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PRESENTATION DE LA REVUE AKIRI

Dans un environnement marqué par la croissance, sans cesse, des productions scientifiques, la diffusion et la promotion des acquis de la recherche deviennent un impératif pour les acteurs du monde scientifique. Perçues comme un patrimoine, un héritage à léguer aux générations futures, les productions scientifiques doivent briser les barrières et les frontières afin d'être facilement accessibles à tous.

Ainsi, s'inscrivant dans la dynamique du temps et de l'espace, la revue « **AKIRI** » se présente comme un outil de promotion et de diffusion des résultats des recherches des enseignants-chercheurs et chercheurs des universités et de centres de recherches de Côte d'Ivoire et d'ailleurs. Ce faisant, elle permettra aux enseignants-chercheurs et chercheurs de s'ouvrir davantage sur le monde extérieur à travers la diffusion de leurs productions intellectuelles et scientifiques.

AKIRI est une revue à parution trimestrielle de l'Unité de Formation et de Recherches (UFR) : Communication, Milieu et Société (CMS) de l'Université Alassane Ouattara. Elle publie les articles dans le domaine des Sciences humaines et sociales, Lettres, Langues et Civilisations. Sans toutefois être fermée, cette revue privilégie les contributions originales et pertinentes. Les textes doivent tenir compte de l'évolution des disciplines couvertes et respecter la ligne éditoriale de la revue. Ils doivent en outre être originaux et n'avoir pas fait l'objet d'une acceptation pour publication dans une autre revue à comité de lecture.

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La revue *AKIRI* n'accepte que des articles inédits et originaux dans diverses langues notamment en allemand, en anglais, en espagnol et en Français. Le manuscrit est remis à deux instructeurs, choisis en fonction de leurs compétences dans la discipline. Le secrétariat de la rédaction communique aux auteurs les observations formulées par le comité de lecture ainsi qu'une copie du rapport, si cela est nécessaire. Dans le cas où la publication de l'article est acceptée avec révisions, l'auteur dispose alors d'un délai raisonnable pour remettre la version définitive de son texte au secrétariat de la revue

Structure générale de l'article :

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Proverbs and ideational metafunction in chinua achebe's *arrow of god*

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Abstract

This paper explores proverbs as identity builders and socialization tools in Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*. It is grounded on the ideational metafunction in Systemic Functional Linguistics. Proverbs have been collected in the first two chapters of Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* with the contexts in which they occur. They are highlighted with italic characters in one table. The proverbs were analyzed from the perspective of processes, participants and circumstances and their frequency counts were established. The results and discussion show that through animal characters, proverbs are used to build identity and impart and social skills.

Key Words: circumstance, experience, frequency, ideational, proverbs.

Proverbes et métafonction idéationnelle dans *arrow of god* de chinua achebe

Résumé

Cet article explore les proverbes comme moyens de construction identitaire et comme outils de socialisation dans *Arrow of God* de Chinua Achebe. Il prend appui sur la métafonction idéationnelle en Linguistique Systémique Fonctionnelle. Les proverbes ont été collectés dans les deux premiers chapitres de *Arrow of God* avec leurs contextes d'apparition. Ils sont en italique et présentés dans un tableau. Les proverbes ont été analysés à la lumière des procès, des participants et des circonstances et leurs fréquences ont été établies. Les résultats et la discussion montrent qu'à travers les personnages animaux, les proverbes servent à la construction identitaire et à la transmission des compétences sociales.

Mots-Clefs : circonstance, expérience, fréquence, idéationnelle, proverbes.

Introduction

Systemic functional linguistics (henceforth SFL) is a theory of language as a meaning-making potential in social contexts according to M. Berry (2017 and 2019) as well as J. J. Webster (2019). SFL considers language as organized in strata (vertically) and metafunctions (horizontally). Language is organized in four strata and in a top-down approach they are context, semantics, lexicogrammar and phonology/graphology. Metafunctions are part of the horizontal organization of language in the semantic stratum according to M. Berry (2017 and 2019). For C. M. I. M. Matthiessen *et al.*, (2010: 138), a metafunction is one of the three “highly generalized functions language has evolved to serve” and they are the “ideational”, the “interpersonal” and the “textual” according to G. Forey & N. Sampson (2017: 131) and J. J. Webster (2019: 35). For J. J. Webster (2019: 35), the ideational metafunction deals with “what is being talked about”, the interpersonal metafunction with “how those interacting” relate “to one another through what they say” and the textual metafunction with “how ideational and interpersonal meanings are turned into discourse”.

