

# An Analysis of Idiomatic Expressions Used in Things Fall Apart Novel

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**Abstract:** This study examines the idiomatic expressions used and interpreted in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, emphasizing how they convey the Igbo people's cultural values and social dynamics in the face of colonial influence. The data are taken from the novel *Things Fall Apart*. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the research identifies different types of idioms, based on Makkai theory, including phrasal verb idioms, tournure idioms, irreversible binominal idioms, phrasal compound idioms, incorporating verb idioms and pseudo idioms. Meanwhile, the meaning of idiomatic expressions is based on the context in which they appear. The findings reveal how Achebe uses these linguistic techniques to articulate social interactions, moral philosophies, emotional landscapes, and tensions between tradition and modernity thereby reaching the research objective of the importance of idiomatic expressions as tools for preserving and transmitting Igbo cultural heritage, providing a deeper understanding of the cultural and psychological dimensions of the novel.

**Keywords:** idioms, idiomatic expressions, Things fall apart novel, meaning.

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## 1. Introduction

Language is a means of expressing the cultural experiences, traditions, and social values that characterize every society. One of the most important linguistic tools in any language is idioms which represent linguistic structures carrying non-literal meanings and reflecting the prevailing culture. These expressions are used to convey complex ideas or deep feelings in a concise and effective way. As Momoh (2000) points out, "complex expressions give literary texts linguistic flexibility by producing new meanings that are not always expected from individual words". Furthermore, the meaning of an idiom can be interpreted contextually because some idioms have several meanings depending on the situation, therefore it can be defined both lexically and contextually.

In this situation, and the work by Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, the novel *Things Fall Apart* is a literary work that reflects the extent to which language as a cultural tool reflects the life and traditions of Igbo society. The novel also relies heavily on idioms, which are used as a means of conveying social values and traditional customs. Such expressions help to show the social dynamics between characters, and

illustrate the situations they are experiencing. Understanding idiomatic expressions in a literary text is not only related to their direct linguistic meaning, but rather requires an awareness of the cultural and social context in which these expressions were used and therefore, analyzing these idiomatic expressions helps reveal the cultural structure of the text and understand the hidden dimensions expressed by the novel.

The aim of this study is to identify and analyze idiomatic expressions in the novel *Things Fall Apart* and understand their role in enriching the text and highlighting the cultural and social meanings that the writer wanted to convey. The analysis aims to illustrate how these expressions are used to deepen the psychological understanding of the characters and clarify the internal and external conflicts they face.

## 2. Literature Review

The study of meaning is referred to as the common term used to describe semantics. "The word semantics is derived from the Greek noun *sema*, which means 'sign, signal,' and the verb *semaino*, which means 'signal, mean'" (Aitchison: 2010). Semantics is regarded as the study of linguistics that deals with word meaning and language-based rule. On the other hand, Tarigan (2009) defines semantics as "the study of meaning and the relationship between a language's form and the meaning it conveys." This field encompasses several key areas: a. The study of the meanings of individual words within a particular language's lexicon, as well as the combinations of words that the language permits. b. The connection between meaning and context—both linguistic (within the language itself) and nonlinguistic (external factors that influence interpretation). c. The relationships and meanings conveyed by specific linguistic forms and patterns. The process by which meaning is translated or transferred from one language to another.

In a nutshell, semantics can be defined as a branch of linguistics that studies linguistic references and truth conditions in language, or language meaning. Furthermore, semantics deals with words, phrases, and sentences. Usually, it is encoded in the structure of the language.

Since there is an existence of a number of linguistic studies, however there is no universally accepted definition of idiomatic expression. Sinclair (1995) regard idioms as "a group of two or more words which are selected together for producing a specific meaning or effect in speech or writing." According to Fernando (1996), idioms is defined as a "conventionalized multiword expressions that are often but not always non- literal". Another description is given to idioms in Webster's New World dictionary (1997) states as a "phrase, construction, or expression that is recognized as a unit in the usage of a given language and either differs from the usual syntactic patterns or has a meaning that differs from the literal meaning of its parts taken together". There is a restriction to this broad understanding by Moon (1998) as "A specific type of expression that is set in form and whose meaning is either unclear from its individual components or metaphorical, typically not directly derived from the meanings of its parts."

