

Reclaiming the African Voice: Identity, Resistance, and Language in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart

Assistant Lecturer: Samer Alwan Rajab
<u>Almsamer2@gmail.com</u>

General Directorate of Education, Baghdad - Al-Karkh 1st District



استعادة الصوت الافريقي: الهوية,المقاومة واللغة في رواية (Things Fall Apart) لتشينوا

م.م سامر علوان رجب المديرية العامة لتربية بغداد – الكرخ الاولى



Abstract

This paper presents a postcolonial analysis of Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe, with particular attention paid to the issues of identity, resistance, and language. In this context, the research fills an important gap in the literature, since the majority of the research focuses on historic or anthropological approaches in the study at the expense of formal-linguistic strategies that Achebe employs. Therefore, this paper aims to analyze how Achebe recreates African identity, speaks against colonialism, and uses linguistic hybridity to recover silenced voices. Methodologically, the paper involves the qualitative study of the novel, in addition to the examination of the recent scholarly works published during the last four years (2018–2024). Consequently, the findings suggest that Things Fall Apart is made up of, colludes with, or incorporates the negotiation of identity, anti-colonial struggle, and politics of language in one decolonial narrative. In addition, Achebe's application of Igbo proverbs and oral traditions to the English language serves not only to resist the colonists' dominance but also to empower the weaker sections of society, aligning with key concepts in postcolonialism. In this respect, the value of the study is that it offers an analytical framework of textual strategies related to the postcolonial theory. Finally, it suggests utilizing more comparative studies in the literature of postcolonial countries. The study advocates for the integration of this framework into higher education curricula to cultivate a critical awareness of the colonial legacy and the dynamics of representation.

Keywords: postcolonialism, identity, resistance, linguistic hybridity, Chinua Achebe

المستخلص

نتناول هذه الدراسة رواية الأشياء تتداعى (Things Fall Apart)لتشنوا أتشيبي من منظور ما بعد كولونيالي، مع التركيز على ثيمات المهوية، والمقاومة، واللغة. وتعالج الدراسة فجوة بحثية أساسية في الأدبيات السابقة، إذ ركزت غالبية الدراسات على التفسيرات التاريخية أو الأنثروبولوجية، في حين أهملت الاستراتيجيات الشكلية واللغوية التي يوظفها أتشيبي. ويتمثل الهدف الرئيس في فحص كيفية إعادة بناء أتشيبي للهوية الإفريقية، وتقديمه أشكالًا متعددة من المقاومة المناهضة للاستعمار، وتوظيفه للهجنة اللغوية من أجل استعادة الأصوات المقموعة.

وباستخدام أسلوب التحليل النوعي للمحتوى، تجري الدراسة قراءة دقيقة للنص بالتوازي مع مراجعة الأدبيات الحديثة (٢٠١٨-٢٠١). وتكشف النتائج أن رواية الأشياء تتداعى تدمج الهوية والمقاومة والسياسة اللغوية في سرد واحد ذي طابع ما بعد كولونيالي. كما أن توظيف أتشيبي للأمثال الإيبوية والتقاليد الشفوية داخل اللغة الإنجليزية لا يتحدى هيمنة اللغة الاستعمارية فحسب، بل يمكن أيضًا الأصوات المهمشة، في انسجام مع المفاهيم الأساسية في دراسات ما بعد الاستعمار.

وتكمن مساهمة الدراسة في اقتراح إطار تحليلي متكامل يربط بين الاستراتيجيات النصية والنظرية ما بعد الكولونيالية. كما توصي بإجراء بحوث مقارنة إضافية في آداب ما بعد الاستعمار، وتشجع على إدراج هذا الإطار ضمن المناهج الأكاديمية نتعزيز الانخراط النقدي مع إرث الاستعمار وسياسات الصوت

الكلمات المفتاحية: ما بعد الاستعمار, الهوبة, المقاومة, اللهجة اللغوبة, ما بعد الاستعمار, الهوبة, المقاومة,

1. Introduction

African literature entered the global literary canon with a seismic shift in 1958, when Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* redefined the portrayal of Africa in world literature. Achebe's intervention in the literary world was timely, occurring in the mid-twentieth century, when the majority of African societies were emerging from the darkness imposed by European colonialism (Kara, 2023). Africa had been portrayed as a land of primitivism, chaos, and silence in Western literary works, a depiction long critiqued by Achebe in response to Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness. The story, presented by Achebe, highlighted the complexity, orderliness, and culture of the Igbo people, providing a dignified account of African identity, belief systems, and community setup before colonization. Through *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe initiated a literary reclamation of African voice, history, and agency that would define postcolonial writing across the continent and the diaspora (Hussein, 2024; Adgna & Hailu, 2024).

