A DISCOURSE-STYLISTIC STUDY OF ACHEBE'S MULTIPLE IDENTITIES IN EZENWA-OHAETO'S *CHINUA ACHEBE: A BIOGRAPHY*

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Abstract

This discourse-stylistic study explores Chinua Achebe's multiple identities and their positive impacts on humanity in Ezenwa-Oheato's biographical text on the literary icon. It emanates from the current scholarly view of identity as a composite of multidimensional selves, and one's characteristic way of being, saying and doing something. The analysis which is meant to bridge the critical gap created by the absence of the multifaceted identity status of a world-class figure like Achebe in identity studies, is premised on the descriptive and content analysis forms of qualitative research method and identity theory, alongside Leech and Short's (2007) stylistic analytical paradigm. With the biographer's distinct use of the linguistic tools predominantly belonging to the semantic field of praise in extolling the laudable identities of Achebe, the seven identities found to have been explicitly and implicitly attributed to him are psychological, literary, religious, prophetic, fatherhood, racial and interpersonal identities, all of which speak to this global citizen's advancement of the cause of humanity. The study also reveals that the biographer's essence of foregrounding Achebe's positive manifestations is to inspire his readers to be of positive influence to their generation like his biographee. The paper therefore ultimately invites its readers to build for themselves positive

identities by borrowing a leaf from Achebe's exemplary life and actions.

Key words: Discourse stylistics, multiple identities, biography, positive impact.

Introduction

Over the years, identity discourse as a growing area of knowledge has witnessed an array of studies, but keeps mute on the multiple identities of Chinua Achebe. This silence on the multifaceted identity status of such a world-class literary icon has no doubt created a dark spot in identity discourse that needs to be addressed. Meanwhile, Achebe is observably portrayed in Ezenwa-Ohaeto's biography on him as a man of many useful parts within and outside the literary hemisphere. His diverse facets of individuality explicitly and implicitly resonate all through the biographical text. This is in conformity with the contemporary scholarly view of identity as a composite of multidimensional selves, and one's characteristic way of being, saying and doing something (Johnstone, 2015; Gee, 2011). By implication, every biographer is a complex personality with a composite of identities. He/she is an interesting figure who is paradoxically difficult to pin down in one analytical spot. Behind the self and central uniqueness of the biographer, who is by no means tied to a fixed identity, there are different strands of person-hood and social manifestations. (Hale, 2009; McVeigh, 2013). As Davies and Harre (1990:46) put it, different identities tend to unfold in a typical identity discourse because "who one is, is always an open question with a shifting answer." Thus, as the narrative evolves, different identities evolve through the linguistic resources with which they are jointly constructed. This multidimensionality of self-hood can only be demystified through identity analysis.

This discourse-stylistic study is therefore meant to identify, describe and evaluate the multiple social identities of Chinua Achebe in Ezenwa-Ohaeto's biographical text on him; demonstrate how the identities are constructed and portrayed by the author with his distinct linguistic choices; and unveil the impacts of the multidimensional identities on Nigerian society, Africa and humanity at large. This is ultimately purposed at showcasing the

biographical subject as a man of many useful parts worthy of emulation. The interrogative lines of inquiry therefore are: What are the multiple identities of Achebe that are portrayed in Ezenwa-Ohaeto's biography on him? How and why are these identities formed and portrayed with significant linguistic resources? What are the positive impacts of the identities on humanity?

In addition to the chosen primary text, other relevant extra-linguistic information on the biographee from various sources shall be consulted for the analysis. Although there could be several other biographies written on Achebe elsewhere owing to his unique place in the universe as the foremost African novelist, it is decided to pitch tent with that of Ezenwa-Ohaeto, his fellow Igbo and former student at the university of Nigeria, Nsukka in order to cash in on his first hand information on the literary icon.

According to the author, the purpose of writing the biography under scrutiny" is to place an inspirational life in its proper perspective" (Ezenwa-Ohaeto, 2000: xii). This study will likewise significantly help to inspire its readers to build impactful and influential identities like the object of study. It will also be a boost and a necessary addition to the available literature on identity discourse and significantly extend the boundary of linguistic knowledge by blowing open new investigative practices like the use of discourse-stylistic approach to the study of biographical identities.

1. Statement of the Problem

Identity discourse as a growing area of knowledge has over the years witnessed an array of studies both within and outside biography research, such as Scollon (1996, Fearson (1999), Holland (2005), Cote (2006), Diaz (2009),Versluys (2010, Bamberg (2011, Koller (2012), Almeciga (2012, Snow (2015) , Numbalkar (online. But none of these studies has accounted for the multifaceted identity of Chinua Achebe or multiple identities of any other personality at that. The implication of this is that the multidimensionality of the personhood of such a world-class figure is left hidden and missing in the literature of identity, thereby creating a research gap in identity studies that requires attention. It is this critical challenge that this study seeks to address.

