

Multiculturalism, Conflict, and Conflict Management: A Critical Discourse Analysis of *Symphonic Shades* by Kelvin Ngong Toh

Gwladys Pa'ami Tchakote

Department of General Studies, Institute of Fine Arts in Foumban, University of Dschang, Dschang, Cameroon

Email: gwladyspami@gmail.com

How to cite this paper: Pa'ami Tchakote, G. (2024). Multiculturalism, Conflict, and Conflict Management: A Critical Discourse Analysis of *Symphonic Shades* by Kelvin Ngong Toh. *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics*, 14, 139-156.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/ojml.2024.142008>

Received: February 8, 2024

Accepted: March 26, 2024

Published: March 29, 2024

Copyright © 2024 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

This research aims at analysing conflict discourses and processes of conflict management in a multicultural Njanga Land as in Ngong's one act play *Symphonic Shades*. The premise of this study is that language has an inherent power to resolve conflict, and human communication in this case relies on linguistic features that describe the conflict as well as the fears and aspirations of the parties involved. The problem this study strives to solve is to examine how conflict is managed, taking into account the cultural sensitivity of disputing parties. To carry out the study, three research questions were formulated: 1) How is conflict framed in *Symphonic Shades*? 2) What are components of the multicultural discourse that can be potentially important in managing conflict in Njanga land? 3) What ideological assumptions are made about multiculturalism and conflict management? This research hinges on Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a theory and method of analysis. It follows that the study identified conflicting discourses, namely the discourse of arrogance, the discourse of dominance, and hate speeches using discursive strategies (identification, legitimation, suppression, exclusion and presupposition). More so, the findings reveal that the use of language in conflict management in the play relies on transcultural education and specific discourse strategies comprising thematic repetition, usual collocations, direct calls to action, compromise. Overall, the implication of these discourses is that language use in situations of conflict is a function of power relations which should be considered when analysing language.

Keywords

Conflict, Multiculturalism, Conflict Management, Discourse, Discourse Strategy, CDA

1. Introduction

In modern linguistic research related to the study of conflict discourse, the ideological orientation of discourse analysis focuses on the way in which conflict is conceptualized and experienced by people in different geographic locations. Conflict is inevitable when individuals from different cultural backgrounds come into contact. It is defined by [Avruch \(1998\)](#) as an attribute of human societies in which individuals or groups have incompatible goals and do not agree over sources of power needed to achieve those goals, including the exclusion of others from the socio-political sphere. In the literature related to trends and paradoxes in conflict analysis, key determinants guide perceptions of conflict. These include: history, self-identity, culture, political integration, development, and the sources of power needed to achieve it ([Chandran, 2015](#)). Conflict that occurs within national and cultural boundaries equally falls within perceptual boundaries and, more especially, is liable to problems of intercultural communication and cultural integration. These concerns generally contribute to the outbreak of the conflict, no matter what the causes may be. In this perspective, culture is an important factor in addressing conflict related issues as well as conflict management.

Situating the paradigm of social exclusion, cultural misunderstanding, and power relations manifested through conflict discourses, *Symphonic Shades* provides the scope for a reflexion on conflict management in multicultural Cameroon. The one act play is set on the university campus of Njanga Land, “a multicultural society” made up of two major regional entities, namely Eastern Njanga Land and Western Njanga Land. Landers owed this geographical demarcation to the ethno-colonial history of Njanga Land whereby the colonial masters bequeathed their culture to landers and did a distribution of resources that was allegedly unequal. Such a disparity does not favour a peaceful cohabitation of Western Njanga landers (who feel disempowered and excluded from the socio-political sphere) with Eastern Njanga landers, who exercise control over all resources in the country. Consequently, the feeling of marginalisation and exclusion led Eastern Njanga landers to engage in a claim for separation and identity, manifested in the form of a conflict. In this study, understanding the impact of cultural differences on the exacerbation of a conflict and how these differences can be reconciled to achieve peace forms the background against which the correlation between multiculturalism, conflict and conflict management will be analysed.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Symphonic Shades displays the lack of clear connections between conflict management processes, multiculturalism, and cultural sensitivity in managing conflicts between minority and dominant cultures. The playwright advocates for multiculturalism as a mediating ideology in conflict management in Njanga Land, but the implications of embedded cultural values and who is included or

excluded are not clearly addressed. On that account, this study aims to explore how conflict management is defined and how multiculturalism is positioned in transcultural education within the text.

1.2. Research Questions

This paper seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How is conflict framed in *Symphonic Shades*?

RQ2: What are components of the multicultural discourse that can be potentially important in managing conflict in Njanga land?

RQ3: What ideological assumptions are made about multiculturalism and conflict management?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of this study is to investigate how the multicultural approach can be used to manage conflict from a discourse analysis point of view. Specifically, this paper seeks to:

- 1) Identify the nature and causes of conflict in the play.
- 2) Identify the forms and components of multicultural discourses in the play and highlight the potential implications of these discourses in conflict management.
- 3) Unveil the underlying ideologies about multiculturalism and conflict management in the play.

