

CULTURAL HYBRIDITY IN *THINGS FALL APART*: A HALLIDAYAN PERSPECTIVE THROUGH TRANSITIVITY ANALYSIS

Anees Abbas Shah

*MPhil English Scholar, Department of English Language and Literature,
Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan, KP, Pakistan.*

Email: aneesabbasbs22@gmail.com

Kiran Hassan

*MPhil English Scholar, Department of English Language and Literature,
Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan, KP, Pakistan.*

Email: bukharikiran123@gmail.com

Shabir Ullah

*MPhil English Scholar, Department of English Language and Literature,
Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan, KP, Pakistan.*

Email: shabirullah316@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

*This study explores the construal of cultural hybridity in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* through the lens of Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, particularly the transitivity framework. By examining material, verbal, mental, and existential processes in the novel, the research highlights how Achebe linguistically encodes the complexities of colonial encounter and identity negotiation. Material processes demonstrate hybridity through actions that transform Igbo traditions under colonial influence, while verbal processes reveal the negotiation of belonging and cultural fracture through speech acts. Mental processes uncover the double consciousness of characters caught between Igbo cosmology and Christian ideology, and existential processes expose the ontological rupture in indigenous beliefs. The findings indicate that hybridity in *Things Fall Apart* is not merely thematic but systematically inscribed in the linguistic fabric of the text. By applying a Hallidayan perspective, this study fills a research gap, linking postcolonial theory and linguistic analysis to show how Achebe reclaims African identity and challenges colonial misrepresentations.*

Keywords: *Juno and the Paycock, Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, cultural hybridity, Halliday, transitivity analysis, systemic functional grammar, postcolonial linguistics.*

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) stands as a landmark postcolonial novel that portrays the tension between indigenous Igbo traditions and the encroaching forces of European colonialism. More than a historical narrative, the text functions as a site of cultural negotiation where competing worldviews intersect and hybridize. The concept of cultural hybridity, articulated most prominently in Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory, provides a lens to examine how Achebe's narrative demonstrates the fusion of traditional Igbo values with colonial impositions, producing new, hybrid cultural forms (Bhabha, 1994). In *Things Fall Apart*, hybridity emerges not only through the plot—such as the Igbo community's gradual adoption of Christianity and colonial laws—but also through Achebe's distinctive linguistic strategies, where he blends English with Igbo proverbs, folktales, and oral traditions to assert the vitality of African culture. Scholars have argued that Achebe intentionally constructs a literary hybridity that resists colonial claims of cultural inferiority (Adebola, 2024).

To examine this hybridity in a systematic manner, this paper employs Halliday's

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), focusing specifically on the transitivity system within the ideational metafunction. According to Qasim et al. (2022), Halliday distinguishes three metafunctions of language—textual, interpersonal, and ideational—with the latter allowing language users to represent experiences through choices in process types, participants, and circumstances. Transitivity analysis, therefore, becomes a powerful methodological tool to interpret how Achebe linguistically encodes cultural encounters, conflicts, and negotiations. As Halliday (1994) outlines, and as further demonstrated by Ahmed and Abubakar (2024), processes such as material, mental, relational, and verbal can uncover how characters act, perceive, and interact, thereby revealing deeper ideological patterns. This linguistic method shows that seemingly ordinary clauses encode worldviews and power dynamics, making it apt for analyzing colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Achebe's narrative foregrounds hybridity not simply as cultural assimilation but as a contested process shaped by domination and resistance. For example, the introduction of Christianity by European missionaries destabilizes Igbo traditions, creating a space where old and new beliefs co-exist and collide. As argued by Usman (2025), such encounters produce identities that are neither wholly traditional nor entirely colonial but exist in a hybrid "third space." The use of translators in the novel, where European missionaries rely on African mediators to communicate religious doctrine, reflects a practical hybridity of language and meaning, while also exposing fractures within Igbo society itself. Achebe's hybrid language—blending English with indigenous forms—further illustrates what Bhabha (1994) identifies as cultural translation, where meaning is continuously renegotiated between cultural codes.

Recent transitivity studies on Achebe, such as Bakare (2022), show how linguistic choices position characters like Okonkwo, Nwoye, and the missionaries differently in terms of agency, action, and perception. For instance, Okonkwo's repeated association with material processes (fighting, building, punishing) reflects his embodiment of traditional masculinity and resistance, while Nwoye's increasing orientation towards mental processes (thinking, questioning, doubting) signals his openness to new belief systems and cultural hybridity. Such contrasts reinforce how transitivity analysis can illuminate the subtle interplay between linguistic form and cultural meaning.

