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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE LEXICAL CHANGE IN THE PERSONAL NAME IN ACHEBE'S NOVELS

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Abstract

Language change is a process by which change occurs in the distribution of linguistic variants across sounds, words or constructions of a language. The change can be as a result of the following factors: contact, region, level of education, gender, age and so on. In the light of this, the research investigates the lexical change in the personal names that occur in the following novels of Chinua Achebe: *Things fall apart, No longer at ease* and *Arrow of God*. From the findings, this study portrays that contact is the major factor that brings about the lexical change in the personal names used in these novels. Furthermore, this contact is classified under religious contact, culture contact and education contact. Finally, Holmes (2013) opines that for there to be a language change, there must be language variation. In the case of language change in the personal names that occur in the aforementioned novels, there are no variations before the lexical change in the personal names. Eckert & McConnell-Ginet's (1992) proposition that no single variable can be held responsible for language change is visible also because inasmuch as the reason for the language change is stemmed to contact with the white men but it further spilled to other factors like education, religion and culture.

Key words: Novel, language, Lexical Change

Introduction

Change is constant in man so also language which is one the basic aspects of human nature. Language also varies across time. According to

Holmes (2013, p.206), etymological dictionary tells us that the word 'nice' once meant 'precise', and before that it meant 'fastidious' and earlier still, it meant 'ignorant'. From generation to generation, pronunciation evolves, new words are borrowed or

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invented, the meaning of old words drifts and morphology develops and decays. The rate of change varies, but we cannot say the changes are faster or slower. Normally, these changes build up until the mother tongue becomes distant and different. After a particular period of time, the relationship will essentially be indistinguishable from chance relationships between historically unrelated languages.

In discussing language change, language is often treated as an entity independent of its speakers and writers. In reality, it is not as if that language itself changes as the speaker and writer change the way they use the language. It all has to do with the speakers' innovation. Sometimes speakers may spontaneously innovate words, may also imitate from the speakers of other communities; but if their innovations are adopted by others and diffuse through their local community and beyond into other communities, then linguistic change has taken place. For there to be language change, there must be language variation and there are interestingly interrelated. Simply put, for language change to take place there must be variation over a period of time and it obviously originated from somewhere and its use will be by various classes of people in a society. Many of these changes sometimes are short-lived, but some are persistent and may at the end of the day be incorporated into the standard dialect. For instance, in English language, 'mob' was condemned as a vulgar word, 'bus' was once regarded as a vulgar shortening of omnibus, 'otel' was once considered the only acceptable way of pronouncing hotel (Holmes, 2013). Therefore, all language change originates from variation. As soon as a new form develops and begins to be used alongside an existing form, there is a possibility of later language change.

In the modern world, language change is often socially problematic. Long before divergent dialects lose mutual intelligibility completely, they begin to show difficulties and inefficiency in communication especially under noisy or stressful conditions. Furthermore, as people observe language change, they usually react negatively, feeling that language has "gone down hill". There are different causes of language change. The change can originate

when language learning is transformed as it is transmitted from one generation to the next. Each individual recreates a grammar and lexicon based on the input received from parents, older siblings and other members of the speech community. It can also emanate through language contact like migration, conquest and trade; these bring speakers of one language into contact with speakers of another language. Some individuals become bilingual as children, while others learn a second language more or less well as adults. In such contact situations, languages often borrow words, sounds, constructions and so on. In the same way some social groups adopt distinctive norms of dress, ornament, gesture and so forth, so also does language as part of the package. In addition, factors like age, region, level of education, gender, among others can also contribute to language change. Linguistic distinctiveness can be achieved through various ways like vocabulary (slang or jargon), pronunciation (often via exaggeration of some variants already available in the environment), morphological processes, syntactic constructions and so on. Finally, rapid or casual speech naturally produces processes such as assimilation, dissimilation, syncope and apocope. Through repletion, particular cases may become conventionalized and therefore produced even in slower or more careful speech.