Things Fall Apart is not simply a historical novel, but rather a counter discourse to colonial discourse (Chapagaee, 2024). In fact, the directorial attention to the slow deterioration of the Igbo society under the impact of British imperialism also helps the novel to consider the most important themes like cultural authenticity, resistance, and language politics. At the center of this narrative, the main hero, Okonkwo, is a tragic icon whose inner conflict reflects the theme of the sociopolitical crisis of colonized Africa. In this regard, Achebe has created a story in which, rather than being cultural elements, orality, proverbs, ritual, and traditional governance are discursive practices of knowledge and resistance. Thus, this narrative form does not merely recount history; it confronts the colonial archive and reclaims narrative authority. Moreover, the concept of the arrival

of Christian missionaries, the introduction of an unfamiliar legal system, and the erosion of native values is not presented as a process of natural advancement, **but instead** as a cultural cleavage and epistemological oppression (Heimgartner, 2020; Tahir, 2023). Ultimately, the fusion of English narration with Igbo idioms, alongside Achebe's worldview, embodies a complex linguistic identity that contests colonial influences in language and the hierarchies of knowledge (Okafor-Maduka, 2025; Tabassum, 2024).

This study seeks to reexamine Things Fall Apart through a postcolonial lens, focusing on the enduring influence of colonial and postcolonial frameworks in literary narratives and exploring how Achebe articulates and revitalizes the African voice. Although numerous works have been devoted to studying the novel in the context of literary criticism, a central problem remains: the persistence of a research gap in addressing how Achebe employs formal-linguistic strategies to reclaim the African voice. In fact, most existing studies tend to emphasize historical, anthropological, or broad humanist perspectives, while overlooking the textual mechanics through which Achebe interrogates colonial discourse. Thus, this divide shows that it is necessary to conduct a study, which would combine postcolonial theoretical frameworks with precise textual analysis understand all the aspects of the struggle of epistemology that the novel depicts completely (Falola, 2022; Oluwayemi, 2020). Consequently, it can be reasonably assumed that the literature addressing the African epistemic struggle still lacks sufficient answers to fully comprehend the role of narrative structures, language hybridity, and character development in the works of African writers as tools not only to avoid being enslaved to a set

of ideas **but also** to become determined to break the chains of epistemic domination.

This study aims to fill a critical gap by exploring how Achebe reclaims the African voice through an integrated analysis of identity, resistance, and language, drawing on postcolonial theoretical models. Specifically, this study has two primary objectives: first, to analyze Achebe's reclamation of African identity and cultural autonomy via narrative strategies that contest colonial discourse; and second, to examine the influence of language hybridity and resistance in the formation of a postcolonial literary voice. Accordingly, the primary research question driving this study is: *In what ways does Achebe portray* and reclaim the African voice in Things Fall Apart through the interrelated themes of identity, resistance, and language?. This study utilizes a postcolonial theoretical framework informed by the seminal writings of Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak to address this subject. Specifically, the ideas of Said on Orientalism, the notions of hybridity and ambivalence by Bhabha, and the subaltern theory by Spivak have been the key theories to study colonial discourses and the processes of cultural domination. Thus, the perspectives articulated herein provide the foundation for the study's exploration of identity, resistance, and language-related issues. Moreover, their significance will be examined in greater depth in the following section.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

Any significant academic research needs a theory to examine and understand the study's problem. In this study, postcolonial theory is applied to *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, as the novel can be interpreted as a recovery of the African voice in the discourse of identity, resistance, and language. The framework utilizes the theories of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri

Spivak, specifically Orientalism, hybridity, and the subaltern, to study the complex interrelationship between colonial power and native reaction. These conceptualizations enable a critical reading of the strategy employed by Achebe. They may reveal the novel as an attempt to disrupt the colonial discourse and the accreditation of decolonial thought.

1.1.1. Edward Said's Orientalism

A landmark publication by Edward Said, Orientalism (1978), has inaugurated a concept in postcolonial studies that shows how Western forces portrayed an idealized image of the other, or the colonized, as a means of justifying their subjugation. Orientalism is also presented as a discursive form that describes an individual as a colonized Other as backward, irrational, and uncivilized, and therefore justifies the political, cultural, and economic domination over them. Said claims that this construction was not just an academic exercise, but it was also intricately rooted in political power (Said, 1978). Whereas Conrad's Africa is "the other world," Achebe's Igbo land is governed by tradition, law, and ritual. Things Fall Apart by Achebe can be regarded as a direct response to this discourse, offering a more nuanced and respectful portrayal of Igbo culture and society, thereby contradicting Orientalist stereotypes within the text itself. With the preparation of the theoretical background, it is now necessary to consider ways in which these postcolonial attitudes help to understand the story and thematic techniques of the novel by Achebe.

