Language, Identity and the Cultural Context of Names in Selected Nigerian Novels

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Abstract

Names are a reflection of a people's language and culture hence novelists often adopt names to capture their sociocultural background, the society in which their texts are set, or the background of their fictional characters. Using the framework of Anthroponomastics which leans on linguistic anthropology, this study examines names in four selected Nigerian novels, namely Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Anthills of the Savannah,* and Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun.* The analysis of the names extracted from the novels shows that in names, language and culture intertwine to bequeath an identity to the named person. This identity may mirror the expected character, roles or the circumstances surrounding the conception and birth of the named one, or may generally reflect the worldview of his/her society. The meaning of names is contextual and derives from a society's cultural and sociolinguistic reservoir which is accessible to members whenever they need names that capture their intended meaning. The names in the novels also indicate the individual and the group identity of the bearers and their society, but expressed through language and they often have multi-faceted meanings.

Keywords: names, language, culture, identity, worldview

1.0 Introduction

Naming, according to Deluzain (1996) is a universal process that differs significantly from culture to culture on how they are given. Its primary purpose in every culture is to linguistically and appropriately label an individual. In other words, naming is a cultural construct of identifying a person through the employment of the cultural strategies in the given society and its realisation through language. Naming is one of the practices that emphasise the mutual relationship that exist between language and culture, wherein culture embodies language, while language expresses culture (Mbarachi, 2014). Names mean more than words used for identification purposes (Guma, 2001; Lamidi & Aboh, 2011), but oftentimes, reflect the circumstances of a child's birth, the parent's perception of the child, their ideology of parenting, the expectation of both the parents and the extended family members on the role the child is to play in the family, the community, as well as the society. Thus, names are used in every culture and are of great importance to the giver, the named one and the society.

Dehnart (2009) posits that names communicate much more than a label, but equally depict who the individual is, both to his family and to others, as well as establish the individual's reputation which is recalled whenever the name is thought of or spoken. The import of Dehnart's (2009) view is that while the name identifies the person to whom it is given, the continuous use of the name communicates the whole personality of the individual as well as the identity of his environment or society. Through names, we can identify where a person comes from, hence, they (names) reflect both the linguistic and the cultural identity of the bearer. Some previous studies on names exist in the literature. For instance, Agyekum's (2006) study considers the Akan names of Ghana as sociocultural tags that have meanings and perform sociocultural functions. He attributes religious names (Christian and Islamic) as the outcome of imported religions in Ghana which add to the existing typologies of names and increase the adoption of multiple names that often give prestige to the bearer's social standing when acquired through virtuous means but debases the bearer when acquired through vicious means.

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Odebunmi (2008) did an onomastic study of Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and discovered that Achebe deployed four prominent naming strategies which reflect the major ethno-religious groups in Nigeria. These strategies are official names, first names, nicknames and institutional/titular names. These studies by Agyekum (2006) and Odebunmi (2008) differ from the present study given that Agyekum's (2006) used non-literary data, whereas Odebunmi (2008) used literary data but studied only Achebes's *Anthills of the Savannah*. However, they are both relevant to this present study as they have given clearer perspectives on both the linguistic, anthropological and onomastic studies of names.

Odebode (2011) adopted a lexico-semantic approach to the study of names of characters in Wole Soyinka's *King Baabu*. According to him, naming is both pragmatic, and is functionally a declaration and a means of identity. Using Castells' identity framework, Lamidi and Aboh (2011) also investigated names in selected 21st-century Nigerian novels, and concluded that the names people give to their children in the novels, reflect the relationship between name and identity that "novelists use to depict their country's socio-political dislocations" (p. 45). Although both studies differ from this study, the lexico-semantic approach of Odebode (2011) and the methodology of Lamidi and Aboh (2011) are both relevant to the methodological and analytical approaches adopted in the present study.

Literature is said to mirror life which includes the totality of human existence within a given culture or society. Nigerian literary authors use literature to capture some aspects of both the Nigerian language(s) and culture in their works. The importance of names in literary texts is understandable given that fiction and reality mingle in the texts (Tóth, 2014). Whether in reality or in fiction, names are created with linguistic items and cultural mores which account for their meaning. This paper examines the names in the sampled novels by determining what they mean, and the various ways naming is used by the authors to linguistically construct identities that reflect the social and cultural reality of their society. This is the focus of this paper.