The objectives of this study seek to provide a clear direction for the analysis. First, the study aims to investigate how Achebe's use of transitivity processes represents the clash and negotiation between Igbo traditions and colonial interventions. By analyzing material, mental, relational, and verbal processes, the study will identify how actions, perceptions, and relationships are distributed between Igbo and colonial characters, thereby uncovering the linguistic encoding of cultural conflict. Second, the research seeks to examine the ways in which transitivity structures reveal cultural hybridity in the novel's characters, themes, and narrative voice. In doing so, the study highlights how Achebe linguistically constructs a space where traditional African culture and colonial influences interact, merge, and transform. Third, the paper aims to demonstrate how Achebe's hybrid language challenges colonial stereotypes of Africans as "savage" and "uncivilized," instead foregrounding the richness of Igbo culture and oral tradition. By pursuing these objectives, the study not only deepens the understanding of Achebe's literary strategies but also contributes to broader discussions in postcolonial studies and systemic functional linguistics.

Research Statement

In *Things Fall Apart*, European colonizers often portrayed Africans as uncivilized and voiceless, reducing Igbo culture to a symbol of primitivism. Achebe challenges this narrative by giving voice to the colonized, representing the complexity and vitality of Igbo identity that had long been misrepresented and corrupted by colonial discourse. However, Achebe also demonstrates that Africans, under the pressures of colonization, are situated in a state of cultural hybridity—neither fully retaining their traditional identity nor wholly adopting a European one. While numerous scholars have examined *Things Fall Apart* through the lens of cultural hybridity, few have explored how Achebe’s linguistic choices, specifically through transitivity patterns, encode this hybridity at a structural level. This gap highlights the need for a study that integrates postcolonial theory with Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics. By applying transitivity analysis to Achebe’s narrative, this research aims to reveal how cultural hybridity is linguistically constructed and represented in the novel, thus contributing new insights to both postcolonial literary criticism and linguistic stylistics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hybridity in postcolonial studies describes the cultural forms that emerge from cross-cultural contact under colonialism—neither purely indigenous nor wholly European, but new, mixed formations that unsettle binaries of colonizer/colonized (Bhabha, 1994). As you note, hybridity arises from sustained cultural exchange and translation, producing novel linguistic practices, styles, and identities in Africa and Europe alike. In literary production, hybridity operates as both **theme** and **technique**: writers creatively combine languages, genres, and symbolic systems to resist colonial stereotypes and to re-center indigenous epistemologies. In this sense, hybridity becomes an enabling aesthetic that allows colonized authors to portray native cultures with agency and complexity, while simultaneously exposing and countering colonial subjugation (Adebola, 2024; Salami & Tabari, 2019–2027).

Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is frequently read as a counter-narrative to colonial discourse, depicting Igbo life both **before** European arrival and **during** the disruptive encounter that follows. Critics observe that Achebe’s strategic incorporation of Igbo proverbs, folktales, kinship terms, and ritual discourse within an English narrative constitutes a hybrid form that contests the colonial construction of Africans as “uncivilized” or voiceless (Adebola, 2024; Grönlund, 2–23). Studies approaching the novel from a postcolonial lens consistently foreground themes of ambivalence, mimicry, and hybridity, showing how characters negotiate identity within and against the new order (Olsson, 3–16; Sabrine & Houda, 1–65). This body of work argues that Achebe’s hybrid poetics is not mere ornament; it is a political and epistemic intervention that recenters Igbo culture and reframes African modernity (Grönlund, 2–23; Salami & Tabari, 19–27).

Building on these readings, scholars emphasize that hybridity opens a creative space—Bhabha’s “third space”—from which colonized writers can re-signify dominant codes (Bhabha, 1994). Your observation that “writers become more creative when they interpret different languages and cultures in the same discourse” aligns with analyses showing how code-mixing, generic blending, and orality-infused English enable new modes of expression in African fiction. In *Things Fall Apart*, this manifests in Achebe’s rhythmic prose, proverb density, and narrative reframing of historical encounters, which collectively challenge colonial historiography and allow readers to perceive Igbo social organization, jurisprudence, and spirituality as complex systems rather than as caricatures (Adebola, 2024; Grönlund, 2–23; Sabrine & Houda, 1–65).