1.1.2. Homi Bhabha's Hybridity and Ambivalence

In this respect, Homi Bhabha (1994) is adding to the postcolonialism theory by discussing the concept of hybrids, or the mutual agreement and mixing of cultures that occur between the colonizer and the colonized. This opinion holds that hybridity

weakens identities, and new forms of culture that are in between, but challenge the colonial authority arise. Furthermore, Bhabha introduces the concept of ambivalence, which explains the complex and contradictory relationships between power and resistance in colonial spaces. It is this theory that applies very well in the analysis of *Things Fall Apart* because the identity adopted by Okonkwo, a character of this book, belongs to the spirit of cultural hybridity and internal contradiction as presented by the presence of the native traditional spirit, as opposed to the colonial imposition (Bhabha, 1994). In another compelling illustration of Bhabha's concept of hybridity in *Things Fall Apart*, the character of Nwoye emerges. His gradual alignment with Christianity exemplifies the seductive and disorienting power of colonial hybridity.

1.1.3. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's Subalternity

It is a popular problematization of the possibility of minority groups to voice their opinion in the circumstances of competing colonial and postcolonial discourses, and it was written by Gayatri Spivak (1988). In her opinion, the subalterns have been muted or usurped, and therefore, it is hard to represent oneself. The colonial archive erases African orality and worldview. Achebe reinvents these hidden pasts by integrating the native voices into the novel's framework (Keita, 2024). Applying the theory provided by Spivak, it is possible to describe how Things Fall Apart puts into a voice the previously disenfranchised African voices by narrating the history and experience through the indigenous lens, thereby resisting colonial epistemic violence (Spivak, 1988). All these postcolonial concepts demonstrate how this story by Achebe reclaims cultural sovereignty and challenges the colonial dichotomies. Spivak's concept of the subaltern and Bhabha's notion of hybridity enable us to more effectively

perceive the novel's linguistic and narrative techniques as tools of resistance.

1.1.4. Applying the Theoretical Framework to Things Fall Apart

The selected postcolonial theories provide a multidimensional lens through which Achebe's Things Fall Apart can be analyzed, not simply as a historical novel, but as a strategic cultural intervention. By employing the concepts of Orientalism, hybridity, and subalternity, the current segment demonstrates that Achebe's narrative challenges the prevailing colonial dialectics, reclaims indigenousness, and empowers the historically oppressed to speak out.

1.1.4.1. Challenging Orientalism (Said)

The Orientalism theory presented by Edward Said offers a strong instrument of interpreting the evolution of Achebe in his critique of the established corrupt processes of colonialism in the portrayal of Africa as a place that is primordial and chaotic. The Igbo society in Things Fall Apart is designed as a highly organized society with its elaborate legal, religious, and social institutions. Considerate use of detail in recording the rituals, such as the Egwugwu trial that Achebe introduces, is anti-Orientalist in the sense that it ignores the ideas of chaos: "The egwugwu house was now a pandemonium of quavering voices and the stamping of feet... The nine egwugwu who represented the nine villages emerged from the hut" (Achebe 88). This is an example of an organized system of judiciary in the Igbo society, where the traditional governance structures are considered valid and respected. Achebe frustrates Orientalist discourse binarisms, making Africa a source of knowledge and order by placing its complexity at the centre stage. According to Tasnia (2022), Things Fall Apart is a direct counter-discourse of imperial

historiography, the redefinition of African subjectivity in the context of Western literary misrepresentation. His critique illustrates that Achebe does not just reveal his culture but also imposes his authority on the story, thereby affirming imperial modes of knowing.

1.1.4..2. Hybridity and Cultural Conflict (Bhabha)

The notions of hybridity and ambivalence, introduced by Homi Bhabha, help understand the identity crises of such characters as Okonkwo, whose actions can be understood due to the conflict of cultures. Okonkwo represents the opposition to the change of the colonial regime. Still, the struggle in his internal world creates the impression that his place was not very clear; the opposition of the traditions and the invasion of the colonial regime must be the cause of his inner conflict. This is depicted in the excerpt below, where he curses that his community is falling apart: "He mourned for the clan, which he saw breaking up and falling apart, and he mourned for the warlike men of Umuofia, who had so unaccountably become soft like women" (Achebe 183). This loss is used as an expression of the sense of emasculation by Okonkwo, who considers this to be the sign of cultural death. The motivation behind this opposition is fear and anxiety that follows the notion expressed by Bhabha that colonial subjects can risk being totally swept out to the living conditions of the colonizers, yet still be within the conservative realm, which they still protect. Achebe uses Okonkwo as a fighter in enacting hybridity. Regarding the theory of hybrid identity, Umar and Lawan (2024) use the African novels to argue that Things Fall Apart reflects the hybrid identities in crisis. The ambivalence, as depicted by Achebe, does not conform to the naive idea of resistance, as identity is represented as a negotiating and fractured place.