2.0 Theoretical Base

There are two branches of research within the field of Onomastics. These are anthroponomastics and toponomastics. Whereas anthroponomastics focuses on the study of the name of individuals, toponomastics is preoccupied with the investigation of names of places. Theoretically, this study adopts anthroponomastics which is based on the view that there is a strong bond between a language and the cultural practices of the speakers of the given language (Al-Zumor, 2009). Based on this framework, naming is a universal cultural practice that reflects the worldview of a people. Personal names therefore reflect the identity and culture of a people which are expressed through the language spoken by members of the given society.

This study is also situated within the field of linguistic anthropology but it uses data sourced from literature. Duranti (1997) conceptualises the study of language within the framework of linguistic anthropology as both a cultural facility and an exercise. Situating this study within the field of linguistic anthropology underscores the strong relationship that exists between a people's language and their cultural practices, and how language functions as a cultural resource, that is perceived "as a powerful tool used to view and understand the worldview and philosophy of a particular society" (Agyekum, 2006, p. 210). Personal names are meaningful part of language, and authors who set their novels within a given society appropriate the existing names in these societies and give such to the fictional characters in their works. The understanding of the meaning of names in a novel requires recourse to the language and the cultural background of the named characters, or the society in which the novel is set.

3.0 Methodology

The data for this study were extracted from four novels, two each from the two novelists under study. The texts are Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1988) henceforth referred to as *Apart* and *Anthills* respectively; and Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) henceforth *Hibiscus* and *Yellow Sun* respectively. The selection of these authors and their texts is premised on the fact that Achebe belongs to the first generation of Nigerian writers while Adichie belongs to the 21st century writers. Their texts represent both the first and the current phases of the novel genre in Nigeria. These works have also widely received national and international acceptance as having made their marks within and outside literary circles which led to their winning of prizes. The names of all the characters in the texts were retrieved from the chosen novels, grouped according to their language of origin, and analysed quantitatively and discursively by showing how the names reflect the language, identity and culture of the society in which the novels are set, as well as that of their characters.

4.0 Result and Discussion of Findings

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of names

Language	Apart	Anthills	Hibiscus	Yellow Sun	Freq.	%
English	3	6	10	16	35	15.91
Igbo	55	9	24	66	154	70
Yoruba	0	5	3	1	9	4.09
Hausa	0	1	1	0	2	0.91
Izon	0	0	0	2	2	0.91
Arabic	0	2	0	5	7	3.81
Ibibio	0	1	0	1	2	0.45
Others	1	3	2	3	9	4.09
Total	**59**	**27**	**40**	**94**	**220**	**100**

Table 1 show that Igbo has the highest number of names (70%). This is expected because both authors are Igbo and set their works in Igbo land. It is natural therefore that most of their characters should bear Igbo names hence the overwhelming frequency. English has the second highest number of names (15.91%). Yoruba names account for 4.09% of the total names in the novels. The Yoruba names come mainly from *Anthills*, *Hibiscus* and *Yellow Sun* with the exception of *Apart*. The absence of Yoruba names in *Apart* can be attributed to its setting – a novel that tells the story of a pre-colonial Igbo community, the early days of European and Christian incursion to the society and how the society adapts to the changes brought by the incursion. The setting also accounts for the absence of characters with names from other ethnic groups, as Nigeria's ethnic groups were yet to witness the integration which was later accelerated by colonisation and the spread of Christianity. The column for 'Others' include the names which occur only once in the four novels. These names are considered insufficient to be in their separate columns. They include *Patel* – India, *Lehman* – German, *Jomo* – Kenya, etc.

