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Language as a Vehicle in The Quest for Identity in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart

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General Introduction

General Introduction

Language is the fundamental feature of humankind, a powerful means of interaction and one of the major determinants of identity. It plays a very important role in the deconstruction/construction of identities, then, and it is from one's speech or language that one is identified. Therefore, the quest for identity through language is one of the most significant aspects of every society. It shows what one has in common with others as well as it shows what makes one especially different from the other.

Within his context, Chinua Achebe depicts his cultural identity and his people's through his writings. Discussing his novel *Things Fall Apart* allows us to understand the countless portrayals of identity and the effect of colonialism upon that identity.

However, In order to study these issues, one has to know that Postcolonial literature deals basically with the period of colonialism and its aftermath. In dealing with the identity and the language of the colonized society, this type of literature deals with the huge challenge of building a national identity following a harmful experience and how writers talk about and celebrate that language and identity, often reclaiming it from, and maintaining strong connections with the colonizer.

Therefore, this work will discuss the vast concepts of language and identity and how they are shaped and constructed through Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

Identity is an important aspect of understanding the self and identification with society and the rest of the world. It is obvious that characters and mainly protagonists in postcolonial novels are often pictured as struggling to figure out who they are, and attempting to find their place in between the old native world and the imperial world.

Thus, language and identity are always present in the works of postcolonial writers, and this is the fruit of their personal experience as well as the experience of their society,

their attempt is to decolonize their literature to free themselves from the chains of the imperial powers.

Thus, this work will focus on this specific topic of the use of language as a vehicle for the quest for identity in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. It is with this understanding that this work aims at:

- Investigating how Achebe has been able to use language as a means of quest for identity in his novel *Things Fall Apart*.
- Finding out the kind of identity that the use of language in *Things Fall Apart* has created about Achebe.
- Describing Achebe's decision to write the novel in English to present the African identity rather than his native language.

The language of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is perhaps the most frequently discussed aspects of his works, partly because the language of postcolonial writers is itself a hotly disputed subject. Despite the opposition of many critics and writers to the use of European languages in postcolonial works Achebe has successfully demonstrated in his novel to date that English can be appropriated to communicate African experiences. The leading research questions that this work proposes to discuss are:

1. How does Achebe create a “New English” to convey the sense of the Igbo language while maintaining Standard English?
2. How he reclaims Nigerian identity through his novel *Things Fall Apart*.

Thus, this work is set out to test the following hypotheses:

1. writing in English, the language of the colonizer, Achebe’s stated goal was to create “new” and more African English. He integrated Igbo words and proverbs into the narrative

in order to record and preserve African oral traditions and to subvert the colonialist language and culture.

2. Chinua Achebe regularly evokes the cultural image of the African race and identity which negates the colonial representation. He affirms that African history is not an empty page, but it is rich with heritage.

Moreover, Chinua Achebe in his book entitled *Morning Yet on Creation Day* states that the African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out English which is at once universal and most able to carry his peculiar experience (389).

Furthermore, Achebe's mother tongue was the Igbo language. In fact, to him the English language was secondary in so far as he recalls, he was punished to ask a question in the Igbo language at school (Ohaeto,30). Thus, by using English, Achebe presents a new voice coming out of Africa, talking about the African experience in a world-wide language in order to bring out his message best.

So, this research adopts the descriptive method in order to deal with the issue of Achebe's use of language as a means of quest for identity. It takes a step towards Chinua Achebe's books as a remarkable step, then, it uses the secondary sources from similar studies such as textbooks, online sources and the electronic media. However, this study highlights the postcolonial theory as the appropriate theory that examine the ways in which writers from colonized countries attempt to articulate their identities and reclaim them from the colonizers.

Subsequently, the framework of this research is carried out through three main chapters, each chapter dealing with some particular points with regard to the topic under investigation .The first chapter is about a theoretical background and key concepts related

to the postcolonial literature, as well as historical foundations related to the issues of language and identity, at the end of this chapter the reader will take a general overview about the post colonial literature. Then, the second chapter is about Achebe's use of language as a means of quest for identity in his *Things Fall Apart*. Also, it contains a study of Achebe's use of English, Pidgin English and Igbo language within the novel. As such, it provides the reader with knowledge about the Igbo identity. Next, the third chapter deals with the analysis of the main aspects of Chinua Achebe's novel.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated

To my father's soul.

To my beloved mother, who taught me that the best kind of knowledge to have is which is learned for its own sake.

To my dearest brother Sayah, who has been a constant source of support and encouragement during the challenges of graduate school and life.

To my brother Kamel, who stands by me with his encouragement and financial support all through my education.

To my loving sisters, Hanane and Hayat.

To my dearest aunt Amel, who leads me through the valley of darkness with light of hope and support.

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SARA.

Abstract

The issues of language and identity are very prominent themes in postcolonial literature. The exploration of the postcolonial writers as Chinua Achebe in terms of the depiction of their cultural identities and of their people's reveals the culture of the postcolonial writers. These writers tackle the influence of decolonization, language, and identity. Their attempt is to reconstruct identity or to reinvent a new one. In the discussion of the works of Chinua with his personal views on an identity question we will see how he views this subject matter as a postcolonial writer and from a personal perspective, and also through his novel *Things Fall Apart*. Moreover, language is a fundamental characteristic of every human society. The language one speaks tells much about one's identity with regards to where the person comes from. In every society, individuals and groups of persons would like to be differentiated from others, and in that effect, identity comes to play. So, this study highlights the topic of post colonialism and its relation with language and identity, and it also discusses the issues regarding the use of language as a means of quest for identity in *Things Fall Apart*. However, at the end of the research, it is discovered that Achebe has been able to use language as a quest for identity in his novel.

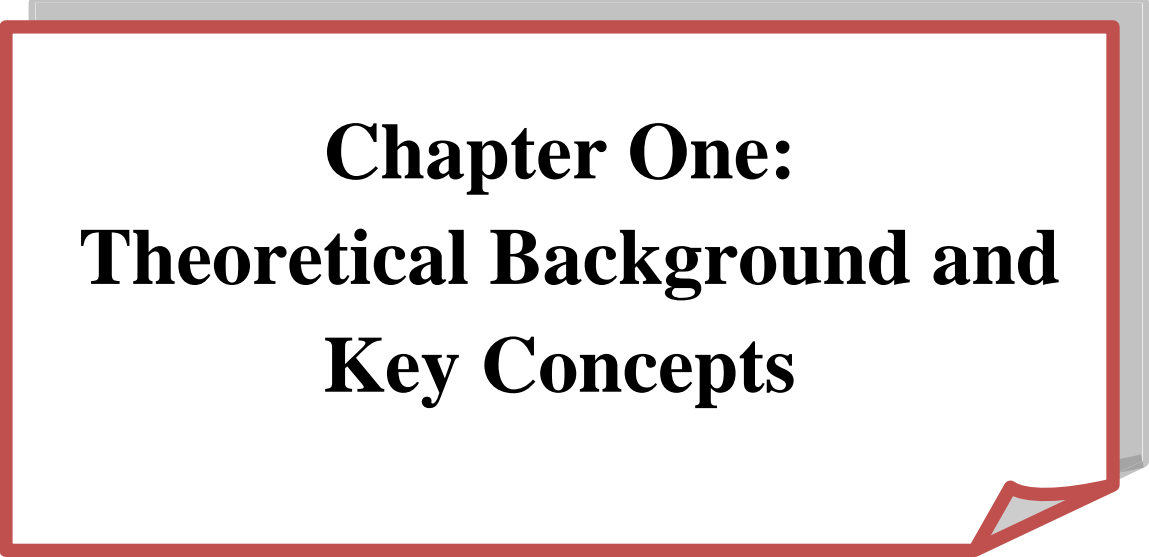
Keywords: Language, Identity, Postcolonial Literature, *Things Fall Apart*

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**Chapter One:
Theoretical Background and
Key Concepts**

The scope of postcolonial literature has been a very wide but controversial one. It is debatable, not only to the core topics that it deals with, but also regarding the value of the term postcolonial in itself. So to understand postcolonial literature and its contexts, one has to understand its background first.

