

Post-Colonial Critique in Nigeria and its disillusionment: A Speech Act Analysis of Chinua Achebe's *There was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*

Ajala Adeola Toyosi Ph.D.¹, Oluwasanmi Olaolu Peter², Adeyanju Adewumi Raphael³, Adebagbo Adebajo⁴

¹Kings University, Odeomu, Nigeria

²Durban University of Technology, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa

^{3,4}Adeleke University, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria

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*Corresponding Author: Ajala Adeola Toyosi Ph.D.

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Abstract

Original Research Article

This study examined the post-colonial disillusionment in Nigeria through a critical analysis of Chinua Achebe's *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*. Employing Speech Act, Trauma and Identity theories as analytical frameworks, the research explored how Achebe's narrative enunciates the complexities of identity and historical trauma within the context of Nigeria's post-colonial setting. Drawing mainly on J.L. Austin's (1962), John Searle's (1969) and Bach and Harnish's (1979) Speech Act Theory, the study explores how Achebe's performative and constative utterances communicate historical grievances, political betrayal, and socio-cultural breakdown during and after the Nigerian-Biafran War. The study further employs Cathy Caruth's (1996) Trauma Theory to examine how national trauma is encoded in Achebe's personal and collective narrative, while Stuart Hall's (1990) Identity Theory gives more understanding on the fragmented post-colonial Nigerian identity as reflected in the author's ideological expressions. The study analysed how Achebe uses language not only to narrate, but to perform critical socio-political actions such as expressing his grievances, asserting facts, describing situations, ascribing blames, informing the public to mention few. This was achieved using thirty-one extracted excerpts from Chinua Achebe's *There Was a Country*. Through qualitative content and quantitative analysis, key speech acts such as expressive, assertive, and informative were identified and examined within the context of historical and political discourse. The study revealed that Achebe's language choices reflect a deep sense of disillusionment with post-independence Nigeria, stressing the failure of nationalism, ethnic reconciliation, and governance.

Keywords: Post-Colonial Disillusionment, Speech Act, Trauma, Identity, Biafra War

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INTRODUCTION

The post-colonial assessment in Nigeria exposes a complex tapestry of disillusionment in the aftermath of colonial rule and the Nigerian-Biafran War. Chinua Achebe's *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* is a poignant reflection of this disparagement connected with the multifaceted identity struggles and historical traumas faced by the Nigerians. Using a Speech Act analysis, this study explores how Achebe's narrative employs language as a transformative tool to narrate and reveal the unfathomable societal grievances and failures of governance in post-independence Nigeria. The study examines the constatives and performative utterances within Achebe's work to express disappointment, resistance,

hope, and a call to action. Achebe also uses his memoir to uncover the intricate dynamics of blame, justice, and memory that permeate the post-colonial experience. This exploration not only highlights Achebe's critical engagement with historical events, but also invites a broader understanding of the socio-political scenery in Nigeria. This consequently gives insights into the lasting impacts of colonialism and ethnic conflict on national identity and collective memory.

Chinua Achebe was a renowned Nigerian writer, critic, and scholar, widely regarded as the father of modern African literature. He was born on November 16, 1930, in Ogidi, southeastern Nigeria. Achebe gained international acclaim with his debut novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958), which challenged

colonial narratives and portrayed African societies with depth and dignity. His literary works often explore themes of cultural conflict, identity, colonialism, and post-colonial disillusionment. Achebe was not only a novelist but also a committed intellectual who used his writings to confront social injustices and advocate for political accountability in Nigeria. As a professor and public intellectual, he influenced generations of African writers and thinkers. His works, including *Arrow of God*, *No Longer at Ease*, and *There Was a Country*, reveal his deep concern for Nigeria's political instability and moral decay. Achebe's legacy remains powerful, as his voice continues to shape discourses on African identity, literature, and nationhood.

The research explores predominant types of speech acts in the text and how they communicate socio-political assessment. The objectives are to identify and analyse the speech acts used by Achebe and to interpret their roles in articulating post-colonial disillusionment. The study is significant for its contribution to pragmatics, discourse analysis, and African literature. It is delimited to selected excerpts from *There Was a Country*, focusing specifically on Speech Act Theory without broader theoretical comparisons.

Political Reflection in Chinua Achebe's *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*

There Was a Country by Chinua Achebe is a personal and historical narrative of the Nigerian-Biafran War. The work is a memoir, political commentary, and cultural reflection of the Nigerian society before and after the civil war. It also captures Achebe's experiences during the conflict while critiquing Nigeria's post-colonial failures, leadership crises, and the consequences of ethnic division. The Nigerian-Biafra War (1967–1970) was a devastating civil conflict triggered by ethnic tensions, political instability, and economic disparities following Nigeria's independence in 1960. The immediate cause was the secession of the southeastern region, dominated by the Igbo ethnic group, which declared itself the Republic of Biafra under Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu (Michael, Duyile and Uzoma 2020).

Oyewo, (2019) stated that the session followed widespread massacres of Igbos in northern Nigeria and dissatisfaction with the federal government's structure. The war led to immense humanitarian crises, including famine and civilian deaths. It exposed deep-rooted ethnic divisions and highlighted the failures of Nigeria's post-colonial leadership in managing unity, justice, and equitable development (Harnischfeger, 2019).

Nigeria's post-colonial practice has been marred by political instability, corruption, and ethnic conflict, leading to widespread disillusionment. Obikaeze, Adebogun and Enapeh (2023) stated that the post-colonial Nigerian state has experienced series of internal political altercations and challenges due to the consistent and persistent behavioural patterns of the political elites (p.1). Chinua Achebe's *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* is a powerful narrative

of these challenges, through his account of the Nigerian-Biafran War. However, there is a gap in scholarly attention to how Achebe's language functions as a tool of critique and resistance within the framework of Speech Act Theory. This study seeks to investigate how Achebe uses speech acts to reflect and construct post-colonial disillusionment in Nigeria.

Relevance of Postcolonial Discourse in African literature

Postcolonial discourse in African literature is crucial for understanding the historical and cultural experiences of African societies in the aftermath of colonialism. It is a framework through which African authors cross-examine the persistent effects of colonial rule, such as identity crisis, cultural dislocation, language imposition, and socio-political instability. Through postcolonial narratives, writers such as Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie engage with themes of resistance, decolonization, and the reclamation of indigenous voices and values. However, postcolonial discourse challenge Eurocentric representations of Africa and assert the continent's agency in shaping its own history, culture, and destiny.