Regarding the frequency of the names in the novels, *Yellow Sun* has the highest frequency of names, 42.72%. The names in *Apart* represent 26.81% of the total number of names. *Hibiscus* has the third highest number of names (18.18%). The novel with the least number of names is *Anthills,* 12.27%. The majority of the names across the four novels are mainly Igbo names followed by English ones. This is an indication that the authors used more names from their indigenous language. However, the inclusion of names from other ethnic groups affirms that Nigerians live in any part of the country and integrate with one another irrespective of their ethnic origin. This integration necessitates the creation of inter-ethnic characters by the authors, and the inclusion of names from other ethnic groups for such characters, without which the novels would not reflect the society in which they were set.

4.1 Construction of Identity

Gerrig and Banaji (1991) posit that naming contributes to the construction of identity at two levels: self-identity of individuals and of communities which both construct the social reality of a people. This position suggests that through names, humans negotiate their self-identities within the constraints of social circumstances. Language users thus have almost absolute freedom in coining names that they like and for various reasons. In Nigeria in particular, names are connected to events that happened in the life of parents or during the pregnancy of the mother, occasions, experiences, people, relationships, etc. Names also function as a means of identifying individuals as well as identifying their ethnic origin especially through the language the people speak since the names are usually coined from the people's language. In literature, writers assign names to characters for the purpose of constructing cultural identity. This may be the identity of the individual in the work or that of the community in which the character exists. The identity construction may be aimed at achieving the set objectives regarding theme, setting, and characterisation. The novel becomes an avenue through which the readers can identify the ethnic group and culture which language is part of. The following table contains names that have cultural significance and depict the worldview of the community in which the novels are set.

Table 2: Names as cultural identity

Names	Meaning	Source
Mbaezi	Community teaches	*Yellow Sun*, p. 129
Nwafor	Child of *Afor*. Given to children born on *Afor* market day	*Yellow Sun*, p. 190
Ibe	Means 'fellow' and is given to male children It may refer to 'fellow brother', 'friend' or 'neighbour'. This means that the birth signifies the coming of a fellow member in the family who can be communed with.	*Yellow sun*, p. 157
Ozumba	Sufficient for the community	*Yellow Sun*, p. 215
Nwala	Child of the land	*Yellow Sun*, p. 202
Ifediora	Short form of *Ifedioramma*, meaning that which is good to the community	*Hibiscus*, p. 285
Ekwueme	One who does what s/he says	*Hibiscus*, p. 185
Amaechina	May the path never close	*Anthills*, p. 222
Ogbuefi Ezeugo	*Ogbuefi* means killer of cow and *Ezeugo* means the king of Eagle	*Apart*, p. 8
Ojiugo	This literarily refers to the white kola nut which is also known as eagle kola in Igbo. As a name, it symbolises one who is highly valued. The eagle kola is highly valued in Igbo culture	*Apart*, p. 21
Ezeani	King of land	*Apart*, p. 21

The names in Table 2 variously express the worldview of the people. The name *Mbaezi* (*Yellow Sun*, p.129) for instance, affirms the communal life of cooperation and the sharing of knowledge that resides with the entire members of the community. *Mbaezi* literally means 'the community teaches'. According to this name, knowledge about human existence is derived from the entire community from where members draw. Names such as this give validity to the saying that no man is a custodian of complete knowledge. This is why no one person is seen as the owner of a child in the traditional Igbo society, as the child learns from the entire community which serves as a reservoir of knowledge.

Nwafor (*Yellow Sun*, p. 190) on the other hand highlights the Igbo weekdays which are represented by the names of the Igbo market days. *Nwafor* is a name given to a child – *nwa*, born on *Afor* market day just as children may be named Monday or Sunday in English when they are born on these English weekdays. Bearing names such as *Nwafor* and *Nweke* (*Yellow Sun*, p. 193) constantly reminds one of the Igbo week days in addition to the birthday of the person concerned. The culture of collective responsibility and unity of the people/community is also expressed through the practice of giving such names as *Ozumba* – sufficient for the community, *Nwala* – child of the land and *Ifediora* – that which is good to the community. Honesty, trust and credibility are virtues that the Igbo hold in high esteem. This is why such name as *Ekwueme* is important as it shows that whatever is said must surely be done by the individual. In other words, a man's word is his bond.

