AWKA JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERARY STUDIES (AJELLS)

Volume 12 Number 4
December, 2025

Power and Manipulative Function of Language: Critical Discourse Analysis of Utoh-Ezeajugh's *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again*

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Abstract

This study investigates the intersection of power and manipulative function of language in Tracie Uto-Ezeajughi's *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again* using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the methodological approach. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Norman Fairclough the research explores how language serves as a tool for both maintaining and challenging power structures within patriarchal Nigerian societies. Fairclough's three-dimensional model-textual analysis, discourse practice, and socio-cultural practice provides the basic tools for analyzing how characters use language to assert dominance, resist subjugation, and negotiate identity. The study adopts purposive sampling in selecting excerpts from the play. Specific dialogues and scenes that foreground power relations, gender dominance, and manipulative use of language were intentionally selected for analysis. The play reveals how one gender deploys language to reinforce gender hierarchies and control, and how the other gender subverts these manipulations through satire, interrogations, imperative and assertive speech. Through detailed textual and contextual analysis,

the study demonstrates that language functions not merely as communication, but as a strategic instrument of power, resistance, and social change. The findings underscore the role of discourse in shaping gender relations and contributing to broader ideological struggles within postcolonial African settings.
Keywords: Power, manipulation, ideology, gender, oppression

Introduction

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) highlights how language can be used to shape perceptions, control behavior and reinforce ideologies, particularly by those in positions of authority. Language being a powerful tool for manipulating and exerting influence is often used to create inequalities and maintain power structures. Language is not merely a tool for communication, it is a potent instrument that can be wielded to manipulate and control individuals and groups.

Critical Discourse Analysis is an offshoot of Discourse Analysis, which systematically investigates the opaque relationships that exist between discursive practices and socio-cultural structures, with the purpose of establishing how discursive practices, events and texts emerge and are ideologically shaped by power and power struggles as manifested in language. CDA distinguishes itself from other approaches to discourse analysis by virtue of its focus on the relationships between discourse, power, dominance, social inequality and the position of the discourse analyst in such relationships (van Dijk, 1993).

It is an integrative method of discourse study developed through a union of divergent theories. It utilizes different approaches to show how language is being used by discourse producers to manipulate and influence discourse receivers either positively or negatively. The social phenomena made open by critical discourse analysis include power abuse/misuse, hegemony, ideology, and identities. Power manifests in language and such usage of language can

manipulate or influence positively or negatively. Power in discourse is to do with powerful participants controlling and constraining the contributions of non-powerful participants (Fairclough, 1989, p. 46). Fairclough in providing his idea of ideology asserts that it is a "system of ideas which constitutes and pilots the large power blocks of our society" (Fairclough 1995, 59). Through powerful positions social actors enjoy, they can manipulate others for their own gains and interests.

Manipulation is a form of social power abuse, a form of social domination that violates social norms or structures (van Dijk, 2006). Ideologies are created and also maintained through the platform of language (with the expression of power and manipulations). The identities constructed in the social world are also formed by the provisions of ideologies shared by persons or groups or society at large. Bloor and Bloor (2013) submit that an individual through their linguistic interactional means create their identity according to their own groupings, and also label or describe others by what their perception of others is.

The provisions of discourse and critical discourse analysis have fostered critical investigations on the discourse of gender. Gender is a social construct that creates boundary or segregation sexually, religiously, behaviorally, physically, emotionally etc. Gender discourse describes language that constructs, maintains, and challenges gender roles, identities, power relations and ideologies in a society, (mis)representation of males and females. It borders on the language either used by males and females as social actors in a social action or language used on those social actors which makes crystal clear hidden factors that are living in their socio-cultural sphere.

Originally, according to the historical or ancient provisions, men are known to want and wield power; as such, power is comfortably described in terms of masculinity, while it is weird and unusual to

describe femininity as such. Lakoff (2003), added that "for a woman to do so (have power) is strange, marking her un-feminine and dangerous. This belief allows a culture to exclude women from full participation in any form of its politics." This socio-cultural pattern has been in existence as it encourages patriarchal socio-construct and feeds the mouths and strengthens the muscles of males that continue to subjugate women in diverse ways. However, in contemporary society, with continuous feminine emancipation and educational development, such impartial power distribution and expression in masculinity have begun finding expressions in femininity.