While postcolonial theory explains what hybridity means, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) helps reveal how hybridity is *textually constructed*. Halliday's model posits three metafunctions—ideational, interpersonal, and textual—with transitivity (within the ideational metafunction) mapping how experience is represented through processes (material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, existential), participants, and circumstances (Halliday, 1994; Qasim et al., 2022). Transitivity is widely used in discourse analysis to uncover how different linguistic choices encode divergent worldviews and ideologies. Comparative media studies, for example, show that the same event can be construed in contrasting ideological ways through different distributions of process types and participant roles—evidence that language choices are value-laden (Shi & Fan, 330–334; Qasim et al., 95–115). These findings support the present study's methodological premise: if ideology is encoded in transitivity choices, then Achebe's representation of cultural encounter—and by extension, hybridity—should also be observable in his clause structure.

Recent SFL-oriented analyses of *Things Fall Apart* demonstrate the promise of this approach for literary texts. Studies show, for instance, that Okonkwo is frequently associated with material processes (acting, doing, enforcing), which textualize his commitment to traditional authority and masculine prowess, while Nwoye trends toward mental processes (feeling, thinking, perceiving), signaling openness to alternative values and belief systems (Bakare, 2022; Ahmed & Abubakar, 2024). Missionaries and colonial actors often appear as verbal and relational process participants, constructing new networks of meaning (“is,” “becomes,” “says,” “teaches”) that reclassify social roles and moral orders. Such distributions are not accidental; they index how the narrative organizes agency, evaluation, and legitimacy—key levers in the formation of hybrid identities (Ahmed & Abubakar, 2024; Bakare, 2022).

A recurring motif in *Things Fall Apart* is translation—missionaries relying on local interpreters to convey doctrine—producing a practical, everyday hybridity of language and meaning. Scholarship ties this to Bhabha's notion of cultural translation, where meaning is negotiated between asymmetrical power positions (Bhabha, 1994; Usman, 2025). The interpreter's presence foregrounds the intermediate space in which lexis, worldviews, and authority are renegotiated. In transitivity terms, interpreters often mediate verbal processes, redistributing authorial voice and blurring the boundary between message and messenger—an especially fertile site for analyzing how the text encodes contestation and accommodation (Ahmed & Abubakar, 2024; Usman, 2025).

Postcolonial readings have persuasively shown that Achebe's novel pushes back against colonial stereotypes and re-centers Igbo epistemologies (Olssoon, 3–16; Sabrine & Houda, 1–65; Grönlund, 2–23; Salami & Tabari, 19–27). What an SFL-transitivity lens adds is granularity: clause-level patterns make visible how hybridity is linguistically constructed—who gets to *act*, who is made to *sense* or *be*, and how social realities are named and stabilized. This aligns with broader discourse-analytic evidence that linguistic choices materialize ideology (Shi & Fan, 330–334; Qasim et al., 95–115). Bringing these strands together, the present study addresses a clear gap: although hybridity in *Things Fall Apart* has been widely analyzed, few studies integrate a rigorous Hallidayan transitivity analysis to map how hybridity is enacted in the text's grammar (Bakare, 2022; Ahmed & Abubakar, 2024). The study therefore contributes to both postcolonial criticism and linguistic stylistics by demonstrating how Achebe's hybrid poetics is implemented at the level of clause structure.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs Halliday's transitivity framework within the Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) model to analyze Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. The primary data is drawn directly from the novel, and the identified process types are analyzed systematically to examine how Achebe represents cultural hybridity. Traditionally, transitivity has been treated as a syntactic description focusing on verbs and their participants. However, in the framework of SFG, transitivity is conceptualized as a semantic process that represents how language construes human experience and reality (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Through this perspective, transitivity enables researchers to interpret similar events in different ways, revealing how linguistic choices embody worldviews and ideologies. Halliday (1994) classifies language into three metafunctions: textual (clause as message), interpersonal (clause as exchange), and ideational (clause as representation). The ideational metafunction, where transitivity is located, is particularly significant as it allows language users to represent experience by selecting different process types, participants, and circumstances. In this sense, transitivity analysis becomes a methodological tool to uncover the relationship between meaning and wording, highlighting how linguistic structures encode cultural encounters, conflicts, and negotiations (Qasim et al., 2022; Shi & Fan, 2020).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Halliday's transitivity system is composed of six process types: material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal, and existential (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Each process type is realized through three main components: the process itself (typically realized by a verb), the participants involved (realized by nouns or noun phrases), and the circumstances associated with the process (usually expressed through adverbs or prepositional phrases).

