

## **Pragmatic Analysis of Conversational Implicature in Krisagbedo's ... *a Darkling Plain***

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### **Abstract**

The paper examines conversational implicature as it applies in ... *a Darkling Plain*, a novel written by Krisagbedo from the pragmatic point of view. The specific objectives of the study are: to investigate the characteristics of conversational implicature in characters' conversations, point out instances of implicatures in ... *a Darkling Plain* and analyse the implicated strategies employed in the novel by some characters using nine (9) excerpts. In order to analyse the implicatures in characters' conversations, the study adopts the theoretical tenets of Conversational Analysis (CA) by Grice (1967). The findings of the paper reveal that there are features that differentiate conversational implicature from conventional implicature and other conversational styles; these features aid understanding during communication. There are instances of implicatures in characters' conversations in ... *a Darkling Plain*. The study discovers that in everyday parlance, people say not exactly what they have in mind or rather; they indirectly pass across messages, hoping their listeners will understand the actual meanings based on the context of usage. The paper concludes that implicatures, especially conversational implicature is a part and parcel of human speeches which every speaker of a language must understand to ensure the smooth-flowing of every conversation.

**Keywords:** *Implicatures, Conversational Analysis, Pragmatics, Non-detachability, Calculability*

### **Introduction**

The meaning of an utterance is anchored on the context in which such an utterance is made. The study of the aspects of meaning and language use that are dependent on the speaker, the listener, the addressor and the addressee, together with the context of utterance is known as pragmatics (Agbedo, 2015). Pragmatics as a subfield of linguistics and semiotics studies the ways in which context contributes to meaning. Pragmatics encompasses conversational analysis, speech act theory, conversational implicature, talk in interaction, and other approaches to language behaviour. While semantics examines meaning that is conventional or 'coded' in a given language, pragmatics studies how the transmission of meaning depends not only on structural and linguistic knowledge (grammar, lexicon, etc.) of the speaker and listener, but also on the context of the utterance, any pre-existing knowledge about those involved, the inferred intent of the speaker, and other factors. In this respect, pragmatics explains how language users are able to overcome apparent ambiguity since meaning relies on the manner, place, time etc. of an utterance. Having highlighted the constituents of pragmatics above, the present study is on conversational implicature.

In everyday conversations, we often convey information that goes above and beyond what we strictly speak; exaggeration and irony are obvious examples. Grice (1975) introduced the technical notion of a conversational implicature in systematising the phenomenon of meaning one thing by saying something else. In introducing the notion, Grice drew a line between *what is said*, which he understood as being closely related to the conventional meaning of the words uttered, and what is conversationally implicated, which can be inferred from the fact that an utterance has been made in context. Since Grice's (1975) seminal work, conversational implicature has become one of the major research areas in pragmatics. This paper examines conversational implicature in characters' conversations, discusses and explicates nine (9) excerpts in Krisagbedo's ... *a Darkling Plain*.

Pragmatics and semantics are two sides to a coin, which when not properly handled, generate conventional and conversational problems. Often time, people consciously or unconsciously say the opposite of what they really meant or wanted to say; this has led to misunderstandings between speakers and listeners in conversations. The study intends solving this problem by exploring the implied meanings of the characters' conversations as projected in ... *a Darkling Plain*.

The study aims at elucidating the conversational implicature in characters' conversations in ... *a Darkling Plain*. Specifically, the objectives of this research are: to investigate the characteristics of conversational implicature in characters' conversations, point out instances of implicatures in characters' conversations in ...*a Darkling Plain* and analyse the implicated strategies as used in the novel by some characters. The knowledge of conversational implicatures and its characteristics will help speakers understand themselves during conversations thereby waving aside the problems generated by lack of understanding. The data for this study are drawn from the novel ...*a Darkling Plain* written by Krisagbedo in 2006 and are analysed using the characteristics of conversational implicature. The researchers engaged in intensive reading of the study text and purposively selected nine (9) excerpts that best convey the intentions of the study.

