

PROVERBS AS A DISCOURSE STRATEGY IN SOME AFRICAN LITERARY TEXTS

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ABSTRACT: *This paper examines the proverb genre as a discourse strategy in some African Literary texts. Specifically, eight (8) proverbs are purposively selected from Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God. The qualitative and descriptive research designs are adopted for this study. These approaches use few data for the analysis to be more detailed and explicit. The qualitative approach is deemed appropriate for our analysis because the study is a corpus based. Referential and Contextual Theories of Meaning are adopted as the main analytical framework for the study. It is discovered that pragmatics or contextual theory is a veritable analytic linguistic framework which studies the meaning of utterances in the context which they are used. Since proverbs are aspects of culture, this study has shown the inextricable link between proverbs, specifically African or Nigerian proverbs and language. It is also shown that context plays a major role in deriving the meanings of these proverbs. It is discovered that young adults or children do not make use of proverbs when talking to elders, because the proverb genre is the wisdom attached to elders in the African society. The study thus concludes that the proverbs in Achebe's novels are more rhetorical, epistemological and didactic than analytical.*

KEYWORDS: Proverbs, Discourse, Strategy, Africa, Literary

INTRODUCTION

Literature has been commonly used since the eighteenth century; it has been applied to those works of poetry, prose, fiction and drama. It designates also any other writing including philosophy, history, and even scientific works addressed to a general audience. It may be classified according to a variety of systems including language, national origin, historical period, genre and subject matter. These classifications give rise to the fact that literature is a universal phenomenon. The term literature falls into two major types: oral and written, where the oral includes ballads, myths, folktales, etc. There are various types of literature across the world, which includes English literature, African, French, American, and Canadian etc. English literature here refers to the body of written works produced in English language. While this word. "African literature" Suggests literature of the blacks and consists of the past histories of black Africans and their culture. It also comprises body of works and genres about African values and cultures.

African literature, consists of a body of work in different languages and various genres, ranging from oral literature to literature written in colonial languages. Emenyonu (1971) posits that African literature has come to mean several things to several people. To some critics it is a tool for the literate African's arrogation of the essence of his cultural heritage – an assertion and at times an imposition of the contents and excellence of a black culture on a white dominated world. Scholars assert that it is simply a political document of protest against the assumptions of colonialism and imperialism as they relate to the world of the

black man. In one of Achebe's Essay's "The African writer and the English language," (1976), cited in Ten (2011) he argues that one cannot cram African Literature into a small, neat definition; that African literature cannot be seen as one unit but as a group of associated—in fact the sum total of all the national and ethnic literatures of Africa.

In this essay, he explains African literature as a writing that is creative through which an African setting is genuinely handled or to which experiences originating in Africa are important.

Hitherto, African literature was considered oral literature up to the 19th century when written African literature began to emerge. There have been several debates as to whether African literature should be written in its indigenous language. A Nigerian critic, Wali (1963) cited in daily news (2010) states that "until African writers accept the fact that any true African literature must be written in African languages, they would be merely pursuing a dead end". Similarly, Ngugi, (1986) believes that African literature can be better conveyed in its indigenous language. This partly explains why Ngugi writes in his native Gikuya language. Though his first novels were written in English, he writes chiefly in his native language. His novels that translated into the English language are the ones with a wider audience. Achebe consistently writes in his chosen style of English replete with proverbs and other vernacular expressions.

In his first and third novels, *Things fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964) respectively Achebe uses Ibo proverbs, imageries and other Ibo vocabularies to his advantage.

Furthermore, Achebe's glory is his use of language; this is what sets him apart from other writers; his ability to translate from his indigenous language into the English language. This systematic transformation of language in writing determines the proficiency and competence of any writer or author. Suffice it to say that what makes a literary work credible and acceptable depends solely on the writer's ability to employ various techniques. A good number of African writers such as Achebe (1958), Soyinka (1959) and Ola Rotimi (1971), use various narrative techniques. One of which is the use of proverbs.

Proverb is an important aspect of indigenous Nigerian languages; it deals with all aspects of life. They are used to emphasize the words of the wise and are the stock in trade of old people, who use them to convey moral lessons and give advice to the young. It is a narrative technique that adds touches of pith to an author's work, the judicious use of this style by an author is usually regarded as a sign of wit. Proverbs are figurative and at the same time poetic in nature and these qualities differentiate them from everyday discourse.

