

**AFRICAN FEMINISM AMONG FEMALE AFRICAN MIGRANTS IN BUCHI  
EMECHETA'S *SECOND CLASS CITIZEN* AND CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE'S *THE THING  
AROUND YOUR NECK***

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to read Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and Chimamanda Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck* from the African feminist perspective. African feminism comprises different types and efforts geared towards improving the conditions of women in Africa and the entire world. These two women writers sought to re-theorize feminism in a way that captures their social-cultural beliefs about the condition of women in the context of migration. Both writers are Nigerians and understand African culture and are also immersed in the American and British cultures as migrants. The selected literary works provide a fictional presentation of African women in the African continent and those who have emigrated from post-independence African countries and lived in the US and UK. Based on the selected literary texts, this study investigated the influence of African feminism on female Africans both on African continent and abroad. Since women are victims of biases, the female characters that Adichie and Emecheta portray in their works devise survival tactics to outsmart social injustices and to create a better world for everyone. Thus, their inventiveness in the adaptation of mainstream feministic traditions to their African context demonstrates that they are both humanistic and socially committed writers. To describe how African feminism in the selected texts is espoused, the study sought to investigate the language use in the context of female African migrants' predicaments and struggles in Buchi Emecheta's *The Second Class Citizen* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck*. The study used a qualitative research design where the researcher undertook a critical reading of the primary texts. The study was library-based, where document analysis was used to collect both primary and secondary data for the purpose of delineating African feminism among female Africans and migrants in the selected texts. The study found that Emecheta and Adichie use straightforward language to empower African female characters.

**Key Words: African Feminism, Language Use, Construct African Feminist Sentiments, Portrayal of Female African Immigrant, Racism**

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

African women authors generally concentrate on resistance to all aspects of patriarchal structure and a conviction that women can live their own lives as they wish to and be responsible for their own lives and future. These female protest novels against the patriarchal system reveal inequalities and abuses meted on women. In addition, these novels also portray the African woman as an independent woman. African women writers treasure feminist ideals that promote independence, unity, and survival of African people. African female authors who are also the leading feminists include Flora Nwapa, Mariama Ba, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Micere Githae Mugo, Ama Ata Aidoo, Buchi Emecheta, and most recently, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

Emecheta was born to Igbo parents in Lagos on 21st July 1944. She moved to Britain in 1960, where she worked as a librarian and became a student at London University in 1970, studying Sociology. She worked as a community worker in Camden, North London, between 1976 and 1978. Most of her fiction has concentrated on sexual politics and racial prejudice. It is founded on her experiences as both a single parent and a black woman living in Britain. She has authored many novels, including *In the Ditch* (1972), *Second Class Citizen* (1974), *The Bride Price* (1976), and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994). In a way, Emecheta's life is reflected in *Second Class Citizen*. She talks of her own experiences as an African woman and migrant prejudiced by numerous troubles ranging from poverty, racism, and motherhood. Still, she also addresses all oppressed women in her writing. Emecheta has written several other novels for children, such as *Nowhere To Play* (1980). In 1983 she was selected as one of twenty 'Best of Young British Writers' by the Book Marketing Council.

On the other hand, Adichie was born on 15th September 1977 in Enugu, Nigeria. She grew up in Nsukka, in the house previously occupied by Nigerian author Chinua Achebe. Chimamanda's father worked at the University of Nigeria. Adichie completed her secondary education at the University's school. She studied medicine and pharmacy at the University of Nigeria for a year and a half. During this time, she edited *The Compass*, a magazine run by the University's Catholic medical students. She later studied at Drexel University in Philadelphia for two years and pursued a degree in Communication and political science at Eastern Connecticut State University. She released *Purple Hibiscus* in October 2003. The book was shortlisted for the Orange Fiction Prize (2004) and was awarded the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book in 2005. *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), Her other novel, is set before and during the Biafran War. Her collection of short stories, *The Thing Around Your Neck*, was published in 2009. Her third novel, *Americanah*, was published in 2013. *The Thing Around Your Neck* is deeply rooted in themes of displacement from Nigeria to other countries, specifically the US and UK, and how that reshapes the individual's cultural identity and their relationship to both countries of origin and country of stay.