Kola nuts are respected in Igbo land. This is why the presentation and breaking of kola nuts follow a laid down cultural procedure. Beyond this, there are different types of kola nuts and these varieties play different roles in the life of the people and during cultural events. For instance, *Ojiugo* is an Igbo name derived from compound words *oji* – kola nut and *ugo* –eagle (this literarily means *the eagle kolanut*). This name is given to a woman who is believed to be very beautiful, not just in her physical appearance but inwardly too by her character. Parents give this name to their daughters as a way of bequeathing them with the special respect and value the people place on white kola nuts that are referred to as *Ojiugo*. The adoption of this compound word (*ojiugo* – eagle kola nut) as a name shows how important the kola nut and eagle are to the people and how the people identify with them.

Children are tied to the land or community because their birth is believed to be the only way of ensuring continuity. The name *Amaechina* is both a prayer and a declaration which means *may the path never close*. The closing of a part in this instance can only be brought about by the cessation of childbirth. This name is usually given when a couple have sought for a child for some time, and when finally a child is born, especially a male child, this name declares that the path to procreation and continuity might not close.

There is always a story or meaning behind every name in Nigeria and to some extent, most names are tied to the culture and worldview of the people. Achebe and Adichie have explored this cultural content of names to spice their writing, as well as depict their cultural identity. Sometimes, the meaning of some of these names is translated into English in the novels; and as this translation aids the non-Igbo reader to understand them, s/he is forced to come to terms with and appreciate the indigenous language of the writer. An example is *Nwanyibuife* (*Anthills*, p.87) where Achebe provides the meaning of the name to the non- Igbo reader – a female is also something (child). This name is usually given where there is bias against the birth of a female child.

4.2 Names as a Reflection of Two Cultures

Nigerian literary writers, like their other African counterparts, have often been said to belong to two cultures. This is mainly because of their use of European language in the expression of their African experiences (in their writing). Regarding the naming practices, Africans have over time reflected this dual culture by adopting both African and foreign names. The analysis shows that many names assigned to the characters by the novelists (Achebe and Adichie) in the novels under study are an affirmation of the duality of culture. This derives from the authors' systematic apportioning of names or a combination of names that represent two cultures or two religious practices. The term 'two cultures' contextualises the Nigerian culture which includes her language, and the European culture through which English (a European language) is acquired and used to express the Nigerian worldview. Table 3 contains names in the novels that indicate dual cultures.

Table 3: Names from two cultures

Names	Origin of Name	Source
Phyllis Okafor	Greek and Igbo	*Yellow Sun*, p.168
Nwafor Isaiah	Igbo and Hebrew	*Yellow Sun*, p. 193
Yewande Coker & Ade Coker	Yoruba and English	*Hibiscus*, p. 213
Major Johnson Ossai	English and Igbo	*Anthills*, p. 162
Prof. Reginald Okong	Germany and Ibibio	*Anthills*, p. 50
Beatrice Nwanyibuife Okoh	Latin and Igbo	*Anthills*, p.75 & 87
Joe (Joseph) Ibe	Hebrew and Igbo	*Anthills*, p. 75
Emmanuel Obete	Hebrew and Igbo	*Anthills*, p. 189
Major Gen. Ahmed Lango	Arabic and Uganda	*Anthills*, p. 193
Sebastian Ojo	Latin and Yoruba	*Anthills*, p. 193
Lara Adebayo	Russia and Yoruba	*Yellow Sun*, p. 49
Vincent Ikenna	Roman (Christain) and Igbo	*Yellow Sun*, p. 178

The combination of English and Igbo names in Table 3 reflects two cultures. This combination underscores the emergence of the foreign culture, which was brought about by the introduction of English in Nigeria through British colonisation. It is now incontrovertible that many Nigerians bear English names in addition to their indigenous names or their surnames. This naming reality is also practiced by novelists in allocating names to their characters (e.g. Major Johnson Ossai (*Yellow Sun*, 193) involves a combination of English and Igbo names; Yewande Coker (*Hibiscus*, p. 213) is a name that combines Yoruba and English).