Proverbs are regarded very highly in African cultures; they constitute a dominant device whether in everyday conversation or in more serious and formal discourses. In the Igbo society for instance, it is described as the palm oil with which words are eaten, (Achebe 1958). Achebe has used proverbs as a discourse strategy in most of his novels like *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God* and *Anthills of the Savanna*.

Statement of the Problem:

Proverb is an important aspect of indigenous Nigerian languages. Most existing studies have focused mainly on Igbo and Yoruba proverbs, studies have also focused on Achebe's use of proverbs as a literary device (e.g. G.D Killam 1969 C.L Innes and Bernth Lindfors 1978).

But not much has been done on aspects of Achebe's use of proverbs as a discourse strategy, hence this study.

Objective of the study:

This study has only one objective which is to examine Achebe's use of proverbs as a discourse strategy in some of his novels.

Research Question:

Only one research question has been posed with a view to achieving the above objective. The question is: to what extent has proverbs been used by Achebe as a discourse strategy in some of his novels?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Some scholarly works have been done on African proverbs in general, Nigerian proverbs and the proverbs in the works of Achebe in particular.

This present work on proverbs as discourse strategies in the novels of Achebe is an additional contribution to the knowledge of proverbial lore. Thus, this review is done under the following sub-themes:

Origin of Proverb:

Scholars often make attempts to trace the origin of the word proverb in their language research, since proverb like literature is a universal phenomenon and is used in every country, most especially in Africa to have diverse meanings. According to Olowonihi (2000), the word proverb is from a Latin word *proverbium* (from *pro*-publicly and *verbum*- a word). This *proverbium* embodies a saying where in place of the plain word proverb, a figurative expression is used. From this, one can say that proverb is an embodiment of wisdom.

In Africa, the Nupe term for proverb for instance is "Eganmaga" and its plural "eganmaganzhi" which means wise saying well-spoken among the Nupe's. These proverbs educate, entertain, and teach morality and are didactic. They form part of oral or unwritten norms and ethics of the Nupe societies passed from one generation to another through songs, stories, fables, folktales, myths, legends, incantations, communal discussions, worship and so forth.

The Idoma word for proverb is "Ita", which according to Ikoyi (2011), are wise sayings that reveal the insights of our ancestors, and what a wise man would do in a certain situation such as morals, common sense, religious teachings, business dealings etiquette family/social relationship and self-control. It also deals with respect and loyalty to authority's patience humility and respect to the lowly.

The Igbo word for proverb is "Ilu" or "Inu" which means bitter. According to Chinonye (nd) the compulsory use of Igbo proverbs (ilu), parables (ukabililu) and idioms (akpaalokwu), in every traditional setting has elevated the language to the status of a living art of popular

communication. To this, Achebe (1958) defined proverbs (ilu) “as the palm oil with which words are eaten”.

The analysis of the origin of both the Nupe (Eganmaga), idoma (ita), and the Igbo (ilu) are given in order to shed more light on the etymology of proverbs and why it is a universal phenomenon. In a nutshell, proverbs are the wisdom of a people.

Definitions of Proverbs

It is unavoidable to state that there are as many definitions of proverbs as there are scholars of the genre. Over the years, there had been different opinions’ concerning the issue of proverbs. For the purpose of this research only a few will be mentioned here. In the words of Finnegan (2012)

The exact definition of ‘proverb’ is no easy matter. There is, however, some general agreement as to what constitutes a proverb. It is a saying in more or less fixed form marked by ‘shortness, sense and salt’ and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it.

Several attempts have been made by different scholars towards providing an accurate definition of proverbs. While some of the outcomes of these attempts have provided one striking revelation or the other about the nature of proverbs, none has been accepted as the universal definition of the term proverb. Zakariyah (2013:21).

One of the many attempts towards defining a proverb is the effort of Taylor (1931) cited in (Olowonibi, 2000:15), according to him;

The definition of a proverb is too formidable to repay the task, and any attempt to combine in a single definition all essential elements giving each the proper emphasis, is still even just a tip of the ice berg. But many people seem to identify a proverb from ordinary statements. Thus, it is a kind of incommunicable quality that informs one if sentence is proverbial and if another is not. Therefore no one definition can enable a person to conclude authoritatively that any given sentence is proverbial.