Igbo language is one of the many languages spoken in Nigeria. Since her independence, the main languages in Nigeria have been Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, also known by the word 'wazobia', i.e. 'wa' in Yoruba, 'zo' in Hausa, and 'bia' in Igbo, all meaning 'to come'. Igbo is predominantly spoken in Abia, Imo, Enugu, Anambra, Ebonyi and parts of Rivers and Delta states. Speaking English, you can get by in most parts of Igbo land, though in some very remote areas, only Igbo or its variants can be understood. This is as a result of British colonialism which took place in the early 50's. Igbo language is classified as a Niger-Congo language and belongs to the Kwa sub-group of languages spoken in sub-Saharan Africa. Igbo as a language consists of many dialects; therefore, the development of Igbo written literature encountered lots of controversies. Perhaps, the reason why Chinua Achebe wrote his first novel in English or can still be because of one of the

factors of language change, contact. As language changes verbally, so it changes in writing. Literature depicts ways of life of the people which include dressing, food, tradition, values, language, among others, and these are seen in the content of the novels of renowned writer, Chinua Achebe. The novels *Things Fall Apart* written in 1958 and *Arrow of God* written in 1960 gave us a picture of what Igbo culture and traditions were like before the contact of the white men and *No longer at ease* pictured the life of Igbo after the contact with the white men. Therefore, this work examined the language change that exists in the personal names of the first three novels written by Chinua Achebe.

Review of Related Literatures

(Wardhaugh, 2010) Opines that language change can be internal or external. Internal change is the historical change seen in the phonology, morphology and syntax of languages showing the structural changes that have occurred over periods of time through use of this principle of 'contrast vs. lack of contrast.' However, in the case of external change, change occurs through borrowing from other dialects or languages which are often quite clearly distinguishable, for a while at least, from changes that come about internally. Some linguists have used the metaphor of waves to explain how linguistic changes spread through a community. Any particular change can spread simultaneously in different directions, though not necessarily in the same rate in all directions. Social factors such as age, status, gender and region affect the rate of change and the directions in which the waves roll most swiftly. (Eckert and McConnel- Ginet, 1992) claim that no single variable (race, class, gender, ethnicity, etc.) can be held responsible for language change rather it is the communities' practices that are the key. That is, people's reasons for coming together and their shared activities, beliefs and perceptions all seem to play a crucial role in language change. Communities of practice are defined not by external factors (number of members in one's social network) but rather by speakers' sense of membership and active participation in a group because it is through the constant use of the linguistic item(s) that perhaps

results to change. Initially, Igbo language seems to have an extremely limited number of adjectives in a closed class; that is why (Emenanjo,1978) counts just eight of them: ukwu 'big', nta 'small', oji 'dark', ọcha 'light', ọhuru 'new', ochie 'old', ọma 'good', ọjọọ 'bad'. Also, many names in Igbo are actually fusions of older original words and phrases. For example, one Igbo word for vegetable leaves is akwukwo nri which literally means 'leaves for eating' or 'vegetables'. Green leaves are called 'akwukwo ndu' because 'ndu' means life. Another example is train (ugbo igwe/ugbo oloco), which comes from the word ugbo 'vehicle'/'craft' and igwe 'iron' or 'metal'; thus a locomotive train is vehicle via iron 'rails', a car 'ugbo ala' via land and aeroplane 'ugbo elu' via air. Words may also take multiple meanings. Take for example, the word akwukwo, it originally means 'leaf' (as on a tree), but during and after the colonization period, akwukwo also came to be linked to paper, book, school and education, to become respectively 'akwukwo edemede', 'akwukwo ogugu', 'ulo akwukwo', 'mmuta akwukwo'. This is because printed paper can be first linked to an organic leaf, and then the paper to book, the book to school, and so on. Combined with other words, 'akwukwo' can take on many forms; for instance, 'akwukwo ego' means printed money or bank notes and 'akwukwo njem' means passport.