2. Conceptual Review Identity

The concept of identity which is central to biographical discourse has generated different definitions and perspectivees from different sources. According to Bamberg (2010:4), identity is "a mental construction of us as persons or how we are identified by others". He explains it further as the "internal make up of who we are as persons which cannot be easily shaken off'". (P.4). Erikson (1950 quoted in Fearson, 1999:1) simply defines it as "distinguishing features attributable to an individual," while Fearson (1991:36) on his own views identity as "a socially distinguishing feature that a person takes pride in". The *Oxford English Dictionary* (online) categorically paints it in the following senses: who somebody is, what something is, a person's nature and special qualities, one's own personality; one's own interests or pleasure; the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else; individuality, etc. For Studios (2020, online), identity implies "the distinguishing characteristics or personality of an individual or generic character in different instances." Other scholarly positions on identity are: "people's concepts of who they are or what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others" (Hogg and Abrams, 1988:2); "the way individuals and groups define themselves and are defined by others on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language and culture" (Dengi, 1985:1); "the way in which individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectivities" (Jenkins, 1996:4, etc.

From these various thoughts, it is deducible that identity connotes one's characteristic make up in terms of individuality, selfhood or personhood and social ties. That is, someone's nature, personality, uniqueness, personal interests, special qualities that no other person can fit into. In more words, identity encompasses one's place of birth and origin, physical looks, family background, cultural background, age, gender, habitation, dressing pattern, character, temperament, occupation, hobbies, religious inclination, talent/skills, status, ideology, fingerprint, signature, philosophy, attitudes, mannerism, thought pattern and virtually every other thing that make up an individual. It therefore stands that when we talk about Chinua Achebe's identities, we simply talk about his

nature, personality, uniqueness, values, actions and personal interests as well as special qualities that no other person can fit into. Insightfully, Judith Butler has contended that identity is not just about who we are and what we have, but also about what we do or perform and recreate through social interaction and discourses (Butler, 1990 quoted in Lamberg, 2011:266). This is to say that who one is, is open to "continuous redefinitions" through discourses. So, in this study, who Achebe truly is in his biography is realized through discursive elements or the deployed resources of language.

Identities are formed by various factors such as family background, ethnicity, race, location, culture, interests, life experiences, media, religion/spirituality, association, society and through other means. To this end, interrogations such as who are you? Where are you from? Where do you live? And expressions like: He is good; She is honest and courageous, etc. can form a pattern of identity in biographical discourse. Likewise, expressions like He is wicked; He is stingy and unreliable; She is a prostitute, and so forth can form another pattern of identity discourse (Davies & Harre, 1990; Duszak, 2002).

By nature, identities can be inherited, given, chosen, developed or achieved. Features such as gender, family, ethnicity/race are inherited or given, while identities such as social group (which one chooses to belong), marital ties, occupation, hobbies, academic status, religion, place of residence, values, are chosen or achieved. (Studios, 2020, online). For Erikson (1968), identity achievement is that point at which an individual has extensively considered various goals and values, accepting some and rejecting others and understanding who they are as unique persons.

Apart from the categories of inherited and acquired identities, identities are majorly classifiable into four from which other types could possibly emerge:

(i) **Personal or individual identity** -which concerns itself with how you perceive yourself as an individual with the leading question: 'who am I?' It is a process that defines an individual otherwise known as self-definition.

(ii) **Social identity** -which deals with how others perceive us as possibly defined by our occupational, financial, religious, marital status, ideology and behavioural patterns. It is a process that defines an individual to others. (Fearson, 1999). For instance, expressions like, He is God-fearing; Ayo is notorious; Nkechi is kind and respectful; Achebe is a world class novelist, etc are forms of social identity in discourses from which our understudied multiple identities emanate.

(iii) **Collective identity**: This has to do with what various individuals as a social group share in common. It is rooted in the sense of belongingness or "we-ness" arising from a social group membership which could be composed of classmates, peer groups, criminal gang, sport fans, civil society, political parties, occupational groups, labour unions, religious groups, estate neighbours, gender group, ethnic group, continent, humanoid, etc. as driven by a common ideology, collective behaviour. Attitudes arising from social groups like homosexuals or lesbians, the masses, the rich, the physically challenged such as the deaf, the blind also contribute to collective identity (Canson, 1991).

