

**THE PORTRAIT OF A WRITER AS A WORDSMITH
DISCOURSE TECHNIQUES IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S *THINGS
FALL APART***

Asika, Ikechukwu Emmanuel
Anambra State University, Igbariam
asikaichechukwu@yahoo.com

Introduction

Discourse analysis is a branch of linguistic study that places emphasis on the use of language in any discourse. According to R. Fasold: "the study of discourse is the study of any aspect of language use" (65). Brown and Yule opine that "The analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use. As such, it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions, which these forms are designed to serve in human affairs (1). In the view of Nicola Woods: "Discourse Analysis is that branch of linguistics which deals with the application of approaches to analyze written, spoken or sign language. Discourse is, at the very least, language plus context' (x).

Discourse Techniques on the other hand refer to the various techniques, style of expression and manner of composition which a particular writer adopts to create a desired work of art. This differs from one writer to another and a study of these various techniques is a veritable way to examine a writer's peculiar style of writing, choice of words and diction, manner of composition and mastery and usage of several subtle artistic ingredients that heighten effect and yield the beauty of any work of art more effectively than others. According to Ofoegbu Cyril:

Discourse Techniques refers to the language technique used by authors to achieve an aim in any given piece. It refers to the language habit of a writer. It looks at the use of a language by a writer especially in a work of literature. These Discourse Techniques vary from author to author; writer to writer etc. Discourse Techniques have been employed by very many writers and to this end we can say that very many writers have evolved a kind of discourse technique used by them alone. Some

discourse analysts may call it stylistics but I have chosen to call it discourse technique (2).

Writers employ various elements, ideas and techniques which help them to arrive at the message of their writings and give their works the desired shape, form, content and pattern and to this we shall soon turn with special reference to the work of Chinua Achebe.

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is reputed as one of the best books to have ever come from Africa. It is one of the pioneering works that laid the foundation and set the scene for Africa literature. The novel is often referred to as an 'African bible' in the sense that we can obtain glances of our African past, our way of life, the way we once lived, our culture, our dignity, and our pride but above all our literature uniquely set apart from the bulk of literary style and manner of composition the Europeans would have loved to impose on 'primitive' Africa, as they once termed us, in their claims to salvage us from our primitivism, barbarism, and redundancy. Chinua Achebe sets out in *Things Fall Apart* to write a novel that touches the core of our culture and with that singular artistic gesture, he is able to prove and showcase that Africans did not hear of culture for the first time from them. Achebe is able to prove that we have culture, we have philosophy of great depth and we have poetry too. It is all these that we lost to colonialism and this is what we must collectively strive to regain. This he puts across in these words:

African people did not hear of culture for the first time from the Europeans; ... their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty. That they had poetry and above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African people all but lost during the colonial period, and it is this that we must now regain. The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity and self-respect (8).

Achebe is able to prove our African culture by looking into our cultural past and by selecting various elements of our culture, our heritage and tradition to be manifested to the world. Achebe is not a selfish and romantic writer. He was not interested in romanticizing African culture and having an 'unreal' sense of

nostalgia for 'one glorious past' but Achebe as a faithful artist, recorded the experiences of his society with all its imperfection to show that Africa is in the journey of metamorphosis to a refined and civilized way of life. He is deeply interested in giving his African people their voices and reclaiming their pride of culture that was almost lost in the era of colonialism. It is in line with the above the Mpalive-Hangson Msiska explains about *Things Fall Apart*:

Conceived as a response to the denigration of Africa in colonialist novels such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* (1939), *Things Fall Apart* stretches the novel form to create a space for the authentic African subject and his or her world. It seeks to go beyond the colonial depiction of grunting 'savages' and 'cannibals' with no language or cultural and historical links to their physical environment and, as such, it reverses her colonial gaze in order to reveal an essential humanity that the colonial novel either deliberately aided or repressed or was incapable of articulating (1).

So many things have been written and said about Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* that a researcher will have a great difficulty selecting what to review as pertinent and what to exclude. We shall resist that temptation here and address the discourse technique used by the writer to achieve the sublimity associated with this classic, *Things Fall Apart*. One remarkable thing about Achebe is inherent in the fact that he wrote his novel when there were not so many models in African novels for one to copy from, unlike what we have today. Achebe wrote virtually 'out of nothing'. He laid the foundation and it is not surprising the long list of awards *Things fall Apart* has continued to receive. Translated in over 58 languages of the world, the highest any African writer could boast of. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is an 'immortal novel' from an 'immortal writer' that shaped the scene of African literature and created a path trodden by so many talented writers over the years and many more will still tread that path all to the glory of African literature.