Emecheta and Adichie form a part of the group of female writers from West Africa who advance feminist ideals, as have their colleagues in other African and Black American worlds. As the mark of their commitment to the survival of the African people in their texts, they support African feminist attitudes such as female independence and cooperation, attitudes that make women display "outrageous, courageous or willful behavior" (McEmrys, 2009:2).

They are female African writers who are largely known and read in contemporary African literature. Their writings as vehicles of expressions for the aspirations for the African women are well regarded in the world. They shed new light on the literary portrayal of African women living in the diaspora, adding glamour to their achievements as prolific writers. This study analyzed works and

showed how Adichie and Emecheta attempt to place their characters who have escaped patriarchy; they face discrimination and racism in the West, where they emigrate to seek better opportunities for their self-actualization.

## 1.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

The following research question was analyzed:

1. How do the two writers use language to construct African feminist sentiments in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck*?

## 1.2 Theoretical Framework

### 1.2.1 African Feminist Theory

According to Ruvimbo (2000), African feminism provides a platform for African women's struggle for identity. Ruvimbo argues that African feminism provides opinions that give meaning to the experiences of women of Africa and those of African origin against the Eurocentric feminism discussion. Ruvimbo adds that African feminism is a social movement whose objective is to raise a global awareness that sympathizes with African women's histories, current situations, and future opportunities. Therefore, African feminism concerns itself with the rights of women from Africa and encompasses the rights of those living in the Diaspora. This argument is validated by the fact that many African feminists live "abroad." Although the discussions, activities, and enactment mainly take place on African soil, African feminism has spread to other parts of the world.

African feminism started in the 1980s as a reaction to its exclusion from second-wave feminism (African feminism Online Encyclopedia, 2014). It further observes that African feminism demanded the inclusion of culture, colonialism, ethnicity, imperialism, and gender issues. It highlights that one of the main differences between African feminism and western feminism is that African feminism is "not exclusionary, in terms of expression and gender participation as western feminism purports" (African feminism online Encyclopedia). It also adds that African feminism ought to go beyond the connection of gender, race, and class and address colonialism and global capitalism. The 1990's witnessed female writers and academicians conceptualize, contextualize and theorize African feminism.

These African feminists included, among others, Filomena Chioma Steady, Ogundipe Molar-Leslie, Obioma Nnaemeka, Catherine Achonolu, Mary Kolawale, and Chikwenye Ogunyemi. Although each of these African feminists used a different style of agitation, all had one thing in common: fighting for African women's rights. For instance, Chikwenye Ogunyemi advocated for womanism to encompass racial, cultural, and economic issues that women need to pursue change. She points out that these issues have been ignored by western feminism. Catherine Achonolu embraced the concept of motherism in the 1990s, centering her discussion on motherhood. On the other hand, Obioma Nnaemeka argued for nego-feminism that encouraged negotiation between men and women in the African culture.

African feminism combines racial, sexual, class, and cultural dimensions of oppression to produce a more inclusive brand of feminism through which women are viewed first and foremost as human rather than sexual beings. It can be defined as that ideology that encompasses freedom from oppression based on political, economic, social, and cultural manifestations and class biases (Steady

Filomena, 1987). This theory helped this study to investigate language use in the representation of African feminism on the basis that a language is an important tool of oppression.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

From the 1970s onwards, research has established that women and men are assigned traditional roles. Women are presented as submissive, controlled, muted, passive, powerless, and emotional beings. At the same time, men are seen as strong, controlling, active, superior characters with occupations, so the adjectives used in the fictional texts also highlight the stereotyped roles in society.

