



Raciolinguistic Ideologies and the Colonial Listening Apparatus in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*: A Raciolinguistic Reading

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ABSTRACT

Examining colonial raciolinguistic dynamics in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958/2006), the present study treats the novel as a corpus for sociolinguistic analysis, not merely as a literary text with sociolinguistic themes. Linguistic imperialism, decolonization theory, and Fanonian phenomenology have provided analytical frameworks for understanding colonial language hierarchy in African literatures, but all lack consideration of racial perception as a constitutive element of language subordination. This gap in the literature is bridged here through the application of the raciolinguistic ideologies framework, which shifts focus from what racialized speakers say/do to how colonial institutions come to hear them as inadequate. Detailed analysis of five strategic passages reveals how Achebe carefully builds a raciolinguistic counter-archive that validates Igbo metalinguistic awareness by turning the colonial gaze around, recording epistemic reciprocity, and theorizing settler destruction on Igbo terms (terms that do not take up the colonial system of evaluation). The conclusion is that the novel never says that the Igbo are legitimate according to colonial standards. Rather, it builds something entirely different that never used that scale of evaluation in the first place. This study expands raciolinguistics beyond its current U.S.-centric body of empirical evidence and positions postcolonial literary texts as legitimate venues for raciolinguistic analysis.

1. Introduction

The encounter between European colonizers and Africans was in part a linguistic one in which the negotiation of who was allowed to speak, what could be understood as legitimate language, and whose communicative practices were recognized as language was bound up with the racial and institutional frameworks of colonial rule. This study examines this negotiation as a sociolinguistic issue through a raciolinguistic lens, drawing on Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958/2006). Using Rosa and Flores' (2017) as well as Alim, Rickford, and Ball's (2016) framework of raciolinguistic ideologies, this paper asks not only what colonial language policy required, but how colonial institutions were ideologically organized to view African language speaking and how Achebe's work works against that system through its language choices.

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Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart* in contradistinction to a colonial literary canon, most explicitly *Heart of Darkness* (1899) by Conrad, that had consistently represented African speech as noise. In an essay titled *An Image of Africa*, Achebe diagnosed the problem as follows: when Africans speak in these texts, they do not speak a language. Their screams and grunts must be translated into a language by a European character. Achebe's argument foreshadows Rosa and Flores' theorization of the raciolinguistic gaze, or how institutional perception comes to be structured such that racialized speakers are heard as linguistically incompetent, regardless of what they actually say. British colonists translated this gaze into institutional language policy in Nigeria by mandating the use of English in schools, courts, and other administrative institutions. Meanwhile, Igbo oral traditions, legal systems, and epistemologies were cast as insufficiently structured for administrative purposes. The problem was perceptual, which then became political. Before colonial governments came to see the Igbo language as unsophisticated, they had positioned their institutions so that they would not hear the Igbo language as sophisticated in the first place. Achebe's novel seeks to bear witness to that dynamic. Although *Things Fall Apart* is a staple in African literature and postcolonial scholarship, it has not been examined from a raciolinguistic perspective. Additionally, raciolinguistics scholarship has been firmly situated within US minority language contexts, with little exploration of its application to African colonial/postcolonial contexts. This paper addresses both issues at once.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Analytical paradigms for thinking about colonial language hierarchy in African literature Phillipson's (1992) framework of linguistic imperialism, Ngũgĩ's (1986) decolonisation thesis, Fanon's (1952) phenomenology of alienation have in common that none of them theorises racial perception as a constitutive mechanism of linguistic subordination. They tend to locate colonial language hierarchy in the realm of policy choices, psycholinguistic dissonance, or, again, literary discourse. The structured hearing through which African communicative practices were institutionally validated as inferior remains unexamined. As a result, certain features of postcolonial literary texts' metalinguistic passages, proverb structures, representations of juridical discourse, and epistemological claims remain unread as sociolinguistic data. *Things Fall Apart* (1958/2006), though a finely-grained transcription of the colonial raciolinguistic encounter, has never been analyzed as such. The present study fills this gap.

