

METAPRAGMATIC ACTS IN J. P. CLARK'S *WIVES REVOLT*

Esther Avosuahi Onmoke

Department of English
Redeemer's University, Ede, Osun State
saliuavosuahiesther@gmail.com/ onmokee@run.edu.ng

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Oluwatosin Mercy Ajayi

Department of English
Redeemer's University, Ede, Osun State
ajayi9921@run.edu.ng /mercyoluwatosin12@gmail.com

Abstract

This study explores the metapragmatic acts in J.P. Clark's Wives' Revolt; highlighting how conversational dynamics are shaped and reinforced in the play's thematic preoccupations. It investigates the functions of metapragmatic acts as both a linguistic and sociocultural tool in literary discourse. The research primarily analyses the types, forms, and features of metapragmatic acts in the text, emphasising their communicative functions. A qualitative method of data analysis was employed to investigate the explicit and implicit metapragmatic acts within the conversation. Explicit acts were evident through performative verbs such as summoning, decreeing, questioning, and confronting, as well as self-referential expressions, hedges, and contextualisation cues. Implicit acts were realised as deictic references and mood variations (exclamative, interrogative, and declarative). Findings showed that speech act descriptions and talk regulation strategies enhanced interaction and thematic expression. The study concluded that metapragmatic acts in Wives' Revolt serve as a vehicle for sociocultural critique, establishing language as a tool for power negotiation and social change.

Keywords: Metapragmatics, Metapragmatic acts, Wives' Revolt, Power negotiation, Literary discourse

1. Introduction

The scholarly investigations of literary discourse have established the complex interplay between language, meaning, and interpretation. As a specialised communicative modality, literary texts deploy nuances of linguistic devices which transcend simple referential signification to engage readers in inferential reasoning, contextual reconstruction and pragmatic negotiation. Within this domain, metapragmatics provides a crucial framework for understanding how literary works create, control, and dispute accepted conventions in communication. Metapragmatics offers insights into the ideological issues of

literary language, the creation of narrative identities, and the negotiation of socio-cultural norms within literary works by analysing how texts reflect their own discursive practices.

The term metapragmatic points to the linguistic markers that aid the interpretation of words beyond the denotative context. It focuses on how meta-utterances (utterances about other utterances) are used to shape conversations in real time, rather than simply discussing language itself. Beyond analysing how language is used or theorised, it examines speakers' active use of utterances to guide and influence communication. Hence, Caffi (1998) describes it as a theoretical and methodological approach describing pragmatics, the conditions governing communicative acts and the management of discourse. Metapragmatics examines how interactants use metalanguage to 'frame their own or other participants' expressions as true or false, precise or vague, cooperative or uncooperative... in order to secure or change the direction of the current talk, to create or maintain effective and efficient social relationships' (Hübler and Bublitz, 2007: 3; Grundy, 2008: 156). This is because the meaning and function of an utterance can vary contextually.

Verschueren (2000), asserts that it focuses on how language works by using language; adding that an utterance carries metapragmatic functions if there is an awareness of the pragmatic effect(s) which is the force behind the meaning-generating capacity of language in use. Distinguishing between the two types of metapragmatics acts, Verschueren (2000) identifies explicit and implicit acts. Explicit metapragmatic markers are markers that specifically comment on the communicative act which include performative verbs and speech act descriptions (apologising, praying, advising), self-referential expressions, hedges, quoted and reported speeches, evidentials and contextualisation cues (well, accordingly, all right, yet, of course). Deictics (they, I, now, where), aspect (progressive: '*you aren't suggesting,*' and perfective: 'I have already eaten.');

mood: (exclamative, declarative and interrogative), modality (won't, can), contextualisation signals (space fillers, prosody, codeswitching), and implicit voice constitute the implicit metapragmatic items that subtly comment on the communicative act.