Apart from the use of English and Nigerian indigenous names, the introduction of foreign religions to Nigeria can also be seen in some of the names Nigerians bear whether in reality or in works of fiction. Names associated with the Christian religion have their origin in Hebrew language or Latin. They are often given to the bearers as either baptismal or Christian names. Examples of such names in the data include: Nwafor Isaiah - Igbo and Hebrew (*Yellow Sun*, p. 193); Joe (short form of Joseph) Ibe - Hebrew and Igbo (*Anthills*, p. 75); Vincent Ikenna - Roman (Christian) and Igbo (*Yellow Sun*, p. 178); and Sebastian Ojo - Latin and Yoruba (*Anthills*, p.193).

The name Major Gen. Ahmed Lango is a military name. Beyond the title however, the name has a combination of Arabic name (Ahmed) which is associated with the Islamic religion and Lango, an African name which is of Ugandan origin. All the European names in the table are either traceable to the introduction of English in Nigeria through colonisation or to the Christian religion both of which represent cultures that were alien to Nigerian culture. Although Ahmed is an Arabic name, it is the only name in the table that has an Islamic identity because of its relationship with the Holy Prophet Mohammad who had it as one of his names.

It is noteworthy that Achebe's *Apart* hardly has names that combine two such cultures. The names of traditional Igbo characters are mainly Igbo names devoid of any imposition of foreign names. However, this changed with the coming of the Christian missionaries who give their new converts new Christian names upon their conversion. Nwoye, Okonkwo's son, is given a Christian name Isaac after his conversion to the new religion (Christianity). That Achebe did not assign dual names reflecting dual cultures to characters in *Apart* may be attributed to the single culture that existed in Umuofia prior to the coming of the white man and the missionaries. Umuofia is a microcosm of the preliterate Igbo society without any contact with the European or Christian cultures hence the lack of European names or a combination of European and Nigerian names.

4.3 Names Derived from Experience

Although names are universal, naming practices are determined by different factors in different societies. This is why naming itself is part of the culture of a people and an expression of such. In Nigeria, names are sometimes determined by events that happened before, during or after the birth of the child. It may also be chosen from the experiences the parents had in their lives, marriage or in their quest for a child. The following table contains names in the novels which are derived from experiences.

Table 4: Names from experience

Names	Meaning	Source
Chiejina	Let nightfall not approach. This means let the family not experience darkness	*Yellow Sun*, p. 19
Okeoma	Fair share. Given when one gets an expected baby	*Yellow Sun*, p. 18
Ozobia	Let another come. Couples who seek for children give this name in expectation of more	*Yellow sun*, p. 27
Kainene	Let us see or watch	*Yellow Sun*, p. 31
Nwayike	A strong or powerful woman	*Yellow Sun*, p. 152
Urenwa	Pride of child. Given on the arrival of much awaited child	*Yellow Sun*, p.390
Kambili	let me live	*Hibiscus*, p. 31
Nwanyibuife	A woman/female is something. This is given where bias is shown against the female child	*Anthills,* p. 87
Ikemefuna	Let my strength or effort not be in vain	*Apart*, p. 37
Ozoemena	let another not happen/occur	*Apart*, p. 54
Onwumbiko	Death I implore you	*Apart*, p. 55
Uyanwa	The cry of baby	*Apart,* p.55
Uchendu	The thought of life	*Apart,* p.94

Table 4 shows that some names reflect experiences in the lives of a couple or a family. For instance, the name Okeoma – fair or good share (*Yellow Sun*, p.18) shows the appreciation of the birth of the baby. This name is usually given to a baby when the parents have been in search of a child. The birth therefore becomes an answer to their prayers and indicates the fairness of God who is the giver of child. The name may also be given to a child whose parents have been in search of either a male or a female child in order to balance the sex equation in their family.

On the other hand, Kainene - *let us see or watch* (*Yellow Sun*, p. 31) means different things to different couples in adopting it for their daughter. To some, it may mean let us appreciate the beauty or the coming of the child given to us by God. To others, it may imply that they still view the survival of the child with suspicion. This later meaning is usually the case when a family has had series of deaths of their children due to a high mortality rate, which in traditional Igbo society is attributed to spirit children (i.e. Ogbanje). Kainene in this case, presupposes that the parents are still observing and hoping for the survival of the given child. The name may also be given in the hope that good things will come to the family through the child. In this case, the name means let us see what this child will become. Whichever meaning is intended, it is linked to past experience in the family.

