

Resolving crises through literary diplomacy: A case study of the *Trojan war will not take place* by Jean Giraudoux

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Abstract

*Crisis resolution is increasingly becoming a critical tool for nation-building and sustainability. Gone are the days when nations had to go to war to establish their power and supremacy over other states and nations. The recent attack of Ukraine by Russian is just an isolated case of when diplomatic negotiations have temporarily failed in averting crises of such a magnitude. Companies and institutions are now resorting to finding alternative ways to arrive at a consensus in times of crises. An analysis of Giraudoux's literary piece helps us to understand the role of language in conflict resolution. This paper seeks to find out how literary language can be useful in crises resolution. Furthermore, it seeks to examine the role and influence of literary language in a diplomatic discourse. To test these hypotheses, we focused our analyses on some selected dialogues from the literary classic: *The Trojan war will not take place* (Tiger at the Gates) written by Jean Giraudoux. We used methodologies and theories in discourse analysis and snowball sampling to gather our data, and to arrive at a conclusion, we used theories in literary pragmatics to analyse our data. After a careful analysis, we found out that literary language plays a fundamental role in crisis resolution. Furthermore, we also discovered that the intonations used in a diplomatic negotiation play a critical role in the outcome of the negotiation.*

Key words: Crisis resolution, language, negotiation, literary diplomacy, discourse analysis

Résumé

La résolution des crises devient de plus en plus un outil essentiel pour la construction des nations. L'époque où les nations devaient s'engager dans une guerre pour établir leur pouvoir et leur suprématie sur les autres états et nations est dépassée. La récente invasion de l'Ukraine par la Russie n'est qu'un cas isolé de l'échec temporaire de la négociation diplomatique pour le redressement d'un conflit entre nations. Les entreprises et les institutions recourent désormais à la recherche de voies alternatives pour parvenir à un consensus en temps de crise. Une analyse de la pièce littéraire de Giraudoux nous aide à comprendre le rôle du langage dans la résolution des conflits. Cet article cherche à découvrir comment le langage littéraire peut être utile dans la résolution des crises. En outre, il cherche à examiner le rôle et l'influence de la langue littéraire dans un discours diplomatique. Pour tester nos hypothèses, nous avons sélectionnés quelques dialogues du classique littéraire : La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu de Jean Giraudoux pour nos analyses. Nous avons utilisé des méthodologies et des théories dans l'analyse du discours et l'échantillonnage en boule de neige pour rassembler nos données, et pour arriver à une conclusion, nous avons utilisé des théories dans la pragmatique littéraire pour analyser nos données. Après une analyse profonde, nous avons découvert que la langue littéraire joue un rôle fondamental dans la résolution des crises. De plus, nous avons également découvert que les intonations utilisées dans une négociation diplomatique jouent un rôle essentiel dans le résultat de la négociation.

Mots clés : Résolution de crise, langage, négociation, diplomatie littéraire, analyse du discours

1. Introduction

Globally, crisis has led to the destruction of life and property. The impact of crisis has destroyed homes and disintegrated families. Furthermore, it has led to the destruction of economies around the world and has brought countries to the brink of total destruction. In fact, the tabloids and news outlets are constantly showing the effects of crisis on our lives. Countries and governments around the world have to deal with crisis almost on a daily basis. Companies and institutions are constantly battling to salvage one crisis after another. Individuals, on the other hand have to learn how to avoid a mid-life crisis. The enormous destruction to life and property occasioned by the recent invasion of Ukraine by Russia and its debilitating economic ramifications for practically the entire world is a classic example.

Resolving crisis has become necessary to both individuals and governments **across** the world. This is chiefly because crisis

resolution has become a fundamental part of our current society. For instance, the global Covid-19 pandemic affected almost every country in the world. The discourse on the current global pandemic has proven that language and communication can play a critical role in resolving crisis. In this paper, we seek to discover how literary language can be useful in resolving crisis. We also seek to find out the role of literary language in diplomatic discourse. To achieve this goal, we decided to use the snowball sampling method to collect our data. To analyse the data, we adopted the contextual discourse analysis approach, using mainly literary pragmatic theories in our analysis. This methodology helped us to analyse the contextual meaning behind the words used.