Hübler and Bublitz (2007) as cited by Unuabonah (2017) differentiate between regular and occasional pragmatic act, and On-line and Off-line metapragmatic act. While offline acts intrude ongoing discourse, online metapragmatic acts sustains a discourse in progress. While routine metapragmatic acts are conducted on a regular basis to achieving a specific pragmatic consequence, occasional metapragmatic acts are periodically perform in an accidental manner. Consequently, implicit on-line, explicit on-line, implicit off-line and explicit off-line are the realisations of metapragmatic acts.

Metapragmatic Comments

Hübler and Bublitz (2007) describes Metapragmatic comments as metapragmatic acts that concentrate on the entire principles of communication, communicative acts, and associated non-linguistic body behavior. Interactants use metapragmatic comments to help listeners understand what speakers are saying. As a result, analysing metapragmatic comments can provide information about our values and personality in addition to what we do when we communicate. Speakers bring up cooperative principle, a politeness principle, sociocultural norms, speech actions, and nonverbal communication up in their meta-utterances. These actions can also be self- or other-directed, prospective (when they relate to an impending discourse component), or retrospective (when they refer to a former speech or discourse segment). From the fore going, this research sets to explore the types, forms and features of metapragmatic acts in J. P. Clark's *Wives Revolt*.

2. Contextualisation of the text

J. P. Clark's *The Wives' Revolt* satirises gender roles, power dynamics, and resistance within a patriarchal society in the fictional *Erhuwaren* community in Niger Delta, Nigeria. The play is about women who have long experienced unfairness and marginalisation. They challenged their husbands who decided to exclude them and hoard the compensation money from an oil company. This exclusion stems from the societal belief that only men should be in charge of wealth and decision-making. The men are enraged by the women's insistence on the male-female sharing formula. The final decree is not favorably received by the women. The wife of the village leader Koko, organises a demonstration against this injustice. The women decide to leave the neighborhood at night and travel to Eyara, one of the outlying settlements in the disease-ridden area. These ladies are forced to bathe in filthy water in Eyara, and days later they return home sick from it. Finally giving in, Okoro changes the law. The women's revolt demonstrates both a literal and symbolic stand against oppression, thereby, giving insight into the evolving gender consciousness within traditional African societies.

Through humor and satire, Clark critiques the social injustices and the exploitation of both women and less powerful community members that bedeviled the society. His portrayal of the women's revolt foregrounds that resistance, even in the face of opposition, is necessary for justice and societal progress. Beyond its spatial setting, *The Wives' Revolt* projects the universal themes of gender inequality, oppression, social injustice and revolution. To Clark, women are not passive victims but active agents of change. This is in tandem with the feminist discourse advocacy for equality and fairness.

3. Literature review

Jacquemet (2007) researches on 'If he speaks Italian, its better': Metapragmatics in court. He analyses the fight for the control of the pentiti's testimony by looking at the different strategies of metapragmatic awareness employed by the defense and the prosecuting bench, represented in the Italian legal system by a prosecuting magistrate, most of the times directly assisted by the presiding judge. The study concludes that, intimidation is usually the exclusive right of the most powerful speaker(s), and that only the powerful rely on explicit metapragmatic strategies as a form of control. Explicit metapragmatics becomes a mechanism of control over the communicative expectations of participants. In the case examined, the judge showed his ability to control different repertoires of alternative styles, displaying his refined social persona. This display of a broad communicative competence has not only boosted his 'interactional power' (Jacquemet 1989), but also signaled that the Neapolitan difference was tolerated and had a place in the Hall of Justice in Naples.

Hongladarom (2007) attempts a study of metapragmatic comments in Thai on the basis that Thais usually say things indirectly particularly in criticism. On this note, the study focuses on two types of metapragmatic comments in Thai- with and without overt disclaimer. The study aims to understand how these disclaimers are used and to reveal the nature of metapragmatic awareness and the notion of criticism from the Thai's point of view. Dialogues in novels and letters, gossips and editorial newspaper form the research data. The paper concludes that the concept of metapragmatics could expand to include the less evident expressions that also indicate the speaker's or writer's evaluative stance. It is established from the overt and covert disclaimer that Thais are concerned about interpersonal relationships. They value friendship and solidarity even when their interactants are unknown.

