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CLASSIFICATION AND MEANING OF PROVERBS IN THINGS FALL APART

**CLASSIFICAÇÃO E
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PROVÉRBIOS EM
THINGS FALL
APART**

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Abstract: This research paper deals with the use of proverbs in the novel **Things Fall Apart** by Chinua Achebe. As a descriptive work, its aim is to describe the proverbs in the novel, classify them, interpret and explain the meaning of the proverbs in the context. Due to the purpose established, qualitative research method was the chosen, specifically the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This research method gives the needed approaches that lead to the thematic and subjective conclusion, that result from the interpretation and explanation of the proverbs and their meaning on the context they appear in the Novel. The study has shown that **Things Fall Apart** has a sum of thirty four proverbs, where thirty two are said by men and two exclusively by women. The proverbs found were classified based on their theme. In the Novel we can find religious proverbs, psychological proverbs, social proverbs and ethical proverbs. Because of the peculiar traces of four specific proverbs and the limits imposed on the number of papers this work should have, only four proverbs were analyzed, interpreted and explained.

KEYWORDS: Classification. Meaning. Proverbs. Things Fall Apart.

Resumo: Este trabalho de pesquisa lida com o uso dos provérbios dentro do romance **Things Fall Apart** de Chinua Achebe. Como um trabalho essencialmente descritivo, seu objetivo é descrever, classificar, interpretar e explicar o significado dos provérbios dentro do contexto no romance. Por causa do propósito estabelecido, o método de pesquisa qualitativo foi o escolhido, especificamente a Análise Crítica do Discurso (CDA). Este método de pesquisa dá-nos as ferramentas para se ter dados temáticos e uma conclusão subjetiva, resultante da análise, interpretação e explicação dos provérbios e seus significados no contexto em que aparecem no romance. Este estudo mostrou que **Things Fall Apart** tem uma soma de trinta e quatro provérbios, onde trinta e dois foram ditos por homens e dois exclusivamente por mulheres. Os provérbios encontrados foram classificados atendendo o assunto de que se retratam. Assim, no romance, foram encontrados provérbios religiosos, provérbios psicológicos, provérbios sociais bem como provérbios éticos. Por causa dos traços peculiares que quatro provérbios apresentam e dos limites quanto ao número de páginas que este trabalho deveria conter, apenas quatro provérbios são analisados, interpretados e explicados.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Classificação. Significado. Provérbios. Things Fall Apart.



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

One large tendency today by the Africans, and particularly by the Angolans, is to consume everything from countries out of African circle. This attitude has been taking many people to think that what is indigenous is worthless and of no use. Whereas, the exogenous is highly valued and appreciated more than what is produced inside, it goes from what we eat to what we believe. Thus, the African culture is forgotten with its moral standards, values and philosophies.

Landers (2001) sees things from the same perspective. She says that industrialization and subsequent migration lead many Africans to experience social disruption and loss of social structure or unity. As a result, many traditions and indigenous knowledge in the form of narrative and proverbs, as well as, the mechanisms for transmitting them have been neglected and lost.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Through the eras, major researches on the field of paremiology were mainly collection of proverbs and proverbs comparison among countries or communities (Rezaei, 2012). Now, attempts have been made to go beyond this kind of study. Many researchers have extended their interest toward the syntactic, phonologic, semantic and pragmatic analysis of proverbs.

Things Fall Apart is a masterpiece in the African Literature. For this reason, it has been extensively analyzed. Though there are studies of the proverbs used in the Novel, there is not any published scientific research done with the goal of identifying the total number of proverbs used in the Novel and its correspondent classification, analysis and interpretation. No researcher has attempted to find out the frequency of proverbs used by women compared with the use men made of it in the Novel under discussion.

1.3. REASON FOR CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH

This study is a contribution for science knowledge growth and continuous human progression. It gives detailed description that will help readers of the Novel under discussion, i.e. Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe, to understand it better and while reading it, relish to the full.

