

AFRICAN LITERATURE AS A MEANS OF RECONSTRUCTING AFRICAN IDENTITY IN A GLOBAL COMMUNITY: A STYLISTIC STUDY OF CHINUA ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART*

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Abstract

Literature has continued to play a remarkable role in reconstructing the way African socio-cultural, political, religious identity are perceived in the global community. With such household names like Achebe, Nkrumah, Nyerere, Sedar Senghor and others absolved with the energy and optimism to counter the representations of African life and practices akin to cannibalism, crudity and a dark place as famously illustrated by Major British literary writers, such as Greene, Conrad, Kipling and the likes, African traditional religion, political institution, language as well as socio-cultural behaviours have been foregrounded stylistically to rescue her all round identity from the rationalized colonial enterprise and denigrating western narrative. In line with the foregoing, this article lends its voice to answering such critical questions as; what is African literature? What is African identity? How has African literature and African literary writers attempted to reconstruct western prejudiced narrative about African identity in a global community. The study purposively selects Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as primary data and subjects same to a content analysis with insights from Geoffery N. Leech's (1969, p.62) linguistic deviation approach and Yu Xueyong's three dimensional model for achieving foregrounding to buttress how African literature has and can be of immense help in reconstructing African identity in a global community. It concludes that African philosophies of belongingness, *Ubuntu*, *EBUB*, *Ibuanyidanda* among others are apt representations of African identity which the African people had employed to order her society into a peaceful, successful and striving state and all of these philosophies are been encapsulated in African literature.

Keywords: Africa, African literature, African Identity, Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart

Introduction

African literature is a literature that shields light on African lifestyles and experiences mostly told by people of African descent or westerners who are believed to have gathered adequate information about Africa and Africans. African writers create works "which are peculiarly African and yet set in the modern world" (Mbiti 1969, 228). It relates African socio-political, cultural, religious ideologies, and identities stressing their importance in ordering a wholesome cohesive African society. From the period of culture and religious European contacts to pre-independent emancipation struggles in Africa, there appears to be some impressive awakening of the consciousness of the relevance of preserving Africa's unique culture, religion, language, political systems which have played important role in the peaceful, striving and successful outlook it has worn years before colonization and westernisation. For instance, shortly after the Uganda gained her independence in 1962, the first "African Writers' Conference" was hosted by the Makerere University in Kampala and had writers all over the world in attendance. The big questions during this conference were what it meant to be African and African writers, if African literature should necessarily be written by Africans, if it had to depict African experience and in what language it had to be written (Paasche, 2017, 11). In response to these issues raised during the conference, Booker (2003, vii-viii) points out that "...literature was about real and familiar worlds, of culture and human experience, of politics and economics, now re-routed

through a language and structure that seemed at odds with the history or geography books we were reading at the time”.

African literature has been used over the years to entertain, educate and preserve age-long traditions and cultures which before its contact with European written documentation style was passed down from one generation to the other and transmitted orally by an oral artist.

As against the popular belief of European colonizers and literary critics who have long regarded African literature as one that needs a touch of western language, style and form to be appreciated, many African writers, especially Achebe have reacted against this western criticism and notion of African literary works. Achebe has asserted that:

The Latter-day colonialist critic...given to big-brother arrogance sees the African writer as a somewhat unfinished European who with patient guidance will grow up one day and write like every other European”
(as cited in André, 2014).

The valuation of all African writers’ works from the point of view of assimilation of western mode of writing plunge African writers into some fix of hiding the core values, morals, and belief systems of Africans which are meant to be represented in African literary works. The quest to write like a European has made many African writers deviate and continue to struggle to meet up with the demands of European critics and readers.

Hence, this study attempts to critique this biased misrepresentation of African identity in the global community by streamlining peculiar African philosophies, languages, core values, religions and political systems that when foregrounded presents Africa and Africans as flourishing and wholesome society.

Statement of the Problem

It is interesting to uncover how Africa has over the years been presented as some incomplete society that needs European help to attend any form of recognition in the global community. With distracted African culture and religion, misplaced language priority, disjointed/unrealistic educational philosophies, and gerontocratic political structure, Africa and Africans appear to be in constant identity crisis and struggle for both self-emancipation and western acceptance. Giving the urgency and the need to construct the already misconstrued African identity in the global community, this body of scholarship is apt and timely. Although, many have attempted to question European/western representation of African identity and called for African socio-cultural, religious and political renaissance in philosophy, psychology, language and legal studies, Anthoroplogy and even literature, there has not been enough literature on the reconstruction of the African identity in a global community as illustrated in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and accessed through the theoretical lens of Geoffery N. Leech’s (1969, 62) linguistic deviation approach and Yu Xueyong’s three dimensional model for achieving foregrounding. Therefore, exploring how African philosophies such as belongingness, *Ubuntu*, *EBUB*, *Ibuanidanda*, African Apprenticeship system (*Igba odibo*), and African languages are useful tools in reconstructing/ resolving African identity crisis in the global space have been objectively