Postcolonial discourse is an avenue for African literature to explore the complex realities of modern African with neocolonialism, leadership crises, and internal conflicts. It bridges the past with the present, giving readers the opportunity to understand how colonial legacies continue to influence contemporary African societies (Mzali, 2011). The discourse also emphasizes the importance of language in resisting domination and preserving indigenous information. Ultimately, postcolonial African literature is not only a tool for historical revision and cultural affirmation, but also, as a platform for socio-political critique and advocacy for justice, equity, and self-determination in a postcolonial world.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in three interrelated theoretical perspectives: Speech Act Theory, Trauma Theory, and Identity Theory. Drawing mainly from Austin (1962), Searle (1969) and Bach and Harnish's (1979), Speech Act Theory is a suitable linguistic basis for analysing Achebe's use of performative and constative utterances to express political disillusionment, historical facts, and emotional responses. Through illocutionary acts such as assertives, expressives, informatives to mention few, Achebe's narrative becomes a medium of socio-political action. Cathy Caruth's (1996) Trauma Theory provides another framework to examine the inscription of collective and personal trauma resulting from the Nigerian-Biafran War, emphasising how past horrors persist in national consciousness. Complementing this, Stuart Hall's (1990) Identity Theory explains the fragmented, unstable post-colonial Nigerian identity as depicted in Achebe's ideological expressions. These three theories enable a nuanced exploration of how language and identity interact in Achebe's *There Was a Country* to reflecting the enduring impact of colonialism and civil conflict on Nigeria's socio-political scene.

Theoretical Review

This study is anchored in three interrelated theoretical frameworks: Speech Act Theory, Identity Theory, and Trauma Theory, all of which provide insightful perspectives for analysing Chinua Achebe's *There Was a Country*.

Speech Act Theory, originally developed by Austin (1962) and later revised by John Searle (1969), posits that language is not merely descriptive, but performative utterances can function as actions. According to (Ajala, 2025, p.2462a), "speech acts refer to the actions performed through language. It highlights the fact that speech is not solely about transmitting information, but also about performing various social functions. Austin classified speech acts into three categories: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary. He further differentiates among locutionary (the act of saying something), illocutionary (the intention behind the utterance), and perlocutionary (the effect on the listener) acts. Searle expanded this by categorising speech acts into assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Austin (1962) proposes a classification of illocutionary acts into Verdictives, Exercitives, Commissives, Behavities, and Expositives. In 1975, Searle also set up the following classification of speech acts: Representatives (acts that commit a speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition, e.g. reciting a creed.), Directives, Commissives (promises and oaths), Expressive (speech acts that express the speaker's attitudes and emotions towards the proposition, e.g. congratulations, excuses, and thanks) and Declaratives. He (Searle) later incorporated direct and indirect speech acts into his Speech Act Theory. A direct speech act is when the encoder's intention matches the literal meaning of the utterance (Ajala, 2025b). For example, saying "Shut the door" is a direct request. In contrast, an indirect speech act occurs when the speaker implies something beyond the literal expression, such as "It's cold in here" to request that the door be closed. Indirect speech acts rely heavily on context, shared knowledge, and inference. Searle emphasized that while both forms can achieve the same communicative goals, indirect speech acts reflect the complexity and subtlety of human communication, often employed for politeness, strategy, or social harmony.

Bach and Harnish's (1979) perspective of illocutionary acts evolved Constatives (Assertives, Predictives, Retrodictives, Descriptives, Ascriptives, Informatives, Confirmatives, Concessives, Retractivives, Disputatives, Responsives, Suggestives, Supportives), Directives (Requestives, Questions, Requirements, Prohibitives, Permissives, Advisories), Commissives (promises, offers) and Acknowledgement (apologize, condole, congratulate, thank, accept, reject). Austin (1962) proposes a classification of illocutionary acts into Verdictives, Exercitives, Commissives, Behavities, and Expositives (Ajala, 2025).

In a postcolonial context, such as Achebe's, speech acts become tools for ideological resistance, criticism, and political engagement. It enables the narrator to assert historical facts,

express personal and collective grief, and inform or persuade audiences about the realities of post-independence Nigeria.

Identity Theory as articulated by Hall (1990), stresses the fluid, constructed, and context-dependent nature of identity. Hall maintains that postcolonial identities are often fragmented, shaped by histories of displacement, colonialism, and cultural hybridity. Achebe's memoir reveals a struggle to reconcile national, ethnic, and personal identities within a shattered Nigerian state. His reflections depict identity not as fixed but as continuously negotiated within the tensions of memory, ethnicity, and nationalism.

Hall's (1990) theory of identity emphasizes that identity is not fixed but constructed through cultural representation, discourse, and history. Key analytical tools include representation, where language and symbols shape meanings (Ajala and Alayinde, 2025); hybridity, which reflects the ambivalent nature of postcolonial identities; and positioning, where individuals negotiate their place within dominant socio-political narratives. Hall also highlights the fragmentation and fluidity of identity, calling attention to internal contradictions and shifts over time. Importantly, identity is deeply rooted in historical and political contexts, especially the enduring effects of colonialism and migration. These elements collectively underscore identity as dynamic, contested, and continually in formation (Hall, 1990; Hall, 1996).

Trauma Theory, especially in Caruth's (1996) framework, provides tools for understanding how traumatic events are represented and relived through narrative. Toksöz, (2024) describes trauma as an overwhelming experience that resists full representation, often recurring belatedly through fragmented expressions. Achebe's depiction of the Biafran War exemplifies this, as he narrates national trauma intertwined with personal grief and historical disillusionment, revealing the deep psychological and societal scars left by war.

Caruth's (1996) Trauma Theory centres on the idea that trauma is not simply an event that happens, but an experience that overwhelms the mind's capacity to fully process it at the moment it occurs. Key tools for analysing trauma in her framework include latency, which refers to the delay between the traumatic event and the subject's ability to narrate or comprehend it, and repetition or haunting, where the trauma returns involuntarily through flashbacks, dreams, or fragmented narratives. Another crucial element is the unpalatability of trauma, where the subject struggles to articulate the full extent of their suffering, revealing gaps and silences in the narrative. These tools help scholars identify how trauma shapes identity and historical memory, especially in postcolonial or conflict-based narratives where collective wounds are deeply embedded (Caruth, 1996).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is a qualitative content analysis aided by descriptive quantitative elements to explore the post-colonial

disillusionment in Nigeria as portrayed in Chinua Achebe's *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*. The primary material for analysis was the memoir itself, from which thirty-one purposeful excerpts were extracted based on their linguistic, ideological, and thematic significance. These excerpts were analysed using the theoretical frameworks of Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), Trauma Theory (Caruth, 1996), and Identity Theory (Hall, 1990). The speech acts (Illocutions) were identified and categorized

according to their communicative functions in the socio-political context of Nigeria's postcolonial experience. Data were coded and interpreted thematically to uncover how Achebe's language constructs national trauma, critiques governance, and articulates fractured identity. The analysis combined close textual reading with theoretical insights to reveal how Achebe's memoir functions as both narrative and socio-political intervention.

