information needed thereby flouting no maxim in speech (11). The same level of cooperation was sustained in speeches (12) and (13). Speech (14) generated the implicature that the local government cannot fund such project and this is suggested in speech (16) also followed by a question on how Prof arrived at the huge figure. Prof Aladinma in speech (17), while answering the question in speech (16), made his contribution more informative than required thereby flouting the maxim of Quantity. Speech (18) generated similar implicature as speech (14) which is the fact that the local government has no money and cannot fund such project. The speaker in speech (18) openly failed to cooperate by not stating clearly that the local government is not willing to pay any money toward the project, rather he disposed the hearer to infer the extra information in speech (18). In addition, the speaker in (18) has flouted the maxim of Quality by blatantly stating what is untrue in '...there is nothing in the local government purse'. The Chairman's conversation with his friend reveals the true state of things:

Jango: Your story is contrary to the rumour that you borrow money from oil companies to run the election

Chairman: I made up that story to protect myself from unnecessary demands from all kinds of people that come begging for one thing or the other. I even told Prof. the same story few minutes ago.

Speeches (20) and (22) attempt to coax and mislead Professor Aladinma into believing there is no money in the local government purse by violating the maxim of Quantity. According to Thomas (1995, p.), a maxim is violated when the speaker intends to deceive or mislead. Not allowing to be misled by speech (22), Professor Aladinma implored the Chairman further in speech (23) telling him that he could still use part of the 30% to rescue the community from impending disaster. However, he was threatened in speech (24). 'If you say that something represents a threat to another person's self-image, that is called a face-threatening act' (Yule

2010, p.136). Speech (24) also flouts the Maxims of Quality and Relation. Why Quality? It is possible for an environmental activist to be one's political adviser. Secondly, it flouts the maxim of Relation because Prof in speech (23) does not request for employment as a political adviser from the Chairman of Ndoli local government. In reaction, Prof cooperated in speech (25) by observing the four maxims at once leaving the Chairman with a ploy to ward him off in speech (26).

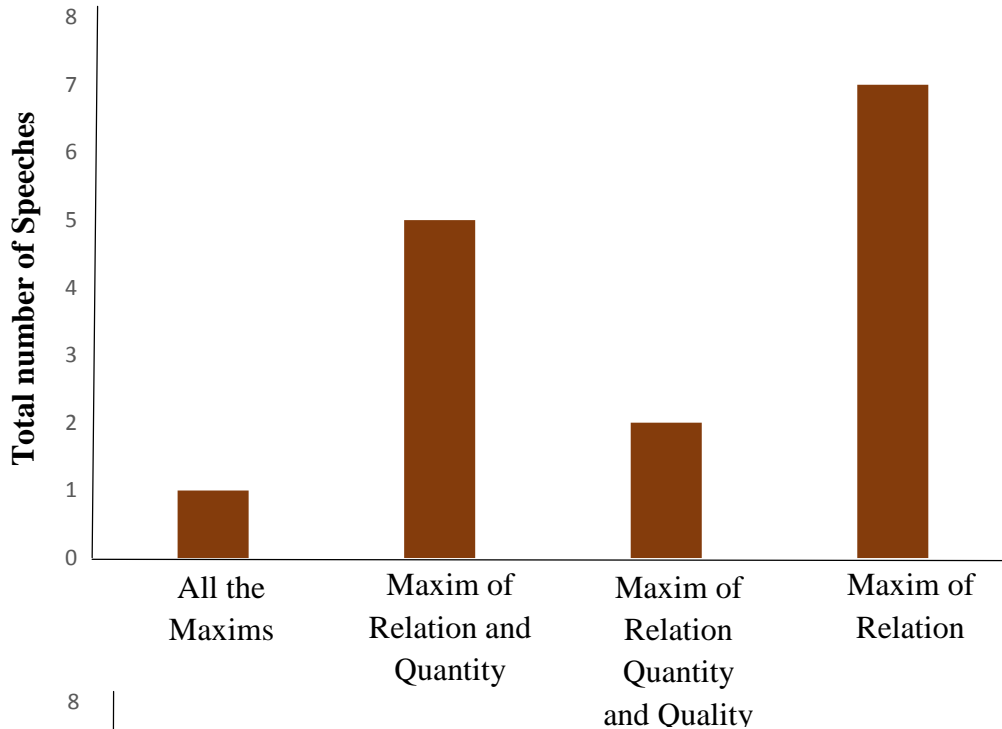
Speech (26) is aimed at warding off Prof Aladinma who insists that the Chairman should raise money towards building a dyke in spite of all warnings that the local government has no money, consequently cannot embark on a white elephant project of that nature as accused by the Chairman in speech (19). Studying the temper of speech (26), the best way for the Chairman to ward off Prof and his campaign is to ask him to put his intention into writing. This is an example of violation of maxim of Quality where the speaker says what they know to be false with the intention to deceive and mislead. Speeches (26, 28 and 30) violated the maxim of Quality thereby deceiving the interlocutor into such responses as speeches (27, 29 and 31) respectively. It is crystal clear here that asking Prof to submit a proposal is a total rejection of whatever Prof stands for. This is true because in the play, the Chairman used his secretary to deprive Prof Aladinma from seeing him, meaning the proposal was never submitted, no money was ever paid, no dyke was ever built, and consequently, the community was ravaged by flood related disaster culminating in insurrection against the Chairman by the village farmers and fishermen. Speech (32) flouts all the maxims.