captured by African writers and critics becomes not just a venture that satisfies African researchers, but also an avenue for filling the gap in literature. The present study, therefore, differs from previous studies conducted in that it attempts to critique as well as reconstruct African identity in the global community drawing insight from how Chinua Achebe presents how the identity of African had been represented in the pre-colonial vis-à-vis how is now been represented in post-colonial era. It also suggests various emancipatory roles African literature and literary writers can play in pushing African cultural, religious, language and political renaissance. Lastly, it draws theoretical insight from the theories of Geoffrey N. Leech's (1969, 62) linguistic deviation approach and Yu Xueyong's three dimensional model for achieving foregrounding to buttress how writers can stylistically pass messages of social reformation and win battles of all round emancipation through their writings.

Objectives of the study

This study is aimed at exploring role of literature in reconstructing African identity in a global community with a view to foregrounding important African philosophies, cultures, unique languages and political cum economic structures which ought to be appreciated to resolve African identity crisis in the global space. To achieve this aim, the objectives are:

1. to offer perspectives on the meaning of African Literature vis-à-vis African identity;
2. to identify core African philosophies that has been instrumental in ordering the African society before European/western contact; and
3. to examine the role of African literature and African literary writers in reconstructing western prejudiced narrative about African identity in the global community.

Methodology

This study employs the qualitative research design and utilizes the content and analysis approach to achieve the outlined objectives of this study. On the one hand, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is been subjected to stylistic analysis in an effort to investigate how African philosophies that portray African unique identity are foregrounded by Africans and in African literary works. On the other hand, the theories of Geoffrey N. Leech's (1969, 62) linguistic deviation approach and Yu Xueyong's three dimensional model for achieving foregrounding are utilized to buttress how writers can stylistically pass messages of social reformation and win battles of all round emancipation through their writings. Both the data and the theoretical framework were purposively selected because they aptly capture the issues addressed in this study.

African Literature

African literature is a unique type of literature that relates African stories and experiences with a reflection of the African culture, traditions, values system and norms using major African narrative ingredients such as proverbs, idioms, riddles, myths and the panegyric

mode of story-song technique to add sonority to the narrative. It is properly appreciated as a creative writing of a sort within the bounds and ambience of African world-view and can be presented in prose, dramatic or poetic form. Prior to the introduction of western literature, Africans entertained and inculcated important moral values, traditions and belief systems using literature either in form of storytelling, songs or proverbs. This type of literature requires a storyteller otherwise known as an oral artist, an audience, and an oral moment, that is, when both the oral artist and audience are in the mood for such oral performance. It was transmitted orally and passed down from one generation to another.

African literature is literature that has its root from Africa and deals with African issues. It is a form of literature that is peculiar to the Africans because of African varieties it possess. Put differently, African literature is a literature of Africans, by Africans and for Africans. Although, this definition does not stand in all cases because, a European who has lived in Africa and has been able to understand African ideologies, norms, values and culture can also tell African stories. While on the other hand, an African who may have lived in Africa but does not understand and appreciate African ideologies, culture, language and tradition may not be able to write African literature. To tell African story well, a writer must have understood to a large extent the history, tradition and belief system of the African.

The above view has been one of the essential discrepancy between African Literature and western literature in that while western literature perceive literature as a separation of art and content, African literature combines both art and content thereby, making such literature both entertaining and educating as asserted by George (1996, 303):

...Africans do not radically separate art from teaching. Rather than write or sing for beauty in itself, African writers, taking their cue from oral literature, use beauty to help communicate important truths and information to society. Indeed, an object is considered beautiful because of the truths it reveals and the communities it helps to build

Literature depicts man and his environment and the true origin and story of man and his environment can best be told through their literature. Literature across ages and continents has served as an embodiment and interpreter of people's culture, a conveyor of a people's language as well as their philosophy, politics, sociological and psychological identity. According to Lencer (2016, 3), "an African writer therefore can be said to be one writing about Africa from an African point of view with an African audience in mind". The preoccupation of such writer is to produce works that capture African experiences and lifestyle and sale same to the world. This is in line with Tanure (1992) view that literature is community-oriented and didactic for ethical and moral instruction. It draws on the beliefs, world-view and folkloric heritage of African people, (p.43). Hence, African literature can be viewed from two perspectives. One, from the entertainment perspective presented in form of songs, folk-tales, and two, from its didactic perspective capturing important messages which helps to order the society. This takes into cognizance Irele's (1981, 10) definition of African literature as serving both aesthetic purposes and shading light on Africa's socio-cultural structures:

The term 'Africa' appears to correspond to a geographical notion but we know that, in practical terms, it also takes in those areas of collective awareness that have been determined by ethnic, historical and sociological factors, all these factors, as they affect and express themselves in our literature, marking off for it a broad area of reference. Within this area of reference then, and related to certain aspects that are intrinsic to the literature, the problem of definition involves as well a consideration of aesthetic modes in their intimate correlation to the cultural and social structures which determine and define the expressive schemes of African peoples and societies

African literature is in sharp contrast with western definition of literature as serving only aesthetic values but African literature goes beyond mere aesthetics, that is, art for art sake and foregrounds its didactic value. To affirm this position Tanure (1992, 44) posits that “culturally speaking, no art for art's sake in Africa. Every literary work has a social function. Songs, prayers, praise chants and abuse are placed at the service of the community. Hence, every literary piece rooted in African culture and tradition has an accompanying message as against western art fun-filled literary writings.