Data Presentation of Data and Analysis

Table 1: The presuppositions in the memoir via the existing common ground.

Locutionary acts (Choice of Expression)	Illocutionary Acts	Common Ground (Background Information/Knowledge)			Overall message of the Encoder.
		Presupposition	MCBs	General Knowledge	
1. The neighbour reported this incident to the menfolk, who then exaggerated the "insult to our traditions". But mother insisted that she had every right to pick the fruit, particularly from a tree in her own compound. I did not think up to that moment that my mother was a fighter. There was a pressure to punish my mother, though it did not go anywhere in the end.	Expressive/ Expositive/ Narratives.	The writer takes it for granted that the readers know the incidence he is referring to, i.e. "The Kola nut incident", where the writer's mother was plucking Kola nut in her own compound. It is also presupposed that the decoders know what the "insult to traditions" entails. Kola nut is a sacred fruit with a very distinct and distinguished role to play in Igbo life and culture, and therefore, traditionally, no one was allowed to pluck from the kola nut tree. They were supposed to ripen, fall and then be collected from the ground and by men, not by women.	Chinua Achebe's magical years (childhood experience) and the Igbo tradition.	A tradition is a belief or behaviour passed down within a group or society with symbolic meaning or special significance with origins in the past.	Every generation must recognize and embrace the task it is peculiarly designed by history and by providence to perform.
2. But things were simpler and safer in those days, and there was never a story of child abductions or any unsavoury incidents that I can recall.	Expressive/ Assertive/ Informative.	It is presupposed that the decoders know that unlike those days when everywhere was peaceful and safe, nowadays, insecurity, corruptions insurgencies are the order of the day. A typical example is the case of the over two hundred secondary school girls abducted in Chibok, Bornu state.	Educational context.	Nigeria today is characterized by insecurity and Boko Haram insurgency.	Child abduction and Savory incidents are now prevalent in Nigeria.

<p>3. In those days, men like Okongwu, who had the means, sent family members abroad to advance their education with the hope that they would return and improve the standard of living of their family and community.</p>	<p>Expressive/ Informative.</p>	<p>It is presupposed that the decoders know who Okongwu is. Okongwu was a pillar of the Igbo community. During Okongwu's time, he was extensively admired for his achievements in education. He was a generous man who sponsored a number of children in various schools in Nigeria and abroad.</p>	<p>A primary exposure (Educational context).</p>	<p>Education is the best legacy.</p>	<p>Education is important in life because it gives people the skills and tools they need to navigate the world.</p>
<p>4. Between these four schools – King's, Queen's, Umuahia and Ibadan – we had some of the very best secondary schools in the British Empire. As a group, these schools were better endowed financially, had excellent amenities and were staffed with first-rate teachers, custodians, instructors and librarians. Of course, today, under Nigerian control, these schools have fallen into disrepair, and are nothing like they were in their heyday.</p>	<p>Expressive/ informative/ Expositive/ Assertive.</p>	<p>It is taken for granted that the readers know the four schools in question. These schools are Government College, Umuahia, Government College Ibadan, King's College, Lagos and Queen's College, Lagos.</p>	<p>The formative years at Umuahia and Ibadan (Educational context).</p>	<p>Generally, the standard of education in Nigeria has dropped.</p>	<p>Education is the fulcrum of the nation's development. It is the foundation upon which all other sectors are built. If the foundation is faulty, what can the righteous do? The foundation of Nigerian's education is weak and if nothing is done to rebuild it, the hope of the unborn children cannot be guaranteed.</p>
<p>5. While African languages and writing should be developed, nurtured and preserved, I would wonder later, would I have been able to communicate with so many boys from different parts of the country and ethnic groups speaking different languages had we not been taught one language?</p>	<p>Expressive/ Ascriptive.</p>	<p>It is taken for granted that the decoders know that the language being referred to is the English language.</p>	<p>The Umuahia experience.</p>	<p>English language is the lingua franca in Nigeria.</p>	<p>English language is a neutral language that accommodates and represents every lexical item in every language. It is a universal language when it comes to globalization. It also plays a key role in ethnic equitability and tolerance when it comes to communication that involves two or more groups.</p>
<p>6. After graduation, I did not have to worry about where I would go next. The system was so well organised that as we left university, most of us were instantly absorbed into civil service, academia, business or industry. I went home to</p>	<p>Expressive/ Informative/ Narratives.</p>	<p>It is taken for granted that the decoders know the situation of the country today (Unemployment is rampant among the youths).</p>	<p>The Ibadan experience.</p>	<p>There is economic recession in Nigeria.</p>	<p>Unemployment and underemployment are prevalent issues in Nigeria.</p>

my village at the end of the holiday and visited a secondary school within my district,					
7. The good luck was that at that point in my career, I was working very closely with a British BBC Talks producer, Angela Beattie. Beattie was seconded to the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation for which she served as head of our two-person department. She was the head of Talks..... It was to Beattie that I now went to and told my story about British typing agency. Ms. Angela Beattie was shocked – she was a no- nonsense person. “Give me their names and addresses” she insisted.	Expressive/ Informative/ Descriptives/ Narratives.	The presupposition here is that Angela Beattie was a British, former BBC Head of Talks, producer and a woman who has the power to influence the processing of Achebe’s manuscript.	Discovering the manuscript; <i>Things Fall Apart</i> .	<i>Things Fall Apart</i> is a post-colonial novel written by the Nigerian author, Chinua Achebe in 1958. It is seen as the archetypal modern African novel in English, one of the first to receive global critical acclaim.	Publishing <i>Things Fall Apart</i> was not an easy task for the author (Chinua Achebe) of the novel.
8. I took along my typed manuscript, hoping to bump into a number of writers and publishers who could provide me with some advice about how best to get the book published.	Expressive/ Narratives.	It is taken for granted that the decoders know that the typed manuscript and the book being referred to is the novel <i>Things Fall Apart</i> .	Discovering the manuscript <i>Things Fall Apart</i> .	<i>Things Fall Apart</i> is a post-colonial novel written by Chinua Achebe.	Chinua Achebe made some efforts before his manuscripts; <i>Things Fall Apart</i> was published.
9. It has often been said that my generation was a very lucky one.	Expressive.	It is presupposed that the decoders know that the encoder is referring to the twentieth century since the former was born on the 16 th of November, 1930.	A lucky generation.	The pace of change in Nigeria from the 1940s was incredible in the aspect of development, villages transforming to towns, modern comforts such as electricity, running water etc.	Achebe’s generation witnessed the crucial economic history of Nigeria i.e. colonialism, slave trade, indirect rule, independence and the Nigerian civil war.
10. I am not justifying colonialism. But is important to face the fact that the British colonies, more or less, were expertly run. There was a distinct order during this time.... I recall the day I travelled from Lagos to Ibadan and stayed with Christopher Okigbo that evening. I took off again the next morning, driving alone, going all the way from Lagos to Asaba.....	Expressive/ Assertive/ Ascriptives/ Informative.	It is presupposed that the readers know that the situation of the country today is nothing to write home about compared with when the British government was in control. It is also taken for granted that the decoders know that rape, abductions, corruption, misappropriation of funds, armed robbery attacks, etc. are prevalent in Nigeria today, which were not experienced during the colonial rule.	The cradle of Nigerian Nationalism.	The colonial masters, majorly the Europeans invaded Nigeria in the 19 th century, displaced the culture and traditions of Nigeria and replaced it with modernization and all sorts of positive and negative changes in the areas of religion, traditions, work of arts, dressings, marriages, etc.	Democracy which is a means for the people to choose their leaders and hold their leaders accountable for their policies in office is a failure in Nigeria.