1.4. Significance

The worth of this study is related to its contribution to current research on conflict resolution in multiculturalism settings, through the analysis and findings derived from the data. It is clear that multiculturalism, conflict and conflict management are relevant topics in this research, as they explain how language affects intercultural communication, conflicts dynamics, and strategies for conflict resolution. By demonstrating the role of multilingual discourse processes in these domains, this study serves as a framework for understanding how multicultural discourse processes play a role in conflict resolution. The interpretations provided in this study, and the results derived from the case study, can be used to inform future Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) studies on multicultural discourse and conflict resolution in fiction. It may also help shape pedagogical approaches toward multiculturalism as a means of promoting inclusion across cultural divides.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Multiculturalism

According to Bekerman (2002: p. 3), the scope of the definition of multiculturalism is blurred. However, in its literal sense, multiculturalism refers to the coexistence of different cultures in a given social environment. In *Towards a richer*

definition of multiculturalism, Moawad and El Shoura (2017) posit that multiculturalism may either be man-made when jurisdictions of different cultures are combined through legislative decree (as in the case of French and English in Cameroon and Canada) or naturally through immigration.

In another perspective, Gates (1993) noted that multiculturalism may be interpreted as a claim for the recognition of various cultural identities in a country. This brings about a closer meaning of multiculturalism: “the view that various cultures in a society merit equal respect [...]” (Hirsch et al., 1993). In contemporary settings, this definition grants credit to Williams’ (1994) thought that multiculturalism is the demand for equal representation on an individual basis by including previously rejected or marginalised cultures in the prevailing hegemony.

Further studies on the concept of multiculturalism show that its heuristic use usually has both a negative and a positive connotation (Bayramov et al., 2015; Glazer, 1977). In their illustration of the negative sense of multiculturalism, Huntington (2004) presents it as the monocultural hegemony of dominant cultures’ values, which has commonly resulted in the discrimination, exclusion, and rejection of minorities. These authors provide an overtly normative understanding of multiculturalism as a doctrine that sustains hierarchical structures that reify a division between dominant and minority groups within a society. Kiba (2017) further established that this intolerance leads to conflicting situations by means of aggressive attitudes aimed at creating an alert, with the aim of claiming a position in the total cultural sphere. In this case, power relations and structural inequalities are addressed by means of depreciating the distinction between “self” and “other”.

Likewise, Bayramov et al. (2015) demonstrated through a study of transient communities in Russia that the honours of multiculturalism pointed at accomplishing dominance and recognition within the political life in contemporary Europe. In its implicit sense, it could be a conception that leads to struggle between the parties involved. This perspective provided a framework for the study of multiculturalism in organisations by Yuki (2012) which centered basically on conflict—generating variables: racial and ethnic segregation, stereotypes or generalisations, trade union participation or political participation.

In the positive sense of the use of multiculturalism, Zubrzycki (2003) posits that multiculturalism is a natural response to ethnic and cultural diversity. In other words, it is a universal phenomenon in which diversity constitutes the main characteristic of culture. Consequently, multiculturalism is a claim for the respect and acceptance of cultural difference and diversity (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997).

Furthermore, Ashcroft and Bevir (2017) approached multiculturalism as an ideology advocating for the resilience of practices that veer off from the standards broadly acknowledged by the majority, particularly if those standards disproportionately affect individuals from minority groups.

Despite these major contributions surveyed to help provide a precise definition of multiculturalism, the relevance of its study remains prodigal of research as there is no consensus approach to apprehending the nature and role of multiculturalism in the 21st century. Nevertheless, the present analysis subverts social ideals of assimilation with fragmentation and integration processes with separatism. Alternatively, it borrows from Taylor's (1992) view that multiculturalism describes the manner in which a given society deals with cultural diversity. In light of the basic assumption that members of totally different cultures can coexist peacefully, multiculturalism conveys the idea that society could be improved by encouraging and empowering social diversity.

2.2. Culture

The implied term in multiculturalism is culture, and in the appreciation and recognition of cultural variety, it takes on an essentialist meaning (Stanisevski, 2006). According to Phillips (2010), essentialism is the view that every social category—defined on the basis of age, race, gender, or ethnicity—has a set of attributes and a behaviour that are inherent to its identity. Essentialist constructs of the concept of culture disclose three distinct meanings.

The first meaning of culture, according to Glenn (2004), relates to a physical place with specific features for individuals identified with a particular social entity, in the sense of “Bamilekes are hardworking” for example. This definition contains an allusion to cultural stereotyping, which is the process whereby people give information about a person or a group of individuals to highlight differences between themselves and others (Jackson, 2014). This view acknowledges differences as essentialist and leads to the endorsement of cultural stereotyping and an allegedly increased level of stigma (Rhodes, Leslie, & Tworek, 2012).

Holliday (2011: p. 5) points to the second meaning of culture as a mutually exclusive phenomenon with other national cultures. Ultimately, people acknowledge differences as essentially indispensable in profiling other cultures and social groups. This understanding of culture is further developed by Canagarajah (2013) and Hall (1990), who posit that in a global context, the representation of culture does not reflect power inequalities that really exist, which results in conflicting cultural orientations.

