

Language Implications for Peace or War: Exploring How the use of Language led to war between Umuaro and Okperi in Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* in the Light of Ludwig Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Language

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ABSTRACT

This paper explored the conflict between Umuaro and Okperi (Fictitious Igbo towns) in Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* (A novel written by Chinua Achebe in 1965, which is a picture of struggle and dialectics between Igbo culture/religion and imported European culture/religion) in the light of Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of language. The aim of the paper was to show how the use and understanding made of language can have implications for peace or war, between individuals or communities. The goal is to contribute to the promotion of peace through appropriate use and understanding of language. Philosophical method of analysis was applied in discussing Wittgenstein's views on language as well as extracts from *Arrow of God*. The extracts hinged on the utterances among the elders of Umuaro, as well as between Umuaro's emissaries led by Akukalia and the elders of Okperi, which eventually culminated in a war between Umuaro and Okperi. The findings of the study showed that use of words and languages can lead to peace or war, by their implications, understanding and context. The conclusion was that understanding and applying Wittgenstein's view of language as a social practice through meaning as use, language-games, rule-following, grammar and form of life can help people, especially those in positions of authority, power and influence, to make good choice of words and languages in their speeches or utterances – words and languages that promote peace instead of war or any kind of violence. Mahatma Gandhi was an example of such leaders, and it was recommended that today's leaders emulate him, for a peaceful coexistence, especially as the present society is apparently enveloped in political tensions and struggle for supremacy in various dimensions.

Key words: Peace, Arrow of God, Wittgenstein, Philosophy, Language, War.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a very significant and indispensable part of human beings. Virtually all the actions, decisions and events in the society are, in one way or another, consequent on language, depending on its use, meaning, understanding and interpretation. Sometimes languages are used without due consideration of their implications, especially for peace or war. This has often resulted to violent conflicts and even wars among humans. For instance, Leech (1981) states that all kinds of conflicts and pressure between one individual and another arise mostly from the use of language. This is what played out in Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* with regard to the conflict between Umuaro and Okperi, starting from the meeting of the elders of Umuaro, the sending of emissaries to Okperi and the utterances between the emissaries and the elders of Okperi, leading to the killing of Akukalia and ultimately to war between Umuaro and Okperi. Improper use of language is therefore a problem that needs to be addressed so as to prevent violent conflicts or wars.

Arrow of God is a novel written by Chinua Achebe in 1965. Since then it has been edited several times. The source for this paper is the 1986 edition. The novel is a prose fiction that mirrors the Igbo traditional world-view or ideology, both before and at the onset of the arrival of the European colonialists. The setting is Umuaro, a conglomerate of six villages of Umuachala, Umunneora, Umunagu, Umuezeani, Umuogwuggu and Umuisiuzo. In the distant past, these villages lived as different people, but they came together and installed a common deity to save them from the hired soldiers of Abam who used to attack, plunder and carry them into slavery. The name of the deity is *Ulu*, and Ezeulu is its priest. Okperi is a distant village and the seat of the colonial administration. Umuaro eventually goes to war against Okperi over a piece of farmland which the former claims is their own.

In his philosophy of language, Ludwig Wittgenstein advocates that we look closely at what we say, since we use words to do things. He wants to draw attention not only to language *in se* (in itself), but also to the actions into which

it is woven. In other words, language evokes actions. Wittgenstein rejects the discovery of elementary propositions as the task of logical analysis, as he previously held in his earlier work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, and shifted to ordinary language as the centre stage for the attention of philosophers. So, in his *Philosophical Investigations* he offers a new way of looking at language, bordering on meaning as use, language games and family resemblance, rule-following and private language, and grammar and form of life.

Using the method of textual and contextual analysis, this paper aims to raise the awareness that language has implications for peace or war, and encourage the use of languages in ways that promote peace rather than violence, especially by those in positions of leadership, authority and influence. In the process, the concept of language and Wittgenstein's philosophy of language will be highlighted as the conceptual and theoretical frameworks respectively. Some of the utterances in *Arrow of God* that eventually led to the war between Umuaro and Okperi will be extracted as data for the study. The goal of the paper is to contribute to the promotion of peace among individuals, communities and societies through proper use and understanding of language, especially by those in positions of power, authority and influence.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Concept of Language

Language is a special gift of God to human beings, and it has been identified as part of every culture. Being part of culture, language assumes a posture of conventionality in various dimensions. According to Crystal and Robins (2019), language is a system of conventional spoken, manual or written symbols by means of which human beings as members of a social group and participants in its culture, express themselves. Its functions are captured in communication, play, identity and emotions. For Collins (2018), language is a system of communication which consists of a set of sounds and written symbols which are used by the people of a particular community or region for talking or writing. It also includes gestures, signs and other means of communication as understood within a given social group. Nnamani (2012) views language as a means of expressing thought, and that human beings use language to structure their experience in the society where they live.