Furthermore, sound change can also take place in the spread of change. This happens when one sound is replaced in people's speech by another over a period of time. For instance, an example culled from (Holmes, 2013), in New Zealand, words like 'new' and 'nuclear' were once pronounced nyew [nju:] and nyuklear [nju:kliə]. Presently, young people are increasingly using American pronunciation without the [j], pronouncing the above mentioned words [nu:] and [nu:kliə] instead which is known as sound variation. Over time, it seems likely that the pronunciation without [j] will displace the pronunciation with [j] in most people's speech. An individual's language behavior also changes in accordance with the demands of his everyday interaction as determined also by the social context (Agbedo, 2001). This means that language change is an inherent part of the process of everyday use of

language. Language attrition is another term that has a close relation with language change. (Kopke and Schmid, 2004) define it as “the non-pathological decrease in a language that had previously been acquired by an individual”. Language attrition takes place when there is change in the linguistic behaviour of a speaker of a language. It could probably be as a result of the acquisition of a second language and less use of the first language. It could affect an individual or the society. When it affects the society, it is seen as a form of language shift. In the case of disappearing words, it may not be as a result of forgetting or losing the L1 words, but that of non-transfer of the L1 words to the children and this leads to the death of the words in question. This is largely caused by cultural and technological changes in the society. Change seems to affect every language so far studied; therefore, it makes the language of our community unique. The only way to allow for change in a totally homogenous community is to assume that every change affects every member of the community absolutely and simultaneously. That is, at some point in time, nobody has the new form of a word structure, the next day, everybody has it.

Language change can also be as a result of acculturation of culture. This case can be caused by when a speaker moves to other places. If someone or speaker moves to a new place, the speaker will be of influence to the new society, so there will be a new dialect or language and in the quest to find the new words or even syntactic structure for communication, language change perhaps occurs. Language can change and develop by itself slowly. Language can change and develop because of adaptation of development, pattern change and the system of the society life, such as the level of education, social, culture and technology mastery. The process of language change can be influenced by internal change which refers to the grammatical change. Internal language change relates to the language change itself. It correlates with the grammatical system. That is a situation whereby it exists in the phonological system, phrase sequences and sentences. Simply put, internal change is observed in isolation to the society in use. External change is as a result of contact with other languages. External

language change is better explored through sociolinguistic study; thereby, examining and looking at the changes as influenced by the socio-cultural factors that occur in society. Changes in the external language change is often caused by the contact of a language with other languages, where humans as social beings who have been cultured either as interconnected or inter-ethnic in a country. There are many purposes for interaction and activities that may bring about language change, for example economy, politics, religion, science, acculturation of culture, technology, etc.

Finally, there is an insignificant amount of scholarly work on language change in Igbo language and Igbo culture novels. A notable work is (Agbedo's, 2001) study of linguistic variation and change in the Enugwu-Ezike dialect of Igbo. Using a wide range of social factors such as region, age, contact, gender and education in measuring the patterns of linguistic variation in the dialect under study, the research identifies region as the most significant factor for variation. Of all the linguistic levels, vocabulary is the most sensitive to language change since it is tied referentially to the culture. It is on this note that this present study seeks to investigate lexical change in Igbo personal names in Chinua Achebe's first trio Igbo cultural novels.

The Lexical Change in the Personal Name that occurred in the First Trio Novels of Chinua Achebe.

Language change can be as a result of so many factors like age, gender, level of education, region, contact, and so on. This change can also be visible phonologically, morphologically, syntactically or lexically. However, this study focuses on the lexical aspect of language change in the personal names that occurred in the following novels of Chinua Achebe: *Things fall Apart*, *No longer at Ease* and *Arrow of God*. A synopsis of the novels under study follows next before their discussion based on the topic.