### **Synopsis of ...*a Darkling Plain***

... *a Darkling Plain* by Krisagbedo is a two hundred and one (201) paged novel, embellished with literary aesthetics - beauty that comes from philosophical postulations, implications and satires. The novel, set in Africa, presumably Igbo land based on the names prevalent in it and excerpts from the Igbo language, centers around a single mother, Deborah Onyeke, who toils day and night in her petty bean cake (akara) business to train her three kids- Mmeso, Chiemerie and Nkiru and to make ends meet. The fruits of her struggles and sufferings are her daughter Mmeso, who has graduated from the university and done with National Youth Service Corps (NYSC); the son Chiemerie, who is preparing to write his Senior Secondary Certificate Examination and the last child Nkiru, who is still in primary school. In the midst of Deborah's struggles, people accuse her of prostitution as a result of her friendship with Adolph, a man who wants her as a concubine to give him a male child as his wife could not. The allegation gets down on Deborah as her children Mmeso and Chiemerie, with her co-tenant Mr. Omeje are among the accusers.

Deborah thinks Patrick, a multi-millionaire, will make a good life partner for her daughter Mmeso but Mmeso seems not to share Deborah's ideology of having an affluent son-in-law, so she believes that she is to decide who she wants for a husband and it is certainly not Patrick, much to her mother's vexation. Mmeso is less concerned about the mother's feelings as she has made up her mind to settle down with Eme, a form teacher who teaches social studies at Union Secondary School. The scale falls off her eyes when she discovers that her so called 'lover' is a play boy that goes to the extent of hitting on secondary school girls.

Onyinye, Mmeso's supposed friend, although engaged to Ben, wants to have Patrick to herself since Mmeso appears not interested. She devises the means of backbiting and tarnishing the image of Mmeso and her family whenever she had the opportunity. Unknown to Onyinye, there are powers beyond human comprehension and imagination that have been employed by Adolph and Deborah to see to the union of Patrick and Mmeso. Asanye, Onyinye father is the physical power that has vowed to kill Onyinye, if she tries to manifest her seductive prowess. Adolph is ready to do anything within and beyond his reach to see to the union of Patrick and Mmeso since it is only on that ground that he can achieve his plan of having Deborah all to himself.

Mmeso remains adamant until she is involved in an accident along Enugu–Port Harcourt high way on her way to Uncle Azuka's house in Port Harcourt to prepare for her upcoming interview with an oil company. The accident claims the lives of every passenger in the vehicle including that of the driver, Balala but Mmeso becomes the only survivor with just a cut above her eyebrow, probably because her mother rebuked and denounced the premonition of her death, which she had on the day she took off to Port Harcourt. The accident seems to have brought Mmeso's life before her very own eyes and she comes to realise that everything in the world is vanity. She calls Patrick immediately she gets to Uncle Azuka's place after the car crash, to profess her love for him and to accept his marriage proposal. She afterwards, calls Chiemerie through Onyinye to inform him of her decision to marry Patrick but implores him to keep it a secret to everyone except their mother. The call did not just re-assure Deborah that her daughter is still alive as the rumours of her death have flown around the whole community, it also brought joy to her family. Mmeso's acceptance of Patrick's proposal attracts a huge amount of money for her mother's business and future projects, and also renders Onyinye's plans abortive.

### **Review of related literature**

Ahamefula (2012) carried out a pragmatic analysis of actions in Krisagbedo's *...a Darkling Plain*. He used Austin (1962) felicity conditions and Grice (1975) cooperative principle in analysing the speech acts of selected characters in the studied literary text. Using characters like Onyinye and Eme, he showed how these characters broke the rule of conversation as implemented by the maxims (quantity, quality and manner). Ahamefula noted that people do not really do what they say in most cases as is seen in *...a Darkling Plain*. Both Ahamefula (2012) and the present study considered Krisagbedo's *...a Darkling Plain* but they differ in the theoretical framework. While Ahamefula adopted Austin's (1962) felicity conditions and Grice's (1975) cooperative principle, the present study adopted Grice's (1967) method of conversational analysis.