The third meaning of culture is associated with a country and (a) language(s). Mahadi, Sepora, & Jafari (2012) contend that language is an element of culture that gives a label (monolingual, bilingual) to a country. In a bilingual setting like Cameroon's, this suggests that there are two subsets of people who share different ideas and traditions. At a closer look, there are inherent social¹ and functional² varieties associated with these languages, which further reinforce the idea that language means diversity, as does culture. Considering the fact that the so-

¹Varieties used by parts of the society, defined by factors such as age, gender, or occupation.

²Variation associated to the situation and the function in which the language is used.

cial background and geographic locations are different from place to place in a country, language differences indirectly create cultural diversity. Each individual identifies with a language, thus with a culture, which has peculiarities in the practice of expression.

2.3. Conflict management

Conflict management is presented in scholarship as a process that involves mediating conflict between disputing parties (Guidikova, 2014).

Chiefly, Lebaron (2003) observed that there is an imperative for cultural sensitivity in managing conflict in multicultural settings. In other words, mediating conflict in a multicultural setting requires cultural awareness. The latter takes into account the way parties name or identify the conflict because parties involved in a conflict operate within “systems of meaning” (Merry, 1987).

Williams (1994) provides a contrasting idea about conflict management in multicultural settings and suggests that any act (be it practical or theoretical) of conflict mediation aims at broadening the cultural identities of the disputing parties. In this case, rather than adopting ethnocultural labels that heighten exclusion and discrimination, like Bamileke, Beti, Anglophone, francophone, words that encompass the “other” like Cameroonians should be used.

Again, conflict management in multicultural settings has a discursive dimension. He explains that the discursive alternative in conflict management entails developing linguistic competence, which will permit individuals to communicate across difference.

3. Theoretical Framework

The selected theory for this study is Critical Discourse Analysis, indicated hereafter as CDA. CDA is an established linguistic paradigm that analyses social life in its discursive aspects, aimed at providing social criticism based on linguistic evidence. Clearly, what concerns CDA is how certain social issues—those characterised by inequalities, power abuse or discrimination, and identity—are reproduced, legitimated or enacted through discourse in relation to the wide social and historical context. Key CDA advocates—Foucault (1979), Van Dijk (1993), Fairclough (2001, 1989, 1995, 2010a, 2010b), Fairclough & Wodak (1997) and Wodak & Meyer (2001)—have proposed principles to advance CDA as an approach that links the detailed analysis of text to existing social structures. This study relies on Norman Fairclough's (2010a) understanding of CDA.

According to Fairclough, the primary function of CDA pertains to “what is wrong with a society [...] and how ‘wrong’ can be ‘righted’”. He further explains that CDA “assesses what exists, what might exist, and what should exist on the basis of a coherent set of values” (Fairclough, 2010a: p. 7). Based on this assumption, CDA, as an eclectic³ method, is relevant in the study of multiculturalism, ³CDA, as described by its propounders, is an “analytic and descriptive method” as well as “a normative and an activist one” (Gamaghelyan, 2017). Conflict resolution beyond the realist paradigm: transformative strategies. Columbia University Press.

conflict, and conflict management because it helps the researcher to identify explicit cultural values within the corpus and evaluate them against these concepts. In other words, CDA offers a framework (a) analysing how language is used to frame and legitimise conflicts in the text, and (b) elucidating underlying motivations and perceptions driving these conflicts. Furthermore, conflict management in multicultural settings requires a deep understanding of the power dynamics that contribute to conflicts and the ability to negotiate those dynamics effectively. CDA provides a framework for understanding the role of language in constructing these power dynamics and offers a critical perspective on how conflicts are represented and perpetuated through discourse. Fairclough's theoretical framework will be useful in identifying instances of power relations and social inequalities and how they can be improved or countered to facilitate a peaceful coexistence.

Specifically, one of the strengths of CDA as a critical theory, in Fairclough's view, is the development of a critical viewpoint in situations of conflict and conflict management. The term "critical" here does not refer to criticism, as Candlin explains in his introduction to "Critical Discourse Analysis". Rather, it makes up a "means of explaining data in a context of social, political, and institutional analysis, and in terms of critiquing the ideologically invested modes of explaining and interpreting, but always with the sights set on positively motivated change" (as quoted by Fairclough, 2010a: p. ix). Therefore, the relevance of the use of CDA in this study can be summarised in two points. First, it allows for the identification of textual functions that create discourses on multiculturalism, constructed social categories that generate conflict, and inclusive practices that promote a mediation between opposing camps in *Symphonic Shades*. Second, it enables the researcher to make a critique of the modes of explaining the wrongs of our society as in the play and refining them.

In reality, CDA offers a conceptual framework comprising notions of *discourse*, *power*, and *ideology* which guide the interpretative and explanatory analysis of the corpus.

3.1. Discourse

To begin with, the first analytical principle evolves around the conception of *discourse* as relational. There is perpetual interaction between language and the social context. Thus, discourse is analysed in this study as a representation of society, here in Njanga land, where social actors "do things with words" in a bid to mediate conflict. Fairclough argues that the problematic of language and power in situations of conflict and in the field of conflict management cannot be excluded from the same problematic that texts recounting struggles against domination be refocused from "critique of structures to critique of strategies" (Fairclough, 2010b: p. 17). Conflict and conflict management are thus relational processes that entail patterns of oppression, marginalisation and exclusion, which are all manifestations of power.