Things Fall Apart portrays one African community, that is, a Nigerian community, its moral conducts, education strategies, procedures to problem solving, or as Gogoi (2017, p. 52) says: "it express African sensibilities". Thus, understanding the frequency of proverbs use, the reasons why they are used, the circumstances in which proverbs are used, as well as the meaning in context of proverbs, will help readers and the worldwide scientific communities to understand and appreciate the richness, beauty and value embedded in African cultures.

Therefore, this work serves the purpose of attraction, attraction of the Africans and Non-Africans to the richness of African culture.

1.4. Relevance of the study

In the field of paremiology, many researchers have agreed that proverbs have great value. Its value extends from a literary device, i.e. a mean to authenticate the African use of language, to do cultural manifestation, i.e. a mean to reflect the beliefs, norms, customs and values of Africans. Meanwhile, understanding the use of proverbs by Africans will surely help those interested to understand the African culture, on the contrary, ignoring the African richness of proverbs and metaphors would be a loss (Landers, 2001, p. 24).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. DEFINITION OF PROVERBS

There has been an enormous increase of interest in the study of proverbs in the part of many scholars around the world during the past few decades. Ahmed (2005, p. 21) says that, “studying proverbs has become a very attractive and popular field for many scholars”. These efforts behind the interest of the various researchers on collecting, analyzing and comparing proverbs stress the importance of the use of proverbs in the XXI century.

Though almost impossible a complete definition of a proverb, many paremiologists have put forth their notion of what a proverb is. Rezaei (2012, p. 1104), for example, defines proverb as being “a form of expression of great antiquity”. Ramírez (2015, p. 1) defines proverbs as “interesting pieces of popular wisdom and tradition belonging to any culture, which help us to foreground the values and shared beliefs held by a speech community”. Tchimboto (2017) gives another definition on proverb; he says that “proverb, which is also known as paremy, is all phrase fruit of human thought and experience” (p. 5).

The list of scholars suggesting a definition of what proverbs are is very long to be presented in this study. However, it is worth citing here the definition of Wolfgang Mieder, a well-reputed scholar in the field of the study of proverbs. He defines the term proverb as follow: “A short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation” . (Rezaei, 2012, p. 1104).

From its etymology, which is Latin, a root and a prefix make up the word “proverb”. The Latin word “proverbium” is the combination of the prefix pro- meaning “forth” and the root -verbum meaning “word”. This suggests that the literal meaning of the word proverb is “a set of words put forth” (Can, 2011, p. 22).

2.2. ANTIQUITY OF PROVERBS

It is agreed among scholars that proverb, as a genre, is part of the huge bunch of oral literature from the folk. That is why it is called “the genre of the traditional verbal folklore” (Timen, 2015, p. 14016) and for the same reason, proverbs are believed to be the first oral literature as it was easy to memorize and use.

What these scholars say reveal the antiquity of the use of proverbs. Since proverbs exist in all human languages, they are as old as the languages they are part of (Ahmed, 2005). In other words, proverbs came in vogue since the time when man started using language in society. The various utterances made in the books of

Upanishads and Brahmins, the abundant use of proverbs during the time of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the epic period, and the proverbs incorporated in the Egyptian book 'the book of the Dead' written circa 3700 BC., the oldest book written in this country, establish the antiquity of proverbs.

Aristotle, with his seminar work, *Aphorisms*, is rendered as the first scholar having studied proverbs and have taken scientific research on it, though, unfortunately his treatise has been now lost. Along with Aristotle, Plato, Sophocles, Homer, as well as Ferdowsi have applied proverbs in their works as a part of literature (Rezaei, 2012, p. 1104; Syzdykov, 2014, p. 319; Trench, 1861, p.3). Since then, (Ramírez, 2015, p. 2) informs that: "proverbs have been introduced in literature, films, drama, arts and music. Furthermore, they are used in advertising as a tool to convey popular wisdom and shared beliefs or ideas among a speech community".

2.3. PROVERBS AND CULTURES

Ferdinand de Saussure, a well-known linguist, once has written: "The culture of a nation exerts an influence on its language, and the language, on the other hand, is largely responsible for the nation" (Saussure, 1915, p.20). Here, Saussure implicitly denotes that languages are crucial elements in the formation, refinement and development of the cultures around the world. Along with him, James Bird, in his work entitled *Wit and Wisdom from West Africa* comments that once Döhn, J. L remarked: "The highest object of language-study is to obtain an insight into the characters and thought-modes of mankind" (Bird, 1865, p. 14).

