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**DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI
ADICHIE'S ZIKORA**

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Abstract:

A short story is a compact narrative that often focuses on a single character or event, delivering a complete and impactful tale in a brief format. This paper focuses on the analysis of narrative and descriptive discourse in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's short story Zikora. It offers Adichie's Zikora as quintessential African Feminist writing, as it portrays the physical and mental vulnerability of a professional woman as a mother. The study shows the use of both language and silence as medium of communication by the protagonist Zikora.

Keywords: *Discourse, Discourse Analysis, Narrative Discourse, Descriptive Discourse, Silence, Sexism, etc.*

Discourse Analysis in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Zikora:

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a renowned Nigerian author, is celebrated for her ability to craft narratives that delve into complex human experiences, often interwoven with cultural contexts. The short story *Zikora* is written by Adichie which explores the life of its protagonist, Zikora, a Nigerian woman living in the United States. The story primarily revolves around Zikora's experiences during her pregnancy and childbirth, highlighting the cultural differences she faces as she navigates the health care system in America. The story delves into themes of identity, motherhood, and the clash of cultures, offering a glimpse into the challenges faced by immigrant women in a foreign land.

Narrative discourse is a literary term that refers to the way a story is told or narrated. It encompasses the various elements and techniques used by authors to convey a narrative to readers. It goes beyond mere plot and character that includes the structure, style, point of view, and other storytelling elements that shape the reader's experience.

Narrative Structure in narrative discourse includes the organization of the story, beginning, middle, and end. It involves the sequencing of events, flashbacks or non-linear storytelling methods that influence the reader's understanding of the narrative. In *Zikora*, the story starts with Zikora's labor day, takes the reader to her past life and ends abruptly. That makes the story a non-linear pattern as the protagonist Zikora's thought process flows back and forth of her life and it also involves flashback techniques through which the reader gets to know most of her life and the characters from her past life.



The choice of narrative perspective is crucial in shaping the discourse. First-person, second-person or third-person narration can significantly impact how readers engage with the story and perceive the characters. *Zikora*, has been written in first person narrative, as the protagonist Zikora is the narrator of the story. Adichie is known for creating complex and relatable characters. In *Zikora*, she likely employs vivid descriptions, internal monologues and dialogue to develop the protagonist and supporting characters.

Zikora describes each and every minute detail of the protagonist's journey into her motherhood which is fraught with emotions and challenges. As she experiences the physical and emotional changes in her pregnancy, Adichie vividly portray the complex inner world of a woman preparing to become to be a mother "I had prepared for pain but this was not mere pain. It was something like pain and different from pain. It sat like fire in my back, spreading to my thighs, squeezing and crushing my insides, pulling downward, spiraling" (Adichie, 05).

The tone and style of the narrator's voice contribute to the narrative discourse. The narrative voice can influence the reader's interpretation of events and characters in the text. The narrative voice of *Zikora* is characterized by a first-person view, providing readers with direct insight into the thoughts, emotions, and experiences of the protagonist. The story is told through Zikora's perspective, allowing readers to connect with her on a personal level and gain a deep understanding of her inner struggles and the complexities of her life as a Nigerian woman.

Another aspect of narrative discourse is dialogues; dialogues between characters are part of the narrative discourse. Authors use dialogue to convey information, create tension, and describe the conflict, to advance the plot and even to end the plot. Adichie skillfully portrays the dynamics between Zikora and her lover Kwame, revealing the strains and miscommunications that often accompany romantic partnerships. She assumes that, she and her boyfriend know each other very well which turns out to be false. "How well he knew me. It was real hummus or nothing for me, none of those flavors invented to appeal to the American obsession for variety. I read somewhere that love was about this, the nuggets of knowledge about our beloved that we so fluently hold" (Adichie, 13).

Narrative discourse involves the exploration of themes and the use of symbols and motifs that add depth and meaning to the story. These thematic elements can be woven into the narrative through various literary devices. One of the central themes in *Zikora* is the clash of cultures. Zikora is caught between her Nigerian heritage and the American healthcare system. Adichie deftly portrays the stark differences in birthing practices, emphasizing how cultural expectations and norms influence Zikora's choices during her pregnancy. "I'd read somewhere that maternal mortality was higher in America than anywhere else in the Western world or was it just higher for Black women? The subject had never really interested me. I'd felt at most a faraway concern, as though it was something that happened to other people. I should have paid more attention" (Adichie, 06).

In the above lines Zikora's anxiousness about maternal mortality can be seen, she worries more because she is a black woman in American society. The cultural tension serves as a lens through which the story explores issues of identity and belonging.

Identity is a recurring theme in Adichie's works and *Zikora* is no exception for it. As Zikora faces the challenges of motherhood and cultural dissonance, her sense of self is put to



the test. When Zikora gives birth to a boy, doctors talk about circumcising for which she responds saying, “You Americans may circumcise, but we don’t do barbarism here in Europe. The only reason it’s tolerated at all is so we don’t get called Islamophobic” (Adichie 18).