In addition, one can say that proverbs are an embodiment of wisdom and as well different from everyday conversation. According to Ahmed (2005) cited in (Zakariyah 2013) proverbs are short pithy sayings which had gained credence through widespread or frequent use.

Abrams, (2012) defines proverbs as “short pithy statements of widely accepted truths about everyday life”. He explains further that many proverbs are allegorical in that the explicit statement is meant to have by analogy or by extended reference, a general application.

The Oxford English Dictionary 8th edition (2010) defines a proverb as a well-known phrase or sentence that gives advice or says something that is generally true. Thus, proverbs are seen as part of everyday discourse, they are phrases that add touches of local colour to our daily conversations. In Africa the use of proverbs is regarded very highly. It is on this note that Achebe (1958) states that “among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten.

Proverbs and their Significance in Written African Literature

Proverbs have become one of the major styles of most African writers because of their value to literature. Asika (nd) asserts that proverbs have become a tool which African writers use to justify the actions of characters, criticize bad ethical and immoral behaviours. This is to say that through the use of proverbs writers are able to communicate to their readers. Proverbs give writers the ability to express the culture of their people, it makes a writer’s work easy to understand, and add touches of local colour. The significance of this is that, proverbs is an oral product, and thus help writers achieve a sense of originality in their piece of work.

One of the most prominent African writers known for achieving an appropriate language through the use of his proverbs is Achebe. According to Lindfors (1978), indeed, Achebe’s proverbs can serve as keys to an understanding of his novels because he uses them not merely to add touches of local colour but to sound and reiterate themes, to sharpen characterization, to clarify conflict, to focus on the values of the society he is portraying. This is what the use of proverbs helps most African writers to achieve. Lindfors (1978:52) comments on Achebe’s use of proverbs to reinforce his characters. He states that “Achebe uses proverb to reinforce the image of Okonkwo as a man who struggles with his chi. Lindfors (1978) elaborates more on Achebe’s use of proverbs in several of his works, such as *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God* and *No Longer at Ease*. In the end he concludes that;

In A Man of the People, as Achebe’s other novels, proverbs are used to sound and reiterate major themes or to sharpen characterization, and to focus on the values of the society Achebe is portraying. By studying the proverbs in a novel, we gain insight to the moral issues with which that novel deals. Because they provide a grammar of values by which the actions of characters can be measured and evaluated, proverbs help us to understand Achebe’s novels. Achebe’s literary talents are clearly revealed in his use of proverbs. One observes his mastery of the English language, his skill in choosing the right words to convey his ideas, his keen sense of what is in character and what is not, his instincts for appropriate metaphor and symbol, and his ability to present a thoroughly African world in thoroughly African terms. It is this last talent that enables him to convince his readers that “African peoples 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, that they had poetry and above all, they had dignity.

Usman, Mustafa and Agu (2013) also write that “the use of proverbs is common among Nigerian writers. Thus, in projecting the “Nigerianness” of their themes and cultural background the

Nigerian writer articulates the rich cultural ethos of proverbs in their creative works to reinforce meanings. It is ultimately submitted that proverbs are a profound source of rhetorical power, literary effectiveness and discourse maturity.

One of the most important things writers achieve with their use of proverbs aside the reinforcement of characters and meaning is their fight for the preservation of culture, since proverbs reflect diverse aspects of a people's culture. African writers have been able to use proverbs to reflect the society they portray. Asika (n.d) writes that;

African writers have been able to use proverbs in telling the African side of the story and several Igbo writers, like Chinua Achebe, Cyprain Ekwensi, John Munonye, Onouha Nzekwu, Obi Egbuna, Flora Nwapa, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo, J.O.J Nwachukwu-Agbada, Rems Umuasiegbu among others incorporated Igbo proverbs in their works to reflect their "igboness" and to showcase the unique cultural values, traditions and norms of the people they write about.

African literature has therefore been made distinct from the bulk of other literatures written in English because of their vivid exploration and exposition of the rich African culture and oral traditions which proverbs, folklore and fables emanate from.

The Concept of Discourse

Discourse first appeared in French language in 1503 from the Latin word *discursus*, Babylon and Fabre, (1990) cited in (Fakuade 2014). According to Babylon and Fabre, at first it meant intention but later it became known as talk or speech. The term according to the Oxford Advance Dictionary 8th edition (2010) "is a long and serious treatment or discussion of a subject in speech or writing", or the use of language in speech and writing in order to produce meaning; language that is studied usually in order to see how the different parts of a text is connected. Fowler (1981:20) cited in (Fakuade 2014) narrows down the scope of discourse to the user. He is of the opinion that it is a write up from the perspective of the writer. He states that;

Discourse in speech or writing is seen from the point of view of the beliefs, values and categories which it embodies; these beliefs constitute a way of looking at the world, an organization or representation of experience, "ideology" in the natural non-pejorative sense".