2. Scope of the study

To constitute our data, we decided to focus on Jean Giraudoux's literary piece: *La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu* (*The Trojan War will not take place*). We chose to sample this literary piece for a number of reasons. Firstly, the book highlights the significance of language and diplomacy. The author wrote the book in 1935 in between two World Wars: World War I and World War II. The context of the book underscores the importance of diplomacy to avert conflict. Secondly, the author wrote seemingly to foretell the possible occurrence of another World War if global leaders do not work towards establishing peaceful resolution of crisis. Moreover, Giraudoux's work highlights the baseless arguments and actions, which sometimes lead to these global crises. This is exemplified in Paris kidnapping the wife of Menelas, the king of Sparta. Furthermore, he stresses on the power of language and diplomacy through the negotiations between Troy and Greece in an attempt to resolve the impasse brought about the capture of Menela's wife. In order to highlight the importance of diplomatic negotiations in the book, we decided to test our methodology on the labour impasse between the National Labour Commission (NLC) and the University Teachers' Association of Ghana (UTAG) which commenced in July 2021 to examine the contextual role of language in the negotiation process. In the end, we seek to look at the actual meaning behind the words used by both parties. We also seek to discover how diplomatic elements can be integrated into literary language for effective communication and

negotiation. Our research seeks to prove that when this integration is achieved, it would greatly enhance the effectiveness of the communication process and thus help; to resolve crisis.

It is worthy to note that language has always been a part of crisis resolution. (Frye 1964; p.27) in his essay *The Educated Imagination* stated the following: “I cannot fathom how the study of literature and language could be separated from democracy which forms the basis of our society.”¹⁰⁵ (Nicholson 1997; p.4) underscores this viewpoint when he states that: “Diplomacy is neither an invention nor side project of any particular political system but rather it constitutes the relationship between man and his environment.”¹⁰⁶. In fact, since the days of Shakespeare, Racine and Molière, language has constituted the basis of the communication process. Furthermore, it is through language (both verbal and non-verbal) that communication is made possible. This is demonstrated by the fact that from the beginning of time, language has always been used as a medium of creation and reconstruction of the society. (Frye 1964; p.27) highlights this point by reaffirming that “He who does not know anything about literature is ignorant about the society in which he lives in”¹⁰⁷. Language, be it written or spoken, is usually the first option for negotiation and communication. The proper and effective use of language is therefore paramount to any negotiation process.

3. Definition of operational terms

Before we start our analysis, it is important to define certain key words in our abstract. Firstly, it is important to explain what we mean by literary diplomacy. Literary diplomacy is a term that seeks to combine literary language with diplomatic language. The objective is to ascertain how literary language can be effectively used in diplomatic discourse. Resolving any form of crisis borders on bringing two opposing parties into an agreement. For that to happen, there is the

¹⁰⁵Northrop, F. (1964). *The Educated Imagination*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press

¹⁰⁶Harold, N. (1997). *Diplomacy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

¹⁰⁷,Northrop,, F. (1964). *The Educated Imagination*, *ibid*, p.27

need for both parties to adopt a communication approach that will be useful in resolving the impasse between them.

4. Research questions

To guide our research, we asked the question: ‘How do two opposing parties who are not professional diplomats or negotiators communicate effectively to reach a win-win agreement using literary language? This question actually highlights our main research question for this research.

5. Methodology

Using the snowballing technique, we sampled some dialogues from Giraudoux’s literary piece: *The Trojan War will not take place*. The objective of this sampling was to test for elements of diplomacy in the dialogues sampled. We then sought to test for elements of tactful communication using Constanze Villar’s elements of diplomatic speeches. Villar proposes that in order to ascertain diplomatic elements within a text one has to consider six (6) main factors as follows:

- A diplomatic text must be able to hide the original intent being communicated.
- A diplomat should not respond directly to embarrassing questions.
- A diplomat should not seek to draw attention to himself through an argument.
- A diplomat must not use shocking statements when talking to his interlocutor.
- A diplomat should always try to find a way to say the truth even in difficult situations without offending anyone.
- A diplomat should be able to hide his true intentions, especially to avoid creating tension during the negotiation process.