All this is to say that culture and Language are intrinsically interrelated and interdependent, in which one reveals the traits of the other and boost it. More serious, either, there is no culture without language and the opposite is also true, there is no language without culture. Some people understand culture as being "the way of life, ideas, traditions, arts etc., produced and shared by a particular group of people" (Larousse, 1996, p. 249). This all is in fact what proverbs encode, the way people live, their way of thinking, their ways of communication, dress habits, joys and celebration, gods and goddesses, their feelings, values, customs, etc. (Can, 2011, p. 15; Syzdykov, 2014, p. 318-320; Landers, 2001, p. 2; Ahmed, 2005, p. 4). Tchimboto says that proverbs also contributes "in the construction of identities, personalities, and the world-view of the people" he furthers his comment saying that "proverbs, as a feature of African culture, are more than a literary genre; they are expression of culture itself" (Tchimboto, 2017, p. 5).

2.4. APPROACHES TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF PROVERBS

Regarding the meaning of proverbs and the steps toward its understanding, Katz and Ferretti classify proverbs into familiar proverbs and unfamiliar proverbs. In their view, familiar proverbs are those which the "meaning are processed prior to the literal meaning", here the role of the context in the understanding of the proverb is irrelevant, because the proverb is familiar or already known to the hearer. In the words of Katz and Ferretti, "the context is not a determining contribution to the reading of a familiar proverb" (Ramírez, 2015, p. 6).

Whereas, in unfamiliar proverbs literal meaning is processed first or, as used in Lakoff-Turner proverb theory “the source domain schemas apprehended as provided by the proverb”. Only after, noticing that the literal meaning does not match with the context, the hearer is forced, somehow, to search for one second meaning for the proverb, i.e., the figurative meaning. In the words of Lakoff and Turner, “only then recipients map the source domain onto a target domain”, which may be specified by the context or may be unspecified (Bradbury, 2002, p. 267).

2.5. FUNCTIONS OF PROVERBS

Proverbs are multifunctional. In fact, the many functions they play are out of expectation (Lauhakangas, 2007). Again, the context in which they will be applied will determine the function they will exert. Many researchers, on this vast field of study, have attempted to list the functions proverbs can assume. All the lists on the function of proverbs are important in the sense that they contribute to the understanding of the significance of proverbs in the modern society. Nevertheless, there is no such a complete list of the functions of proverbs. Proverbs are used as argument supporters; they are also used for criticism; to advice; to warn; as guidelines for security, decency and dignity; for didactic purpose or as teaching device. Proverbs are used for therapy; for humor; to check and control behavior and attitude; to solve problems; to embellish speech, to add color to everyday conversation and make effective points in talk. They are also used as indirect mean of saving face, avoiding crises and preserving politeness; to persuade; to close or open argument; and to make calculations of profitability (Landers, 2001; Ramírez, 2015; Tchimboto, 2017; Timen, 2015; Syzdykov, 2014; Lauhakangas, 2007; Hildebrandt, 2005 and Finnegan, 2012).

2.6. CLASSIFICATION OF PROVERBS

The notion on classification is related to dividing the proverbs into definite or fixed classes. Many paremiologists have thought and suggested proverb’s classes based on the alphabetic system, others on the form the proverbs may assume, and even some others have based their classification on the various themes proverbs may discuss. Here, is preserved and presented the classification based on the theme of the proverbs for being the easiest, simple and remarkable. According to their theme, proverbs can be:

1. Religious proverbs: proverbs based on a belief in a god or gods. Here is an example: “To resuscitate, is easy to Allah” (Bird, 1865, p. 20).
2. Ethical proverbs: proverbs based on the concept of what is morally right or wrong. For instance: “He, who separates men that are fighting, should not strike them” (Bird, 1865, p. 13).
3. Social proverbs: proverbs based on the human society, the way it is organized and the position individuals have in the society. For example: “A subjectless king is no king” (Bird, 1865, p. 11).
4. Scientific and psychological proverbs: proverbs related to the human Knowledge on how things in the world work. Example: “The bird can drink much, but the elephant drinks more” (Bird, 1865, p. 14).