So, in this chapter, the first elements to be dealt with are the theoretical background concerning the field of postcolonial literature and the post colonial theory, then, we are going to see how different scholars perceive this idea in different ways and try to find out a common ground between them. Thus, after dealing with the key notion of postcolonial literature, we are going to deal with the postcolonial criticism so as to determine the size of this field. After going through the overall core of this field, the work will also deal with a general overview of the link between postcolonial literature and language and identity to frame our work.

A. Definitions and Historical Foundations of Postcolonial Literature:

Post colonialism in Africa refers to the era between 1960 and 1970. Many authors during this time, and even during colonial times, reflected their concerns regarding the political and social conditions of their countries. Much of early postcolonial writings reflected a sense of freedom and identity in which it marked the beginning of a major change in African intellectual and literary development.

Moreover, Postcolonial studies obtained popularity in England during the 1960s with the foundation of Commonwealth literature in the United States. Because postcolonial writers are studied by and read most often by Western audiences, their works are often seen as being representative of the Third World. African writers are themselves very aware of this gap between texts that are accessible to the West and those that remain in Africa.

Then, the language matter became a central concern with many African writers in the years following decolonization, including Chinua Achebe, who agrees with many

writers who support African-language literature on one point that an African writer must write for a social purpose. In contrast to western writers who create art for art's sake, any African writers Create works set one mission in mind to re-establish their own national culture in the postcolonial era.

A. Post colonial Theory:

The post colonial theory does not exist only in the field of post colonial studies, but also in the field of globalization. Ania Loomba in criticizing the postcolonial theory for being so dependent on post-structuralist states that this theory insists on the idea of “multiple histories” which blurs the mechanisms by which these histories work together. She also criticizes it for changing emphasis from locations and institutions to individuals and their subjectivities which is due to its reliance on literary and cultural criticism and post-structuralism, she postulates that post-structuralism is the reason behind the weaknesses of the post colonial theory (59).

Postcolonial theory has changed literary studies in the past three decades. By turning to topics such as decolonization, language and representation. It aims to answer questions about the notions of language, home, identity and so on, on the basis that the colonizer wants to achieve his control and effect on those notions through the process of knowing the other. Postcolonial theory also aims to account the lasting effects that colonialism has on civilizations, not just recovering past world, but looking at how the world can move past the state of colonialism and work towards creating a better future.

Accordingly, the idea of a postcolonial theory comes out of the incapacity of the existing European theory to handle the complexity and cultural diversity of postcolonial writings. Many theorists and critics see that the point that gives postcolonial theory, its strength is its comparative methodology and its way of viewing the world in a hybridized view. Ashcroft Bill proclaims that one has to bear in mind that postcolonial theory cannot

be seen as using the other European theories as contexts in its development. They say that the European theories form the conditions of the development of post-colonial theory in its contemporary form and the determinants of much of its present nature and content (153), but this fact, according to them, maybe somehow dangerous to postcolonial theory because European theories have the tendency to reincorporate post-colonial culture into a new Universalist model.

Moreover, Lazarus Neil states that some critics want the postcolonial theory to talk about two aspects: the environment of colonization and the way it has functioned, and the role of decolonization as a specific narrative of liberation. But they say that postcolonial theory has failed to do so because of its close relation to post-structuralism, and thus, because it has separated literature from politics and economy. Other critics, however, think that the relation of postcolonial theory to post-structuralism and post-modernism strengthened its position in the modern world system. (02)

C. Literature and African literature:

At the phase of our search for language as a vehicle for the identity of the African literature, we shall establish what constitutes literature in general and African literature in particular.

However, Literature is a work of art about human society to which literary artists belong. Through the work of literature, the literary artist reflects the society back to the man who may be unconscious of certain events, activities shaping his life. Hence, literature is primarily about man and his society.

Thus, Achebe states that African literature is in the vanguard of helping the continent to regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement and let the African know that he is not just as good as the next man, but

that he is much better. But before celebrating the merits of African literature, it is pertinent to establish what constitutes African Literature (105).

Moreover, Scholars of various hues have postulated on what African literature is and what it should be. Chinweizu states that African literatures are works done for the African audience, by Africans and in African languages whether written or oral (56). Thus, African literature presupposes the existence of the ancient African literary tradition. However, there is a flaw in seeing African literature just as works done for the African audience.

However, Africa had no literature by 1874. Through the writings of literary artists like Chinua Achebe, we now know with all certainty that before the incursion of the white man into Africa, the natives had flourishing civilization, culture and tradition which were celebrated in their myths, proverbs, languages, religious rituals, songs and poetry.

Then, that literary activities were going on in the African continent before the advent of colonialism and missionary activities is not in doubt. But they were performing the literary activities as an African thing is doubtful. Each ethnic nationality was performing her arts in her distinct indigenous languages as an autonomous community whose members shared common cultural identity. The indigenous tribes that constitute what is known as Africa today were doing their things which were essential to their respective cultures and languages, quite oblivious of what obtained in other parts of the continent (Kunene 316, Adejunmobi 589).

Furthermore, African indigenous languages were subjugated and suppressed by European languages, especially, English, French and Portuguese, the only option available to the few emerging African educated elite was to adopt one of the European languages in which he was educated to express himself. The new languages began to be used as a tool of communication not only in everyday life but also in literary creations. Though written in foreign languages, the

emerging literatures were not designated as English, French or Portuguese literatures because they were written by Africans. In this way, what was later identified as African literature began to evolve gradually.

D. Critical Approaches to Postcolonial literature:

In the scope of critical literature, Figueira states that there is no clear agreement among scholars on how to approach postcolonial texts or what makes the canon of postcolonial criticism. She claims that with the definitions of postcolonial criticism which we have at hands, we can understand the reason behind this disagreement. For this reason, we shall deal with a sample of these definitions to make the latter idea clear. Ashcroft et Billstate that postcolonial criticism covers all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day (31).

Thus, postcolonial criticism emerges from the assumption to anthropological studies of art. It identifies the irrelevance of indigenous cultures with western aesthetics. It deals with the ethnocentric view of other cultures by western discourses and their relationship, and with the exclusionary cultural discourses.

Yet, Dirlik states that the field of postcolonial criticism has evolved during this last decade. This kind of criticism has evolved bearing the traits of the early postcolonial discourse, putting the emphasis again on the ethnocentricity of the colonial experience, but this criticism left early discourse behind by questioning the very meaning of colonization (433).

E. Language in Postcolonial Literature:

E.1. Historical Foundations of Language:

Language is the most important aspect of any living society. It is in this realization Ngonebu states that:

Language is one of the most significant features of humankind. There is nothing human beings can do without the function of one form of language or the other. The fact that a human being exists and lives together depends purely on the existence of language. (1)

Thus, Ngonebu had rightly observed that if language is removed from any society, such society is no longer alive. The presence of language is just like the air we breathe. If it is taken away, it means that the person would cease to be alive. In a related development, Whorf posits that:

We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native language. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way - an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. (443-464)

This clarifies that language enables us to talk with one another. It equally enhances us to make comments about anything; it provides us with the mode of interaction as well as a capacity of representation. It must be noted that language can affect a society by influencing or even controlling the world view of its speakers.

E.2. Language Question in Postcolonial Literature:

The question of the language for African literature has been the site of controversy in debates surrounding African literature. As in the debates surrounding oral literature in which orality is often mobilized as a means of wresting African literature away from a colonial appropriation of it; some writers have argued that African literature must be written in indigenous African languages so as to resist a kind of linguistic colonization of African literature. The majority of written African literature in colonial and post-independence Africa has been written in European languages, predominantly in English and French. For this reason, the Kenyan writer Ngugi WA Thiong'o argues that to rid African literature of the legacy of colonialism, African writers must begin writing in their native languages and that literature written by Africans in a colonial language is not African literature, but Afro-European literature. He also argues that language was the most important vehicle through which that power fascinated and held the soul prisoner. The bullet was the means of physical subjugation while the language was the means of psychological subjugation (285-306).