These guidelines will serve as our litmus test to examine our sampled dialogues in Giraudoux's work. They will also serve as a guide in analysing some selected dialogues between the NLC and UTAG, which will help us draw a firm conclusion on our research question and validate our hypothesis. It is worthy to note that our study will focus mainly on the pragmatic analyses of the chosen text. That is, we will be focusing on the contextual, textual and the functional meaning of our selected data. We used theories in literary pragmatics to study the contextual meaning of words used in our chosen dialogue. (Cutting, 2002, p.2) states that: "Both pragmatics and discourse analyses study the meaning of words in context, analysing the parts of meaning that can be explained by knowledge of the physical and social world and the socio-psychological factors influencing communication as well as the knowledge of the time and place in which the words are uttered or written."¹⁰⁸ (Cutting 2002; p. 3) further states that "Literary pragmatics focuses on the meaning of words in interaction and how interactors communicate more information than the words they use. Throughout our analysis, we sought to highlight how words used by lead negotiators actually communicate more than what is actually being communicated graphically. Most negotiators tend to use the strategy of communicating beyond words used that is what is said without literally saying it explicitly. In fact, in most times the users of these words are not actually aware of the full implication of the words they are using. In such instances, the author leaves room for the reader to make his own judgement. This style of literary write up gives room for literary critics to properly analyse these literary texts without any biases. The literary texts sampled for this analysis aligns with this style of literary write-ups.

6. Analysis and presentation of results

To start our analysis, we will focus mainly on the discourse between Hector and Ulyse and then analyse the conversation between Hector and Oiax. It is worthy to note that Hector, the heir apparent, is the representative of Troy at the negotiation table. He seeks to

¹⁰⁸ Cutting, J. (2002). *Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis*. London and New York: Routledge

negotiate a peaceful deal between his country and the Greeks. These negotiations have become needful because his younger brother, Paris, has kidnapped Helen, the wife of the king of the Greeks. The Greeks are threatening to wage a bloody war if Helen is not released. Hector who doubles as the commander of the Trojan army knows very well the effect of such a war and consequently does everything, he can to avert it.

At this stage, we are focusing on the diplomatic negotiation between the representatives of Troy and Greece. We will first look at the structure of the negotiation process and then examine the content of the negotiation process before we draw a conclusion. Firstly, let us look at the structure of the negotiation process. The negotiation starts with the introduction of the negotiation teams with each party choosing a lead negotiator. This is highlighted when Ulysse, the lead negotiator of Greece, introduces his team as follows.

- I am Ulysse
- And this is Anchise. Behind him is, the Thrace, the bridge, and that open hand is Tauride
- Too many people for a diplomatic conversation (*La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*, p.197)

Here, we clearly see an introduction of the negotiating teams and the lead negotiators for both parties. In fact, the principles of negotiation demand that the lead negotiator introduces himself and his team with calm and confidence. This phase of the negotiation process is very important as it sets the tone for the success or failure of the negotiation process. How a negotiator starts the negotiation process is as important as how he ends it. Starting the negotiation process with a calm confidence is important because it sets the tone for a cordial exchange of the two parties. Starting a conversation with a hostile expression or a hostile outlook could potentially block the negotiation process and hinder the participation of the parties involved. This is exemplified in Giraudoux's literary piece when Oiax joins the negotiation process. It is worthy to note that without any formal protocols, Oiax demands an immediate release of Helen with compensation. In fact, he does so with blatant insults as follows:

- Where is he? Where is he hiding? A coward! A Trojan!

- Who are you looking for?
- I'm looking for Paris.
- I am his brother.
- I see that Greece has sent us negotiators. What do you want?
- War!
- Nothing to hope for. Why do you want her?
- Your brother kidnapped Hélène. (*La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*, p.197)

In this exchange, we clearly see that what happens here is in direct contrast to the opening style of Hector, which is a more welcoming approach. We see how Oiax opens the negotiation with an insult, literally using derogatory terms like 'coward' to describe his opponent. Now let us look at how the lead negotiator of Troy replies to these remarks. Hector replies Oiax by identifying himself.