Fakuade (2014), states that analysis entails a careful examination in this context, description and explanation of form-function relationship. The terms discourse and discourse analysis in the opinion of Widdowson cited in (Fakuade 2014) "have become broad over the last three decades used to denote scholastic activity spoken interaction, written text, grammar and lexis beyond the confines of the sentence and intonation. He makes it clear that he is concerned with discourse as language in use rather than the more socio-political inclined discipline.

In doing a discourse analysis of text one cannot live out the context of usage, this means that discourse cannot be separated from pragmatics which deals with the linguistic study of the meaning of utterances according to the context which that utterance was made. According to Halliday and Hassan quoted in (Zakariyah 2013), the three concepts that make it possible to interpret the social context of a discourse are field, tenor and mode. Thus, in this study the communicative potentials that make a proverb didactic in a discourse is the field. Achebe has greatly explored his use of proverbs as a discourse strategy in his novels which gives the reader an easy interpretation of the text.

As a discursive style, Achebe's use of proverbs does not only serve as keys for understanding his novels because he does not use it merely to add "touches of local colour" but in conversation to sharpen characterization, to clarify conflict, to give advice, and explore his themes, using proverb as a linguistic armory to narrate his story. By using this style of discourse, he incorporates the use of simile and imageries, for instance in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964) he uses these similes,

...like a bush fire in the Harmattan (pg.1).. as busy as anthill (pg.45)

...like a grain of maize in an empty goatskin bag. (pg.100)

...like a bad cowry (pg.146)

The significance of these similes is to show that Achebe incorporates not one but several styles of writing; his vivid use of language does not stop at proverbs alone. Besides Achebe's use of proverbs, idioms and similes as a discourse strategy, he also employs the use of code mixing and code switching although he writes in English; he uses the African language within passages. The use of his native vocabulary Igbo makes his readers to look outside their constraints and identify more with the African culture (background knowledge). For instance when Achebe writes on the woman that was killed (the wife of Ogbuefi Udo) in *Things Fall Apart* he describes how Umoufia was feared by all its neighbours and by describing the medicine he made use of the term "Agadi nwayi" (p.9), a reader might not understand what this means but then Achebe goes further to say "old woman" pointing to a reader what "Agadi nwayi" means. Also, in Achebe's description of the mask Nwaka used in the Idemmili festival he said the mask is called "ogalanya" a reader might also not know what it means but he further explains it to mean "man of riches" (P.39). He also uses the English language and his indigenous language interchangeably; this is such that his message will be better conveyed, and because some words in the Igbo language may not have an exact substitute. In *Arrow of God*, for instance he writes "But the elders were not foolish when they said that a man might have Ngwu and still be killed by Ojukwo" (p, 39).

It is therefore the stand point of this study, that Achebe a witty and skillful artist achieves an appropriate use of language for each of his novels using almost all the above-mentioned styles but largely through the use of proverbs as discourse strategy because by studying his use of proverbs one is better able to interpret and understand his novels. This study differs from the ones reviewed because most of the studies on proverbs especially from the linguistic circles in African studies have concentrated on traditional interpretations. The proverbs from this traditionalist perspective are considered naturally known and thus do not require critical and detailed interpretations, this tend to undermine the nature and functions of proverbs in everyday discourse. This study thus examines Achebe's novels to analyse his reliance on indigenous proverbs as discourse strategy which he utilizes in sharpening his characters, resolving conflicts, giving advice to the young, and

questioning the eels of colonialism in his Nigerian society. This study reveals that the Igbo proverbs Achebe uses serve as the linguistic weapon through which he depends on to pass across the message of his novels.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The data for analysis are presented in the table below:

Table 1: Proverbs Selected for Analysis

	TFA	AOG
T1	He who brings kola brings life.	When hand shake passes the elbow, we know it has turned to another thing.
T2	The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them.	A man who has nowhere else to put his hand for support puts it on his own knee.
T3	If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings and elders.	As soon as we shake hands with a leper he will want an embrace.
T4	When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk.	A disease that has never been known before cannot be cured with everyday herbs.
T5	A toad does not run in the daytime for nothing.	Unless the wind blows, we do not see the fowl's rump.
T6	The lizard that jumped from the iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did.	For when we see a little bird dancing in the middle of the pathway we must know that its drummer is in the nearby bush.
T7	Proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten.	An old woman is never old when it comes to the dance she knows.
T8	Eneke the bird says that since men have learnt to shoot without missing, he has learnt to fly without perching.	He is a fool who treats his brother worse than a stranger.