(iv) **Multiple identities**: This is a case of possessing several identities by an individual as manifested in different contexts. For example, a man who is known for generosity and honesty can also be short tempered in a manner that he can mail or kill someone when the ferocious anger descends on him uncontrollably. Someone may be stupendously rich but very stingy. Such a situation is what Gidden (1991:199) calls "pseudoselves" or "contrast with a true self". Apart from such contradictory qualities, a biographee may be a man of many parts such that he is a lawyer, a businessman, writer, pastor, politician, lecturer, all bunched into a single individual. In another development, there can be an individual of two worlds where his father is Nigerian, while his mother is Canadian or an individual whose paternal lineage is Yoruba, while the maternal background is Igbo. This is to say that we are all products of multiple and dynamic identities as humans. Although some psychologists view identity multiplicity as a function of personality

disorders and mood fluctuation where the memory malfunctions in different ways (Spanos ,1994), the idea is viewed in this study from the perspective of Gaither (2019) who classifies multiple identity on the basis of multiple existentialism and functionality of a single individual. Such multiple components include:

Personal identity (which encompasses personal idiosyncrasy, attitudes, reputation, habits, beliefs, ideas which give rise to someone's overall self image), **Cultural identity** (which involves idea formation based on one's cultural background), **Professional identity** (one's identification with a particular profession or career), **Gender identity** (which has to do with one's sex status and its implication), **Religious identity** (one's identification with a religion or adherence to religious practice such as Achebe's practice of Christianity), **Interpersonal identity** (one's social actions and relationship with friends and others), **Family identity** (relationship with family members), **Collective identity** (sense of belonging to a group or a professional body, e.g. Achebe's identification with Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), **Ethnic and national identity** (identification with a particular ethnic group or nationality such as Achebe's identification with Nigeria, Igbo and Biafra), **Achieved identity** (such as Achebe's academic and literary achievements). Although there could be a case of multiple personal identities or multiplicity of any other identity type, the one that preoccupies us here is multiple social identities. According to Spanos and Bull (1984), this sort of identity multiplicity is socially constructed, context bound, goal-oriented and geared towards societal expectations. This is exactly how Achebe's own identity multiplicity is considered in our study which is targeted at demonstrating how his identification is a plus to Achebe's generation.

3.2 . Biography

According to Hale (2009:48), the term biography refers to "the true story of a notable person's life written by someone else." The significance of this definition lies in: (a) Its description of biography as a "true story", which clearly distinguishes it from fictionalized stories portrayed in creative literature, but pictures it as a component of social realities. (b) Its depiction of biographical subjects as "notable" individuals, which reveals that biographies are ideally written about the greats – male or female, and (c) Its description of biographical content as being documented by "someone else" which clearly distinguishes its authorship from autobiography that is self-authored. Warner (2022, online) further defines biography as "a detailed description or account of someone's life and times, which is told by a different author." This implies that the content of biography is beyond a shallow compilation of information about someone's life comprising date and place of birth, family background, education and work experience. Otherwise, it will amount to a mere profile. It has to be a detailed description involving both the personal life of the individual and the historical facts about his existence in order to give the biographical discourse a context to lean on. It is thus understandable that biography is a platform for expressing societal realities through true life stories. This sort of realism primarily focuses on the lives of eminent personalities. It leverages on the lives of the great within a recognizable set of standards (Stanley, 1992:142). Notably, it's not about people that are great in misdeeds, but in societal impacts. Chanyang (2018, online) corroborates this assertion with the view that biographies are basically written about people with "great contributions to the world" or personalities who lead '"an extraordinary life'. To this end, biographers tend to choose biographical subjects that are iconic or people of renown whose lives provide them an opportunity to explore (McVeigh, 2013: 25). This could be about

someone that is still alive, a male or female but with ideal qualities. That is, an individual whose character is worthy of emulation.

Biography as a true story of a notable personality is not just a narrative rendered in a third person pronoun and past tense, but it also characteristically captures the following specifics: geological account/family background of the subject, his/her place and date of birth, formative years, educational and occupational background, positive impacts on humanity, achievements and legacies, instances that manifest their ideal character, innate qualities, attitudes and world views, details that illustrate the person's individuality as well as the biographer's feelings and evaluative judgment about the biographee which of course makes the genre of biography evaluative in nature. It is these features that particularly make biography identity discourse.

3.3. Discourse Stylistics

Discourse stylistics as a subfield of stylistics, is simply an amalgam or a blend of the concepts of "discourse" and "stylistics." While discourse is understood as "language in use in meaningful situations" or "the use of language for communication in context" (Brown and Yule,1985:1), stylistics is taken to mean "the principled and systematic study of language in use" or preferably the study of the linguistic style of a text (Hall, 2001:3). Put together, discourse stylistics becomes an interdisciplinary mechanism which "studies texts as instances of naturally occurring language use in social context, where discourse analysis should reveal as much about the contexts as about the texts". (Simpson & Hall, 2002: `136). In other words, while the discourse analysis component leverages on the context of the text under scrutiny, stylistics dwells on its linguistic style. In essence, the context of occurrence of a piece of discourse is of great interest to the discourse analyst, whereas the notion of style preoccupies the stylistician. To this end, we can simply say that discourse stylistics

is a version of stylistics that operates with the combined principles of discourse analysis and stylistics itself.