1.3. Research Questions

1. How does the colonial raciolinguistic gaze operate in *Things Fall Apart* (1958/2006). through what specific mechanisms is Igbo communicative practice constituted as linguistically deficient?
2. What linguistic features of Achebe's text constitute a raciolinguistic counter-archive, and through what formal strategies do they construct an alternative evaluative apparatus that contests the colonial listening apparatus?
3. What does this analysis contribute to the theoretical development of raciolinguistics as a field, particularly with respect to its geographic and contextual scope beyond the US context?

1.4. Significance of the Study

In terms of contribution, this study does two things. First, for raciolinguistics, it puts the framework's key concepts to the test in both empirical and theoretical terms beyond the US context: the standardizing gaze, the raciolinguistic listening subject, the production of linguistic deficiency, and the shifting relation to a historical instantiation of racial-linguistic ideology in the African colonial context. Second, for African literary linguistics/postcolonial language study more broadly, it provides the analytic framework for reading postcolonial literary works as sociolinguistic datasets whose linguistic particulars can be read as primary raciolinguistic evidence. Both of these contributions can be applied elsewhere: the former to other case studies in postcolonial literary settings across Africa, South Asia, and the Caribbean, the latter to matters of language revitalisation and decolonisation policy on the ground in postcolonial nation-states.

2. Literature Review

This section discusses recent studies that serve as the foundation for this study's analysis of colonial linguistic imperialism in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958/2006) under the frameworks of raciolinguistic ideologies. Major themes explored in this review of literature include raciolinguistics as a framework for analysis, scholarship regarding colonial language imperialism in African literature, past criticism of *Things Fall Apart* (1958/2006). and a gap in research. Finally, this chapter closes by defining how this study fills that gap with its own unique contributions.

2.1. Raciolinguistic Ideologies: Theoretical Foundations

The study draws on the raciolinguistic ideologies framework developed by Rosa and Flores (2017) in their article titled *Unsettling Race and Language: Toward a Raciolinguistic Perspective*, featured in *Language in Society*. Rosa and Flores (2017)

maintain that sociolinguistics has been historically constrained because scholars have failed to conceptualize how race conditions how language is heard and institutionally assessed. Their framework theorizes two mechanisms working simultaneously: a standardizing gaze that attempts to hold speakers accountable to a whitealigned monolingual norm and a raciolinguistic gaze that ensures racialized speakers cannot sound anything other than linguistically inferior no matter what they produce. The analytical leverage of this second mechanism is that it displaces the problem away from what the speaker produces and onto how they are listened to institutionally (i.e., the raciolinguistic listening subject). It is this move from production to perception that raciolinguistics distincts itself from previous models such as domain theory, prestige models, and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Building upon earlier publications, this framework was introduced in Alim, Rickford, and Ball's (2016) edited collection *Raciolinguistics: How Language Shapes Our Ideas About Race*, published by Oxford University Press. In his introduction to that volume, Alim (2016) noted that raciolinguistic ideologies function not simply to misconstrue linguistic practice that is already taking place, but to construct what language "is" institutionally speaking, such that particular communicative practices are already disqualified from being heard as reasonable/discursive prior to their articulation. Rosa's (2019) monograph *Looking Like a Language, Sounding Like a Race* built upon this framework with an ethnographic account of the raciolinguistic experiences of Latinx youth across US schools. He offers the notion of raciolinguistic enregisterment to describe the way in which particular linguistic forms become raciolinguistically marked (heard as distinctively raced) as signs of linguistic inadequacy when deployed by racialized speakers. Preceding both volumes, Flores and Rosa's (2015) article *Undoing Appropriateness* from *Harvard Educational Review* offered crucial insights into the distinction between what speakers say and do versus what listeners in institutional contexts are conditioned to hear. The framework described above supplies the central instrument of analysis in the present study.

2.2. Colonial Language Imperialism and African Literature

Three monographs have been particularly influential in creating the prevailing frameworks through which colonial language has been examined in African literature. Phillipson's (1992) *Linguistic Imperialism*, from Oxford University Press, provides a theory of colonial language hierarchy according to which linguistic imperialism operates structurally similar to other forms of economic imperialism that is to say, there is systemic inequity to resources, prestige, and access to institutions. Phillipson's model is immensely productive, though limited to the level of language policy and structure; it cannot explain racialization as a technology of language subordination. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) offers *Decolonising the Mind* from Heinemann Press, which theorizes European languages as tools that imprison the African writer in foreign oral traditions and epistemologies that come at the expense of native languages. Ngũgĩ's model is committed to examining the cultural politics of the writer's psycholinguistic experience, but it largely ignores how African linguistic expression was institutionally marked as inadequate. Finally, Fanon's (1952) *Black Skin, White Masks* from Grove Press provides the closest precursor to raciolinguistics with its explication of the colonial subject who cannot achieve institutional personhood no matter their fluency in the colonial language. Fanon, too, is limited by his focus disciplinary focus: while phenomenological, his work provides no way of reading the linguistic features that colonial texts use to reproduce or resist the raciolinguistic framework.