P. Seitel (1976: 125) claims that proverbs are metaphorical reasonings in interactional contexts. For N. R. Norrick (2014: 8), they are teaching tools with “fixed, poetic” forms. L. Silué (2020, p. 15) states that linguists view proverbs as sources of metaphors and figurative language. Proverbs transmit knowledge or advice according to Z. P. Toh (2020: 64). Proverbs are short sayings that convey life experience teachings. L. Silué (2020: 14) associates proverbs with “elders” or “initiated people”. For him, proverbs are the heart and the essentials of discourse and verbal interactions in traditional societies. D. M. Gnessoté (2020: 105) backs him up by positing that proverbs embed and teach moral values. This paper describes proverbs and their functions through the ideational metafunction of language in Chinua Achebe’s (henceforth *AOG*).

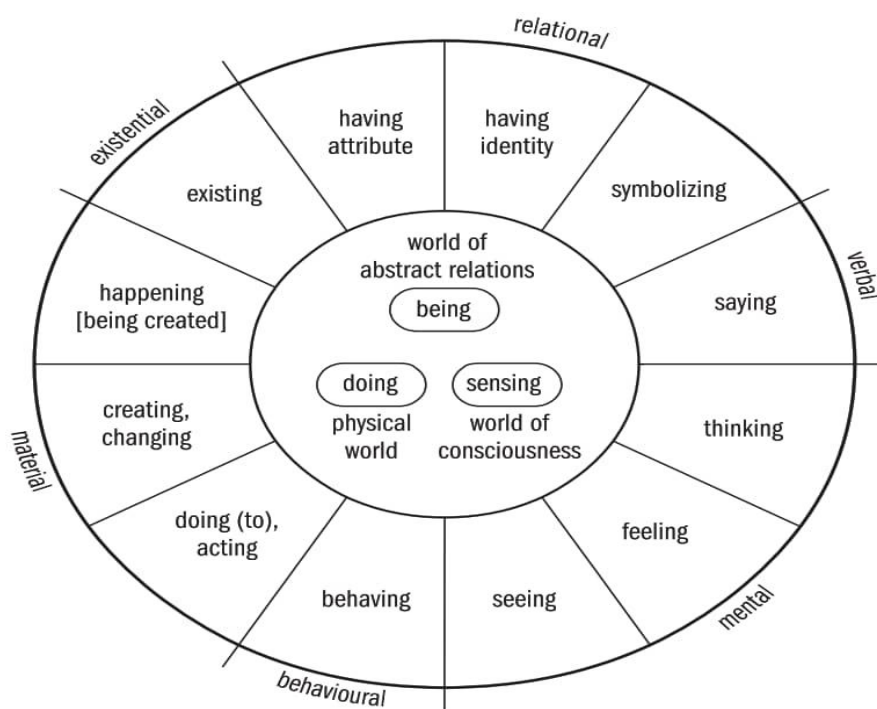
The main research objective of this paper is to identify proverbs in Chinua Achebe’s *AOG*. The first specific objective is to analyze proverbs in Chinua Achebe’s *AOG* through the ideational metafunction markers and the second specific objective is to discuss the role of proverbs as identity-builders and socialization tools in Chinua Achebe’s *AOG*. The main research question is: what are the ideational metafunction markers identified in Chinua Achebe’s *AOG*? The two specific research questions are: in which way are the ideational metafunction markers linguistically materialized in proverbs found in Chinua Achebe’s *AOG*? How do proverbs participate in identity construction and socialization in Chinua Achebe’s *AOG*?