African literature as a Reflection of African Identity

Literature has been instrumental in defining exactly what African identities should be, pointing out overarching African identity crisis in a global community and recommending proactive steps to be taken in reconstructing and/or resolving the identity crisis thereby integrating Africa and Africans into the same progressive global landscape.

Throughout the African continent, Africans have backgrounded their cultural values, languages, and philosophy which is an embodiment of their identity and instilled national consciousness in them. Representing Africa based on skin colour, colonial experiences, and economic underdevelopment is a huge disservice on the people of African origin and it is a deleterious indicator of reason many Africans have decided to abandon their identity and distinctiveness in pursuit of western authorization. More so, Efisi (2008, 90) affirms that “...the African is not determined by the colour of his skin, nor the experiences of colonialism, slavery, poverty or underdevelopment. Rather, he is one who embodies the entire heritage of Africa and at the same time feels the need to change the African environment, not in isolation, but to meet with the challenges of global development”. There is more to being an African than skin colour or geographical location and this is the authentic definition of African identity. It is our cultural belief, religious acclamation, political structure, language, and philosophy, means of education and wealth creation.

Africans have their languages reflect their cultures and beliefs. These cultural belief system peculiarly define their religious belief; what is deemed right or wrong and are adhered by all. But, the effort made by Africans in recent time to speak, act, dress, or behave like the westerners have become a major cause of identity crisis in African. A case of possessing what Efisi (2008, 90) calls “blurred identity problem”. Nkrumah (1968, 78) captures the root of this identity crisis as unhealthy exposure of the African minds through contacts, trade, slavery and colonialism. The infiltration of western religion in particularly

Christianity and Islam, system of selecting political leaders as against the traditional belief that the gods and ancestor have a hand in deciding who mediates between them and the people, and even the western language now serving as mother tongue (L1) of most African children have further plunged African into disturbing identity cataclysm. Reiterating Nkrumah's view, Maziri pointed out in what he termed the "triple heritage" that the "Afro-ethnic," "Arab-Islamic," and "Euro-Christian exerted a great influence on the identity crisis African is faced with in the global community, (Maziri as cited in Efisi, 2008, 91). Furthermore, Falaiye (1996, 97) identified the crisis of economic development, the dilemma of control and class formation as three major problems of African identity even as they continue to understand their identity in the global space.

With all the cultural cum religious, philosophical and political revolution taking place in Africa in contemporary times, many African writers have continued to lend their voice in the campaign to give primacy to African values and cultural identities because it is what defines who African truly are. Wright (1970, 6) has voiced his discontentment in the morbid intrusion of western culture and dynamic ascendancy that have thrown Africa into a cacophony of African identity crisis and a quest for emancipation at all levels:

We had our own civilization before we were captured and carried off to this land. You may smile when we call the way of life we lived in Africa 'civilization,' but in numerous respects the culture of many of our tribes was equal to that of the land from which the lave captors came. We smelted irons, danced, made music and recited folk poems; we sculptured, worked in glass, spun cotton and wool, wove baskets and cloths...We had our own literature, our own system of law, religion, medicine, science and education', we painted in colour upon rocks, we raised cattle, sheep and goats, we planted and harvested grains- in short, centuries before the Roman rule, we lived as men.

Wright aptly captured the ordered nature of the African people before western contact. This lifestyle demonstrated in African cultural belief system of peaceful coexistence, hard work, philosophy of belongingness, *UBUNTU*, *EBUB*, *Ibuanyidanda*, religious tolerance, democratic political structure, social inclusivity all rounded up to make Africa a wholesome entity that needed no modification.

Although, many western critics have argued that Africa had some unwholesome practices which needed urgent abolishment like the killing of twins, osu practice, the belief that a king must have people to accompany him to the land of the dead and so on, these practices were already wearing off as many Africans realized their irrelevance, hence, the African man needed not necessarily a Westerner to assist in abolishing these practices.