3.2. Power

Power is a central concept in CDA and a key lens to analyse practices of marginalisation and exclusion engendered by conflict and conflict management processes. CDA researchers are generally interested in the ways discourse reproduces social domination, that is, the power abuse of one group over others, and how minorities or dominated groups may discursively resist such abuse. From a social constructivist perspective, Luke (2004) states that it is an “[...] essentially contested concept”. However, Culpeper et al. (2009: p. 514) explain that power takes three major forms, namely “*the power to, the power over, and the power behind*”. The “*power to*”, in their point of view refers to power a person possesses in its most broad sense. This is the type of power forces of law exercise on criminals. The second one, “*power over*”, shows the capacity people have to exercise control over others through the use of formal authority and position. As an example of power over, Fairclough (2001: p. 2) and Illich (1987) cite medicine and education as domains where professionals, by virtue of their diploma, legislate the needs of an individual, while that very individual loses the ability to fulfil his or her needs. Then, the “*power behind*” is often seen in work organisations whereby a person or a group informally exercises the real power of an office. In this analysis, power is discussed as a set of relationships constructed and manifested through language that contribute to the exclusion and dominance of groups in conflict. In addition, the notion of power is relevant here as the researcher’s task is to identify processes of conflict management, which itself constitutes a field for power struggles over addressing marginalisation, giving a voice to the voiceless, empowering the powerless, and controlling conflict discourses.

3.3. Ideology

Just like discourse and power, the concept of ideology is essential in CDA studies. Borrowing from Fairclough (1995: p. 14), ideology in this study refers to “meaning in the service of power”. In other words, it serves the interests of certain groups with social power, ensuring that events, practices, and behaviours come to be regarded as legitimate and commonsense. This concept is relevant in this study in that it will enable the researcher to expose hidden ideologies (stigmatization, stereotypes, attitudes, otherness, etc.) in *Symphonic Shades* and how they sustain asymmetrical power relations as well as social inequalities.

Particularly, CDA in this study addresses the issues of multiculturalism, on the one hand, as a process of inclusion of affected populations in conflict management, which fulfils the aim of social justice and the human need for cultural empowerment. On the other hand, conflict and conflict management are regarded as social concerns in the play, which calls for language awareness to frame the problem and its solutions. Therefore, the analysis will focus on a textual dimension whereby emphasis will be laid on:

- 1) The use of vocabulary and the reasons for the choice of particular words to describe multiculturalism.
- 2) Linguistic characteristics of practices of exclusion which account for the socio-political conflict.
- 3) Discursive strategies to contest such practices and change them.

4. Methodology

4.1. Design

The research design for this inquiry is a case study in which the researcher relies on a non-numerical data base—a one-act play entitled *Symphonic Shades*—to examine discursive constructions of the concepts of multiculturalism, conflict, and conflict management. This design is suitable for the analysis of the corpus because it will enable the researcher to determine how multiculturalism is constructed in the text as a discourse, who it concerns and the ideology underlying it in conflict management.

4.2. Justification on the Choice of the Corpus

Symphonic Shades is fiction, and it is used in this research as a lens to examine the concepts of multiculturalism, conflict, and conflict management. This play offers a unique and insightful perspective on these complex and nuanced topics due to the fact that fictional narratives often deal with the complexities of human relations, cultural distinctions, and how conflict arises and resolves itself. Thus, by analyzing this play, a deeper understanding of the underlying issues and dynamics at play in multicultural societies and how conflicts can be managed effectively is provided.

4.3. Data Analysis

As mentioned in the theoretical framework for this study, the analysis of data is informed by the qualitative use of Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis. The major ideas in which this article is grounded are that multiculturalism, conflict and conflict management are discourses. This implies that there are ideologies embedded in the play that discursively situate the social and political contexts of frames of conflict, multiculturalism, and conflict management. CDA, then, is used in the corpus to make explicit these ideological assumptions. Prior to that, there will be a critique of power relations through the examination of discursive textual features such as words, conceptual categories, and the socio-political and cultural structures within which the text operates. In addition, inherent in conflict management are ideological positions that serve the interests of policy makers and spark meaning in the service of dominant groups (Thompson, 1990). So, CDA will be used here to indicate the voices and discourses that are included and which may be excluded, or absent to manage the conflict in *Symphonic Shades* through the identification of specific discursive strategies.

5. Findings

5.1. Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is presented in the text as a discourse that recognizes and honours difference, contests ideologies that privilege dominant groups, specifically the Eastern Njanga landers, as holders of power in Njanga land. In reality, the politics exalted by multiculturalism as described in the text have two notable characteristics. First, it frames issues of social justice and domination in terms of identity groupings. It is made evident in the text using the following utterances:

Fatima: away the thoughts of seeing you [Western Njanga landers] as my enemies, away the noise of battle, away to sounds of apartness for united, we stand taller than the Iroko tree; for united we stand deep like the roots of the eucalyptus tree that never dies.

This excerpt legitimises the discourse of multiculturalism in the play as a condition that requires that landers resist segregationist attitudes and strive for union. Also, the noun phrase “**Iroko tree**” stands as a metaphor for strength and unity which are prerequisites for progress, which is termed “**taller**”. The comparative form of the adjective “**tall**” conveys the idea that unity among landers empowers them to seek new prospects of togetherness. All these elements constitute the legitimisation strategy used by the playwright to signify that the recognition of difference is central to multiculturalism. In contrast, the clauses “**noises of battle**”, “**enemies**”, and “**sounds of apartness**” are linguistic traces of war and otherness that the playwright uses to illustrate divisive actions, which multicultural discourse does not accommodate.