According to Fracnk & Treichler (1989), gender involves social meaning that categorizes humans into masculine and feminine in terms of their roles as defined by the culture of the community. Simone de Beauvoir (as cited by Eckert & McConnel-Ginet, 2003, p.15) states that “women are not born, they are made.” In this way, therefore, the process of ‘making a man or a woman’ begins with the curiosity of whether the baby due will be a boy or a girl (McConnell-Ginet, 2003). Before birth, when the sex of the baby is unknown, it is mentioned as “it,” later changes into a “he” or “she” that is either a male or a female (Butler, 1993). The moment the child is born onwards, there are predetermined rules and values as female or male social gender roles are being assigned. These roles are significant in how an individual identify themselves and how society judges them. Essentially, they are the behaviors that society imposes are “correct” for boys and girls. Female and male duties, rights, responsibilities, roles in production are all determined by social gender identity.

Hartman and Judd (1978) investigated the images of women and men, the order of female-male mentioned, and stereotyped roles for females and males. They established that sexist language usage is built into English and other textbook materials used by students. For each category, they found evidence that learning materials reflected sexist attitudes and values. Similarly, Porreca (1984) tried to find how sexism was treated in English learning materials. The results reveal that sexism continues to develop in English learning materials.

Language in texts and books as an ideology maker and social role determinant leads us to generalize the roles of the sexes in a community. This seems beneficial at first instance; however it may create prejudice and discrimination among individuals. Haas (2003) states, "generalizations are used to organize facts and concepts by summarizing them and describing the relationships among them. Once a generalization is formed, it can be used to make predictions of actions and events" (p.122). Once the intolerance and generalization have been exposed to individuals through materials used in the learning environment, it would be rather hard to change people's opinions.

This observation is supported by Brunner (1986) as “language necessarily imposes a perspective in which things are viewed and a stance toward what we view. It is not just the medium, is the message. The message itself may create the reality that the message embodies and predispose those who hear it to think about it in a particular mode” (p.121). Within this framework, creative writers should consider these aspects while many fail to recognize the social organization of subjects and disciplines that transcended its elicit origins as a basis for the acquisition, recognition, and production of language.

Language plays a crucial role in the life of human beings. It is proven beyond doubt that we use language, and language uses us to define, designate, tag, and shape our places in society (Cameron,

2005). This role of language is generally suitable for all human beings, either male or female. However, this study endeavors to explain how language shapes a woman's place and identity in society. Mostly, women face linguistic discrimination in two different ways: one is how they are taught to speak and use language, and the other is about how language treats them (Lakoff, 2004). These linguistic disparities tend to specify a woman's role and function in society as a sex object, a servant, a wife, a daughter, a mother, and specifically a woman (Kerber, 1988). This study collected data from Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck*. In these texts, different lexical items, phrases, and sentences got uttered intentionally to explain the role of the main characters, Adah and Akunna, as a wife, a daughter, and a woman. The study examined the speeches of different characters only to show the language-made and man-made places of women in society. The study sought to find out whether language specifies gender roles individually, or internally or externally. Basically, different social characters surrounding a woman use language in such a way that it starts shaping a woman's character in different sub-characters, as explained in the fictional works of Adichie and Emecheta.

Additionally, language use tells us that a man remains a man in every situation either as a father, as a husband, as a son, and above all as a man but a woman's place in society is changeable depending on the language use and those tagged names that men constantly use on women.

### 3.0 METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative research design that involves the use of the non-numerical method of data collection and analysis. It undertook a critical reading of the selected texts by conducting content analysis combined with library research. Content analysis using African feminism theory helped the researcher to explore and consider different ways in which African women are oppressed – socially, economically, politically, and psychologically with a view to reduce, if not to eliminate, their oppression. In this study, African feminism theory helped Buchi Emecheta's *The Second Class Citizen* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck* distinctly capture the issues that affect African women; issues that are definitely products of patriarchy. Oppression, repression and exploitation, withdrawal of rights and privileges, and discrimination in their homes and places of work are some of the identified African feminist concerns in the fictional stories. However, reading these texts, one agrees with Strong-Leek (2001; p33) that "one must acknowledge as well that male and female roles are societal constructs, and thus, the entire female identity is based more upon societal constraints rather than physiological realities." This study analyzed available secondary sources that included journals, books, the internet, and other publications.