There are many other concepts and definitions of language. However, the central point of them all is that language is a means of communication, and it comes in a variety of ways, in the context of cultural and social milieu. Meaning, understanding and use of language is a crucial issue in human communications and relationships. It is important to always bear in mind the meaning, understanding and use of language. This is because language is usually incendiary, especially when misused or misunderstood. Language is highly contextualized in its use and understanding. That is why philosophers treat language meaning as a situational-dependent behaviour governed by informal logical rules (Stewart, 1971). One of such philosophers is Wittgenstein (1953:243),

who maintains that "a private language in which words are to refer to what only the speaker can know - to his immediate private sensations - is not a genuine, meaningful rule-governed language". He argues that speaking of language is part of activity or a form of life.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Language

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1952) was born in Vienna, Austria. Some see him as the greatest philosopher of the 20th century. He played a great role in analytic philosophy, and his influence continues to be felt in current philosophical thoughts in the areas of language, logic, perception and intention, ethics, religion, aesthetics and culture (Monk, 2018). In his early work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, he gave great insight into relations between world, thought and language. However, in his later work, *Philosophical Investigations*, he criticized the traditional philosophy as being dogmatic, including his own earlier view in the *Tractatus*. In *Philosophical Investigations*, he emphasizes a new view of language under meaning as use, language games and family resemblance, rule-following and private language, grammar and form of life.

Meaning as use

Through understanding meaning as use, Wittgenstein intends to turn people from thinking of linguistic pictures, where the use of language to name or picture the world is only but one of its multi-faceted uses, to the "varied manifold of activities in which we use word" (Matson, 2000 : 564). He is of the view that using a word, say 'object', and trying to pinpoint the essence thereof, is misleading, for this is metaphysical and simply abstract. He rather advocates a return to the everyday use of words. What is implied here is that meaning should not be conceived as representation, pointing to an exterior entity as the provider of the sense of the word used. For him such an external entity in the mind is a mental image. Instead of that, "philosophers should look and find out the various uses of the word, just as we see the variety of tools and their uses when we think of tools in a toolbox, since the functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects" (Wittgenstein, 1953:11).

The import of Wittgenstein's meaning as use is summarized by his famous statement that "For a large class of cases of the employment of the word 'meaning' – though not for all – this word can be explained in this way: the meaning of word is its use in the language" (Wittgenstein, 1953:43). According to Biletzki (2018), Wittgenstein introduces the concept of language-game so as to address the innumerable diversity of uses of words and their being part of an activity.

Language-games and family resemblance

There is no explicit definition of language-games by Wittgenstein. This is because, according to Biletzki (2018), the new coinage is meant to promote a more dynamic,

diversified and activity-oriented view of language. "The analogy to games was carefully chosen, for there is no common element in all games by virtue of which they are called games" (Matson, 2000:564). For instance, in board-games, ball-games, card-games, and so on, one should not think or say that there must be something common to them all, but one should look and see whether there is anything common to them all. Thinking in this context implies speculation or conjecturing, which is irrelevant, since meaning is ascertainable from direct observation. So, the watchword for Wittgenstein is: Don't think, but look. Language games can be seen as a shared conceptual yardstick that allows the possibility of identification and production of signs and establishment of relations of signification and representation (Xanthos, 2017). The aim of the language-games is to help people to choose their words and languages appropriately. For instance, if one is dealing with science, one has to face facts, falsehood and evidence, rather than appeal to emotions, good and bad, just and unjust.

Wittgenstein is against the philosopher's tendency towards generalization. Instead of that, he urges that we "follow words in their uses through a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing" (Wittgenstein, 1953:66). These he refers to as family resemblances which serve as bridges to connect different uses of a given concept or word. He maintains that words are defined by family resemblances, and not uniquely defining properties (Sowa, 2018). For instance, chess and basketball are games because they resemble the group of activities that people call games. For him, the meaning of a word is its use as specified by a set of rules, just like in the game of chess, a piece is not defined by its shape or colour, but by the rules guiding its use. Family resemblances allow vagueness which is inevitable, since "we might say that not everything we say can be said clearly" (Wittgenstein, 1992:357).