Second, multiculturalism highlights issues of representation in the sense of equal recognition of different cultural entities and at the level of individual identity. The following quotations illustrate that idea: I stand for the equality of people, justice, and fairness for all human beings; “Police 2: *give equal opportunities to all and respect everyone* (scene 1, p. 15)”. At the level of individual identity, multiculturalism as an ideology exhibits the rhetoric of coexistence woven around the idea of a dual cultural identity for all landers. Prof encourages “**twoness**” which, in John’s view, constitute a “**strength**”, the strength of [the] university [of Njanga land], the strength of Njanga land; the hope of the world, the treasure of justice and peace. This character’s perception stands as a strategy of persuasion about the essence of adopting a hybrid cultural identity. Again, the lexical choice made to express the importance of twoness for all landers, “**strength**”, implies that belonging to two identities is the utmost potential every lander should possess in a multicultural society.

5.2. Conflict

Conflict in *Symphonic Shades* is presented as a socio-cultural event in which discourses of arrogance and dominance are embedded. The arrangement of these conflict-related discourses gives priority to the identification of the root

causes of the insurgency that overshadows the university of Njanga land and Njanga land at large.

Discourse of Arrogance

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines arrogance as an attitude of superiority manifested in an overbearing manner or in presumptuous claims or assumptions. It allegedly appears to be a major cause of conflict among landers in the play (scene 2, p. 15). This observation finds its justification in the sentence “*arrogance is ruining this country and this university*” (police 2, p. 14, scene 1). This implies that arrogance is a harmful and misguided attitude that hinders the peaceful coexistence of landers. In addition, another linguistic evidence of arrogance in the play is the clause “*we are in charge*” which is used by Fatima and Jean (scene 1, pp. 12-13). They use it repeatedly, perhaps as a reminder to their mates who come from the West that they are a minority with no representatives in the government.

5.3. Discourse of Dominance

Dominance is a key dimension of power relationships between Easterners and Westerners in Njanga land. Consider these excerpts from the text:

Jean: it is not he who wants in this university and country. It is he who can and we are in charge here. As long as we rule here, things must be done our way. [...] here we are in charge. pp. 12 - 13

Jean: we are in charge here. We will crush you because we are not afraid of you. [...] We are in charge and that is the fact. We will crush you if you try not to be silent and happy where we have place you. p. 34

To begin with, verbs in the above examples are indicators of power abuse:

“**Can**”: modal verb which means ability, expresses a coercive power that Jean exercises over his classmates who are Westerners.

“**Rule**”: transitive verb that means exercising authority or power over, often arbitrarily.

“**Crush**”: intransitive verb which means to oppress.

This explanation shows the superiority of Easterners over Westerners (Christina and John), which, in Jean’s opinion, is legitimate by virtue of his identification with the ruling class. Relational identification is used here as a discursive strategy by which Jean and Fatima relate to the ruling class. Ideologically, it expresses divisive thoughts that sustain difference and marginalisation of Western Njanga landers. Again, the clause “**we are in charge here**” as well as the sentence “*as long as we rule here, things must be done our way*”, expresses a coercive power (an abusive power) over their mates which to them is legitimate because they belong to the dominant class. It is an ideological enterprise to exclude Western Njanga landers from decision-making at the university and in the country at large. Obviously, there is a bias toward the integration of Westerners in the university, who are reduced to silence and intransigence. Again, the use of

the present tense in the excerpt recalls the idea that the discourse of dominance is framed as a phenomenal issue, that by which Easterners' hegemony in the university and in Njanga categorise western landers as aliens, thus as objects of marginalisation and exclusion. Likewise, the repetition of the clause "we will crush you" is done to emphasise on the hegemony of easterners over others in Njanga land. This statement involves the use of suppression as a discursive strategy, which reinforces the positional power and authority that Eastern Njanga landers claim over Westerners.

5.4. Hate Speeches

Hate speeches constitute another form of discourse in the play that can be identified as a source of conflict by means of identification. They are formulated by both parties in the play. Jean, who is an Easterner, refers to Western landers as "**rowdy detractors**"; "**professional noise makers**" (scene 1, p. 11). John who is from East Njanga land qualifies Westerners as "**partisan and stomach-centric**", as "**chop I chop**" and as "**appointment focused**" (scene 4, p. 46). In reality, these expressions are attributes used by both parties to incite hatred against one another. Moreover, this presupposes that there is an underlying power struggle among landers which might have caused the escalation of conflict between landers.

Presuppositions constitute a key type of inference and a discursive strategy in hate speeches in *Symphonic Shades*. The study revealed that these presuppositions relate to the complex causes and effects of conflict in Njanga land; and rely on a large amount of background knowledge that the characters communicate to the reader. The sentence "here we are in charge [...]. Our elders in Njanga lander have crooked short cuts to get to power" presupposes that corruption has integrated the habits of Njanga landers and that he who has the means gets power. In addition, there is an underlying presupposition that westerners who constitute a minority in Njanga land are subjected to marginalisation and exclusion:

John: "[...] what peace can we get in Njanga land? When some people are more landers than others. When few glory in state wealth and a majority languish in State-guided lack? [...] This university was created with the idea of brotherhood that politicians from the west and east dreamed of. My brothers and sisters, it was not majority and minority flexing muscles at each other. It was not that in the end, I be called enemy and underprivileged" (scene 1, p. 13).

