

## African Literary Communication

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**Abstract:** This article entitled *African Literary Communication* centers on the way of transmitting message as well as the language African writers use or should use in their literary productions. It purports not only on revealing the implementation of African literary communication but also on assessing controversial views on the choice of language in writing African literature. However, it is obvious that the choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation not only for their natural and social environment but also in relation to the entire universe. Hence language has always been at the heart of the two contending social forces in Africa of the twentieth century. This stemmed from the Berlin Conference (1884) when western civilization and culture began to creep into African socio-cultural milieu, in the quest for imperial pilfering of African resources. Accordingly, the African literary communication is a cultural issue that in the current work aims at analyzing the language(s) used by African writers in their writings. However, the probing of this issue reveals that African writers were compelled to use the colonizer's languages in their writings rather than their own and diverging points of view are given about the use of these languages. In this controversial context, I couldn't help suggesting recommendations as part of my contribution to the debate.

**Keywords:** African literary communication, African writer, colonizer, literature, language.

### I. Introduction

The communication, referring to the social process of information exchange is the transmission of information by humans using various types of technologies. It has its origin in the desire of humans for communication near or over a distance greater than that feasible with the human voice. Thus, the African literary communication refers to the message African creative writers convey whatever the form. In other words, it is about the transmitting of Africa ideas, beliefs, customs, and culture through creative productions. However, for it to be possible, language is at the crossroad of all. As a matter of fact, language is the medium of expressions of the people and the human society is the provider of beliefs and manners in the society which are expressed by writers. This is to say that it is the people's language in particular which would define their literature like French literature in French, English literature in Great Britain, Portuguese literature in Portugal, Russian literature in Russia, to name just a few. This is not the case for African countries where official languages are not their own, rather than adopted foreign languages.

In this connection, the term African literature needs to be well understood. It generally refers to a comprehensive, complex and creative literature of and about Africa, though several critics belonging to different schools of thought have provided varying interpretations about African literature. With the aforesaid, it becomes ambiguous to provide a satisfactory or conciliated definition of this concept. The common sense would consider African literature as the body of works produced in different languages and various genres starting from oral literature to the literature written in colonial languages (French, English, and Portuguese). Put differently, the implementation of African literature doesn't limit itself on one particular language; a conception that doesn't unify actors and critics of literature. In this way, the answers of the following questions will help to appropriately conduct this

analysis: How is African literary communication implemented? Who is author of African literature? Finally, in which language African creative writers present or should present their works? Though open, the two last questions present an ambiguous character of African literature but this doesn't prevent to argue.

In order to successfully carry out this work, four approaches will be helpful and beneficial. The first will be the sociological approach since every literary work has a social function and people always interact within a society and whatever a man does beneath is placed at the service of the community. The second will be the linguistic one as communication is based on a language without which any exchange can be done. Next, the cultural approach also matters in this study as language is a cultural issue and values are the basis of a people's identity, their sense of particularity as members of human race. This connection between language and culture is highlighted by Ngugi Wa Thion'o (1986:15) when he writes: *Culture is almost indistinguishable from language that makes possible its genesis, growth, banking, articulation, and indeed its transmission from one generation to the next.* The last approach will be the historical one for the choice of the language for communication in Africa wasn't done in vacuum, it rather stemmed from the earliest form of literature. However, the issue of communication in African literature, with the language as well used by creative writers was and is still the preoccupation of more than one author as no consensus has been found. It is in this perspective that I have listed myself in this adventure not to deny the previous analysis devoted to the debate rather to recognize and to get credit for the relevance of each contestant.

Thus, to reach my objective, I will first of all present the historical and linguistic situation of Africa and with it its literature. After this, I will show how African literature is implemented by focusing on the forms which characterize it. Then, my preoccupation will consist in talking of the language issue for African literature with reference to pioneers or earlier contenders of this language debate. At last, I will provide some recommendations which, once taken into account would help the African literary world to reach a conciliated view on the problem of language in African literature.

## **II. Historical and linguistic situation of African literature**

As the title denotes, this section deals with the history of African literature and the language related to it. Like the other continents, African continent has a history as well as a literature which has origins dating back thousands of years to Ancient Egypt and hieroglyphs, or writing which uses pictures to represent words. However, it is paramount to note from an early start that the Sub-Saharan Africa developed a written literature during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This is to say in other words that this literature had a first form and later on a second one, known as oral and written forms which are currently used in the daily life of African people and they are also forms of African literary communication with language as medium.