#### 3.1 Sampling and Data Collection Tools

In this study, the target population encompassed all the literary texts written by African immigrant writers and all other textual writings about migrants. Since this study used a qualitative design, it focused on critical reading, description, clarifications, understanding, synthesis, and analysis of African female migrant experiences that are not necessarily representative of the entire population. A purposive sample, also referred to as a judgmental or expert sample, is a nonprobability type of sampling, was used. The main objective of a purposive sample is to produce a sample that can be logically assumed to be representative of the population. This is often accomplished by applying expert knowledge of the population to select a sample of elements that represent a cross-section of the population in a nonrandom manner. Thus this study used the purposive sampling technique to choose Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Thing*



*Around Your Neck*. These texts got selected because they provided in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon of African feminism.

### 3.2 Data Analysis

This study used a qualitative research design that encompasses document analysis. In addition, a case study was conducted focusing on the two texts: *Second Class Citizen* by Buchi Emecheta and *The Thing Around Your Neck* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The researcher conducted library research that involved both intensive and extensive reading of the primary texts. Internet sources involving online journal articles formed an important part of this research.

To derive meaning from the data, the findings were clustered in emerging themes as they appeared under each category of questions relating to research questions, which provided reach materials for triangulation out of the emerging themes. Content analysis was performed manually to maintain a close connection with the data.

## 4.0 RESULTS

The research question of this study was;

1. How do the two writers use language to construct African feminist sentiments in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck*?

### 4.1 Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*

Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* is a novel of personal development dealing with a young African woman's gradual acquisition of knowledge about herself as a potential artist and about the themes of love, marriage, and the subject of student life abroad (p. 124). It traces the life of the female protagonist and how she overcomes her tough challenges. Upon the protagonist's arrival in the United Kingdom, she learns to embrace the western culture, which favors a woman's desire to live above the shackles of patriarchy.

The *Second Class Citizen* addresses the predicament of being a woman, especially in the Igbo traditions. It begins with a girl who sees herself reflected in the eyes of the surrounding society as having little value or worth. On the first page, it is stated:

*Adah was a girl who has arrived when everyone was expecting a boy. So, since she was such a disappointment to her parents, to her immediate family, to her tribe, nobody thought of recording her birth. She was so insignificant (1974, p. 7).*

This reveals that gender is constructed in everyday language and social practice. When a nurse or midwife announces "it is girl," this is not merely stating the sex but engaging in a social construction that keys into existing social norms and established semiotics of gender differences. In Igbo society, the female child is insignificant. She is regarded as a second-class human being. Her welfare is not the concern of her parents. Such is the protagonist Adah's fate in Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* (p. 2).

Being an African with western education, Emecheta satirizes all the African institutions that suppress women's freedom. Marriage is one such institution that hinders women's freedom and personal fulfillment. Emecheta sees the motif of marriage as a form of slavery for the woman. In her *Second Class Citizen*, Francis is represented as a feudal lord who stays at home and feeds fat on the labor of his wife, – Adah. Adah is saddened by her husband, who is perpetually unemployed and does not provide. She assumes the bread-winner role, does housekeeping, and looks after the children. At night she is forced to give into Francis' never-ending demands for his "sex rights." As if these were not enough, Francis would beat her up and destroy her hard-earned property:

*To him, a woman was a second-class human, to be slept with at any time, even during the day, and, if she refused, to have into her until she gave in; to be ordered out of bed after he had done with her; to make sure she washed his clothes and get his meals ready at the right time. There was no need to have an intelligent conversation with his wife because, you see, she might start getting ideas (Second Class Citizen, p. 164).*