- **Material processes** represent actions or events. Here, the *Actor* performs an action, the *Goal* is the entity affected by it, and sometimes a *Recipient* is involved as the receiver of something.
- **Mental processes** represent perception, cognition, or affection. They involve a *Senser* (the conscious participant) and a *Phenomenon* (what is perceived, felt, or thought).
- **Relational processes** deal with states of being, possession, or identification, where participants are typically labeled as *Carrier* and *Attribute*, or *Identified* and *Identifier*.
- **Behavioral processes** combine mental and material aspects and represent physiological or psychological behaviors, such as breathing, dreaming, or smiling.
- **Verbal processes** are communicative acts involving a *Sayer* (who speaks), an *Addressee* (who receives the message), and the *Verbiage* (the content of what is said).
- **Existential processes** represent the existence of an entity, realized by an *Existent* that signifies "what exists."

By applying this theoretical framework, the study demonstrates how Achebe's narrative encodes cultural hybridity at both the linguistic and ideological levels, uncovering the complex interplay between African and European worldviews within the novel.

DATA ANALYSIS

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) foregrounds the struggles of the Igbo people during pre-colonial and colonial encounters with Europeans. The narrative challenges the Eurocentric portrayal of Africans as uncivilized by showcasing Igbo traditions, proverbs, folktales, rituals, and oral literature (Achebe, 1958). Achebe employs a hybrid narrative style, embedding Igbo cultural elements within English, thereby symbolizing cultural hybridity.

From a Hallidayan perspective, hybridity can be systematically studied through transitivity analysis, which examines how language encodes experiences. Halliday (1994) emphasizes that transitivity is not merely a grammatical structure but a semantic process that interprets reality through material, mental, verbal, relational, and existential processes. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe's representation of speech, action, and thought reflects the cultural clash and eventual hybridity of Igbo society.

Material Processes and Cultural Hybridity

Material processes in Halliday's framework refer to actions and events carried out by participants, typically involving an Actor (the doer), a Goal (the affected entity), and sometimes a Recipient. In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, such processes are not merely narrative descriptions of action but become symbolic enactments of cultural hybridity—points at which Igbo traditions and colonial practices either clash, merge, or transform. Achebe deliberately situates material processes at the center of communal, ritual, and colonial encounters to emphasize how cultural hybridity is inscribed through physical acts.

One striking example occurs when Achebe describes the transformation of outcasts under missionary influence:

“The two outcasts (Actor) shaved off (Goal) their hair.” (Achebe, 1958, p. 157).

The act of shaving here is seemingly simple but semantically charged. Within Igbo society, hair held spiritual and cultural significance; shaving it signaled loss of identity, ritual cleansing, or subjugation. In the context of colonial Christianity, however, shaving symbolized renunciation of traditional Igbo identity and the adoption of foreign cultural codes. As a material process, this action represents more than bodily alteration—it embodies cultural hybridity, the crossing from one system of meaning into another, negotiated through physical transformation.

Another culturally embedded action is the ritual of offering kola nut:

“He who brings kola brings life.” (Achebe, 1958, p. 6).

According to the researcher, the Actor is the host, the Goal is the kola nut, and the Recipient is the guest. This material action is embedded in Igbo customs as a ritual of hospitality and blessing. Within Achebe's narrative, kola nut symbolizes respect, unity, and continuity of Igbo culture. Yet, the intrusion of colonial structures gradually disrupts this material process. As Christianity and European institutions eroded communal values, kola rituals became hybridized—retained by some as cultural markers, while dismissed by others as “pagan.” Thus, Achebe demonstrates how material actions, once sacred, become contested spaces where cultural hybridity plays out.

Achebe also highlights colonial arrogance through material avoidance, exemplified in the District Commissioner's response to Okonkwo's death:

“...a District Commissioner must never attend to such undignified details as cutting a hanged man from a tree...” (Achebe, 1958, p. 207).