Also, Muntigl (2007) examines a metapragmatic examination of therapist reformation using the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) on the premise that SFL accounts for language use according to context and also an approach that is well equipped to explore the metapragmatic issues that surround reformation. The research examines what interactional relevance a certain reformation might have for the subsequent unfolding of the therapeutic conversation and the interrelationship between reformation type and social context. The study concludes that reformulation as an important metapragmatic functions operate to provide a novel frame which the clients may construe their experience of self or other's behaviour. Reformation itself with respect to conjunctive meanings such

as elaborating, summarising and exemplifying provide a general frame through which actions, utterances, sensing and being are interpreted. Also, reformulation constitute a key therapist practice of doing narrative therapy.

Tanskanen (2007) explores metapragmatic utterances in computer-mediated interactions. The study examines how and for what purpose do participants use metapragmatic utterances in the challenging communicative setting of asynchronous (utterances that comment on the communicative act only but not on the subject of discourse) computer-mediated interaction. Findings reveal that majority of the metapragmatic utterances are self-initiated and intratextual and that their most typical function is to act as judgments of appropriateness. The study draws its conclusion by asserting that there is a collaborative purpose behind the use of metapragmatic utterances, communicators adopt the perspective of their fellow communicators and construct their messages in a manner which contributes to a successful communicative exchange by anticipating potential problems.

Unuabonah (2017) investigates metapragmatic comments in Nigerian quasi-judicial public hearings using a discourse-pragmatic framework that integrates Verschueren's (2000) metapragmatics, Mey's (2001) pragmatic act theory, conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974), and Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle to identify metapragmatic comments (MPCs) and their textual and interpersonal functions. Findings show that MPCs include speech act descriptions, maxim adherence/violation, talk regulation, and metalinguistic comments. Textually, MPCs control topics, mark discourse boundaries, and interrupt; interpersonally, they express evaluative stances, respond to comments, emphasise messages, and claim attention. The study concludes that MPCs both shape and are shaped by interactional context, with participant roles and status influencing their production and frequency.

These research works are connected with the present study with respect to the adopted framework. The divergence comes in the applicability. While the previous studies apply metapragmatics to court discourse, computer-mediated language and Thai language, the current study is domicile in literary discourse. Even though the focus is different, they provide a deeper insight into and better understanding of metapragmatics. The focus of these studies shows that literary discourse has not received adequate attention from metapragmatics standpoint. Thus, this study explores the metapragmatic acts in J.P. Clark's *The Wives Revolt*, its types (explicit and implicit), forms and functions to unveil how language is used and how speakers (or writers) reflect on and manipulate language to achieve specific effects.

4. Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach to investigate the metapragmatic acts that are inherent in conversational exchanges in the selected text. Conversations drawn from J. P. Clark's *Wives' Revolt*, constitute the primary data for this research. The analysis follows a qualitative research design, focusing discursive analysis and textual interpretation. The data is subjected to thematic and contextual scrutiny, with a particular emphasis on identifying instances of explicit and implicit metapragmatic acts. Explicit metapragmatic acts captures overt commentary on language use within the dialogue, while implicit metapragmatic acts is concerned with more subtle, underlying pragmatic cues that shape conversational interpretation. A random sampling technique is employed to unveil representative instances of metapragmatic expressions within the text. This selection aids the presentation of a balanced representation of various speech forms and pragmatic strategies. The study also adopts a metapragmatic approach to elucidate the interpretative principles governing conversations. This framework fosters a deeper understanding of how metapragmatic awareness influences discursive intent, interactional coherence, and discourse meaning. Therefore, this study provides a nuanced exploration of metapragmatic acts within the interactants of *Wives' Revolt*, thereby contributes to existing studies on literary discourse and metapragmatics.