Statement of the Problem

Language is not merely a neutral medium of communication; it is a powerful social tool through which dominance, ideology, and control are constructed and sustained. In many literary texts, especially those addressing gender relations, language functions as a means of reinforcing unequal power structures and legitimizing oppression. Tracie Utoh-Ezeajughi's *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again* presents a satirical yet critical portrayal of matriarchal authority, political hypocrisy, and gender struggle within a postcolonial African society. While the play has been widely recognized for its feminist and political themes, insufficient scholarly attention has been given to how power is enacted and sustained through manipulative language in the text.

Female characters in the play frequently employ linguistic strategies such as labeling, ridicule, ideological framing etc to silence the men and dismiss their resistance as irrational. These discursive practices deviate from the broader societal attitudes that normalize male dominance and delegitimize female agency. Without a critical examination of these language choices, the subtle ways in which power operates at the level of discourse remain obscured.

Therefore, the problem this study addresses is the lack of a detailed Critical Discourse Analysis of *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again* that systematically explores how language is used to manipulate, control, and reproduce power relations between genders. By analyzing the play through the lens of Critical Discourse, this study seeks to uncover the ideological underpinnings of linguistic expressions in the text and to show how language functions as a mechanism of power, resistance, and social transformation.

The Purpose of the Study is to:

i. Examine the linguistic pattern of manifestation of power relations in the text.
ii. Investigate the ways language manipulate social actors as reflected in the text,
iii. Explore how the authors employed language in shaping readers' perception of reality,
iv. Examine ways in which language can be a tool of oppression and a means of resistance.

Conceptual Framework

Power

The concept of power, who holds it, and how they use it has been of great interest to almost every field of academic. A crucial way in which power is expressed and resisted is through language. Ng and Bradac (1993) argue that language reveals power, creates, reflects and obscures or depoliticizes power. It has even been claimed that there is no language situation, involving either public or private discourse free from the effects of power.

Power is the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events. It is a force of control exerted in discourse to show relations through inclusion or exclusion. Social power is manifested through discourse and involves the domination of a group by another group. Thus, social power creates asymmetries in social construct and constructs two groups: 'dominators; those social actors that deploy linguistic features to

control others, and dominated; those are controlled by powerful social actors or discourse participants. According to Fairclough (1989), power in discourse is controlled by powerful participants. van Dijk (1996) emphasizes that social power is essentially a kind of control by a group on other group, and power becomes an important concept in investigating the process of connections against social group. According to Ejiaso (2024), power is a "force of dominance in society that manifests in language use". She further asserts that "power relations are asymmetrical and unequal in our society which makes for the inequality, discrimination, victimization etc. in human social construct". Bloor and Bloor (2013) acknowledge that power and control are at the heart of critical discourse analysis.

Manipulation in Relation to Language Function

Power expression in discourse represents manipulation. Powerful participants, social actors socially advantaged, employ manipulative linguistic strategies to get their interests or whims, social, religious, etc. satisfied, perhaps mostly at the detriment of those manipulated. Power and manipulation are intertwined as power gives rise to manipulation in discourse while manipulation strengthens power. Manipulation is a form of abuse of social power and a form of social dominance. It is consequently marked by its violation of social norms or structures.

Here, the focus is on communicative or discursive employment of manipulation by discourse participants for their interests against that of others. It is a "social practice of power abuse, involving dominant and dominated groups, or institutions and their clients" (van Dijk, 2006, 372). Barnhill (2014) submits that manipulation is a two-faced coin meaning that one face is paternalistic in that it is a well skimmed action executed for others advantage and even for the manipulator's advantage also, while the second face insinuates that it is suppressive and influential as it is piloted towards the actualization of the manipulator's interests at the detriment of

others. Powerful discourse participants or social actors employ manipulation in discourse to produce, reproduce and maintain power, construct identities for themselves and others as well as represent their ideologies.

Gender Discourse

Gender refers to the social, cultural, and psychological characteristics, roles, and behaviors that a society associates with being male, female, or another identity. Unlike sex, which is typically based on biological traits (such as chromosomes, hormones, and anatomy), gender is a social construct that varies across cultures and time. Some researchers of Gender discourse argue that gender is purely social, while others believe biology plays a significant role.