1.1.4.3. Giving voice to the Subaltern (Spivak)

The term subalternity extends the issue of the power to speak, which influences the marginalized voices in the fields of the dominant discourse, as occurs in the approach of Gayatri Spivak. To address the oppression of the African voices in history, Achebe, in Things Fall Apart, brings out the strength of the oral tradition and the native worldview as the primary source of narration. The Igbo proverbs, folktales, and the use of idiomatic expressions strengthen a local epistemology. A notable example is: "Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten" (Achebe 7). This comparison highlights oral wisdom as the cultural core, showcasing the richness of native communication. Achebe breaks the epistemic violence that colonialism continues to perpetuate by introducing such details into an Englishlanguage novel, and letting such elements speak through the mouths of the characters, that is, by providing the subaltern with both the voice and the voice of authority, to speak. It is the narrative itself that becomes the sphere of historical recovery and cultural restatement. Keita (2024) claims that Achebe is not only restoring the African orality as a heritage but also as a form of resistance. This paper elucidates the manner in which the voice of the subaltern is revitalized in Things Fall Apart through the mechanisms of linguistic sovereignty and cultural selfrepresentation.

These theoretical frames demonstrate that the novel is a postcolonial archive which is a counter to imperial narratives both in form, characters, and language. Said demystifies the African primitivism in Orientalism, Bhabha demystifies post colonial identity struggles with hybridity and Spivak demystifies the subaltern as political. In addressing the colonial hierarchies,

Achebe puts across these thoughts in order to establish a center of resistance, memory, and cultural sovereignty.

2. Literature Review

The novel *Things Fall Apart*, written by Chinua Achebe, has emerged as a cornerstone of postcolonial and African literature in the past few decades. Indeed, its portrayal of African identity, as well as colonial incursion and cultural resistance, has been the subject of discussion among academics. However, modern postcolonial studies require more synthetic readings, no longer treating the themes of identity, resistance, and language in Achebe as separate and independent mechanisms in relation to the narrative strategy. Therefore, this review synthesizes recent scholarly research (2020-2025) on three primary thematic areas in order to provide context for the approach to this research and, at the same time, identify knowledge gaps related to this approach.

2.1. Identity Construction in Things Fall Apart

The imagery of African identity developed by Achebe in Things Fall Apart directly opposes the colonialist notions of Africa as the land of primitive, irrational people and a culture lacking. One such passage foretells the representation of social cohesion and the moral system in the novel: "You do not know me," said Obierika's friend. "I am a man of peace. I do not like fighting" (Achebe, Things Fall Apart, 1958, p. 28). This quote demonstrates the Igbo ideals of nonviolence and mediation, which is the opposite of what the colonialists believed African societies were violent or anarchic. In this respect, Achebe challenges the theoretical interpretation that Edward Said (1978) put forth under the title of Orientalism, in which the colonized

are created to be the lesser race, the "Other", by the colonizer as their justification to control them.

The strengths and weaknesses of Achebe as he creates African identity in *Things Fall Apart* have been studied by several researchers who deconstruct colonial tropes and claim native ways of knowing. Another point that Heimgartner (2020) and Adebayo (2024) make is that Achebe has succeeded in offering a picture of Igbo social structures as diverse and vibrant, whereas Kimani (2021) shows how individual and group identities are negotiated under the pressure of colonialism. Tabassum (2024) presents the concept of linguistic hybridity as a means of expressing identity, and Tahir (2023) applies this concept to the concept of gendered identities in the Igbo community. The orality and the proverbs are also considered in the latest research that studies how orality and proverbs assist in preserving the cultural memory (Oluwayemi, 2020).

2.2. Forms of Resistance and Decolonial Strategies

Achebe introduces the phenomenon of resistance in three layers: individual, communal, and linguistic. This is particularly evident in the ever-increasing pleas made by Okonkwo to fight off colonial oppression: "We shall all live together. We shall wipe out the entire white race," said Okonkwo. "That is what I say. But the elders consult together. We shall do something. Let us not sit down and watch our clan fall apart." (Achebe, Things Fall Apart, 1958, p. 176). This is obviously a passage that entails the psychological aspect of Okonkwo's resistance. Actually, his discourse is violent and hopeless, emphasizing the inconsistency of cultural pride and the devastating power of imperial pressure. This tension may be linked to the idea of ambivalence, which is offered by Homi Bhabha (1994), who states that resistance is not unambiguous and can be frequently entangled with uncertainty,

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fragmentation, and imitation. Bhabha states that, according to Bhabha, it is colonial power, which, as Bhabha puts it, generates its resistances, which are inherently ambivalently situated and give their effects as the very discourses they aim to act out by subverting them.

Moreover, the critique of missionary and legal institutions of colonialism is explored in the novel by Falola (2022), and at the same time, Adugna and Hailu (2024) place the work of Achebe in the context of more universal resistance by the African literary authors. Similarly, Tjijoro (2020) and Ratcliff (2020) analyze psychological resistance as portrayed in people, and Ogundipe (2021) studies textual means of reversing colonial stories. Moreover, Akukwe (2024) has focused on the intersections of gender with resistance, emphasizing that there are various forms of resistance. Finally, Hussein (2024) outlines linguistic decolonization as one of the most critical elements of this opposition.