Therefore, the choice of language for African writers has an impact on the audience for whom they write, and that those who choose to write in a European language, limit their audience to a more elite African audience and a Western one, this does not necessarily mean that other non-elite forms of cultural production in African languages have not survived obvious examples are oral literature and concert parties. It should also be kept in mind that the wide diversity of languages in Africa makes it impossible to choose one language in which all African peoples or even the majority of people in one country can be reached.

However, Achebe remarks that it is not only convenient to use native language, but it is necessary because it offers Africans a medium of communication that transcends all

the ethnic groups. Thus, he argues in reference to his homeland Nigeria, which is home to hundreds of ethnic groups where he further remarks that a true national literature that will celebrate national culture will only be possible through English. (93-94).

Achebe states that: I have been given this language and I intend to use it (Achebe102). He admits that it is not right to abandon one's mother tongue in someone else's and terms it as a dreadful betrayal which produces a guilty feeling, but for him, he has no other choice. Thus the literature on nationalism and decolonization sought to articulate a new African identity through the Africanization of the European languages.

F. Identity question in postcolonial literature:

Identity is one of the major features used among people in the society to indicate the difference among individuals in order to make one unique from others. Therefore, Erikson, who is described as the father of identity theory, views identity as a subjective sense as well as an observable quality of personal sameness and continuity, paired with some shared world image. As a quality of unself-conscious living, this can be gloriously obvious to a young person who has found himself as he has found his criminality. In him we see emerge a unique unification of what is irreversibly given... that is, body type and temperament and vulnerability, infantile models and acquired ideals... with the open choices provided in available roles, occupational possibilities and friendships made (51, 11-22) .

Moreover, identity is what differentiates one individual from another. Self identity is the sum total of a being understands of oneself. The components of the identity concept include physical, psychological, and social attributes which can be influenced by the individual's attitude, habits, beliefs and ideas. Identity may come in diverse forms, but the most important thing to be known about identity is that it is used for differentiation among individuals or group of persons. The use of language alone with a person or group of

person is a strong paradigm for identification of individuals. Language is therefore said to be one of the major determinants of identity.

However, the quest for identity as a concept refers to a search for recognition. It is in this development that Kwasi states that quest for identity is a move by individuals, nation, continent, etc. when they are not placed in a position where they ought to be. However, it is when something goes wrong that critical self-analysis tend to begin. It's not everything that goes wrong with a people precipitates crisis of self identity; it is only the kind of reverse that injures human dignity and saps self-confidence that causes the type of soul searching. In Africa colonialism has been such an adverse(59-70).

Thus, Jeffery states that the quest for identity is one of the most crucial aspects of every individual or society to the development of any society. It refers mainly to taking into account the greatest difference which separate people, as well stating these differences in order to be acknowledged and respected by the others. One most crucial important thing about identity is that, it tries to show what one have in common with others as well as to show what makes one specially different or uncommon from the other. (4)

Therefore, the loss of identity and the quest for it has been the pervasive theme in contemporary African literature. Though, the problem of the quest for identity was very much there even in the 19th century, or even much before, the contemporary writers seem to work out new equations. Identity is co-related with status, sex, age, family, profession, nationality and so on.

G. The Dilemma of Identity in the Postcolonial Literature:

The Postcolonial Identity is the basic unit to the postcolonial literature since it is the result of the process of colonialism, a thing that led to the emergence of cultural and spatial elements that affected the postcolonial identity and postcolonial writers. Albert. J Paolini postulated:

If post colonialism forms part of a struggle over discursive power in the constitution of identity, then history, in particular colonial history, also pay a significant part. (51)

In fact, one of the main reasons that pushed colonized peoples to rebel against colonial powers is the feeling that they begun loosing the components that forge their identity.

Thus, post colonialism is an issue that came to stress the role of postcolonial peoples in the world and to bring to life their voices as distinct from their colonizers voice, it also came to highlight the postcolonial identity as different from the colonial one .

H. Language as a Determiner of Identity:

Every human being on earth speaks one language or the other, it is this language that attached such a person prestige. The majority of Nigerians value their language. Whenever, Igbos, Yorubas, Hausas, Ijaws, Efiks, Idomas, Igalas, Nupes are gathered, they speak their language to give them an identity. Through the language, one could identify the original mindset of the speaker or writer, furthermore, language is the most important means of the quest for identity, the loss of a language is bound to entail the loss of aspects of the identity that were conveyed by it, it could be said here that language and identity are twins in establishing a concrete image about a culture or society at large.

From what has been said before, we come to the conclusion that the term postcolonialism does not only denote the reaction to the colonial process and its aftermath, it also examines the social and cultural change that occurred during and after colonialism and which affected the language and the identity of the colonized.

Moreover, the term postcolonial literature deals with cultures and literatures influenced in a way or another by imperialism since the moment of colonization till the present day.



Chapter Two:
Language and Identity in
Things Fall Apart

Language is the main features of any living society. The language one speaks tells exactly about one's identity and where he comes from. Thus, Achebe's first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, speaks truth about the African identity and Africa's response to British imperialism with clarity of language that brings Achebe both acclaim and criticism. Then, he recognizes that the use of language alone by a person is a strong paradigm for identification of individuals. Therefore, language is one of the major determinants of identity. Thus, an analysis of Achebe's language can reveal to the reader his personal language attitude, and how the study of his language attitudes can temper the residual tension over his choice to write in the hegemonic British tongue.

Furthermore, the issue of identity is of a great importance in postcolonial literature. Chinua Achebe defended this postcolonial identity through Things Fall Apart; he is seen as a prominent figure among the postcolonial writers who are preoccupied by notions such as language and identity through the literature he produces. This chapter will try to discuss these vast notions of language and identity.

A. Achebe's Use of Language in *Things Fall Apart*:

The literature on decolonization sought to articulate a new African identity through the Africanization of the European languages. According to Achebe, in his essay, *The African Writer and the English Language*, he draws an example from the poem *Night Rain*, in which J. P. Clark captures the African experience of a young child:

Out of the run of water
That like ants filing out of the wood
Will scatter and gain possession
Of the floor. (Clark 98)

The stanza like ants filing out of the wood is beautiful because of the imagery used. The use of this imagery brings out the authenticity of an African setting from the way he puts it: Of course, if you have never made a fire with faggots, you may miss it (Clark98). Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, foregrounds the use of the English language to capture the African experience from the way he has used imagery. He does not see anything wrong with the use of the English language to express him. He sees a new voice coming out of Africa, speaking of the African experience in a worldwide language. He does agree that an African can learn English well enough to be able to use it effectively in creative writing, but he is quick to point out that the African writer cannot use it like a native world (101). Achebe's justification for his use of the English language was simply because it is a worldwide language.

A.1. The Use of English:

Chinua Achebe presents the deepness of an African culture to readers of other cultures as well as to readers of his own culture. By using English, in which he has been proficient since childhood, he reaches many more readers and has a much greater literary impact than he would by writing in a language such as Igbo.

Yet, Achebe uses his English knowledge for infiltrating the degrees of the enemy and destroying them from within, but he has faced a problem. How can he present the African heritage and culture in a language that can never describe it adequately? Indeed, one of the primary tasks of *Things Fall Apart* is to confront this lack of understanding between the Igbo culture and the colonialist culture. In the novel, the Igbo ask how the white man can call Igbo customs bad when he does not even speak the Igbo language. An understanding of Igbo culture can only be possible when the outsider can relate to the Igbo language and terminology.

So, Achebe solves this problem by incorporating elements of the Igbo language in his novel. By incorporating Igbo words, rhythms, language, and concepts into an English text about his culture, Achebe goes a long way to bridge a cultural divide.

Therefore, Achebe's language use in *Things Fall Apart* reflects the Igbo cultural influences and presuppositions in English. He competently uses the English Language to describe ideas, circumstances, issues which are exotic to the Igbo society and which portray the sociocultural setting. Achebe modifies the English language to suit the cultural norms, social interactions, ideas and ideals of the traditional Igbo society.