Things Fall Apart

Okonkwo is a respected and influential leader within the Igbo community of Umuofia in eastern Nigeria. Okonkwo's father, Unoka, is a lazy and wasteful man who usually borrows money and squandered it on palmwine and merrymaking with friends; and his wife and children often go hungry. Unoka is considered a failure due to his ill behaviours. He was referred to as Agbala, one who resembles the weakness of a woman and has no property. He later died a shameful death and left numerous debts. As a result of these, Okonkwo attempts to be his father's polar opposite by starting from his early stage of life to build his home and reputation as a seasoned wrestler and hard-working farmer with three wives. Due to Okonkwo's reputation in his community, he is asked to care for a young boy named Ikemefuna, who is given to the village as a peace offering by neighboring Mbaino to avoid war with Umuofia. Okonkwo comes to love him like a son. In fact, he is so fond of him more than his real son, Nwoye. After the coming of the locusts, Ogbuefi Ezeude, the oldest man in the village, communicates to Okonkwo a message from the Oracle which says that Ikemefuna must be killed as part of the retribution for the Umuofian woman killed three years earlier in Mbaino. He warns Okonkwo not to be involved in the killing of Ikemefuna, but he feels that it will be a sign of weakness. When the men of Umuofia take Ikemefuna into the forest to slaughter him, Okonkwo actually participates in the murder because he does not want to be seen as a weakling like his father. However inside him, Okonkwo feels painful guilt and regret. When Nwoye realizes that his father has murdered Ikemefuna, he begins to distance himself from his father and clansmen.

After the death of Ikemefuna, Okonkwo becomes depressed, so he visits his best friend, Obierika, who disapproves of his involvement in the killing of Ikemefuna. After discussing Ikemefuna's death with Obierika, he is finally able to sleep restfully, but awakened by his wife Ekwefi that their daughter Ezinma, whom Okonkwo is fond of, is dying. Okonkwo gathers grasses, barks, leaves and prepare medicine for Ezinma. Later, the priestess, Chielo tells Ekwefi that Agbala needs to see Ezinma.

Although Okonkwo and Ekwefi protest, Chielo takes a terrified Ezinma on her back and forbids anyone to follow. Chielo carries Ezinma to all nine villages and then enters the Oracle's cave. Ekwefi follows secretly, in spite of Chielo's admonitions, and waits at the entrance of the Oracle. Okonkwo surprises Ekwefi by arriving at the cave, and he also waits with her. The next morning, Chielo takes Ezinma to Ekwefi's hut and puts her to bed. Ogbuefi Ezeudu later dies. Okonkwo worries because the last time that Ezeudu visited him was when he warned him against participating in the killing of Ikemefuna. During the funeral, Okonkwo accidentally shoots and kills Ezeudu's sixteen years old boy. For his crime, the town exiles him for seven years to his mother's homeland, Mbanta. During Okonkwo's second year in exile, his best friend, Obierika, visits him. He recounts the sad news about the village of Abame: that a white man rode into the village on a bicycle and the elders of Abame consulted their Oracle which told them that the white man would destroy their clan and other clans. This caused the villagers to kill the white man. But weeks later, a large group of men slaughtered the villagers in retribution. The village of Abame is now deserted.

During the course of Okonkwo's exile, six missionaries, including one white man, arrive in Mbanta. The white man speaks to the people about Christianity. Okonkwo believes that the man speaks nonsense, but his son, Nwoye, is captivated and becomes a convert of Christianity. The Christian missionaries build a church on the land given to them by the village leaders at an evil forest hoping they will die but nothing happen to them. This made them believe that the missionaries possess extraordinary power. The missionaries then go to Umuofia and also start a school. Nwoye leaves his father's hut and moves to Umuofia so he can attend the school. When Okonkwo's exile is over, he arranges to return to Umuofia. As he returns to Umuofia, he discovers that the village has changed during his absence. Many men have renounced their titles and have converted to Christianity. The white men have built a prison; they have established a government court of law, where people are tried for breaking the white man's laws; and they also employ natives of

