

To study the structure of literary forms used by Buchi Emecheta

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Abstract

Like other communities, the African society has its own series of events Buchi Emecheta belongs to the colonized nation hence, it is necessary to write about their nation, about their problems, about “who” they are. The majority of post colonial writings basically deal with the grave reality of everyday life. Much of her fiction was focused on sexual politics and racial prejudice, and as well as on her own experiences as both a single parent and a black woman living in Britain. Buchi Emecheta’s novels imparts the negotiation between colonial and patriarchal spaces and personal whim. This ideological contradiction issues from the competition and contest between two different cultures, between different genders, between individualism and national and social duties and responsibilities. The present research helps to get a new dimension to analyze the selected works. In the light of these social practices and taboos prevalent in the African society, the paper is an attempt to analyze the reflection of the African system and the structure of literary forms of Buchi Emecheta.

KEYWORDS: Post-colonial literature, African women, Discourse analysis, subaltern.

Introduction

The area of the research is post-colonial literature .It is the study of the structure of literary forms as well as their socio-politico-cultural background. Buchi Emecheta belongs to the colonized nation hence, it is necessary to write about their nation, about their problems, about “who” they are. The majority of post colonial writings basically deal with the grave reality of everyday life. Nigerian writer Buchi Emecheta was born to Ibo parents in Lagos on 21 July 1944. She went Britain in 1960, where she worked as a librarian and she was the student of Sociology at London University in 1970. In Camden, North London, she worked as a community worker between 1976 and 1978.

Much of her fiction was focused on sexual politics and racial prejudice, and as well as on her own experiences as both a single parent and a black woman living in Britain. Her first novel, the semi-autobiographical *In the Ditch*, was published in 1972. The post colonial writings were suppressed by the major minority. The white settlers put them into the balcony. The marginalized people were not allowed to speak.

Literature of the colonial countries is the manifestation of their mind. They tried to speak and expressed themselves through their writings. So the post-colonial writing is an attempt by the subalterns to create a space at the centre. So the base of the research is to study the use of language, what they speak and how they speak, their way of expression, how they have structured the literature.

Rationale for the research:

All the texts of the writer focus on the theme of conflict. This conflict deals with the difference between an individual and society at different levels. There is a struggle of individual for their freedom- political as well as social freedom. The selected texts has a great influence of colonial / post-colonial era and also have a great impact upon their society. The present study will be helpful to analyze the structure of literary form.

Statement of the problem:

The present research was done to study the structure of literary forms used by Buchi Emecheta.

Studying from this perspective will give a new dimension to the present study. Though research works have been done on the writer but there are certain questions/doubts which need to be clarified and answered. These questions such as:

- How does language assist to understand the cultural conflicts in the novels?
- How does Emecheta try to reconstruct and frame 'woman' in her fictions?
- How Emecheta has talk about the politics of the nation?
- Does the study of the writer assist the research to view the culture as a whole?
- Does the research serve us to view patriarchal and nationalist ideologies?
- Does the writer speak the language of the subaltern? What is the effect of it?

Aims and Objectives:

As the title of the research is "To study the structure of literary forms used by Buchi Emecheta"

The central aim of the research is to study use of language. The research will also study the structure of these literary forms.

Methodology of research:

The methodology of the research includes the deep analysis of the chosen texts. To test how the language is used by the writer. The research imparts in depth light on the language used. The study is based on the two theories- Subaltern Studies and Discourse Analysis. As the research wishes to do a study the structure of the literary forms used by Buchi Emecheta.

The two different theories used in the study are :the theory of discourse and the theory of subaltern.