11. By the time I became a young adult, Obafemi Awolowo had emerged as one of Nigerians dominant political figures.	Expressive/ Assertive/ Informative.	Achebe presuppose that the readers know that chief Obafemi Awolowo was a Nigerian nationalist, a political participant in the struggle for Nigerian independence.	The cradle of Nigerian Nationalism.	Chief Obafemi Awolowo is the founder of the Obafemi Awolowo University established in 1962 in Ile-Ife. The founder is also known as the undisputed hero of the Yorubas, and a tribe of Nigeria whose wartime policy of starvation and currency change helped kill the Biafran dream.	The post-colonial era of Nigeria history was dominated by three actors, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and Ahmadu Bello.
12. Sir Ahmadu Bello was able to control Northern Nigeria politically by feeding on the fears of the ruling Emirs and a small elite group of Western-educated Northerners.	Expressive/ Informative/ Behabitive (Accusatory).	It is presupposed that the readers know how important Ahmadu Bello was to the Northerners. He was a Nigerian politician who was the first and only premier of the Northern Nigeria region.	The cradle of Nigeria Nationalism.	Ahmadu Bello, the Sardana of Sokoto was the architect of the development of the northern Nigeria. He, together with Azikiwe and Awolowo fought for the independence of Nigeria. He (Ahmadu Bello) was one of the three selected to represent the North at the drafting committee for the new Macpherson constitution in 1951.	Sir Ahmadu Bello emerged as the most powerful politician in the Northern region.
13. The British were aware of the inter-ethnic tensions and posturing for power among the three main groups.	Expressive/ Assertive.	It is taken for granted that the readers know that Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo are the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria.	The cradle of Nigeria Nationalism.	Nigeria a country viewed as a multi-national state, as it is inhabited by over five hundred ethnic groups, of which the three largest are the Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. These ethnic groups speak over five hundred different languages and are identified with wide varieties of cultures.	Ethnicity is one of the features of the post-colonial rule in Nigeria.
14. While this quiet transition was happening, a number of internal jobs, especially the senior management positions began to open up for Nigerians, particularly for those with university education.	Expressive/ Informative.	It is taken for granted that the readers know what "this quiet transition" means.	The post-independence Nigeria.	Post-colonialism is an intellectual direction that exists since around the middle of the 20 th century. It developed from and mainly refers to the time after colonialism.	There were major internal changes in Nigeria after the independence. These changes include changes in the system of governance, trade, orientation, ideology, etc.
15. I knew that the book was going to be problematic for me because of its criticism of Nigerian politics – very severe criticism. The novel, after all, climaxes in a military coup.	Expressive/ Assertive/ Informative.	It is presupposed that the decoders know that the book in question is <i>A Man of the People</i> .	The January 15, 1966 Coup.	<i>A Man of the People</i> (1966) is the fourth novel by Chinua Achebe. The book ends with a military coup, similar to the real-life Coups of Johnson Aguyi Ironsi, Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu and Yakubu Gowon.	Corruption is a persistent phenomenon in Nigeria. It is the greatest form of human right violation, official misuse of funds and resources. In short, Nigerian politics is corrupt.

16. For about a week, lying hidden in Mr. Cawson's house in Lagos, I still simply thought that things had temporarily gotten out of hand and that everything would soon be all right.... I arranged to smuggle Christie and the children out of Lagos on a Cargo ship from the port.	Expressive/ Informative/ Narratives.	It is taken for granted that the readers know why Achebe and his family members turned to fugitives in their own country.	The dark days.	The Nigerian civil war which lasted for over a period of thirty months (6 th of July, 1967 to 15 th of January, 1970), was a war fought to counter the secession of Biafra from Nigeria. Biafra represented nationalist aspirations of the then Eastern Nigeria now South-East and South regions, whose leadership felt they could no longer coexist with the Northern dominated federal government.	The Nigerian civil war was a brutal one which took many lives and damaged many properties.
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Table 2: The Illocutionary acts, Implicatures, Intention behind the acts, and their Pragmatic functions in the memoir.

Utterance Acts (Choice of Expression)	Illocutionary Acts	Implicatures	Mode of Communication	Intended Message
17. There was a strong sense that Nigeria was no longer habitable for the Igbo and many other peoples from Eastern Nigeria.... That Epiphany made us civilized that Nigeria "did not belong we" as Liberians would put it.	Expressive/ Expositive/ Informative.	- The Igbos and other Easterners were not seen as full-fledged members of the Nigerian family. - The Igbos and the non-Igbos were co-habiting peacefully before the clamour for political emancipation of the Igbos	An indirect illocutionary act of justifying the Igbos' struggle for political emancipation.	To let the readers know the predicaments of the Igbos and the people from the Eastern Nigeria. A situation which consequently informed Ojukwu's decision: A clamour for a separate political participation in the Nigerian politics.
18. Nigerian's position on Biafra as I understand it, was hinged on the premise that if Biafra was allowed to secede, then a number of other ethnic nationalities within Nigeria would follow suit. The Nigerian government, therefore, had to block Biafra's secession to prevent dissolution of Nigeria.	Informative/ Expositive/ Expressive.	The Igbos' agitation for Biafra is justified and inevitable, but the Federal Government's disapproval is because of its selfish reasons and benefits.	An indirect illocutionary act of justifying Igbos' struggle for a political emancipation, as well as condemning the federal government for being inconsiderate.	The Nigerian government is inherently wicked, inhumane and self-centered. The government did not care about the welfare of the masses.
19. Most African countries adhered to the doctrines of the 107civilization of African unity, which supported Nigeria for the same reasons espoused by the great powers "Allowing Biafra to secede would result in the 107civilizations107107 of the entire continent". There were a few prominent nations in Africa that openly declared support for the Biafran cause for humanitarian, ethical and moral reasons.	Expressive/ Expositive/ Disputative/ Informative/ Representatives.	There were controversial views and opinion about the Igbos' agitation for Biafra independence.	A direct illocutionary act of condemning the federal government.	To let his readers know how heartless, self-centred and desperate the Nigerian government was.