Martin (2013) examined implicatures and parts of the contextual meanings of utterances that are separate from their sense (main point). The empirical taxonomy described in the paper draws on the work of Grice (1975), but fleshes out two important subcategories of implicature. One of these subcategories according to Martin (2013) is the conventional implicatures (CIs), which contains definite anaphora, iterative adverbs, honorifics, and Potts' (2003) CIs: nominal appositives, non-restrictive relative clauses, as-parentheticals, and expressives. The other is the nonconventional implicatures apart from Grice's conversational implicature, which contains lexical items often construed as bearing presuppositions, such as the so-called active verbs, aspectuals, and achievements. Martin (2013) explained that what distinguishes the class of anaphora from other conventional implicatures is that the use of 'a definite' must be anchored to the speaker, since it bears the implication that an antecedent is retrievable in the discourse context. This new characterisation of the landscape of implicatures, Martin (2013) said, holds significant consequences for semantic theory. The notion of contextual felicity usually assumed to apply to presuppositions is generalised to a mechanism that accounts for the infelicity of all conventional implicatures on the basis of whether their contents conflict with entailments present in the discourse context. For the non-anaphoric implicatures, explained Martin (2013), the choice between anchoring their implicature to the speaker or to an embedded perspective is influenced in part by this new notion of contextual felicity. Since it places non-anaphoric lexical items usually thought to be presupposition under the category of non-conventional implicatures, the terms presupposition and anaphora become synonymous.

Cignetti (2015) investigated the degree of pragmatic awareness of learners of English as a foreign language and also whether explicit instruction facilitates the learners' interpretation of these implicatures. For this purpose, Cignetti (2015) assigned twenty-six students to an experimental and control group and their performances were measured through a written multiple-choice test before and after the treatment. The analysis of the data indicated that most students in both groups proved to be rather insensitive to implicatures before instruction. However, according to Cignetti (2015), after being exposed to explicit teaching, the students in the experimental group exhibited a significant improvement in their recovery of implicatures.

Kasmirli (2016) embarked on a research in the area of conversations and contexts. In the study, Kasmirli provides a detailed exposition of the Gricean framework and a problem concerning the role of speaker intentions in implicature. Kasmirli notes that the issue of understanding speaker's intentions can be addressed by reinterpreting Gricean framework as a normative one. The study proposed some revisions to the framework to make it more compatible and showed how the tension in Grice's view of speaker intentions can be resolved. Kasmirli (2016) argued that despite its attractions, the revised theory has a serious flaw, being unable to establish norms of implicature that are speaker-independent. As a solution, Kasmirli (2016) proposed instead, an intention-centred account, which abandons the requirement of calculability and allows a direct role for speaker intentions, while still preserving a normative element. The study went ahead to look at neo-Gricean theories, which use Gricean principles to explain a range of supposedly context-independent implicatures. In conclusion, Kasmirli (2016) asserted that implicature is more context-sensitive than neo-Griceanism allows and that general principles have at best a limited role in its explanation;

implicature is less rational than Grice supposed and more dependent on context and speaker intention.

Eitelgeorge, Pouscoulous and Lieven (2018) conducted a corpus study on early production and perception of utterances containing 'some' in British English. Children's utterances (5,276) containing 'some' were extracted from the dense corpora of five children aged 2 to 5 years and analysed alongside a portion of their caregivers' utterances (9,030) with 'some'. These were coded into structural and contextual categories, allowing for judgments on the probability of a scalar implicature being intended. The findings of the study suggested that children begin producing and interpreting implicatures in a pragmatic way during their third year of life, shortly after they first produced 'some'. Their production of 'some' implicatures is low but matched their parents' input in frequency. The mothers' production of implicatures also increased as a function of the children's age. The data also suggested that as soon as they acquired 'some', children were fully competent in their production and mirror adult production. The scholars noted that the contrast between the very early implicature production they found and the relatively late implicature comprehension established in the literature calls for an explanation; possibly in terms of the processing cost of implicature derivation. In addition, the study concluded that 'some' is multifaceted, and thus, implicatures are frequent, and structurally and contextually constrained in both populations.

In a study on implicatures in judicial opinions, Shardimgaliev (2019) noted that frequently discussed question in recent jurisprudential debates concerns the extent to which conversational implicatures can be conveyed reliably in legal language. Based on this, he set out to challenge Marmor (2016) and Hunt's (2016) views which state that implicatures tend to be unreliable or indeterminate in legal discourse and that implicatures are also unreliable in judicial opinions respectively. He referred to Marmor and Hunt's position as 'the skeptical view'. Shardimgaliev adopted an evidence-based approach to show that the evidence provided by the Sceptics (Marmor (2016) and Hunt (2016) is not only scarce but also inconclusive. A wealth of examples of implicatures from judicial opinions that are not unreliable was also provided to disprove the Sceptics. The study concluded that although the evidence might not provide a definite refutation of the skeptical view, it casts it at least into doubt and gives a good reason to resist the claim that communicative cooperation is presumed to a lesser extent in judicial opinions than in ordinary discourse.