Rule-following and private language

Rule-following is one of the key issues in Wittgenstein's discussion of language. This has to do with what is applicable to the uses of a word. In traditional philosophy, rule is considered as an abstract entity, beyond all particularities, so that comprehending the abstract and how to use it amounts to knowing the rule. Regarding this, Wittgenstein (1953:201) states that "No course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule". For him, that everything can be made out to agree with the rule implies that it can also be made out to conflict with the rule. This sounds paradoxical, but Wittgenstein maintains that there is no real reason for saying that a person is truly following a rule, rather other conditions (such as public standards) can warrant such an assertion, and this is where the question of private language comes in.

For Wittgenstein (1953), an utterance has to be subjected to public standards of correctness for it to be meaningful. So, if a language refers to what only the speaker knows (private language), it is not a genuine, meaningful rule-followed one. The point of Wittgenstein's argument is that rule-following should be understood in terms of what the word or language

means within the social context, not in isolation from its public meaning and attribution.

Grammar and form of life

Usually grammar is understood as consisting of rules of correct syntactic and semantic usage. It is a network of rules that determine what is sensible or otherwise in linguistic stance, and it "tells the kind of object a thing is" (Wittgenstein, 1953:371). Wittgenstein's view is opposed to grammar-book rules where rules are idealistic and perceived as an external standard to be conformed to. The purpose of grammar, according to him, is to clarify misconceptions and philosophical perplexities, and so free people from being misled into false illusions. He argues that far from being abstract, grammar is contextualized within the normal activities in line with language-games.

Language-games stresses the fact that language involves activities, and speaking of it is part of an activity; and since activity is part of life, speaking of language is a form of life. "Without forms of life, language cannot function" (Wittgenstein, 1953:206). By form of life he means the kind of life common to humankind, shared human behaviour which is "the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language" (Wittgenstein, 1953:206). This is universalistic, as noted by Biletzki (2018), since the use of language is possible only by human form of life. This universality is also to be adaptable and adapted to contexts and cultures, so that within a particular community, based on their form of life and systems of reference, language can have a meaning common to the members of that community. According to Garry (1971), Wittgenstein's form of life refers to the theoretical, empirical, practical and historical horizon which provides the contextual framework for the analysis of all communicative phenomena, their meaning and logical structure.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data for analysis here consists of some utterances extracted from the *Arrow of God*. Analyzing these extracts will reveal how words can lead to peace or conflicts, and even war, depending on their use, understanding, interpretation and context.

Extracts from *Arrow of God* That Led to War between Umuaro and Okperi

The use of language that eventually led to war between Umuaro and Okperi started among the leaders of Umuaro themselves. Their disregard for Ezeulu's stand not to go to war and their decision to send emissaries to Okperi with white clay for peace or a new palm frond for war constitute a beginning step in the direction of crisis. This can be seen from the following extracts:

Extract 1

On the day, five years ago, when the leaders of Umuaro decided to send an emissary to Okperi with white clay

for peace or new palm frond for war, Ezeulu spoke in vain. He told the men of Umuaro that Ulu would not fight an unjust war (Achebe, 1986:15).

The above extract is a hint that war between Umuaro and Okperi was imminent, though there was a possibility of its prevention. That Ezeulu spoke in vain means that the people of Umuaro did not heed his council not to go to war, even when he made it clear to them that Ulu would not fight on their side, since the war was unjust. This is precisely what Ezeulu told the men of Umuaro:

Extract 2

My father said this to me that when our village first came here to live the land belonged to Okperi. It was Okperi who gave us a piece of their land to live in. They also gave us their deities – their Udo and their Ogwugwu. But they said to our ancestors – mark my words – the people of Okperi said to our fathers: We give you our Udo and our Ogwugwu; but you must call the deity we gave you not Udo but the son of Udo, and not Ogwugwu but the son of Ogwugwu. This is the story as I heard it from my father. If you choose to fight a man for a piece of farmland that belongs to him I shall have no hand in it (Achebe, 1986:15).

The implication of Ezeulu's statement is that the people of Okperi made it clear to the people of Umuaro right from the beginning that they should not lay claim to the ownership of the land as well as the deities. Hence they should call the deities son of Udo and son of Ogwugwu respectively, thereby indicating that the deities properly belong to Okperi people.