3. Review of Related Studies

This paper acknowledges that several research exercises, mainly articles have been conducted on the subject of identity which sought to examine various areas of human individuality. These are from scholars like: Scollon (1996) who examined the kinds of identities emblematized by discourse participants in intercultural communication in Hong Kong, Fearson (1999) who examined the subject of identity in political discourse and traced its contemporary use to the work of Erick Erikson of 1950s, Holland (2005) who explicated "memory books" as critical tools for understanding identity, Cote (2006) who demonstrated how adult's identity replaces that of youthfulness on account of achievement, not just about age, Diaz (2009) who demonstrated autobiography as a discourse of identity and resistance with Emma Goldman's *Living my life,* Versluys (2010) who presented an in-depth overview of identity as a notion in discourse analysis, Bamberg (2011) who examined the discursive approach to identity construction, using conversational data, Koller (2012) who provided an insightful analytical parameters for collective identity from the perspective of critical discourse analysis, Almeciga (2012) who studied identity formation from the perspective of critical discourse analysis, Snow (2015) who did an analytical overview of the concept of collective identity, and Numbalkar (online) who focused his attention on John Lock's theoretical views of personal identity. But incidentally, none of these studies has accounted for the multifaceted identity of Chinua Achebe or multiple identities of any other personality at that. This safely justifies the need for this study.

5. Theoretical Framework

The paper is premised on Laclau and Mouffe's identity theory alongside Leech and Short's (2007) analytical paradigm for

linguistic categories. Notably, the current way of viewing identity in discourse is that the person or single self that we see is a composite of multidimensional selves jointly constructed into a single personality with the resources of language (Johnstone, 2015). He is a composite of multiple identities on the grounds of social ties and manifestations. But within the multiple identities attributable to the personality, there is always a central self that all other fragments of the self are woven around, (e.g. Achebe's central self in the text under examination is its literary prowess). Lucan, 1977:71) refers to this nucleus as "master signifier", while Laclau and Mouffe (1985:127) call it "nodal point" of identity. For Lucan, identity has to do with identification with something. And this "something" is the subject positions that discourses offer the individual.

The bottom line here is that identity is not an individual, but a representation of various human forms and acts or a signifier of human forms and actions. In their theoretical view, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) equate their nodal point of identity (entry point) with Lucan's "master signifier" and cite the noun "man" as not an identity but a symbol of a master signifier of what he is known for and the capacity in which he functions, such as Mr, Peter, King, football, six packs, fatherhood. According to them, when such things are mentioned in discourse, the picture of a male readily comes to mind in contrast with the image of a female that constructively evolves when we mention to things like actress, feminism, breastfeeding, bride price, menstruation, etc. As an example of what discourse can offer at different levels, male or female in this case is not identity itself but a master signifier or nodal point. Further, in a sentence like, Johnson as a medical doctor is stinking rich but very stingy, Johnson as the subject is not an identity, but a signifier of his multiple identities of medical practice, wealth and stinginess. In excess, an individual is not an identity per se, but a master signifier or pointer to different versions of the person or even different signifiers whose roles

could be contradictory or complementary. By implication, Chinua Achebe as a name is not an identity, but a signifier of different versions of his personhood which can only make meaning through his actions and attitudes. It is the linking together of these versions in chain of equivalence that help to establish the wholesome identity relationally. In the words of Jorgenson and Philips, 2002:48), "it is by being represented in this way by a cluster of signifiers with a nodal point at its center that one acquires an identity." The nodal point according to them is the privileged sign around which others signs acquire their meaning and relevance. Just the way the human body serves as the central part of its members so is the nodal point or signifier is to identities. It is on this ground that Laclau and Mouffe (1985 quoted in Jorgenson and Philips, 2002:43) totally reject the traditional view of identity as an individual, but only see it as an inner core to be expressed contextually in diverse ways in discourse.

Essentially**,** the characteristics of Laclau and Mouffe's theory of identity that drives this study have been summarized by Jorgenson and Philips (2002:43) as follows:

- The subject is fundamentally split; it never quite becomes 'itself'.
- It acquires its identity by being represented discursively.
- Identity is thus identification with a subject position in a discursive structure.
- Identity is discursively constituted through chains of equivalence where signs are sorted and linked together in chains in opposition to other chains which thus define how the subject is, and how it is not.
- Identity is always relationally organized; the subject is something because it is contrasted with something that it is not.
- Identity is changeable just as discourses are.
- The subject is fragmented or decentred; it has different identities according to those discourses which it forms part.