Hands full of researches have been conducted by both international and local scholars in the subject area. Our review shows that none of the researchers concentrated on conversational implicature in Krisagbedo's *...a Darkling Plain*. Although Ahamefula (2012) worked on *...a Darkling Plain*, but he did not study conversational implicature strategies in the text. This obvious gap is what this study hopes to bridge.

### **Theoretical framework**

Conversational Analysis, henceforth CA may be conceived as a specific analytic trajectory which may be used to reach a specific kind of systematic insight in the ways in which members of a society interact. CA has its origins in the 'ethnomethodology' of Harold Garfinkel (1967) and Harvey Sacks (1984), which is in turn built on the social

phenomenology of Schutz and Luckmann (1974). CA seeks to describe conversation in a way that builds upon the way it is taken up by the people who are participating in it. It does this by paying attention to the way each utterance displays an interpretation of the previous utterance, and by paying particular attention to hitches, misunderstandings, and repairs. Levinson (2000:319) states:

The methodology employed in CA requires evidence not only that some aspect of conversation *can* be viewed in the way suggested, but that it actually is so conceived by the participants producing it. That is, what conversation analysts are trying to model are the procedures and expectations actually employed by participants in producing and understanding conversation...

Although Conversational Analysis (CA) is subsumed within ethnomethodology, CA does have its own subset of principles. Markee (2000:40) defines four aims of CA, which manifest similar features to the four principles delineated by Seedhouse (2004:13-16). The principles are:

- There is order at all points in interactions; Conversation has structure.
- Contributions to interaction are context-shaped and context-renewing; Conversation is its own autonomous context.
- No order of detail can be dismissed a priori as disorderly, accidental, or irrelevant; the study of conversation requires naturally occurring data.
- The analysis is bottom-up and data driven; there is no a priori justification.

The aspect of conversational analysis which the present study is interested in is that of conversational implicature, which sees meaning as being implied during conversations. As pointed out, our utterances often convey pieces of information, which go beyond the contents that are explicitly asserted; or as Grice puts it, beyond *what is said* by our utterances. Consider the following examples:

- (1) A: Can I get books somewhere around here?  
B: There's a bookshop around the corner.  
(A can get books at the bookshop around the corner)
- (2) A: Are you going to church tonight?  
B: I am very tired.  
(B won't go to church tonight)

In each of these examples, B's utterance conveys a proposition- the proposition expressed by the italicised sentences that differs from what B has intuitively said. While B in (2), for instance, merely says or asserts that B is very tired, her utterance's main point is to convey the proposition that B will not go to church (Davis, 2010).

Aiming to develop a systematic account of the above phenomenon, Grice (1967) introduces the notion of a conversational implicature, which either refers to the act of meaning one thing by saying something else or to the content itself that is conveyed by such speech acts. This study adopts the above definition in analysing the data.

Conversational implicatures are determined by features of the context of utterance broadly construed rather than by the conventional meaning of words used in the utterance. Grice (1967; 1989) in Agbedo (2015:312) proposes a list of the characteristics of conversational implicatures:

### **Cancellability**

Since conversationally implicated contents are only loosely related to utterances' literal contents, they are what Grice calls *cancellable*. Grice (1975; [1989b: 44]) states:

A putative conversational implicature that *p* is explicitly cancellable if, to the form of words the utterance of which putatively implicates that *p*, it is admissible to add *but not p*, or *I do not mean to imply that p*, and it is contextually cancellable if one can find situations in which the utterance of the form of words would simply not carry the implicature.

### **Non-detachability**

For Grice (1967; 1989:39), conversational implicatures are not detachable. He states "...it will not be possible to find another way of saying the same thing, which simply lacks the implicature in question, except where some special feature of the substituted version is itself relevant to the determination of an implicature."