Readers witness her evolving self-perception and her attempts to reconcile her Nigerian identity with her life in America. Narrative discourse is the art of storytelling itself, encompassing all the elements that come together to create a cohesive and compelling narrative. It's a dynamic and creative aspect of literature that allows authors to craft stories that resonate with readers on multiple levels, making it a fundamental concept in the study and enjoyment of literature.

Descriptive discourse is a fundamental element of literature that allows authors to create vivid and immersive worlds for readers. It involves the use of detailed and evocative language to paint pictures, convey emotions and establish atmospheres within a narrative. In Adichie’s *Zikora*, descriptive discourse plays a vital role in creating a rich and immersive narrative. Adichie's skillful use of descriptive language brings the story's settings, characters, and emotions to life, allowing readers to vividly experience the world she has crafted.

In setting the story, Adichie meticulously describes the urban landscape of the United States, the sterile environment of the hospital, the modern and clinical appearance of the healthcare facilities. Zikora, the protagonist, is depicted with great attention to the details. Readers learn about her physical appearance, her clothing choices during her pregnancy and the changes she undergoes during pregnancy. “I yanked off my hospital gown, the flimsy blue fabric with its effete dangling ropes that gaped open at the back as if designed to humiliate” (Adichie, 05). These kinds of descriptions help readers connect with Zikora on a personal level, as they can imagine her vividly. The description of the supporting characters, such as the father of Zikora’s child Kwame and the medical professionals, brings their personalities and roles in the story to life.

Through her descriptive discourse in *Zikora*, Adichie creates a narrative that engages readers' senses and emotions. Her ability to paint detailed scenes, evoke strong emotions and convey cultural nuances through descriptive language enhances the reader's understanding of the characters and the complex themes explored in the story. It is a testament to her skill as a storyteller and her ability to transport readers into the world she has crafted. In the world of literature, words often take center stage, but it's the moments of silence that can be equally profound. Silence serves as a potent tool for conveying emotions, exploring themes and engaging readers in a deeper, more contemplative experience. This paper studies how silence is used as discourse in *Zikora* and its significance in storytelling.

Zikora, is a captivating narrative that subtly incorporates the profound language of silence into its discourse. Through the character of Zikora, Adichie weaves a tale that not only explores the complexities of motherhood, culture, and identity but also emphasizes the significance of what remains unspoken. Silence can be a powerful conduit for emotions. When characters remain silent in pivotal moments, it can speak volumes about their inner turmoil, fear, or love. It allows readers to connect with the characters on a visceral level, as they project their own feelings onto the unspoken words. Throughout the story, readers are privy to the inner world of Zikora. Yet, what are equally compelling are the emotions and thoughts that remain unexpressed. Adichie skillfully utilizes silence as a literary device to convey the depth



of Zikora's feelings. In moments of joy, pain and confusion, Zikora's silence becomes a canvas on which readers can project their own interpretations. Silence in *Zikora* conveys unsaid emotions, for example, the protagonist describes a different meaning behind her mother's scornful look each time. Also, through the silence of Kwame readers can understand his character that chooses silence as a tool for disagreement or fighting. Silence is a powerful tool in the realm of relationships. The interactions between Zikora and the father of her child Kwame are rife with unsaid words and unspoken truths. Adichie uses these moments of silence to convey the complexity of their relationship, allowing readers to decipher the nuances that underlie their interactions. Both Zikora and Kwame assume that they know each other when they are in a relationship but after the breakup Zikora recalls how Kwame was unaware of women's bodies. Zikora thought that they both are in the same boat when it comes to their future together plan, but it turns out to be a disappointment.

Silence becomes a metaphor for the uncharted territory of selfhood that Zikora navigates. Throughout the story it is an internal monologue that tells the reader about Zikora's life completely. Though she shares her feelings and emotions with her cousin Mmiliaku, she chooses to live with her own thoughts about her past and present life silently.

Adichie's *Zikora* is a masterful exploration of the profound language of silence within a narrative. Through the character of Zikora, Adichie invites readers to listen not only to the spoken words but also to the eloquence of silence. In the quiet spaces between words, readers find an opportunity to delve deeper into the rich tapestry of Zikora's life. Adichie's storytelling prowess lies not only in what she says but in what she leaves unsaid.

The narrative ties up loose end while leaving certain questions unanswered, allowing readers to interpret the story's implications and outcomes. The descriptive elements help to create a lasting impression of the characters and their world. The silences, in turn, resonate with the reader, inviting them to ponder the unspoken emotions and the intricacies of human relationships. Overall, the interplay of narrative, description, and silence in the conclusion of *Zikora* leaves a powerful and thought-provoking impact.

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