A.2. The use of Pidgin English:

Pidgin English is the result of a combination of several African languages and some European languages (English, French, Portuguese, German, etc.). Thus, Pidgin is a simplified form of the language used for communicating between groups of people who normally speak different languages. Therefore, Pidgin words may also be used for lack of an English equivalent, or simply for local color.

However, Achebe adds another stratagem in his creative use of language by incorporating a few examples of Pidgin English. He uses only a few Pidgin words or phrases such: tie-tie (to tie) / kotma (a crude form of court messenger) / and sah (Yes), then he uses the term inyanga. In the statement, "Ezinma had been making inyanga with her pot", the word means "showing off."

However, as colonialists, the British were skillful at installing Pidgin English in their new colonies. Unfortunately, Pidgin sometimes takes on characteristics of master-servant communication; it can sound patronizing on the one hand, and subservient to the other. Furthermore, using the simplified language can become an easy excuse for not learning the standard languages for which it substitutes.

A.3. The use of Igbo language:

One of the techniques Achebe uses to great perfection is the use of Igbo language in his work. The Igbo words and expressions depict him as an Igbo and at the same time situate the location of the novel. Achebe in his discussion with Susan Gallagher in New York says that “it does not matter the language you write in, as long as you write it good.” (260)

Thus, in the novel, one could find these Igbo words which further strengthen the text as having Igbo background such: Chi /Chee/ : personal god, efulefu /eff-ou-lefe-/:worthless man ,egwugwu /EH-gwou-gwou /: a masquerader who impersonates one of the ancestral spirits of the village , iba//: fever / ILO: the village green, where assemblies for sports and discussions / ISA-ifi : a ceremony, If a wife had been separated from her husband for some time and were then to be re-united with him, this ceremony would be held to ascertain that she had not been unfaithful to him during the time of their separation / nno//: welcome / nso-ani: a religious offence of a kind abhorred by everyone, literally earth's taboo / nza : a very small bird / obi: the large living quarters of the head of the family / obodo dike//: the land of the brave /ochu: murder or manslaughter / ogbanje /og-BAHN-jeh /: a changeling,- a child who repeatedly dies and returns to its mother to be reborn , agbala/ A-ba-lah /: a word for a man who had no title(14).

Hence, another example of Achebe's combination of Igbo elements is his frequent reference to traditional Igbo proverbs and tales. These particular elements give Things Fall Apart an authentic African voice to provide an authentic feel for Igbo culture would be impossible without allowing the proverbs to play a significant role in the novel.

B. Issues of Identity in *Things Fall Apart*:

The issues of identity in *Things Fall Apart* are mirrored with the clash between tribal beliefs and the colonial administration; it portrays the significant change in the Nigerian villages after the arrival of the missionaries. *Things Fall Apart* is a story about personal beliefs, customs, and identity confliction between family, culture, and religion of the Igbo tribes. It shows how *Things Fall Apart* when these beliefs and customs are challenged and how a personal identity changes for a man.

Yet, Achebe in his *Things Fall Apart* had clearly x-rayed his Igbo ancestral identity through his use of language. He uses specific languages to create a unique linguistic environment that no European or non-native writer of African literature can replicate.

Furthermore, the drawings on the outside of the huts and the people's bodies for the feast of the New Yam are the images conjured to endure only for a certain period, these images are closely related to spirituality and events of communal significance. These elements are major constituents of indigenous identity conveyed via Achebe's pictures in words. Therefore, the representation of these features through non-static and transitory images suggest that identity is a process constantly in motion with ramifications and change.

As long as, a certain narrative tone and elements, of oratory, such as proverbs have been employed to represent Igbo identity, as a basis for a collective and stable self, Proverbs among the Igbos play the role of reinforcing old-established knowledge, the diverse functions of this rhetorical element become obvious and in itself bear a strong notion of change.

Therefore, Achebe uses proverbs to bring out the native's belief in myth and the normal cycle of life, for example, on dark nights, the fear of darkness and of evil spirits are

enhanced through stories like a snake was never called by its name at night, because it would hear. It was called a string. Though the use of these saying in *Things Fall Apart* by Achebe do not only added local color to his writings, but also brought out the rich culture and tradition of the natives whose lives are replete with these practices and belief which are part of their everyday life and itself their 'culture. (Chandra 188-199)

Thus, Achebe creates an identity for the Igbos through his propendrous use of local colors and spiritual beliefs. Achebe through his novel made us to understand that "chi" is highly regarded among the Igbos. This is indeed a clear identity of the Igbo world-view. In the novel Achebe states when a man says yes, his 'chi' says yes also. (19), this 'chi' in Igbo cosmology is the guardian spirit granted to every individual at the time of birth. The 'Chi' is believed to be responsible for one's fortunes and misfortunes. Furthermore, Achebe stood by his entire career with a language style that would change in African literature. He accomplished his goal by writing about his own culture and his own family in a poetic proverbic style. The unique language style of *Things Fall Apart* not only changed Achebe's career but also his country.

B.1. Identity of Igbo Clan in Nigeria:

Igbo identity in *Things Fall Apart* represents as the indigenous tribe with the relationship between the religious institutions and traditional beliefs. It portrays their perception to set the principles of their society with certain customs and social patterns. The Igbo people in Nigeria believe in the supernatural things as a part of the superstitions of their clan, which makes them to follow the traditional beliefs. Achebe points out the identity of the African people in the primitive society and shows that the Igbos are a pluralistic society. However, each Igbo village, like Umuofia, Mbaino, Mbanta and Abame are an autonomous political unit. These villages are interlinked and integrated into one another by means of marriage and shrines.

So, Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* depicts an Igbo society where there are clearly defined parameters of right conduct on both personal and communal levels. The ethics of the African community portrayed in *Things Fall Apart* can be summarized as follows: Live and let live. This concept is repeated during prayers that accompany the breaking of kola nuts: “He broke the kola-nut saying: we shall all live. We pray for life, children, a good harvest and happiness... Let the kite perch and the egrets perch too.” (119)

Thence, the ethics of the Igbo community portrayed in *Things Fall Apart* encourage the individuals to work hard in order to succeed in life, hence in Umuofia an individual's achievement are rated more highly than age or ancestry. Thus, Okonkwo who raises himself in life by dint of hard work is highly respected in his society. Although the society encourages people to strive to be successful in life, it takes care to shield the weak from the strong by restraining the mighty from intimidating their less fortunate neighbors.

Further, the Igbo society that one sees in *Things Fall Apart* is so highly organized that the society even has a Week of Peace when all are constrained to be at peace with their neighbors, no matter what. Above all, this society is so ethical that it makes the distinction between just and unjust wars. As a result, although Umuofia is a war like community, it never fights an unjust war: “And in fairness to Umuofia it should be recorded that it never went to war unless its case was clear and just” (Achebe 9).

Furthermore, identity is not static; it keeps changing with time and space. The identity of the Igbo community too is not monolithic. It gradually changes when it comes into contact with the Colonizer's culture; it seems that Achebe perhaps desires such a positive change in the Igbo society. This message is very explicit in his novel, that he wants the Igbo people to assess both their own culture and the culture of the colonizers, acquire and adopt the good qualities of both and discard the bad. It is very obvious that the

Igbo identity will be constantly in the process of change, of course for the better, and perhaps Achebe wants this to be the very identity of the Igbo identity.

Moreover, when the culture of the natives encounter with the culture of the colonizers, an eventual change comes to the religious belief of the former. We see that many people, initially and particularly the social outcast, were getting themselves converted into Christianity, this shift would definitely bring a change in the traditional Igbo identity. For many people, unlike Okonkwo, in the Igbo community began to examine the new religion of the colonizers and see if something could be gained from it.