1. Ideational Metafunction Markers

1.1. Identifying Process Types

C. M. I. M. Matthiessen et al., (2010: 164) claim that processes are materialized by verbal groups and add that processes construe diverse scenarios: “happening” and “doing” for material processes, “sensing” for mental processes, “saying” for verbal processes, “being or having for relational processes”, “saying” for verbal processes, “behaving” for behavioral processes and “existing” for existential processes. Processes are illustrated in Figure 1: Process Types in English:

Figure 1: Process Types in English.



Source: M. A. K. Halliday & C. M. I. M. Matthiessen (2014: 216).

Figure 1 shows the six process types in English. Moving clockwise, they are material, existential, relational, verbal, mental and behavioral. M. A. K. Halliday & C. M. I. M. Matthiessen (2014: 300) point out three main process types which are “material”, “relational” and mental. Material processes deal with doings in the physical world, relational processes deal with abstract relations and mental processes with the inner world or the world of consciousness. They consider the three other process types as borderline types. Behavioral process are at the junction of material and mental processes, verbal process are mixtures of mental and behavioral processes and existential processes bridge material and relational processes.

1.2. Associating Participant Roles to Process Types

C. M. I. M. Matthiessen *et al.*, (2010: 155) define “participant as “an element directly involved in process, which may or may not be impacted by the involvement in the process.” Participants are part of the transitivity system with processes and circumstances. Participants are directly involved in the process and may or may not be affected by the process or its consequences. M. A. K. Halliday & C. M. I. M. Matthiessen (2014: 311) broaden their definition of “participant” to encompass direct and indirect participants as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Process Types and Their Characteristic Participants.

PROCESS TYPES	PARTICIPANTS, DIRECTLY INVOLVED	PARTICIPANTS, OBLIQUELY INVOLVED
Material:	Actor, Goal	Recipient, Client; Scope; Initiator; Attribute
Behavioral	Behaver	Behavior
Mental	Senser, Phenomenon	Inducer
Verbal	Sayer, Target	Receiver; Verbiage
Relational	Carrier, Attribute Identified, Identifier; Token, Value	Attributor; Beneficiary Assigner
Existential	Existent	

Source: M. A. K. Halliday & C. M. I. M. Matthiessen (2014: 311). Adapted.

Table 1 introduces the participants for the six process types: material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal and existential. C. M. I. M. Matthiessen & K. Teruya (2024: 103) indicate that participants are “the persons, personalities” and their “relevant features”. Two types of participants are indicated: directly involved participants and indirectly involved participants also known as obliquely involved participants. Direct participants are involved in the process and indirect participants are affected by the process. direct and indirect participants for five process types: material, relational, verbal, mental and behavioral. Existential processes have no indirect or oblique participants.

The label for each participant varies according to process type. One direct participant is found for behavioral and existential processes whereas two direct participants are found for material, mental and verbal processes. Four direct participants are found with relational processes or clauses. M. A. K. Halliday & C. M. I. M. Matthiessen (2014: 302) point that “look” and “worry” can be considered as “a form of” behavior and lay emphasis on the difficulty in always drawing a clear-cut line among processes. A mental process can be viewed as a behavioral process as shown with “look” and “worry”.

1.3. Circumstantial Elements

Circumstances are part of the ideational metafunction but remain peripheral according to M. A. K. Halliday & C. M. I. M. Matthiessen (2014). Circumstances serve to add details to the process regarding time, place, manner, degree for instance. They are answers to questions that help add information to the circumstances surrounding processes as shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Circumstantial Elements

	Circumstance Type		Wh-Item
Enhancing	Extent	Distance	How far?
		Duration	How long?
		Frequency	How many times?
	Location	Place	Where? [there, here]
		Time	When? [then, now]
	Manner	Means	How? [thus]
		Quality	How? [thus]
		Comparison	How? What like?
		Degree	How much?
	Cause	Reason	Why?
		Purpose	Why? What for?
		Behalf	Who for?
	Contingency	Condition	If what?
Default		In absence of what?	
Concession		Despite what?	
Extending	Accompaniment	Comitative	Who/What with?
		Additive	And who/what else?
Elaborating	Role	Guise	What as ?
		Product	What into?
Projection	Matter		What about?
	Angle	Source	
		Viewpoint	

Source: M. A. K. Halliday & C. M. I. M. Matthiessen (2014: 313-314). Adapted.