Discourse analysis is the study of language in use. Discourse analysis (DA), or discourse studies, is a general term for a number of approaches to analyze written, vocal, or sign language use, or any significant semiotic event. It is used in different disciplines, in different ways, with contents or the meanings of the concepts. The objects of discourse analysis includes discourse, writing, conversation, communicative event which are variously defined in terms of coherent sequences of sentences , prepositions, speech, or turns-at-talk. Contrary to much of traditional linguistics, discourse analysts not only study language use 'beyond the sentence boundary' but also prefer to analyze 'naturally occurring' language use, not invented examples. Text linguistics is a closely related field. The essential difference between discourse analysis and text linguistics is that discourse

analysis aims at revealing socio-psychological characteristics of a person/persons rather than text structure.

Discourse analysis has been taken up in a variety of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, including linguistics, education, sociology, anthropology, social work, cognitive psychology, social psychology, area studies, cultural studies, international relations, human geography, communication studies, biblical studies, and translation studies, each of which is subject to its own assumptions, dimensions of analysis, and methodologies.

Hence, Discourse analysis is related with the social, political and cultural aspects. As discourse analysis is a multidisciplinary subject it involves the study of semiotics, poetics, linguistics, psychology, sociology, history, anthropology and communication research. Discourse studies the language in use and therefore it is more related with the speech rather than with the written documents. The work of discourse analysts is to investigate the meanings out of the used language because language is always used in situational context. According to Saussure language is a system of signs and signs are arbitrary. Therefore it is necessary to identify signs within the context. When used in language signs have their significance, value and importance and they become real. This makes language a social performance or social action.

There are six traditions of discourse analysis in literature. They are: **Conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, discursive psychology, critical discourse analysis, Bakhtinian research, and Foucauldian research.**

Conversation analysis: In Conversation analysis the focus is on the talk. Conversation analysis is an approach which studies talk-in-interaction or verbal interaction. Conversation analysis (CA) is an approach to the study of social interaction, embracing both verbal and non-verbal conduct, in situations of everyday life. As its name implies, it began with a focus on casual conversation, but it basically deal with how people act out their sociality when they speak. The core intention of Conversation analysis is to understand social interaction and the role of discourse in every day life. As a consequence, the term 'conversation analysis' has become distinctive and successful approach to the analysis of social interactions.

Interactional sociolinguistics: Interactional sociolinguistics view of discourse is developed from the perspective of sociology and anthropology. It is a sub discipline of linguistics that uses discourse analysis to study how language users create meaning via social interaction. Interactional sociolinguistics was founded by linguistic anthropologist John J. Gumperz. Topics of interest include cross-cultural miscommunication, politeness, and framing.

In terms of research methods, interactional sociolinguists analyze audio or video recordings of conversations or other interactions. Analysis focuses not only on linguistic forms such as words and sentences but also on subtle cues such as prosody and register that signal contextual presupposition.

These contextualization cues are culturally specific and usually unconscious. When participants in a conversation come from different cultural backgrounds they may not recognize these subtle cues in one another's speech, leading to misunderstanding. This

approach helps the analysts to interpret what participants intend to convey in everyday communication.

Discursive Psychology: Discursive psychology is a form of discourse analysis that focuses on psychological themes in talk, text and images. As a counter to mainstream psychology's treatment of discourse as a "mirror" for people's expressions of thoughts, intentions, motives, etc., DP's founders made the case for picturing it instead as a "construction yard" wherein all such presumptively prior and independent notions of thought and so on were built from linguistic materials, tropicalized and, in various less direct ways, handled and managed. Here, the study of the psychological implies commitment not to the inner life of the mind, but rather, to the written and spoken practices within which people invoked, implicitly or explicitly, notions precisely like "the inner life of the mind". Discursive psychology therefore starts with psychological phenomena as things that are constructed, attended to, and understood in interaction. An evaluation, say, may be constructed using particular phrases and idioms, responded to by the recipient (as a compliment perhaps) and treated as the expression of a strong position. In discursive psychology, the focus is not on psychological matters somehow leaking out into interaction; rather, interaction is the primary site where psychological issues are live. It is philosophically opposed to more traditional cognitive approaches to language. It uses studies of naturally occurring conversation to critique the way that topics have been conceptualized and treated in psychology. Discursive psychology tries to understand **self** and **identity**. This approach argues forth social construction of attitudes, social groups and identities.