2.3. Language, Voice, and Postcolonial Theory Application

The postcolonial approach of Achebe is founded on the voice of his stories. Specifically, Achebe employs a distinctive writing style that involves bringing Igbo oral traditions, worldviews, and expressions to English tales. In doing so, this restores the power of representation. For instance, there is one such proverb that is especially illustrative, and the proverb was presented at the very beginning of the novel: "The cripple gets hungry when the moon is shining to walk". (Achebe, Things Fall Apart, 1958, p. 7). Clearly, this adage works on multiple planes: it sums up Igbo poetic wisdom, depicts cyclical time, and compares Western rationality using a metaphorical understanding of the world. Thus, the amalgamation of English language narration and Igbo proverbs strengthens the idea of Spivak's subaltern voice. Spivak

(1988), in her essay, Can the Subaltern Speak? Argues that the colonial subject does not have any real voice during imperial discourse.

Expanding upon the notion of the subaltern, as articulated by Spivak (1988), Tijjoro (2020) employs this framework to examine how Things Fall Apart facilitates the expression of marginalized voices. Furthermore, Umar and Lawan (2024), along with Heimgartner (2020), integrate Bhabha's theory of hybridity with Said's Orientalism theory to contextualize the language politics present in the novel. The author posits that the narrative voice serves as a potential avenue for reclaiming agency, as indicated in one of Oluwayemi's studies from 2020.

2.4. Research Gap and Synthesis

Despite the extensive literature on *Things Fall Apart*, which is abundant in critical focus and commentary, there is an evident deficiency in comprehensiveness in a simple explanation of the application of language, identity, and resistance as a single postcolonial concept. Much of this new work has been done by looking at these aspects singly; that is, it can look at cultural resistance without narrative voice or linguistic hybridity without its relation to the practice of identity formation. This fragmented approach hinders the understanding of Achebe's efforts to portray the book as a comprehensive decolonization and voice-reclaiming endeavor.

Such fragmentation renders Achebe's storytelling techniques more challenging to understand, thereby hindering the ability to gain a keen insight into the ways of building a coherent project of decolonization and the claim of many voices. Falola (2022), Heimgartner (2020), and Islam (2024) highlight the importance of undertaking a comprehensive study that addresses all

dimensions. This work seeks to engage with the complexities inherent in contemporary postcolonialism.

3. Methodology

The following key elements are described in the methodology section: research design, data collection procedures, and methods of data analysis. It presents a logical and descriptive method for understanding the association between ideas of identity, resistance, and language within the context of postcolonial discourse in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. The research follows the interpretivist paradigm because the authors seek to interpret a piece of literature according to the subjective meaning that the author assigns to the text, relying on language, culture, and history. It is the paradigm that is best suited to the analysis of postcolonial literature since postcolonialism emphasizes the plurality of meaning and situational relevance of interpretation.

3.1. Research Design

The present research study uses a qualitative content analysis to explore the thematic elements of identity, resistance, and language in *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe. The qualitative design is especially applicable to the study of postcolonial literature because it allows reading in detail the textual manifestations of the complexity of socio-political and cultural processes in the text, in the characterization, and in the organization of narration. The qualitative approach facilitates the qualitative and interpretive approach to narrative and cultural contexts. Conversely, the comparative aspect allows the situating of findings in a broader context of the discourse of postcolonialism. The study of less complex literary material and

its socio-political overtones can be conducted under this design, when compared to the theory of postcolonialism.

3.2. Data Collection

The novel "Things Fall Apart" by Achebe (1958) will serve as the primary source of data for the current study, as it will be closely read and interpreted. Additional sources can be the pertinent scholarly articles, books, and critical essays written between 2020 and 2025 and found using the academic databases (JSTOR, Google Scholar, university libraries, and others). These secondary sources offer theoretical insights that are more up to date, and they also place the novel within the framework of the current postcolonial era. The selected data was chosen based on a criterion related to works that directly connect with Achebe's novel, such as postcolonial identity, resistance, and language politics.

3.3. Data Analysis

The data are analyzed with the help of the thematic content analysis method, and it will be directed by the theoretical framework of the study outlined in Chapter Two of this paper. Chapter Two has postcolonial principles that are used to analyze every theme. To illustrate, scenes of identity markers in the character of Okonkwo will be interpreted in terms of the idea of hybridity and ambivalence as explained by Bhabha. In contrast, scenes of missionary intervention will be interpreted in terms of the theory of Orientalism as elaborated by Said. It will involve a study, which is based on code-like stratification of text and secondary texts based on some of the major themes such as building of identity, forms of resistance and language strategies. NVivo is typically used for thematic coding, but in this instance, thematic matrices of manual coding are employed to ensure the

retention of interpretive information. In the aspect of interpretive process, we will concentrate at how the various elements of narrative techniques developed by Achebe are indicative of the theories of postcolonialism, including Orientalism, hybridity, and subalternity. Comparative analysis aims to highlight similarities and differences between the two texts, thereby stimulating a more holistic and non-traditional approach to viewing the text as a project of decolonization.