According to the researcher, the material process is absent by choice—the Commissioner refuses to act. This avoidance underscores colonial detachment and the

refusal to engage in indigenous rituals of honor or mourning. Okonkwo's death thus becomes a symbolic site where colonial material inaction meets Igbo ritual expectations, creating a void of meaning that signifies hybridity. The action not taken is as important as the actions performed, illustrating the asymmetrical power relations encoded in material processes.

Furthermore, Achebe frequently depicts communal labor, farming, and warfare as material processes that reveal Igbo identity. For example, Okonkwo's participation in yam farming is described as:

"Yam stood for manliness, and he who could feed his family on yams from one harvest to another was a very great man indeed." (Achebe, 1958, p. 33).

The Actor here is the farmer, the Goal is yam cultivation, and the Circumstance is communal survival. These material processes define masculinity, honor, and continuity in Igbo culture. Yet, with colonial intrusion, traditional markers of prestige lose meaning, creating hybrid social realities where indigenous material practices compete with Western ones, such as formal schooling or clerical work introduced by missionaries.

Thus, through material processes, Achebe encodes the physical enactments of hybridity—from rituals like kola offering and yam farming that reinforce Igbo identity, to disruptive colonial actions (and inactions) that destabilize it. Halliday's model reveals that these actions are not neutral but ideologically charged, shaping how cultural identities are performed, negotiated, and hybridized in the contact zone between Igbo and colonial worlds.

Verbal Processes and the Negotiation of Identity

In Halliday's framework, verbal processes refer to acts of speaking, declaring, questioning, or narrating, typically involving a Sayer (the speaker), a Receiver (the addressee), and Verbiage (the content of speech). In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, verbal processes play a crucial role in dramatizing how cultural identities are negotiated, resisted, or redefined in the face of colonial intrusion. Unlike material processes, which highlight physical acts of hybridity, verbal processes foreground the discursive and dialogic struggles through which Igbo and colonial values intersect.

One of the most explicit verbal markers of hybridity is found in Nwoye's declaration of allegiance to the Christians:

"I am one of them," replied Nwoye (Sayer) to Obierika (Receiver). (Achebe, 1958, p. 144).

This simple utterance is deeply symbolic. By verbally aligning himself with the missionaries, Nwoye not only renounces his father's expectations but also linguistically inscribes hybridity—he steps outside the Igbo collective identity without fully becoming European. The act of saying here signals both rupture and transition: it demonstrates how verbal choices articulate the hybrid position of individuals caught between conflicting cultural systems.

Achebe also uses verbal processes to dramatize ideological clashes. When the elders reflect on colonial influence, one laments:

"How can he when he does not even speak our tongue? But he says that our customs are bad. The white man is very clever. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart." (Achebe, 1958, p. 176).

According to the researcher, the Sayer (an Igbo elder) addresses a collective audience (Receiver) through evaluative Verbiage. The speech emphasizes how language itself becomes a site of disempowerment: the colonizer lacks Igbo linguistic competence yet

asserts judgment over Igbo culture. The elder's metaphor of the "knife" highlights how verbal judgments destabilize Igbo cohesion. Through these verbal exchanges, Achebe shows how hybridity is not only enacted in physical actions but also negotiated through speech that exposes cultural fractures and the imposition of foreign authority.

Moreover, Achebe foregrounds the significance of proverbs as verbal processes, often repeated as cultural wisdom. Proverbs function as verbal carriers of Igbo tradition:

"Proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten." (Achebe, 1958, p. 7).

According to the researcher, the proverb itself becomes Verbiage—an act of speech that reinforces Igbo cultural identity by rooting language in tradition. However, when colonial discourse delegitimizes such proverbial knowledge as "heathen" or "primitive," hybridity emerges in the contestation of verbal authority. The colonizers' dismissal of Igbo proverbs undermines the symbolic power of traditional verbal processes, forcing the Igbo to negotiate identity in spaces where their linguistic codes are invalidated.

Another instance of hybridity in verbal processes appears in missionary dialogue. The missionary often speaks in moral absolutes, framing Igbo practices as "evil" or "un-Christian." For example, Achebe notes that the converts were told that twins were an "abomination" and that the Igbo must abandon such practices. In these moments, the Sayer (missionary) positions himself as the sole authority of truth, while the Receivers (Igbo listeners) are compelled to negotiate between their cultural worldview and the imposed Christian discourse. Such exchanges reveal how verbal dominance becomes a colonial strategy of cultural erasure, yet also open spaces for hybrid responses, as some Igbo embrace new speech forms while others resist them.