5. Data Analysis and interpretation

This section is grouped into three. The first discusses the various parameters through which both implicit and explicit metapragmatics are achieved in the text. The second section explores the forms in which the metapragmatic acts take. This involves a systematic description of the speech acts. The last part examines the features of the metapragmatic acts inherent in the text. Each aspect draws excerpts from the text to substantiate its claim.

5.1.Types of metapragmatics

The explicit and implicit metapragmatics is discussed. Excerpts from the text are used to substantiate the claims.

5.1.1 Explicit metapragmatics

5.1.1.1 Performative verbs

Summoning:

- a) OKORO: *Ehruwaren! Ehruwaren! Descendants of Udemede..., open your ears wide that you may hear well...*

WV pg 1

- b) IDAMA: *Oko!*

OKORO: (offstage right) *O!*

IDAMA: *Come out quick. Come out here quick!*

WV pg17

From the above excerpt, Okoro is set to make an announcement, he thereby calls the people of Erhuwaren to come closer and to pay rapt attention to his announcement. Similarly, in (b) Idama pays Okoro an early morning visit. Okoro, who is trying to fix himself a meal is summoned by Idama, who on the other hand brings the news of the absence of the female fold in the village. This is used to initiate listener's rapt attention.

Decreeing

OKORO: ... To stem these evil forces from the society before they take indestructible roots in our blessed soil, *it is hereby decreed as penal measures that, as from the first crowing of the cock tomorrow, it shall be come an offence for any citizen of Erhuwaren...*

WV pg 2

From the announcement made by Okoro, there is an underlying decree. The performative verb 'I hereby decree' is a pointer to the explicit metapragmatic act. The pragmatic act employed here is explicitly on-line, although Okoro is only the participant involved in this speech act.

Questioning:

a) KOKO: Have you come home after passing your obnoxious law?

...

b) OKORO: Unfair to whom to the goats or to their owners?

WV pg 4

After Okoro had announced the banishing of goats in the village, Okoro goes back home to be welcomed with a question by his dear wife. However, he also employs the act of questioning, trying to assert his unfairness as said by Koko. It is an explicit on-line pragmatic act. The pragmatic act of questioning gave room for more interaction.

Confronting/Challenging:

KOKO: Now, I know there really are hogs in the hedge. You don't even have to part the leaves to see their snouts.

OKORO: The prowlers you see are in your head, woman. *How dare you liken the best of our land to common swine?*

WV pg9

Okoro challenges the underlying ridicule in Koko's description of the men. The explicit on-line pragmatic is denotable here. After been challenged by Okoro, Koko doesn't cease to make her description of men known.

5.1.1.2 Self-referential expressions ('I have not passed any obnoxious law,)

- a) KOKO: Have you come home after passing your obnoxious law?
OKORO: *I have* come home all right, but *I have* not passed any obnoxious law. So, mind what you say.
WV pg 4
- b) OKORO: Your mouth will get you into real fire one of these days...
KOKO: *I'll speak my mind* in any place any day. Anyway, *I am talking* in my own house and to my husband...
WV pg 6-7
- c) KOKO: You have your free women from the street all the time, ...
OKORO: ...Oh! *I should have known I would have* nothing but hostility and criticism from my own wife *when I came after* doing a good day's job for which *I have had* nothing but praise from everybody outside.
WV pg12

The participants make use of the self-referential explicit pragmatic act as an inclusive strategy to get themselves involved in the conversation ((a) *I have come home*) and also to make their opinions known ((a) *I have not passed any...*, (b) *I'll speak my mind*, (c) *I should have known*). These are explicit on-line pragmatic marker. Also, they are regular metapragmatic acts.

5.1.1.3 Hedges

- a) KOKO: Goats have no language that anybody in his right senses would hear, so don't try selling that cake that no child will buy.
OKORO: *Well*, so you women keep saying but as you can see, we have concrete evidence.
WV pg 4
- b) OKORO: Men pay all taxes in this land, that's how it's been since men dropped his poll tax upon our individual heads...
KOKO: *Well*, you will soon see what kind of bag you've brought yourselves with your new rules and regulations.
WV pg 10
- c) OKORO: Oh, the breed embraces men as well, *maybe not* in the same large number...