- I'm looking for Paris...
- I am his brother.

Hector does not give a hostile reply but instead he makes a subtle remark and asks a question to inquire about their demands. It is important to note that even though Hector is fully aware of the situation, he pretends he has no clue about it. He replies Oiax saying: 'What do you want?' and to this question, Oiax replies without mincing words: 'War!' In this particular dialogue, we see two kinds of negotiation styles namely: the hostile negotiation style and the pacific negotiation style. In fact, each of these negotiation styles has its own merits and demerits. Obviously, we see that Hector tries to avoid the confrontational approach. This is a very important stance in negotiation especially when the opposing party adopts a hostile posture. Self-mastering during the negotiation process is a very crucial element in negotiation. Emotional intelligence is needed here to calm down the situation. This approach demands a lot of tact and self-control. It is worthy to note that the use of tact and the art mastering one's emotions constitute two important elements in the negotiation process. We see these two crucial elements at play when Hector tries to explore these qualities during the negotiation process. We also see that when Oiax accuses Paris of kidnapping Helen, Hector does not deny this fact but rather replies to this accusation by not avoiding the

word ‘kidnapping’ in his response. He replies by not affirming that Helen was kidnapped. He rather affirms by saying that Helen accepted voluntarily to come to Troy. Obviously, accepting an invitation cannot be described as kidnapping. This is a diplomatic strategy usually used to deflect attention from the main issue and calm tensions down. According to (Patterson et al 2009, p.2), the negotiation process follows five main phases namely:

1. The preparation phases
2. The discussion of the problem phase
3. The proposition of the solution phase
4. The negotiation of a compromise phase
5. The agreement phase¹⁰⁹

From our initial analysis, one could realize that we have already identified the first two stages in our analysis. This clearly shows that these critical elements of diplomacy are enshrined in literary discourse. Let us now look at how Oiax responds to Hector’s diplomatic strategy:

- A Greek does what she wants. She doesn't have to ask your permission. This is a case of war
- We can offer you an apology
- The Trojans are not accepting an apology. We will only leave here with your declaration of war (*La guerre de Troie n’aura pas lieu*, p. 183)

Clearly, we see here that Oiax is still hostile in his approach and still wants to declare war at all cost. Furthermore, he adopts the strongman approach in this negotiation process and tries to project the superior powers and values of his country as against the country of the opposing party. “A Greece does what she wants. She doesn’t ask permissions. This is war.” Noticing that the opposing party is still angry, Hector decides to offer an apology to calm him down but when

¹⁰⁹ Patterson, K. ; Grenny, J. et al (2009). *Conversations Cruciales*, cited in *Les éléments clés d’une négociation réussie*. SA : Ixelles Publishing

comes to realize his diplomatic strategy was not working as expected, he tries to modify his strategy by throwing an equally hostile challenge at Oiax, daring him to declare war himself. “If you want war, declare it yourself”. (*La guerre de Troie n’aura pas lieu*, p.183). This statement by Hector actually aggravates the already tensed negotiation process. Oiax responds to this dare by saying they were going to declare war that same evening. “Great, we are declaring war tonight” (*La guerre de Troie n’aura pas lieu*, p. 183). Obviously, Hector knew Oiax was just bluffing and that he could not possibly declare war, but he wanted to show some strength to counter the hostile strategy adopted by Oiax.