After Ezeulu's speech, it was Nwaka who took the floor. He countered Ezeulu by saying that despite what Ezeulu claimed his father told him in the olden days, the lore of the land is beyond the knowledge of many fathers. He claimed that his own father told him a different story, to the effect that Okperi people were wanderers who had sojourned for a while in three or four places before moving on again. The following extract shows how he was able to stir the people's emotion:

Extract 3

Elders and *Ndichie* of Umuaro, let everyone return to his house if we have no heart in the fight. We shall not be the first people who abandoned their farmland or even their homestead to avoid war. But let us not tell ourselves or our children that we did it because the land belonged to other people. Let us rather tell them that their fathers did not choose to fight. Let us tell them also that we marry the daughters of Okperi and their men marry our daughters, and that where there is this mingling men often lose the heart to fight (Achebe, 1986:16).

Nwaka's speech was followed by a long uproar, largely of approbation. The way he started his speech was very captivating. He began by recognizing the elders and *Ndichie* (respected elderly and titled men). He also employed emotionally provoking words. Majority of the people then

accused Ezeulu of avoiding war because his mother was from Okperi. Even Akukalia, whose mother was equally from Okperi, was against Ezeulu, instead of supporting him. In fact, he was so fierce that he wanted the war to start at once. Many people spoke in the assembly, weighing the pros and cons of going to war, and vice versa. In the end, the assembly chose Akukalia to carry a lump of white clay and new palm frond to Okperi, for the people of Okperi to choose. White clay and new palm frond represent peace and war respectively in Igbo culture. The last to speak was the oldest man, Ogbufi Egonwanne, from Akukalia's village. He acknowledged that Akukalia was angry and was right to feel that way, but cautioned that he was not being sent to his mother's land to fight, but to place the choice of war or peace before the people of Okperi. The following extract captures his take:

Extract 4

We are sending you, Akukalia, to place the choice of war or peace before them.... We do not want Okperi to choose war; nobody eats war. If they choose peace we shall rejoice. But whatever they say, you are not to dispute with them. Your duty is to bring word back to us. We all know that you are a fearless man, but while you are there, put your fearlessness in your bag. If the young men who will go with you talk with too loud a voice, it shall be your duty to cover their fault. I have in my younger days gone on such errands and know the temptation too well (Achebe, 1986:17-18).

Ezeulu spoke again. He blamed Ogbuefi Egonwanne, telling him that he should have reminded the people that their fathers did not fight a war of blame, rather than teaching the emissaries how to carry water and fire in the same mouth. Again, Ezeulu's speech fell on deaf ears, as Akukalia and his two companions set out for Okperi the following day, being *Eke* market. *Eke* is one of the four market days that make up the four-day native week for the traditional Igbo people. The three others are *Oye*, *Afo* and *Nkwo*. Each village or town has one of these markets as its own official market day.

When the emissaries reached Okperi, they went to the house of Udueze, the nearest living relation to Akukalia's mother. Udueze was wondering what could be the reason for them to storm Okperi so early. After a brief exchange of greetings, Akukalia said to him, "We have an urgent mission which we must give to the elders of Okperi at once" (Achebe, 1986:21). Udueze wanted to offer them kola nut first, but they refused, saying that they had a big load on their head and could not understand anything they were told. They also declined the offer of white clay to draw lines on the floor. Kola nut and white clay are traditional tokens of goodwill between host and guest among the Igbo people. Their rejection of these meant that their mission was really grave. Udueze then took them to the man who would receive their message, namely Otikpo, the town-crier of Okperi.

At Otikpo's house, Akukalia and his companions again refused the offer of kola nut, despite the recognition accorded him by Otikpo, addressing him as 'son of our daughter'. Akukalia maintained that their message was urgent, and required the elders of Okperi. To this, Otikpo replied that

they had come at a bad time, since Okperi people do not have any other business on their *Eke* day. Again, Otikpo addressed him, "Son of our daughter, you should know our habits" (Achebe, 1986:22). To this Akukalia retorted, "Your habits are not different from the habits of other people ... and our mission could not wait" (Achebe, 1986:22). Otikpo went out and called his neighbor, Ebo. He came in again and suggested that Akukalia and his companion sleep at Okperi and see the elders tomorrow, but they refused. When Ebo came and was shaking hands with all present, Akukalia refused to shake hands with him. After Ebo had learnt why he was called, he queried, "Why did they choose to come today? Have they no market where they come from? If that is all you are calling me for I must go back and prepare for market" (Achebe, 1986:23).