### **Calculability**

According to Grice (1967:31), the presence of a conversational implicature must be capable of being worked out; for even if it can in fact be intuitively grasped, unless the intuition is replaceable by an argument, the implicature (if present at all) will not count as a conversational implicature.

Grice (1967:31) goes further to contrast conversational implicatures with conventional implicatures. While conversational implicatures are, as mentioned above, utterance contents that are conveyed in virtue of particular features of the utterance context, conventional implicatures are utterance contents that are grammatically encoded and thus triggered by the conventional meaning of (some of) the words used in the utterance. The following examples are for clarification:

- (3) Marie is poor, but she's honest.
  - a. Marie is poor and Marie is honest.
  - b. Poor people are not usually honest.
  
- (4) Even Bart passed the test.
  - a. Bart passed the test.
  - b. Bart was among the least likely to pass the test (Grice, 1967:31).

On Grice's account, the a-sentences in these examples express *what is said* by utterances of (3) and (4) respectively, while the b-sentences express contents that are conventionally implicated.

Grice further distinguishes between two different types of conversational implicatures namely, generalised and particularised conversational implicatures. Grice (1975:43) states:

Particularised conversational implicatures are cases in which an implicature is carried by saying that *p* on a particular occasion in virtue of special features of the context, cases in which there is no room for the idea that an implicature is normally carried by saying that *p*.

But there are cases of generalised conversational implicature. Sometimes one can say that the use of a certain form of words in an utterance would normally (in the absence of special circumstances) carry such an implicature or type of implicature. For this study, the tenets of Grice's CA are adopted.

### **Presentation and analysis of conversational implicatures in ... *a Darkling Plain***

Instances of conversational implicatures adopted by some characters in the novel under study are numbered one to nine and as they are being presented; they are equally analysed for better understanding and clarity.

#### **Excerpt 1 (p. 18)**

...all right, Deborah snarled as she secured the loose ends of her cloth. Adolph's owl-like stare followed her as she disappeared through the curtains into the living room. Relevantly, he drew up the trouser and stood. Just then, Deborah's voice broke in on him ordering him out of her bedroom. Buttoning up as he emerged from the bedroom, he snorted, What sort of nonsense is this? I mean do I have to....

The above excerpt shows that Adolph is in Deborah's bedroom, trying his possible best to woo her to bed but she appears stubborn. After much pestering, holding and seizing by Adolph, Deborah says "All right" for Adolph to release her but the "All right" she said does not mean that she has consented to sleeping with Adolph. On the other hand, Adolph misunderstood Deborah's response to mean consent, hence his relaxation on Deborah's bed. But Adolph realises he has been fooled when Deborah went to her living room and was ordering him out of her house. Deborah's conversational style took the form of Grice's implicature, which according to him, refers to the act of meaning one thing by saying something else.

#### **Excerpt 2 (p. 24)**

...why are you being unnecessarily diplomatic? Joe had asked.  
Just ask me whether vouchers have been signed?"  
Well, you know what I mean.

From the excerpt above, it is deduced that Eme, a secondary school teacher and Mmeso's boyfriend, employs conversational implicature in his conversation with Joe, whose intention is to find out if their salaries are ready for payment. Instead of asking Joe about the readiness



of the salary voucher, decides to be dramatic. He is seen asking Joe if their school bursar had returned from Enugu, a city in Enugu state, Nigeria. Joe sensing the implicature in Eme's question makes it known to him that he is aware of all his tricks and approach to situation. He tells him the direct meaning he wants to convey and Eme concurs to it. Calculability, as a feature of conversational implicature manifests here. Grice (1967:31) notes that the presence of a conversational implicature must be capable of being worked out; for even if it can in fact be intuitively grasped, unless the intuition is replaceable by an argument. Joe is able to calculate and deduce Eme's intents.

**Excerpt 3 (p. 35)**

... I thought that having gone this far, I am entitled to sit back, relax and enjoy at least a bit of the fruit of my endeavour. However, it appears that you are all out to make me regret all the pains I took just to see you through your academic career. Are you pretending that you don't know what you have done? I want to know the crime I have committed for which you regard me as an ingrate, Mmeso pleaded.