Discourse Techniques in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

There exist many techniques employed in the novel which are part of the ingredients and tools that make the work of Achebe unique,

rare and appealing in all dimensions. Many of the critics have recognized over the years and continue to recognize and project these techniques and style of adaptation. This study hopes to support and validate some of the earlier views advanced by the scholars and critics and at the same time to fill some yawning gaps in the criticism of the monumental work of one of Africa's best writers. We shall examine the various techniques used in the novel under a number of sub-headings, touching on proverbs, folktale, humour, and language.

Proverb as a Discourse Technique in *Things Fall Apart*

Several scholars have attempted to define the proverb. Proverb, in the words of Donatus Nwoga, is a "terse statement which figuratively gives expression to traditional wisdom relevant to a given situation"; While Chinua Achebe views it as "the palm oil with which words are eaten". Emmanuel Obiechina perceives it as "the kernel which contains the wisdom of traditional people. [Proverbs] are philosophical and moral expositions shrunk to a few words (156). Rems Umeasiegbu, for his part, sees proverb as any expression recognized by a people as embodying the wisdom and philosophy of their ancestors. He admitted that the definition has its pitfall but the strength lies in the words recognized by people as embodying the wisdom and philosophy of their ancestors. This he believes is important; for an outsider cannot tell the people whose lore he is studying what a proverb is (9).

Onuekwusi Jasper sums up these definitions by looking at proverbs from their major and peculiar characteristics. He believes that they are pleasant expressions which adorn the rhetoric of a people. Proverbs constitute a part of the oral tradition of a people, which is unconsciously acquired and also used unconsciously. In his words:

A proverb is a philosophical, allusive and metaphorical citation that gives credence to traditional truth and wisdom. It is allusive and metaphorical because it refers to some truth outside itself. It is philosophical because it is a product of a long period of reasoning and observation which expresses some timeless truth (17).

In all these varying definitions, something could be deciphered which could account for the general characteristics of proverb and that is the idea that proverbs are short and terse in nature and they are embodiment of wisdom and philosophy about life and nature formulated in time past by our forefathers in their bid to understand and explain their world better. This is what makes proverb as an element of folklore, vital and enduring in our African society, even in our contemporary age.

Proverbs have become tools with which writers justify the actions of characters, criticize bad ethical and immoral behaviours while advocating for right virtues and morals. Through the use of proverbs, writers try to express the wealth of philosophy, wisdom and perception of life as they affect and control their community. These wisdom and rich philosophies were handed over from the ancestors and their use is an index of continuity with the past. By so doing, African writers enhance the plot of their stories, sharpen their characterizations and influence their storyline to suit their purposes and moreover give their works a touch of African beauty.

Proverb plays an integral role in *Things Fall Apart* for one can hardly tell effectively an Africa story that involves her rich cultural past and heritage in isolation from the rich proverbs that are part of the lore of the people. Achebe made abundant use of proverbs in his work and one may argue that these proverbs are not accidental but were intentionally incorporated by the writer as part of his techniques to achieve a desired style of writing. The proverbs play an integral role in the making of the novels. These proverbs serve as a way of asserting the African unique cultural values. The proverbs used in the novel are familiar. Achebe was able to borrow some of these proverbs from the rich lore of his people and he blended them perfectly in his literary work that one can hardly differentiate this oral mode of communication in the literary form. With the emergence of the novel, the African has no need to strive to master the Europeans proverbs as he could select as many he wished from the cultural tradition and blend them in his literary works. When this is done, the writer clothes his work in unique African flavor giving it s voice that is authentically African. The writer has succeeded in telling the African story from a real African

perspective and with the African voice too. Many critics have reacted and acknowledged Achebe's use of proverb in his novel. For example, Bernth Lindfors argues that Achebe uses proverbs to reinforce the image of Okonkwo as a man who struggles with his chi (79). He concludes:

In a *Man of the People*, as in Achebe's other novels; proverbs are used to sound and reiterate major themes, to sharpen characterization, to clarify conflict and to focus on the values of the society Achebe is portraying. By studying the proverbs in a novel, we gain insight into the moral issues with which the actions of characters can be measured and evaluated. Proverbs help us to understand and interpret Achebe's novels. It is this last talent that enables him to convince his readers "that African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans, that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value, and beauty, they had poetry and above all, they have dignity (92).