Umuofia. Mr. Brown, the white missionary, respects the Igbo traditions. He makes an effort to learn about the Igbo culture and becomes friendly with some of the clan leaders. He also encourages Igbo people of all ages to get an education. Mr. Brown tells Okonkwo that Nwoye, who has taken the name Isaac, is attending a teaching college. Nevertheless, Okonkwo is unhappy about the changes in Umuofia. When Mr. Brown becomes ill and is forced to return to his homeland, Reverend James Smith becomes the new head of the Christian church. Reverend Smith is nothing like Mr. Brown; he is so intolerant of clan customs and is very strict. Violence later arises after Enoch, an overzealous convert to Christianity unmasks an egwugwu. In retaliation, the egwugwu burn Enoch's compound and then destroy the Christian church. When the District Commissioner returns to Umuofia, he learns about the destruction of the church and asks six leaders of the village, including Okonkwo, to meet with him and they are jailed until they pay a fine of two hundred and fifty bags of cowries. The next day at a meeting for clansmen, five court messengers who intend to stop the gathering approach the group. Suddenly, Okonkwo jumps forward and beheads the man in charge of the messengers with his machete. Realizing that his clan will not go to war against the white men, the proud, devastated Okonkwo hangs himself.

No Longer at Ease

The Umuofia Progressive Union (U.P.U) gives Obi a scholarship to study law in England, to repay when he returns. So many things happen to him when he is in England. First, he changes his course of study to English and abandons law. Second, he finds himself nostalgic about home by writing poems about Nigeria. Finally, he meets a girl named Clara at a dance in London but there is no spark as of the time of contact, though the girl is also a Nigerian. On Obi's boat ride back to Nigeria after nearly four years in England, he meets Clara once again. This time, there is a spark between them which generates into a relationship. Back in Nigeria, he stays in Lagos with his friend Joseph, trying to find a job and a place of his own. He also visits his

own home village of Umuofia. Obi's return is marked by fanfare; the Umuofia Progressive Union throws a huge party and welcomes him back as their local hero. In fact, the expectation is that Obi's repayment of his debt will allow them to send others to school, and his position in the civil government will place the whole region of Umuofia in a position of power within government. Through Obi, they may be able to get jobs. Luckily for him, he receives an appointment to work with the Scholarship Board of the Civil Service. He is immediately welcomed to the world of bribery as soon as he resumes work, though he refuses the offer at the initial stage. It happens when a man offers Obi money in order for him to "pull strings" for his little sister's scholarship. Obi rejects the offer, only later to be met at home by the little sister herself who offers Obi her body in return for the scholarship favour. Again, he rejects this offer.

In spite of the fact that Obi starts his life in Nigeria in a sincere way, life remains unfair to him. Initially, Clara tells him that she cannot marry him because she is an outcast literally known as *osu*, in Igbo land. Obi decides to ignore this and go ahead in his marriage arrangement with her anyway. Things never get better because he begins to pay a monthly sum to the Umuofia Progressive Union to pay back his school loan, and he also begins to send his parents a monthly sum of money, as well as pay for his brother's school fees and his mother's hospital bills when she is sick. Soon enough, Obi's finances are so stretched beyond their capacity that he is in debt. He then receives a letter from his father telling him that he must come home. He takes a two weeks' leave from his job. The job pays him twenty-five pounds for his leave, and he decides to pay for his brother's school fees out of that money, realizing that if he doesn't pay it now when he has the money, he won't have it in a few months when it's due. At home, Obi's parents confront him about his engagement to Clara. His parents tell him he must not marry Clara because she is an outcast. In fact, Obi's dying mother threatens him that if he insists on marrying Clara, he must wait until she is dead because if he marries Clara while she is alive, she will kill herself. Though Obi's parents raised him as a