All the circumstances in Table 2, except for matter, are divided in two, three or four categories. Location is split into Place and Time. Extent, cause and contingency each has three subtypes such as distance, duration and frequency for extent. Manner has four subtypes, namely means, quality, comparison and degree. The last four additional circumstances are accompaniment, role, matter and angle. Each of these, except for matter, is divided into two subtypes such as Guise and Product for Role or Source and Viewpoint for Angle. The questions to be answered provide peripheral information in that without such information the clause remains meaningful. Circumstances can be characterized as answers to specific questions. WH-Items are part of the questions whose answers provide the circumstances that enable the clause to expand on the processes and participants. Circumstances are “peripheral” as M. A. K. Halliday & C. M. I. M. Matthiessen (2014: 221) claim.

2. Materialization in Proverbs

Five excerpts all taken from Chapter One of *AOG* showcase 06 proverbs. They serve as data to be analyzed through processes, participants and circumstances. They are presented in Table 3:

Table 3: Proverbs as Illustrated in Italics.

Excerpt	Page	Proverbs
01	p. 9	'I don't know how many times I have said in this house that I shall not eat my supper when every other man in Umuaro is retiring to sleep,' he said as soon as Matefi came in. 'But you will not listen. Whatever I say in this <i>house is no more effective than the fart a dog breaks to put out a fire.</i>
02	p. 9	'Do you blame a vulture for perching over a carcass?' said Matefi. What do you expect a boy to do when his mother cooks soup with locust beans for fish? She saves her money to buy ivory bracelets. But Ezeulu will never see anything wrong in what she does. If it is me then he knows what to say.
03	p. 11	His father who preferred him to Edogo, his quiet and brooding half-brother, nevertheless said to him often: 'It is praiseworthy to be brave and fearless, my son, but sometimes it is better to be a coward. <i>We often stand in the compound of a coward to point at the ruins where a brave man used to live. The man who has never submitted to anything will soon submit to the burial mat.</i> '
04	p. 13	Only the woman's barn,' he replied. 'But that could wait. There will be no cocoyam to put into it until harvest time.' 'Nothing will wait,' said Ezeulu. ' <i>A new wife should not come into an unfinished homestead.</i> I know such a thing does not trouble the present age.
05	p. 13	'I am one of those they have chosen to go to Okperi tomorrow and bring the loads of our new teacher.' 'Oduche!' 'Father!' 'Listen to what I shall say now. <i>When a handshake goes beyond the elbow we know it has turned to another thing.</i> It was I who sent you to join those people because of my friendship to the white man, Wintabota. He asked me to send one of my children to learn the ways of his people and I agreed to send you. I did not send you so that you might leave your duty in my household. Do you hear me? Go and tell the people who chose you to go to Okperi that I said no.

Source: Chapter One of *AOG*.

Table 3 contains five proverbs from Chapter One of *AOG* with the context to interpret each proverb. Each of the five excerpts contains one proverb, except for excerpt 03 that contains two proverbs. In Table 3, the proverbs are in italics and the sentences that enable the processing and interpretation of each proverb are provided but not highlighted. The proverbs are analyzed in a linear fashion with attention brought to the process types and their counts, to the participant roles and to the circumstantial elements contained in the clauses that constitute the proverbs. Making an inventory of all the proverbs in Chinua Achebe's *AOG* is unrealistic since it would mean taking all proverbs into the nineteen chapters of *AOG*. Due to space constraints, the first chapter has been arbitrarily chosen since it offers the door to the rest of *AOG* and a first context for proverb extraction.

2.1. Marker Materializations in AOG.

Five excerpts are taken from the first chapter of *AOG*. The participants in the proverbs across the first five excerpts are noun phrases or pronouns. In excerpt 01, *the fart* is participant. It is a noun phrase made up of Article + Noun. In excerpt 02, one participant is *you*, a personal pronoun in subject position and the other participant is *a vulture*. Another noun phrase occurs as part of a circumstantial element (*a carcass*). Dogs and vultures are the animals that are participants in the processes found in the proverbs that occur in excerpts 01 and 02 found in Table 3.