Gender discourse refers to the ways language is used to construct, maintain, reinforce and challenge gender identities and power dynamics. It encompasses a wide range of interactions, including conversations, written texts, media representations, and even physical appearances. Discourse analysis examines how language and symbolic activities shape our understanding and experience of gender, revealing how gender is not simply a fixed identity but something performed and maintained through various actions and interactions. Critical discourse analysis reveals how language perpetuates gender inequalities, stereotypes, and dominant norms. In the foregoing research work, the researchers exposed how these gender norms are challenged in the selected text.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

In the existing social constructs, there are both implicit and explicit social phenomena; and both explicit and implicit phenomena have impacts on social actors which they mostly react to the explicit form. To make those implicit phenomena in language conspicuous, the tool of critical discourse analysis surfaced which was pioneered by Foucault, Fairclough, Wodak and van Dijk and recently van

Leeuwen. The tool of critical discourse analysis is a multidisciplinary approach as well as a concept that helps in bringing to fore certain earthed social realities in the social world by focusing its lens on discourse or language studies. Critical discourse analysis for Shousha (2010) "is a very important research tool which moves beyond a surface-level examination of discourse to show how discourse can produce and hide deep structure relations of power and inequality". It is seen as a feasible and reliable investigative tool that combines the use of linguistic items and social theory (Fairclough, 1992).

Critical discourse analysis is a veritable tool that not only describes, interprets and evaluates discourse in context by providing explanations to certain patterns in the social world, but also seen as an ideological approach to linguistic or discursive studies by some scholars. Bucholtz (2003, 57) describes critical discourse analysis as an approach to language as a primary force for the production and reproduction of ideology of belief systems that come to be accepted as "common sense". In a similar vein, Cutting (2002) sees critical discourse analysis as an ideological approach that examines the purpose of language in the social context, and reveals how discourse reflects and determines power structures". From the foregoing, it can be deduced that critical discourse analysis is a critical framework for uncovering how language use in texts can challenge power structures, making it useful for analyzing the manipulation of language.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a multidisciplinary approach to analyzing language as a form of social practice. Fairclough's theory operates on the premise that discourse is both socially constitutive and socially conditioned. It reflects social structures and processes, but also plays an active role in shaping them.

Fairclough's model of CDA consists of a three-dimensional framework for analyzing discourse:

1. Text (Description) at the micro level, this dimension involves the linguistic analysis of the text itself. This includes vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and text structure. The goal is to examine how language choices shape meaning and reflect particular ideologies or power relations.
2. Discursive Practices (Interpretation) at the meso level, this dimension focuses on the processes of text production, distribution, and consumption. It examines how texts are interpreted by different audiences and how they are situated within specific institutional or cultural contexts. This dimension connects textual features with the broader discursive processes that produce them.
3. Social Practice (Explanation) at the macro level, this dimension situates discourse within wider social, political, and cultural structures. It involves analyzing how discourse reproduces or challenges power relations, ideologies, and social identities. This part of the analysis helps uncover the ways in which discourse contributes to the maintenance or transformation of social systems.

Fairclough's CDA is particularly useful in examining how language both reflects and reinforces power dynamics and ideological structures in society. By applying CDA, this study aims to uncover hidden assumptions, implicit power relations, and ideological underpinnings embedded within texts.

The theoretical framework allows for a critical interrogation of discourse, not merely as a reflection of reality but as a means through which social reality is constructed and contested. Through this lens, discourse becomes a site of struggle, where competing ideologies and social forces vie for dominance and legitimacy.

In this study, Fairclough's CDA will be applied to some conversations which will be extracted from the text under review.

The analysis will explore how language choices construct particular representations of reality, what power relations are enacted or resisted through discourse and how the discourse contributes to sustaining or challenging dominant ideologies. By employing Fairclough's model, the study seeks to move beyond surface-level content analysis and engage with the deeper socio-political implications of language use.

Empirical Studies

Several empirical studies have examined the relationship between language, power, and ideology using the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). These studies provide a strong foundation for analyzing the manipulative use of language in dramatic text, particularly in relation to gender and power relations.

Onuoha (2018) carried out a research on gender reversals: men's emasculation in Tracie Chima's *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again* and Tess Onwueme's *The Reign of Wazobia* to deconstruct the traditional patriarch definition of women and men. He argued that masculinity is fluid, flexible and constantly altered based on situational contexts. Dataset were purposively sampled. Using textual and discursive analytic method the study found that through the characterization, mutability of masculinity is uncovered and women's performances affect men and their masculinity through women's expression of strong aggressive attitudes. It concludes that masculinity and femininity is both biological and gender constructed and that the fluidity of masculinity made it a position that can be occupied by men or women.