Summary

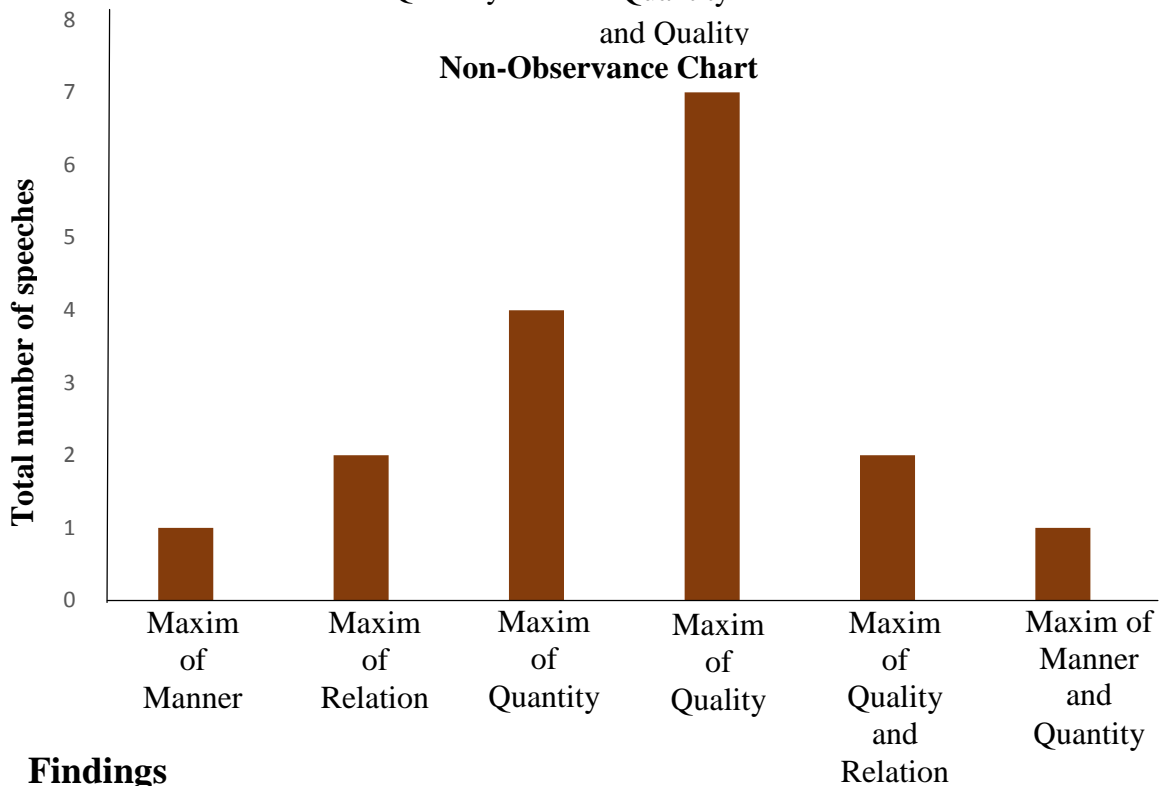
The discussion is summarized below in both tabular and chart forms to show the behavior of the speeches in relation to the nature of observance and non-observance of maxims.