In excerpt 03, two proverbs occur with different participants and circumstances. In the first, the personal pronoun *we* and *the ruins* (Article + Noun) are participants. noun phrases appear in the first proverb from excerpt 03 but they are not participants. The phrases *a coward* and *a brave man* are found in circumstantial elements. In the second proverb, two noun phrases with different structures (Article + Noun, Article + Noun + Noun) and one pronoun are participants. The participants are respectively *the man*, *anything* and *a burial mat*. No circumstance is found in the second proverb.

Excerpt 04 features a noun phrase structured as Article + Adjective + Noun in *a new wife*. A noun phrase having the same structure is part of the circumstance in the proverb from excerpt 04. The two participants in the proverb found in excerpt 05 contains two participants with each structured as Article + Noun (*a handshake* and *the elbow*). Another noun phrase structured as Adjective + Noun is part of the Role, namely Product. A human body part (*elbow*) as a simple noun is found as well as a compound noun (*hand* in *handshake*).

The five excerpts are presented with their contexts. The context for the first excerpt is a discussion between Ezeulu, the Chief Priest and one of his wives named Matefi. She brings his food to him late in the evening and he is complaining about it and threatening Matefi. The last clause in excerpt 01 reads: “Whatever I say in this house *is no more effective than the fart a dog breaks to put out a fire.*” The clause portion in italics is not a full proverb, because constituents are missing. A clause like “Words are *more effective than the fart a dog breaks to put out a fire*” gives the feel of a proverb in that it states a generally accepted truth as pointed in L. Silué (2020: 14) and Z. P. Toh (2020: 64). There is a verbal process (say), a relational process (*is*) and a material process (*breaks*). The Sayer or primary direct participant is *I* with reference to Ezeulu, the Chief Priest. The Identified or primary participant in the relational process is “What I say in this house” and the participants in the material process (*breaks*) are

the fart and a dog. The answer to the question “what for?” with regard to the fart is *to put out a fire* manifesting purpose.

The context for the second excerpt is a discussion between Ojiugo and her mother Matefi. Ojiugo collects the bowls after one of Ezeulu’s sons Nwafo takes all his time eating and wastes Ojiugo’s time in the process. The question in excerpt 02 *Do you blame a vulture for perching over a carcass?* can be rephrased as a statement: One does not blame a vulture for perching over a carcass or A vulture is not blamed for perching over a carcass. The question is a rhetorical one since no true answer is expected. Y. Hong & S. Wei (2019: 237) consider the verb “blame” as saying or thinking “that someone or something is responsible for something bad”. Y. Hong & S. Wei (2019: 238) define the noun “blame” as “responsibility for a mistake or for something bad”. Blame can operate as a verbal process or a material one since blaming involves saying or thinking. This paper takes blame as a verbal process for the sake of argument. The Sayer or primary direct participant in the verbal process is *you*. C. M. I. M. Matthiessen et al., (2010: 216) define the Target as construing “the object of praise, blame, criticism and so on”. The target is *a vulture*. Purpose can be identified in *for perching on a carcass*.

Excerpt 03 is taken from a broad context where Obika, a son of Ezeulu, is introduced. He is described and characterized as a drunkard, an angry and a strong man and his father is condoning his behavior. The last two clauses of excerpt 03 stand as general truths or words of wisdom. In the clause *We often stand in the compound of a coward to point at the ruins where a brave man used to live*, *we* is Actor in the material process *stand* and the Goal is *the ruins*. The phrases *in the compound of a coward* and *where a brave man used to live* are circumstantial elements indicating Location in space. The last clause in the excerpt is *‘The man who has never submitted to anything will soon submit to the burial mat.’* There are three participants for the two occurrences of the verb *submit*: *the man*, *anything* and *burial mat*.

Excerpt 04 portrays a discussion in which Ezeulu and other men are discussing. The discussion centers on Obika and his construction project. Obika replies that the construction of the barn will wait and his father replies that it will not be the case. The last but one clause reads: *A new wife should not come into an unfinished homestead*. The material process (*should not come*) has one participant which is *a new wife* and one participant indicating location in space (*into an unfinished homestead*).