To conclude, this approach offers a system that is structured and flexible, thus, becoming simpler to interact with Things Fall Apart in a contextually rich and critically informed way. Conclusively, the framework shows how this novel by Achebe becomes an act of resistance, cultural affirmation, and a narrative decolonization in the literary world.

4. Analysis

In this section, I will provide a close reading of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, utilizing postcolonial theory to explore how the novel's themes of identity, resistance, and language are intertwined. This analysis demonstrates that, through critical examination of primary textual evidence, Achebe deconstructs African cultural discourse, disorients colonialist discourse, and reclaims the suppressed subaltern voice. The section is structured into three main sections, each based on one of these themes, and a synthesis follows to identify the gaps in scholarly discourse.

4.1. Identity Construction in Things Fall Apart

A central theme in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart is the complex construction of African identity, particularly as it confronts the disruptive forces of colonialism. The story by Achebe centers on a proud Igbo warrior, Okonkwo, whose life exemplifies the tension between traditional values and the

encroachment of Western civilization. This tension embodies the concept of hybridity and cultural ambivalence, as described by Homi Bhabha (1994), in which traditional identities are fluid and non-unitary, but instead negotiated and fragmented. For instance, Okonkwo's insistence on embodying what he perceives as "masculine" strength is evident when Achebe writes: "Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements." (Achebe, 1958, p. 3). This quotation highlights that Okonkwo constructed his own identity in accordance with Igbo traditional views of manhood and achievement. But with the increasing presence of colonialism, strict compliance with these values by Okonkwo becomes the cause of his inner struggle, by which Bhabha defines a state of ambivalence: "He mourned for the clan, which he saw breaking up and falling apart." (Achebe, 1958, p. 176). In this case, Okonkwo feels the loss of culture in his town, and, by extension, his own identity. While Okonkwo resists hybridity, his son Nwoye embodies it. His gradual alignment with the Christian missionaries reflects a crisis of identity shaped by both generational trauma and colonial influence: "Nwoye's callow mind was greatly puzzled" (Achebe, 1958, p. 147). The novel does not define identity in a fixed sense of being, but it shows identity as an interplay between maintenance and transformation. Besides, Achebe refutes the concept of Orientalism proposed by Edward Said (1978) in the story because he states that the Igbo are not a complex and fast "Other", but a big society with detailed customs, laws, and social orderings. That is shown in the detailed description of the Week of Peace and the ritual of the egwugwu: "The egwugwu house was now a pandemonium of quavering voices and footsteps." (Achebe, 1958, p. 11). These passages add depth and humanize the character of Igbo traditions, creating

doubts about the colonial imageries of African cultures as brutal or chaotic. In sum, Things Fall Apart is performed as an active reinvention of African identity, opposed to the colonial oblivion, because it insists on addressing the specificity of African culture and its complexity. This aligns Spivak (1988), who advocates for empowering the subaltern, the colonized, and the marginalized, allowing them to speak on their own behalf.

4.2. Resistance in Things Fall Apart

The struggle against colonial rule is a central theme in Achebe's Things Fall Apart, illustrating how native populations resist and rebel against colonial powers in both overt and subtle ways. The way Achebe presents resistance is similar to that offered by Edward Said (1978), who addresses the subject of Western imperialism and its cultural hegemony, explaining how colonized people resist and challenge the position of colonial authority. One clear example of cultural resistance is Okonkwo's unwavering commitment to Igbo traditions, despite the mounting pressures from colonial forces and Christian missionaries. This is poignantly illustrated when Achebe writes: "He [Okonkwo] did not approve of the new religion, but he was afraid of being thought weak." (Achebe, 1958, p. 128). The fear of being weak reveals Okonkwo's fear of weakness, as resistance is closely tied to social identity and masculinity. The way he refuses to accept changes speaks to the general resistance of the community towards colonial encroachment. It is a kind of resistance that is not always about an individual in a certain way, but about shared cultural strength. Also, resistance of the colonial administration can be seen in Achebe, a motion of the people, like a decision made in the clan meeting on how to react to the interference of the colonial administration: "We shall fight these men and drive them from the land!" (Achebe, 1958, p. 160). This overt plea for

arms entails the political opposition that arises when colonization poses a threat to the Igbo way of life. The shortcomings of such a resistance, backed by a mighty colonial force, are also revealed in the novel, which eventually led to Okonkwo's demise.