2.7. PREVIOUS STUDIES

Through decades, many scholars have been studying different aspects from the Novel, *Things Fall Apart*, by Chinua Achebe and Emmanuel Obiechina, in his work *Narrative Proverbs in the African Novel*, confirms the fact that different scholars, from various perspectives, have extensively analysed *Things Fall Apart*. Nevertheless, in relation to the study of proverbs presented in the Novel, there are few studies published. This is attested by the fact that, among thirty three references read for the realization of this paper, only three papers were discussing directly the study of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart*, its description, analysis and interpretation.

The first paper is by Gitanjali Gogoi. The author deals mainly with Achebe's choice of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart*. He mentions that "In all of his five novels, Chinua Achebe creatively uses oral cultural elements such as proverbs, folktales, myths etc. to convey different messages" (Gogoi, 2017, p. 52). And one of these messages is in response to the misrepresentation of African culture and people in the works of western writers like Joyce Cary and Joseph Conrad.

The second work on proverb, in relation to the proverbs in *Things Fall Apart*, is by Alimi. Alimi studies the use of proverbs as a literary device. He presents Achebe's view on the importance of proverb saying that: "among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palmoil with which words are eaten" (Alimi, 2012, p. 122). That is to stress that, the use of proverbs is highly prized in the traditional African society and is used to portray certain actions or events in picturesque manner, making its use inevitable for the Africans.

The third work is by Emmanuel Obiechina entitled *Narrative Proverbs in the African Novel*. In this work, he reserves a place to talk specifically about the example of *Things Fall Apart*. Where he, different from the two firsts that limited their selves describing some proverbs of the Novel and comment on it, Obiechina discusses not the all sum of the proverbs of the Novel, but the nine Narrative Proverbs he found in *Things Fall Apart*. He identifies, analyses, classifies the Narrative Proverbs from the context cited, and shows their practical application (Obiechina, 1992).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. TYPE OF RESEARCH

This work is mainly a descriptive work, also known as *ex post facto* research (Cothari, 2004). A descriptive research work aims to give an account of the affairs as it exists at present. Cothari says that "The main characteristic of this method is that the researcher has no control over the variables; he can only report what has happened or what is happening" (Cothari, 2004, p. 3).

3.2. Methodologies

Research methodology is an expression that refers to the systematic way or ways the researcher uses to conduct the research work and solve the research problem, which is the reason for the research realization. Simply saying, research methodology "may be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically" (Cothari, 2004, p. 8).

Because of the nature of this paper, the chosen research method was the qualitative, within which special attention was given to Critical Discourse Analysis. That means, Critical Discourse Analysis is the emphasized method of discourse analysis being used here, though bit of the characteristics of the others discursive methods of analysis may be present, i.e. Conversational Analysis and Interactional Sociolinguistics.

3.3. CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis is a domain of Critical Applied Linguistics. Its aim is to investigate the existent relationship between language use, power and ideology (Tavakoli, 2012) i.e. how language portrays the way people see the world they live in, and their behavior toward each other. It is committed with criticizing the values of a society as drawn by the language being used in that particular community. That is why Critical Discourse Analysis starts its analysis focused on a social issue.

3.4. Procedures

This paper has gone under specific procedures and submitted to a particular method of research, which is the qualitative method. This method was chosen because it gives the needed approaches that lead to the thematic and subjective conclusion, that result from the interpretation and explanation of the proverbs and their meaning on the context they appear in the Novel.

One first step taken was a careful repeated reading of the Novel to know the total number of the proverbs present in it and apprehend their meaning. The second step was the classification of the proverbs found. The third step was the selection of the proverbs for analysis. Among many, four were chosen. The act of determining this limited number was a motivated act, which had as principles the distinctive traces of the four proverbs, such as validity denial, ellipse and the fact that women, something rare in the Novel, uttered two of them. Have selected the proverbs, critical discourse analysis was done through three steps, which are, description of the circumstances in which the proverbs were mentioned, interpretation and explanation of the proverbs.