- The subject is over determined; in principle, it always has the possibility to manifest and identify differently in specific situations.

Specifically, here lies the nucleus of Laclau and Mouffe's identity theory that frames this study: In discourse, an individual is not an identity per se but a gate way to multidimensional selves manifestable through the individual's qualities, behaviour, attitudes and actions. These manifestations are usually represented discursively to enable the individual acquire his/her true identity. By implication, the multiple identities of Achebe understudied in this paper are a function of his positive qualities, behaviour, attitudes, actions or impacts on humanity in one way or the other.

Leech and Short's (2007:61) analytical paradigm for linguistic categories on its own is a theoretical guide or "checklist" for demonstrating how and why linguistic categories are deployed in a text. At the lexical level, it investigates the vocabulary generally used, in terms of whether it is simple, complex, emotive, descriptive and evaluative, and also identifies the semantic field the lexical items generally belong to. That is, it is used to figure out the type of word classes used and what use is made of them. For example, it specifically probes into the following: Do the employed nouns and pronouns refer to events, perceptions, processes, social qualities or moral qualities? What type of identity are the personal pronouns used to portray? What adjective types are significantly used in the text and what use is made of them? Are they attributive, predicative, gradable or non-gradable? What are they attributed to? Is it physical, psychological, emotive or evaluative states? What comparative or superlative constructions are noticeably deployed? Are the deployed verbs dynamic in the sense of referring to actions and events or stative in nature in the sense of referring to states and emotions? Do they contain significant aspects of the meaning in the sentences to portray physical activities, movement and achievements? What semantic

functions do the adverbs perform? Is it indication of degree, manner, place or direction? What significant sentence adverbs/ adjuncts are noticeable? At the grammatical level, it scrutinizes the type of sentences predominantly favoured by the author and their functions - in terms of whether they are declarative, commands, interrogative, exclamatory or the type of identities or ideologies they are used to express. What significant use is made of present and past tense structures to portray achievements, historical facts and sociocultural values? What other type of grammatical constructions are generally used to any special effect?

From the stylistic point of view, this analytical model is meant to demonstrate how the language items in the text under scrutiny are evaluatively deployed by Ezenwa-Ohaeto to depict his biographee's multiple identities. How the features are used to construct the biographee's identities and convey his laudable impacts on humanity shall also be particularly examined.

The choice of this two-some theoretical background is to enable us appropriately account for the linguistic resources that are significantly used by Ezenwa-Ohaeto to express Achebe's multiple identities from both sides of the linguistic coin of discourse stylistics. Nevertheless, in our data analysis, we shall only focus on the linguistic items that appeal to our evaluative purpose on the basis of their communicative value from the purview of their contextual background. This is in conformity with Verdonk's (2006:6) stance that "we are not so much focused on every form and structure in a text as on those which stand out in it" communicatively while dong a stylistic analysis. As Leech and Short's (2007:69) put it "any predictable method of stylistic analysis must select some features for analysis and ignore others," noting that "the principle of selection depends on the purpose we have in mind."

6. Methodology

The paper applied descriptive, and content analysis forms of qualitative research method to the scrutiny of Achebe's biography by Ezenwa-Ohaeto as sampled purposively. While the descriptive

approach (which tends to portray 'accurately the characteristics of a particular individual, situation or group", Agbonifoh and Yomere (1999:128) was used to describe the perceived multiple identities of the biographee, the content analysis template was used to identify and extract the linguistic patterns portraying the identities for analysis. The linguistic units that the researcher needed to analyse were selectively extracted from the primary text by purposive sampling on the basis of their communicative value and evaluative significance. The instrument used for the research was the researcher himself who carefully read through the 326-page primary text to extract the required data. He also consulted some secondary sources /extalinguistic materials relating to the person of Achebe for contextual insights on him.

Our searchlight was specifically beamed on positively evaluative lexis and sentences as well as logically organized patterns of language use bothering on Achebe's multiple social identities emanating from his actions and qualities. The use of linguistic resources such as attributive and predicative adjectives, concrete and abstract nouns, declaratives, implicit and explicit attitudinal patterns, intertexuality and interdiscursitivity inferences, markers of values and social good, etc were predominantly interrogated**.** The extracted data which were thematically coded Texts 1-7 to capture various strands of Achebe's multiple identities, were analyzed on the basis of quote and explain method in accordance with identity theory and Leech and Short's (2007) stylistic analytical principle.