Akukalia and his companions suggested that Otikpo use their *ikolo* (a traditional gong used as a means of making announcement in the community) to summon the elders, but Otikpo told them that it is not their custom in Okperi to welcome strangers to their market with the *ikolo*. At this point, Akukalia felt insulted, claiming that they were being referred to as market women. He reminded them that his name is Okeke Akukalia of Umuaro. To this Ebo replied, "Ooh, of Umuaro. I am happy you have said of Umuaro. The name of this town is Okperi" (Achebe, 1986:24). Akukalia then shouted at him and said, "Go back to your house, or I will make you eat shit" (Achebe, 1986:24). In reply Ebo said, "If you want to shout like a castrated bull you must wait until you return to Umuaro. I have told you this place is called Okperi" (Achebe, 1986:24). This statement cut Akukalia to the quick, for a reason which Achebe (1986:24) states as follows:

Extract 5

"Perhaps it was deliberate, perhaps accidental. But Ebo had just said the one thing that nobody should ever have told Akukalia who was impotent and whose two wives were secretly given to other men to bear his children".

Consequent upon the above bitter exchanges, a fight ensued, and Ebo sustained a broken head, and blood started streaming. He then rushed to his house to get a machete. Akukalia rushed after him, went into his *obi* (hut), took the *ikenga* (*Ikenga* is a symbol of moral probity, authority and justice, handed down from ancestors from generation to generation), rushed outside and broke it into pieces before all the people. As Ebo came near, apparently not believing what his eyes saw, Akukalia threatened and dared him to move a step further if he called himself a man. Ebo went back to his *obi* in hot anger. After pleading with his ancestors, he loaded his gun with bullets, knelt down at the threshold, aimed and shot Akukalia dead.

Everyone was stunned when the body of Akukalia was brought home to Umuaro. The people of Umuaro had an assembly the following morning. Most of them agreed that Akukalia went too far by breaking the *ikenga*. They would have let go of the issue, but some reasoned that the people of Okperi would have come to explain what happened. Again, Ezeulu tried to dissuade them from going to war, reminding

them that Ulu would not fight in blame. The following extract depicts what he said:

Extract 6

Umuaro is today challenging its *chi* (god). Is there any man or woman in Umuaro who does not know Ulu, the deity that destroys a man when his life is sweetest to him? Some people are still talking of carrying war to Okperi. Do they think that Ulu will fight in blame? Today the world is spoilt and there is no longer head or tail in anything that is done. But Ulu is not spoilt with it. If you go to war to avenge a man who passed shit on the head of his mother's father, Ulu will not follow you to be soiled in the corruption. Umuaro, I salute you (Achebe, 1986:27).

There was confusion and the people were divided into two, some on the side of Ezeulu and some on the side of Nwaka. In the night, Nwaka held another meeting in his house, which excluded everyone from Ezeulu's village, Umuachala. He told the people that Umuaro should not allow itself to be led by the priest of Ulu. He described Ezeulu as a man of ambition who wanted to be "king, priest, diviner, all" (Achebe, 1986:27). He convinced them to disregard Ulu and his priest, and fight for their farmland and also avenge the contempt Okperi had poured on them.

The people of Umuaro were swayed by Nwaka's speech, and the war was waged. On the first day of the war, Umuaro killed two men from Okperi. On the following two days, Umuaro killed four men from Okperi, while Okperi killed three from Umuaro, one of whom was Akukalia's brother, Okoye. The war came to an abrupt end the next day, for Winterbotton, the European colonial district administrator, brought soldiers to Umuaro and stopped it. He gathered all the guns from Umuaro and asked the soldiers to break them before the people. He later arbitrated between Umuaro and Okperi and gave the disputed piece of land to Okperi.

Findings: Implications for Peace or War

From the extracts presented and analyzed, it can be seen that language has implications for peace or war. These two dimensions are discernible in the text under consideration, and so need further highlighting in the light of Wittgenstein's philosophy of language.