<p>20. The leader of the influential civil right group, Roy Wilkins, implored the Nigerians especially to be more humane in their treatment of the Biafrans. He made a moral argument to end the food blockage by reminding Gowon that the need to save the lives of the thousands starving daily, “outweighed any military or political considerations”.</p>	<p>Expressive/ Informative.</p>	<p>The Nigerian government was inhuman.</p>	<p>An indirect illocutionary act of criticising Gowon’s administration.</p>	<p>The intention of the encoder is to threaten both the positive and the negative faces of Gowon’s administrative government.</p>
<p>21.Wole, fed up with the federal government’s unsuccessful treatment of the Biafra issue, had travelled to secessionist Biafra in an attempt to appeal for a cease fire to the hostilities. He planned to set up an antiwar delegation made up of intellectuals, artists and writers from both sides of the conflict and from around the world to achieve his aim. When he returned to Nigeria, the authorities arrested him and accused him of assisting Biafra in the purchase of weapons of war.</p>	<p>Informative/ Expressive.</p>	<p>The Nigerian system is faulty. It is characterized with injustice, unfairness, corruption and violation of human right.</p>	<p>An indirect illocutionary act of criticising and condemning the Nigerian system of government.</p>	<p>To intensify the approval of Wole Soyinka. His attempt to intervene in conflict going on in the country earned him a jail term. That is the kind of government Nigeria had.</p>
<p>22. Dike had already established an international reputation for academic excellence as an historian. He taught at Harvard University after the war as the first Mellon professor of African history. In 1978, at the dawn of Nigeria’s second republic, this towering international academic returned to Nigeria to help set up the Anambra state university of Technology. It is a disservice to this wonderful man, to his achievements and contributions to Nigeria’s development that he died in 1983 from a blood infection that would not have been difficult to cure had he stayed in the United States.</p>	<p>Assertive/ Expressive/ Behabitve (Accusatory)/ Informative.</p>	<p>The Nigerian public health care system is inefficient.</p>	<p>An indirect illocutionary act of assessing the public health care sector in Nigeria, and condemning the government for its poor implementation of the national health policy.</p>	<p>The intention of the encoder is to enjoin the federal government to improve on the Nigerian health care service. It is when the federal government ensures that health is regarded as the right of all citizens of the country, irrespective of status, tribe, etc., that the health care sector will be given an urgent attention for its improvement.</p>
<p>23. John de St. Jorre, the well-regarded reporter for the observer reported, “The Biafrans ‘stormed’ through the Mid-West not in the usual massive impedimenta of modern warfare but in a bizarre collection of private cars, ‘mammy’ wagons, cattle and vegetable trucks. The command vehicle was a Peugeot 404 estate car. The whole operation was not carried out by an ‘army’ or even a ‘brigade’....but by at most 1,000 men, the majority poorly trained and armed, and wearing civilian clothes because they had not been issued with uniforms”</p>	<p>Descriptives/ Representatives/ Expressive/ Narratives.</p>	<p>The Biafran armies were not well prepared for the Nigerian civil war.</p>	<p>A direct illocutionary act, picturing the Biafran invasion of the Mid-West.</p>	<p>To provide the readers a subdued picture of the Biafran army’s readiness.</p>
<p>24. For most of us, Biafra our new nation was a dream that had become a reality – a republic in the strict definition of the word: “a state in which the supreme power rests in the body of citizens entitled to vote and is exercised by</p>	<p>Expressive/ Expositive.</p>	<p>The republic of Biafra was built on a strong intellectual foundation, making the interest</p>	<p>An indirect illocutionary act of condemning the federal government for the ill treatment given to the Igbos.</p>	<p>To make the readers realise that the urgent need of the Republic of Biafra was inevitable because of the ill treatment of the Easterners by the Nigerian government.</p>

representatives chosen directly or indirectly by them. We could forge a new nation that respected freedoms that all mankind cherished and were willing to fight hard to hold on to. Within Biafra, the Biafran people would be free of persecution of all kind.		of the masses its utmost priority.		
25. She remembers vividly: The bombardment from the Nigerian Air Force on this day was particularly heavy, as if the pilots had been upset at not discovering the market sooner. Most of the bombs fell before dawn. In the morning, we discovered the most harrowing of sights. One image still haunts me till today; that of a pregnant woman split in two by the Nigerian blitz. That was a horrendous experience for most of us and we were very frightened after that.	Expressive/ Representatives/ Narratives/ Descriptives.	The Nigerian Airforce's bombing exercise was barbaric, ruthless and disheartening.	An indirect representative act of denting the image of the Nigerian government.	To let the readers know the level of hatred the Nigerian government had for its fellow Nigerians; the Igbos.
26. ...General Yakubu Gowon, ever so cocksure following his victory, proclaimed to the entire planet that Nigeria had more money than it knew what to do with it. A new era of great decadence and decline was born. It continues to this day.	Informative/ Expressive/ Behabitive (Accusatory)/ Assertive.	General Yakubu Gowon was a deceitful president, just like many presidents and politicians of nowadays are deceptive and misleading in many ways.	An indirect illocutionary act of threatening the positive and the negative face of the Nigerian government.	To condemn and criticize Nigerian politicians and the play of politics in Nigeria generally.
27. Elie Wiesel reminded us, "There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest". I had very little at my very disposal to protest with, so the strongest statement I could make was turn down the honour of commander of the Federal Republic which I was awarded.	Representatives/ Expressive/ Behabitive (Giving Advice).	No matter how difficult it might be, when government leaps beyond the precipice, one should never join ranks with crime.	An indirect illocutionary act of assessing and criticising the Nigerian polity.	To reveal the level of corruption and indiscipline in the Nigerian polity.
28. In 2011, Nigeria was ranked number fourteen in the Failed State Index, just below "heavens of stability" – Afghanistan, Somalia and Iraq! (A failed state) is one that is unable to perform its duties on several levels when violence cascades into an all-out international war, when standards of living massively deteriorate, when the infrastructure of ordinary life decays and when the greed of rulers overwhelms their responsibilities to better their people and their surroundings.	Assertive/ Informative/ Expressive/ Behabitive (Accusatory).	Nigerian government has failed woefully in many aspects.	An indirect illocutionary act of condemning and criticising the Nigerian government and its political leaders.	The intention of the encoder is to describe the state/condition of Nigeria today. He (Achebe) uses indirectness to state the failures of the Nigerian rulers and the aftermath (Consequences) of failure which include insecurities, corruption, ineffectiveness, poor health services, economics recession, etc. Achebe's primary intention here is to threaten the positive and the negative face of the Nigerian political leaders before, during and after the Nigerian civil war