According to O'Grady (1998), idioms "display a high degree of conventionality in the choice of component lexical items and have a meaning that is not a simple function of the literal or non-figurative meaning of their parts." So it is important to clarify that the idea that an idiom's overall meaning is not the same as the sum of its constituent parts. Concerning Copper (1998), idiomatic expressions can be defined both lexically and contextually. With regard to its lexical perspective, "an idiomatic expression has the meaning that is typically attributed to its common usage in dictionaries. However, because some idioms have several meanings depending on the context, the meaning of an idiomatic expression can be understood contextually".

Riehemann (2001), on the other hand, defines idioms as "words that do not exist as independent words with the same meaning." As for Ifill (2002) "idioms are fixed expressions that the meaning of which cannot be derived from a combination of the meanings of their component parts, and the elements that make up the idioms are limited in the kinds of variability that they are able to demonstrate." Additionally, idiom is defined by Fellbaum (2007) as "a class of multi-word units which pose challenge to the understanding of grammar and lexis that has not been fully met."

As a result, not every word within an idiom is inherently idiomatic. It is also argued that idiomatic expressions convey a literal meaning only when used in isolation. Moreover, the meaning of a statement can vary depending on the context in which it is expressed; *contextual meaning* refers to the meaning of a word based on the surrounding context. In summary, the meaning of idiomatic expressions is shaped by the context in which they are used.

According to Makkai (1972), idioms are classified into two primary categories. The first is encoding idioms, which, although relatively easy to interpret, require speakers to use a particular, conventionalized manner of expression. The second is decoding idioms, whose meanings are not immediately obvious or predictable. Within decoding idioms, Makkai further distinguishes between lexemic and sememic types. A lexemic idiom refers to any multi-word lexeme composed of two or more minimal free forms (or morphological words), where each component can independently function in different contexts as a single-word lexeme. Examples of lexemic idioms, according to Makkai (1972, 1994), include the following:

- **Phrasal verbs idioms** as this type's basic structure always consists of a verb followed by a particle, which might be either an adverb or a preposition. In other words, since certain adverbs can also function as *prepositions*, the structure of the idiom typically involves a *verb + adverb* combination. The element that follows—often referred to as the "object of a preposition"—can be understood in a similar way to the "object of a transitive verb." These constructions are commonly known as *phrasal verbs*. For example: *Please turn on the light. This place is dark.* In this case, *turn on* means *to switch on the lamp*.
- **Tornure idioms** as typically consists of at least three lexemes, with a required position between the adverb and the verb. In other words, a tournure idiom includes either a definite or indefinite article and comprises a minimum of three words. These idioms often convey a metaphorical meaning. For example, *blowing a fuse* metaphorically means *becoming very angry*.
- **Irreversible binominal idioms** explained as a fixed expression made up of two components, labeled A and B, whose order cannot be changed. These two words are typically joined by a conjunction. There are several common patterns found in binomial idioms: 1. B expresses the opposite of A (e.g., *sink or swim*); 2. A and B complement one another (e.g., *brush and palette*); 3. B represents a variation or extension of A (e.g., *bag and baggage*); 4. B is the consequence or outcome of A (e.g., *to shoot and kill*).
- **Phrasal compound idioms** are regarded as a common type of idiom, where certain words are combined into a single expression, yet their overall meaning cannot be inferred from the meanings of the individual parts. The following pattern demonstrates that this kind contains primary nominal: 1) Adjective + noun as "green horn" which denotes inexperience. 2) Noun plus noun as an intelligent is an egghead. 3) Verb + noun as "kill-joy" which refers to someone or anything that ruins other people's happiness or pleasure. Combining every type of word into one creates phrasal, which is inherently an idiom.
- **Pseudo idioms** as One of its components is often a fossilized word—an archaic or obsolete term—that no longer carries an independent meaning, as seen in expressions like *spic and span*.

Sememic idioms on the other hand, are considered of a higher and more abstract linguistic level. They serve primarily to convey culturally specific concepts like deference, tact, etc., and they link with institutionalized culturally pragmatic meanings.