7. Data Presentation and Analysis

Text 1: **Psychology Identity**, a type of social identity that comprises one's level of intelligence, temperament, mood and non-linguistic acts (Crystal, 1987).

a. /The child **exhibited** signs of **intelligence** (P.9).
b. Achebe was usually **quiet** and **attentive** (P.11).
c. He possessed the **best** handwriting in the class (P.14).
d. He was so **intelligent** that he was nicknamed **Dictionary** and regarded as students' **second teacher** (P.14).
e. In all the subjects…Chinua scored the **highest** marks (P.14).

f. Each time he scored **8/10**, he would cry throughout (P.14).
g. He was the **best** English reader (P.14).
h. He **never** featured in the list of offender and law breakers (P.14).
i. He **passed** 2 entrance exams at once which made him a **celebrity** in Ogidi (P.22).
j. He **thinks** a lot. He **doesn't** talk very much… *(*P86*). /*

In the above data, the highlighted lexical items like **exhibited** and **passed** (2 exams at once -dynamic verbs for extraordinary performance), **intelligence,** (abstract noun), **best** and **highest** (attributive superlative adjectives), **intelligent** (predicative adjective), **Dictionary** (metaphor for intelligence and intellectual consultancy) are used to foreground Achebe's identity of excellence and remarkable performance in school. By these usages, identity of high giftedness in his formative years is constructed for him by the biographer. Lexical elements like **quiet**, **attentive**, **never** (a law breaker) are also used to identify him as a well behaved and law abiding personality in his society. Being described as a **second teacher** on its own is an identity of selflessness. It depicts him as a young man who uses his god-given intelligence to help his classmates advance their learning skills selflessly. Interestingly, crying for scoring **8/10** makes him a personality that never settles for anything short of excellence. Thinking a lot without talking much also foregrounds him as a highly philosophical individual which in turn translates into a high level of creativity. All these qualities put together further make him a **celebrity,** thereby giving him a high level of recognition in his home town. It is therefore obvious that positive semantic resources are deliberately deployed by Ezenwa-Ohaeto to portray Achebe's psychological exceptional disposition. In other words, through markers of value, excellence, creativity, good character and selfless service to humanity, the psychological arm of Achebe's identities evaluatively comes to life in the text as a shining example and source of inspiration to young people. From the syntactic point of view, all the sentences employed are declaratives to show the author's level of approval of Achebe's positive influence.

Text 2: Literary Identity

a. /The literary method of the author is **apparently** simple but a **vivid** imagination **illuminates e**very page.
b. His style is a **model** of **clarity** (Times literary Supplement, 20th June, 1958).
c. Mr. Achebe's style is a **model** for aspirants (Time & Tide, 20th June, 1958).
d. **Excellent** novel well **worth** reading (The observer, 20th June, 1958).
e. The author **possesses** literary **gifts** of **high** order, writing a **clear** and **neaty** style free of the dandyism often affected by Negro authors (The Listener, 20th June, 1958).
f. Achebe has a **profound** gift of observation and tells his story with an **adept** touch. He is the **best** African novelist of today. (Valerie Wilner in Flamnigo of August 1985).
g. The telling is **polished**; images **effortlessly** light up the pages; the style is **faultless**… (Sunday Times on Achebe's Arrow of God).
h. Through his writings, he has **enriched** all humanity (from a citation on award of honorary PhD to Achebe). (Ezenwa-Ohaeto, 2000, pp 65, 106 & 268)./

The above laudatory comments and positive evaluation from the British press are all products of Achebe's amazing literary dexterity and fingerprint. Through his narrative techniques of intertextuality and interdiscoursivity meant to emphasize Achebe's global acceptance, Ezenwa-Ohaeto foregrounds Achebe as a rare gem, and priceless jewel in the world of literature. Through key words like **apparently, effortlessly,** (manner adverbs), **model** (concrete noun), **clarity, gifts** (abstract nouns**) illuminates, polished, enriched (dynamic verbs), vivid, Excellent**, **worth, high, profound, adept (**attributive adjectives**) clear**, **neaty** and **faultless (**predicative adjectives), his exceptional literary skills and qualities with which he illuminates Africa and the rest of the world are underscored, thereby bringing his unique literary identity to the fore. The impact of his exceptional literary identity is so powerful that the niche he carved for himself has since become a literary pattern for many African writers practising Achebean style.

This literary style is so **faultless** that its publisher "didn't touch a word" in his classical Things *Fall Apart* (TFA) in an attempt to correct it, yet it achieved instant success with enthusiastic reviews (Ezenwa-Ohaheto, 1997:6). In other words, with the deployed linguistic resources, he is adjudged a foremost African novelist and literary icon. He is extolled as a pacesetter, role model, illuminator, trailblazer and wordsmith. The claim that his work is better than every other **Negro** further redefines him as an exceptional writer.