This excerpt includes many other presuppositions, each triggered by noun phrases and verbs marked in bold. The first presupposition relates to the fact that there is an unequal distribution of resources among landers in Njanga land. The second presupposition is that conflict in Njanga land results from the non-recognition of western Njanga landers as citizens with equal rights to easterners in Njanga land, thereby relegating them to a minority. Another presupposition here is that the university was meant to operate on a mutual under-

standing of both western and eastern landers and not for the westerner to claim supremacy and ownership of the institution, saying, “**here, we are in charge**” (Jean, scene 1, p. 11).

5.5. Conflict Management

Ideas that relate to conflict management in *Symphonic Shades* converge to a transcultural education on the one hand. On the other hand, conversations among characters reveal a range of discourse strategies that characters use to mitigate conflict, namely thematic repetition, usual collocations, direct calls to action, and compromise.

5.5.1. Transcultural Education

Transculturalism, as defined by Kiba (2017: p. 2) in *The problem of Multiculturalism in the Context of Conflict*, refers to the “unification of cultures, hybridisation of them in a manner blurring their individual features”. In such a project, each party preserves its identity, and none of them is dominant; rather, they operate on an equal basis. This constitutes the very premise of Prof’s lectures in the university of Njanga land where she instills in students the knowledge on how to remedy conflict in their country, as well as corresponding attitudes and skills that are required to this effect.

Knowledge

In *Symphonic Shades*, Prof creates awareness of the colonial history of Njanga land, cultural awareness, and differences during her lectures. Specifically, Prof recalls the ethno-colonial history of Njanga land to students in the following terms: “Njanga Land is a multicultural society, owing to the colonial dividing line” (p. 24). “[...] Njanga land is built on the colonial past. It has two colonial cultures” (p. 55). In this excerpt, she makes use of identification (spatial) as a discursive strategy in her description of Njanga land as a “**multicultural society**”. Ideologically, this suggests that Njanga Land is a space in which different cultures coexist. The same idea is suggested in Ngong Toh’s description of the university campus.

The university of Njanga land is presented in the play as the lone university in the country where students from the East and West regions come to study (p. 11). Consequently, the motto “**we live together**” that the playwright acknowledges in the description of the stage is a reflection of the fact that the university of Njanga land is a mosaic that integrates students from different cultural backgrounds. Critically, it is a metaphor for the way multiculturalism operates: the recognition of cultural pluralism along with oneness (Kolb, 2009).

Attitudes

The playwright establishes behavioural attitudes of characters towards one another based on their regional identity. Eastern Njanga landers—Jean and Fatima—display some sort of dominance over their mates as they identify with the ruling power and “**feel in charge of matters in Njanga land**”. They are driven by “**the spirit of marginalisation**”, hold “**a language of supremacy**”, are

possessed by “**the demon of arrogance**”, and seek “**the annexation of people**”. Ideologically, these ideas demonstrate the degree of power abuse that easterners exercise over westerners. Western Njanga landers, namely John and Christina, constitute a minority in the university because they are “distant from the ruling clan”.

Such a division of sociocultural personality types among students implies that the University of Njanga land is a place in which the autonomous co-existence of cultures is based on negative mutual recognition, a division of sociocultural personality types (supremacy and arrogance), which are formed in different cultural regions of Njanga land. Following this observation, Prof advocates respect and openness as key alternatives to counter power abuses and dominance. A change of attitude is therefore advocated in the play as students agree to live as one, saying: “*we accept to integrate nationally, we accept to live together, with all feeling as one and happy.*” The phrase “**we accept**” is used twice in bringing out the discourse of unity. Repetition for emphasis is used here as a strategy in that phrase to indicate that students opt for a consensual new way of life in which rejection of the other is prohibited.

Skills

Indications are given in the play to students by Prof on how to counter the conflict that exists among them. The ultimate ones she teaches students are twoness and the love for one another despite cultural differences.

“**Twoness**” is a skill that is presented by the author as a paramount necessity to mediate conflict between Eastern and Western Landers in the play. It is taught by Prof as a practice that honours cultural differences and fosters living together. Prof teaches students that twoness, as advocated by Web du Bois, is “a kind of double consciousness”. In other words, twoness is an attribute of people whose backgrounds consist of a blend of two different cultures or traditions.

This discourse is identified in the play through linguistic traces, that include words, phrases, expressions, and sentences. The first linguistic trace which refers to twoness is the sentence “Twoness stands for two in one”. In this sentence the phrase, “[...] **two in one**” establishes the essence of twoness and presupposes that requires the co-existence of two cultures.