Theoretical Framework

Stylistics

Stylistics means the application of style to achieve a set goal. The peculiar nature of Africans to weave in morals in stories and to produce works of art that depict the reality of

the African man and his environment propelled earliest African literary writers to move away from art as an aesthetic piece to art as a reforming/reconstructing piece. Leech and Short (2007) treat stylistics as the way of the writer to convey message to the reader (as cited in Abdul, Madiha, Sofia & Nida, 2015, 10). The way and manner a writer presents his thoughts is done in an attempt to pass certain message across to his readers. Such a writer can choose to abide or opt out of set rules guiding a particular writing but this deviation would be carried out with an intention to foreground certain issues and development. Stylistics is the deployment of style in literary writing and Wales (2011) defines style as a set of features peculiar to, or characteristics of an author: his or language habit or idiolect. It is an attempt to “link choices in text to social and cultural context” (Thornborrow & Wareing, 1998, as cited in Abdul, Madiha, Sofia & Nida, 2015, 10).

One of the commonest approaches to stylistics which sprouted up from style as choice approach is style as deviation approach and means to move away from stipulated rules, regulations or codes of writing either to suit readers’ expectation, achieve clarity and brevity or for mere aesthetics. Therefore, the analysis of this work will be anchored from style as a deviation from the norm approach. In modern literature, there have become a constant deployment of the deviational style of putting down thoughts, ideas and message either to suit the expected readers or for mere aesthetics. Other times, a writer may choose to deviate from the norms of writing, be it linguistic or literary in a bid to achieve clarity, brevity or simply, for ornamentation. This notion of style as deviation stems from the believe that there are rules, conventions and regulations guiding different activities of man, be it academic or secular and once these conventions are not followed or complied with, there is a deviation. Modern literary works are flooded with numerous instances of deviation usually employed for stylistic, pragmatic or purely linguistic purposes. It is often believed that there is almost no literary work that does not involve some sort of deviation from ordinary language and assumes that the subject of linguistic deviation should not be neglected because in some cases all of the importance and influence of a literary work depends on it (Shamisa, 2004, 240). Similarly, Shafii-Kadkani (1989,158) posits that poetry which is a branch of literature is “nothing but breaking the norms of ordinary and logical language” in a bid to bring to the fore intended messages or to paint language different from its everyday usage. With the development of the “defamiliarization” concept into a more systemic concept which is “foregrounding” by one of the Prague Linguistic circle, Mukarovsky (1932), style as deviation from the norm has been seen as an aspect of foregrounding.

Leech (1969) identified eight (8) classification of style as deviation which include; lexical, sematic, phonological, morphological, grammatical, use of dialect, use of register, and historical deviation.

Lexical and morphological deviations both attempt to create words that diverges from their ordinary expressive usages with the deployment of morphemes which occurs majorly in form of neologism (introducing an entirely new word into a literary piece), affixation (attaching inflectional morphemes in front, middle or back of words), compounding, conversion or the use of acronyms.

Semantics deals with how literary writers deviate from known meanings of words and expressions mostly not for ornamentation but in an attempt to solve a particular problem in the society. According to Eman (2014, 42), semantic deviation has to do with the “deviation that shows how an ordinary simple word can have an astonishing meaning” and produce denotative, connotative, collocative, affective, thematic or stylistic meanings based on the writer’s intentions. Semantic deviation can be done through ‘transference’ which is the act of transferring the meaning of words to what they do not explicitly represent with the help of such figurative devices like metaphor, synecdoche, and metonymy. On the other hand, semantic deviation can take on what Li and Shi (2015) regards as ‘honest deception.’ Simply put, honest deceptions are paradoxical expressions employed to manipulate words for the sake of emphasis (Fowler, 1926, 608) and employ figurative devices such as hyperbole, litotes and irony.

Phonological deviation is related to sounds created for the purpose of creating music through the use of rhymes, alliterations, repetitions, onomatopoeia and so on.

Grammatical deviation occurs when a writer abandons or neglects stipulated rules of grammar while structuring his/her sentences. For instance, punctuation marks, tenses and even sentence structures are often neglected or used wrongly in most literary works and this could be consciously done by the poet for stylistic purposes.

The standard dialect cannot fulfil the needs of most African writers in need of projecting African core values and identities to the outside world, hence, the need to incorporate African dialects and transliterate them to suit their desired messages. They often borrow "refined dialects" which Leech (1969) calls *Dialectism*, (as cited in Eman, 2014, 214) to assist in appropriately relating their emotions and messages. This means that the literary artist “borrows features of socially or regionally defined dialects” (Hosseini & Vahid, 2011, 1332) that is, the use of words, expressions or structure which are from a particular dialect but differs from the standard language of writing

According to Eman (2014), “register (also called "professional dialect") is represented in the use of special vocabulary, grammar, etc. These are used by people in certain situations and events. Register is not used by all people, but only a limited group of people. Sometimes writers use "register mixing" which means different registers (Leech, 1969, 42-52).

Historical deviation relates to the use of archaic or outdated words or expressions by a writer to either create some kind of effect or to enhance the aesthetical value of a particular poem. Latin, Greek or French words and expression such as hitherto, thou, ere, whither, farther...etc can be used to beautify a literary piece. Leech regards this type of deviation as “archaism” and defines it as “the survival of the past into the language of present time” (Leech, 1969, 52).

Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* will be subjected to a stylistic analysis, with insights from Leech’s (1969) theory of linguistic deviation and Yu Xueyong’s (2007) three dimensional model for achieving foregrounding. While the formal identifies the various instances of style as deviation from the norm, the later handles how these sub-categories of deviation

were employed to foreground Achebe's intended message of drawing Africans back to their history and repainting the misconstrued African image by the westerners. However, because not all the subcategories are represented in the novel, the study will focus on realization model which comprises phonological and graphological deviations, the form model consisting of grammar and lexical deviation, and semantics which encompasses denotation, connotation and other types of meaning.

Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe

Things Fall Apart written by Chinua Achebe (1930-2013) was published in 1958 as a response novel to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* that described Africa as savages and a people needing some kind of enlightenment by the Europeans. It is written in third-person omniscient perspective, thereby giving the narrator the privilege of knowing and communicating the thoughts and feelings of other characters in the novel. Set in the outskirts of a small fictional village, Umuofia in Southeastern part of Nigeria and relating the cultural, political and religious contact clashes between the Africans and European missionaries in the village that left the whole clan projected by the protagonist, Okonkwo struggling to come to terms with the realities accompanying the western infiltration.

The narrative structure of *Things Fall Apart* chronicles the life of the protagonist, Okonkwo as a resilient young man in Umuofia striving to break away from his father, Unoka's life of zero achievement and honour, his seven years exile in Mbanta after he mistakenly fires a shot that killed the sixteen years old son of Ogbuefi Ezeudu, the oldest man in the clan and the one that had forewarned him not to have a hand in Ikemefuna, his surrogate son's death at his burial and finally, his return to Umuofia to discover that things have truly fallen apart with western enculturation, new political institutions and advanced cultural and religious alterations which ultimately led Okonkwo to taking his own life.

Stylistic Projections of Achebe's Things Fall Apart as a Reconstruction of African Identity in a global World

The Realization Model

This model encompasses the graphological and phonological stylistic deviations and they are powerful foregrounding tools used in both formal and informal literary settings.

Graphology deals with the physical properties of the novel. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is a 209 pages work patterned into 25 chapters and structured in a way that readers can easily depict its plot and themes. The structuring of the novel written in 1958 clearly captures the three major periods that shaped African identity. Firstly, within the first thirteen chapters, Achebe captures the ordering of Umuofia who believe that wealth and titles are achieved through physical work, having large barns, marrying many wives and the presence of a person's *chi*; personal god. It is, however, a reflection of the pre-colonial African society displaying the agrarian nature of the Igbo and how whoever could not fit into this time was thought weak as in the case of Okonkwo's father, Unoka whom he resented greatly for having no barns and taking no titles:

Extract 1

...Even as a little boy he had resented his father's failure and weakness, and even now he still remembered how he had suffered when a playmate had told him that his father was *agbala*. That was how Okonkwo first came to know that *agbala* was not only another name for a woman, it could also mean a man who had taken no title... (Chapter 2, page 12).

This belief system influenced how Okonkwo ruled his household instilling in them the spirit of hard work and resilience and necessitated his resentment for Nwoye, his son whom he feared may end up like his father, “a lazy and improvident man who was quite incapable of thinking about tomorrow” (Chapter 1, pg. 2)

Another noticeable graphological characteristics of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is the writing pattern. The novel was written in simple diction and simple sentence structure and embellished with proverbs which Achebe asserts are the palm oil with which words are eaten. This written style creates a sense of formality that befits a historical narrative as against the lofty, sophisticated literary style many European writers had fashioned their works. This was engineered by the belief that literature as a work of art has to possess a bit of sophistication paying little or no attention to their thematic preoccupations.

Proverbs are effective tools of communication in Igbo land because they demand a certain level of understanding to interpret their meanings. According to Kuskovskaya (1987, 3), “proverbs and sayings are short sentences expressing a well known truth or a common fact familiar to experience.” It is also said in African parlance that once a proverb is interpreted to a person, it means that the bride price of such a person's mother is in vain. These proverbs also showcased the philosophies that helped Umuofia (Africa) people order their society. Proverbs floods Achebe's work not just *Things Fall Apart* but his trilogy and other works he wrote afterwards. For instance, Okonkwo while seeking favour from Nwakibia, the wealthy man in his village, he opens his speech with a proverb to massage his ego and prepare the ground for a favourable consideration of his request:

Extract 2

“...I have brought you this little kola. As our people say, a man who pays respect for the great paves the way for his own greatness. I have come to pay you my respect and also ask a favour” (chapter 3, pg 14).

From the above extract, it is obvious that Africans honour individuals who have achieved certain feats in the community as can be seen in the case of Nwakibia. Nwakibia has “three huge barns, nine wives and thirty children... taken the highest but one title that one could take in the clan” (chapter 3, pg. 12). These honours do not only come through reverence for such people but also by awarding different titles to celebrate their achievements.