4. DATA PRESENTATION

4.1. About the Author of the Novel

Chinua Achebe was born in Nigeria in 1930. He was raised in the large village of Ogidi and is a graduate of Ibadan University College. He worked for certain period in radio as the Director of External Broadcasting in Nigeria, unfortunately his early career in radio ended in 1966, when he had to leave this post during the national upheaval that led to the Biafra War. He was appointed Senior Research Fellow at Nsukka, the University of Nigeria. From 1972 to 1976, and again in 1987 to 1988, Achebe was a Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and for one year at the University of Connecticut, Storrs. He has published novels, short stories, essays, and children's books.

Chinua Achebe was a prominent man of literature, has tested by the facts, he has received numerous honors from around the world, including the Honorary Fellowship of

the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, as well as more than twenty honorary doctorates from universities in England, Scotland, the United States, Canada, and Nigeria. He is also the recipient of Nigeria's highest award for intellectual achievement, the Nigerian National Merit Award.

4.2. SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL

Things Fall Apart is a prestigious work of Africa Literature written by an African writer from Nigeria in 1958, whose name was Chinua Achebe. As is known, there is always some kind of purpose in every single work of Literature. The author of a piece of writing may write with the goal of teaching a lesson to the possible readers, to criticize certain behavior or attitude or even to amuse. Achebe, as a writer, has written Things Fall Apart with a goal, too. What he wanted to portray through the Novel is the fact that the Africans societies were already complex and evolving entities, with their own agendas, philosophies of great depth, values, and internal conflicts, before the arrival of their colonizers.

Achebe's work is considered as a post-colonial work because it accounts the history of an African community, i.e. a Nigerian community called Ibo in its pre-colonial and early colonial periods during 1850-1900 (Gogoi, 2017), which had to encounter the power of the European Colonizer and face its subsequent drastic changes imposed by the occupant.

The novel starts with the internal upheavals of the members of the community due to their differences of character. For example, the protagonist in the Novel, Okonkwo, had a repulsive attitude toward becoming like his father, Unoka, who was a musician and unsuccessful economically and socially because of his habit of refraining from working. Okonkwo, through his attitudes and thoughts, showed how different he wanted to be. He wanted earnestly to take away the shame his father casted on their family through hard work and better achievements compared to the young people of his time.

He wanted also to prove to be a capable man, different from his full of debt father. In certain period of his life, Okonkwo could do it certainly, but the destiny turned against him with a bad fate. He became a tragic hero, killing himself, because he could not deal with the fact that his village and people could not fight the European Occupants with their religion, schools, government and system of justice imposed upon them all.

One very important aspect of this Novel is its beauty found in the African portrayed ways of bargaining and teaching. In the Novel, Chinua Achebe shows that African Proverbs played a very important role in preserving the ways of life of their ancestors and constituted a valuable resource of practical wisdom for the new generation with their problems. Men and women used them to solve their tensions, to entertain and teach their children. Holding on them assured well being and success to all those wise enough to perceive not only the beauty on the proverbs and short stories but also the wisdom from the past experience.

4.3. CLASSIFICATION OF THE PROVERBS IN THE NOVEL

A survey through a close reading and methodological counting was made to find out the number, context of use, and the meaning of proverbs in the novel Things Fall Apart by Achebe. The study has revealed that there are thirty four proverbs in the

Novel, distributed in seventeen chapters of the Novel, respectively, chapter one, two, three, four, eight, ten, eleven, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, seventeen, nineteen, twenty, twenty one, twenty two, twenty three and twenty four. This number excludes the three repeated proverbs in the Novel, or better say, they were only counted once, though two of them comes in a changed form.

The others chapters of the Novel are bare chapters regarding the use of proverbs. They are, chapters five, six, seven, nine, twelve, sixteen, eighteen and twenty five. These chapters contain not any reference to a proverb. Among the thirty four proverbs found only two are said by women and the others thirty two by men. There is no instance where the children or the colonizers utter a proverb.