WV pg 34

The explicit metapragmatic acts are used to hedge. Participants avoid been committed to the effect of the utterances they make. In (a), Okoro refuses to be committed to Koko's assertion of goats' inability to speak. In (c), Idama asks why the only gender that constitute witchcraft is the female. Okoro in response to Idama's inquisition, says the men are also captured by this witchcraft but he refuses to commit himself totally to the assertion by saying *not in the same large number* that is to say the proportion of witchcraft is lesser than the wizard. This is an explicit on-line metapragmatic act used to distant self from the postulation.

5.1.1.4 Contextualisation cues

- a) OKORO: ...*Accordingly*, all good citizens, now in possession of the above-mentioned creature, shall as from the time of this announcement, take all due step to remove their holdings, ... *WV pg 3*
- b) OKORO: Ehn, if I wasn't a clever man, much more cunning in fact that the tortoise of the tales, these children of mine would have killed me. *Oh, yes*, she's been teaching them a few tricks out of her dirty bag, *all right*. Look at it...*Well*, has he wet himself or done the big one that he is screaming?... *All right*, I am coming, don't worry, we'll see if we can do something to soothe the child. *WV, pg 25-27*

The evident contextualisation cues used by the interlocutors helps to uphold the interaction. These cues contextually indicate hedging, assertiveness, turn upholding, and affirmativeness.

5.1.2 Implicit Metapragmatics

Deitic and mood are identified as the implicit metapragmatic acts in the texts.

5.1.2.1 Deitic

Personal deixis

OKORO: ...*they* have refused for many a day now to perform their civic duties... *Our* good women, not content with creating this condition of stench... This is the law of the land! It is the decree *I* have been empowered to proclaim!...

WV, pg 2

Place deixis

Chorus: Later the same evening, at *Okoro's house*, *Koko* is sitting in front of her door at the kitchen end of the courtyard, ...

WV, pg 4

KOKO: Have you come *home*, after passing your obnoxious law?
WV, pg 4

Time deixis

Chorus: A street at Erhuwaren early one *evening* in the Urbobo area of Nigeria...

WV, pg 1

Chorus: *Later the same evening*, at *Okoro's house*, *Koko* is sitting in front of her door at the kitchen end of the courtyard, ...

WV, pg 4

OKORO: ...*Accordingly*, all good citizens, *now* in possession of the above-mentioned creature, shall as from the time of

this announcement, take all due step to remove their
holdings, ...

WV, pg 3

Metapragmatic acts implicitly express deixes of person, place and time. These help the interactants to have the full knowledge and understanding to their environment as well as the contextual understanding and interpretation of the discourse.

5.1.2.2 Mood

Exclamative mood

OKORO: *Erhuwaren! Erhuwaren!...*

WV, pg 1

KOKO: *Such sweet praise for iced fish!*

OKORO: No, you don't say it's iced fish I've been eating all the time?

KOKO: *I'm afraid so! It's the cooking that matters!*

WV, pg 13-14

Interrogative mood

KOKO: Have you come home after passing your obnoxious law?

.....

OKORO: Unfair to whom to the goats or the owners?

WV, pg 4

Declarative mood

KOKO: *The law you have passed is bad, unfair and
discriminatory, being directed against women
because of our stand. We will not accept it.*

OKORO: Is that a threat?

KOKO: *It is not. I meant exactly what I said.*

OKORO: And are you speaking for yourself or are all the
other women as pig-headed as you?

KOKO: *Abuse will not settle the matter.*

WV, pg 10-11

Speakers' mood is implicitly checked with the use of metapragmatic marker. In every utterance, there is an underlying mood that helps in the interpretation and the response to the ongoing discourse. Moods such as exclamative, interrogative and declarative mood are notable in the text. The interrogative mood keeps the interaction going (implicit on-line). The declarative mood as employed by Koko signals impoliteness as observed by the African culture. Women are believed to be submissive and modest but, reversed is the case in the text.