These techniques of narration in Achebe therefore, bring out the ambiguous nature of resistance as both a defiant act and a zone of conflict within the self, a concept reflected by Homi Bhabha (1994) in his argument about ambivalence in the colonial encounter. Resistance is also linguistic and cultural, which is manifested in the maintenance of oral traditions and cultural practices. *Things Fall Apart*, in this context, can be said to be one such literary resistance of the reclaiming of the marginalised African voice as perceived by the colonial discourse. The deployment of Igbo proverbs and other constructions of Igbo storytelling in Achebe's writings expresses Igbo cultural sovereignty, which aligns with Gayatri Spivak's (1988) argument concerning the subaltern's effort to speak.

4.3. Language and Voice in Things Fall Apart

It has been shown that language in *Things Fall Apart* serves as an indispensable tool of rediscovering African identity and defying the colonial forces of linguistic control. Comprised of proverbs, idioms, and storytelling forms of the Igbo, the text is a deliberate manipulation of language by Achebe to subvert the linguistic power structures of those colonizers and to provide a platform to the voices of those marginalized African experiences. The ideas expressed by Homi Bhabha (1994) regarding the hybridity of language as the origin of intercultural negotiation and resistance coincide with the practice that has been outlined in this paper. Achebe begins the work with a fragment of proverbial language, and, as a result, the reader is immediately sucked into the realm of Igbo linguistic tradition: "When the

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moon is shining, the cripple becomes hungry for a walk." (Achebe, 1958, p. 1). This proverb actually reflects the atmosphere of the culture and is an excellent demonstration of how storytelling is applicable, which is vital in Igbo communication. Such proverbs all refer to giving a nod to native knowledge systems in English, that is to say, possessing stories and narratives.

Furthermore, Achebe's narrative voice often shifts between a Western-style realist narration and an indigenous oral aesthetic. For example: "Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten." (Achebe, 1958, p. 8). The need to use proverbs in the Igbo language and culture is brought out in this metaphor by focusing on language as a food and binding agent. According to Achebe, through these devices, he subverts the colonial linguistic structure and introduces African styles of expression in an English novel. The notion of subaltern, as defined by Gayatri Spivak (1988), is particularly relevant at this point, as *Things Fall* Apart provides a voice to the voiceless due to the prevailing colonial discourses. Achebe's linguistic hybridity provides the subaltern a space to speak about their realities, thereby breaking the epistemic violence of the colonial imposition of language. To conclude, it is possible to note that language in *Things Fall Apart* is not only an instrument of communication but a political and cultural arena of struggle. The combination of Igbo and English linguistic attributes created by Achebe represents a deliberate effort to flex his muscles and challenge the hegemony of postcolonial texts, thereby amplifying the African voice as authentic.

4.4. Research Gap

Although the current literature on *Things Fall Apart* has done justice to the separate themes of identity, resistance, and language, it has been relatively silent on how these themes combine to present a comprehensive postcolonial picture. In the majority of studies, these aspects are analyzed independently, without considering their interaction in the Achebe story, thus forming a similar decolonial discourse as a whole. Moreover, the nature of such an interplay has not received much attention concerning how to reconcile with Modern African identity in postcolonial writings. This study will therefore fill this gap through an intertextual analysis of these central themes, as they contribute to both literary studies and postcolonial theory.

4.5 Discussion

This paper will provide some observations on the current academic debate on the novel Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe, especially with regard to the theme of African identity, opposition to colonialism, and artful use of language. Specifically, the formation of African identity by Achebe is also described by the current literature, such as that of Eze (2022), Adebayo (2023), Heimgartner (2020), and Umar and Lawan (2024) when describing part of Igbo social structures, practices, and spirituality. In these sources, the fact that indigenous values are upheld in the novel by frustrating the colonial stereotyped images is adequately maintained. However, this study continues with the observations by showing how identity creation in the novel is not absolute but is constantly being negotiated in reaction to the colonization disruption. This trend is translated into the concept of cultural hybridity of Homi Bhabha (1994). The Okonkwo character, as a site of contradiction to change and

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tradition in this sense, complicates the interpretations of the past of the Igbo identity as one and homogeneous.

The current paper also engages with the existing literature on the topic of resistance by Ratcliff (2020), Tabassum (2024), and Akukwe (2024), who interpret Things Fall Apart as a cultural site of conflict with colonial invasion. Though such literature deals with the external consequences of defiance and institutional criticism, the current research is concentrated on the latent and internal results of resistance. The tragic position of Okonkwo, not to give in, the entire drama of the group of elders insisting on their claims of ritual rights, and even the silent spiritual exodus expressed by Nwoye all prove that the resistance in the novel works on various levels: individual level, group level, and symbolic level. The same findings are reflected in a criticism of cultural imperialism by Edward Said (1978) and the notion of ambivalence introduced by Bhabha, in which the concepts of resistance and integration are neither mutually exclusive nor integrated.