				and all the people that were against the Igbo course of a separate political participation.
29. Over eight hundred deaths, mainly in Northern Nigeria have been attributed to the Islamist Boko Haram since its formation in 2002. The group's ultimate goal, we are told is to, "overthrow the Nigerian government and create Islamic state. In many respects, Nigerian's federal government has always tolerated terrorism.	Declaratives/ Assertive/ Informative/ Expressive/ Behabitive (Accusatory).	The federal government is partial, tribalistic and unjust. It (federal government) failed to enforce laws protecting its citizens from wanton violence, particularly attacks against non-indigenes living in desperate parts of the country.	An indirect illocutionary act of inciting the readers (especially the Christians) to be sensitive to the Islamic activities in Nigeria and criticising the government for being anti-Christianity and sentimental.	To condemn the federal government's act of injustice and unfairness to the Igbos and the Christians.
30. Corruption in Nigeria has grown because it is highly encouraged. In <i>The Trouble with Nigeria</i> , I suggest, "Nigerians are corrupt because the system they live under today make corruption easy and profitable: They will cease to be corrupt when corruption is made difficult and unattractive".	Assertive/ Representatives/ Suggestive/ Expressive/ Behabitive (Accusatory).	Nigeria is still a corrupt nation because of lack of discipline and weakness of the democratic institution.	A direct illocutionary act of expressing thoughts and feelings about the outgrowing pace of corruption in Nigeria.	The intention of the encoder is to condemn the act of corruption in Nigeria and make likely suggestions on how to curb it.
31. I for see the Nigerian solution will come in stages. First, we have to nurture and strengthen our democratic institutions- and strive for the freest and fairest elections possible. That will place the true candidates of the people in the office.	Predictive, Behabitive (Advisories)/ Assertive/ Expressive.	- Nigerian democratic policy system is built on a faulty foundation, and that is why corruption is so rampant. - Presently, there are no true candidates of people in the office.	An indirect illocutionary act of condemning and criticizing the Nigerian political leaders.	To condemn the way democracy is practiced in Nigeria and criticise the Nigerian political leaders.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Speech Act Analysis

Below is the Summary of the Illocutionary Acts extracted from the presented data.

Table 1: Illocutionary Acts in the Thirty-One Excerpts

Illocutionary Acts (Constatives and Performatives)	Frequency	Percentage
1. Expressives (Constatives)	31	32.3%
2. Assertives (Constatives)	12	12.5%
3. Descriptives (Constatives)	3	3.1%
4. Ascriptives (Constatives)	2	2.9%

5. Responsives (performatives)	-	-
6. Confirmatives (Constatives)	-	-
7. Disputatives (performatives)	1	1.0%
8. Suggestives (performatives)	1	1.0%
9. Declaratives (performatives)	1	1.0%
10. Representatives (Constatives)	5	5.2%
11. Expositives (Constatives)	6	6.3%
12. Predictives (Constatives)	1	1.0%
13. Narratives (Constatives)	7	7.3%
14. Informatives (Constatives)	18	18.8%
15. Supportives (performatives)	-	-
16. Acknowledgement (performatives)	-	-
17. Verdictives (performatives)	-	-
18. Directives (performatives)	-	-
19. Commissives (performatives)	-	-
20. Behabitives (performatives)	8	8.4%
21. Exercitives (performatives)	-	-
TOTAL	96	100%

Speech Act Analysis

Constatative Acts: Constatative acts are utterances that describe a situation or state of affairs and can be evaluated as true or false, while performative acts, on the other hand, are utterances that perform an action simply by being said, especially in the right context. From the result of the table above, constative (88.5%) acts occur more frequently than the performative (11.5%) acts. This indicates the importance of Constatives in the process of conveying meanings/messages from the encoder (Achebe) to the decoders (the readers). However, the intense instances of constatives in any communicative event like this (interactional event between Achebe and the readers) is because constatives are speech acts that automatically inform, suggest, predict, dispute, describe, explain, confirm, assert, etc. Adegbija (1982) is of the opinion that the main function of constatives is to provide felicity for the mapping of the sequences of speech acts performed in a communicative event into one master speech act, a process in which the general pragma sociolinguistic context of the reader's world knowledge plays a crucial role. In line with Adegbija's submission, the study has revealed that Achebe principal acts are expressive (the act of informing), informing informative (giving out some information about the war) and assertive (the act of asserting) to achieve his intentional motive of creating in the readers a fighting attitude against corruption, tribalism and religious prejudice in Nigeria. The use of these acts (constatives) helps the encoder (Achebe) to reiterate his points better all designed to achieve a particular goal which is influencing the belief(s) of his readers.

Expressive and Informative have the highest frequency in Achebe's sampled illocutionary acts with 32.3% and 18.8% distribution respectively. The high occurrence of these two acts backs up Bach and Harnish's assertion that constatives (Expressive and Informative) express a speaker's belief and his desire that the decoder forms a similar one. However, Expressive is the most used constatives out of the fifteen applicable constative acts for this study. This signifies the intention of the encoder which is to express his feelings, thoughts, opinions and views concerning the secession of Biafra in 1967 and the subsequent civil war that exploded in Nigeria. Achebe emphasises and elucidates the unfair treatment of the Igbos during and after the Nigerian civil war with the sole aim of drawing the attention of his readers (especially the Igbos) to the fact that the tragic events (Biafra war) was tantamount to racial discrimination against the Igbos, poor leadership and misplacement of priority in Nigeria.

From the foregoing explanations, it is clear that expressive acts reveal the encoder's attitude and emotions towards a particular proposition. Achebe thus communicated his thoughts and feelings about the Nigerian civil war with some reservations, subscribing to what Thomas (1995) refers to as the "Principle of Expressibility" which states that anything that can be meant can be said. This however, is in line with the belief that human being can find a way of putting into words anything they need to say. All the sampled illocutionary acts of Achebe are thus Expressive in nature because every act is a representation of the encoder's goal behind the linguistic performance.

Next to Expressive in incidence are Informative (19.5%) and they inform the readers of certain events, states or situations. Informative essentially perform the functions of affirming, asserting, describing, establishing, etc and are very important logical act for the criteria of valid inference and demonstration. Instances of informative acts of the sampled utterances are found in samples 6, 7, 11, 12, 14, 16 among others.