Again by use of proverbs Achebe clothes his characters with distinctiveness as a true Igbos. Hardly does an Igbo elder engage in a discourse without proverb which is the oil with which words are eaten and the elders make use of proverbs to eat their words and pass a desired message. Achebe is true to his characters and bequeathed them all the attributes that could be desired. By so doing, he brings them close to life and confers on them the appropriate personality. Many of the proverbs in the novel are used by the elders in their bid of explain one idea or another.

The first proverb in the novel is used by the writer to support the idea that Okonkwo even at a very tender age enjoyed the honour and accolades meant for only great men and elders. This is as a result of his great and notable achievements even as a young man. In Igbo society, age is not so much respected as much as achievements. People's achievements count more than their age. That was why Okonkwo enjoyed great a reputation as a young man. Achebe gives the proverb below to support such claim:

As the elders said, if a child washes his hands he could eat with kings (7).

Another proverb in this direction is the one used by the writer to show Okonkwo's discomfort any time his father is discussed or issues reflecting something of his behavior. Unoka, Okonkwo's father died a weakling. He borrows and does not pay back. He is very lazy and has nothing to show for his mature years except maybe Okonkwo, his son. He develops a strange disease in his old age and is put away in the evil forest to die. Aware of all these, Okonkwo swears to be the opposite of his father. But any reminders of his father's weakness keeps him uncomfortable. The writer had expressed this as follows:

Everybody laughed heartily except Okonkwo, who laughed uneasily because, as the saying goes, an old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb (16).

Okonkwo has become uneasy at the mention of Obiako going to the oracle and learning that he is to sacrifice a goat to his dead father. Obiako had repelled that the oracle should ask the father if he had a fowl while he was alive. This makes Okonkwo uncomfortable as Obiako's father has reminded of his own. Another example that points at this use of proverb is when the writer wants to talk about how Okonkwo has risen to fame and his achievements as part of his personal efforts and making which his chi only consented to. The writer said:

The Igbo people have a proverb that when a man says yes his chi says yes also (21).

There are other instances of this level of proverb use in the novel. On the idea of the use of proverb to cloth characters with a unique personality, instances abound in the novel. These proverbs bring the characters closer to life and give them the aura and personality that adorn a traditional Igbo person. Nwakibie had used this proverb while breaking kola nut for Okonkwo and others present:

Let the kite perch and let the egret perch too. If one says no to the other, let his wings break (15).

Okonkwo in trying to explain the purpose of his visit enshrines it in this proverb:

"Nna ayi," he said. "I have brought you this little kola. As our people say a man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness (15).

He goes on:

The lizard that jumped from the high Iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did ... (17).

Nwakibie says:

Eneke the bird says that since men have learnt to short without missing, he has learnt to fly without perching. I have learnt to be stingy with my yams but I can trust you ... (17).

He adds another proverb:

'You can tell a ripe corn by its look. I shall give you four hundred yams ... (17).

Other instances of this proverb use abound in the novel as Achebe helps his characters to enshrine their words and pass their message with coded proverbs which portray them as typical Igbo men and bring them closer to life.

Another level of proverb use in the novel is to cast aspersion and criticize the actions of some character. The writer uses proverbs to criticize some bad actions of his characters and allows the characters too to use proverbs in reprimanding and correcting a fellows' ill behaviours. An instance of this is Okonkwo's criticism of Nwoye's behaviour. Okonkwo has always lamented about Nwoye's behaviour and often wondered how such 'feminine' personality came to be his son. He hates his actions and often wishes one of his daughters, Ezinma were a son Okonkwo once criticized Nwoye thus:

"No my friend, he is not too young. A chick that will grow into a cock can be spotted the very day it hatches. (52)

Another proverb used by Okonkwo in this direction is when he is criticizing Obierika. Obierika often criticizes the boy of being too sharp like razor. Okonkwo reprimanded him that the boy only inherited his trait as he was equally the same way as a child.

Hear him:

"As our people say, "When mother-cow is chewing grass its young ones watch its mouth, Maduka has been watching your mouth (56).

Similarly, when Okonkwo is banished from Umuofia after unintentionally killing Ezeudu's son Obierika, his friend who had helped in removing valuables from his compound at night, and also

joined to destroy the remainder in the morning according to the dictates of tradition, Okonkwo's action and its consequences on his friends and community are criticized:

“As the elders said, if one finger brought oil if soiled the others (100)

Other examples could be seen in the novel. These are the levels of proverb use that proved an important discourse technique adopted by the writer to achieve his aim.