The second linguistic trace that shows twoness is “I belong to both sides [...]. My twoness makes me an easterner and a westerner.” Prof uses these sentences to situate her “self” in Njanga land. This also aims at making a representation of twoness and projecting it as the ideal identity for Njanga landers. The clause “**I belong to both sides**” is a discursive strategy of self-identification and self-presentation that Prof uses to define her spatial belonging. Moreover, that clause can be seen as a metaphor for the togetherness that Prof is striving to instill in her students. She presents her identity as the epitome of diversity.

I see all of you as children of this beloved country longing for a future that no one has the right to deprive you of. my task as a Christian, an intellectual and an activist is to bring twoness to Njanga land, where all people are born

free, equal before our laws and guided by the fear of God and human dignity; where we share love and the ideals of what brings us together and respect our difference; where we mix cultures and not melt cultures, where tribal and regional balance is not allowed to flourish; where justice lives and reigns, my children. (Scene 3, p. 27, 35, 36)

In the above excerpt, the use of the following adjectives: “**Christian**”, “**intellectual**” and “**activist**” by Prof can be ideologically explained as an expression of Prof’s commitment to the institutionalisation and the practice of twoness in Njanga land. She aims at educating the minds of students, who in her vision of togetherness, constitute the driving force through which change can be effected.

This description of twoness is framed on two scales. First, at the individual level, the use of the personal pronoun “you” is a strategy of including students in the project of twoness. She draws their attention to the fact that twoness is, first of all, an individual undertaking. Second, twoness is framed by Prof in interpersonal terms, and the use of inclusive possessive pronouns “we” and “our” corroborate this fact. Actually, “we” is used as a strategy of inclusion, expressing the idea that twoness will only be reached by means of mutual consensus among characters and people of Njanga land at large.

Again, the apostrophe “my children”, further contributes to making students aware of the tasks that rest upon them. Overall, Prof seeks to alert us to existing cultural multiplicity and richness, seeking to alleviate the suffering of groups that ostensibly found themselves on the periphery of society’s power centers because of their different cultural characteristics. In calling for appreciation and recognition of cultural difference, Prof adopts an essentialist approach to culture.

5.5.2. Usual Collocations

The usual collocations that were itemised in the text include “**We are one**”, “**live together**”, “**my brother**”, “**one love**”, “**one heart**”. All these elements converge to develop a sense of nationhood among landers. The underlying ideology here is that of love, which encapsulates the memorable ideal of a homeland. Moreover, these collocations constitute the discursive strategy of transformation, which creates a mental disposition for the characters to ameliorate the relationships between landers but primarily to create what Bourdieu (1990) referred to as a “**national habitus**”.

5.5.3. Direct Call to Action

It encompasses the discourse of nationalism using expressions like “**let’s get together**”;

John: “**let** hate speech end and **let** the spirit of dialogue invade our hearts. **Let** fighting give way to justice [...]” (scene 3, p. 37)

Jean: “**let** us love and build this university and make it ours; **let** us love and build this country and make it ours; **let** us love and recognise our past [...]” (scene 3, p. 38)

The verb “let”, which literally means “to cause to”, constitutes an appeal to all

landers to resist separatist attitudes like “**fighting**” and “**hate speech**” to embrace “**dialogue**” which stands as an integration framework for landers to achieving peace and transforming social inequalities. Again, there are constructive discursive strategies embedded in this discourse, manifested through the use of linguistic utterances that recall a national entity. For example, the use of inclusive pronouns “us” and “ours” appeals to solidarity and unity among landers.

5.5.4. Compromise

Compromise in *Symphonic Shades* is one where disputants submit to a third who offers a concession which is accepted by all. Njanga land has two colonial cultures and Prof recommends students to “**love them, mix the cultures but not melt them**”. It is a strategy of inducement by which Prof calls on students to change. The verbs *love*: valorise the two cultures, give them equal status; *mix*: hybridity; *not melt*: caution to students to preserve the originality of each culture are imperatives that she gives the students to remedy conflict. The character manifests the commitment to change in play through the voice of Jean who says: [...] our hearts will celebrate and respect your differences as we mix our colonial identities and not melt them’. Pragmatically, this sentence embodies a consociational undertaking that students aim to follow for the inclusion of all without discrimination in the university and in Njanga land as a whole. Culture is receiving due recognition as a key factor in the management of conflict in njanga land.

6. Conclusion

The discourse analysis of *Symphonic Shades* reinforces the understanding of discourse as concerned with the interrelationships between language and society. It found out that language is a significant component in investigating how individuals understand and handle conflict. The different linguistic elements that have been analysed indicate that multiculturalism is developed in the play as a network of connections, forcing changes in mentality. Considering that this play is a metaphor for the Anglophone crisis, Ngong Toh thus seeks to conscientize people about the fact that a variety of cultures need not necessarily lead to conflicts. As such, the idea of twoness submitted in the text contributes to asserting that difference should support exchange and togetherness, as well as knowledge, which should create a society of tolerance.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

- Ashcroft, R. T., & Bevir, M. (2017). *Multiculturalism in Contemporary Britain: Policy, Law and Theory*. University of California Press.
- Avruch, K. (1998). *Culture & Conflict Resolution* (p. 172). United States Institute of Peace Press.