Implications for Peace

It can be noticed that meaning as use, language games and family resemblance, as explained in Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, played out in the extracts. For instance, the elders of Umuaro understood that Ezeulu's statement, based on what his father told him regarding the ownership of the land, meant that he did not want them to go to war against Okperi. For Wittgenstein, meaning should not be conceived as representation, pointing to an exterior entity as the provider of the sense of the word used, but rather in terms of everyday use of the word (Matson, 2000). The people of Umuaro, instead of considering the everyday meaning of unjust

war, might have conceived Ezeulu's speech as pointing to an exterior entity, since he was referring to what his father told him. If they had considered the everyday meaning of the language, perhaps they would not have gone to war with Okperi.

From every indication, it can be correctly asserted that Ezeulu's use of language has implications for peace, but it was construed as a compromise to favour his maternal town, Okperi. Apparently Ezeulu was honest in his statement, hence he even invoked the stand of Ulu, whose priest he was. In his discourse on grammar and form of life, Wittgenstein (1953:206) maintains that "without forms of life, language cannot function". This is because he is of the view that language involves activities, and speaking of it is part of an activity; and since activity is part of life, speaking of language is a form of life. According to Garry (1971), Wittgenstein's form of life refers to the theoretical, empirical, practical and historical horizon which provides the contextual framework for the analysis of all communicative phenomena, their meaning and logical structure.

The essence of Wittgenstein's grammar and form of life is to provide a form of life adaptable to cultural contexts, and a system of reference to interpret languages, so that in a community language can have a meaning common to the members of that community. In the light of this, it would not be a wrong assumption to aver that the people of Umuaro understood the meaning of Ezeulu's language. His reference to the intention of Ulu for them not to go to war would have convinced them all the more, since they all believed in the deity. However, they appeared to have been carried away by some sort of assumed air of boldness and bellicose heroism, instigated by Nwaka's speech. The people of Okperi offered kola nut and white chalk to Akukalia and his companions, which are signs of welcome among the Igbo people, but they rejected the offer. In addition, all the pleas by Uduezue, Oti-ipo and Ebo to let Akukalia and his companions come another day, or sleep over, since they do not receive visitors on their market day, proved abortive. This shows that the people of Okperi were out for peace, but the emissaries from Umuaro were impatient and would not accept a second chance.

Implications for war

After Ezeulu's speech by which he tried to dissuade the people of Umuaro from going to war, Nwaka's speech followed. However, Nwaka chose to play the game, countering Ezeulu's view with a different story from his own father. Having given the version of what his own father told him, as has been noted earlier, Nwaka, like in a game, applied further tactics in using his words such as the following:

"Let everyone return to his house if we have no heart in the fight. We shall not be the first people who abandoned their farmland or even their homestead to avoid war. But let us not tell ourselves or our children... that we did it because the land belonged to other people. Let us rather tell them that their fathers did not choose to fight" (Achebe, 1986:15).

Apparently, Nwaka wittingly crafted those words with the intention of making the people of Umuaro have impression

of themselves as cowards and weaklings if they did not go to war against the people of Okperi. This would make them look irresponsible in the sight of their children. Obviously, such children would live with a sense of shame and betrayal. In Igbo culture, this is the last thing fathers would have their children inherit from them. Nwaka was quite aware of this. That was why he framed his speech the way he did. His speech underscores the view expressed by Wittgenstein (1953) in his rule-following and private language, that an utterance has to be subjected to the public standard of correctness for it to be meaningful, and that if an utterance or language refers only to what the speaker knows, it is not a meaningful, rule-following one.

What can be inferred from Nwaka's speech is that it has implications for war, unlike that of Ezeulu. From Nwaka's speech, one can visualize language as an activity (Wittgenstein, 1953), for his speech was really acting on the psyche of the people of Umuaro, and at the same time evoking actions in them. Also, Akukalia's hot temper and rude language towards the people of Okperi, coupled with Ebo's reference to Akukalia as a castrated bull were far from guarantying peace. However, Ebo's derogatory utterance was provoked by Akukalia's repeated insults. All these led to a fight that saw the killing of Akukalia by Ebo.

The Dilemma of the Elders of Umuaro

Four days after the death of Akukalia, the assembly of Umuaro was again held. As would be expected, speeches by both Ezeulu and Nwaka created a state of uncertainty in the minds of the people. Many people spoke to the assembly one after another, in a bid to evaluate which actions to take. This is in line with the view expressed by Whitting (2010) that language involves practices of employing expressions in certain ways, practices governed (following the game analogy) by rules, which determine the correct use of those expressions and by appeal to which participants regulate and evaluate their actions. Many people stood with Ezeulu, while some went with Nwaka. So, the meeting ended in a confusion.