Christian, and shunned many aspects of Igbo culture up to that point, now his father simply insists he cannot marry Clara. He says that though Christians must give up part of their indigenous culture and beliefs when they convert, this is not one of those things, it runs too deep in Igbo culture. Obi, therefore returns to Lagos and tells Clara all that has transpired. She breaks up with him and it is then that he discovers she's pregnant. He has no choice than to borrow money to pay for Clara's abortion because he is broke at the moment. When Clara is hospitalized due to an infection from the abortion procedure, Obi realizes that he has made a mistake. He sends Clara a letter and begs her to come back to him. But it is too late. Clara returns his letter unattended and leaves Lagos soon afterwards. When his mother dies, Obi sends all the money he can to pay for her funeral but he stays in Lagos and refuses to go home for her funeral. U.P.U. frowns at Obi's absence in his mother's funeral which is a sign of his nonchalant attitude towards his mother's death. In all honesty, he is terribly saddened by his mother's death, and with Clara gone too, Obi sinks into a deep depression. As time goes by, he begins to let go of his former convictions. Obviously, it is Clara's presence that makes Obi to be living straight all along. Deeply in debt, with no one to keep him steady, Obi pushes aside all his tenets of life and allows this acceptance of bribes to become habitual; though he maintains certain semblance of principles by refusing to accept bribes from people who do not have the minimum qualifications to appear before the Scholarship Board. He continues to take bribes until the end of the novel, when Obi decides he cannot stand it anymore. He has paid off all of his debts and can no longer be a part of the corruption. It is at this moment, however, when he has taken his last bribe that he is caught.

Arrow of God

The novel consists of a storyline about two rural villages of the Igbo, Umuaro and Okperi in a bitter feud. The residents of both villages are at war over a piece of disputed land. Nwaka, a man of great influence and riches pushes for the war against the advice of Ezeulu, the Chief Priest of Ulu, the ruling deity of Umuaro. An English colonial official, Capt.

T.K. Winterbottom steps in to stop the war and rules in favour of Okperi after discussing the matter with Ezeulu, the one man in Umuaro who tells the truth. In order to restore peace, Captain Winterbottom destroys all the firearms within Umuaro. Due to this, the people of Umuaro become angry with Ezeulu because he didn't take their side. Five years later, a sense of normalcy returns to Umuaro. Christian missionaries have now made their way into Umuaro, converting and convincing the people that the old gods are ineffective. Seeing that the faith of the white man is gradually rooting in their community, Ezeulu sends one of his sons, Oduche to learn all he can of the white man's culture by having him attend a church that the missionaries have set up in Umuaro. As time goes by, the enmity between Ezeulu and Nwaka worsen. In the quest of vengeance, Nwaka bolsters his position through his friendship with Ezidemili high priest of the lesser god, Idemili, who has long been jealous of Ezeulu/Ulu's reigning power. Ezidemili's ill will towards Ezeulu worsens when the missionaries call the Christian Igbo, including Oduche, to kill the sacred python. Oduche chickens out at the last minute by putting the snake in a box instead. Doing anything to the royal python is considered an abomination. When the priest of Idemili hears about the death attempt on the python, he sends an envoy to Ezeulu to ask how he intends to make amends for his son's crime. Ezeulu responds by telling Ezidemili to die and the matter rests there, uneasily.

While the feud between Umuaro and Okperi continues to rise, Winterbottom prepares to carry out the British policy of indirect rule. By this, he sends emissaries to invite Ezeulu, whose honest act during the land dispute between Umuaro and Okperi he remembers, to the Government Hill in order to name him "Paramount Chief" but Ezeulu refuses to comply; because of this, he is imprisoned for two months. Though, he was later released. Back in Umuaro, in order to get back to his people on their defiance five years ago, Ezeulu refuses to initiate the New Yam Feast. He uses his detention as an excuse saying he could not eat the ritual yams at two new moons; therefore he has two left over from the previous crop; and from their tradition, the New Yam Feast can only be called when there are no yams left.

At some point, the village elders agree to accept Ulu's punishment if only Ezeulu will announce the harvest, but the Chief Priest rebuffs them.