Another notable proverb in the novel that showcases strong African philosophy and help Umuofia people order their society into a free, fair, egalitarian community is the philosophy of belongingness.

Extract 3

We shall all live. We pray for life, children, a good harvest and happiness. You will have what is good for you and I will have what is good for me. Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too. If one says no to the other, let his wing break" (chapter 3, pg. 12).

The above extract shades light on one of the key philosophies guiding the ways of life of the African people which is unity in diversity, accommodating spirit. It is believed that the world is big enough for all persons to live in irrespective of qualification, economic status, political position or religious affiliation. The traditional African society before European contact co-existed freely with one another except in rare occasions such where a person is said to be an *Osu* or *ejima*. These set of people were regarded as cursed and not fit to co-habit with free born in the society. In one occasion, Okonkwo had attempted to degrade a fellow kinsman whom according to him had no title by calling him a woman, "this meeting is for men" (chapter 4, pg 18). Other elders at the gathering had rebuked him asserting that Okonkwo was only fortunate to have achieved what he had achieved:

Everybody at the kindred meeting took sides with *Osugo* when Okonkwo called him a woman. The oldest man present said sternly that those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble (chapter 4, pg.18).

The elders were invariably admonishing Okonkwo to practice the philosophy of *EBUB* (*Egbe ghere ugo egbere*) and re-echoing one of the cardinal point for understanding the African view of humankind which is the belief that "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti, 1969, 108).

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is written in though not plain language as it is flooded with proverbs, idioms and the likes but in a simple diction and simple sentence structure whose meaning can be deciphered without consulting the dictionary.

The phonological aspect of the realization model is another notable deviational written pattern of Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* and clearly employed for stylistic purpose. Phonological deals with sound patterning in a literary work of art. In the case of *Things Fall Apart*, the phonological aspect performs both stylistic purpose and also used for emphasis or a foregrounding tool. There are metaphors, simile, personification, hyperbole, allusion, etc.

Metaphors strong figurative devices that make hidden or implicit comparison between two things which are unrelated, but shares certain common features. For instance, in *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe relied on metaphors to present the lifestyle and belief system of the people of Umuofia (Africa) creating room for the audience to align themselves with the images he created in the novel.

For instance, in Umuofia, yam is regarded as the king of crops and not meant to be planted by the weak. Whoever wanted to cultivate yam in Umuofia must be ready to till journey to

the thick bushes that are mature enough for cultivation and till the ground well so as not to cultivate their yams on weak soil like his father Unoka usually did:

Extract 4

'His mother and sisters worked hard enough, but they grew women's crops, like coco-yams, beans, and cassava. Yam, the king of crops, was a man's crop.'

Extract 4 uses yam as a metaphor for masculinity, strength and vigor. It is an attribute that qualified men in Umuofia to not only be in wealth like Nwakaibia but also take up more wives and titles. Men of valour in Umuofia (Africa) are those whose barns are big enough to not only feed his immediate household but also cater for others.

Another metaphorical statement in the novel is one comparing the relationship between Okonkwo and his first son, Nwoye:

Extract 5

“Living fire begets cold impotent ash” (**chapter**)

Here, Okonkwo compares his son Nwoye who enjoys sitting around his mother to listen to her stories to himself whom many in Umuofia had described as a “Roaring flame.” Incidence that further heightened his resentment for Nwoye is his conversion to Christianity, thus, instilling in him the fear that Nwoye may end up like his grandfather Unoka and making him wish that “Ezema were a boy.”

Simile which a figure of speech that makes direct comparison with the use of the words ‘as’ and ‘like.’ floods Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. Some instances of these figurative device were used to describe the wrestling skill of Okonkwo who at a very tender age defeated Amalinze, a notable wrestler whose back has never touched the ground. The omniscient narrator described the protagonist thus:

“Okonkwo was as slippery as a fish in water,” (Chapter 1, pg. 1)

We could also see the resilient nature in Okonkwo and his desire to succeed by all means in the way he toiled on his farm from dawn to dusk:

“He threw himself into it like one possessed” (pg. 19)

The above is used to describe him with a set goal, and also giving his best to see that the goal is actualized.

Furthermore, there description of the kind of harvest Okonkwo recorded when he borrowed yam seedlings from Nwakibia:

“...That year the harvest was sad, like a funeral...” (pg. 17)

A ‘funeral’ is usually a bad omen, because, the dead never return back to life. Hence, the narrator compares the year’s harvest to a funeral in order to foreground the level of loss that was witnessed by the people of Umuofia.

There are also instances of personification, like; “the night was quite” (pg. 5), “the year had gone mad” (pg.17), “Okonkwo was choked with hate” (pg. 195) and so on. These attributions of animate things with inanimate painted in the reader the picture of the nature of the subject of discourse.

There are also hyperboles, onomatopoeia, symbolism, irony helping the omniscient narrator aptly convey his desired message to his audience/reader.