Fernando (1996) provides a classification of idiomatic expressions that includes the following categories:

1. Pure idioms, which are fixed, conventionalized multi-word expressions whose overall meaning is entirely nonliteral, as in *spill the beans*.
2. Semi-literal idioms, which contain one or more components used literally, alongside at least one element with a figurative meaning, such as *foot the bill*.
3. Literal idioms, like *on foot*, are more straightforward in meaning compared to pure and semi-idioms. They fulfill

the basic characteristic of idioms, which is their fixed or restricted form. Idioms can also be grouped into sentential and non-sentential categories, with the latter encompassing sayings and proverbs. According to Kvetko (2009), idiomatic expressions can be further divided into verbal idioms and verbless idioms, with the latter typically functioning as adverbial, adjectival, or nominal phrases.

In his book *Makna dalam Wacana*, Suhayat (2008) identifies two types of idioms: **Full idioms**, where the overall meaning cannot be directly inferred from any of the individual components. For example, *a bad egg* refers to *a worthless or untrustworthy person*. And **partial idioms**, where part of the expression's meaning can still be understood from one of its elements. For instance, *wake up* means *to awaken*. Therefore, in order to interpret idiomatic expressions accurately, it is essential to understand both their structure and their meaning as a whole.

### 3. Research methodology

Descriptive Qualitative Method was followed to analyze the idioms in the novel *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe and this approach is considered the most appropriate for the study of written forms and literary texts, as it provides a rich framework for analyzing language and cultural content in the context of society and history since the aim is to explore how idioms can be used as tools to illustrate social relationships and explain transformations in characters and society. The aforementioned approach is used as claimed by Sugiyono (2007) that the formulation of descriptive problems guides writers in exploring and capturing social situations to be studied. However, it is defined by Merriam (1998) as an umbrella concept that covers many forms of inquiry that helps in understanding and explaining the meaning of social phenomenon with disruption of natural setting.

The primary source of data is the novel *Things Fall Apart*, which is considered one of the most prominent literary works that reflect traditional African culture. The novel contains many idioms that reflect the societal values and concepts of the Igbo community.

To ensure comprehensiveness and accuracy in data collection in the present study,

The novel was read completely and carefully to ensure that idiomatic expressions contained in the text were identified. The examples used are selected randomly to ensure a broad and comprehensive coverage of the novel and this approach allows for capturing a wide range of idiomatic expressions, reflecting the diverse linguistic and cultural elements present in *Things Fall Apart* and by selecting examples from various parts of the text, the study aims to provide a representative analysis of how idiomatic expressions are employed throughout the novel.

### 4. Findings and Analysis

#### 4.1 Types of Idioms

In the analysis of idiomatic expressions in Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart," several categories of idioms emerged, each serving distinct purposes within the narrative and the use of idioms enriches the text, providing cultural depth and illuminating the social dynamics present within Igbo society. Below is a detailed examination of each type of idiom identified and provided

##### 4.1.1 Phrasal Verb Idiom

Phrasal verb idioms consist of a verb combined with a preposition or adverb, producing a meaning that often diverges from the literal definitions of its components and these idioms encapsulate the essence of social interactions, personal challenges, and the struggles faced by characters against the backdrop of societal change and the following analysis of 30 examples from the text illustrates the multifaceted roles these idioms play:

1. **Break down:** This idiom signifies the disintegration of established social structures, as seen when "the traditional structures began to break down under colonial pressure." Here, Achebe uses this idiom to illustrate the fragility of Igbo society in the face of external forces.