The name Nwanyibuife – a female is also something (*Anthills*, p. 87) is a challenge to gender bias in a situation where the birth of a female child is viewed as a disappointment perhaps because some members of the family expected a woman to have a male child. This therefore is a declaration that a girl child can achieve as much as a male child, if not more, when given the right upbringing. Daily experiences are thus interpreted within the context of the culture and the perception of such in the society. This necessitates the adoption of names with positive attributes in order to attract positivity to both the bearer and to his/her society. The novelists use this strategy to entrench Nigerian experiences in the novels through the adoption of these names.

4.4 Names Referring to God

Nigerians are very religious people who by their culture align with their creator in whatever they do. This is also shown in the naming practices of her people who choose names that refer to God. The following table contains some names in the novels that are in this category.

Table 5: Names Referring to God

Names	Meaning	Source
Nnesinachi	Mother is from God	*Yellow Sun*, P.8
Emeka (short form of Chukwuemeka)	God has done well	*Yellow Sun*, p.70
Ekechi	God's wish	*Yellow Sun*, p. 138
Chioke	God of distribution	*Yellow Sun*, p.87
Chinyere	God gave	*Yellow Sun*, p.121
Onyeka (short form of Onyekachi)	Who is bigger than God?	*Yellow Sun*, p.120
Eberechi	God's mercy	*Yellow Sun*, p.191
Abuchi (short form of Mmaduabuchi)	No human is God	*Yellow Sun*, p.330
Chima	God Knows	*Hibiscus*, p.86
Chukwuka/Chika	God is supreme	*Hibiscus*, p. 151
Chiaku	God of wealth	*Hibiscus*, p. 248
Chimsimdi	My God says I count	*Hibiscus*, p. 289
Emmanuel	God is with us	*Anthills*, p. 189
Christopher	Carrier of Christ	*Anthills*, p.1
Chielo	God's thought	*Apart*, p.70
Machi	God's goodness	*Apart*, p.51

The names in Table 5 are usually given in appreciation of the birth of a child when it is seen as the answer to the prayer of a family. For instance, Eberechi - God's mercy (*Yellow Sun*, p.191) and Machi - God's goodness (*Apart*, p.51) expresses the appreciation of God for his mercy and his goodness shown by giving a child to a family. The supremacy of God is confirmed through the adoption of such names as Chukwuka (or Chika) (*Hibiscus*, p. 151) and Abuchi (*Yellow Sun*, p. 330). These names indicate that God's personality supersedes that of any human and that God does not reason like humans as he does his things as they please him.

Prior to and after the advent of Christian and Islamic religions in Nigeria, the traditional religion of the various ethnic groups held sway. Most names given to children at birth tell more about Gods nature and attributes, as well as the way the people relate to God (Chi).

This is because the knowledge of God among the pre-modern Igbo existed prior to the emergence of the Christian missionaries. This is evidenced in the mode of worship of the traditionalists. The following prayer by Papa Nnukwu illustrates:

> Chineke! I thank you for this new morning! I thank you for the sun that rises... Chineke! I have killed no one, I have taken no one's land, I have not committed adultery... Chineke! I have wished others well, I have helped those who have nothing with the little that my hands can spare... Chineke! Bless me. Let me find enough to fill my stomach. Bless my daughter, Ifeoma. Give enough for her family... (*Hibiscus*, pp. 174 – 175)

The two Christian names in Table 5 (Emmanuel and Christopher) indicate the co-existence of both the traditional religion and the Christian religion. This shows also that Christianity has come to stay. The advent of Christianity introduces the concept of Christ in the naming practices of Nigerians. The name Emmanuel (*Anthills*, p. 189) is of Hebrew origin (another name for Jesus Christ) and means 'God is with us'. As for Christopher (*Anthills*, p.1), it is from Greek and means carrier of Christ. Both names are associated with the Christian religion. Achebe and Adichie have explored this religious nature of Nigerians both in the traditional and Christian religions and have adopted the names that mirror the choice of Nigerians in this regard.