B.2. Social Identity in *Things Fall Apart*:

Things Fall Apart links the social identity of the Igbo people in Nigeria. The first part of it focuses on the pre-colonial structure of Igbo society. They had no centralized political structure; they lived in autonomous villages and towns ruled by their elders. Don Ohadike points out the Igbo social structure as the lineage groups and on the basis of the lineages formed a compact village or a town named as obodo. Then, relationships were based on the blood ties, and each person traced his or her descent to three groups. First, a person belongs to the smallest social unit known as UNO, or house. This was a natural family, consisting of a man, his wife, or wives, and their children. The second group was a umunna, or lineage, composed of a number of related houses. Finally, a group of lineages formed a concept of village or town. (19)

Though, the Igbo communities had no centralized government, they were known as democratic by social and political structures revolved around the idea of crosscutting ties. The most significant social markers of Igbo society are the unique system of honorific titles. The titles are not conferred by higher authorities, but they are acquired by individuals.

Then, Okonkwo distinguished himself and got the honor to his village, he impressed all the villagers by his reputation as a wrestler throughout the nine villages of Umuofia. The wrestling match is to honor the concept of identity of the Igbo people in and around the nine villages of Nigeria. The value of physical power is considered not only in the wrestling matches, but also in farming and rural activities. Then, Okonkwo's prosperity was visible in his household. He had a large compound enclosed by a thick wall of red earth (Achebe 11). In Igbo clan, the man, who fails to progress beyond the most junior titles was a man without status in the eyes of his people. Unoka, Okonkwo's father died without a title as he didn't work hard. Subsequently, he lost his reputation in the clan. Thus, the man having more wives can be called a reputed man in the society. Achebe points out the reputation of Okonkwo as:

There was a wealthy man in Okonkwo's village that had three huge barns, nine wives and thirty children. His name was Nwakibie and he had taken the highest but one title, which a man could take in the clan. It was to this man that Okonkwo worked to earn his first seed yams. (Achebe 15)

The identity of a wealthy person in the clan is considered by the number of wives, children and, more importantly, yams. Yam is the main crop in Igbo villages as it is considered as the king of the crops (Achebe18). The Igbo clan in Nigeria has a patriarchal social identity.

B.3. Masculine Identity:

In the society on which the story of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is based, the fictional Umuofia, the males are different from the females.

In the lives of Achebe's male characters in his novel, as well as the general conceptions of the society of Umuofia, the notion of masculinities are defined by specific traits of maleness, which appear to be collectively approved by the society. Okonkwo grows up the ladder in the society and acquires three wives, who in turn, have children for him.

Therefore, the masculine identity of the Igbo people in *Things Fall Apart* is reflected by order and hierarchy. Both concepts are related to their change and the issues of chaos in society. The arrival of the missionaries is regarded as the main cause of the chaos resulting from their encroachment in Igbo culture and tradition. The mixture of the traditional cultural patterns and ethical power is attributed mainly to men by the patriarchal society. The pride of male power is affected with the various aspects of order and hierarchy, particularly honor and the sense of duty, which are the attributes of men. Moreover, those attributes constitute the repute, respect, and honor in the name of prestigious titles in Igbo land. The Igbo patriarchal society afflicts with the male power as an important aspect to construct their identities.

Moreover, it penetrates the kind of 'honor' in the organized Umuofian system is attributed to the people, who are likely to play a great role in the leadership. The man, who fails to achieve power, loses the identity as a member of the clan. In the Umuofia community of *Things Fall Apart*, Igbo men are constrained to achieve male superiority, in order to be seen and respected (Azado 50).

Thus, the dilemma between individual and society leads Okonkwo to believe firmly in the necessity to recapture his lost identity. For the purpose, he imposes himself some poignant principles to which he tries to stick. Okonkwo becomes an individual fighter in Umuofia. His success and failure repose on his ability to make an appropriate synthesis of the three values that make up his personality: male power, honor, and sense of

duty. At the end of the story, Okonkwo realizes that the greatest obstacle in Umuofia, is that coward, Egonwanne...Tomorrow he will tell them that our fathers never fought a war of blame (Achebe 151). It resulted in his suicide, which represents the physical aspect of his own violence. In return, the novel ends tragically with the death of both the white man and masculinity of the Igbo clan with certain 'honor' to the duty-boundless action. Okonkwo prefers to hang himself rather than fall into captivity; he tries to save a little honor that remains for him.

Thus, the tragic end of the protagonist is a result of the masculine issue of the identity as Okonkwo realizes that the people of his clan are failed to resist the rules of the missionaries, and they had started to behave as women losing the power of war or resistance with missionaries.

B.4. Feminine Identity in *Things Fall Apart*:

The identity of women in *Things Fall Apart* reveals the patriarchal society. Gender identity of Igbo people is structured in terms of the spatial organization: Men, and especially men with social status, live in their own obi or huts, where women come to them as and when they required while women live in small huts or cook out. Achebe puts in Okonkwo's prosperity was visible.....each of his three wives had her own hut(Achebe11).There is also a kind of hierarchy among the women and they either give respect to each other or follow the married or elders meekly. The identity of the women in Igbo society is considered as the 'lowest' or the 'second rate'. There is a distinction between masculine and feminine actions and responsibilities. Respect and success in the clan are based on the manly activities and accomplishments. On the other hand, women are supposed to be the head of the household duties by taking care of the children and hens, scrubbing the walls and growing the crops like coco-yams, beans, maize, melons and cassava which are inferior and the crop Yam, 'the king of yams' is grown by men. The

instance of the hierarchy in women is dealt by Achebe in the novel. A man can have many wives, as many as nine. The elder wife of Nwakibie has the right to drink the palm wine at first as she holds the position as the head of the family being the first wife of Nwakibie.

Achebe writes:

Anasi was the first wife and others could not drink before her, and so they stood waiting.....she went back to her hut. The other wives drank in the same way, in their proper order, and went away (Achebe 15-16).

B.5. Cultural Identity:

Cultural identity is one of the aspects that go to change to suit the changing needs and conditions. *Things Fall Apart* mirrors the identity of the people through the multidimensional panorama of the Igbo society. However, identity is those behavioral patterns, lifestyles, social structures and norms that distinguish a person from other peoples. The harmonious existence of Igbo in the nine villages of Nigeria perpetuates the cultural aspects of their own. The arrangement of wrestling matches is one of the parts of it that used to be decided the identity of the village. The arrangement of the New Yam Festivals makes a sense of the unified kinsmen in the Igbo society and their beliefs towards rejoice.

Therefore, the identity is reflected as per the flexibility of the social structure of Igbo people. The protagonist of the novel Okonkwo signifies his attribute towards the cultural patterns of the Igbo tribe right from the beginning of the novel, but his doom at the end of the story is remarkably related to the patterns of the culture of the Igbo which he wanted to preserve though there is a disruption of the ethics caused by the missionaries. The identity of the Igbo people was known for their integrity, morality and the commitment to the prosperity. These, were the characteristics of the cultural glory.

However, the arrival of the missionaries caused the changes and the innocence regarding worldly matters replaced by the downfall of the Igbo through their disintegration.

Hence, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, has significant themes like love, culture, colonialism, achievement, honor and individualism. In treating these themes, Achebe employs a variety of devices, such as proverbs, folktales, rituals and the juxtaposition of characters and episodes to provide a double view of the Ibo society of Umuofia and its cultural identity. Achebe not only added local color to his writings, but also brought out the rich culture and identity of the natives whose lives are replete with these practices and belief which are part of their everyday life and itself their culture.

B.6. Religious Identity

Religion is the main part of any society. It shapes the moral and ethical boundaries to regulate the actions of human beings into a particular mode of existence. The religious identity among the Igbo people plays a pivotal role in the day to day activities. The Igbo people lived in the villages surrounded by their farms till mid-twentieth century. They focused on their religious beliefs and supernatural beings: God, spirits and ancestors.

Yet, *Things Fall Apart* deals with the supreme God 'Chukwu' among the people. Chukwu is seen as a powerful God, the one who holds the knife and the yam and provides people with wealth, rain, and children, and who is merciful toward rich and poor, male and female, child and aged. Every morning the father of the family offers prayers to the Supreme Being. The supreme God 'Chukwu' does not intervene in the minor problems of human existence in the Igbo families, however; such matters are left to the spirits and ancestors, who are often described as messengers by 'Chukwu'. There are the personal Gods of the Igbo families named as 'Chi' these are the personal wooden gods and the Igbo people worship their wooden gods which are known as the ancestors for the well beings.