It is worthy to note that bluffing is one key negotiation strategy that is often used during the negotiation process often to project one’s strength. This strategy is usually used to drive concessions and compel opposing parties to give in. Bluffing usually involves putting the opposing party under some amount of fear in order to get him to compromise his position and concede defeat. This is exactly what Oiax tried to do with Hector. Interesting, this strategy did not achieve the desired results as Hector nullifies the bluff of Oiax by challenging him to declare a war. A critical look at this particular negotiation exchange between Hector and Oiax reveals that a negotiation style can backfire if not used with consideration. Here, Hector calls out the bluff of Oiax by telling him he is a liar. Obviously, Hector, who seems to be more strategic in his approach knows that one cannot just declare war without recourse to mediation. “You are a liar; you cannot declare war. No island will follow you if they know that we are not responsible” (*La guerre de Troie n’aura pas lieu*, p.183). So, one may ask, how does this literary work of Jean Giraudoux dovetail into the recurrent impasse between the National Labour Commission (NLC) of Ghana and the University Teachers Associations (UTAG)? We would seek at this stage to examine the similarities between the negotiation strategies adopted in the literary work of Giraudoux and negotiation in the context of modern society.

7. UTAG –NLC impasse in the context of giroudoux’s work

The impasse between the University Teachers’ Association (UTAG) and the Government of Ghana(GoG) represented by the National Labour Commission (NLC), the Fair Wages and Salaries Commission (FWSC), the Ministry of Finance (MoF), the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations (MoELR), and the Ministry of Education(MoE) is a clear demonstration of the relevance of literary diplomacy in negotiations for an amicable solution to a problem as exemplified in Giroudoux’s work “The Trojan war will not take place’ . Public sector Ghanaian university teachers declared a nationwide strike on January 10, 2022 attributing their action to a worsening condition of service. The strike action dragged on to February 2022 after which it was temporarily suspended for negotiations to restart. I would be recalled that UTAG had embarked upon a similar industrial action in 2021 and negotiations ended in a stalemate.

Our analyses of some statements from the literary piece have revealed that tact and diplomacy are essential ingredients for averting the escalation of conflicts. That is to say that even when one party in a negotiation speaks with anger, the other ought to calm down in order to reach a reasonable consensus. This phenomenon explains why Hector, the Trojan representative, toned down his language in spite of the provocative language employed by Ulysee, the Greek negotiator. Indeed, if all the two lead negotiators had addressed each other with disdain, the Trojan War would have probably taken place and the story would have had to be re-written all over again.

We share the view that the UTAG-GoG labour problem escalated and ended in a strike action by the former on August 2, 2021 partly because none of the two parties adhered to the principles of diplomatic negotiations as demonstrated by Hector. UTAG declared a nationwide strike following a disagreement between it and the Government of Ghana in respect of the conditions of service of the former. It is worthy to note that the NLC which should have played the role of a neutral arbiter rather opened fire by going to court to secure an ex-parte injunction against the Association to seek contempt charges and sanctions against the leadership of UTAG as expressed by Myjoyonline as follows:

The National Labour Commission has secured an interlocutory injunction against the University Teachers Association of Ghana (UTAG). The injunction restricts the leadership of UTAG, its Executives, officers, members, agents and servants from continuing with the current industrial action¹¹⁰.

This act by the Commission seemed to have further infuriated members of UTAG who categorically refused to attend an invitation by the Commission who later realized that negotiation with the striking workers was the way forward towards bringing the impasse to a resolution. Leadership of UTAG vehemently rejected NLC invitation in these words:

Therefore, we would not be able to honour your invitation as we would want the court process to end before any meeting...¹¹¹

The inference from the court action of the NLC is that they were not ready to sit with UTAG to resolve their disagreements. It again speaks of a certain level of anger with which the Commission approached the issue under review. It must be stressed that diplomatic negotiations as exemplified in our book of reference is relevant even in the courts where issued are perused from the perspective of legalities. This was clearly proven when the Presiding Judge at the Labour Court 1 Division of the High Court, Justice Frank Rockson Aboadwe, advised the feuding parties to meet and resolve their differences as reported by Citinews as follows:

The High Court's Labour Division, 1, has advised the National Labour Commission (NLC), and the University Teachers Association of Ghana (UTAG), to settle the stalemate over their industrial action out of Court¹¹².

