ABSTRACT

The present research is a sociolinguistic study of Chinua Achebe’s novels. All the novels of Achebe are studied in the light of social background, ethnicity and the Igbo culture that existed in Nigeria during the period when the novels were being written. The language used by the novelist is unique and suits the characters he has portrayed. The inner world of the characters is revealed via the language use. Therefore, studying the novels of Achebe from sociolinguistic point of view is one of the ways to interpret the literary discourse and arrive at authenticity of the speech situations and the characters.

The thesis is divided into five chapters:

Chapter One

The first chapter highlights the Aims and Objectives, Rationale and Significance and also the Scope and Limitations of the present research. The life and works of Chinua Achebe as a novelist are also discussed in this chapter. A brief biographical sketch of Achebe has been included therein. In addition, it discusses works of Chinua Achebe in general and his life in the rural Nigeria in which he lived and certain aspects of it, such as the dialect and his philosophy of life and how it influenced his writing in particular.
Chapter Two

This chapter throws light on the sociolinguistic theory in general, and different concepts and terms related to it in particular. In the beginning, an attempt is made to define and explicate the term ‘Sociolinguistics’. The chapter discusses the major sociolinguistic terms and concepts in view of the research objectives such as Linguistics and Sociolinguistics, Sociolinguistics and the Sociology of Language, Linguistic Variation or Language Variation, Dialect, Idiolect and Sociolect, Language, Society and Culture, Literature and Sociolinguistics and some Sociolinguistic Terms such as Pidgin, Creole, Code Switching, Code Mixing, Initialism, Honorific Terms, Terms of Greetings, Terms of Abuses, Curses and Diminutive Expressions. Several factors influencing the linguistic expressions are elaborately studied. The theory part in this chapter also discusses the interrelations between the language and society. In this chapter, it is revealed how skilled writers of English language have presented the language of their characters. The chapter provides a theoretical background for the further chapters to be developed.

Chapter Three

This chapter explains the sociological background of both the major and minor characters of Achebe’s novels. Generally speaking, Achebe’s characters come primarily from a certain regional background e.g. the continent of Africa. They are predominantly rustic, habituating in a particular region of Nigeria. Achebe
preferred his home territory to any other place for writing his literary work. Therefore, in actuality, his characters reflected this background of Igbo tribal setting in and around Umiofia. The chapter therefore, studies the Igbo society, its significant tradition, and structure of families, role of family heads, status of women, rituals, influence of colonialism and other related factors. An attempt is made to relate the sociological background of the characters to their linguistic behavior as it has a bearing on the development of the novels. It is observed that a person’s sociological background affects the linguistic expressions. It is maintained and validated in the present study that the social background of the characters help in understanding the novels.

Chapter Four

This chapter is devoted to the use of language and dialect by the characters in Chinua Achebe’s novels. Achebe’s characters come from a region of Nigeria where the standard language is scarcely used and the regional dialect is more predominant. Factors influencing characters’ language or linguistic expressions in the novels and their sociological relations are discussed with appropriate examples. Each factor has been thoroughly discussed. Achebe’s skillful use of other linguistic tools of expression, such as Unusual Spellings, Terms of Greetings, Honorific Tags, Initialism, Abuses, curses and Diminutive Expressions along with the Phonological, Morphological and Syntactic variations are studied.
Chapter Five

The chapter is mainly devoted to the major findings of the present research. In the beginning, it takes the review of the preceding chapters. Then, it states the pedagogical implications of the study. Towards the end of the chapter, an effort is made to suggest further scope for research in the related area. The results of the study of the five novels of Chinua Achebe are highlighted in this chapter.
MY SINCERE TRIBUTES

TO

CHINUA ACHEBE

(Nov. 1930 – Mar. 2013)