Folktale as a Discourse Technique

Achebe makes abundant use of folktales in his novel as part of his technique. Folktales are among the rich traditional heritage handed from generation to generation. They have become a tool, which writers use to achieve desired goals. Such aims range from entertaining the readers to inculcating morals and worthwhile ethical behaviour and building and cultivating the acceptable social values; criticizing, reprimanding and condemning unethical behaviour to the advancement of plot and establishing the major and fundamental themes in their literary works. These are among other vital areas in creative writing, which tales help them to achieve. In the words of Onuekwusi Jasper,

Folktales are very popular and common in Africa. In fact, of all the genres of oral literature, it is the one that most adequately fulfils the entertainment and educational function of oral literature. It does not have that restriction which form and usage imposes on proverbs, riddles, myths and legends. Folktale has no fixed form. This is because the folktale admits a lot of improvisations, which show a particular narrator's ingenuity or skill. What is usually constant may be a story line and the ultimate moral that a particular tale carries. The number and length of episodes vary according to the age of the audience ... stories for children may be told in plain language for we are concerned with their understanding of morals and values. Stories for adults may contain idioms, proverbs, riddles and other artistic forms of rhetoric for a story telling situation also provides for this group some training in verbal art (35).

Rems Umeasiegbu in his study of the use of tales in *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God*, and *No Longer At Ease* respectively speaks of Achebe in this manner:

Achebe is a realistic novelist. The items of his works have been faithfully handled. He presented the ugly and the beautiful aspects of the society he deals with. His novels discuss primarily the meeting of African and European cultures. In order to show that Igbo people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans, he recreates the culture of his people very carefully and accurately and by doing so, shows vividly the tragedy that befalls the African people in his novels as a result of this clash of cultures. His conscious attempt to stay within the precincts of realism is evident from his comments: "We cannot pretend that our past was one long, Technicolor idyll. We have to admit that like other people's past, ours has its good as well as its bad sides (27).

Umeasiegbu considers the individual tales that have been used by Achebe in his work to pass moral judgments on characters. He recreates these tales and in each of the tales he offers a rich insight on the purpose it was used for. In one of the tales, he explains the significance in these terms:

In Igbo culture, to call someone a tortoise is to ridicule him. The tortoise is known for his cunning, dishonesty, indecision, arrogance, self-deceit, treachery, and narrow-mindedness. These are not good qualities. Perhaps Achebe may have had these evaluative terms in mind when he uses the tale. Okonkwo has become an unwitting victim of his own mischief, haughtiness, betrayal, and vacillation. Had Achebe thought highly of his hero, he would probably have saved him the inglorious downfall. Okonkwo's action merited a contemptuous response from Umuofinas: he would be buried like a dog (29).

There are several folktales used in the novel and these folktales serve as a way of asserting the rich culture of the people Achebe writes about as he borrows these tales from their rich oral lore.

Folktales in some cases are symbolic and point to some of the actions and the disorder that would come in the course of the story. Nwoye's preference of his mother's stories to the masculine stories

of war, violence and bloodshed told by his father points to the direction his life would take. It was not surprising that he embraced the White man's religion to the heartbreak of his father. The story about the quarrel between earth and sky one can argue is symbolic of the quarrel between the traditional Igbo society and the White men and the fate of the vulture in the story is symbolic of the fate of some people who would suffer and even die as a result of this colonial contact. Then the story about eneke nti-oba who challenges the whole world to a wrestling contest and is finally thrown by his *chi* points to Okonkwo and his unexpected fall into misfortune and ultimately death.

Also folktales are used in the novel to teach morals. The story about the tortoise and the birds and the feast in heaven can be interpreted from various dimensions. The wisdom of the tortoise is his greatest undoing and this has an analog in the character and personality of Okonkwo whereby he comes to his destruction in the end. Above all, the use of the folktales gives local colour to the novel and we hear a true African voice in one of their nights of endless story telling. This is part of what makes the novel rich in African culture and a classic in African literature.

Humour as a Discourse Technique in *Things Fall Apart*.

Humor is widely used in literature; it is used in drama as in comedy and in the novel in different cultures and civilizations. It reflects a point of view and can be a vital tool in expression of the truth. Things seem different when seen through the prism of humour than through the prism of seriousness.