As illustrated in the novel, marriage is depicted as an exploitative institution that suffocates women. Society allows men to subordinate women and even marginalize them. This has rendered many women worthless as they are often left at the mercy of men. The novel focuses on migrants' search for an acceptable home and culture in a hostile land. The quest for identity and home in *Second Class Citizen* is born out of the sense of dislocation, sexism, and racism. At first, Adah rejects the prevailing culture and lifestyle of London. She is socially as well as culturally alienated in the new land. However, she gradually gets adapted to the new culture, which gives birth to a new life of a promising writer in the backdrop of sexism as well as racism. Emecheta's protagonist, after a constant fight against sexism and racism, embraces an identity that allowed her to voice as a writer and welcome a second home in England which gave freedom from traditional patriarchal oppression and stereotyping of African women (p. 35).

Upon her arrival in England, Adah sees the need to fight against matrimonial injustice, which she does at the expense of her marriage. To wear a new social identity, she boldly faces her husband and stops his oppressive tendency.

Emecheta uses language to capture the reader's attention and drive the message of the text. The lexico-semantic analysis of this work involves the use of collocates for cohesion, simile, and metaphor for comparison, irony for humor, hyperbole for emphasis. Emecheta tapped from the wide varieties of English idioms to enrich the narrative. Her sense of humor is reflected in her ironic statements and her use of simile and metaphor. It is also seen that words such as "second-class," "sub-standard," "female child," "inferior," and "black" are scattered in the text. These words are often contrasted with words such as "first-class," "male," and "white." The use of these contrasting words echoes the central ideas of the novel, which are the female child are seen as a second-class human being (degradation of the female), and the blacks in England are seen as second-class citizens (racism) (p. 10).

These experiences stifle her hopes, and she starts to distrust those around her. However, Adah chooses to resist this mistreatment, employing various strategies to overcome the limits placed upon her skin color, such as changing her accent when speaking to potential landlords over the phone. African feminists believe that African women always have a choice and the power to act, no matter how bad the situation looks. Adah knows that there are various accents in London, and her voice on

the phone call for the vacant room in Hawley Street would make clear that she is an African. In a tragicomic scene, Adah disguises her voice while speaking on the phone to a potential landlady to arrange an initial interview. In this scene, the accent has a role in judgments of identity construction; it plays an important role in Adah's identity construction. This is in order to transgress the boundaries of her black identity, which had been a great obstacle for social acceptability.

Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* is characterized by figurative, idiomatic, and proverbial expressions. Her sense of humor is contagious, which relaxes the reader and aids in the novel's enjoyment (p. 20). It is obvious that the beauty of the novel lies in Emecheta's ability to use language. This enables her to paint a beautiful picture of characters struggling to end their disappointment about life, especially in a foreign land.

#### **4.2 Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck***

The "thing around your neck" becomes a symbol of the narrator's anxiety and desperation at her lack of control in America. She feels lonely, isolated displaced, and alienated. At night "something would wrap around your neck, something that very nearly choked you before you fell asleep" (p. 119). She suffers from a lack of control and the burden of expectations placed upon her by Nigerians at home.

The impersonal "You" reflects her own sense of detachment; her inability to deal with her anxiety and her problem of distance; it is also her inability to help her relatives and tell them about her problems; it is difficult to say to them because of the stereotypical impression they have of American people and their lifestyles. Akunna experiences anxiety because she cannot fulfill the relatives' expectations; she struggles to pay her rent on a waitressing salary and consequently cannot send home extra gifts expected by the Nigerians. Nor does she want to disappoint them. She wants to write to her relatives about the "real" America; the Americans who are not rich and do not live in big houses and own big cars. But she finds that she does not want to disappoint them. Perhaps she feels that they are even more desperate than her and is anxious because of their sense of hope and dependency.