When the news of the fuss between Ezeulu and the people of Umuaro concerning the initiation of the New Yam Festival reaches out to the Christian missionary, he sees the unrest as an opportunity to win more converts. The Christian catechist, Mr. Goodcountry, recognizes this as an opportunity. He says that anybody who wants to offer their yams to the Christian god instead, so they can harvest their yams, will receive the protection of the Christian god as well. As people begin to suffer, they do just that. Meanwhile, Obika who is sick is asked to help in the funeral preparations for Amalu, one of the elders in the village who had died some months back. He helps with one of the funeral rituals by carrying the mask for Ogbazulobodo, the night spirit, and chasing after day. He runs so hard and so fast that he drops dead when he returns. The villagers take this turn of events as a sure sign that their god, Ulu, has abandoned his chosen cleric, undermining or possibly even destroying himself in the process. That year, many of the yams were harvested in the name of the Christian god; and the crops reaped afterwards were also reaped in the name of the Christian god. Rather than starve, the villagers flock to the church to make offerings to the Christian God. As *Arrow of God* comes to a close, it seems that the worship of the Christian god has replaced that of Ulu.

Below is the list of some names mentioned in the novels under study:

| Things Fall Apart | No Longer at Ease | Arrow of God |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| Okonkwo | Obi Okonkwo | <u>Ezeulu</u> |
| Uchendu | Clara Okeke | Nwaka |
| Ekwefi | Isaac Okonkwo | <u>T.K.</u> <u>Winterbottom</u> |
| Obierika | Hannah Okonkwo | Obika |
| Nwakibie | Joseph Okeke | Edogo |

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Ezeudu | Christopher | Oduche |
| Ikemefuna | William Green | Okuata |
| Nneka | Marie Tomlinson | Tony Clarke |
| Nwofia | Mr Omo | Moses Unachukwu |
| Chukwuka | Sam Okoli | John Wright |
| Akueke | Macmillan | Nwafo |
| Obiageli | President of the union | Ezidemili |
| Ezinma | Odogwu | Ogbuefi Akuebue |
| Mr Brown | Esther | John Goodcountry |
| James Smith | Janet | Matefi |
| Nwoye/Isaac | Charity | Ugoye |
| District Commissioner | Agnes | Oyilidie |
| Unoka | Mr Jones | Ojiugo |
| Chielo | Joshua Udo | Obiageli |
| Obierika | Mr Mark | John Nwodika |
| Enoch | Elsie Mark | Akueke |
| Akunna | Charles | Ibe |
| Mr Kiaga | Bisi | Ofoedu |
| Okagbue Uyanwa | Sebastian | Wade |
| Maduka | Florence | Akukalia |
| Ojiugo | Doctor | --- |
| Nkechi | Eunice | --- |

Akwiku

Vice President

The above personal names from Chinua Achebe's novels can be categorized into cultural and religious/western names. However, the question is how these religious/western names came to be, and this leads us to the crux of the research which is the language change in the personal names of Chinua Achebe's first trio novels. The novels *Things fall apart* and *Arrow of God* have more of an ancient Igbo setting, enriched with lots of Igbo culture. The novels portray the values, cultures and traditions of the Igbo people; though, written in English language. The storylines of these two aforementioned novels treat Igbo traditional life just before and immediately after the advent of the white men in Igboland. Before the advent of the white men, names in use were Igbo names that depict the market days of the Igbo people, relationship with their ancestors, cultural values and so on. However, the contact they had with the white men introduced foreign names within the community which led to language change in personal names. In the light of the personal names that exist in these novels due to the contact with the white men, the change in personal names is as of a result of the following types of contact:

Religious Contact

The white men came to Igbo land with their religion which is totally different from what already existed in their community. Initially, it was strange and was causing a lot of chaos between them; but as time went by, their mission gradually set out on the path of accomplishment which also resulted to change of the first names of their Christian converts. In the novel *Things fall apart*, Okonkwo's son, Nwoye during his father's exile, came in contact with the white men was captivated by their teaching about Christ and became a convert of Christianity. Baptism is a rite of passage for every Christian convert and it comes with a change of name. In the case of Okonkwo's son, it is from Nwoye to Isaac. However, in the case of Enoch, the overzealous convert to Christianity who unmasks the egwugwu of

the people of Umuofia, the novel did not mention his Igbo name before he becomes a convert. In the light of the unmentioned Igbo names of some of the Christian converts in the likes of Moses Unachukwu and John Nwodika of the novel *Arrow of God*, their final names depict they are Igbo people that converted to Christianity through baptism. Furthermore, in the novel *No longer at ease*, we also have the likes of Enoch in the novel *Things fall apart* where the Igbo names of the converts were unmentioned. They are Hannah Okonkwo, Joseph, Esther, Janet, Charity, Agnes, Charles, Sebastian and so on. This means that they once possessed an Igbo name, though not mentioned in the novel; their contact with the white men through religion brought about the change of name.

Education Contact

The white men first introduced religion when they came to Igbo land, then education for the Christian converts. As time went by, they colonized the entire Igbo community and so became the piper that dictates the tune. In the case of the educational aspect of contact, not all experienced change in personal name; for instance, Obi adapted some of the white man's culture but resisted the encroachment of change in his traditional personal name. However, people like Clara, Christopher, Sam, Simeon, Nora, among others marked themselves off from their traditional names and identified with the white men through the use of their Christian names. The possibility for sticking to their Christian names can be seen as to identify with the white men they are working for or living with in the same environment as the case may be. When the white men gained ground in the Igbo community and began to have converts, it was only the Christian converts that had the privilege of education. Therefore in this context, the change of name through education contact is often as a result of religious contact. This is buttressed by (Labov, 2001) proposition that linguistic fashion rests on the notion that language change is motivated by the need to be liked by others as well as the desire to be different.

Culture Contact

Culture, therefore, is the ‘know-how’ that a person must possess to get through the task of daily living; only for a few does it require a knowledge of some, or much, music, literature, and the arts (Wardhaugh, 2010) Language is part of every culture; therefore, there are inseparable. Language change as it relates to personal name can occur due to cultural differences. Therefore, in the light of Wardhaugh’s proposition, the change in the personal name in these novels is as a result to get through the task of daily life of the converts that changed their Igbo traditional names to the white man’s name and cultural identification. The cultural identification is visible in the case of the doctor in the novel *No longer at ease* who carried out an abortion on Clara. Before the advent of the white, the concept *dibia* which is used presently in addressing a native doctor is not in use then; instead, they are called by their professional names like Agbala as seen in the novel *Things fall apart*. The doctor definitely comes from the African circle and has a name; however, the name is not made known. Due to the contact between the African/Igbo and the white men, he was addressed by his professional title which is Doctor, leaving his Igbo cultural name or religious name. So also the professional title Vice President given to one the indigenes of Umuofia clan.

Conclusion

In summary, language change is simply seen as a process of change in the linguistic items which may sometimes occur as variants of different sounds, lexical and word constructions of a language. The change can be internal or external, though in some cases, the internal change can be as a result of the external change. This external change can be caused by factors like contact, region, level of education, gender, age and so on. In the light of this, the research investigated the lexical change in the personal names that occurred in the following novels by Chinua Achebe: *Things fall apart*, *No longer at ease* and *Arrow of God* and from the observation, it was found that the factor that brought about the language change in these novels is the Igbo community contact with the whites. The change in

the personal name of the Igbo people in this study portrays that contact is the major factor that brought about the lexical change in the personal names used in these novels. Furthermore, this contact is classified under religious contact, cultural contact and education contact. Furthermore (Holmes, 2013) opines that for there to be a language change, there must be language variation. In the case of language change in the personal names that occurred in the aforementioned novels, there are no variations before the lexical change in the personal names. This perhaps results because it is a change in a written story. Finally, (Eckert and McConnell- Ginet’s 1992) proposition that no single variable can be held responsible for language change is visible also because inasmuch as the reason for the language change is stemmed to contact with the white men but it further spilled to other factors like education, religion and culture which sometimes can be independent factors to language change.

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