Critical discourse analysis: Critical discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse that views language as a form of social practice. Scholars working in the tradition of CDA generally argue that (non-linguistic) social practice and linguistic practice constitute one another and focus on investigating how societal power relations are established and reinforced through language use. Hence Critical discourse analysis is concerned to analyze how social and political inequalities are manifested in and reproduced through discourse.

Bakhtinian research: Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin was a Russian philosopher, literary critic, semiotician and scholar who worked on literary theory, ethics, and the philosophy of language. His writings, on a variety of subjects, inspired scholars working in a number of different traditions (Marxism, semiotics, structuralism, religious criticism) and in disciplines as diverse as literary criticism, history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology and psychology. Although Bakhtin was active in the debates on aesthetics and literature that took place in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, his distinctive position did not become well known until he was rediscovered by Russian scholars in the 1960s. Bakhtin conceptualizes language as dialogic. In his views the specific uses of language or "utterances" contribute dynamically to meaning-making because they are embedded in socio-cultural and historical contexts. Bakhtin particularly focuses on the discourse in the novel. In Bakhtin's view language is dialogic in nature.

Foucauldian research: Foucauldian discourse analysis is a form of discourse analysis, focusing on power relationships in society as expressed through language and

practices, and based on the theories of Michel Foucault. The French philosopher Michel Foucault studied not language, but discourse as a system of representation. Foucauldian discourse analysis can be performed upon various types of communication and textual meaning. It offers a particular critical approach to researching psychological and social worlds by considering broader contexts, rigorously dissecting discourses rather than imposing a single theoretical framework. Foucault intended to reveal how certain discourses help sustain networks social meanings. Foucault's definition of discourse is about text and the analysis of the text and therefore it limits the meaning.

The present study focuses on the biographical information of both of the writer. It also includes brief summary of the works. It also introduces the theory of subaltern. It discusses about how the world is divided into the West and the Rest in post colonialism. According to post colonialism the basic of such difference is "white". The rest of the world is always out of the territory of the white. The very concept of whiteness has put rest of the world into the border, out of the mainstream. Colonial or imperial rule has depicted the colonized people as inferior, feminine, childlike, uncivilized and incapable of looking after themselves. The subaltern theory discusses how the colonized people, the miserable speak about themselves and the colonizers and how they look at the western world from their own panoramic view and realisation. The study also brings in light how the word civilization got different meanings based on the racial differences. It deals so far that white people have moulded the very concept of civilization. They have made it limited to their own culture. So the writers, critics and thinkers thought about putting non-western countries at the centre. Hence keeping these things in mind they started writing on subaltern group. They trusted in the equalities between all human beings. The subaltern was a group of people who were displaced both externally and internally. The subaltern people have voice but they were deliberately muted by the "haves". The theory brings in light how the subalterns "speak" and how they try to reconstruct their nation and their identity. With the base of the theories the research will study the writer who belong to a colonized nation.

Literature Review:

This portion of study discusses about the significance of the past. It focus on the works done on the writer. This section discusses the theory of subaltern in detail. It defines the change in the meaning of subaltern. How different critics have discussed and analyzed the idea of subaltern has been talked about. For example, Antonio Gramsci has delimited the meaning of subaltern to the peasants, workers and indigenous people only. For him they are sophisticated and can be easily cheated by the economically elite class. In his first notebook he has use the term subaltern in literal sense. In his other notebooks he used the term in a figurative way. He used the term for non-literary instances, in regard to position of subordination or lower status. Gramsci's use of the term subaltern is in relation to Marx. According to him subalterns are social classes and they are subject to dominant class. It is in this sense subaltern groups are subordinate to ruling group's policies and initiatives. In his book *On the Margins of History* Gramsci has identified slaves, peasants, religious,

women different races and the proletariat as subaltern social groups. Antonio Gramsci approaches the subaltern as a historically determined category because it exists within particular historical, social, economic, political and cultural context. Ranjit Guha's study of subaltern is mainly based on the historiography of Indian nationalism as it was dominated by elitism. He basically concentrate on the history of Indian nationalism. Guha views elitism as the result of ideology and British rule. Guha writes that subaltern groups were victimized and in these group workers, farmers, non- industrial urban poor were involved. This difference was the result of politics of people.

Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak's *Can Subaltern Speak?* Is a land mark in the field of Subaltern Studies. She has used deconstruction to examine the truth. Her focus is on the plights and agonies of non-Europeans which were caused by the West. Spivak's meaning, understanding and contextual use of subaltern is completely different from other critics. She is feministic in her perspective of subaltern. In feminine context subaltern means women who were suppressed by men. They are wretched and treated as second to men. By bringing in woman as subaltern subject she has meaningfully brought gender issues in Subaltern Studies. She has written against the violence done by the dominant discourse by setting a particular kind of ideology or a mental framework. In this essay as a postcolonial critic Spivak has tried to give voice to the silenced other. Her explanation of subaltern is based upon Indian culture.

The literary meaning of "subaltern" is a person holding lower rank or having a subordinate position. The study of all these critics concluded that they have used the term subaltern in rich connotation. In post colonialism the term subaltern covers both, imperialism and patriarchy. In Subaltern Studies critics see the natives as feared natives in colonial hierarchy. Women are used as scapegoat in masculine imperialism. The "Subaltern" always stands in an ambiguous relation to power-subordinated to it but never consenting to its rule, never adopting a dominant point of view or vocabulary as expressive of its own identity. In general subalterns exist outside the power. In post colonialism it is a trend to look at the world from the margin.

Apart from this study the chapter also viewed works done on fictions of the writers. The study reveals that majority of the works focus upon the thematic issues of the novels.

Study of Selected Novels of Buchi Emecheta:

This section of the study will analyse Emecheta's works in detail. Majority of Emecheta's works is related to the issue of victimization and exploitation of women. She focuses on the problems and scarcity of women. The main thing in her works is how a woman is doubly marginalized. She tries to define what it means to be a woman. She has touched upon the problems of motherhood and childbearing. For example, the title of her novel *The Joys of Motherhood* is very ironic. The main character Nnu Ego is a victim of the so called notion of motherhood. In a patriarchal society a woman is forced to bear children. It matters nothing whether she wishes to or not. Childbearing and motherhood has become a tradition. Nnu Ego is the victim of this situation.

Ironically the novel is not about the joys of motherhood but about the joys of fatherhood.

In *Bride Price* Aku-nna loses her life fighting her battle against the enemy called tradition. After her father's death she has to go to Ibuza. Ibuza is her native land and it is the place where her uncle lives. As per the African tradition, the property of her dead father was inherited by her uncle Aku-nna's. Even the family has the share on the property. He also inherits her mother and she becomes his fourth wife. Aku-nna's mother is not asked by any one about her wish. She just has to follow the given customs and traditions. The same way Aku-nna's love marriage with Chike is not accepted by any one and her step father has not paid her bride price. Even the title of the novel indicates that girls in the family are source of income. Though they have a family they are disoriented from it. Emecheta through her novels constructs the notion of woman as a salient.