MAXIMS	SPEECHES	NATURE OF NON OBSERVANCE OF MAXIMS	SPEECHES	NATURE OF COOPERATION (OBSERVANCE) OF MAXIMS
Manner	1,3,32	Flouting	4,10,11,12,15	Maxims of Relation and Quantity
Relation	5,6,24,32	Flouting	2,9,21,23,27,29,31	Maxim of Relation
Quality	8,14,16,18,24,32 26, 28, 30	Flouting Violating	13,19	Maxims of Relation, Quantity and Quality
Quantity	3,7,17,32 20, 22	Flouting Violating	25	All Maxims

Observance Chart



Non-Observance Chart



Findings

In Wake Up Everyone, most of the Chairman's contributions reflect looting and embezzling

disposition which some Nigerian public servants and politicians glamorize today at the expense of the plight of the masses. That is why he puts up deceptive intention reference to the topic of discussion by playing with words to reveal or conceal that position. If context is one of the crucial factors in Pragmatics when it comes to interpreting what is meant, Holmes (2008), then the socio-political, economic, cultural, religious and linguistic background of the speaker is vital when doing a Cooperative Principle analysis.

Besides, maxims are often blatantly flouted by politicians who play with words to create effects and ovation as well as generating implicatures.

Again, such non-observance of maxim arising from man's selfish intention always has unpleasant ending as we can see in *Wake Up Everyone*, where local farmers and fishermen took to the street and demanded to deal with the chairman following flood related disaster in Ndoli land.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there are significant instances of uncooperativeness in the speech of Prof Aladinma and the Chairman which later culminated in insurrection and rebellion. This shows that utterances lead to actions and reactions by others (hearers) and this is a kind of relationship between speech and actions. Non-observance of maxims is a product of the machination of the precarious human nature we possess which manifests in speech. Human beings are so precarious in the sense that hearers do not know what exactly is in the speaker's mind, meaning speech or writing alone does not express or entirely reflect what is intended. The human mind has the capacity to process two thoughts simultaneously and expressing them in a single utterance thereby leaving the hearer to infer the unexpressed meaning. An utterance may express approval but beneath the expressed meaning may be disapproval. These were all evident in the dialogue between Prof Aladinma and the Chairman in *Wake Up Everyone*.

Appendix

Speech 1: You see Mr Chairman, when the drummer changes beat, the dancer must change his steps. Things are no longer the way they used to be, and even a child must have noticed the changes in our climate. Take the rain for instance, the down pour this year has been heavier than that of any other year. From news report around the world, natural disaster has become daily occurrence, earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, floods, and many others. (13)

Speech 2: But these are expected, Prof. Aladinma. Doesn't the Bible say that in the last days things like these will happen, and...

Speech 3: Come on Mr Chairman you are beginning to sound like religious fanatics, the Bible this, the Koran that...what we now witness are nothing but reactions to man's mindless activities on earth. The soil and the rivers have become unproductive because of the chemicals and oil we pour on them. The flood and erosion we experience are caused by our senseless attempts to reclaim wet lands and our blockages of original water channels and drainages. What about the carbon

monoxide from power generators and all kinds of vehicles, or the unfriendly substances flared up into the air by oil companies on daily basis. The problems of our world today are created by man, and man can still find solutions to them.

Speech 4: How, for instance?

Speech 5: Good, that is why I am here. You see, as it concerns this area, Ndoli land, which is under your care, I foresee flood because of the likely overflow of the river. Already, the farmers are complaining that their farmlands have become unproductive, and the fishermen say the fishes have disappeared from the rivers and streams.

Speech 6: You are predicting a flood simply because local farmers and fishermen are complaining?"

Speech 7: Not so, Mr Chairman. Ndoli land as you know, is a coastal region and like all coastal areas, its closeness to the sea makes it prone to flooding as the rivers easily overflow their banks, resulting to the vulnerability of human lives and property. It is a very serious issue and that is why I'm here.

Speech 8: Ah! Prof.! Prof.! You see, before now, I was planning to invite you, to thank you for all the sensitizations you have been organizing for our local farmers. There have been good testimonies. But this fear of impending flood is what I still don't understand. I'm aware that this is a river-rine area, and that we are surrounded by water. But since I was born, this community has never experienced flood; neither have my parents told me of any in their own days.

Speech 9: That is the point. Things have changed. We must learn from other people's experiences. Have you not heard of the flood in Calabar, Lagos, and Ibadan Recently? All I'm asking is for the Local Government to assist in the initiative to build a dyke that will fortify our river banks so that our land doesn't become vulnerable to flood in the future. I'm only opting for a preventive measure.