Here are the proverbs numbered and classified according to their themes:

Scientific and psychological proverbs

1. "The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them" (Achebe, 1958, p.4).
 2. "When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk" (Achebe, 1958, p.6).
 3. "A toad does not run in the daytime for nothing" (Achebe, 1958, p.13).
 4. "An old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb" (Achebe, 1958, p.13).
 5. "Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching" (Achebe, 1958, p.14).
 6. "You can tell a ripe corn by its look" (Achebe, 1958, p.15).
 7. "A chick that will grow into a cock can be spotted the very day it hatches". (Achebe, 1958, p.45).
 8. "A child's fingers are not scalded by a piece of hot yam which its mother puts into its palm" (Achebe, 1958, p. 46).
 9. "When mother cow is chewing grass its young ones watch its mouth" (Achebe, 1958, p. 49).
 10. "A baby on its mothers back does not know that the way is long" (Achebe, 1958, p.73).
 11. "If one finger brought oil it soiled the others" (Achebe, 1958, p. 90).
 12. "Mother is supreme" (Achebe, 1958, p. 95).
 13. "What is good among one people is an abomination with others" (Achebe, 1958, p. 99).
 14. "Never make an early morning appointment with a man who has just married a new wife" (Achebe, 1958, p. 100).
 15. "Living fire begets cold, impotent ash" (Achebe, 1958, p. 109).
 16. "I cannot live on the bank of a river and wash my hands with spittle" (Achebe, 1958, p. 116).
 17. "A child cannot pay for its mother's milk" (Achebe, 1958, p. 117).
 18. 'As a man danced so the drums were beaten for him" (Achebe, 1958, p. 129).
 19. "Whenever you see a toad jumping in broad daylight, then knows that something is after its life" (Achebe, 1958, p. 141).
- Social proverbs
20. "If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings" (Achebe, 1958, p. 5).

21. "A man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness" (Achebe, 1958, p. 12).
 22. "The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did" (Achebe, 1958, p. 14).
 23. "Looking at a king's mouth one would think he never sucked at his mother's breast" (Achebe, 1958, p. 17).
 24. "The dog said, if I fall down for you and you fall down for me, it is play" (Achebe, 1958, p. 51).
 25. "A man who makes trouble for others is also making it for himself" (Achebe, 1958, p. 69).
 26. "An animal rubs its itching flank against a tree, a man asks his kinsman to scratch him" (Achebe, 1958, p. 117).
 27. "The clan was like a lizard, if it lost its tail it soon grew another" (Achebe, 1958, p. 119).
 28. "We approach a great man through his servants" (Achebe, 1958, p. 125).
- Ethical proverbs
29. "It is not bravery when a man fights a woman" (Achebe, 1958, p. 67).
 30. "Never kill a man who says nothing" (Achebe, 1958, p. 98).
 31. "An Umuofia man does not refuse a call" (Achebe, 1958, p. 134).
- Religious proverbs
32. "He who brings kola brings life" (Achebe, 1958, p. 3).
 33. "Those whose palm kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble" (Achebe, 1958, p. 17).
 34. "When a man says yes his chi says yes also" (Achebe, 1958, p. 18).

These proverbs were used in a range of different circumstances, and for varied purpose. The study has shown that some of them were used as a mean of excuse to do or not do something, others as an instrument for praise, encouragement, mean of persuasion, even others used to emphasize, rebuke, to show disappointment, to solve problems, to console, as a mean of reconciliation, to entertain, explain a point and as a warn.

5 DATA INTERPRETATION

The proverbs to be analyzed here were chosen for their peculiarities. For example the two firsts are proverbs uttered by women, something rare in the Novel, where the most part of the proverbs are said by men. Moreover, the other two proverbs are unique in the way that they are repeated in the novel, one in it full form and the other is mentioned again to stress that it lacks validity.

5.1 *Women and proverbs in the novel*

As portrayed in the Novel, women in the Ibo community had the duty to instruct and educate their daughters. This by no means signifies that they had no control over their sons, or had no share in their education. Rather, there are many instances in the Novel where boys are mentioned sat together with their mothers for instructions and entertainment. The mean of instruction women particularly used was storytelling, and within the stories, proverbs were mentioned.