Humorous literature makes the reader laugh. The work may cause amusement as with comedy or absurdity. People of all ages respond to humor. The majority of people are able to experience humor, i.e. to be amused, to laugh or smile at something funny and thus they are considered to have a sense of humour. The hypothetical person lacking a sense of humor would likely find the behaviour induced by humor to be inexplicably strange or even irrational. Though ultimately decided by personal taste, the extent to which an individual will find something humorous depends on a

host of variables, including geographical location, culture, and maturity, level of education, intelligence and context.

The use of humour has become an effective device which several writers manipulate to achieve a desired aim. Humour which is often in the form of laughter is weaved in between stories by some writers, making their stories comical and ridiculous in one aspect but yet serious. Writers tell their stories from different points of view and perspectives and whatever viewpoint a writer adopts in the end becomes his own style of writing which will form the bedrock of criticism for the particular work of art. The use of humour has become an important technique and style of writing worthy of serious discourse. Humour has a way of appealing to the reader and helps to sink deep the message of the work into the depth of the reader's mind. We often realize even in a tragic and serious story that writers still found time to recreate humorous incidents, easing the pains and seriousness which the particular work has already elicited. This could be in the form of jokes, funny actions and in most cases humour serves as an embellished satirical tool through which a writer hopes to point at other sides of life which he mocks and criticizes. Humour, in other words has become an effective tool manipulated by some writers to lighten the mood of their stories and at the same time make a lasting and permanent impression of the thematic issues in the work. Humour satirizes, entertains, delights but above all, achieves the desired comic relief needed for smooth reading and assimilation of the message of any given work of art. Thus, effective manipulation of this technique could aggregate to the beauty and touch of excellence in any given work of art.

Things Fall Apart is a tragedy and many incidents in the novel are tragic. The killing of twins which is part of the imperfections of the past, is part of the tragic scenes recorded in the novel. We constantly hear the crises of these babies left to die in the evil forest as a result of ignorance and barbaric culture. Again is the idea of dumping people with strange diseases in the evil forest because of the belief that they are cursed by the gods. These are people that would have received adequate medical treatment in our modern time and be well. Another is the marginalization and the *osu*. Then,

comes the killing of Ezeudu's son and other tragic events in the novel. The greatest of these incidents is the killing Ikemefuna, as a result of a bizarre and barbaric culture. But in all these tragic scenes cited in the novel, Achebe still finds time to include so many humorous events and experiences which add a degree of comic relief to a reader. In the midst of the serious story told in *Things Fall Apart*, humour is one of the techniques employed to ease the tension. A writer who combines humour effectively in a tragic story wins and maintains the attention of the reader.

The first and most memorable instance of humour in the novel is the story about a wealthy man who sets before his guest a mound of foo-foo so high that they could not see one another. It takes all day till evening when the mound had gone down to recognize one another and exchange greetings. The narration:

The story was always told of a wealthy man who set before his guest an mound of foo-foo so high that those who sat on one side could not see what was happening on the other and it was not until late in the evening that one of them saw for the first time his in-law who had arrived during the course of the meal and had fallen to on the opposite side. It was only then that they exchanged greetings and shook hands over what was left of the food (29).

One might wonder about the soup pot which accompanied this foo-foo. But the exaggeration is timely and needed in order to highlight Achebe's argument that the feast of the New Yam in Umuofia is about the best time of the year and no matter what one went, there is always food and good cheer.

Another episode that is humorous is Okonkwo's praise of Obierika's son, Maduka and his gallantry even as a child, which he compares to the foolishness and feminine nature of his own son Nwoye. Maduka wins honour in the wrestling arena and Okonkwo praises him and ridicules his son in these words:

'He will do great things, Okonkwo said. 'If I had a son like him I should be happy. I am worried about Nwoye, A bowl of pounded yams can throw him in a wrestling match... his two younger brothers are more promising. But I can tell you, Obierika, that

my children do not resemble me. Where are the young suckers that will grow when the old banana tree dies? (52)

The humour is in Okonkwo's description of his son's weakness to the exaggerated level that he could be thrown by a bowl of pounded yams. We see it also in the way he frets over the cause of this weakness, as his expectation is that the children should have come with his temperament and brawn. But it is this valiant nature and bravery he so delights in that destroys and ruins him in the end. Another use of humour is in the mockery of a man called Dimaragana, who would not lend his knife for cutting of dog meat because dog meat is; but he volunteers to use his teeth to cut the meat. The writer explains:

Here we say he cannot climb the tall tree but he can tap the short ones standing on the ground. It is like Dimaragana, who would not lend his knife for cutting up dog meat because the dog was taboo to him, but offered his teeth (55).