Next to, the spirits are powerful in three dimensions such as space (sky) earth (land) and the ancestral world. The space spirits exist through thunder, lightening, sun, and moon. The earth spirits exist through nature spirits, rocks, hills, cave tress and farms. The guardian spirit of the earth is Ani. The ancestral spirits serve as a guardian of hunters, farmers, fishermen, medicine men and other professional guilds. It is also believed that the ancestral spirits called ‘chi’ evaluate the fate of an individual.

Then, it seems customary for the Igbo people to pray God Chukwu when there is a kind of danger or rejoice among the people. The Igbo clan believes that the time is cyclical and the rites of the naming ceremony, marriage ceremony, membership in secret and openly societies and funeral with honesty to the communal values are judged by supreme God.

From what has been said before, we come to the conclusion that the identity question is a fundamental theme in the works of postcolonial writers, this is the outcome of their own experiences. Chinua Achebe is one of the most world known postcolonial authors who expressed and dealt with the question of identity through his essays or novels. He made his opinions clear through his novel; he thinks identity with all its elements should be restored through literature. He illustrates well the crisis of identity that surrounds postcolonial writers and subjects and tries to cure it through giving some solutions.

Moreover, Achebe depicts also identity through *Things Fall Apart* as linked to land and belonging as it is to language. Throughout his works he portrays the identity of postcolonial Nigeria, or Africa in general, before, during, and after colonialism. He pictures out how this identity has been distorted at first and then bit by bit replaced to take its current shape.

Chapter Three :
Analysis of the Main Concepts
in *Things Fall Apart*

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is a postcolonial novel that describes the life of Okonkwo, a wealthy local leader and warrior of the fictional Nigerian village Umuofia. The novel is split into three parts: the first two describing the Igbo people and their culture and the third describing the British and the colonial conquer of Umuofia.

Thus, Achebe's main purpose of writing the novel is to educate his readers about the value of his culture and identity as an African. *Things Fall Apart* provides readers with an insight of Igbo society right before the white missionary invasion of their land.

Moreover, this qualitative research, which is descriptive in nature, confirms that, Achebe writes *Things Fall Apart* to encourage his fellow countrymen to take advantage of the educational system that the missionaries introduced to them so as to better their lives.

Furthermore, the aim of this chapter is to analyze Igbo society as it appears in the novel, which is before and after the arrival of white missionaries in Umuofia, the effects of their arrival concerning Igbo culture, consequently leading to the clash of cultures between the two parties.

A. Background of the Novel:

Things Fall Apart is one of the most influential novels of its time, both on a local and global scale. In order to understand the novel and its contents, it is important to look into the history of the novel that led to its publication. When Nigeria became a colony of Britain in 1906, the country became exposed to the British political structure and its various institutions.

Therefore, it is under these circumstances that Achebe then came to know of both the British culture as well as Nigerian culture. Since neither of them understood the other's culture and neither of them was willing to abandon their own beliefs to follow the beliefs of the other, it can be assumed that there was a lot of tension.

Thus, *Things Fall Apart* is all about chaos and confusion of traditional Igbo culture that suffers at the hand of the white man's arrival in Umuofia along with his religion. (Alimi121). Moreover, Alimi states that Achebe uses regionally inflected language to describe the lifestyles of his characters as well as the environment where the plot is set respectively. *Things Fall Apart* is a novel that rich is with Igbo proverbs that Achebe translates into English for the benefit of his readers who are unfamiliar with Igbo (121). Achebe timelessly uses proverbs in this novel to preserve Igbo culture and language as well as to show the value not only to him, but the entire Igbo community.

Furthermore, Most of the text in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* chiefly features in the use and explanations of the complicated Igbo myths and proverbs that the Europeans fail to acknowledge. Throughout the novel Achebe craftily uses his characters to speak in proverbs when they address one another. The use of proverbs is very important in conversations as the Igbo believe them to be a fountain of wisdom and of respect. Then, from the onset of the novel Achebe makes readers aware of the importance of proverbs in conversation.

Subsequently, the difference between Achebe's novel and other colonial novels is that his novel thoroughly examines Igbo society as he portrays them in a manner which shows all aspects of Igbo culture and not only the desirable aspect of their culture. He also predicts the future of the Igbo and where they are headed if the white missionaries are to be successful in taking control of Umuofia. With the use of English language, Achebe is successful in fully detailing the life of Okonkwo who at the beginning of the novel is a very famous young man in all the nine villages of Umuofia. However, as the novel develops and white missionaries begin arriving in Umuofia along with their government and institutions, Okonkwo who tries to protest the change is at the end buried without

respect or dignity and his fame is soon forgotten because of the greatest sin in Igbo religion that he commits by taking away his own life.

Hence, Owomoyela states that One of the main reasons that *Things Fall Apart* was successful is because of its detailed descriptiveness of Igbo culture as seen from the perspective of its author, who had an insider outsider position as a result of being raised in a Christian household, which meant that he was not allowed to participate in traditional Igbo rituals although he was Igbo (18). It means, Achebe presents a thorough understanding of narrative organization and style, and a keen observation of and absorption with day-to-day happenings, not through the lenses of the anthropologist, but through the clear insight of one who was involved with and felt at one with his culture while at the same time inculcating western ideas. And it's for these reasons that Achebe is able to fully convince his audience of the ideas in his novel.

B. Analysis of the Igbo Society in *Things Fall Apart*:

During the Age of Imperialism, The Europeans became hungry for Africa's natural resources; many European countries set colonies in Africa. One of the reasons that the Europeans had in colonizing Africa was their claim to civilize the primitive African minds as a humanitarian act.

The Europeans held a Eurocentric view of the world, firmly believing European culture to be superior. Eurocentrism therefore perceives Europe as the core of civilization and of humanity. In order to give his people back the pride that they once had, Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart*.

Therefore, Igbo is a society that also appears to be skeptical about change. They refuse to send their children to school where they stand a chance to be able to read and write in the English language. However, Language is a very important element to Igbo, it gives them a sense of belonging and they also use it as a means to preserve their culture and heritage. Despite Mr Brown's efforts to show the villagers that they need to learn

English because they are now being ruled by the District Commissioner and other white missionaries who only communicate in English, the villagers still remain reluctant in educating their children (Achebe 128). The Igbo depend on their language to differentiate them from other cultures, they also depend on language to define their social rank in their society. Okonkwo, for instance, when being compared to his father Unoka is considered as a wealthy man and not only because he has married a lot of women or his household produces many yams, but because of his strength that helped him defeat one of the strongest wrestlers in the village (Achebe 6).

However, even so readers are immediately aware of Igbo's ignorance towards the rest of the world. They are a secluded community with no knowledge whatsoever about the world outside Umuofia. At no point in the novel do the characters make reference to Nigeria or the rest of the world. It is interesting to note that the Igbo are not at all curious of other forms of life that lie beyond Umuofia. Because the Igbo has only known Umuofia to be the only place in the world, and they do not show any interest in learning about other places outside Umuofia, it can be safely concluded that anything outside of their territory is disregarded, hence its non-existence to them. Accordingly, it comes as no surprise that the Igbo deny their children the chance of mobility from Umuofia into the competitive world which the white man's education assures them, they even reject the white missionaries' attempts in teaching them the English language all in favor of their devotion to their native language.

Further, even before the white missionaries arrive in Umuofia, the Igbo already have their own judicial systems that are based on the knowledge that their forefathers have passed on to them about their culture. Their courts are spearheaded by the older men of the village, whose wisdom and knowledge is trusting in the power of their ancestral gods to guide them to give a fair and unbiased ruling. However, one of the first things that the

white missionaries do when they arrive in the village is to replace Igbo courts with theirs. This disadvantages the villagers as the white missionaries do not know the history of the Igbo, their culture or their system of justice. It can be argued that this is one of the many mistakes that the missionaries make when they first decide to take over Igbo and their territory. In this sense Igbo does not know what lawful right is or wrong in the white man's courts. That is why the leaders of the village are surprised when they are imprisoned after burning the missionary church.