African people was the victim of colonization. Indeed, western civilization and culture started to crawl into African social and cultural society first with the contact of westerners with Africa. This stemmed from the Berlin Conference held in (November 15<sup>th</sup> 1884-february 26<sup>th</sup> 1885), a series of negotiations in which the major European nations met to decide all questions connected with Africa in general. From this meeting European powers discussed the partitioning of Africa, establishing rules to amicably divide resources among the western countries at the expense of the African people who lost his authenticity in social, economic, cultural, and politic plan. This state of affair didn't please Africans and as such, creative writers in defending their cultural identity, excoriate European intervention as disruptive of the growth and development of African culture through colonization. It is in this vein that Mexan Serge Epounda et al, approaching the social discontent of indigenous people exalt the role of postcolonial writers. In this connection, they (2020: 247-248) writes:

The major preoccupation of the postcolonial writing is to revise the historical social norms in the perspectives to justify the actions of the society. The postcolonial writers mainly emphasized the indigenous people, places, and their practices to get rid on the stereotypes, inaccuracies and general influences in the spheres of education, social, legal and political settings.

Furthermore, language imposition to Africans was one of the drawbacks subjugated. Indeed, the English, French, Arabic, and Portuguese literary traditions along with Christianity and Islam and other effects of colonialism in Africa also had a dynamic impact on African literature, but African writers adapted those alien traditions and

made them their own by placing them into these African traditions. On the linguistic context, Africa presents a most complex situation comparing to the remaining continent. This is due to the fact that Africa has more than the third of languages worldwide as we can read from Lodhi, (1993: 79) when he writes:

The boundaries were fixed arbitrarily regardless to the linguistic situation of the continent. Africa witnessed, therefore, an impressive linguistic diversity, as African ethnic groups within each country had their own dialects. Furthermore, of the estimated 6,200 languages and dialects in the world, 2,582 languages and 1,382 dialects are found in Africa.

From this excerpt, we can learn that the Westerners in charge of partitioning African countries didn't appropriately considered the national boundaries. The fact of having an incalculable number of languages and dialects should culturally favour the continent go forward but unhappily, this brought about troubles for communication not only among Africans themselves but also among non-Africans as each country or ethnic group has specific languages. Although the number of African languages is approximate, it matters to notice that some are still being discovered and some others are disregarded for having few speakers. This leads to say that the number of African languages is timelessly increasing. At this stage, due to a large indeterminate number of dialects, the question of language in the African continent in general and within a country in particular becomes trickier, mainly when it comes to choosing a national language. It is certain that most of the languages composing part of Africa's cultural complexity are spoken by few people, though some of them spoken by the majority of people are considered lingua francas. This is the case of Swahili in East Africa and Hausa in West Africa where populations use them in common, one way to overcome and to some extent lower the problems inherent to the choice of a national language.

It is agreed that any language has a dual character: means of communication and carrier of culture. But, it carries culture for those people to whom it is a mother-tongue. Thus, there is no doubt that Africa was colonized by Europe, consequently, European languages (English, French, Spanish, Portuguese) have influenced African's ones. Paradoxically, the imposition of these European languages over African languages has been increasing regardless the fact that they are not mother-tongues of African populations. In other words, the European cultural invasion was and is still remarkable in African society and a token of this prevailing domination has been the infinite number of African production written in the European languages against a smaller number of literary works written in the African languages. This is to say that the linguistic situation of Africa remains dominated by the foreign forces, which are European languages mainly restricted to intellectual and social class of high status or within the ruling class in Africa since more than half of the population is subjugated. But trying to overturn the supremacy of European languages over African languages depends on leaders as it is a political issue. However, important is to note that the advent of European languages is not only a cultural tool of dominance but also a political power of unification of African people.

### **III. African literary communication's implementation**

The present section deals with how the message about African beliefs, customs, culture and values are transmitted. In other words, this section will endeavour to answer the question how are African literary productions conveyed from creative artists to consumers of these products? However, the title of this communication as formulated poses a tiny worry. Indeed, African literary communication to some extent means that there is also another African communication which is not literary. In this connection, literature is a word that is applied to virtually anything that is written under the sun, it is conceived in many views. The speech or communication delivered by a Head of State on the eve of the country's independence; a manufacturer who offers a new product encloses it in a leaflet or manual containing more information on how to use it, both use literature. Additionally, in social sciences, exact sciences also its discipline has its specific literature. But, the difference has been made by Nkem Okoh (quoted by Mary E. Modupe Kolawolo) who categorized literature into literature of knowledge and literature of power. To him, literature of knowledge refers to the literature that gives more information on products or subjects while literature of power is imaginative. Thus, my concern in this study is about the imaginative literature as it is a powerful form of human expression in an artistic manner.