These questions have been recently revisited but remain unanswered. Latumeten and Janah (2025) examined *Things Fall Apart* in the *Prologue Journal on Language and Literature* as an articulation of postcolonial consciousness countering colonial language education that forcibly altered the sociolinguistic unity of the Igbo peoples. Nawaz, Bibi, and Hussain (2025) interpreted canonical works of colonial English literature in the *Journal of Applied Linguistics and TESOL* to argue that their conventions of representation fetishize and pathologicalize indigenous ways of being. Dlamini and Peters (2024) reviewed the literature on African writing through a Fanonian lens in the *Journal of Postcolonial Psychology* in order to discuss how Black linguistic self-articulation is affected by the epidermalization of inferiority. Suleiman (2025) discussed the structural neo-linguistic imperialism at play in the postcolonial retention of European languages as institutions of power in Africa in the *Journal of African Languages and Literary Studies*. What these articles have in common is a flaw: each draws from theoretical frameworks (Phillipson's theory of linguistic imperialism, Bhabha's concept of hybridity, Fanon's theory of colonial psychology) that omit the constitutive nature of racial perception in colonial language encounters. None used raciolinguistics as a lens through which to study this literature.

2.3. Studies on *Things Fall Apart* (1958/2006)

There is a large body of critical literature on *Things Fall Apart* (1958/2006). However, from a sociolinguistic perspective, the bulk of this work is methodologically unavailable. The essays by Achebe himself are, of course, critical works of the highest order that speak directly to the topic at hand. In "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" (1977), published in *The Massachusetts Review*, Achebe explicitly names the operation of racist hearing that treats colonial African speech as noise rather than language as the central mechanism of colonial racial ideology in representational literature. Achebe's argument explicitly precedes and works as a direct foundation for Rosa and Flores's (2017) theorization of this phenomenon.

Whether or not one uses the terminology of raciolinguistics, which postdates Achebe's essay, this work has a long intellectual history intimately tied to Achebe's own literary and critical project. In *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (1975), Heinemann publishes Achebe's meditation on bending and shaping English to bear the weight of my African experience.

Critiques of the novel have opened the doors for cultural, postcolonial, and ideological interpretations. However, what these studies have in common is that they don't approach the novel's language itself that is, its metalinguistic passages, proverb formulations, representations of juridical discourse, or epistemological claims of equivalence as sociolinguistic data. Instead, they read the novel as if its themes, characters, and ideological stances were the data. Al Zubayer (2025) and Dlamini and Peters (2024) take steps toward reading African postcolonial texts linguistically. However, both of these studies remain grounded in psychological and postcolonial theory. To my knowledge, no study uses raciolinguistics as its lens for reading *Things Fall Apart*. This gap can be easily filled.

2.4. Research Gap

Existing scholarship discloses a gap in inquiry on three fronts. First, raciolinguistics has been predominantly, if not exclusively, applied to US minority language communities (specifically, African American Language and Latinx linguistic practices) and has yet to be deployed in relation to African colonial and postcolonial language situations, even though it contains theoretical tools with immediate salience for thinking through colonial language stratification in Africa. Second, research into colonial language imperialism as it is negotiated in African literatures, such as Latumeten and Janah's forthcoming work, Nawaz et al. 2025, Dlamini and Peters 2024, and Suleiman 2025, has not intersected with raciolinguistics and is therefore missing a tool for thinking through the perception of race as a mechanism that produces colonial language hierarchies. Third, scholarship on *Things Fall Apart* has yet to apply a sociolinguistic lens that treats the novel's particular linguistic representations as raciolinguistic data in their own right.