2. Stand up to: The phrase in "He learned to stand up to the invaders, embodying courage" reflects personal resilience and defiance against oppression. This idiom captures the character's internal growth and resistance, reinforcing themes of bravery and honor in the face of adversity.
3. Give in: The expression "some elders gave in to the demands of the new religion" highlights the theme of compromise and change. This idiom underscores the internal conflicts within the community as traditional leaders navigate the pressures of colonial influence.
4. Put off: "He tried to put off the inevitable clash with the missionaries" demonstrates the struggle between confronting reality and delaying action. This idiom symbolizes a broader theme of avoidance in the face of significant change, showcasing the tension between tradition and modernity.
5. Carry on: The community's resolve to "carry on despite the upheaval" encapsulates the theme of perseverance. This idiom emphasizes the strength and resilience of the characters, reflecting a collective commitment to maintaining cultural identity amidst chaos.
6. Look after: The phrase "The women looked after the children while the men fought" illustrates the division of labor and roles within Igbo society. This idiom highlights the importance of familial responsibilities and communal support, reinforcing the theme of solidarity during conflict.
7. Turn down: "He had to turn down the offer of land from the colonizers" signifies the refusal to accept something that compromises integrity and heritage. This idiom captures the struggle for agency and autonomy amidst colonial encroachment.
8. Come across: "In his journey, he came across many challenges" reflects the unexpected nature of life's journey. This idiom illustrates how characters confront various obstacles, symbolizing the unpredictability of cultural change.
9. Run away: The idiom "Many villagers chose to run away rather than face the new order" highlights the theme of escape in the face of overwhelming challenges. This reflects a lack of agency and illustrates the emotional turmoil within the community as they grapple with change.
10. Hold on to: "He wanted to hold on to the customs of his ancestors" underscores the desire for cultural preservation. This idiom encapsulates the tension between the past and the future, emphasizing the struggle to maintain identity amid colonial pressures.
11. Take over: The phrase "The colonizers attempted to take over the land and resources" signifies the aggressive nature of colonialism. This idiom highlights themes of power dynamics and the impact of colonization on indigenous cultures.
12. Fight back: "The villagers decided to fight back against oppression" reflects the theme of resistance. This idiom emphasizes the courage and unity of the community as they confront colonial.
13. Bring about: "The changes brought about by colonialism were profound" illustrates the transformative effects of external influences. This idiom emphasizes the theme of change and the irrevocable impact of colonial rule on traditional societies.
14. Get along with: "He found it hard to get along with those who embraced change" highlights personal conflict and generational divides. This idiom illustrates the challenges of adapting to new realities while maintaining relationships.
15. Look forward to: "He looked forward to the harvest season with hope" signifies optimism and anticipation. This idiom reflects the characters' connection to the land and their reliance on traditional agricultural cycles.
16. Back down: "He refused to back down from his beliefs" embodies the theme of conviction and integrity. This idiom illustrates the character's steadfastness in maintaining personal and cultural identity.

17. Set up: "The church was set up as a new center of influence" highlights the establishment of new power structures. This idiom signifies the shift in authority and the introduction of foreign ideologies into the community
18. Drop out: "Some members chose to drop out of the traditional society" reflects the struggle between tradition and modernity. This idiom emphasizes the choices individuals face when confronted with change.
19. Call on: "The elders called on the spirits for guidance" illustrates the importance of spirituality in Igbo culture. This idiom underscores the reliance on ancestral wisdom and traditional beliefs in decision-making.
20. Go through: "She had to go through many hardships to survive" reflects resilience and perseverance. This idiom captures the struggles faced by individuals as they navigate personal and societal challenges.
21. Make up: "They tried to make up after their heated argument" highlights themes of reconciliation and community harmony. This idiom reflects the importance of relationships within the societal fabric.
22. Take up: "He decided to take up the challenge of leadership" signifies the acceptance of responsibility. This idiom emphasizes the themes of courage and commitment to one's community.
23. Turn up: "The truth about the colonizers began to turn up slowly" reflects the gradual revelation of reality. This idiom highlights the theme of discovery and understanding in the context of colonialism.
24. Come up with: "The community came up with a plan to resist" emphasizes collective action and solidarity. This idiom signifies the importance of unity in confronting challenges.
25. Look into: "He wanted to look into the history of his people" highlights the importance of cultural identity and heritage. This idiom underscores the quest for knowledge and understanding in a changing world.
26. Work out: "They needed to work out their differences" reflects the theme of negotiation and resolution. This idiom illustrates the importance of dialogue and compromise in maintaining community harmony.
27. Run into: "He ran into old friends who shared his values" signifies the importance of community and connection. This idiom reflects the strength of social bonds amidst changing circumstances.
28. Get away with: "The colonizers seemed to get away with their injustices" illustrates themes of power and injustice. This idiom highlights the moral complexities faced by characters within the narrative.
29. Pull together: "The villagers needed to pull together to survive" emphasizes unity and cooperation. This idiom reflects the importance of collective strength in facing challenges.
30. Break up: "The old ways began to break up as new ideas took root" signifies the transformative impact of change. This idiom encapsulates the tension between tradition and modernity, highlighting the disintegration of established norms in the face of colonial influences.