As a reminder, African literary communication refers to the way African creative works reach the recipients. This process cannot be done without the use of language which is a fundamental element in the transmission of

message. The language, not only allows the narrator to narrate and make himself understood but also permits him to describe his characters. It is agreed that most African literature is oral. That is why anyone attempting to study African literature should firstly study cultures and oral traditions from Africans draw their styles, metaphors and plots. Thus, referring to my study as the theme is formulated, this communication presents two facets: the pre-colonial communication which is currently in use and the post-colonial communication, the most used form nowadays. In a word, African literary communication uses the language to send messages either orally or in a written channel. Such are the two forms of communication African artists use to address either the audience or the readers that I intend to unroll in this section.

In pre-colonial Africa, like in any other continent people had no choice to communicate if not orally, as it was the first form of communication, speech comes first and then writing. This has been divine principle that people simply comply with (Genesis 1:1-3). Accordingly, people transmitted messages orally from one generation to another through speech or song and might take the form of folktales and fables, epic histories and narrations, proverbs or sayings, termed as oral traditions. Indeed, without writing, oral traditions made it possible for a society to pass knowledge across generations. Thereafter, oral traditions not only help people make sense of the world but also are used to teach children and adult about important aspects of their culture. Education, being the process of learning knowledge, abilities, customs, habits as well as beliefs of a particular group of people had been imparted to African people through oral tradition using the spoken language. This process requires at least two people, one to speak and another to listen. Naturally, African literary communication is marked here by historical events, moral values, religious values, songs, etc which have been around since humans have the ability to communicate between them. These values are interpreted as evidences delivered orally by older people for the edification of the youth and also as a form of a number of customs that have been set in certain communities, a series of beliefs, and the routines which is performed repeatedly to show the continuity through the spoken word or phrase by mouth. In this connection, the wordings of Errington (1984:54) are meaningful when he said:

*It is concluded that oral tradition is a form of practice in conveying messages or verbal testimony about the things that happened in the past or the present to be passed on to the next generation.*

Thus, oral traditions, manifested as formal speech communication, in some circumstances coexisting with music in form of song, or with instrument, and dance, generated an almost unimaginable range of genres. These oral genres such as myth, legend, anecdote, song, proverb, riddle, sayings etc. together come under what is called African oral literature. However, for this study, I propose to consider storytelling, riddles and proverbs among the many. Storytelling is the art and practice of telling stories not given to anyone. It is a sensory union of image and idea, a process of re-creating the past in terms of the present. In so doing, the storyteller uses realistic images to describe the present and fantasy images to evoke and embody the substance of a culture's experience of the past. These ancient fantasy images are the culture's heritage and the storyteller's bounty: they contain the emotional history of the culture, its most deeply felt yearnings and fears, and they therefore have the capacity to elicit strong emotional responses from members of audiences. During a performance, these envelop contemporary images - the most unstable parts of the oral tradition, because they are by their nature always in a state of flux and thereby visit the past on the present. So, why storytelling?

Nothing can be undertaken if not beneficial to people. Thus, there is often a lesson or a value to instill, and the transmission of wisdom to children is a community responsibility. In fact, parents, grandparents, and relatives take part in the process of passing down the knowledge of culture and history for storytelling not only provides entertainment, develops the imagination, but also teaches important lessons about everyday life. As to the storyteller, he doesn't limit himself on the words. Additionally, his tools are also gestures, facial expressions, body movements, singing, and acting to make stories enjoyable and memorable. It happens that a storyteller performs epics that can be hours or even days long that relate history and genealogy, battles and political uprisings of a community. Some gifted or well-known storytellers often repeat the story with the same words and same expressions in each performance wherever they perform. But they also add new material to an old story to make it more interesting or meaningful to different audiences. The art of storytelling is characterized by repetition of the language and rhythm. That is why storytellers often repeat words, phrases, refrains, sounds, whole lines and even stanzas to help the audience remember the chorus and allow them to join in with the storyteller.