Speech 10: So how do you want us to help?

Speech 11: Good. The United Nations Development Programme has made provisions for projects like this for rural communities. All we need to access the fund is to provide twenty per cent of whatever the project will cost and a proposal on the need for them to support us through their counterpart funding scheme.

Speech 12: What is the cost of the project?

Speech 13: Approximately one hundred and seventy million naira

Speech 14: What! And what you mean is that the local government should provide thirty something million naira?

Speech 15: Only

Speech 16: Only? Did you say only? From where do you expect us to cough out such an amount of money? By the way, how did you arrive at that intimidating figure.

Speech 17: I invited my friend, the Head of Civil Engineering at Dagota University and a Technical Consultant for UNDP who came with a team of other experts to do the appropriate feasibility studies and costing. It was based on their design on paper that we arrived at the project cost. Here is it. The entire 20 per cent doesn't have to come from local government purse. You can help us to approach the state government and the oil companies in this land.

Speech 18: Look, Professor Aladinma, there is nothing in the local government purse.

Speech 19: I don't understand what you mean

Speech 20: Then let me explain. Seventy per cent of local government allocation is spent on workers' salaries, while the remaining thirty percent is all that is left to run the local government. And definitely, we cannot remove a kobo from it to embark on white elephant projects like the one you are proposing.

Speech 21: How do you mean white elephant project? Have you forgotten we are talking about how to ensure the safety of our land? All right, what about the oil companies, won't they be glad to lend us a helping hand?

Speech 22: Listen, this local government headquarters was recently refurbished by Zodiac Oils, the three eighteen seater buses and two Toyota Hilux trucks out there were donated by Continental Petroleum, my official Prado Jeep came three weeks ago as a birthday gift from the MD of Diamond Oil, and all of these oil companies came together to raise me a loan with which I ran the election for this position. I have not even begun to think of how to pay back the money and you are asking me to go back to them, plate in hand like Oliver Twist, asking for more? With due respect for your concern for this community Prof., I don't think this local government is ready to get involved in such project. After all, it is based on mere speculation.

Speech 23: Mr Chairman, I suggest you have a second thought about this, because if flooding occurs, it will not only affect your image as the Chief Security Officer of this local government area, it will also lead to a rapid increase in disease and poverty. Come to think of it, nothing really stops you from using part of the remaining thirty-percent of your allocation to support this project.

Speech 24: Ehm, Professor Aladinma, we are glad about your war against the vandalization of our natural forests. We are also happy with the Climate Change Adaptation Education you are giving to our farmers, but I suggest that you stop at that. You cannot be an environmental activist and my political adviser at the same time.

Speech 25: I have not come here to make trouble with you. I have only come for the good of Ndoli land. Please, you must help to save the land.

- Speech 26:** Okay. Prof., I would like you to put your pen on paper on this project, prepare a proposal and I will present it to The Legislative Council during the next legislative session.
- Speech 27:** Good, that sounds more encouraging, more optimistic.
- Speech 28:** So when do I expect it?
- Speech 29:** Before the end of next week
- Speech 30:** All right. So can I have my peace now?
- Speech 31:** Definitely, Mr Chairman (stands, shakes hand with the Chairman and exits)
- Speech 32:** Stupid old man. Who does he think he is? I Edwin Ochonkeya, the Crocodile that guards Ndoli creeks, the unsterilized knife that cuts the thick balls of Oyibo, release money for such useless project? Nonsense, Nonsense!

References

- Mbajjorgu, G. (2011). *Wake up everyone*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited,
- Grice, H. P. (1975). 'Logic and conversation'. In Peter Cole and Jerry Morgan (eds), *Syntax and semantics*, vol.3 *Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press.pp.41-58.
- Grice, H. Paul. (1989). *Studies in the way of words (The William James Lectures)*.Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Jacob L. Mey, (2001). *Pragmatics (2nd Ed.)*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Thomas, J. (1995). *Meaning in interaction: An introduction to Pragmatics*. London: Long Man Group Limited Press.
- Holmes, J. (2008). *An introduction to socio-linguistics (3rd edition)*. England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Wardhaugh, R. (2006). *An introduction to sociolinguistics (5th edition)*. USA: Blackwell Publishing Limited.
- Yule, G. (2010). *The study of language (4th edition)*. USA: Cambridge University Press.