Text 3: Religious/Spiritual identity
/a. Isaiah Okafor was a **devout Christian** (P7).
b. Achebe was a **thorough** little **Christian** (P7).
c. Achebe's name Chinualumogu (May God fight on my behalf) is a prayer (p.7)./

The positive attributive adjective **devout** is significantly used in the above data to depict Chinua Achebe's father as a practising Christian father who no doubt, being a catechist indoctrinated the young Chinua into Christianity. The Christian principles he imbibed from his father makes him a **thorough** breed of Christian right from his formative years to adulthood. The employed attributive adjective **thorough** particularly reveals that his commitment to Christendom is without reservation; it is absolute. Besides, the proper noun Christian which occurs twice in the above data is used to foreground Achebe's religious identity than no other word. His Christian name, which is said to be a prayer point invoking God's defense mechanism also implicitly, speaks volumes of his Christian religious identity. The positive effects of his Christian identity duly reflect in some of his novels. For instance, in the 17th chapter of *Things Fall Apart*, the elders of Mbanta give the Christian missionaries a portion of evil forest to build their church, thinking they will die, but surprisingly, the missionaries build their church and remain healthy. The villagers therefore come to the conclusion that the Christians have incredible power possibly more potent than their deities (Achebe, 1958). For us, this episode is an attempt by the author to prove to his readers that the Christians' God he personally believes in is more powerful than the pagans' gods. Achebe also bears the

identity of a Christian preacher in his *Arrow of God* where the Christians eat their new yams without consequences even when the Chief priest, Ezeulu refuses to perform the annual ritual that makes their consumption spiritually safe for everyone. By implication, Achebe uses his Christian identity to preach the gospel of Christ's unlimited power through fiction.

Text 4: Prophetic identity

a. / Chinua, I know you are a **prophet**. Everything in this book has **happened** except a military coup! (p.109)

b. Thus, the last '**prophecy***'* in Achebe's novel, completed about a year before the coup had been fulfilled (P.109)./

The statements in text 4a above are from J.P Clarke, Achebe's friend who after going through the provided advance copy of his new novel , *A man of the people* where Achebe predicted a coup d'état as a consequence for the excessive corruption that characterized Nigerian government in the mid 1960s. Surprisingly, the following day in 1966, news had it that a coup d'état spearheaded by Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu had taken place with lots of casualties. The prediction was so accurate that some soldiers went in search of Achebe. The bottom line in our text 4 is the prophetic attributes constructed for Achebe. Through the use of the concrete noun **prophe**t, the dynamic verb **happened** and the abstract noun **prophecy,** Achebe's identity is evaluated as a seer with accurate fulfillment. He is seen as a literary prophet whose words do not fall to the ground. Little wonder that in a posthumous tribute to him in 2013, Theodore Orji, the then governor of Abia state exclaimed that "Achebe was a prophet" (Source, May 27, 2013, P.33). It is therefore wise and proper to watch out for the fulfillment of every other word of prediction in Achebe's books that is yet to materialize.

Text 5: Fatherhood Identity

/a. **He** had the reputation -at the age of 32 -of a **father** figure in African literature.

b. In his own family**, h**e also had to play the role of a **father** (P.92)./

First, the personal pronoun **he** is used twice in the above text to picture Achebe as a dual-role social actor. With the use of the concrete noun **father,** the biographer ascribes to him two fatherly roles and responsibilities in the African literary hemisphere and his nuclear family respectively. The philosophy behind the first statement which happens to be a declarative assertion from the author is Achebe's determination and willingness to guide and inspire his literary children by building a standard to look up to. Inadvertently, it was his advisory role that paved way for the emergence of Nguigi wa Thiongo and his W*eep not Child*. Others in this categories are Flora Nwapa, a young lady whom he encouraged to publish her *Efuru i*n 1962, having recommended her to Heinemann publishers who counted so much on Achebe's judgment, Chukwuemeka Ike, Amadi Elechi, Cyprian Ekwensi, J.P Clarke, etc. As the pioneer editor of African writer series for his publisher, he made sure he provided the needed assistance to upcoming writers. This inspiring live-and-let-live attitude of not removing the ladder after climbing is what Ezenwa-Ohaeto foregrounds Achebe's identity for as a father figure in African literature. Apart from pioneering African literature to the scale of global recognition, he also pioneered the Association of writers in Nigeria (1985) which later became Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) with prominent members. These acts have since earned Achebe "the father of African literature." As affirmed by James Curray (quoted in Ezenwa-Ohaeto, 2000:280) "Chinua Achebe more than anyone else reshaped the literary map of Africa." Achebe's second fatherly role in the text is the one in his household. The implication of the declarative statement is that as busy as Achebe was, he still took out time to take care of his wife and children, thereby asserting the acceptable role of a husband and father. In all, Achebe's fatherhood posture in the two senses of usage is meant to inspire and better the lot of humanity cognitively.