Verbal processes also mark generational and ideological divides within Igbo society. Okonkwo's violent outbursts often contrast with Nwoye's softer, questioning tone. The father's speech is characterized by imperatives and authority, while the son's dialogue reflects uncertainty and eventual defection to Christianity. These conflicting verbal styles reveal hybridity not only between colonizer and colonized but also within the Igbo community itself, where different voices represent different ways of negotiating identity in a hybridized world.

Thus, verbal processes in *Things Fall Apart* are far more than simple acts of communication; they are symbolic performances of hybridity. Through speech, characters align themselves, resist others, or redefine their identities. Halliday's framework illuminates how dialogue functions as a site of power, negotiation, and cultural fracture, making verbal processes central to understanding Achebe's representation of the hybridized colonial encounter.

Mental Processes and Double Consciousness

In Halliday's transitivity framework, mental processes involve perception, cognition, affection, and desire, typically structured around a Senser (the one who feels, thinks, or perceives) and a Phenomenon (that which is felt, thought, or perceived). Unlike material or verbal processes, which dramatize hybridity externally through actions and speech, mental processes bring hybridity into the interior world of consciousness. In Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, these processes are pivotal in exploring how characters experience double consciousness—a fractured awareness of self shaped simultaneously by indigenous Igbo values and colonial impositions.

Nwoye serves as the most prominent example of this inner duality. Achebe writes:

"But there was a young lad who had been captivated... It was the poetry of the new religion, something felt in the marrow." (Achebe, 1958, p. 147).

According to the researcher, Nwoye is the *Senser*, captivated not by reasoned arguments but by the Phenomenon of Christianity's emotional resonance. The phrase "felt in the marrow" highlights the depth of this inner transformation—it is not merely intellectual but deeply affective. This mental process reveals hybridity at the psychological level, as Nwoye negotiates between his Igbo upbringing and the comforting promises of Christian doctrine. His attraction is shaped by pain—the memory of Igbo practices that unsettled him, such as the killing of Ikemefuna and the abandonment of twins. Thus, Nwoye's mental conflict illustrates double consciousness, where the inner self is pulled in two irreconcilable directions.

Similarly, Achebe presents Obierika as a reflective thinker whose mental processes articulate Igbo rationality and critique. For example:

"Fortunately, among these people a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father." (Achebe, 1958, p. 7).

According to the researcher, Obierika is the *Senser* engaging in a cognitive process, contemplating the fairness and rationality of Igbo customs. The Phenomenon of his reflection resists colonial stereotypes that portray Africans as irrational or primitive. By embedding such mental processes in his narrative, Achebe destabilizes colonial discourse and asserts the intellectual dignity of Igbo society. At the same time, Obierika's tendency toward questioning tradition—especially in later reflections on Okonkwo's downfall—demonstrates hybridity within Igbo thought itself. He embodies the internal negotiation between cultural loyalty and critical distance, another layer of double consciousness.

Achebe also employs mental processes to highlight the pain of cultural dissonance. For instance, Okonkwo's internal torment after his son's conversion reveals a mental conflict rooted in both personal and cultural loss. Though not always expressed in words, Achebe signals Okonkwo's internal despair:

Okonkwo "was deeply grieved" when Nwoye joined the Christians, and "he could return fire for fire, but what he could not bear was the thought of his son sitting with effeminate men listening to a foolish talk." (Achebe, 1958, p. 151).

Okonkwo, as the *Senser*, experiences grief and anger as the Phenomenon of his son's perceived betrayal. The mental process here dramatizes the tragic dimension of hybridity: the colonizer's presence fractures even the most intimate bonds of family. His inability to reconcile these emotions intensifies his rigidity, ultimately pushing him toward self-destruction.

Furthermore, Achebe extends mental processes to collective reflection, particularly when Igbo elders contemplate the disruption of their society. Their internalized doubts and anxieties signify the intrusion of hybridity into communal consciousness. For instance, their questioning of why the white man is allowed to stay, despite being an outsider, reflects not only political disempowerment but also the erosion of mental certainty. In these collective thought processes, Achebe shows hybridity operating at the level of cultural psychology.