In fact, it seems that Igbo are more civilized than the missionaries themselves. In their traditional courts, for example, if two parties are in conflict with each other both parties are given the chance to tell their story before a ruling is taken as opposed to the case of the British courts. When the villagers commit any form of crime they are imprisoned without first being questioned whereas Igbo courts question those at conflict before a ruling is taken. For example, Okonkwo beats up his youngest wife during the Week of Peace for petty reasons and although wife beating is allowed in Igbo culture, she is given the chance to take the matter before the courts. Okonkwo is not found guilty of beating his wife, but for doing so during the Week of Peace where acts of violence are not allowed. (Achebe 124)

So, Igbo have been a violent society, this is seen through the character of Okonkwo who is generally a representative of the tribe. However, Okonkwo's actions show that Igbo only become violent when certain factors force them to be. For example, Okonkwo shoots one of the messengers who are sent by the missionaries to break up their meeting (Achebe 144). He does this because he is tired of the white missionaries and the power of authority they have claimed over their village. Although it is not the best decision to be taken by him, it is understandable why he does it. Instead, they let the other messengers escape and sit back and watch the missionaries take total control of their

territory. It could be argued that this is the case because their hostility, whether on a smaller scale or larger scale, has always been restricted within the boundaries of their land. Based on this statement, it justifies why Igbo do not fight back against the white missionaries who take refuge in their land and threaten to change all aspects of their culture. It is rather disappointing that Igbo not only welcome the white missionaries to their land, but they also easily allocate them a piece of it.

Then, the decision by the rulers of Mbanta to allocate land to the missionaries was the worst mistake the Igbo could make (Achebe 105). It gave the missionaries the impression that the Igbo are a weak society that they could easily influence with their culture. However, it can also be argued that the decision by the Igbo to keep the piece of land where the evil forest lay is an indication of the respect and loyalty they still have for their own culture. But, because the Igbo fail to make known to the white missionaries the dark nature of the forest, any remorse concerning the new culture and religion is lost. Hence, the white missionaries remain unopposed and in control of Umuofia and its people.

As far as the Igbo are concerned the white missionaries are aliens because their origin is not known to them. They do not even understand the concept behind Christianity. This is because until now the nature of white people and their culture has existed outside of their language. To the Igbo it means it has simply not existed, and this ultimately leads to the doom of their culture as they are confused about how to react to this new religion. Because the white missionaries are convinced that the Igbo are primitives they obligate themselves to civilize them even though the so called primitives do not ask for their help or to be civilized.

Moreover, the white missionaries arrive in Umuofia and almost immediately expect the people of Umuofia to submit to their authority and without any question. However, on the other hand, the missionaries serve as a ray of hope to the people that Igbo religion gives

no favor to. Some villagers are excited to go along with the white men's idea, seeing that it is the only way to escape from their own religion. Okonkwo's son Nwoye is among the first converts to Christianity (Achebe 107). This decision came after the sacrifice of Ikemefuna who was almost a brother to Nwoye. Nwoye was totally against the decision made by Igbo to kill his brother, hence, he protests against this act of joining the church and choosing to attend school. His father on the other hand is not at all pleased with Nwoye's decision to join Christianity. Although Okonkwo is disappointed in his son's choice he does not act on it. It is then assumed that Okonkwo somehow expected this kind of behavior from his son as he always saw Nwoye as weak and woman-like.

However, Okonkwo ends up disowning his son, Nwoye after he abandons the Igbo religion. The decision by Okonkwo to disown his only son for following another religion is yet another example of the Igbo's inability to deal with change, especially that which has not existed within the Igbo language. By abandoning his own religion, Nwoye disrespects his father in the worst possible way. Then, because Okonkwo is unaware of the Christian culture he cannot act against his son. It is apparent that committing suicide is Okonkwo's way of going against Christianity. This act not only costs him his life, but it also takes away the respect Umuofia once had for him.

Achebe is successful in making readers aware that although the effect of European colonialism challenges the culture of Igbo, the benefits of it can also be seen. Igbo society stands to benefit from the school and from other smaller things such as bicycles that the white men come with. Forcing Igbo people to abandon their own way of life to follow theirs seems to be the only factor that makes the white missionaries bad people in history.

C. Analyzing /comparing of the main aspects in *Things Fall Apart*:

The following analysis compares and contrasts the description of the main aspects of the native people and the colonialists in *Things Fall Apart*.

C.1. Religion:

According to Achebe, the natives have a polytheistic belief in which the god Chukwu is the supreme. He is said to have a lot of other minor Gods to help him because his work is too great for one person (180). For instance, there is the goddess of the earth, called Ani, to whom the natives sacrifice in order to obtain a good harvest (Achebe 17). The importance of religion for the natives can be seen in that Chukwu is called the “supreme” (highest ranked) and also, the sacrifices indicate this.

Further, Okonkwo’s reaction when his son Nwoye has converted to Christianity is an evidence of this. He, then, sends for his other five sons and tells them the following: You have all seen the great abomination of your brother. Now he is no longer my son or your brother. I will only have a son who is a man, who will hold his head up among my people. If any one of you prefers to be a woman, let him follow Nwoye now while I am alive so that I can curse him. If you turn against me when I am dead I will visit you and break your neck (Achebe 172). The fact that Okonkwo rejects Nwoye as his son and as the brother of his sons for the sake of religion shows that the faith is very important to the natives. Looking at the colonialists, they have a monotheistic belief, they are Christian. According to them, there is only one god, and he made heaven and earth (Achebe 179). Because of their strong belief, they condemn the Igbo-peoples’ religion, telling them that their gods are not real, and that they are only pieces of wood and stone. In order to spread their faith, they build churches and schools in which their faith is conveyed. The fact that these men believe that god made heaven and earth, and that their god is the only, shows that religion is very important to them. Another evidence of this is that they travel all the

way to Africa, leaving their homes, families and friends, and work hard to spread their faith. In all, it is clear that religion is an important matter, both for the natives and for the colonialists. Even if the native's religion is polytheistic and the colonialists monotheistic, they both believe that there is a higher power, a god, that controls life and death and thus, their faith is similar.

C.2. Politics:

The natives' political system is widely related to religion. For instance, when Okonkwo is in exile because of an accidental murder, the elders set fire to his houses, demolish his red walls, kill his animals and destroy his barn because it is the justice of the earth goddess (Achebe 125). Thus, the elders' decisions are based on their wisdom, and what they believe is the will of God. If, however, the elders are incapable of solving an issue, the Egwugwu, the nine spirits and the founders of the nine villages, are called for. As an example, they judge a marriage case where the husband beats his wife (Achebe 90-94). Also here, the Egwugwu decide themselves how this case should be closed. Finally, the oracles also have a say in the governance of the people; they are some kind of medium between the gods and the people.

Nonetheless, the white men seem to believe that it is, and this can be seen in the following extract, where the District Commissioner talks to some natives: We have brought a peaceful administration to you and your people so that you may be happy. If any man ill-treats you we shall come to your rescue, but we will not allow you to ill-treat others. We have a court of law where we judge cases and administer justice just as it is done in my own country under a great queen (Achebe 194). Further, the use of the noun "justice" here indicates that the District Commissioner believes that their judge is the correct and fair one. Both the natives and the colonialists have a developed and functional political system. Even if the natives' system is religiously bound while the colonialists'

system is political throughout, the systems are similar. In both, there are appointed “judges” who have the power to decide what is right and what is wrong.

C.3. Material Things:

It is indicated, in the novel, that the natives and the colonialists use different material things. For instance, the natives have horses, while the colonialists have bicycles (iron horses). Also, the natives have palm wine, while the colonialists have wine. Further, it is mentioned how the colonialists have clothes (shorts), shoes and glasses while the natives are mostly naked.

However, the natives and the colonialists use different material things for the same purpose. For instance, the reason that the colonialists use clothes while the natives do not, is probably due to weather differences in Nigeria and Britain. In Nigeria, it is hot and because of that, the natives probably do not want to use clothes.