Akunna suffers from the burden of the stereotypical image of a wealthy American: Many Nigerians have a stereotypical impression of America as a place of wealth and luxury, with big cars and big houses where people had plenty. (p. 37/ 182/ 124) "You thought everyone in America had a car and a gun" (p. 117). The Nigerians build expectations based on these stereotypes; their relatives in Nigeria also expect a great deal from the immigrants, which places enormous pressure on them. She makes herself completely invisible as a reflection of her omnipotence and insignificance, "Nobody knew where you were because you told no one" (p. 119). "Sometimes you felt invisible and tried to walk through your room wall into the hallway (p. 119).

Akunna finally writes home when she is able to send some 'crisp dollar bills' (p. 127), which helps her alleviate her anxiety, but she gets confronted with the news of her father's death five months ago. The fact that she was unaware of the death; did not attend the funeral or the goat celebrations reinforces her alienation and desperation. The father's death becomes a symbol of just how much she loses to assimilate into a new country.

Contrastingly, Americans also have a stereotypical idea about Africa; for example, they perceive Botswana is swamped by AIDS (p. 119). This makes it hard to establish rewarding relationships and



be accepted as an individual. Juan's mother does not expect Akunna to be well-read or educated. She is surprised that she has read Nawal el Saadawi (p. 126). Many Americans view the Africans as an "exotic trophy" or an "ivory tusk" (p. 126). Akunna values her relationship with Juan because he knows more about Africa than most.

As migrants, women are particularly vulnerable. They are often exploited by men – either Nigerian or American – and struggle to survive. In a strictly patriarchal society, which continues in America for many Nigerians, the women are advised to "guard your husband like a guinea fowl's egg" (p. 178). This alludes to the lack of power experienced by many women who struggle with their sense of dependence.

The narrator (Akunna) experiences an overwhelming sense of anxiety because of the helplessness of her situation. She refuses to compromise her dignity and resists the uncle's advances; this leaves her destitute, and she must rely on her resources to find work and shelter. She is wary of the boyfriend's often condescending attitudes and feels burdened by the pressure to help her relatives in Nigeria who expect her support; (p. 119). She makes herself completely invisible as a reflection of her omnipotence and insignificance ("Nobody knew where you were because you told no one." "Sometimes you felt invisible and tried to walk through your room wall into the hallway (p. 119).

There is a sense that the relationship will not endure the test of time or the difficulties encountered by Americans and Nigerian couples. They are gawked at; (p. 125). Akunna's boyfriend buys her an expensive "scarf hand-painted in Mexico." In "A Private Experience, the scarf is a sign of Hausa's ethnicity and reconciliation, and compassion, but here it is just a materialistic token.

### ***4.3 Summary of key findings and discussions***

The study findings reveal that gender is constructed in everyday language and social practice. Further, it was found that in Igbo society, the female child is insignificant. She is regarded as a second-class human being. Her welfare is not the concern of her parents. Such is the protagonist's (Ada's) fate in Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* (p. 2).

Furthermore, being an African with western education, Emecheta satirizes all the African institutions that suppress women's freedom. Marriage is one such institution that hinders women's freedom and personal fulfillment. Emecheta sees the motif of marriage as a form of slavery for the woman. In her *Second Class Citizen*, Francis is represented as a feudal lord who stays at home and feeds fat on the labor of his wife, – Adah.

As demonstrated, society allows men to subordinate women and even marginalize them. This has rendered many women worthless as they are often left at the mercy of men.

The novels focus on migrants' search for an acceptable home and culture in a hostile land. The quest for identity and home in *Second Class Citizen* and *The Thing Around Your Neck* is born out of the sense of dislocation, sexism, and racism. At first, the protagonists reject the prevailing culture and lifestyle of Britain and America. For example, Akunna retained her Nigerian culture by discovering their local African food store. This is clear evidence that African female migrants in America retained their core identity.

Although the African female migrants retain some form of identity, there is a unique construction in individual African women who have interacted with western spaces, as revealed in the two texts. Adah and her husband are unable to get accommodation because of their "Blackness," even though they have the required money to pay rent. When they were given an appointment to see a house for rent, Adah had to change her accent to resemble the British accent. She does so to give an impression that she and her husband are not Blacks but British. That is, they have to hide their black and African identity to be accepted in English society. The main influence for adopting the British identity among many African female migrants is the need to get accepted and integrated into the new society.