5.2 Metapragmatic Forms

5.2.1 Speech Act description

Metapragmatic acts perform certain speech acts some of which are: advising, objecting, apologizing, exemplifying, and requesting.

Advice

KOKO: And again money, no matter how it was got, will do the trick. Oh, we know who has the money has the title in this land. That's why you men are today keeping to yourself a great part of the money that belongs to everybody.

OKORO: *Your mouth will get you into real fire one of these days, and I won't bring you water or sand to save you. There's a limit to the protection I can give you in this town if you are going to let your tongue rule your head.*

WV Pg 6

Language is used to perform different acts. The act of advising is explicitly expressed with the use of metapragmatic act. Koko, who seem to be impolite in the text is advised by her husband to watch her tongue. He further says he can't be there to protect her at all times, hence, Koko needs to watch her mouth.

Objection

KOKO: You men spend all your money drinking together, anyway, and come home to be at your wives or drive them out of bed with your stench and snoring. Admit it, you rigged the whole thing to do us out of our fair share of the money that the white men paid us.

OKORO: *We did not.*

KOKO: Oh, yes, you did

OKORO: *We didn't, I swear.* You know as well as I do that it was in strict observance of tradition that we shared the money into three parts.

W

V Pg 7

Koko challenges the men of cheating the women as well as their irresponsible act. However, Okoro objects to this assertion, he even swears (*We didn't, I swear*) to ascertain credibility. The explicit off-line pragmatic act is deducible here. Koko disengages in the conversation by bring up the issue of the goats.

Apology

OKORO: ...To bring peace and harmony back to town, back to the home, it makes my heart sweet all over to be able to

announce that with immediate effect, even as I am speaking, *the obnoxious law, banning all manner of goats from our city and anywhere near Its precincts, is hereby revoked and consigned to that place where all such unhappy things are better left and unforgotten.* In consequence of which all good citizens, who have suffered loss of goats by one head or an entire herd, *are entitled to collect compensation at public expense after confirmation of their claims.* By the same token, our women folk whose insight into these matter passes the understanding of all men, deserve the specially fatted cow; the hundred heads of yam, the ten barrels of palm oil and all the other items of reparation required in the act of...

WV pg 58-59

Okoro made a proclamation of the banishing of goats in Erhuwaren. This proclamation seems offensive to the female folk. Thus, they make up their minds to excuse themselves from the community. After several deliberations and juxtapositions, the law is then reversed by the same individual who proclaims it. Okoro apologises and reverses the obnoxious law and also backs it up with compensation. Hence, it is an explicit off-line metapragmatic act.

Reminder/ Exemplification

OKORO: *...You remember* the man who broke open his gramophone at Oto-Ogon, thinking he would find a man inside? All he found there was a network of knobs, rods and twisted steel. Now, that's real witchcraft for you.

WV pg 34

Okoro tries to educate Idama on witchcraft, he thereby delves into the past and citing the example of a man who broke open his gramophone hoping to find a man in it but did not. The explicit on-line metapragmatic act is employed to indicate the act of reminder and exemplification.

Requests

OKORO: *Where are they now?*

IDAMA: You know they didn't stop at Agboghiamé but went on straight to Otughievwen. There they were warmly received and entertained in the town -hall.

WV pg 28

The act of request is explicit through the use of questions. The implicit

metapragmatic act of interrogation is employed to explicitly make request. Okoro, who is quite anxious asks Idama where their women are. Thus, this can be said to be explicit on-line metapragmatic act.

5.2.2 Talk Regulation Comments

Upholding of Turns:

OKORO: Oh, the breed embraces men as well, *maybe not* in the same large number... *At night*, they can fly from here to Lagos and ... *or* they only have... Oh, to have a witch in the house is a terrible thing. *yes*, whether as mother... *All right*. How else do you think the white man speaks...