In excerpt 05, Oduche, one of Ezeulu’s sons, is chosen as a member of a duo that must go to Okperi and Ezeulu raises objections to that trip. Ezeulu calls his son and enjoins him to obey:

When a handshake goes beyond the elbow we know it has turned to another thing. Although friends with Captain Winterbottom, also known as Wintabota, he cannot condone the decision taken to make his son member of a duo that is set for Okperi. The material process *goes* has two participants: *a handshake* and *we*. There is a first circumstance pointing to location in space *beyond the elbow* and a second circumstance called Product which is the answer to the question *what into?* The product is materialized through the prepositional phrase *into another thing*. The process *turned* has one participant: *a handshake*.

2.2. Frequency Counts of Markers in Proverbs

It should be recalled that the ideational metafunction markers are the processes, the participants and the circumstances. Their various frequency counts are shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Frequency Counts of Ideational Metafunction Markers in the Proverbs.

	Processes	Participants	Circumstances
Excerpt 01	-Material (1x) - Relational (1x)	2x	Purpose (1x)
Excerpt 02	- Verbal (1x) - Material (1x)	2x	Purpose (1x)
Excerpt 03	- Material (5x)	5x	Purpose (1x)
Excerpt 04	- Material (1x)	1x	Location (1x)
Excerpt 05	- Material (2x) - Mental (1x)	2x	- Location (1x) - Product (1x)

Source: *Our Own*.

Table 4 indicates frequency counts of the three types of ideational metafunction markers, namely processes, participants and circumstances. Columns 2, 3 and 4 indicate the markers to look for in analyzing ideational meanings. Column 2 shows that two process types are missing in the proverbs across the five excerpts: behavioral and existential processes. Four types of processes are found in the proverbs: material, mental, relational and verbal. Column 3 indicates the frequency counts of participants across the proverbs in the five excerpts. Column 4 points to the circumstances that were found in the metafunctional analysis of the proverbs. Only three types of circumstances are found across the proverbs: purpose, location and product.

The proverbs in the five excerpts embed thirteen processes: 10 material, 01 mental, 01 relational and 01 verbal. One material process and one relational are found in excerpt 01 whereas one verbal and one material are found in excerpt 02. Excerpt 03 contains 05 material processes and excerpt 04 has 01 material process. Excerpt 05 has 02 material processes and 01 mental process. Except for material processes that occur 10 times, mental, relational and verbal processes occur once for each type. Material processes occur in all the proverbs in the five excerpts while mental, relational and verbal processes occur in only one proverb across the excerpts.

The global ratios for process types are 10/13 for material processes and 1/13 for mental, relational and verbal process types. Regarding the occurrences of processes in proverbs from the five excerpts, material processes constitute half (1/2) of the process occurrences in excerpts 01 and 02, the totality in excerpts 03 and 04 and two thirds (2/3) of the processes in excerpt 05. Among material processes, those found in the two proverbs from excerpt 03 make up for half (1/2) of all the occurrences of material processes. Relational and verbal process types make half (1/2) of the processes found in excerpts 01 and 02 respectively and mental processes make for a third (1/3) of the processes in excerpt 05.

Twelve participants are found in the proverbs across the five excerpts. Excerpts 01, 02 and 05 have 02 participants each, excerpt 03 has 05 participants and excerpt 04 has 01 participant. Regarding ratios, excerpts 01, excerpt 02 and excerpt 05 have 2/12 each, excerpt 03 5/12 and excerpt 04 has 1/12. As for circumstantial elements, only purpose, location and product are materialized across the proverbs from the five excerpts. Purpose occurs 03 times in excerpts 01 to 03 combined. Location is found twice in excerpts 04 and 05 combined. Product occurs only once in excerpt 05 only. The ratios are 3/6 for purpose, 2/6 for location and 1/6 for product. Excerpts 01 to 03 have 1/6 each as regards purpose. Excerpts 04 and 05 have 1/6 each regarding location.