The result also shows that Assertive are extensively used by Achebe to inform based on the existing data shared among the participants in the discourse. They (assertive) constitute 11.4% of the illocutionary act analysed. Ascriptives, Narratives and Expositive are constative acts of attributing a cause, characteristic or responsibility to someone or something, giving account or report of something or an event and interpreting, explaining or describing an event respectively. While sample 5 (Ascriptive act) attributes the language that accommodates/represents every lexical item in every language and unifies different ethnic groups in Nigeria to the English language, sample 19 ascribes good governance to the period of the British colonies in Nigeria.

Narrative act is any report or recount of connected event, real or imaginary and presented in a sequence of written or spoken words. Achebe narrates his childhood experience (the Kola nut incident) in sample 1, his experience after his graduation from the University of Ibadan in sample 6, how Beattie assisted him with the publication process of his manuscript; *Things Fall Apart* in sample 8, the civil war explosion in sample 16, the Nigerian Airforce's bombing exercise in sample 25 among others.

Expositive as proposed by Austin (1962, 1975) is a higher level of illocutionary act type which manifests how speech acts and their linguistic realizations are intended to be interpreted in discourse. Their interpretation in discourse may trigger a context-sensitive illocutionary force, thus contributing to the structuring of discourse. Samples 1, 4, 17, 18, 19 and 24 depict this act.

Accounting for the 3.1%, Descriptives have the seventh highest occurrence of illocutionary act in the entire sample considered and characteristically bear a resemblance to Narratives and Expositive. These acts (Descriptives) describe an incidence, a person, situation, place or an event. For instance, Achebe in sample 7 describes Beattie (as a no-nonsense person), the Biafran invasion of the Mid-West in sample 23 and his wife's experience of the Nigerian Airforce's bombing exercise in sample 25. Predictive constitutes 1.0% of the illocutionary acts in the data analysis.

Performatives

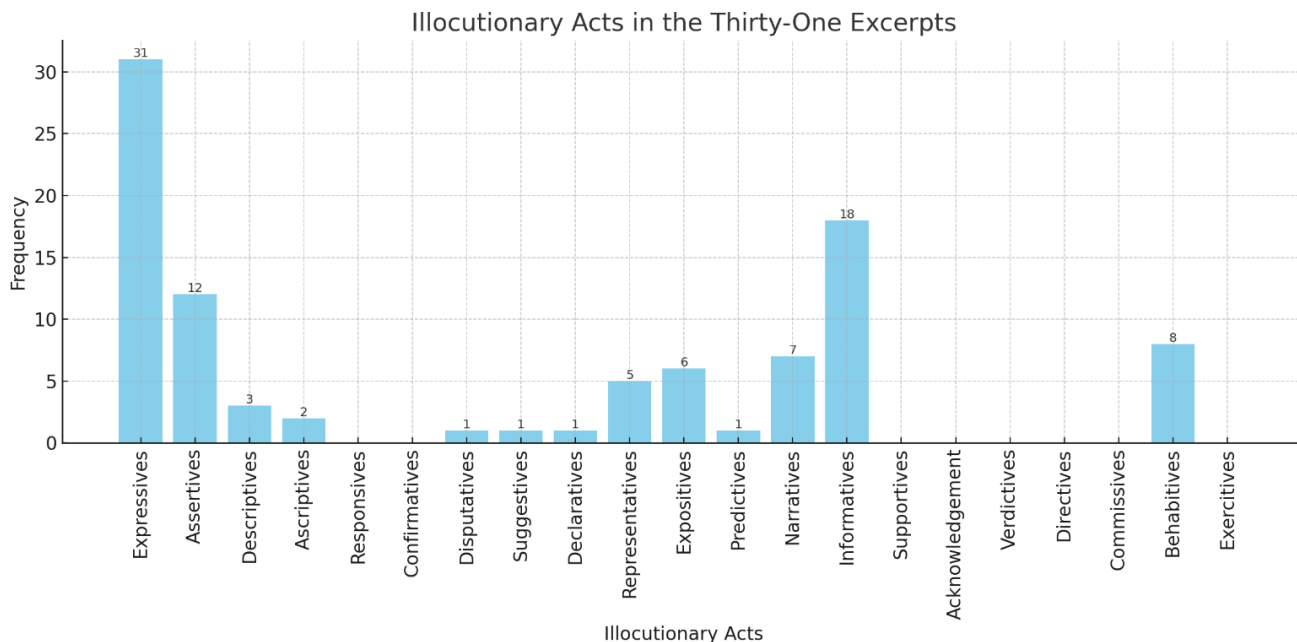
Performative acts are utterances which are not only describing reality, but also changing the social reality they are

describing (Austin 1962). Performative acts which contain a special type of verb (a performative verb) are oriented at performing an action. In using a performative verb, a person is not just saying something but is actually doing something (Wardhaugh 1992, p. 283). Behabitive, Disputative, Suggestive and Declaratives acts are the only performative acts found applicable to the sampled analysed utterances of Chinua Achebe in his memoir. Some of these acts (Behabitives) perform the functions of condemning, criticising, explaining, justifying, accusing and advising as observed in samples 12, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30. These performative acts however, are either explicit or implicit performative acts. Disputative are acts showing inclination or disagreement. These acts are used in the memoir to criticise and condemn the Nigerian government in sample 19. Suggestive are acts that recommend, allude, insinuate or indicate what is being suggested. Sample 30 is a typical example of this act. Achebe, citing from his novel, *The Trouble of Nigeria* indirectly suggests that "Nigerians are corrupt because the Nigerian system makes corruption easy and profitable. If corruption is made difficult and unattractive in Nigeria, the economic recession in the country will be a thing of the past." While the encoder (Achebe) declares over eight hundred deaths in the Norther Nigeria (Declaratives), attributing it to the activity of the Islamist Boko Haram (sample 29), an act directed to condemn the federal government's act of injustice and unfairness to the Igbos and the Christians, he (Achebe) prognosticates (sample 31) that the Nigerian solution will definitely come in stages with time (Predictive).

According to Lyons (1981, p.175), an explicit performative is one in which the utterance inscription contains an expression that makes explicit what kind of act is being performed. The explicit performatives include performative verb and therefore, can be seen to be a mechanism which allows the speaker remove any possibility of misunderstanding the force behind an utterance (Thomas, 1995, p.47).