WV pg 33-34

Bid for Turn

a) OKORO: That's slander, and you know it. Kama, you forget is an Ade of Ughievwen and...

KOKO: (completing the catalogue for him.) Idodo and Oto are members of the Honourable Orders of Igbu and Ebo at Otughievewen.

WV pg 6

Check listener's attention

OKORO: What do you mean they didn't stop there? Now, where did they go? Don't tell me they are going to Okwagbe or Owahwa? That will be taking the dance a little too far, don't you think?

IDAMA: Well, I remember you saying not quite long ago that they could go as far as Otokutu-or was it Ughevwighe that you mentioned?

OKORO: Must you record everything a man says like the magic box brought from Accra? Tell me, where have the old girls tracked our wives to?

IDAMA: Do you really want to know?

OKORO: Oh, you release words with great reluctance like a rich man his money. Where have our wives gone? I asked.

WV pg 30

The interactants employ metapragmatic acts to uphold, bid for turns and check listeners' attention. In a) Okoro uses explicit on-line metapragmatic act to uphold his floor while Idama listens until the floor is released. However, Koko bids for

turn my cutting in Okoro's speech. She didn't wait until the floor is allocated to her. While the listener's attention is checked by questioning. Similarly, Idama's attentiveness is displayed when Okoro challenges him of keeping record of all that is said '*must you record everything a man says like the magic box brought from Accra? Tell me, where have the old girls tracked our wives to?*' It can be deduced from the utterance that Idama is attentive to the interaction. The use of interrogation by the participants explicitly checks listeners' attention.

From the analysis above, explicit and implicit metapragmatics as essential tools for navigating social interaction and meaning in the text. Explicit metapragmatics are characterised by on-line markers such as performative verbs (summoning, decreeing, questioning, and confronting), self-referential expressions used as inclusive strategies, and hedges that allow participants to distance themselves from their assertions. These explicit acts also function as contextualisation cues to manage assertiveness and turn-taking. Conversely, implicit metapragmatics operate through deixis (person, place and time) and mood (exclamative, interrogative, and declarative), which provide necessary environmental context and signal underlying attitudes, such as the impoliteness noted in declarative shifts. Furthermore, these metapragmatic forms perform specific speech acts which include advising, objecting, apologising and requesting while simultaneously serving as talk regulation comments to uphold or bid for conversational turns and verify listeners' attention.

5.3 Features of Metapragmatic acts

Findings reveal that self-directed metapragmatic comments (MPCs) allow speakers to express their thoughts and feelings about their own messages and the person they are interacting with, while other-directed metapragmatic comments help speakers to show their perspective on the listeners and the listeners' messages.

5.3.1 Direction

Self Direct

KOKO: Have you come home, after passing your obnoxious law?

OKORO: *I have come home all right, but I have not passed any obnoxious law. So mind what you say.*

WV, pg4

Others Direct

KOKO: *What else can you call a law that banishes goats from the town on account of the reasons you have given, if it is not downright unfair?*

OKORO: *Unfair to whom to the goats or their owners? Nobody*

has ever heard the goats complain except those who speak their language.

WVPg4

Self-directed MPCs help the speakers to reveal their epistemic and affective stance towards the content of the speakers' messages and the addressee, while other-directed MPCs help the speakers to indicate their epistemic stance towards the addressees and the addressees' messages.

5.3.2 Positioning

Mid message

a) IDAMA: Yes, it's a shame but, Oko, are you sure she's still in bed sleeping?

OKORO: Am I sure? If I don't know my wife inside out, who should? *Of course*, she's still in her dreamland, pursuing herd of pigs...

WV pg18

b) OKORO: Yes, I've finished, no, I'm quite finished by this terrible thing our women have done to us. *Yet* I still can't how it was done. Did they wake up our women in turn at dead of night, and taking each out of hearing and sight of others, lead them out with promise of gold trinkets dangling outside to fall their individual laps? Or did those men of Eyara simply take them in one straight procession?