Again, Okata (2019) conducted a research on power and manipulative function of language: a critical discourse analysis of Tracie ChimaUtoh's *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again*, to explore ways language and other discursive features were used in the text to dominate and subjugate their male. Twenty data excerpts were

purposively selected and analyzed under discursive features of discourse opening and closing, turn taking, discourse interruption, speech errors, role sharing, and elicitation in talk. The Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis was deployed. The findings showed that women exercise control and power through their discourse, women's ideologies manipulate men and women use language to control the actions and thoughts process of their husbands. It concludes that effective language use facilitates creation of mutual trust and is a tool to power and dominance expression and subjugation.

Adiele (2018) worked on *language as platform for power and political control: a critical study of selected speeches of Mrs Maryann Babangida on the Better Life Program* to investigate the role of linguistic choices in creating and sustaining power relation and political control and critically analyze the advocacy strategies adopted by Mrs. Babangida as linguistic features of either empowering women or manipulating them for political advantages. Eclectic multidimensional approach was adopted in the research under the Norman Fairclough's (1995) and van Dijk's (2006) perspectives on critical discourse analysis.

The research findings showed that she deployed language in promoting asymmetrical power relations and producing, reproducing, legitimizing and maintaining social structures that sustain domination and political control. Udoumoh and Okpala (2024) investigated on the *'discourse manifestations of power in* Helen Habila's *Measuring Time'* to critically explore power elements and manifestations in Helen's Measuring Time. It employed qualitative-descriptive research design. Ten extracts from the novel were sampled purposively. Using Fairclough's critical discourse analytic model of discourse as a social practice as a theoretical framework for analysis, the results of the research revealed that power manifest at the linguistic levels of lexical, syntactic and grammar, for instance: metaphor, repetition,

adjectives etc. which express power asymmetries. The power reflected in the discourse manifests in sub-themes of power as manipulation, imposition, exploitation, and the derogatory labeling of disabled characters by the able-bodied ones. The study concludes that these findings help in structuring the story's plot, characterization and thematic makeup and analysis of the text.

Collectively, these empirical studies establish that language is a powerful instrument for constructing, maintaining and challenging power relations. They also reveal a research gap in the detailed analysis of dramatic texts by female Nigerian playwrights using Critical Discourse Analysis. The present study seeks to fill this gap by empirically examining how Tracie Utoh-Ezeajughi uses dramatic discourse to expose and subvert patriarchal power through manipulative and counter-manipulative functions of language.

Methodology

This research adopted the qualitative research design for the critical discourse analysis of the dataset, based on the dataset that are examined. This is considered the appropriate approach for the study given the nature of text studied, which involves context-based language. This study adopted the purposive sampling technique because the study does not analyze the entire play but deliberately selects specific dialogues and scenes that clearly reveal power relations and the manipulative function of language. Text is chosen based on their relevance to the research objectives and not on randomness.

Research Question 1: Relations of Power Manifestations in *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again*

Here, the focus is on identifying and analyzing linguistic strategies employed to reinforce dominant ideologies and exert control or authority. This will be done by answering the following questions:

a) What relational value do textual features have in terms of the Subject Position of the Discourse producer?
b) What relational value does vocabulary or lexical items have with regards to discourse receivers?

To find out what rational value textual features have in terms of the subject position of the discourse producer, the focus will be on how the discourse producers' subject position is structured by themselves in their dialogic interaction. The subject position of women in *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again!* by Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh will be discussed, particularly, through the linguistic features of modes and modality. The modes show agencies of the discourse producers and manifest in declarative, imperative and interrogative modes. Through the declarative mode, the discourse producers give information while the addressees receive the information, mostly without arguing, showcasing their passive roles.

Instances of Declarative Modes in *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again!* (Henceforth Represented as OWHGMA!)

Extract 1: *Ene: Necessary or not, evil is evil and I, Ene, will not put up with it any longer. What have I not done for this useless Inyang? I took him to my village and gave him money to pay my dowry. I sponsored the traditional marriage and the church wedding. I feed this man, I clothe him and I put a comfortable shelter over his head? Ingratitude! He cannot even impregnate me. Three years since our wedding and nothing has happened. What am I supposed to do with a eunuch?* (*Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again!* abbreviated as OWHGMA, 23-24)

Here, Ene Inyang, wife to Inyang, gives information about her financial responsibility and duties in her marital life with her husband to her female friends or group and in the presence of her husband, who neither expressed any objection nor resistance, thus conveying that his wife is more powerful and has control over him.