The current paper fills all three aspects of this gap. Bringing Rosa and Flores's (2017) raciolinguistic framework to bear on *Things Fall Apart* moves raciolinguistics beyond analyses of the United States to the African colonial literary canon; it also positions postcolonial literary texts as a legitimate space for raciolinguistic analysis, and it allows us to produce an interpretation of *Things Fall Apart* that focuses on close reading of text rather than thematic analysis. That this close reading demonstrates Achebe to have constructed an intentional raciolinguistic counter-archive that systematically works to dismantle the colonial listening machine by instituting an alternative framework for interpretation is novel to scholarship because it arises from a methodological standpoint that neither raciolinguistics nor African literary analysis has previously taken.

3. Research Methodology

The present study is qualitative and interpretivist in nature, conceptualizing *Things Fall Apart* (1958/2006) as sociolinguistic data rather than as thematic literature. Analysis centers on raciolinguistic ideologies alone, through which colonial institutions perceive, assess, and remediate Igbo discourse. Corpus includes Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958/2006), Anchor Books edition. Five excerpts from the text were purposively sampled to create the analytic corpus based on the following criteria: (a) They include metalinguistic discussion, (b) Colonial-Igbo institutional interactions, and (c) Evaluations of Igbo discourse as adequate or authoritative. Drawing on raciolinguistic theory, each extract will be analyzed through the lens of the raciolinguistic ideologies of standardizing gaze and raciolinguistic listening subject: Who is being positioned to speak Igbo improperly? How is Igbo speech marked as illegitimate/illicit/normal/perfect? This will be done through examining lexical usage, figurative language, discourse structure, and metapragmatic statements in order to point out: (1) moments of colonial raciolinguistic evaluation and (2) counter archival practices that record the complexity of Igbo communication and systems of valuation outside the colonial. Trends identified in analysis of the five excerpts will be contextualized within the novel as a whole to discuss both consistency in raciolinguistic framing across Text and Achebe's employment of a counter listening device. The analysis is limited to one text, five excerpts, and one theory in order to preserve richness of analysis. This project does not engage in quantitative analyses or large scale generalizations outside of colonial literature *Things Fall Apart* (1958/2006),

4. Analysis and Findings

This paper provides a raciolinguistic lens original theory from Rosa and Flores (2017) and subsequent work by Alim, Rickford, and Ball (2016) onto Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958/2006). Five excerpts from *Things Fall Apart* (1958/2006) are read as data that reveal various raciolinguistic processes by which colonial linguistic supremacy was created, institutionalized, and resisted in colonial Igbo society. By interpreting these excerpts through a raciolinguistic lens, this paper argues that raciolinguistics was not chosen merely as a theoretical lens for interpreting this novel, but rather because it allows the most specific level of analysis of this process. Namely, raciolinguistics illuminates a factor that previous sociolinguistic

theories ignored: colonial linguistic stratification did not occur simply by policy or prestige, but by having Igbo speakers viewed through what Rosa and Flores (2017) call the raciolinguistic gaze as linguistically inferior, without even having to hear their speech. Rosa and Flores (2017) define standardizing gaze as the way institutions measure racialized speakers against a white-centric monolingual standard and mark their performance as inferior. What makes this gaze unique is that it occurs before linguistic proof: speakers are already established as inferior on the basis of race before they have had a chance to speak. The excerpt below demonstrates that Achebe's work recognizes this pattern and illustrates a rebuttal to this claim within the first few pages of the book.

Extract 1

"Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded as a very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten." (Achebe, 1958/2006, p. 10)