4.5 Names Referring to Parents

The bond that exists between parents and their children is very strong and has spiritual, cultural as well as biological undertones. This is because parents see themselves in their children and give them names that connect them to the family. Names are also used to express the love parents feel for their children or their expectation for them. Through naming practices, parents also link the young ones by way of honour, to their ancestors. The following table contains names that refer to parents.

Table 6: Names referring to parents

Names	Meaning	Source
Olanna	Fathers jewel	*Yellow Sun*, P.26
Ikenna	Father's strength	*Yellow Sun*, p.27
Nnanna	Grandfather (paternal)	*Yellow Sun*, p.76
Onunna	Father's mouthpiece	*Yellow Sun*, p.120
Nnaemeka	Father has done well	*Yellow Sun*, p.151
Adanna	Father's first daughter	*Yellow Sun*, p.338
Ezinne	Good mother	*Hibiscus*, p.57
Nnenna	Paternal grandmother	*Hibiscus*, p. 289
Obinna	Father's heart	*Hibiscus*, p. 289
Nneka	Mother is supreme	*Anthills*, p.91 &*Apart*, p.94
Nnadi	Father exists	*Apart*, p. 25
Akunna	Father's wealth	*Apart*, p. 128

The names in Table 6 show the diverse ways parents view their children or the love they feel for them. The names also portray the type of connection the parents have with their children. Names endear the children to their parents. For instance, Olanna – which means father's jewel (*Yellow Sun*, p. 26), is an expression of how precious the child is to the father. It follows also that whatever is precious to the father will equally be precious to other members of the family since the father is the head of the family. Adanna – father's first daughter (*Yellow Sun*, p.338) is given to the first daughter born into a family. It may also be used as a pet or endearment name by parents who may prefer this name even if the girl in question has other names. Ikenna - Father's strength (*Yellow Sun*, p. 27) and Obinna - Father's heart (*Hibiscus*, p. 289) denote the position of the male child in the family and in a society that is patriarchal in nature. These names indicate that the man considers his male children as his strength and heartbeat.

Ezinne - Good mother   (*Hibiscus*, p.57), Nnenna - paternal grandmother (*Hibiscus*, p. 289) and Nneka – mother is supreme (*Anthills*, p. 91 and *Apart*, p. 94) all portray the goodness of the mother even when she is a grandmother. It also connects the young to the old even to the ancestor. This connection between the living and the dead (ancestors) is based on the people's belief in reincarnation.

For instance, Nnenna may be given to a girl child when it is believed that she is a reincarnate of a deceased grandmother. This name is not only given to babies whose grandmothers are late but also to those whose grandmothers are alive. However, its meaning shows the love that exists between a son and his mother which is inherited also by a newborn baby girl.

The name Akunna - Father's wealth (*Apart*, p. 128) may be viewed as sexist by some as it traditionally portrays the girl child as a father's means of acquiring wealth mainly through marriage. However, the name may at present be interpreted as indicating that women have come of age and a woman can also change the fortunes of her parents.

In all, naming practices are very important in the life of humans and to some extent determine their perception of the children and family connection. The understanding of the connection between name and identity can be found in language when people talk and write especially when they introduce themselves to others. The wrong pronouncement of names also attracts some form of correction on the part of the bearer because such brings about distortion of the identity of the bearer and no one wants his/her identity distorted. The novelists adopt indigenous names to portray their Nigerianness and although the stories are told in English, the presence and meaning of these names become a way that Nigerian language(s) and culture are made to reflect in the novels.

5.0 Conclusion

This study has examined the names and naming in the selected novels from linguistic and cultural perspectives as a reflection of the identity, and a cultural practice which finds expression through language in the texts. It has also been noted that the studied authors being Igbo have explored this practice by adopting the names which appropriately suit their characters in their texts. Through names and naming techniques, these Nigerian novelists engrave Nigeria's ways of life (through language) in their novels. In literary situations, names are used as discursive strategies for the construction of identities. This may be the identity of the novelists, the characters (with approximates in reality), or that of their society, etc.

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