Achebe's use of phrasal verb idioms in *Things Fall Apart* skillfully captures the complexities of Igbo society during a time of upheaval. These idioms reflect personal and communal struggles, deepening the narrative's exploration of cultural identity and the conflict between tradition and change. Through them, Achebe highlights how language serves as a powerful tool for expressing social dynamics, preserving cultural heritage, and conveying the human experience.

#### 4.1.2 Tournure Idiom

**Tournure idioms are multi-word expressions with a fixed structure, meaning their word order cannot be changed** without losing their idiomatic meaning. They often follow a **specific syntactic pattern** and usually consist of **a verb + object or complement**. In "Things Fall Apart," these idioms not

only enrich the narrative but also serve as vehicles for conveying the collective consciousness of the Igbo people and they reflect deep insights into human behavior, social norms, and the moral fabric of society. Below are four examples of tournure idioms found in the text, along with an analysis of their significance within the context of the story:

1 **"A toad does not run in the daytime for nothing."** Every action has a purpose, according to this idiom; anything out of the ordinary suggests a deeper problem. To put it another way, given its context, it demonstrates the Igbo idea that occurrences have deeper reasons rather than being random. Animals and the natural world are frequently used to represent human conduct in Igbo culture. It is unusual for a normally nocturnal toad to show up in the daytime, indicating some underlying disturbance. This proverb also illustrates how societal upheavals and changes, like the colonists' arrival, are not coincidental but rather have deeper causes. It also reflects Okonkwo's impetuous personality, as he frequently reacts violently to his failure-related anxieties.

2. **"The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them."** This idiom emphasizes the hierarchy, hard work, and leadership as Igbo beliefs; it implies that those who position themselves well will succeed before those who are dependent or passive. Okonkwo exemplifies this philosophy—he works tirelessly to rise in status, believing that strength and self-reliance will bring success; however, his rigid mindset also contributes to his downfall when he fails to adapt to change. This means that those who take initiative or hold power will benefit first (highlighting the importance of leadership and hierarchy in Igbo society).

3. **"Eneke the bird says: since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching."** This idiom represents that one must adapt to survive in changing circumstances. While in terms of contextual meaning it reflects the resilience and the need to adjust in times of adversity. Eneke the bird symbolizes resilience and adaptation in the face of danger. The proverb stresses the need for flexibility in changing circumstances. This idiom foreshadows the struggles faced by the Igbo people as colonial rule disrupts their traditions. Unlike others who adjust, Okonkwo refuses to change, leading to his tragic fate.

4. **"He can eat with kings If a child washes his hands."** This highlights personal responsibility and ambition in Igbo society, and Okonkwo's ascent from poverty to become a respected warrior and leader reflects this sentiment. He works hard to distance himself from his father's laziness and earns his place among the elders, but his obsession with status also leads to his downfall. This means that one who makes themselves presentable and prepared can achieve greatness. It also emphasizes self-improvement and social mobility. Furthermore, one who prepares and betters themselves can achieve greatness.

The analysis of tournure idioms in *Things Fall Apart* highlights Achebe's deep understanding of Igbo culture. These expressions serve as cultural touchstones, conveying generational wisdom and moral lessons. By integrating them into the narrative, Achebe offers insight into characters' motivations and societal pressures, while reflecting broader themes of tradition, change, and the human condition.

#### 4.1.3 Irreversible Binomial Idiom

Irreversible binomial idioms are phrases made up of two elements that are conventionally paired and cannot be rearranged without losing their intended meaning, conveying the meaning that cannot be predicted from the meanings of the individual words. These idioms are termed "irreversible" because their components are conventionally fixed in order; altering the sequence disrupts their conventional meaning. In "Things Fall Apart," these idioms often reflect cultural dichotomies, social values, and the tensions between tradition and change and the themes used and interpreted by irreversible binomial idioms in the novel highlights the complexities of social interactions and the characters' struggles within their community. Below are five examples of irreversible binomial idioms related to the ideas, event mentioned along with an analysis of their significance:

1. Trial and error: This idiom represents the iterative process of learning and adapting that characters undergo as they confront various challenges throughout the story. For instance, Okonkwo's journey can be seen as a series of trials where he struggles to assert his identity and maintain his status amidst changing social dynamics. This idiom underscores the notion that personal growth often comes through mistakes and setbacks, reflecting the broader theme of resilience in the face of adversity.
2. Peace and quiet: This expression encapsulates the ideal state of harmony that the characters, especially the elders of Umuofia, yearn for amidst the growing conflict introduced by colonial forces and internal strife and the longing for peace and quiet is evident in the community's reactions to the disruptions caused by missionaries and colonial authorities. This idiom highlights the tension between the desire for stability and the chaos brought about by external influences, serving as a commentary on the impact of colonialism on traditional societies.
3. Give and take: This idiom emphasizes the importance of compromise and reciprocity within community relationships. In Igbo culture, maintaining balance in social interactions is crucial, and this expression reflects the expectation that relationships require mutual concessions. Characters like Okonkwo often struggle with this concept, particularly as he confronts the changes brought about by colonialism and the use of this idiom illustrates the challenges of negotiating relationships during times of societal upheaval and highlights the cultural values of cooperation and social harmony.
4. Sink or swim: This idiom vividly illustrates the high stakes faced by characters when adapting to the pressures of colonialism. As the Igbo society grapples with the introduction of new beliefs and practices, individuals must either adapt and thrive or resist and potentially fail. Okonkwo's ultimate fate serves as a poignant example of this dichotomy; his inability to navigate the changing landscape leads to his tragic downfall and the idiom captures the existential struggle of characters in a rapidly transforming world, emphasizing the urgent need for adaptation in the face of uncertainty.
5. Live and let live: This expression encapsulates the idea of tolerance and coexistence within the community, particularly relevant in the context of the diverse beliefs introduced by colonialism. As different factions within Igbo society grapple with the presence of missionaries and new customs, this idiom serves as a reminder of the importance of mutual respect and understanding. It also reflects the tension between traditional values and the need for adaptation, highlighting the difficulties characters face in reconciling their beliefs with those of others. This idiom reinforces the theme of social cohesion, suggesting that harmony is attainable through acceptance and dialogue.

The use of irreversible binomial idioms in *Things Fall Apart* highlights the cultural depth and social dynamics of Igbo society. Achebe employs these expressions to enrich the narrative, reflecting core values like resilience and community. They also illustrate the characters' struggles to maintain their identity amidst external pressures, offering insight into themes of cultural change and social conflict.

#### 4.1.4 Phrasal Compound Idiom

Phrasal compound idioms are lexemic idioms. They are combinations of words that, when used together, convey a meaning different from the literal meanings of the individual words. In other words, they are combinations of words that convey complex meanings, often related to emotions, relationships, or social dynamics and these idioms enrich the narrative by encapsulating intricate feelings and cultural sentiments, highlighting the characters' internal struggles and social interactions. In "Things Fall Apart," Achebe employs phrasal compound idioms to deepen the reader's understanding of the characters' experiences and the societal shifts occurring within the Igbo community. Below are five examples of phrasal compound idioms related to the themes in the text, along with an analysis of their significance:

1. Heavy-hearted: This idiom expresses a profound sense of sadness or emotional burden. For instance, when Okonkwo reflects on the changes taking place in his village due to colonial influences, he feels heavy-hearted about the loss of traditional values and the disintegration of community ties. This idiom encapsulates the emotional weight that characters experience as they confront the painful



reality of cultural disruption, illustrating the tension between their deep-seated attachments to tradition and the harsh realities of change.

2. **Deep-rooted:** This phrase signifies beliefs, traditions, or customs that are firmly established and difficult to alter. In the novel, Achebe describes the deep-rooted traditions of the Igbo people, which highlight the community's resistance to change and the use of this idiom underscores the strength of cultural identity and the challenges posed by colonial forces attempting to uproot these longstanding practices. It reflects the characters' struggles to maintain their heritage in the face of external pressures, emphasizing the tension between continuity and transformation in the societal landscape.
3. **Well-meaning:** This idiom refers to intentions that are good but may lead to unintended negative consequences and the well-meaning actions of the missionaries, for example, often result in misunderstandings and conflicts within the Igbo community. Achebe uses this idiom to illustrate the complexities of intercultural interactions, where the intentions of outsiders, despite being positive, clash with the established values and norms of the local people. This highlights the nuanced portrayal of characters and the intricacies of cross-cultural relationships in the narrative.
4. **Heartfelt:** This expression conveys genuine emotion and sincerity. When characters share heartfelt sentiments during communal gatherings or discussions about their struggles, it reflects the deep connections among the villagers. For instance, during moments of crisis, heartfelt speeches resonate with the community, fostering solidarity. This idiom emphasizes the emotional depth of the characters' interactions, revealing how shared feelings and collective experiences shape their responses to external challenges, reinforcing the theme of unity in adversity.
5. **Long-standing:** This idiom denotes customs, practices, or relationships that have persisted over a significant period. In "Things Fall Apart," the long-standing customs of the Igbo community provide a framework for social order and identity. Achebe highlights how these traditions, while revered, are also tested by the forces of change introduced by colonialism and the use of this idiom illustrates the tension between the desire to preserve established ways of life and the inevitable transformations brought about by external influences, reflecting the characters' internal conflicts regarding tradition and modernity.