- Bayramov, V. D. et al. (2015). Multiculturalism: Discursive Practices. *Review of European Studies*, 7, 195-200. <https://doi.org/10.5539/res.v7n7p195>
- Bekerman, Z. (2002). Hidden Dangers in Multicultural Discourse. *Race Equality Teaching*, 21, 36-41. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234734874>
<https://doi.org/10.18546/RET.21.3.12>
- Bourdieu, P. (1990). 3 Structures, Habitus, Practices. In *The Logic of Practice* (pp. 52-65). Stanford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781503621749-005>
- Canagarajah, A. S. (2013). *Translingual Practice: Global Englishes and Cosmopolitan Relations*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203120293>
- Chandran, S. (2015). Towards Post-War Social Science: Contesting Discourses and Possible Reconstruction for Multicultural Societies. *Jaffna University International Research Conference Proceedings, 2012*, 218. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2624440>
- Culpeper, J., Katamba, F., Kerswill, P., Wodak, R., & McEnery, T. (2009). *English Language: Description, Variation and Context*. Palgrave Macmillan.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-07789-9>
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and Power*. Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (2001). Critical Discourse Analysis as a Method in Social Scientific Research. In R. Wodak, & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (pp. 121-138). Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857028020.n6>
- Fairclough, N. (2010a). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446289068.n17>
- Fairclough, N. (2010b). Language and Ideology. In *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (2nd Edition, pp. 56-68). Longman.
- Fairclough, N., & Wodak, R. (1997). Critical Discourse Analysis. In T. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse as Social Interaction* (pp. 258-284). Sage.
- Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Penguin Boo.
- Gates, H. L. J. (1993). Beyond the Culture Wars: Identities in Dialogue. In P. Franklin (Ed.), *Multiculturalism: The Task of Literary Representation in the Twenty-First Century. Profession 93*. Modern Languages Association.
- Gamaghelyan, P. (2017). Conflict Resolution beyond the International Relations Paradigm: Evolving Design as Transformative Practice. In *Nagorno-Karabakh and Syria. Philip Gamaghelyan; with a Foreword by Susan Allen*. Ibidem Verlag.
- Glazer, N. (1977). *We Are All Multiculturalists Now*. Harvard University Press.
- Glenn, S. S. (2004). Individual Behavior, Culture, and Social Change. *Behavior Analyst*, 27, 133-151. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03393175>
- Guidikova, I. (2014). *Cultural Diversity and Cities. The Intercultural Integration Approach*. EUI: RSCAS Policy Paper 2014/02. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2380692>
- Hall, S. (1990). Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*. Lawrence and Wishart.
- Hirsch et al. (1993). *The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* (2nd ed.). Houghton Mifflin.
- Holliday, A. (2011). *Intercultural Communication and Ideology*. Sage.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446269107>
- Huntington, S. P. (2004). *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*. Simon & Schuster, Inc.
- Illich, I. (1987). A Plea for Research on Lay Literacy. *The North American Review*, 272,

- 10-17. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01807056>
- Jackson, L. (2014). *Muslims and Islam in U.S. Education: Reconsidering Multiculturalism*. Routledge.
- Kiba, L. (2017). The Problem of Multiculturalism in the Context of Conflict. *In Forum Scientiae Oeconomia*, 5.
- Kincheloe, J. L., & Steinberg, S. R. (1997). *Changing Multiculturalism*. Open University Press.
- Kolb, E. (2009). The Evolution of New York City's Multiculturalism: Melting Pot or Salad Bowl. In *Multiculturalism: The Task of Literary Representation in the Twenty-First Century. Profession 93*. Modern Languages Association.
- Lebaron, M. (2003). *Bridging Cultural Conflicts: A New Approach for a Changing World*. Jossey Bass/John Wiley.
- Luke, A. (2004). Notes on the Future of Critical Discourse Studies. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 1, 149-152. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405900410001674551>
- Mahadi, T., Sepora, T., & Jafari, S. M. (2012). Language and Culture. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2, 230-235.
- Merry, S. E. (1987). *Cultural Frameworks of Mediation* (pp. 1-23). PCR Occasional Paper Series: Cultural Aspects of Disputing 1987(2).
- Moawad, N., & El Shoura, S. (2017). Toward a Richer Definition of Multiculturalism. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 5, 802-806. <https://doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/4783>
- Phillips, A. (2010). "What's Wrong with Essentialism?" *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory*, 11, 47-60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1600910X.2010.9672755>
- Rhodes, M., Leslie, S.-J., & Tworek, C. M. (2012). Cultural Transmission of Social Essentialism. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 109, 13526-13531. <http://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1208951109>
- Stanisevski, D. M. (2006). *Multicultural Discourse: A Comparative Case Study of Government Practices in Facilitation of Multicultural Public Discourse in South Florida*. Ph.D. Thesis.
- Taylor, C. (1992). *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*. Princeton University Press.
- Thompson, J. B. (1990). *Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communication*. Stanford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781503621886>
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis. *Discourse & Society*, 4, 249-283. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002006>
- Williams, A. (1994). Resolving Conflict in a Multicultural Environment. *MCS Conciliation Quarterly*, Summer, 2-6.
- Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2001). *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857028020>
- Yuki, K. (2012). *Stereotypes, Segregation, and Ethnic Inequality*. MPRA Paper 39704, University Library of Munich, Germany.
- Zubrzycki, J. (2003). *Criticisms of Multiculturalism*.