This sentence does ideological work through foundational raciolinguistic counter-positioning. Rather than introduce Igbo proverbial discourse as an exotica to be explained to a hypothetical outsider, Achebe positions proverb as constitutive of an elaborate and historically situated communicative practice that has a (functional) theory of itself. The culinary metaphor palm-oil that brings out the taste of food positions proverb as structural necessity rather than rhetorical flourish: proverb is not icing on the cake but the basis on which social meaningfulness inheres in Igbo discourse. Put raciolinguistically, this explicitly rejects the legibility standard against which Igbo oral discourse was judged by colonial institutions. Colonial administrators set up these institutions in ways that could only hear proverbial discourse marked by European-language ideologies as tonal, non-written, figurative rather than logically propositional as epistemologically lacking. Extract 1 lays bare the process of hearing as an ideological rather than a linguistic analysis. The discursive tradition of the Igbo does not simply have a language; it has theorized how language works and what it takes for language to work, calling into question, from the first pages of the text, any rigorous definition of epistemological sophistication. For Alim (2016), raciolinguistic ideologies work not simply by warping people's perception of existing language but by constituting what will and will not count as language in institutional contexts. Extract 1 is Achebe's refusal to accept the constitutive force of exclusion, positioning Igbo discourse as fully theorized from the outset. Extract 2 is the institutional endpoint of the raciolinguistic process inaugurated in Extract 1. If Extract 1 records Igbo communicative competence, Extract 2 records the colonial machine's inability to register it and the genre through which that inability gets institutionalised. Rosa and Flores (2017) conceptualize the raciolinguistic listening subject as the institutional agent whose listening is ideologically calibrated to hear racialized speakers as inadequate, no matter what they say. The colonial officer is that subject distilled.

Extract 2

"The story of this man who had killed a messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading. One could almost write a whole chapter on him. Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph, at any rate. There was so much else to include, and one must be firm in cutting out details. He had already chosen the title of the book, after much thought: The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger." (Achebe, 1958/2006, p. 209)

This part of the novel is the raciolinguistic climax, and its language structure needs careful analysis. The Commissioner's comment that Okonkwo's death would make for interesting reading and that it deserves a paragraph does not indicate callousness. It is a raciolinguistic act of the most consequential kind: the reduction of a man's entire life, resistance, and death into a unit of colonial textual production. The quantifying language of an entire chapter and a substantial paragraph grammatically reduces a person to mere raw material for European narrative, assessing their value not by their social status, legal authority, or communicative complexity within Igbo institutional life, but rather by their utility as content in the colonial genre being developed by the Commissioner. This is the raciolinguistic listening subject working at full institutional power: Okonkwo is not heard as an important Igbo political and moral figure, but rather as data that can be added or removed based on the needs of a colonial text.

In its title alone, the projected book performs the standardising gaze at once through genre and word choice. Pacification turns ongoing colonial domination, military force, structural dismantlement, and destruction of Igbo political systems into a finalised bureaucratic accomplishment, obscuring through grammar both the coloniser's effort and the colonised struggle. Violence of enforcement is translated into nominalization into simply another bureaucratic product. Primitive invokes the race-language link demanded by the standardising gaze at the level of structure: it frames the Igbo population as backward, irrational, and thus inherently unable to achieve the types of self-organisation that the colonial assessment regime marks with literacy in the European script. Importantly, this designation occurs following the novel's careful accounting of Igbo legal process, knowledge

of the cosmos, ritual leadership, and proverbial knowledge of language use, metadiscursive self-consciousness indeed those very linguistic practices that a tool untainted by raciolinguistic logic could take as proof of organisational proficiency. Tribes also performs a similar maneuver with respect to recognition on the political level: it refuses to recognize the Igbo society as a social formation at all, robbing the egwugwu ritual, the village council, and indeed the entirety of ceremonially managed leadership displayed in the novel of anything that might be considered equivalent to European political forms. The book produced by the Commissioner will not merely misrepresent the colonial encounter it will produce Igbo speakers as objects of European knowledge-production, rather than subjects of their own institutional realities. This is what Rosa and Flores (2017) call the most pernicious effect of the raciolinguistic gaze: not failing to see what is right in front of you, but producing (through the vehicles of institutional discourse) a racialized speaker who cannot structurally see their own communicative and institutional richness. When the Commissioner sets out to write his book, he doesn't fail to understand Okonkwo's importance because he doesn't know any better. He will successfully fail to understand Okonkwo because of the ideological technologies of perception through which he reads the world around him. The raciolinguistic gaze, as evidenced here, is less an act of looking than it is a technology of erasure one that the novel aims to, well, overwrite by archiving the very content that will be deleted from the Commissioner's book.