The Form Model

This comprises grammar and lexical deviation that can be found in the novel. While incorporating dialectical language varieties, proverbs, idioms and so on in *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe painstakingly selected words, phrase and sentences that help him convey his message to his intended audience. Because of the wider audience he intended to reach and the thematic preoccupation of the novel, Achebe deviated from using complex sentences which is one of the prerequisite of an embellished sophisticated European style of writing to a simpler sentence structures.

Also, owing to the fact that the novel is written in third person omniscient narrative techniques, third person pronouns “he,” “him,” and “his” appearing either at the subjective, objective or possessive case take prominence in the novel.

Lexically, the Igbo lexicon took the centre stage in the novel and mentioned for 179 times with words such as *egwugwu*, *obi* and *ani* dominating the discourse. This is a deliberate stylistic deviational pattern aimed at giving the Igbo language some level of prominence especially those with no direct English equivalents.

According to Larsson (2007), most of the words/phrases used in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* are local words with no real equivalence in English. While some words focused on family relations such as *umunna*, *umuada*, and *Nne*. Many related issues of religious belief systems of the Igbo tribe in some way, for example *egwugwu*, *chi*, *ogbanje*, *iyi-uwa* and so on. Others treated the homestead or village grounds, such as *obi* and *ilo* (pg.14).

At the morphological level, Achebe code-mixed some of his sentences not just for stylistic purposes but also to include the tradition, language and culture of Umuofia (African) people in his novel. This style of written made the novel relatable with the overall way of life of the people, thereby, incorporating the philosophy of belongingness in the world where European language and ideologies are said to play superior roles in literature. Some of the code-mixed expressions are:

“He played the ogene” (pg.3)

“I sacrifice a cock to ani, the owner of the land” (pg.12)

“When a man says yes, his chi says yes also” (pg.20)

The Semantic Model

Semantics deals with meaning and it is the major preoccupation of most modern poetry that have long deviated from the conventional expectancies of poems for solely, aesthetic purposes. Most Post-colonial and post-independent African literary writers irrespective of the genres focused on tackling socio, political, economic, religious as well as ethno-cultural renaissance of Africa and not just written for ark sake.

Acbebe's *Things Fall Apart* is one of the earliest literary works that projected Africa in a different light in the global space by reconstructing the misconstrued perception of Africa as a dark place and a people who have no voice, therefore, requiring European voice to be heard.

The novel relates the customary, socio-political and religious practices of Umuofia clan (Africa) the exigencies of intelligibility and realistic representation which invariably gives credence to the enormous employment of proverbs, idioms, English code mixed with Igbo language and different narrative styles coming together to relate an authentic African philosophies of life in general

With the use of different literary devices such as metaphors, simile, personification, symbolism and others, the thematic preoccupation of the novel, though, written in simple sentence structure cannot be easily deduced by everyone. For instance, in the extract below, Acbebe draws a deduction from the story illustrating it with an anecdote:

Never kill a man who says nothing. Those men of Abame were fools. What did they know about that man?' He ground his teeth again and told a story to illustrate his point. 'Mother kite once that her daughter to bring food. She went, and brought back a duckling. "You have done very well", said mother Kite to her daughter "but tell me, what did the mother of this duckling say when you swooped and carried its child away"? "It said nothing" replied the young Kite. "It just walked away". "You must return the duckling" said mother Kite. "There is something amnions about the silence". And so daughter Kite returned the duckling and took a chick instead. "What did the mother of this chick do"? Asked the old Kite? "It cried and raved and cursed me" said the young Kite. "Then we can eat the chick" said her mother. "There is nothing to fear from someone who shouts". Those men of Abame were fools' (112).

The extract above is metaphorical in that it relates the death of the Igbo (African) culture. Here Achebe creatively uses language surrounded by the African scenario to capture the anti-imperialist activities and the reactions that attended their activities. He advises the ex-colonialists as well as the corrupt leaders and their colonial protégés not to misconstrue the silence of Africans and the masses for cowardice. Achebe uses extended metaphor of the kite's raid on the ducklings and chicks to make a socio-political statement by demonstrating how the people are torn apart between accepting the new ways or falling back on their old ways and persistently fighting it out with the colonial master. The stiff resistance against the dominance of the western culture keeps Okonkwo far from his people ultimately leading to taking his life.

Okonkwo's helpless situation is what many people in Africa are faced with today, that is, identity crisis. The world has advanced technologically, culturally, in terms of education and enlightenment, politically but, Africans instead of embracing their unique cultural, religion, ideologies, philosophies, political cum economic structures and strive to engage in healthy competition with the western world have settled for European authentications years after gaining independence. African like Okonkwo has continued in wallow in identity crisis that if not handled properly could lead us to total crumbling and forfeiture of who we really are as a people.