Decision Made and the Subsequent War

Being faced with the uncertainty of going to war or not, it was difficult for the people of Umuaro to make a choice. The outcome of going to war would be dicey, and not going to war would be viewed as cowardice. However, Nwaka, during the nocturnal meeting which he convened, convinced them that they did not need the chief priest of Ulu to tell them what to do. He eventually got them to agree that three or four Okperi heads must go down to settle the matter. Based on this agreement, a decision was taken and the war was waged from one *Afo* (market day) to the next (Achebe, 1986).

Nwaka might have pulled such a support due to his position as one of the three persons in all the six villages that took the title of *Eru*, the highest in the land. He was also among the prosperous men, and hailed from a village reckoned as first in Umuaro. The people of Umuaro did just want war initially. That was why they sent emissaries to Okperi, with symbols of peace and war respectively, for the people

of Okperi to make a choice. Even after the death of Akukalia, the people of Umuaro would have left the matter there, but the use of language, engineered by Nwaka, continued exerting influence on them, until it culminated in war with Okperi. In this regard, Achebe (1986:26) states that:

“...there were others who, as the saying was, pulled out their hair and chewed it. They swore that they would not live and see Umuaro spat upon. They were, as before, led by Nwaka. He spoke with his usual eloquence and stirred many hearts”.

Among other things, Nwaka said, “We shall fight for our farmland and for the contempt Okperi has poured on us. Let us not listen to anyone trying to frighten us with the name of Ulu” (Achebe, 1986:28). Obviously, ‘anyone’, as he used it here, was in reference to Ezeulu. He also told them that if a man says yes, his *chi* (god) will also say yes. He further cited the example of the people of Aninta who carried their deity to the boundary between them and their neighbor and set it ablaze, when it failed to protect them. This was the last straw that broke the camel’s back, and so the people of Umuaro went to war against Okperi.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Wittgenstein’s view is that language is analogous to games. This implies that meanings of words or languages are dependent on the uses made of them within the diverse human activities in life. From what happened in Umuaro and between Umuaro and Okperi, one can learn that Wittgenstein’s ‘meaning is use’ is a caution for people not to misuse words or jump into some abstract speculations based on misuse of words. Again, the meaning of a word rests on its use in context, not on its ideal referent outside of all possible contexts (Richter, 2004). Such misuse of words and consequent abstract speculation often lead to confusion. To avoid this, words should be used in ways conventionally accepted and approved by a linguistic community, thereby creating a sense of relevance among the members of the said community.

Language is a social practice, as argued by Wittgenstein, and understanding it as such would help in having clear and effective communication. One should also be conscious of one’s audience and craft one’s utterances accordingly. This was not the case with Akukalia, who used unwholesome words in his encounter with the people of Okperi, especially Ebo, whom he threatened to make eat shit. Those in authority and positions of power and influence are expected to make good choice of words, bearing in mind that their words can lead to peace or to war, as was the case with Ezeulu, Nwaka and Ogbufi Egonwanne in Chinua Achebe’s *Arrow of God*. This corroborates the view expressed by Barasa, Khasandi-Telewa and Ndambuki (2016:76) that “language is a powerful tool that people in leadership positions and those seeking power, particularly politicians, can use not only to communicate their policies and ideological positions, but also to manage and resolve conflicts”.

The study has shown that language has implications for peace or war, and has raised the awareness of this

through the analyses of the key concepts associated with Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language and some utterances in Chinua Achebe’s *Arrow of God*. Understanding this truth and putting it into practice, by making good choice language in every situation, will expectedly be a plus to people’s knowledge base and subsequently promote peace among individuals and communities. Practical steps in this direction include controlling one’s temper, avoiding use of derogative words, eschewing overly self-esteem, showing respect for the elders and being considerate of others. This is of particular importance in the present era, with its avowed freedom of speech, political tensions and struggle for supremacy. Mahatma Gandhi, whose 1942 speech engendered non-violent approach to political issues, understanding and cooperation that eventually led to India becoming an independent country in 1947 in a peaceful atmosphere, stands out as an icon in making appropriate choice of words and languages for peace.

Recommendations

For the betterment of the present as well as the future, the following recommendations are put forth:

1. Efforts should be intensified, especially in the educational institutions, in the study of language and its proper usage and understanding in various contexts.
2. Leaders and those in positions of authority at various levels are urged to emulate Mahatma Gandhi in their choice of words and languages.

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