The phrasal compound idioms in *Things Fall Apart* play a key role in expressing the characters' emotional and cultural struggles. Achebe uses them to highlight themes of tradition, change, and resilience, emphasizing the Igbo community's challenges under colonial rule and their ongoing relevance to cultural identity today.

#### 4.1.5 Incorporating Verb Idiom

Incorporating verb idioms blend verbs with other elements. **This type of idioms**, according to Makkai, are highly idiomatic, with meanings that cannot be easily inferred from the verb and other elements in the phrase. On the other hand, **phrasal verbs** often involve some level of compositionality, where the meaning is related to the individual components, and their structure is more flexible.

They are often producing expressions that articulate actions or states significant to the characters' experiences and the narrative's progression and these idioms provide insight into the characters' daily lives and their relationships, and their responses to the changing social landscape within Igbo society. In "Things Fall Apart," Chinua Achebe skillfully employs incorporating verb idioms to illuminate the interplay between individual agency and collective identity. Below are five examples of incorporating verb idioms found in the text, along with an analysis of their significance:

1. **"He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart."** It means to destroy unity or break apart a bond. This idiom is shown in the Obierika speech about colonialism when breaking Igbo traditions. This idiom is used to refer to the **effect of colonialism's** destruction on Igbo society. Obierika, Okonkwo's friend, says this when reflecting on how the arrival of European missionaries and their foreign ways have divided the Igbo people and fractured their unity. The knife

symbolizes the act of cutting off the old ways, and the "things that held us together" refer to the traditional values, customs, and social structures that previously bound the Igbo community. The phrase emphasizes the **irreversible damage** caused by foreign influence, causing the society to "fall apart."

**2. "Okonkwo was ruled by one passion—to hate everything that his father Unoka had loved". This idiom refers to** completely controlled or dominated by something. In terms of its context in the written text, it indicates Okonkwo's fear of weakness dictates his actions. Okonkwo's existence is motivated by a deep distaste for weakness and all associated with it, particularly the way his father, Unoka, lived. Unoka was poor and unfulfilled, and Okonkwo saw his love of music and laughter as signs of weakness. The phrase "controlled by" illustrates how Okonkwo's fear of becoming like his father shapes his decisions, behaviors, and attitude toward other people. His excessive behavior, which includes rejecting tenderness and becoming rude, is directly related to this dominant urge. The comment highlights his obsessive desire to sever his father's legacy in order to avoid making the same mistakes twice.

**3. "He has washed his hands and so he eats with the kings."** This idiom represents cleansing or preparing oneself to be worthy of honor. Contextually, it refers to personal responsibility leading to success. This aphorism is significant in Igbo culture because it stands for personal responsibility and dignity. The reason for Okonkwo's success in his village is his tenacity and diligence; he "washes his hands" by rising to prominence as a respected warrior, a successful farmer, and an important member of the community. The statement claims that he has earned the right to sit among the elders or those in charge since he has demonstrated his strength and discipline, which are highly valued in Igbo society. It highlights the idea that the secret to success is not just birthright but also hard work.

**4. "Okonkwo was choked with hate." This idiom means when someone is** overwhelmed by strong emotion. In other words, it describes Okonkwo's intense of anger and resentment. Okonkwo's depth of emotion is evident in this sentence, particularly his dislike of things that he views as weak or dishonorable. Throughout the book, Okonkwo is shown to be struggling with strong emotions, especially in response to the changes brought about by colonialism and his fear of failing. The expression claims that Okonkwo's animosity is widespread and manifests itself in his actions, which usually lead to rash and aggressive choices. It reveals his internal conflict between maintaining his traditional values and the changing world, as well as his deep frustration with the weakness he associates with past generations.