Discussion of Findings

From the analysis above, it has become obvious that Africa as represented in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* had a well ordered society ruled by moralism, religious tolerance, political inclusivity, out-based philosophy of education and a well-rounded economic structure. Umuofia which serves as the setting of the novel and represents the entire Igbo clan in south east, Nigeria, and by extension, Africa was certainly not a dark place as described by Conrad in his "Heart of Darkness." Achebe attempted in his work to debunk popular misrepresentation of Africa in the consciousness of both Europe and African who in contemporary times are engaged in culture cum religious and political renaissance. Rather than align with the portrayal of Africa as primitive, barbaric, crude, and without proper education. Achebe foregrounded how Africans only acquired skills relevant to their immediate environment. Hence, skills, knowledge were acquired based on what was needed at that time. For instance, because of the prestige that yam (agriculture), the king of crops commanded in the precolonial era and the fact that most African society at that time were agrarians, it was described as a must have for every strong, brave and success-oriented Umuofia man. This reverence for yam symbolizes the belief that whoever could cultivate it in large quantity is bound to possess large barns, invariably having more than enough to even sell and take up titles and as many wives as he wishes. Nwankwo had six wives and this was possible because he had barns filled with yam seedlings, hence, he could cater for every marital expense and still take proper care of his household.

Albeit, there were other individuals in Africa skilled in craft making, wrestling, storytelling and the likes which many critics have presented as improvident, weak and failures like Unoka and Nwoye because of the time that produced them, contemporary African society could view these characters as very resourceful and contributing their quotas to societal growth and development. Unoka in present day Africa could make a great musical artist like the Osita Osadebe, Fela Kuti, P'Square, Wizkida and the rest, the great story tellers could have produced more Achebes, Chimamanda, Wole Soyinka, Senghor, Nkrumah and others and the likes of Amalinze could have produced great wrestlers too. What is notable in all these is that Africans are not lazy. They share the philosophy that if a child prepares himself well, he could dine with the elders/wealthy. But, because of the agrarian society that Umuofia people found themselves in before colonization, many relied on agriculture, a skill that requires physical strength to be recognized.

More so, Umuofia people practised what Igbo people call '*Igba odibo*' or '*igba boyi*.' *Igba odibo* is a method of apprenticeship where a person is sent to understudy a particular master for certain period of time, and afterwards, he gets empowered by such a benevolent master. It was not only a means of empowerment in Igbo land but produced individuals competent in several skills. Although, this skill was backgrounded in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* because of the importance it placed on agriculture, but, many people especially those from not too prominent families engaged in this kind of empowerment and informal education. Thus, it produced highly skilled individuals who could engage in healthy competition in their various professions.

African language was also revered in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* in that, we saw such Igbo lexicons like *ani* (land), *eze nwanyi* (priestess), *ilo* (village square), *obi* (compound), *ogene*, *udu*, *ekwe* among others dominating the novel not only for stylistic purposes but, also for cultural and dialectical perseverance and relevance. Achebe also code-switched and code-

mixed certain words, phrases and sentences such as “he played the *ogene*” (pg. 3), “I sacrificed a cock to *ani*” (pg. 12), “when a man says yes, his *chi* says yes also” (pg.20) all in an attempt to weave in the traditional culture as well as religious belief system in Igbo land which helped him order their society at that time.

It is important to reiterate that major identity crisis faced in African in recent time stems from religio-cultural, ideological and philosophical contacts with the western world. Inspired by Africa’s desire to be, act and behave more western than the western colonizers, Africa has been plunged into identity crisis, hence, producing individuals, ideologies, education and technologies that neither serve African needs nor represent authentic African lifestyle in its entirety. It is this identity crisis inspired by a misconstrued European narrative of Africa and Africans that Achebe attempted to handle in his novel, *Things Fall Apart*.

Conclusion

This article has attempted to lend its voice to answering such critical questions as; what is African literature? What is African identity? How has African literature and African literary writers attempted to reconstruct western prejudiced narrative about African identity in a global community. Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* served as primary data and was subjected to a content analysis with insights from Geoffrey N. Leech’s (1969, 62) linguistic deviation approach and Yu Xueyong’s three dimensional model for achieving foregrounding to buttress how African literature has and can be of immense help in reconstructing African identity in a global community. Findings revealed that Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* gave Africa a voice to tell her story as against the prejudiced narrative of some European writers like Conrad. More so, in telling this authentic Africa story, Achebe deviated in his style of writing. Against the supposed standard of writing in sophisticated and embellished language, whereby, works of art are produced with little or no didactic effects, Achebe presents his novel in a simple sentence structure, embellished it with proverbs, idioms and mythical stories, and also, transliterated many expressions especially those with no English equivalent. He code-switched and code-mixed many English words and expressions with Igbo word in an attempt to give credence to the African language. The study concludes that African philosophies of belongingness, *Ubuntu*, *EBUB*, *Ibunanyidanda* among others are apt representations of African identity which the African people had employed to order her society into a peaceful, successful and striving state and all of these philosophies are been encapsulated in African literature and once these philosophies are maintained, African will become a force to reckon with in the global space.

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