Deborah, Mmeso's mother, in the above excerpt, does not want to convey her message directly to Mmeso; she has chosen the meaning of her message to be implied by adopting Grice's implicature, which either refers to the act of meaning one thing by saying something else or to the content itself that is conveyed by such speech acts. Deborah actually wants to raise the issue of the union she wishes to take place between Mmeso and Patrick, a multi-millionaire; instead, she comes from the angle of accusing Mmeso of not wanting her to enjoy the fruit of her labour. Although Deborah conveys the message with the meaning underlying, Mmeso understands her point but initially pretends not have known what her mother is talking about. The fact that she gets the implied meaning expressly is evident in page 36 when she says:

**Excerpt 4 (p. 36)**

...I am sorry, mum, but I can't imagine you insinuating that I don't want you to enjoy the fruit of your endeavour simply because I have rejected Patrick's advances. Isn't there any other way of paying for your motherly cares except by marrying Patrick?

Judging from Deborah's motherly position, there is no better way of communicating her intentions to her daughter, Mmeso other than the approach she adopted. It will be awkward if she bluntly tells Mmeso to marry Patrick for his wealth. Non-detachability feature of conversational implicature holds that it will not be possible to find another way of saying the same thing. This feature becomes obvious in this particular excerpt by the reason of Deborah's conversational style.

**Excerpt 5 (p. 39)**

...so what are you going to do now? Eme asked. Mmeso's eyes itched with surprise.

What am I going to do or what are we going to do about it?

Well what do we do?

Oh! Come on Eme, she said, smiling broadly, please be serious.

I am very serious, Mmeso .... However, the problem is that I am not buoyant enough to foot the bill now. Look at me. I do not have a kobo in my account inspite of the fact that I have worked for seven years as a university graduate....

It does appear that when a man says money can do anything, it is a sure sign he hasn't got any but I still believe money is not everything in life, Emy.

The reality is that marriage is too complex an art for any same person to dabble into in the hope of learning how to do it in the doing of it. Moreover, marriage has been described as a very dangerous institution both for men and women....

The excerpt above is a long conversation between Mmeso and her supposed fiancé, Eme. It is observed that Eme is communicating meaning different from what he is saying. Eme here is giving Mmeso excuses as to why he cannot marry her presently as they are speaking. His major argument initially was lack of finance. Eme argues that a man as broke as he is claiming to be does not venture into marriage. He accepts that all his worth is an MA degree certificate and as such, is not qualified to settle down with Mmeso. But when it seems as if Mmeso does not give a hoot about whether he is broke financially or not, he changes his argument immediately. He starts arguing that marriage is too complex for one that is not ready to go into it and that marriage is described as a very dangerous institution both for men and women.

Eme knows that he is still skeptical about marrying Mmeso, but he hinges on finance, when it is clear that lack of money is not his major reason; the implied reason is his double mindedness about having Mmeso as his wife and his flirting business. As their conversation progressed, Mmeso catches his implied reason, and reacts thus:

**Excerpt 6 (p. 40)**

"Look Eme," she snapped, "you have got the wrong end of the stick. Let me tell you, Eme, I am not begging you to marry me. Did I make myself clear?"

Like evident in excerpt 5, there is no better way of one telling a girl he is dating that he cannot marry her if not by using lack of finance and unpreparedness as excuses. Eme could have told Mmeso, whom he is having a romantic relationship with and who has been banking on him for marriage directly to her face that he does not want to marry her, but like Grice stated, "Conversational implicatures are not detachable. It will not be possible to find another way of saying the same thing, which simply lacks the implicature in question, except where some special feature of the substituted version is itself relevant to the determination of an implicature."

Eme's speech in excerpt 5, therefore, exhibited the non-detachability characteristic of conversational implicature.

**Excerpt 7 (p. 47)**

"It must be this rat" she concluded "Junior! Junior!!" she screamed.  
"Come here quickly"  
"Come here" Onyinye ordered. "Why did you tamper with this crayfish?"  
"Is there any crayfish in that container?"  
"Will you stop asking me stupid question?"  
"Ha! I didn't touch any crayfish", Junior flatly denied.  
"Oh! Maybe it was those little spirits"  
"Spirits?" He asked.  
"Yes?"

“Do spirits eat crayfish?” He asked  
“Why not?”  
“No, sister; I think it is those rats.”  
“All right, wait for me, “she said and turned to collect a cane on top of the kitchen unit.