Extract 2: *Ene: What shall I do? The situation is beyond me. We are always fighting. Yet I shoulder all the responsibility in the house. I pay the house rent, the electricity bill, the water bill… I buy the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the car we drive… I pay for every single thing in the house. I have never asked him what he does with the miserable salary he receives. (OWHGMA, 30)*
The female discourse producer presents themselves with the domestic responsibilities which in the social world men are supposed to do. Upon her roles, her husband violates her domestically. In Extract 2, Ene gives out information to other female social actors about her wifely and husbandly roles.

Instances of Imperative Modes in OWHGMA!
Extract 3: *Ene: Who else answers Inyang in this house? Take my Honda car from the garage and drive Madam Ifeoma to her house. If you like, enter the town from there. I will be waiting for you when you come back. (Inyang begins to go towards the exit.) …* (OWHGMA, 34)
In this extract, Ene is represented as more powerful as she gives her husband instructions to carry out and Inyang does so without any query or refusal. The female social actor makes a request impolitely, which the male counterpart clearly avoided expression of resistance by not arguing. This shows that the former wields greater power than the latter.

Instances of Interrogative modes in OWHGMA!
Here, the female social actors query or ask their counter-parts, their husbands questions impolitely.
Extract 5: *Funmi: But that is beyond comprehension. What are they doing in this place? (Just then, the inner room door opens and the bar attendant walks out. Everybody turns to stare as she swings her way to the bar.)*
Inyang: (suddenly shouting.) Madam Funmi Anifowose- Sabio, the time you enter this place with Chief Irene Okpiribe – Sabio, my heart was full of joy. I said to myself, what a happy surprise. Oga

Felix! Your wives are here. Oh, what a problem ... I mean what a good surprise. (OWHGMA, 34)

In Extract 5, the female social actor(s) questioned their husbands whom they met coincidentally in a restaurant in a remote area. The males dodged responding to the question, out of fear, and the fear is also manifested in the response Inyang made which are pontificated by off-topic to the question they were asked. This shows that the male are afraid of their female counter parts while the women are represented as powerful. Therefore, domination and authority lies on women. The male's display of undisputable obedience and subservience and avoidance of resistance speaks volume of the high authority and power the wife wields over him.

Modality, on the other hand, is ways language shows degrees of certainty, possibility or obligation. Through these, the authority possessed by the speaker is represented. Modality is manifested through the use of modal verbs. Fairclough (1989, 183) has "relational modality of obligation" and "expressive modality of categorical truth, possibility, intention, permission, which the text studied embody. When discourse producers want to give unquestionable commands, they use such modal verbs as must, have to, should would, dare to and outright commands.

Instances of Modality in OWHGMA!

Extract 7: *Ifeoma: (resolute.) It is true. I have allowed this to go on for too long. Enough is enough. I* ***must*** *establish my authority. (OWHGMA, 32).*

Extract 8: *Mairo: The same house? Odera* ***will*** *not enter my house today until he has explained what he is doing in this bar. (OWHGMA, 51)*

What relational value does vocabulary or lexical items have with regards to discourse receivers?

Certain linguistic items are used by powerful discourse participants to represent or label things from their views; this reveals the discourse producers' ideologies possessed by such group.

The following are the linguistic items used by women on their husbands in *Our Wives' Have Gone Mad Again!*

Extract 9: *"...foolish man…" (22, 52)*
Extract 10: *"...Lazy idiot…" (22, 33)*
Extract 11: *"...imbeciles…" (23), (25)*
Extract 12: *"...worthless-good-for-nothing…" (26)*
Extract 13: *"...Monster…" (28, 33)*
Extract 14: *"...good for nothing piece of liability? (32)*
Extract 15: *"... Jobless parasite…" (35)*
Extract 16: *"...motor park illiterate…" (52).*

In the play, *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again!* The female social actors deliberately employed linguistic items that demean the male counter parts.