Extract 3

"He spoke through an interpreter who was an Ibo man, though his dialect was different and harsh to the ears of Mbanta. Many people laughed at his dialect and the way he used words strangely." (Achebe, 1958/2006, p. 133)

This scene has been widely missed or underread in the scholarship thus far as either comic relief or ethnic tension. Analyzed through a raciolinguistic lens, however, we see it more precisely as evidence that the Mbanta community has a metalinguistic evaluation grid operating just fine, and that said grid is operating vigorously and critically in this moment. The Mbanta villagers' evaluation of the interpreter is not code-resistant behavior against colonial intrusion. It is targeted sociolinguistic evaluation: they perceive his speech as having a different and coarse dialect; they judge his vocabulary as odd. These are precisely the kinds of judgments that norm-fluent speakers make constantly about incorrect or vague language use. The Mbanta community, that is, is operating as a raciolinguistic listening subject, in the useful and positive sense of a listening subject whose hearing is inflected by linguistic norms and who evaluates the speech they hear based on those norms, rather than upon the colonial order of prestige.

The raciolinguistic irony of the passage lands with structural precision: The missionary project whose very institutional ideology is built on placing European Christianity and its linguistic form epistemically above the rest has ironically created a dynamic wherein its mode of transmission is deemed inadequate by those very people they attempt to dominate. The evaluative gaze is inverted, if only for a moment. Here, it is the colonial project that has failed to produce a proper Igbo speaker, and it is the speech community judging them. Mockery from the people is far from innocent or happenstantial; it is metalinguistic labor a communal voicing of the standards by which communicative fitness is judged. This next extract shows another aspect of the raciolinguistic encounter in action: a rejection of colonial epistemic authority via what Santos (2007) might describe as a decolonial epistemic move that takes the form of organized theological and philosophical argument that the colonial episteme cannot 'compute' by itself. Flores and Rosa (2015) suggest that a key consequence of raciolinguistic ideology is that racialized speakers are systematically refused the right to have 'knowledges'. In Extract 4, we see an Igbo speaker producing just that, in direct conversation with the missionary's assertions.

Extract 4

"You say that there is one supreme God who made heaven and earth," said Akunna on one of Mr. Brown's visits. "We also believe in Him and call Him Chukwu. He made all the world and the other gods." (Achebe, 1958/2006, pp 163)

This interaction stands out as one of the most crucial sites of raciolinguistic struggle in the novel. It has been misunderstood as evidence for cultural exchange or theological interest because of scholarship that reads it primarily as such. When viewed through Rosa and Flores's (2017) lens, however, it becomes clear that Akunna makes an epistemological equivalence claim through this statement: Igbo cosmology already includes what the missionary believes to be a revelation unique to Christianity. Akunna claims Chukwu, the supreme God in Igbo belief, to be the same referent that God names for his own being, only with the difference in linguistic elaboration, rather than a conceptual absence. By saying He made all the world and the other gods, he positions Igbo theology within the schema of hierarchical monotheism, where lesser gods are not competitors to the Supreme God but creations under it, rather than apart from it, equally as complex a theological position as the Trinity.

In contrast to such a purely theological reading, the raciolinguistic framework illuminates what cannot be received as legitimate within the colonial missionary gaze's standardizing stare: Mr. Brown's project is not dialogue in any epistemologically innocent sense. It is, rather, a conversion effort premised on the inadequacy of Igbo cosmological understanding. In order for this project to succeed, Akunna's statement must be heard not as equivalent but as a misconception, a raciolinguistic hearing that necessarily positions Igbo theological discourse as a groping towards the truths of European Christianity. Achebe archives the statement here without irony and with epistemological fidelity, forcing the reader to hear it as the equivalency that it is. This constructs an alternative listening subject: one capable of hearing Igbo cosmological discourse as epistemologically adequate.

The fifth extract intervenes at the scale of conceptual vocabulary on the link between raciolinguistic ideology and resistance. Rosa and Flores (2017) suggest that resistance to the raciolinguistic hierarchy cannot take place within the evaluative terms the hierarchy installs. To argue for the legitimacy of a racialised linguistic practice on the terms of the standardising gaze is to concede the gaze's power to confer or deny legitimacy. Resistance most consequential to their argument develops an entirely new evaluative apparatus, one that theorises the colonial encounter on its own terms, rather than using colonial vocabulary. Extract 5 most richly demonstrates this strategy through condensation and analytical power in the novel.