Discourse analysis of Selected Proverbs

Group one: Text analysis of Proverbs from *THINGS FALL APART*

1. *He who brings kola brings life. (p.5)*

Analysis:

The kola nut is a West African fruit that can be chewed. Kola is very important in most African cultures especially in the Eastern part of Nigeria. The breaking of kola together shows a sign of love unity and peace. This proverb makes reference to the use of kola. From the context of use, Okoye visits Unoka and is offered kola nut as a sign of acceptance to Unoka's home. He portrays the importance of kola in the Igbo society where a visitor is often offered kola nut as a form of welcome before any form of conversation takes place.

Among the Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria, kola is very significant. It precedes whatever food or entertainment one should expect while visiting another fellow. Thus, if one should serve friend varieties of food and drinks without kola-nut, it is assumed that the host has failed woefully. The guest can go out and tell his fellows that his friend (the host) could not even offer him ordinary kola in house not minding that he has been fed sumptuously. Legend has it that when the founding fathers of the Igbo race visited the Almighty; the first thing God gave them was kola-nut. Hence since god is the giver of life, the Igbo people believe whosoever brings kola to his friend, has brought life. This is the origin of proverb “he who brings kola, brings life.”

2. *The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them. (p.6).*

Analysis:

In uttering this proverb, Unoka makes reference to a cosmic object “the sun”. In the context of the proverb one sees that Unoka owes so much debt which he represents with lines of chalk. This proverb means that he will attend to his bigger creditors before those he owed little. In the use of this proverb, there is an illocutionary act carried out by Unoka who actually recognizes the intent of Okoye’s visit. His response is explicit and appropriate in the context of discourse. He therefore does not violate the Grice maxim of relevance. His response is not outside the reason for Okoye’s visit. The proverb therefore gives a direct answer to Okoye who has background knowledge of the fact that Unoka owes so many people. He performs a perlocutionary act by rolling his goatskin bag and departs without a word, because his action shows that Okonkwo’s proverb has effect on him.

3. *If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings and elders. (p.6).*

Analysis:

The proverb is made clear and orderly within the context of use. The proverb portrays the fact that those who work hard could dine with elders and kings despite their age. From the context, one sees that in the Igbo society age is respected but achievements is held in high esteem. At a young age Okonkwo had achieved a lot which means he actually worked hard to gain the status that qualified him to dine with elders. In this discourse, the maxim of quality and relevance is observed; the proverb is not false but expresses a known fact because in our society today people are respected for their achievements and not age, and the proverb is in relation to the topic of discussion. The implicature is that one needs to work hard.

4. *When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk. (p.7).*

Analysis:

This proverb makes reference to another cosmic body “the moon”. This cosmic body collocates with the word shine and the reference to cripple collocates with walk metaphorically. From the context of use, the moon usually shines at night and children play under it, adult tell moonlight stories to young ones and the old try to remember their youthful days. This proverb therefore means that when the moon is shining at night people are outside playing, dancing, and singing, doing specifically things that interest them such that even a crippled man feels like joining them. A cripple in this context could mean those who are

physically crippled, or those who are old and can no longer play like the children or dance like the youths, they only sit and watch remembering old times. In discourse, the narrator has observed the maxim of quality, because it is known by everyone that the moon shines only at night.

5. *A toad does not run in the daytime for nothing. (p.15).*

Analysis:

This proverb makes reference to a living thing “a toad” which invariably collocates with the verb jump instead of run. It is a known fact that the toad runs in the daytime only if something is after its life or it is pursuing something. This proverb therefore means that there is always a reason for everything that happens in life; that is, there is always a cause of action. From the context of use, one notices that Ogbuefi uses this proverb in reference to Obiako who left his trade. Ogbuefi is trying to figure out Obiako’s reason for quitting his trade. He therefore violates the maxim of quality and relevance because he actually lacks evidence to back up what he thinks is the actual reason behind Obiako’s recent decision. Their reasons are based on assumption; his introduction of Obiako’s story is neither in relation to why they are gathered at Nwakibie’s house.