RQ 2: Ways in which Language Manipulates Social Actors as Reflected in the Text: Positive Self-Representation and Negative Other Representation

To investigate ways language manipulate social actors in the text, it is pertinent to look at it from the angle of Self Representation. Positive self-representation (PSR) and negative other-representation (NOR) are key discursive strategies, especially in politics and ideology, where speakers use language to portray their "Us" group favorably (emphasizing virtues like peace/love) while depicting the opposing "Them" group negatively (using harsh terms, highlighting flaws like treachery) to manipulate perception, consolidate power, and create in-group cohesion, often through van Dijk's Ideological Square which strategically manages positive/negative traits across groups.

Extracts from OWHGMA!

Here, the discourse producers present themselves in a good light and the other, discourse consumers, in negative light.

Extract 17: *Funmi: Ene my sister, we all have different grades and degrees of imbeciles in our homes but what shall we do? Men are necessary evils or so they say.*
Ene: Necessary or not, evil is evil and I, Ene, will not put up with it any longer. What have I not donefor this useless Inyang? I took him to my village and gave him money to pay my dowry. I sponsored the traditional marriage and the church wedding. I feed this man, I clothe him and I put a comfortable shelter over his head. Now what do I get in return? Ingratitude! He is lazy, insubordinate and good for nothing. He cannot even impregnate me. Three years since our wedding and nothing has happened. What am I supposed to do with a eunuch?
Mairo: Take him to the hospital so that he will be subjected to extensive medical tests. May be contracted an infection which destroyed his reproductive organ. You know how it is, with these men from gutter.
Ene: Which hospital have I not taken him to? Do you know how much that eunuch has cost me in medical bills? (Inyang comes in with the drinks.) (OWHGMA, 23-24)

Here, Funmi, a member of the women's group, presents the women in the US/THEM polarization by presenting women as the best in character and otherwise while their husbands are represented as individuals with some malfunctions such as "imbeciles" and "necessary evils". Ene, another female social actor presents herself positively by high responsibility display at home (providing money for her own dowry payment, traditional and church weddings sponsorship, feeding, clothing and sheltering her husband)and emphasized her power and discrediting her husband Inyang. She also emotionalized the argument in ways of presenting her husband (the others) as incapable of impregnating her and has nothing to offer negative other representation).

Inyang having this knowledge of what his wife is saying did not object and became less resistant to her manipulation and more

vulnerable.The wife's domination led to his (Inyang) accepting and doing things like cooking, shopping groceries that he would ordinarily resist to.

R.Q 2: Author's Usage of Language to Shape and Influence Readers' Perceptions while Reading the Text:

Metaphor: Metaphor is a rhetoric used by social discourse producers to create the world. The instances of their usages are shown in the following extracts.

Extract 18: *Ifeoma: (between sobs.) I would have died. The **monster** would have killed me if not for divine intervention.*
Ene: Who?
Funmi: What?
Mario: Which Monster?
Ifeoma: My husband (OWHGMA, 28)

Extract 19: *Ene: You need to do that. (Suddenly looks round the room.) Inyang! Where is that **good-for-nothing piece of liability**? Inyang! (Inyang comes in from the kitchen. He is wearing an apron.) (OWHGMA, 32))*

Extract 20: *Ene: (cuts in.) Get out of my sight. (To Ifeoma.) Ify, I will come and see you tomorrow. Mario and Funmi, let us go and eat before we lose our appetite because of this **jobless parasite**. (OWHGMA, 35)*

Here, the author compared the male characters to inanimate or demeaning object. Such objectifications include: "jobless parasite", "good for nothing liability", monster etc.

Simile: Here, the authors used simile figurative expressions to further represent the social realities in the text.

Extract 21: *Ene: See how you are blabbering **like a fool** in front of my friends. A fool that cannot take simple instruction. You want us to starve and wait for his majesty 'King Inyang' because 'you are thinking'. Are you capable of thinking? (OWHGMA, 25)*

Extract 22: *Ene: (incredulous.) Go ahead. Abuse me. Disgrace me. Show the world how we live in this house. It is not your fault. It is mine. I am the one who picked a worthless **good-for-nothing***

like you *from the gutter and made something out of you. Answer back, we are now equals. After all, we sleep on the same bed. (Inyang goes into the room without uttering a word.) (OWHGMA, 26)*
Here, the authors employed simile, the use of 'as' or 'like' in making comparisons of men and women in order to create the social realities and contexts of their story lines. This helps the reader to fully grasp the hidden information which the author wants to convey.