The occurrence of various process types indicates a wide range of meanings from creations, doings and happenings (material processes) to identifying and attributing (relational processes) through thinking, perceptions, desires and emotions (mental processes) and saying (verbal processes). Direct as well as indirect participants are associated to the four process types found in the proverbs across the five excerpts. The circumstances that expand on the processes with their associated participants help build a complete picture of the ideational meanings throughout the proverbs in the five excerpts.

3. Identity Formation and Socialization through Proverbs

P. Seitel (1976: 125) and N. R. Norrick (2014: 8) both note that proverbs are metaphorical or figurative sayings in interactional contexts. Table 3 shows that proverbs are searchable data across Chinua Achebe's *AOG*. This section discusses proverbs as identity builders and socialization tools.

3.1. Proverbs as Identity Builders

Y. Hong & S. Wei (2019) posit identity as what marks the differences between a person or a group and the next person or group. O. O. Upiomoh (2023: 86) argues that identity in the

African context “goes well beyond parents” to get “deeply rooted in our forebearers”. According to L. Silué (2020) and O. O. Upiomoh (2023: 86), proverbs are teaching instruments in African culture. Through “proverbs”, family “traditions” are passed down through generations as N. Burford & L. Singh (2023: 137) indicate. N. Burford & L. Singh (2023) insist in claiming that valuable life lessons that helped shape the identities of past generations are handed down to the following generations through proverbs.

In excerpt 04, the Chief Priest Ezeulu contends with his children who propose to put off finishing a house that is to welcome a newly wed wife. He says: *A new wife should not come into an unfinished homestead*. The following clause in excerpt 04 shows the Chief Priest strongly stating the present age’s neglect of respect and honor due to women. Honorable men have come before the present age and their customs and practices have been handed down and as encapsulated in Chief Priest Ezeulu’s words, no new wife is welcomed in an unfinished home. Ezeulu’s words is an echo to the statement that men identified as honorable do not welcome their newly wed wives in less than appropriate homes. Beyond the literal meaning involving physical buildings standing as homes lies a metaphorical meaning of a house with all the commodities. The metaphorical reasoning contended with by P. Seitel (1976) fully makes sense.

The identity of honorable men embedded and perpetuated in the proverb *A new wife should not come into an unfinished homestead* is a sign that identity is essential to a community. This identity is to be passed down from generation to generation in an uninterrupted fashion and proverbs play a role in that transmission. Ezeulu’s stance in reclaiming the validity of the proverb and forcing his interactants to acknowledge it and live by it bears witness to identity as being handed from a generation to the next with the risk of being lost in the transmission process. By defending marriage as it has always been in his community, Chief Priest Ezeulu is speaking in favor of an African way of getting married and of appropriately welcoming newly wed wives. Moreover, the proverb can be seen as a defense of women’s rights to be married and appropriately welcomed home. In Ezeulu’s mouth, the proverb stands as a warning against identity loss especially regarding marriage and wives and Ezeulu himself, through his use of the proverb, becomes the living embodiment of age-old wisdom as the mouth of “the aged, the spirits, the ancestors and the divines” as L. Silué (2020: 27) indicates.

G. Leech (2006: 95) associates “a span of time including the present” with the present time whereas D. Biber et al., (2021: 451) indicate that the present simple expresses “present habitual behavior”. The occurrence of the present simple in the proverbs locates them in the present and

the present simple as a means of expressing habits also ascribes atemporality to proverbs. Proverbs convey life lessons and experiences true at the moment they were formulated and also true afterwards. N. Burford & L. Singh (2023) as well as N. Wane et al., (2023) acknowledge the value of proverbs as educational tools and an encapsulation of age-old culturally relevant wisdom. In the case of *AOG*, the proverb sample depicts permanent values in link with the individual's identity.

3.2. Proverbs and Socialization

Y. Hong & S. Wei (2019: 1382) indicate that the suffix “-ize” means to “make something have more of a particular quality” and “-ization” as used to form nouns from verbs ending in “-ize”. Socialize, from the root word social means making someone more social. In other words, it means making a person adopt behaviors and manners in line with the society in which he/she lives. P. Seitel (1976: 125) contends that interactional contexts are part of the definitional characteristics of proverbs and the five excerpts in Table 3 depict interactions. All the five excerpts and the proverbs therein show the Chief Priest as the major figure in all the interactions.