As mentioned above, there are only two proverbs in the Novel uttered by women. One of Okwonkwo's wives, i.e. his second wife, called Ekwefi, mother of a girl called Ezinma, quoted the first of them and a woman called Chielo serving as a priestess of a god named Agbala mentioned the second. Here is the first proverb:

A man who makes trouble for others is also making it for himself” (Achebe, 1958, p. 69).

This proverb had its place in chapter eleven of the Novel. Ekwefi while in a share of stories uttered it to her daughter Ezinma. The story was about a tortoise and the birds. The tortoise was full of cunning, and used to take advantages of others. Because of this, the birds had decided not to take with him to a feast in the sky. Because of the famine in those days, the tortoise had to find ways to get the help of the birds to the feast where plenty of food would be served and he consequently safeguard his life. Thus, he managed to convince them that he had changed and no tricks would be played. To emphasize this point he uttered the proverb “A man who makes trouble for others is also making it for himself” (Achebe, 1958, p. 69).

This proverb is an example of a social proverb, i.e. it deals with the way people are affected by their own actions and the actions of the others. In a society where people are interdependent, harming others should stir revenge or either provokes resentment. These feelings consequently would prevent others to help those who had harmed them in one way or the other when in need. That is why it is said that making trouble for others is also making it for oneself.

Okwonkwo had a daughter with Ekwefi named Ezinma and she was their only begotten child and the center of her mother's world. A medicine man, who was also a diviner of the Afa Oracle said that Ezinma was an Ogbanje, i.e. “one of those wicked children who, when they died, entered their mothers' wombs to be born again”. This was said of Ezinma because her mother “Ekwefi had suffered a good deal in her life. She had born ten children and nine of them had died in infancy, usually before the age of three” (Achebe, 1958, p. 54).

After Ezinma's recovery from a sickness that had almost lead her to death, Chielo, a priestess of an Oracle called Agbala, “the oracle of the Hills and the Caves” [20:34], payed at night a visit to Okwonkwo. The purpose of the visit was to take Ezinma with her, alleging that her god, Agbala who wanted to see his daughter, had ordered her. Though Okwonkwo had repeatedly refused the request, Chielo, with authority, took Ezinma and placed her on her back. On this, Ezinma began to cry. To comfort the girl, Chielo asked Ezinma not to cry and uttered the second proverb:

A baby on its mother's back does not know that the way is long” (Achebe, 1958, p. 73).

This is the second proverb in the novel uttered by a woman, and it found a place in chapter eleven. What is here is an instance of a Scientific and psychological proverb, because it is clearly based on the experience humans have with babies. Especially in Africa, when women move from a place to other, they take their babies on their back. This practice refrain the children from getting tired because of the distance. Moreover, they even do not see or perceive the long way their mothers cover. That is why for a child the idea of walking long ways, but in their mother's back, is comfortable and

consoling. That is also the motive of the saying “A baby on its mother’s back does not know that the way is long” (Achebe, 1958, p. 73).

5.2 Elliptical proverb in the Novel

In the chapter, three of the Novel can be found an example of an elliptical proverb. That is, a proverb not uttered in its full form, or having some of its elements missing. The proverb is:

Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching” (Achebe, 1958, p. 14).

And its full form is found in chapter twenty four. It says:

Eneke the bird was asked why he was always on the wing and he replied: ‘Men have learned to shoot without missing [their mark] and I have learned to fly without perching [on a twig]” [(Achebe, 1958, p. 1042).

In the first moment the proverb was uttered, the words [their mark] and [on a twig] had not appeared, but still it preserved its entire meaning. It seemed like the modification, by removing the final parts of the proverb, was not significant for the changing of the meaning. This, in fact, is one essential characteristic of an elliptical proverb. They, after being changed, remain meaningful.