An artist is known by his artworks. In the African context, the griot is famous for more than one reason. He is at the same time storyteller, historian and teacher or adviser. As a storyteller, a griot is the social memory of the community and the holder of the word, the keeper of facts and important events of his time. It is his responsibility to pass this knowledge on to future generations, as well as that of past times passed down to him by his ancestors. As historian, a griot is a praise-singer and musical entertainer. He is the guardian of the knowledge of their people's ancestry and genealogy. Since history may never be written down, the griot is crucial to keeping records of the past and entrusted with the memorization, recitation, and passing on of cultural traditions from one generation to the next. As adviser, a griot counsels and mediates disputes relying on the understanding of both parties. The griot's reputation goes beyond ordinary men regarding the role he plays. In fact, within a community he is also taken as a poet, spokesperson, translator, peace-maker, witness, teacher, composer, translator, interpreter, and warrior. Not only men but women also play the role of griot in African traditional society. Additionally, African literary communication is also expressed through rhetorical forms. They are often used in the speech for persuading or entertainment and are taken as ornaments for a true communication. Among them I have considered riddles and proverbs.

*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines the riddle as a question, statement or description, not easily understood at first that has a clever answer. In the riddle, two things are compared. The obvious thing that happens during this comparison is that a problem is set, then solved. But there is something more important here, involving the riddle as a figurative form: the riddle is composed of two sets, and, during the process of riddling, the aspects of each of the sets are transferred to the other. In other words, the riddle involves two contestants where the first part asks the question and the second part provide the answer. In the traditional society, riddles are not only a privileged circumstance for participants to communicate but also contribute to increase or equip them of the traditional knowledge. This practice is beneficial for children who are exposed and initiated to the culture of their society as the substances referred to are drawn from the immediate environment. The implementation of riddles often begins with a particular style as: Tell me ... Tell me ... or Tell me what .... Some of riddles which serve as examples and their answers are:

Question: Tell me 'A pot without an opening'.

Answer: Egg

Question: Tell me the silly man who drags his intestines.

Answer: A needle and thread

The most important thing in riddles is that the one who asks the question is likely or supposed to know the answer. So, in case of wrong answer, he provides the expected right answer.

As to proverbs, they are short well-known sentences or phrases that state general truth about life and give advice. Considered as the major ingredients or ornaments of speech proverbs are particularly useful in oratory in which they contribute. However, proverbs differ from every day ordinary speech for their figurative mode of expression. Thus, the words of the proverb are by themselves only one part of the metaphorical experience. The following are taken as samples of proverbs with full meanings:

- No matter how long the night the day is sure to come
- A short man hangs his bag where his hand can reach it.
- Strike the iron when it is still hot.

Telling stories, riddles and proverbs are circumstances where African literary communication is practiced. But, they are not the only occasions to communicate. Performances in rituals, songs, dances, marriages, funerals, births, deaths, and other ceremonies are also open to real communication.

African literary communication doesn't limit itself on orality. In post-colonial Africa with the favour of colonization European forces which invaded Africa brought also their languages that ultimately prevailed on African languages. This is to say that from then, Africans began converting their oral culture into written one with African literature representing writings of African national livings on their soil exalting native problems related to culture and identity.

Focusing on the distortion of culture by the influences of the colonization, they declared their experiences in writing on the realities experienced by indigenous people of the country. In this connection, Ashcroft et al, 1989: 2) believes that postcolonial literature is 'affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to



the present day''. Thus, African writers revealed through novels, plays, and essays the real images of their countrymen as well as their problems encountered before, during and after colonization.

In the African countries of English expression, writers used English as main legacy of colonization with Nigeria largely contributing to the richness of African literature and standing first in the literary productions. As a matter of fact, it was in 1952 that Amos Tutuola published *The Palm Wine Drunkard*, the first novel to be published in the region. In this novel, Tutuola presents a hero in quest of his dead palm-wine tapster in the Dead's Town. The most important aspect of the novel lies on the author's unveiling images and thoughts of the valuable past of the Africans. His literary career is rich in books, essays, and plays. *Palm Wine Drunkard* was folled by *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1954), *Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle* (1955), *The Brave African Huntress* (1958), and many others. On his side, Chinua Achebe also plays his role as a historian bringing back in the mind of new generation the African glorious past as his novels centered on the problems of culture and identity. In a word, Achebe in novels revealed the life of Igbo people, customs, culture and the change they underwent at the advent of new masters. For his early writings, Achebe was called father of modern literature. Praising Achebe's creativeness, Simon Gikandi (2019: 1) raises the author's role in consolidating African identity he writes:

Today, among literary critics, historians, and general readers alike, there is a consensus that more than any other African writer of his generation, Achebe used creative writing to give Africans a voice; that he instituted a literary practice in which African being and becoming could be imagined; and that he had used creative writing to help consolidate national and regional identity. Above all, his works transformed our understanding of world literature in the second half of the twentieth century.