In conclusion, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* gives a realistic picture of the Igbo society and shows how the colonizers undermined their tradition, religion and culture, and imposed their style of life, religion and culture upon them. The novel introduces an image of a Nigerian village before and after colonization, it presents a definitive form of the African identity.

Furthermore, Achebe has successfully been able to make his novel the true voice of a nation who had been silenced and suppressed by the colonizers. The disasters and cruelty experienced by the Igbo community have been lively and realistically depicted by the novelist to highlight the true face and intention of the bearers of the torch of civilization to the Dark Continent, which symbolically stands for all the suppressed and colonized nations. Moreover, *Things Fall Apart* directs those who are misled by European novels which portray Africans as savages into a whole new light with its depiction of the Igbo community from an African perspective.



General Conclusion

General Conclusion:

This dissertation charts the issue of language as a vehicle in the auest for identity in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall A part*. Achebe thinks identity with all its elements should be restored through literature. Obviously, his struggle was mainly with the question of identity through language. He illustrates well the crisis of identity that surrounds postcolonial writers and subjects and tries to cure it through giving some solutions. He also made it clear that his works are the outcome of his own experience and it is a result of his true feelings to the condition of his country and of similar postcolonial states also, that is why he expressed this in his novel.

Therefore, this study has been able to identify the use of language as a means of quest for identity in *Things Fall Apart*. It is very important to note that what set Achebe out as a world recognized novelist are the distinctive display of his language in passing across information about the ancestral home, his cultural, traditional and his world-view at large, these gave Achebe a very clear identity which make him the image of both the old and the new Igbo colonial and post-colonial world.

Furthermore, the findings of this research confirmed that in *Things Fall Apart* Achebe intensifies to reflect a sense of identity of the Igbo people with their past and pride of it. It is also intended to make the rest of the world to know about Africa's rich culture and heritage.

Consequently, this thesis assumes that identity can be invented because it is not fixed, but fluid, as well as the language of any society has its own changing social patterns and it changes as per the changing need and conditions.

Finally, the results of this study show that, it is possible that *Things Fall Apart* may be only one chance book that gives a clear bond between language and identity and defend the existence of an author and his beliefs about language and identity. Then, it is discovered that Achebe has been able to use language as a vehicle for the quest for identity in his novel, *Things Fall Apart*.



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Appendices

Appendix A: The writer's Biography.

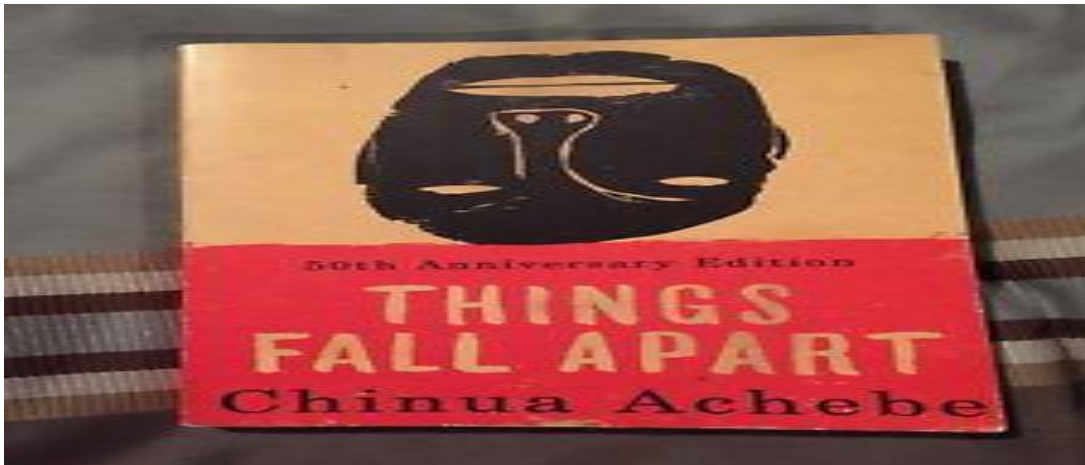


Who is Chinua Achebe?

Chinua Achebe, in full **Albert Chinualumogu Achebe**, was born in November 16, 1930 and he died in March 21, 2013, he is a Nigerian novelist and one of the significant novelists, who wrote about formal colonialism in Africa as well as the first decade of decolonization there. He plays a vital role in the making of the African world as he was a trusted writer, who was able to alter the image of Africa in light of European primitivism shrouded with rhetorical deficiency to an independently affirmative culture. Achebe attracts a wide attention for his known novels, including *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), Achebe also published several collections of short stories, children's books and books of essays include *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (1975), *Hopes and Impediments* (1988), *Home and Exile* (2000), *Was a Country A Personal History of Biafra* (2012). In 2007 he won the Man Booker International Prize.

Appendices

Appendix B: Plot Summary of the Novel



The title Things Fall Apart was adapted from William Butler Yeats' poem "The Second Coming":

Turning and turning in the widening gyre

The falcon cannot hear the falconer

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold

(Yeats, 1921)

Things Fall Apart is centered on the life of the protagonist of the novel, Okonkwo. As the novel develops Okonkwo accidentally kills a man and he and his family are exiled from Umuofia. During his exile white missionaries arrive in Umuofia and change the village. When Okonkwo returns to his village, he sees the major transformations that Umuofia has undergone during his exile. Then, Unhappy with the change, Okonkwo and other villagers come together to drive the white missionaries out of their land. Their efforts are in vain as the missionaries send their messengers to abort the meeting. Okonkwo kills one of the messengers and in shock at his actions the villagers let the other messengers escape. The messengers report back to the missionaries and they take off to bring Okonkwo to justice only to find him dead.

Résumé/الملخص

Abstract

The issues of language and identity are very prominent themes in postcolonial literature. The exploration of the postcolonial writers as Chinua Achebe in terms of the depiction of their cultural identities and of their people's reveals their culture, their attempt is to reconstruct identity or to reinvent a new one. Moreover, language is a fundamental characteristic of every human society, thus, the language one speaks tells much about one's identity. So, this study highlights the topic of post colonialism and its relation with language and identity, and it also discusses the issues regarding the use of language as a vehicle for the quest for identity in Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart*.

Keywords: Language; Identity. *Things Fall Apart*

Résumé

Les questions de langue et d'identité sont des thèmes très importants dans les études postcoloniales et la littérature. L'exploration de ces écrivains postcoloniaux comme Chinua Achebe en termes de représentation de leurs identités culturelles et de leurs peuples révèle la culture des sociétés et des écrivains postcoloniaux. Ces écrivains s'attaquent à l'influence de la décolonisation. Leur tentative est de reconstruire l'identité ou de réinventer une nouvelle. De plus, le langage est une caractéristique fondamentale de toute société humaine. La langue que l'on parle en dit beaucoup sur l'identité en ce qui concerne l'origine de la personne. Dans cette étude, nous essaierons d'aborder d'abord le post colonialisme et sa relation avec le langage et l'identité, Il aborde également les questions liées à l'utilisation de la langue comme véhicule de recherche d'identité dans le roman d'Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*.

Mots Clés: La langue, Identité. *Things Fall Apart*

ملخص

تعتبر قضايا اللغة والهوية من المواضيع البارزة في دراسات الأدب في مرحلة ما بعد الاستعمار. تناول العديد من الأدباء هذه القضايا و من بينهم نجد الروائي شينوا اشيبى اذ انه صور الهوية الثقافية لشعبه في مرحلة ما بعد الاستعمار. اشيبى حاول إعادة بناء الهوية التي هدمها الاستعمار او اختراع هوية جديدة مستقلة عن ما خلفه الاستعمار من ثقافة دخيلة على شعوبهم. فالغة هي العامل الاساسي في تحديد هوية الفرد و المجتمع.

و بالتالي في هذه الدراسة، سنتطرق أولاً الى موضوع ما بعد الاستعمار وعلاقته باللغة والهوية، ومن ثم نناقش مسألة أشيبى و تمكنه في استخدام اللغة كوسيلة لاثبات الهوية في روايته الأشياء تتداعى.

الكلمات المفتاحية : اللغة، الهوية ، الأشياء تتداعى