There is evidence of the transformation of African migrants in Adichie's *Thing Around Your Neck* as presented by Akunna's uncle that "America is a give-and-take: you gave up a lot, but you gained a lot too" (Adichie, 2009a, p. 116), as noticed in the whole story. The character gave up a normal wage to gain a job, gave up a house to gain her honor back, gave up her pride to gain her boyfriend, gave up her identity to gain America, and later gave up America to gain her identity back. Therefore, Adichie creates a narrative of a painful loss and even more painful recovery. "*The Thing Around Your Neck*" is a story of transformation, a journey of self-discovery.

The characters are socially as well as culturally alienated in the new land. However, they gradually get adapted to the new culture, which gives birth to a new life of promising writers in the backdrop of sexism as well as racism. Emecheta's protagonist, after a constant fight against sexism and racism, embraces an identity that allows her to voice as a writer and welcomes a second home in England which gave freedom from traditional patriarchal oppression and stereotyping of African women (p. 35). Upon her arrival in England, Ada sees the need to fight against matrimonial injustice, which she does at the expense of her marriage. To wear a new social identity, she boldly faces her husband and stops his oppressive tendencies.

Emecheta uses language to capture the reader's attention and drive the message of the text. The lexico-semantic analysis of this work involves the use of collocates for cohesion, simile, and metaphor for comparison, irony for humor, hyperbole for emphasis. Emecheta tapped from the wide varieties of English idioms to enrich the narrative. Her sense of humor is reflected in her ironic statements and her use of simile and metaphor. It is also seen that words such as "second-class," "sub-standard," "female child," "inferior," and "black" are scattered in the text. These words are often contrasted with words such as "first-class," "male," and "white." The use of these contrasting words echoes the central ideas of the novel, which are the female child are seen as a second-class human being (degradation of the female), and the blacks in England are seen as second-class citizens (racism) (p. 10).

These experiences stifle her hopes, and she starts to distrust those around her. However, Adah chooses to resist this mistreatment, employing various strategies to overcome the limits placed upon her skin color, such as changing her accent when speaking to potential landlords over the phone. African feminists believe that African women always have a choice and the power to act, no matter how bad the situation looks. Adah knows that there are various accents in London, and her voice on the phone call for the vacant room in Hawley Street would make clear that she is an African. In a tragicomic scene, Adah disguises her voice while speaking on the phone to a potential landlady to arrange an initial interview. In this scene, the accent has a role in judgments of identity construction; it plays an important role in Adah's construction of identity. This is in order to

transgress the boundaries of her black identity, which had been a great obstacle for social acceptability.

Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* is characterized by figurative, idiomatic, and proverbial expressions. Her sense of humor is contagious, which relaxes the reader and aids in the enjoyment of the novel (p. 20). It is obvious that the beauty of the novel lies in Emecheta's ability to use language. This enables her to paint a beautiful picture of characters struggling to end their disappointment about life, especially in a foreign land.

## **5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The purpose of this study was to read Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and Chimamanda Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck* from the African feminist perspective.

The study concluded that the use of language is significant in giving the novel meaning by revealing the setting and the themes. Further, the findings showed that the language used was straightforward, leading to a smooth reading of the text. Emecheta's *The Second Class Citizen* and Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck* are characterized by the use of figures of speech and proverbs. Their sense of humor is infectious and helps relax the reader and enhance the novel's enjoyment. In this research, it was revealed that Adichie has successfully manipulated language so that stylistic effects are created. The text *The Thing Around Your Neck* has not enjoyed much attention because of its newness. Therefore we suggest that upcoming researchers give attention to other aspects of the text which has not been worked on, like "A feminist analysis of the novel," which will be a good start. Also, the oral aesthetics in the novel can be a good area to research upon.

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