All the analysed performative acts of Achebe are thus implicit because the utterances are not with imperative purposes (Directives), rather, they are expressing Achebe's feelings but indirectly performing one function or the other (i.e. criticising the government for being unfair to the Igbos and justifying the Igbo for aspiring to be politically independent). Instances of Behabitives in the sampled utterances include Achebe condemning the Nigerian government for its poor implementation of the National Health Policy (sample 22), condemning General Gowon for being a deceitful president just like many Nigerian presidents and politicians of nowadays (sample 26); advising Nigerians never to be a party to crimes and corruptions in Nigeria (sample 27); condemning and criticising the Nigerian government for being tribalistic and unjust to the Igbos (samples 28 and 29); accusing Nigerians, both the masses and the government for lack of discipline and weakness of the democratic institution (sample 30).

Diagram 1: Illocutionary Acts



Source: Authors Textual Analysis (2025)

Direct and Indirect Speech Acts

Apart from distinguishing speech acts according to the general function (classes of illocutionary act), they can also be distinguished with regards to their structure (mode of communication). Achebe uses either direct or indirect speech act in his memoir to recount his early life experience (the formative years at Umuahia and Ibadan), the independence and the post-independence Nigeria, the history of ethnic tension and resentment in Nigeria. He also describes, recounts and represents the Nigerian Biafra war, the Republic of Biafra (the economic blockage and starvation, the capture of the Biafra states and the case against the Nigerian government), Gowon’s response to allegations and the Nigerian’s painful transitions (A re-appraisal of corruption and indiscipline, state and rise of terrorism, state resuscitation and recover) using either the direct or the indirect speech act, depending on the nature of the locutionary act.

Achebe was direct with his speech act whenever he chooses to be deliberately offensive (face threatening act), when the intended message to be passed across to the audience is face-threatening but intends to mitigate the face threat, and lastly, when he wants to avoid ambiguity (when he wants his message to be interpreted accurately). Samples 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9 among others are instances of direct speech acts by the encoder (Achebe) because the locutionary acts is the history of his early life experiences which are not face-threatening in any way. In samples 19 and 30, Achebe also chooses to be direct (bald-on-

record) in condemning the federal government’s self-centeredness. Achebe (in samples 19 and 30) directly expresses his feelings and opinion about the outgrowing pace of corruption in Nigeria because the decadent situation of the country warrants an urgent address. In sample 23, he uses a direct speech act (Representatives, Descriptives, Expressive and Narratives) for picturing the Biafran invasion of the Mid-West in order to avoid misinterpretation by the decoders as well as letting them know the depth of wickedness of the non-Igbos towards the Igbos. However, Achebe’s use of direct speech acts in samples 17 and 18 are very minimal because his message is face threatening but he does not want to be maximally offensive (politeness principle).

The encoder (Achebe) uses more of indirect speech acts to code his message to avoid being unnecessarily invidious and rude because most of his illocutionary acts are about the federal government’s inadequacies before, during and after the Biafra war till date. He (Achebe) therefore manipulates language by being indirect to justify the Igbos’ aspiration for political emancipation (samples 17 and 18); criticise Gowon’s political administration (sample 20); criticise the Nigerian system politically, economically, etc (sample 21); access the Nigerian public health care and condemn the government for the poor implementation of the national health policy (sample 21); condemn the federal government for the ill treatment given to the Igbos (sample 24); incite the readers (especially the Igbos and the Christians) to be sensitive to the Islamic activities in Nigeria (sample 29) among others.

Trauma and Identity in Achebe's *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*

Achebe's *There Was a Country* is an intense literary piece of national and personal trauma shaped by the Nigerian-Biafran War. Drawing from Cathy Caruth's Trauma Theory, the memoir portrays trauma not only as a past experience, but as a persistent and haunting memory. Achebe's selected utterances specifically sample 16, 20, and 25 capture the fragmentation and emotional rupture that Caruth describes. For instance, Achebe recalls fleeing Lagos with his family (sample 16) and narrates the haunting image of a pregnant woman split by a bomb (sample 25). These memories, relived through narrative, exemplify the latency and belatedness that Caruth emphasizes, making Achebe's narrative both a cathartic recollection and a political statement.

In line with trauma theory, the memoir presents an intense fractured sense of post-colonial identity through the lens of Stuart Hall's Identity Theory. Hall (1996) posits that identity in postcolonial contexts is fluid, contested, and historically situated. Achebe's excerpts in samples 17, 18, and 24 reveal the struggle of the Igbo people and other Eastern Nigerians to locate themselves within a hostile nation-state. The assertion that "Nigeria was no longer habitable for the Igbo" and the dream of Biafra as a republic of freedom underscores the disintegration of a unified Nigerian identity. Achebe's reflections, therefore, align with Hall's view of identity as a process of positioning where individuals and groups negotiate their place amid the shifting terrains of ethnicity, politics, and memory.

Achebe's use of expressive and informative speech acts (dominant in the data) reflects both the identity of Achebe and his traumatic experience. His expressions are not mere recollections; they are performative assertions of belonging, exclusion, pain, and resilience. Indirect speech acts are particularly revealing, allowing Achebe to criticize the Nigerian state (samples 20, 26, 28) without direct confrontation, maintaining decorum while expressing deep disillusionment. This rhetorical strategy reflects both the inexpressibility of trauma and the complexity of identity politics in post-war Nigeria. Achebe avoids simplistic narratives; instead, he constructs a layered memory that invites collective reflection.

CONCLUSION

The memoir's thirty-one sampled utterances portray a Nigeria caught in the throes of historical trauma and unresolved identity crises. Achebe, through trauma-laden recollections and identity-reflective assertions, engages his readers in a discourse that is both personal and national. His narrative bridges memory and critique, emotion and resistance, fulfilling the dual theoretical expectations of Caruth and Hall while providing a compelling sociolinguistic commentary on post-colonial Nigeria.

This study has examined Chinua Achebe's *There Was a Country* through the lens of Speech Act, Trauma, and Identity Theories to explore post-colonial disillusionment in Nigeria.

The findings reveal that Achebe's use of language is deeply expressive, informative, and assertive serving as both a narrative of personal experience and a socio-political critique. The memoir reflects the traumatic aftermath of the Nigerian-Biafran War and articulates the fractured identity of post-colonial Nigeria. Achebe's illocutionary acts mostly expressive and informative reflect disillusionment, grief, resistance, and a call for justice, thus reinforcing the memoir as a powerful linguistic and ideological intervention.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that more interdisciplinary research be undertaken to explore the intersection of language, trauma, and identity in African literature. Nigerian scholars and educators should engage with Achebe's memoir as a tool for national reflection and discourse on governance, ethnic relations, and post-war healing. Furthermore, there is a need for government and policy-makers to acknowledge the enduring effects of historical trauma on national identity and cohesion, and to foster inclusive dialogue that addresses the grievances of marginalized groups, especially the Igbo community. Finally, future research could extend the use of Speech Act Theory to other post-conflict narratives in Africa to deepen understanding of how language mediates memory, justice, and resistance.

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