Language is also one of the most crucial areas of controversy. Other authors, such as Kara (2023) and Okafor-Maduka (2025), among others, have explored linguistic hybridity in Achebe, particularly in his application of Igbo proverbs to narrate English stories. This fact is confirmed in this reading since he puts Achebe in the perspective of the theory of the subaltern that Gayatri Spivak (1988) has addressed.. The proverbs, songs, and idioms available in the novel are not ornaments, but rather epistemological tools, which are retaliatory to the repression of traditional systems of knowledge and worldviews among indigenous people. Collectively, these findings represent an essential gap in the literature. Despite numerous studies on identifying resistance or language that overlook the other two

aspects of the situation, few have examined how all three factors interact within a cohesive postcolonial environment. This paper bestows this kind of integration since it unites Said Orientalism, Bhabha hybridity, and Spivak subalternity. The result shows that Things Fall Apart is not a simple assault on imperialism; it is a multidimensional narration that tries to address not only the question of culture and its existence but also that of selfrepresentation. The study's contribution lies in its comprehensive nature and the combination of theories. The given proposal provides a paradigm that can be copied to examine the African literature based on the interrelated thematic and theoretical frameworks instead of fragmented or single-sided analysis. This ratifies the fact that Achebe remains a contemporary subject in the modern debate on decolonisation, identity politics, and the politics of voice. Things Fall Apart is a narrative of cultural loss or anti-colonial protest. Still, it is a rich hub of resistance, reconstruction, and recovery, an ode to the power to oppose, to celebrate, and to speak.

5. Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the novel is not just a historical narrative of cultural dislocation; it is an intentional literary gesture of reinventing African identity and criticizing colonial knowledge. Achebe presents an illustration of what Homi Bhabha identifies as the hybridity and ambivalence of the postcolonial subjectivity by demonstrating the intra-conflict between the main character of the novel, Okonkwo, and the resilience of the Igbo people through the course of a whole chapter. Meanwhile, in the same breath, the novel encapsulates several resistance modes, i.e., the ritualistic, personal, and

linguistic forms of resistance, which challenge the imperial power structures, a la Edward Said, and the struggle to reclaim the voice and agency of the subaltern vision, as Gayatri Spivak puts it forward. The novel uses the hybrid narrative to blend English and Igbo proverbs, Igbo idioms, and oral traditions, thus taking narrative authority back to colonized people and disrupting prevailing representations. The approach taken in the study is a very rigorous methodology that combines postcolonial theory and literary analysis, which was also a significant gap in the academic discourse. It shows that identity, resistance, and language cannot be viewed as separate entities but rather as three aspects of the decolonial view of Achebe. *Things Fall Apart* can be explored as a landmark in postcolonial literature, serving both to critique colonial encroachment and to affirm the continuity, strength, and voice of African culture.

5.1. Contribution to Knowledge

The present study contributes significantly to the African and postcolonial literature discipline as it suggests an integrated conceptual framework through which the construction of identity, the process of resistance, and the politics of language converge in *Things Fall Apart*. In this study, the elements are compared to earlier studies where they were separated as factors that have no relationship with each other. This study shows that they are connected, and their combination affects the ideological and aesthetic make-up of the novel. This framework allows us to see how Achebe approaches his narration in more detail. It provides a framework for organizing our understanding of other postcolonial works that share overlapping crosspoints. Besides, the article emphasizes linguistic hybridity as an act of cultural self-assertion as well as a politically charged stylistic device. This point is especially fruitful when considering larger studies

on postcolonial language theory, multilingualism, and literary voice. Their outcome is also pedagogical as they offer *Things Fall Apart* as a text that is not only inviting to critical reading, but also will help in theoretical application in the study of different subjects.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations emerge for future research and practical application:

- **5.2.1. Further Interdisciplinary Studies:** The scope of the intersection of the concepts of identity, resistance, and language in the new literature that may broadly be termed as a postcolonial setting still needs to be extensively probed, leaving other relevant sciences, such as sociolinguistics, anthropology, and history, to be employed to enhance the existing literary mapping.
- **5.2.2.** Expanded Comparative Analyses: Comparative analysis of *Things Fall Apart* and other postcolonial writings in other parts would offer more light to different manifestations of resistance and negotiation of identity under colonial governments.
- **5.2.3.** Focus on Contemporary Implications: The researchers ought to explore how these themes by Achebe relate to the current aspects of African socio-political life, identity politics, cultural renewal, and retention of language.
- **5.2.4. Pedagogical Applications:** Teachers are advised to use this interdisciplinary model in teaching to develop a critical understanding of colonial heritage so that students can be equipped with critical thinking in approaching Postcolonial writings.
- **5.2.5.** Linguistic Research: More research on hybrid language use in Postcolonial colonials would further enrich the knowledge on how languages construct identity and resistance in multilingual settings.

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