Extract 5

"He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart." (Achebe, 1958/2006, p. 161)

Uttered by Obierika, this sentence imagines colonial devastation in locally (Igbo) conceptual terms. Employing an Igbo system of metaphor, this sentence generates an analysis (a theory) of what colonial encounter has done to the social bonds of the community. The knife metaphor embeds a specific understanding of social cohesion: community is imagined as woven/bound and therefore capable of being cut at its seams. Decline is not merely an abstraction but a materially descriptive end-point: if you cut what binds you together, the whole is undone because what made it whole no longer exists. Colonial violence is thus identified not through colonial language civilization/progress/pacification but through Igbo figurative language that holds within it a theory of communal ties. This is the raciolinguistic counter-move that Rosa and Flores (2017) mark out as the one they find analytically most significant: not challenging colonialism by arguing that Igbo discourse can in fact live up to the colonial standard but proving that Igbo discourse has its own standards of analysis for which the colonial standard is not now nor has it ever been the relevant measure. The sentence gives its name to the novel the authorial decision of raciolinguistic exactitude. Achebe titles his text from inside Igbo discourse, refusing the assumption that the vocabulary for theorizing colonial devastation must come from without, or that the language which has been positioned as pre-rational and lacking the analytical capacity to critique must itself be invoked through western theory. The student who understands this sentence as the analytical intervention that it is, has already ceased to be the kind of listening subject that the colonial raciolinguistic regime needs and desires. Across the five extracts then, the raciolinguistic counter-archive that Achebe is building performs four moves. It claims the metalinguistic competence of the Igbo conversation prior to colonial representation (Extract 1), it archives the apparatus by which that metalinguistic competence is translated into deficit (Extract 2), it shows how the archived conversation is speaking with an evaluative logic of its own that can turn the colonial logic back on itself (Extract 3), it archives the epistemic parity of Igbo cosmological discourse that the missionary archive was designed not to hear (Extract 4), and it theorizes colonial violence with Igbo taxonomies that do not use the white evaluative scale that it critiques (Extract 5). This is not critique on the colonial language scale, it's building a new evaluative order where that scale has no purchase. The results of this analysis have shown (through line-by-line examinations of five text excerpts from *Things Fall Apart (1958/2006)*) that Achebe encodes in his novel what can be described as a raciolinguistic counter-archive: a recorded account of Igbo linguistic repertoires, social organization, metapragmatic awareness, and worldknowledge that colonial powers were designed not to hear. The analysis, drawing on the insights of Rosa and Flores (2017), Alim (2016), and Flores and Rosa (2015), uncovered five distinct raciolinguistic dynamics at play in the novel's primary textual data. Taken together, they show that Achebe's linguistic and literary decisions don't argue that the Igbo are legitimized by colonial standards; they build an alternate evaluative system in which those standards were never considered valid and an alternate listening subject who could understand the counter-archive as it is.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has argued that *Things Fall Apart (1958/2006)* is itself a raciolinguistic counter-archive: a record that names, theorizes, and challenges how Igbo came to be linguistically constructed as lack through colonialism. Through a framework of raciolinguistic ideologies, this paper argues that *Things Fall Apart (1958/2006)* stages not simply a conflict of tongues but the workings of a colonial listening regime the standardizing and raciolinguistic gaze, to invoke Rosa and Flores that is already set up to hear Igbo speech as sound. By paying particular attention to Igbo metalinguistic awareness, legal and knowledge systems, and auto-contained language ideologies across the five excerpts analyzed here, Achebe continually undoes the colonial ideology that authority relies on European-based monolingualism. The results show that Achebe's literary

techniques do not simply plead for the accommodation of Igbo within a pre-established hierarchy; rather, they helpfully produce an entirely different system of value and an alternative listening subject capable of hearing Igbo communicative practices as valid on their own terms. This contributes to raciolinguistics in two keyways. Firstly, it evidences that the paradigm can travel beyond its primarily US-centric empirical grounding in order to productively explore colonial texts in Africa, where auditoryracial perception and language policy were mutually constitutive. Secondly, it positions literary texts from postcolonial Africa as methodologically productive sites of raciolinguistic data, rather than merely secondary examples that support theories generated elsewhere. This study thus contributes to raciolinguistic and African literary linguistics by showing how a close reading of primary texts, informed by theory, can illuminate the colonial raciolinguistic experience.

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