WV pg 47

In a), Okoro employs mid message to indicate awareness of Koko's whereabouts as reflected in the previous speaker's utterance while in b), the mid message indicator shows contrast and also holds the attention of other interactant during the interaction.

Prospective

OKORO: Who would have thought they had the might and mind.

IDAMA: *Well*, never trust a woman, so the saying goes.

OKORO: Gone, walked out, emigrated! Are you sure of your facts?

IDAMA: *Of course*, I'm sure. My own Titi, too is gone. yes, all are gone-handmaid, headwife, most favoured wife,

nursing mother...

WV pg 19

The speakers position these metapragmatic acts at the beginning of their utterances for different reasons. Idama uses *well* to hedge the previous speaker while Okoro uses the phrase *of course* to assert and respond to the previous speaker.

Retrospective

IDAMA: They went there all right, but they didn't stop there.

OKORO: What do you mean they didn't stop there? Now, where did they go? Don't tell me they are going all the way to Okwagbe or Owahwa? That will be taking the dance a little too far, *don't you think?* *WV pg. 29*

Okoro utilises an MPC that describes the kind of message he has passed across at the end of his utterance. This speech act description serves to intensify the force of the interrogation in his utterance, indicating that, the addressee is obliged to carry out the action of responding to his questions. It is an explicit on-line metapragmatic act.

Self-directed metapragmatic comments allow speakers to express their epistemic and affective stances toward the messages and the listener, while other-directed MPCs reflect the speaker's perspective on the addressee's messages. Structurally, these acts are positioned as prospective (at the beginning) to hedge or assert responses, mid-message to indicate awareness, contrast, or maintain listener attention, or retrospective (at the end) to intensify the force of an utterance or describe the preceding speech act. Ultimately, these explicit on-line markers serve as crucial regulatory tools, obliging responses and clarifying the communicative intent within the interaction.

6. Discussion of findings

Conversations in *Wives's Revolt* encapsulate the types, forms and features of metapragmatic acts. Both explicit and implicit metapragmatic acts are significantly evident in the text. The explicit metapragmatic acts are realised through performative verbs such as summoning, decreeing, questioning, confronting/challenging; self-referential expressions, hedges and contextualisation cues. The implicit metapragmatic act are presented as deitic (person, time and place), mood (exclamative, interrogative and declarative) in the text. The implicit interrogative mood metapragmatic act is employed majorly to uphold the interaction as well as checking listener's attentiveness. The directive mood as employed by Koko is an impolite strategy against the African cultural belief of women's submissiveness and modesty.

The metapragmatic forms, speech act descriptions and talk regulation comments are noticeable as in the text analysed. Speech act descriptions are presented as objecting, advising, apologising, decreeing, exemplifying, and requesting while the talk regulation comments are used to uphold turns, bid for turns and to check listener's attention. Direction is achieved through self- direct and others direct while the positioning are identified as prospective, mid message and retrospective. These form the metapragmatic features in J P. Clark's *Wives Revolt*. They show awareness, assertion, hedging and also intensify interrogation as well as establishing a relationship and connection between the participants.

7. Conclusion

The analysis of *Wives' Revolt* by J.P. Clark projects the importance of metapragmatic acts in shaping conversational dynamics and thematic preoccupations of the text. Both explicit and implicit metapragmatic acts serve various communicative and discursive functions. Explicit metapragmatic acts elements highlight the characters' awareness of language use and its effects in their conversations. The metapragmatic forms such as speech act descriptions and turn taking comments ultimately ensures a deeper relationship among/between the interlocutors and reinforces the central themes of gender roles, resistance, and power dynamics. This study establishes the importance of metapragmatic awareness in literary discourse; thus, reinforcing that language is not just an instrument of communication but a weapon of power relations and social change. Ultimately, the metapragmatic acts in *Wives' Revolt* not only structure the discourse but also serve as a vehicle for sociocultural critique. Through explicit and implicit strategies, the play underpins issues of gender roles, authority, and linguistic influence in negotiating societal norms.

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