This humour is created to mock the ozo titled men and their tradition that an ozo title holder may not climb a palm tree. It is also a mockery of so many other unrefined and archaic traditions and cultures of the Igbo people of the past which led to many deaths and tragic scenarios. Another use of humor is in the writer's description and mockery of the white men. It comes in the form of dialogue:

'It is like the story of white men whom, they say, are white like this chalk said Obierika. He held up a piece of chalk... 'And these white men they say, have no toes,' ...'One of them passes here frequently,' said Mache. 'His name is Amadi.' Those who knew Amadi laughed. He was a leper and the polite name for leprosy was 'the white skin' (59).

This caricature is directed to the white men who in time proved their superiority, putting a knife on the 'thing' that held us together so that we fell apart. Another instance of humour is the riddle on the mysteries of the Holy Trinity. A townsman had challenged the preacher after his sermon on the Holy Trinity thus:

'You told us with your mouth that there was only one god now you talk about is son. He must have a wife, then.' the crowd agreed.

'I did not say he had a wife; said the interpreter somewhat lamely.

'Your buttocks said he had a son, said the joker, 'so he must have a wife and all of them must have buttocks.' (118)

This is the people's confusion of the Whiteman religion which they later accepted as part of the inevitability of life. These humorous scene among others, added laughter and relief in the story and served as a verifiable technique that aided Achebe to tell his tragic story amidst laughter and mockery.

Language as Discourse Technique in *Things Fall Apart*

The beauty of the novel that sets it apart from many others is Achebe's choice of language. Language gives a local colouring to the novel and makes it unequivocally African. Though Achebe is writing in English, he twists the English language and flexes it in such a way that it is forced to carry the weight of an African experience and express its world and cultural heritage. His use of code mixing and code-switching, direct transliteration, local imageries and native words, add a rare touch that is lacking in many literary works of the time. Instances of this language use abound from the first paragraph of the novel to the very last. Apart from the use of proverbs, Achebe uses the native language and brings the story down to his people who hear their voices and native customs, their unique way of storytelling echoing in the traditional voice. Let us look at this example:

Okonkwo did as the priest said. He also took with him a pot of palm-wine. Inwardly, he was repentant. But he was not the man to go about telling his neighbours that he was in error. And so people said he had no respect for the gods of the clan. His enemies said his good fortune had gone to his head. They called him the little bird nza who so far forgot himself after a heavy meal that he challenged his chi (25).

Let us examine this example too:

Remove your jigida first, her mother warned as she moved near the fire place to bring the pestle resting against the wall. 'Every day I tell you that jigida and fire and not friends. But you will never hear. You grew your ears for decoration, not for hearing.

One of these days your jigida will catch fire on your waist, and then you will know. (56)

Instances of this level of language use abound. The language structure is purely afro-centric and not Eurocentric. It is on all these techniques among others that the sublimity and beauty of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* lie.

Conclusion

This paper set out to examine the discourse techniques employed by Chinua Achebe in his novel, *Things Fall Apart* and has been able to unveil some of these techniques that make the novel memorable and enduring for all ages. Among these techniques are proverbs. Proverbs play an integral role in the novel. Achebe incorporates them not only to showcase our rich African heritage but he uses them as embedded ideas to help a critical and discerning reader to arrive at some logical conclusions. The proverbs serve as a gateway to understanding several view points in Achebe and identify the dimensions of his art. They are not accidental but intentionally incorporated by the writer as part of his techniques to achieve a desired style of writing. Achebe also makes abundant use of folktales as part of the techniques he employs to structure his narration. The folktales not only help to enforce the themes but serve as keys to arrive at some hidden textual details in the novel. Humour is one technique employed by Achebe as a vital technique in the course of telling his story. Through humour employed at strategic intervals, the readers are able to ease off from the seriousness of the story he sets to tell and also to help them accommodate the tragic import of the story. Language is another important technique that brings out the beauty and thematic issues in the novel to the fore-court of the readers's attention. Achebe structured his pattern of narration with dexterity and artistic perfection to such a height that every sentence in the novel seems to be aware of its own artistic and stylistic difference from the next sentence. It is this that combines with other elements of fiction and materials from our rich cultural background to create the monument we all celebrate and take pride in, *Things Fall Apart*.

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