The judge was implicitly advising the two parties to dialogue instead of always running to the courts for the settlement of differences, reinforcing the need to resort to negotiations instead of tearing each other apart. This gives credence to the need to avoid rancour and resort

¹¹⁰ UTAG cannot honour National Labour Commission's invitation until court process ends. <https://www.myjoyonline.com/utag-cannot-honour-national-labour-commissions-invitation-until-court-process-ends/?param=://www.myjoyonline.com/nlc-secures-interlocutory-injunction-against-utag/?param=> / Retrieved on August 16, 2021

¹¹² Seek out of court settlement – Court advises NLC, UTAG <https://citinewsroom.com/2021/08/seek-out-of-court-settlement-court-advises-nlc-utag/> Retrieved on August 16, 2021

to resolving issues by talking diplomatically among one another when there are challenges to be resolved.

Another key element worthy of mention is that in literary negotiations, it is of utmost relevance for the erring party to recognize their mishap to calm down the party that the said offence has affected. We observe, for example, that Hector apologizes to the Trojans for keeping Hélène and this seems to have cooled the tempers of the Greeks who had suffered the consequences of the capture of the spouse of their king and this, in a way, paved the way for negotiations to commence. This important technique appeared to have been missing in the UTAG-GoG negotiations as the NLC showed its reluctance to apologize to the striking teachers even after realizing that it acted in bad faith by seeking an ex-parte interlocutory injunction against the industrial action. This act by the NLC further did not sit well with UTAG and this partly explains why the controversy raged on for substantial period of time. Mention should also be made of the flouting of the said negotiation principle by UTAG when the Association refused to acknowledge the illegality of the strike it had declared by not notifying the Commission seven clear days before the start of the industrial action. If this had happened, the long battle could have been curtailed. It is equally necessary to mention that respect is valued in **negotiations** to resolve crises as seen in Giroudoux's literary piece. We observe that members of UTAG felt disrespected as seen in the following words by an executive member of UTAG-University of Ghana chapter, Prof. Ransford Gyampo:

He may continue to treat us like rags, but when there is a mobilization of the anger of University Teachers in a manner that creates a praetorian situation, the bucks would stop with you in dealing with the mess. A simple survey on the various campuses would give a sense of how bitter and angry they are, for the disrespectful manner in which they have been treated over the years¹¹³.

¹¹³No Progress with Negotiation; Ken Ofori Atta Disrespecting UTAG - Prof Gyampo Tells Akufo Addo https://www.operanewsapp.com/gh/en/share/detail?news_id=d7c1d8a0f7187c342cd067. Retrieved on September, 18 2021 Retrieved on August 16, 2021

This was in reference to the failure of agencies representing the State especially the Finance Ministry to attend meetings scheduled to discuss the way forward for resolving the crises between the Government of Ghana and the University Teachers Association. This supposed underestimation of the opposing side could aggravate matters as we witnessed during the impasse. What is implied in the above citation is that the teachers were marginalized by the representatives of Government.

It is essential to mention that good faith is priceless when it comes to diplomatic negotiations. That is to say that what has been agreed by negotiators ought to be binding on them as spelt out in the document. We share the opinion that the decision by UTAG not to comply with the court's directive to call off its strike action pending negotiations with Government smacks of lawlessness and breach of trust, an act which has the propensity to drag on conflicts which is what was witnessed during the impasse under consideration.

8. conclusion

This paper set out to investigate the relevance of literary language in diplomatic negotiations aimed at brokering peace among feuding parties. Deploying the snowball sampling technique, we selected some negotiation dialogues from Jean Giraudoux's literary piece titled '*La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*' and subjected them to Constanze Villar's elements of diplomatic speeches. After a pragmatic and discourse analyses of the selected dialogues, it emerged that literary language plays a key role in crisis resolution as seen in the encounters between Ojax, and Hector, and Ulyssee who represent the Greece and Troy respectively.

To be able to practically test our hypotheses, we undertook discourse and pragmatic analyses of the UTAG versus the NLC impasse within the context of the literary work under review. It emerged from these analyses that one of the causes of the protracted impasse between the two bodies could be attributed to the exhibition of a hostile attitude towards each other, absence of reconciliatory speeches by the parties, as well as bullying of one party by the other as was seen when the NLC tried to use the judiciary as a way of cowing UTAG into silence.

The study shows that these attitudes rather inflame passion and escalate conflicts.

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