This is a conversation between Onyinye and her younger brother, Junior. Noticing that the crayfish in the container has been cleared, Onyinye knows it was Junior that must have tampered with it but then, she concludes that it must be a rat that tampered with it. Onyinye did not say rats; rather, she is specific by using ‘this’ as though she is pointing to the rat. By implicature, Junior is the rat that Onyinye is referring to but does not state it categorically because he is the only child in the house who could have done that. Junior was still insistent on not eating the crayfish when Onyinye made moves to get a cane. Onyinye tells Junior to stay there and wait for her but that was not what she actually meant to say. She knows that Junior would never stand there to wait for her; and so, she indirectly alerts Junior of her intention to get a cane, which made Junior to run away. Junior’s ability to discern Onyinye’s moves and take to his heels when she told him to wait for her is what Grice (1967) means when he identifies conversational implicature as being calculable. According to him, the presence of a conversational implicature must be capable of being worked out. Junior worked out onyinye’s conversational implicature and took a wise decision.

**Excerpt 8 (p. 49)**

“Who is it?” She inquired.  
“Na Derico”, the voice behind the door growled in a false  
“Baby yoo!” Onyinye crooned as she undid the bolt and swung the door open.

From the above, conversational implicature comes into play. Onyinye asked who was at the door? Mmeso answers that it is ‘Derico’ even when she knows that she was not Derico. The actual meaning of the Derico that she mentions is Mmeso. This is evident in the way Onyinye recognises she is the one at the door and screams “Baby yoo!” Two characteristics of conversational implicature are evident in excerpt 6. First is non-detachability. The intimate relationship between Mmeso and Onyinye is one that does not require Mmeso to mention her real name when Onyinye inquires who the person at the door was. There is, therefore, no other way to notify Onyinye that she is the one at the door than mentioning ‘Derico’, which appears to be their slogan. Second is calculability. When Mmeso says ‘Derico’ is at the door, nothing stops Onyinye from further asking who is Derico? But Onyinye quickly grasps the gist and this is why she croons ‘Baby yoo!’

**Excerpt 9 (pp. 62-63)**

“Actually, I never knew that the whole affair has degenerated to such a ridiculous extent. Now, the question I am asking is, what sort of relationship are you having with Adolph?”  
“Are you now accusing me?” Deborah fumed as she directed her smoking gaze at Omeke.  
“I am not, my sister” he said, trying to evade Deborah’s scorching stare.  
“All I am saying is that you should be careful.”

Conversational implicature manifests in this excerpt. From the first statement made by Omeke, it is obvious that he is insinuating or rather, concluding that Deborah and Adolph

are having an affair. But when Deborah asked if he was accusing her, Omeke denies it saying that he is just saying that Deborah should be careful. In other words, he indirectly states that Deborah is having an affair but changes it when Deborah inquires. Similar to what is obtained in excerpt 8, two characteristics of conversational implicatures are identified. The indirect way (non-detachability) devised by Omeke to ask Deborah if she is having an affair with Adolph is the type every responsible man will adopt. It will be disrespectful to put it directly to Deborah's face that she is having an affair with Adolphus, her admirer. There is also calculability, which is evident in the manner with which Deborah works out what Omeke's intention. She, therefore, intuitively discerns the implied meaning in his question and retorted in rage.

## **Conclusion**

The importance of language in relation to context (pragmatics) and society (sociolinguistics) cannot be over-emphasised. Conversational implicature as pointed out from the text is used directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously by speakers. In the novel ... *a Darkling Plain*, conversational implicature is observed to have been employed by the author using some characters in the novel to bring out the beauty embellished in the literary work. Implicatures, are, therefore, employed in conversations to indirectly pass across messages without stating the obvious.

CA has proved able to provide a holistic portrayal of language use that reveals the reflexive relationships between form, function, sequence, and institutional context. Intrinsically, CA can be treated as a basic science which is useful for learning and teaching. It, can, therefore, be concluded that implicatures, especially conversational implicature, is part and parcel of human speeches which every speaker of a language must understand to ensure the smooth-flowing of every conversation. Features which are amenable to linguistic analysis by the use of some linguistic theories abound in the novel and as such, more studies are encouraged to increase the volume of materials available to every scholar.

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