Thus, mental processes in *Things Fall Apart* illustrate how colonial encounters are not only enacted in external actions or speech but also deeply inscribed in the interior lives of characters. Nwoye's spiritual longing, Obierika's critical reflections, and Okonkwo's grief all dramatize forms of double consciousness, where the self is perpetually negotiating between tradition and transformation. Achebe uses these processes to portray hybridity as an internal struggle, emphasizing that colonialism does not only reshape societies but also fractures the very consciousness of individuals who inhabit

those societies.

Existential Processes and the Transformation of Beliefs

In Halliday's framework, **existential processes** serve to indicate that something exists, has presence, or is real within the discourse. Unlike material or mental processes, which deal with actions or thoughts, existential clauses construct the very **ontology of a culture**—they affirm or deny the presence of beliefs, customs, or entities. In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe strategically deploys existential processes to reveal how Igbo traditions and worldviews are both affirmed and destabilized under colonial intrusion. These moments are crucial in dramatizing hybridity because they capture not only what "is" in Igbo culture but also what ceases to exist under colonial disruption.

A stark example of existential meaning occurs in the aftermath of Okonkwo's death:

"It is an abomination for a man to take his own life. ...a man who commits it will not be buried by his clansmen. His body is evil." (Achebe, 1958, p. 207).

According to the researcher, the existential statement establishes the presence of taboo in Igbo cosmology: suicide "is" forbidden, and the body of one who commits it "is" unclean. This construction reaffirms Igbo spiritual codes, yet the act itself—Okonkwo's suicide—collapses the boundary of belief. The existential reality of taboo is confronted with the existential reality of colonial disruption: the colonial system leaves Okonkwo powerless, forcing him into an act his culture deems unthinkable. Thus, Achebe uses existential processes to dramatize hybridity as tragic contradiction, where Igbo identity and colonial domination cannot coexist without rupturing the individual.

Another illuminating instance occurs in Achebe's depiction of traditional rites:

"A man's life from birth to death was a series of transition rites which brought him nearer and nearer to his ancestors." (Achebe, 1958, p. 122).

This existential construction foregrounds the continuity of existence as a cultural truth in Igbo cosmology. Life "was" not random or secular but ordered through rituals that affirmed connection with ancestors. The existential framing here asserts that Igbo culture perceives human life as sacred progression rather than linear individualism. Yet, under colonial rule, this existential worldview is disrupted. Christianity denies the existence of ancestral bonds, reframing existence through salvation and damnation. Achebe's use of existential processes therefore captures the tension between two systems of being: the cyclical ontology of Igbo tradition and the linear teleology of Christian doctrine.

Existential processes also highlight the erosion of cultural institutions under colonial pressure. When Achebe notes that "there was a church in Mbanta, and it was growing strong" (Achebe, 1958, p. 149), the existential "there was" signals the undeniable presence of a foreign institution within Igbo land. The simple assertion of existence underscores hybridity: the cohabitation of Igbo shrines and Christian churches, each claiming ontological authority, destabilizes the cultural landscape. Such coexistence points to hybridity not as simple blending but as a fraught negotiation of parallel existences.

Furthermore, existential processes are central to the disappearance of traditions. The narrator observes how some Igbo customs no longer held sway as converts abandoned communal rituals. The absence of participation—the fact that "there were no longer enough men to practice certain ceremonies"—illustrates hybridity through nonexistence. What "was" central in Igbo life ceases to "be," replaced by colonial practices. In this way, absence itself becomes a marker of cultural transformation.

Achebe's reliance on existential clauses emphasizes that hybridity is not only a matter

of action, speech, or thought but also of ontological presence and erasure. Through these processes, the novel records both the affirmation of Igbo traditions and their simultaneous displacement by Christianity and colonial governance. In other words, existential processes dramatize hybridity as the struggle over what *is allowed to exist* within a colonized society.

Halliday's transitivity framework enables a systematic unpacking of Achebe's representation of cultural hybridity in *Things Fall Apart*. Through **material, verbal, mental, and existential processes**, Achebe demonstrates how Igbo traditions are disrupted, negotiated, and hybridized under colonial influence. Actions such as shaving hair, utterances like Nwoye's declaration, feelings of religious attraction, and existential beliefs about suicide collectively illustrate the hybridity of identity.