The character of Adah in *Second-Class Citizen* is a revolutionary one. She is full of life and has a burning wish to live her dreams. But the tragedy of her life is as it is the same for all women; her wishes/dreams are involved in a female body. Being a woman she is not free but imprisoned. She is a working woman and her dream is to go to UK at first she sends her husband first and then she goes. Her condition is the same even in her dream world. She works and earns money but she has to live under the thumb of her husband. She has to bear and look after her children. She struggles hard to manage her job and childbearing. She is forced to bear children. Before she came to UK she had two children and gave birth to her third child. After this she learnt the measures of birth control equipment but got pregnant again for the fourth time and at the end of the novel she again got pregnant for the fifth time. She wrote a novel names it *The Bride Price* and calls it her "brain child". It was the first creative work by Adah which had proved that women can write. Through her work Adah tried to construct her own identity in a patriarchal society. But the novel is burnt by her husband. Burning of her creative work, the Novel indicates towards the symbol of suppression of women by men. Men never allow a woman to speak about their rights. For men, women are "dull brained" and they can only do a thinking of how to breast-feed their children. She left her husband's home but in the end of the story she came back accidentally, against her wish. So what had happened to Adah, happens to every woman. She was intellectual, learned, knowledgeable, and full of fire but she has to be unassertive before her husband. Her dream world fails to fulfill her dreams.

Women, in Emecheta's works vainly try to elude from the situation. Though Buchi Emecheta's culture is in many ways is very similar to other cultures, but what catches our eye is how and in what way its values, customs and traditions differ from other cultures. Emecheta has also framed Africa in her fiction. She has impregnated a larger sense of Africa by asking question of what Africa meant to her. Buchi Emecheta's novels are the tales of girls and women who are oppressed and entranced. Emecheta has portrayed her women characters with limited success. They negotiate between the old and the new. Her female characters are distressed in cognizance about the traditional and western way of life. Emecheta has written about infliction of white and western values on indigenous people. Set in

postcolonial Ibadan, Lagos and contemporary London her stories show how girls and women are advised to embrace male privilege. Women characters challenge their men's right. Gender factor is deeply grounded in the fabric of African customs and traditions. Emecheta, in her texts, shows how gender determines women's status and roles in domestic and public era. Emecheta has represented the image of patriarchal society in which maleness is socially renowned and femaleness is presented as subordination or in thralldom to men. All female characters are underprivileged by the fact of their gender, and their roles were limited to domesticity and house work only. Moreover in male dominate society sexuality is seen as a social configuration of control, management and subjugation. In general, Emecheta shows how masculinity and femininity are culturally-specific.

Conclusion:

She has raised her voice from the margin. She created or recreated their nation and the self. The individual characters indicate the fractured self of them and as well as of their society as well as nations. In post colonialism the natives of colonized counties were treated as subaltern subjects. They are caught between social and political hierarchy. The vision and a very beautiful dream of freedom are broken. In her works we see the natives are blindly attracted towards the city which is a symbol of neo colonialism. What we feel is once colonized is colonized forever. The natives are governed by particular ideologies.

Buchi Emecheta's novels imparts the negotiation between colonial and patriarchal spaces and personal whim. Within the space Emecheta's women characters try to claim piece of time and make it glitter. Buchi Emecheta in an interview claims that she is a feminist with a small "f". For her western feminism is a luxury which she cannot afford.

The struggle by Emecheta discovers the common issue of gender silencing which is framed in their works. It can be concluded that Emecheta's novels are social project but they exhibit the mechanism of gender hyponymy. Emecheta's male character Francis from *Second-Class Citizen* miss to create a room for himself in Whiteman's culture and his disappointment and frustration of failure comes out when he beats his wife Adah. In Francis's first novel, *The Bride Price*, shows that being a man Francis cannot see his wife advancing and becoming an individual and independent. She tried to present a particular ideology or a mental framework through her work. This ideological contradiction issues from the competition and contest between two different cultures, between different genders, between individualism and national and social duties and responsibilities. The present research helps to get a new dimension to analyze the selected works. The study finds that the narrative of the novels is the narrative of failure. The writer has not tried to provide a solution to the problem they have simply arouse complicated issues of their culture, society and nation. The writer speaks the language of subaltern and they tried to move the centre. They tried to recreate centres among the working people in conditions of gender and racial equality.

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