6. *The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did. (P.15-16).*

Analysis:

The proverb explains the fact that people are happy with themselves whenever they do something good. People are often times happy and proud of their own achievements even when others do not appreciate their efforts. It makes use of the lizard as a symbol; the lizard is known to nod its head after any activity it engages in. In the context of use the proverb shows an implicature of self-praise. Okonkwo indirectly praises himself before Nwakibie, in order to convince him to accept his request. The narrator observes the rule of turn taking in discourse. Nwakibie does not intrude into Okonkwo’s speech until he finishes then Nwakibie takes his turn immediately after him.

Besides this, he observes the maxim of relevance, his use of this proverb is in relation to the request he is asking from Nwakibie.

7. *Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten. (p.5).*

Analysis:

This proverb is an important proverb, contextually; it is part of the account of the author on the interaction between Okoye and Unoka. Okoye made this statement: “Among the Igbo the art of conversation is regarded very highly....” The pragmatic import is that the proverb highlights the importance of the use of proverbs for oratory purposes. It qualifies proverb to the use of palm oil as a food substance. One can assert that any conversation devoid of the use of proverb is as empty as food without oil, therefore making the message hardly effective.

This proverb thus serves to explain the wisdom attached to anyone who uses proverbs effectively in any conversation. Being effective during discourse is necessitated by the Grice maxim of relevance and manner by which the interlocutors avoid saying things that are not in

relation to the discourse or things that are ambiguous and cannot be clearly understood. It is a discourse strategy achieved mainly through the use of proverbs. Thus, the author's use of this proverb is in observance with the maxims of relevance and manner, because it is clearly understood and is in relation to Okoye's oratory power. Okoye on the other hand, violates the maxim of quantity by skirting round the topic before he finally hits the nail on its head. Besides this, the proverb is a metaphor. The term palm-oil is used to refer to words without the use of "as" or "like". There is no connection between words and palm-oil, therefore, it is a direct comparison. It should be borne in mind that metaphoric statements make a point very clear and vivid. This is in connection with the author's observance of the maxim of manner.

8. *Eneke the bird says that since men have learnt to shoot without missing, he has learnt to fly without perching. (p.16).*

Analysis:

Contextually, this proverb is uttered by Nwakibie to explain the reason behind his refusal to give out seed yams to many young men. Okonkwo is among the few who benefitted from Nwakibie because of his diligence and zeal towards work. This proverb serves to explain that Nwakibie must have given seedlings to so many youths in the past which yielded nothing and now he has learnt to be stingy. The pragmatic import is that all youths should develop zeal towards working hard; it also implies that it is man that has made his fellow man to be wicked. This proverb makes reference to a bird eneke which connotes with the word 'fly'. Besides this, Nwakibie observes the Grice maxim of relevance because he uttered this proverb in relation to the discourse, but he violates the maxim of quantity instead of going straight to the point "I shall give you..." he takes the time praising Okonkwo and narrating to him how other youths have come for the same offer but he turned them down.

CONCLUSION

It is discovered that pragmatics or contextual theory is a veritable analytic linguistic framework which studies the meaning of utterances in the context which they are used. It is also discovered that the Grice model of conversational principle known as Grice maxim is a veritable tool useful for effective analysis of utterances in discourse analysis. Since proverbs are aspects of culture, this study has proved the inextricable link between proverbs, specifically African- Nigerian proverbs and language. Particularly, Grice maxims allows one to analyse data pragmatically and arrive at the meanings of the proverbs used in Achebe's novels; *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, on their contexts of usage. Context here plays a major role in deriving the meaning of these proverbs. These proverbs as used in their appropriate contexts, partly means that there is no pragmatic failure. Achebe in his wit allows us to know those who use proverbs, thus it is discovered that young adults or children do not make use of proverbs when talking to elders, because proverbs is the wisdom attached to elders in the society.

On the types of proverbs used by Achebe, one can conclude from the analysis that the proverbs in Achebe's novels are more rhetorical, epistemological and didactic than analytical. African proverbs, particularly those used in the selected novels, are used to give advice, warn, caution, reprimand, make reference to cosmic bodies, persuade, and teach morals.

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