Achebe gives "voice to the voiceless" by embedding Igbo traditions into English narrative structure, while also capturing the painful cultural transformations caused by colonialism. Thus, hybridity in *Things Fall Apart* emerges not only at the level of cultural representation but also through the linguistic choices of transitivity that encode the **Igbo struggle between preservation and transformation**.

Conclusion

This research has demonstrated that Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* inscribes cultural hybridity at multiple linguistic levels through the application of Halliday's transitivity analysis. Material processes reflect the enactment of hybridity through rituals, physical actions, and colonial interventions, showing how Igbo traditions are transformed in contact with Western practices. Verbal processes illustrate the negotiation of identity, as speech acts and proverbs become sites of tension between indigenous and colonial worldviews. Mental processes reveal the inner conflicts of characters, particularly Nwoye and Okonkwo, whose divided consciousness embodies the psychological impact of hybridity. Existential processes, finally, dramatize the presence and erasure of Igbo beliefs, highlighting the ontological disruption brought about by Christianity and colonial governance.

Through these findings, the study fulfills its objectives of revealing how Achebe linguistically encodes hybridity and challenges colonial stereotypes. Achebe gives voice to the colonized by portraying the Igbo not as "uncivilized," as colonial discourse often suggested, but as active agents whose traditions, values, and consciousness undergo transformation under colonial rule. By bridging systemic functional linguistics and postcolonial literary studies, this research offers a fresh perspective on *Things Fall Apart*—showing that Achebe's resistance to colonial discourse is not only thematic but embedded in the very linguistic choices of the novel.

WORKS CITED AND CONSULTED

- Adebola, M. (2024). Cultural, religious, and linguistic hybridity in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. *Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 12(3), 45–59.
- Achebe, C. (1958). *Things fall apart*. Heinemann.
- Ahmed, A., & Abubakar, S. (2024). A transitivity analysis of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*, 21(2), 45–55.
- Bakare, J. (2022). *Transitivity and characterisation in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart* (Master's thesis). University of Lagos.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. Routledge.
- Bikic, A. (2022). The intertextual relation of *My Dark Vanessa* and Nabokov's *Lolita*. [Bachelor's thesis].
- Bordo, S. (1993). *Unbearable weight: Feminism, Western culture, and the body*. University of California Press.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.
- Fanon, F. (1963). *The wretched of the earth*. Grove Press.
- Grönlund, M. (2020). Eastern Nigeria at the crossroads of culture: Cultural hybridity in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* [Bachelor's thesis, Faculty of Education and Business Studies, Department of Humanities]. *Essays.se*.
<https://www.essays.se/essay/7afd47126f/>
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1994). *An introduction to functional grammar* (2nd ed.). Edward Arnold.
- Olssoon, M. (2010). *Colonial legacies: Ambivalence, mimicry and hybridity in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Louise Erdrich's Tracks* [Bachelor's thesis]. Uppsala University.
- Qasim, H. M., Khan, A., & Rehman, S. (2020). An appraisal–Transitivity analysis of editorials on the results of general elections–2018 in Pakistan. *Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 8(2), 15–34.
<https://www.numl.edu.pk/journals/subjects/1602166900JRSS-7.pdf>
- Qasim, M., Khan, A., & Rehman, S. (2022). Halliday's metafunctions of language: A review. *International Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, 9(1), 55–64.
- Russell, K. E. (2020). *My Dark Vanessa*. William Morrow.
- Sabrine, R., & Houda, G. (2018). *Cultural hybridity in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart* [Master's dissertation, Echahid Hamma Lakhdar University, Eloued]. *Dspace@Univ Eloued*.
<http://dspace.univ-eloued.dz/bitstream/123456789/763/1/memoir.pdf>
- Salami, A., & Tabari, B. (2018). Things Fall Apart and Chinua Achebe's postcolonial discourse. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature*, 6(3), 19–27.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323915487_Things_Fall_Apart_and_Chinua_achebe's_Postcolonial_Discourse
- Shi, W., & Fan, M. (2019). Critical discourse analysis of news texts from transitivity perspective. *EAS Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, 1(5), 330–334.
https://easpublisher.com/media/articles/EASJHCS_15_330-334_c.pdf
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 271–313). University of Illinois Press.
- Usman, F. (2025). Navigating cultural hybridity: The conflict between Igbo and colonial structures in *Things Fall Apart*. *Journal of African Literature and Theory*, 17(1), 88–102.