In its first occurrence, Nwakibie, a wealthy man in Okwonkwo’s village, in a conversation with Okwonkwo, who was in need of some seed yams for his farm, uttered the proverb. In their time, young people were soft, afraid of hard work. However, things were different with Okwonkwo, a young bold man without any fear of hard work. He deserved a well given praise from this old and wealthy man of the village of Umuofia.

This proverb is a Scientific and Psychological Proverb, based in the human experience with one particular bird called Eneke and its keen ability of flying without resting on a twig. His ability is compared with the ability a man might have to shoot without missing any established mark. In fact, it is commendable when seriously a man takes action toward sharpening one’s ability or skill, aiming proficiency. This was the intent in Nwakibie’s utterance of the proverb.

The proverb is mentioned one-second time by Okika, a great man and an orator, in the occasion of their release from their imprisonment by the colonizer, in a great gathering of the men of Umuofia against the colonization while delivering a speech. In this second instance, the proverb is used with a clear different purpose, i.e. encouragement to the men of Umuofia to start thinking on strategies to root out the colonizer. They had to believe on their abilities and sharpened skills of fighting, just like the Eneke bird believed on his abilities and capacities.

5.3 Denial of a proverb validity in the Novel

When a man says yes his chi says yes also” (Achebe, 1958, pp. 17, 92).

The community portrayed in the Novel is very religious. It honor, among others, their gods, and ancestors with many rituals of sacrifice and offerings. That is not to

wonder if a religious proverb is found in the Novel. In fact, as it can be seen from above, there are three religious proverbs in the Novel. This one for example shows in what the Ibo people of the Novel believed in relation to their gods. The word “chi” from the proverb designates a personal god, responsible for the fate of the one who worshiped him. People believed that if one has a good Chi, he would be prosperous, but if a bad one, evil fortune would follow him or her to the grave.

This proverb appears for the first time in chapter four being quoted by the narrator in relation to Okwonkwo’s success. He says: “At an early age he had achieved fame as the greatest wrestler in all the land. That was not luck. At most one could say that his Chi or personal god was good”, then, he quotes the proverb under discussion and continue saying, “Okwonkwo said yes very strongly, so his Chi agreed” (Achebe, 1958, p. 17). From here is clear the use made by the proverb in the Novel in that particular context, i.e. to explain the reason why Okwonkwo was prosperous.

Later, in chapter fourteen, the narrator still in relation to Okwonkwo uses the proverb again. However, at this time, Okwonkwo was ill fated. In fact, he had to leave his father homeland to reside in his mother homeland because of an unexpected killing of a man of the village. His all expectations and prospects with the Umuofia community were in danger of not being realized. Is in Okwonkwo misfortune, that the narrator retells the proverb denying its validity. Because Okwonkwo had said clearly yes to his goals and directed his all effort toward achieving the same goals, but his Chi was not made for great things. So, “the saying of the elders was not true – that if a man said yea his chi also affirmed” (Achebe, 1958, p. 92).

6 CONCLUSION

The aim of the present work was to find out the theoretical data, in relation to the proverbs in the Novel **Things Fall Apart** by a Nigerian author, Chinua Achebe. To achieve this goal, the use of qualitative research method was of extreme importance. This method helped to find the textual data and subjective conclusion through the critical analysis of proverbs in context.

This work is mainly a descriptive work, its focus is to present one reality and help those interested to understand better the reality being analyzed. In this case, what is pretended here is the description of the proverbs in the Novel, its classification and meaning through the context in which they were applied in the Novel **Things Fall Apart**.

Through repeated close reading, there was found thirty four proverbs in the Novel. Thirty two proverbs, the majority of them, were said by men in the Novel and only two of them uttered by women. There is not any instance where the colonizers or the children used a proverb. The study also showed the presence of one elliptical proverb and one proverb which had its validity denied.

The thirty four proverbs were properly divided into four classes according to the themes they present, i.e. scientific or psychological, religious, social and ethical proverbs. In the Novel there are nineteen scientific or psychological proverbs, three religious proverbs, nine social proverbs and three ethical proverbs. Among all of them, only four proverbs were presented for analysis, interpretation and explanation. These four proverbs were chosen because of their unique traces that distinguished them from the others thirty.

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