Text 6: Racial Identity

Note: The following conversation ensues between the ticket collector (TC) and Chinua Achebe (CA) who picks a seat of his choice on the bus he boarded with both the whites and blacks in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia):

/TC: What are you doing here?
CA: I am travelling to Victoria Falls.
TC: Why are you sitting here?
CA: Why not?
TC: Where do you come from?
CA: I don't know what that has to do with it. But if you must know, I come from Nigeria and there we sit where we like in the bus (P.78)./

With this conversational technique of communication, Ezenwa-Oheato reveals how Achebe defines himself in terms of his black race and courageously defends his African identity which the white supremacist tries to downplay. In other words, he did not hesitate to defend his African heritage and dignity when it was put to test in the midst of the prejudicial Europeans. He is by this singular act implicitly identified by the biographer as an astute ambassador and a defender of African personhood. And true to this outstanding identification of his, when the bus eventually got to its destination, his fellow blacks who timidly distanced themselves from the supposedly special seats on the bus, rushed to applaud him for standing his ground to defend the dignity of his black race. Thus, Achebe is not only proud of his Africanism in the text, but encourages other Africans to do same at the face of any racial challenge, believing that a leopard does not change its colour for any reason. The effect of this action later gave Achebe himself inspiration to publish an essay entitled "Can there be a multi-racial society" in *The Daily Express*, a Lagos-based newspaper.

Text 7: Interpersonal identity

a. /I used to feel **elated** when he **acknowledged** my greeting, remembered my name and **asked** how I was getting on...(xi)
b. **Neither** did Achebe's **reputation** as a novelist obstruct his **interactions** on an individual basis with other writers like Christopher Okigbo, T.M Aluko, Cyprian Ekwensi …John Munroye and Chukwuemeka Ike (p.84)./

In this text 7a, the biographer constructs for Achebe an outstanding interpersonal identity by conveying attitude of Joy and positive feelings over the biographee's personal relationship with him through positively used key words like **elated** (predicative adjective), **acknowledged** and **asked** (action verbs). He senses that as highly placed Achebe is as a university professor, and his academic superior, he still identifies with the little ones far below his status. This is unlike his colleagues who may have allowed greatness to erode their relationship with others. Similarly, in Text 7b, the author invokes attitude of satisfaction with Achebe's interpersonal relationship with his fellow writers and friends. Words like **neither** (a negation pronoun exonerating him from bad behaviour), **reputation** and i**nteractions (**abstract nouns for high regard, and interpersonal engagement respectively) are used to establish that despite Achebe's iroko height of literary reputation, he still tends to carry everyone along. In all, the two declarative sentences carrying these linguistic elements are meant to picture Achebe as a man without superiority complex over any one. Such an interpersonal identity is to the biographer a positive act worthy of emulation.

8. Conclusion

In line with its purpose, this paper has identified and described the multiple identities of Chinua Achebe and how they are portrayed and evaluated with distinct linguistic resources by Ezenwa-Ohaeto in his biographical text on the great writer. It has also investigated the positive impacts of the identities on Nigerian society, Africa and humanity at large. In all, the discourse-stylistic exploration unveils seven major multiple identities of the biographee in the order of: psychological identity, with which Achebe exhibited so much intelligence and exemplary character; literary identity, with which he became a global literary icon and spread African cultural heritage and his peculiar linguistic habits around the world; Christian religious identity, with which he preached his Christian faith through fiction; prophetic identity, with which he could accurately predict events and occurrences through fiction; fatherhood identity, with which he produced and cared for lots of literary children and his immediate family; Racial identity, with

which he defended the cause of the black race with its writings and attitude, and Interpersonal identity, with which he related well with everyone around him .

This identification was made possible through the deployment of linguistic resources such as attributive and predicative adjectives, concrete and abstract nouns, declaratives, implicit and explicit attitudinal patterns, intertexuality and interdiscursitivity inferences, markers of values and social good, etc, aimed at forgrounding Achebe's various identities. Beside being used to showcase Achebe as a man of many parts stylistically and discursively, these linguistic elements which virtually belong to the semantic field of praise were deliberately employed by the biographer to celebrate his subject for advancing the cause of humanity in many ways. We therefore recommend that people should aim at building for themselves identities that are worthy of emulation to advance the cause of humanity like the distinguished biographical figure if they must be celebrated like him.

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