The use of incorporating verb idioms in *Things Fall Apart* plays a crucial role in expressing the characters' actions and experiences. Achebe employs them to reveal daily life, cultural values, and responses to change, exploring themes of loyalty, resilience, and community. These idioms highlight the struggle to maintain cultural identity and tradition amid societal disruption, reflecting broader themes in postcolonial literature.

#### 4.1.6. Pseudo idioms

A **pseudo-idiom** is an **expression that mimics the structure or function of a true idiom** but lacks the **established, culturally fixed, or widely recognized meaning** that is characteristic of authentic idiomatic expressions. In other words, a pseudo-idiom appears to be an idiom because it uses **figurative language or a combination of words** to convey a meaning, but it is often either **newly coined** or **context-dependent**, and may not have the same **fixed usage or widespread cultural recognition**. The following expressions are **figurative** in nature, using imagery or comparisons to convey deeper meanings. However, they may not be **traditional or fixed** expressions that have been passed down through generations, which is a characteristic of true idioms or proverbs. Instead, they are more **context-specific** and could be seen as **invented** for the literary purposes of the novel.

**1. "Okonkwo was a man who was afraid of his own shadow."** Although this term sounds like a traditional idiom, it is actually not a well-known adage in Igbo culture. Nevertheless, it mimics the form of an idiom, making it a fake idiom. Although the phrase might imply someone who is very afraid, in the book it is more a metaphor for Okonkwo's internal conflict than a widely used expression.

2. **"His hands were like a well-constructed house, a metaphor of strength."** This metaphor, which compares Okonkwo's hands to a house's solid and strong foundation, is obviously figurative. It is not a typical Igbo proverb or statement that has been passed down through the years, despite the fact that it is employed for dramatic effect. It might be regarded as a novel literary metaphor that functions similarly to an idiom but is not culturally particular.

3. **"He had a heart like a stone"**. The term implies a person who is emotionally apathetic and uncompromising, like stone. Though it is more of a descriptive metaphor than a well-known phrase in Igbo culture, this expression has the appearance of an idiom. Although it isn't an idiomatic expression in the conventional sense, it functions similarly to an idiom by conjuring up a figurative meaning.

4. "The world was like a tight rope to walk, one steps off and you fall." While this term metaphorically captures the fragility of existence, it doesn't seem to be a well-established, traditional Igbo proverb. Although it lacks the deep cultural significance and historical roots of a genuine proverb, it still mirrors the metaphorical quality typically found in idioms.

In *Things Fall Apart*, pseudo-idioms are used to reflect the evolving language and cultural context of the Igbo community, especially as they encounter colonial influence. These expressions mimic traditional idioms but often carry a more nuanced or altered meaning, signaling shifts in social dynamics, identity, and values. Achebe uses pseudo-idioms to illustrate the tension between tradition and change, highlighting characters' struggles to adapt to new realities while preserving their cultural heritage.

## 5. Conclusions:

The comprehensive analysis of idiomatic expressions in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* demonstrates the author's skillful use of language to convey the cultural values, social dynamics, and internal conflicts within the Igbo society, and the study has identified and examined six main categories of idioms, including phrasal verb idioms, tournure idioms, irreversible binomial idioms, phrasal compound idioms, incorporating verb idioms, and pseudo idioms, each serving distinct purposes in enriching the narrative and enhancing the reader's understanding of the text.

These linguistic devices work in harmony to create a rich, multilayered narrative that reflects the depth and nuances of Igbo society and the study concludes that the idiomatic expressions in *Things Fall Apart* are not merely rhetorical flourishes, but rather serve as powerful tools for Achebe to preserve and transmit the cultural heritage and wisdom of the Igbo people. By analyzing these linguistic devices and the research has provided deeper insights into the social, psychological, and cultural dimensions of the novel, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of this seminal work of African literature and its enduring significance.

To comprehend the meaning of idioms, readers need to be able to understand the idiomatic expressions used in the work so that they can understand the whole context of the novel very well. It is obvious that Chinua Achebe uses such expressions to give readers of *Things Fall Apart* a flavor of the Igbo tribe. Moreover, it builds upon Achebe's writing style as one that teaches the readers with the cultures and beliefs of the tribe as well as authentic African writing.

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