D. M. Gnessoté (2020: 109) names moments such as naming ceremonies, weddings and conflict management instances where proverb use is materialized. Gathering to name a baby or to unite a man and a woman through wedlock are instances in which society as a whole perpetuates traditions. O. O. Upiomoh (2023: 82) mentions that proverbs are “speeches” and the interactional context of proverbs becomes obvious in social events such as weddings, conflict management instances. A wedding is the opportunity for elders to make speeches and advise the newly wed couple and part of this speech consists in proverbs as pointed to by D. M. Gnessoté (2020). The wisdom needed to live in a given society is carried by the language used in that society as O. O. Upiomoh (2023: 85) states: “the language that carries the wisdom of its people”.

It is worth noting that “proverbs, stories, and folklores” should be “a part of everyday speech” as stated by O. O. Upiomoh (2023: 85). Daily verbal interactions are moments when knowledge and experience are shared according to N. Burford & L. Singh (2023: 136). They stress on the use of proverbs “in adult conversations” in which parents share “anecdotes of childrearing”. N. Burford & L. Singh (2023) claim that the child learns the ethics, principles and manners of his/her society through socialization and proverbs have a place in that process. As transgenerational tools for “encapsulating the wisdom of experience” as pointed in N. Burford

& L. Singh (2023: 139), proverbs are instrumental in developing morality and good manners as expounded on in N. Burford & L. Singh (2023: 140).

In excerpt 05, chief Priest Ezeulu through the proverb *when a handshake goes beyond the elbow, we know that it has turned into another thing*, Ezeulu is warning on the boundaries of true friendship. The proverb as a metaphorical reasoning contended by P. Seitel (1976) takes its full sense. Literal understanding cannot account for what *a handshake*, for what *beyond the elbow* represents and for what *it has turned into another thing* means and implies. In the context of friendship and social relationships, keeping safe distance when necessary, avoiding to cross certain boundaries and engaging in socially accepted behaviors may come into play. The proverb in Chief Priest Ezeulu's mouth is reminiscent of respectful behavior in friendship and social settings. His refusal to condone such a behavior sheds light on his rigor in enforcing the skills needed in social interactions. The cultural knowledge and competence necessary to navigate social interactions is learned by experience according to N. Wane et al., (2023: 236) who state: "Proverbs have been used to spread knowledge, wisdom, and truths about life from ancient times up to the current times in many cultures".

Conclusion

This study aims to investigate proverbs as identity builders and socialization tools in Chinua Achebe's *AOG*. Motivated by the cultural and educational significance of proverbs in traditional societies, our paper addresses the following subsidiary questions: (1) In which way are the ideational metafunction markers linguistically materialized in proverbs found in Chinua Achebe's *AOG*? (2) How do proverbs participate in identity construction and socialization in Chinua Achebe's *AOG*? Data collection involved selecting five excerpts from the first chapter of *AOG*, which included six proverbs. These proverbs were analyzed through processes, participants and circumstances.

The analysis shows the dominance of material processes over mental, relational and verbal processes and the occurrence of only three types of circumstantial elements: purpose, location and product. The ratios of the various process types and circumstantial elements vary from one proverb to the next and across the proverbs as a whole. Proverbs have been identified as identity building tools and socialization means. The study further identifies proverbs as encapsulating age-old culturally relevant wisdom. The occurrence of the present simple in the proverbs situates them in the present and the present simple as a means of expressing habits also ascribes atemporality to proverbs.



Proverbs convey life lessons and experiences true at the moment they were formulated and also true afterwards (G. Leech, 2006 and D. Biber et al., 2021). However, due to space constraints, the scope of the study was limited to a small sample of five excerpts embedding six proverbs. Future research could extend the data to include many excerpts embedding more proverbs, enabling a deeper exploration of their linguistic functions. Despite its limited scope, our study highlights the importance of proverbs as they are used to build identity and impart social skills.

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