Exaggeration: The author deployed the use of overstatement in representing certain features of the social reality of the social actors. Instances include:
Extract 23: *Ene: (cuts in.) See how you are blabbering like a fool in front of my friends. A fool that cannot take simple instruction. You want us to starve and wait for his majesty 'King Inyang' because 'you are thinking'.* ***Are you capable of thinking?*** *(OWHGMA, 26)*

Rhetorical Question: Rhetorical questions were also used by the author to present certain questions that ordinarily, the answer is known by the discourse participants but are not responded to.
Extract 24: *Ene: (cuts in.) See how you are blabbering like a fool in front of my friends. A fool that cannot take simple instruction. You want us to starve and wait for his majesty 'King Inyang' because 'you are thinking'.* ***Are you capable of thinking?*** *(OWHGMA, 26)*
Extract 25: *Ene:* ***Who else answers Inyang in this house?*** *Take my Honda car from the garage and drive Madam Ifeoma to her house. If you like, enter the town from there. I will be waiting for you when you come back. (Inyang begins to go towards the exit.)* ... (OWHGMA, 34)

RQ 4: Ways Language can be a Tool of Oppression and a Means of Resistance

Here, the different manifestations of oppression and resistance are expressed through language. Linguistic features portraying oppression and resistance and subversion in the text will be discussed in some subheadings.

Dominant discourses challenge patriarchal ideologies

Extract 26: *Ene: (stand-offish.) welcome yourself, foolish man. (Pointing) Look at the clock. Is this the time your mates clean the house? Lazy idiot! (Ene expresses her disgustand then matchesto a sette. As the other women move towards the sette, Fumni trips on an upturned chair and nearly falls. Inyang quickly puts out his hand to aid her).*

Inyang: Sorry, Madam. (OWHGMA, 22)

Extract 27: *Ene: (furious) Inyang, how long does it take you to walk to my fridge and bring the drinks I bought with my money?*

Inyang: Sorry, Madam. It is the tumbler. I have to wash it before I bring them. (OWHGMA, 24-25)

Extract 28: *Ifeoma: What shall I do? The situation is beyond me. We are always fighting. Yet I shoulder all the responsibility in the house. I pay the children's school fees; I pay the house rent, the electricity bill, the water bill… I buy the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the car we drive… I pay for every single thing in the house I have never asked what he does with the misearable salary he receives. (OWHGMA, 30)*

Extract 29: *Funmi: But this is beyond comprehension. What are they doing in this place? (Just then, the inner room door opens and the bar attendant walks out. Everybody turns to stare as she swings her way to the bar)*

Inyang: (suddenly shouting.) Madam Funmi Anifowose-Sabio, the time you enter this place with Chief Irene Okpiribe-Sabio, my heart was full of joy. I said to myself, what a happy surprise. Oga Felix! Your wives are here (shouts louder.) Oga Felix! Your wives are here. Oh, what a problem … I mean what a good surprise.

Mairo: What is wrong with this Inyang? Are you sure some nuts have not come loose in his head? (OWHGMA, 50)

The women's actions and ideologies challenge the patriarchal ideologies which has male in charge and in control. But the reverse is the case as the women's empowerment keeps them at the affairs of their homes and even the public. Their actions, reactions and inactions challenge and dominate the belief that patriarchy is reigning, rather matriarchy is projected here. Normally, the patriarchal social construct sees men as in controlling position to lead, provide money, food, shelter and even give them jobs but they are downplayed. A man in the African custom has the role of owning a house but here, through Mario's comment it is shown that women own the house as such a direct measure to challenge patriarchy. Here, the hidden ideologies against men in *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again* are expanded by studying the linguistic features used by men and women respectively to address the opposite genders.

Extracts Showing Implicit Biases against Men in OWHGMA!

Here, the ideologies women possess about men are portrayed in their linguistic expressions. In Our *Wives Have Gone Mad Again*, women considered their husband as useless.

Extract 30: *Ene: Necessary or not, evil is evil, and I, Ene, will not put up with it any longer. What have I not done for this useless Inyang? I took him to my village and gave him money to pay my dowry. I sponsored the traditional marriage and the church wedding. I fed this man. I clothed him and I put a comfortable shelter over his head. Now, what do I get in return? Ingratitude! He is lazy, insubordinate, and good for nothing. He cannot even impregnate me. Three years since our wedding and nothing has happened. What am I supposed to do with a eunuch? (OWHGMA, 23)*

Extract 31: *Funmi: It is your fault. You made him independent. You found a job for him. You should have left him to continue his job as your drier. That way, he would always have respect for you. But you wanted him to have self-esteem. See where it has got you. (OWHGMA, 30-31).*

Extract 32: *Ene: This case is very easy to solve. Tell his Managing Director to throw him out of the job. When he returns home, put him in his place. (OWHGMA, 31)*
Extract 33: *Irene: Oh I have great plans. I will create a ministry for men affairs under which he can run such programs as Better Life for Rural Men, Husband Support Program and many other lucrative ... Sorry, I mean expedient programs. (OWHGMA, 77)*
Ene's comment shows the inability of men to pay their marital rights of their homes as expected in African particularly Igbo culture. Again, in Extract 31, Funmi portrayed that their man's inability has resulted in the women empowering them with employment and that they can also disempower them as seen in Ene's comment in extract 32. Irene in extract 33 also stressed when further to buttress on their men's irresponsibility and how they can make them useful.

Male Linguistic Resistance
This subheading portrays ways men express aversions to the females dictates in the text.
Extract 34: *Inyang: But, Madam Ene, I am trying to make you happy. Why are you scolding me? What is my offence now? (OWHGMA, 26)*
Extract 35: *Ifeoma: (deceptive calm) Zeus, what is the time?*
Zeus: I don't know. Consult your wrist watch.
Ifeoma: But you are wearing a wrist watch too. Please consult it and tell me the time.
Zeus: (abrasive) Why should you ask me the time? Am I your time keeper? (OWHGMA, 55-57)
Extract 36*: Ene: Inyang! Where are young going to?*
Inyang: (suddenly brave) I am going away. I am tired of this marriage. What my eyes are seeing is too much. (OWHGMA, 73)
Inyang in extract 34 showed resistance but was unsustainable because of the female's dominance. Zeus also showed resistance in extract 35 where he responded back to his wife rudely despite his wife being the breadwinner of the family, possessing more power.

His defiance is portrayed in their pattern of interactional turn-taking. In extract 36, Inyang also showed resistance to "Ene" his wife's oppression by stating that he is leaving his marriage.

Discussion of Findings

This study investigates the role of language in the construction and exercise of power in Tracie Utoh-Ezeajughi's *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again* using the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The findings reveal that the play presents a deliberate reversal of traditional gender power relations, where women occupy dominant political and social positions, while men are marginalized and rendered powerless. Language functions as the primary mechanism through which this power imbalance is established, sustained, and justified.

The analysis also shows that men are discursively constructed bas irrational, incompetent, and politically irrelevant through repeated linguistic strategies. Women use dismissive expressions, sarcasm, and derogatory generalizations to represent men as unfit for leadership. Such representations function ideologically to naturalize male exclusion from power. In lane with Van Dijk's notion of ideological discourse, positive self-representation of women ("competent", "organized", "progressive") is paired with negative other-representation of men ("confused", "emotional", "incapable"), reinforcing asymmetrical power relations.

The findings also indicate that the language becomes a site of resistance as the play progresses. Men gradually appropriate discourse as a counter power tool, using collective speech, assertive language, and rhetorical strategies to challenge women authority. This shift illustrates that power in discourse is not fixed but dynamic. Men's use of persuasive argumentation and direct confrontation destabilizes the earlier matriarchal narrative.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Through the lens of CDA, it becomes evident that in language, the text is a powerful instrument of both domination and resistance. The play reveal how patriarchal ideologies are perpetuated through discourse practices, yet also how those same discursive practices can be subverted. Ultimately, the study highlights the transformation potential of language in challenging hegemonic structures and promoting social change. Judging from the findings the researchers suggests that:

1. There is a need for more interdisciplinary research that combines literary analysis with linguistic tools like CDA to examine how power operates subtly through language in African texts.
2. Writers should continue to challenge oppressive narratives by portraying women as agents of change, not just as victims. Language should be used not only to reflect reality but to critique and reshape it.
3. Given the influence of language on thought and behavior, there should be an emphasis on critical language education in schools. Students should be trained to analyze text beyond surface meanings, learning to identify implicit ideologies and power structures within discourse.
4. This study shows the critical role language plays in shaping societal perceptions of gender. Educators and activists should incorporate discourse awareness into gender advocacy programs to help people recognize and challenge the linguistic structures that support inequality.

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