Through his literary productions, Chinua Achebe communicates to not only his people (African) but also to westerners who have misrepresented Africa, one way to exalt, restore and bring out the African value, with it African people. His first novel *Things Fall Apart*, publish in 1958 was followed by *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), *A Man of the People* (1966), and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987). Another icon of modern literature is Ngugi Wa Thiongo, the Kenyan writer who through his writings traces not only the history, culture of Kenyan people but also of African identity as a whole. As the other writers, Ngugi draws his inspirations from the African people's subjugation through slavery, colonization, and neo-colonialism and his novels including *Weep, Not Child* (1964), *The River Between* (1965), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *Petals of the Bloods* (1977); *Devil on the Cross* (1983), *Matigari* (1986) and *Wizard on the Crow* (2006) shows an immense and consistent review of characterization, content, ideas and style. His literary production is very abundant. Apart from novels, Ngugi has also published a collection of short stories, several collection of essays and children's books.

Communication through writing has been the aspiration of authors in postcolonial Africa. In Anglophone literature, Amos Tutuola, Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiongo have been considered as samples among the many. However, writers like Ben Okri, Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Coetzee, and others are not to be neglected. As we can realize, African literary communication is manifested through two channels or forms: oral and written, the early form being backed up by the second which becomes widely used in modern literature. However, writing is one thing but the medium in which thoughts have been transmitted is also another one. This is the reason why I have proposed to probe on the language used by African writers to convey their beliefs or message, the issue I will be concerned with in the next section before proving relevant recommendations. .

#### IV. African literary language of communication

The simplest definition that we can give to language is a means of communication. As such, language is the core in literature for the latter cannot be undertaken out of language. However, the question of the African language of literature has always been the concern of many scholars but unfortunately no conciliated approach has been found yet till now. It matters to notice according to my survey that no study on the language issue as I have formulated has been undertaken in our Alma matter, except online data. Thus, the current section seeks to answer the following question: What is the African language of literature?

To begin with, it is important to recall that the debate on the language issue on African literature is an ongoing process which started with icons of this literature years ago. Most of writers, if not all writers who attended the conference of Kampala, Uganda in 1962 opine about this issue in their writings, whether for or against. Indeed,

two contestants or opposing groups opine for long on the question, whether they are for writing African literature in African languages or not. In other words, this debate has attracted a lot of arguments and counter arguments. Thus, the answer to the above query will consist in assessing the views of different scholars on the issue of what language to use when it comes to writing African literature. Accordingly, the investigation shows that we have on one hand Ngugi Wa Thiong'o with his group and Chinua Achebe with his fellowmen on the other hand. As I earlier put it, the Conference of Berlin hold in 1884 gathering European powers centered on the partitioning of African countries in terms of colony and with it the language of the European powers. Consequently, African countries as colonies and neo-colonies came to be defined into three groups of languages known as English-speaking, French-speaking, and Portuguese-speaking African countries. As to the language to use in writing African literature, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, (1986:15) the Kenyan writer autographs his *Decolonizing the Mind* in the following terms:

This book is gratefully is dedicated to all those who write in African language and to all those who over the years have maintained the dignity of the literature, culture, philosophy and other treasures carried by African languages.

The understanding of this dedication shows that Ngugi militates against the use of European languages in African literature but rather promotes African values, cultures, and authenticity using African languages. For him, African literature should definitely written in African languages even if the problem of "which language" must be chosen regarding the linguistic multiplicity the continent has. He would prefer writing African literature in mother tongues rather than in an adopted language. The position of Ngugi is that African literature cannot be written in any other languages if not African, mainly if it is imposed. Thus, he (1986:18) argues that "imposing a foreign language and suppressing the native languages as spoken and written, were already breaking the harmony previously existing between the African child". Furthermore, he asserts that "African literature can only be written in African languages (p. 27). This phenomenon is what Ngugi calls an Afro-European literature, which is the literature written by Africans in European languages; a behavior that African writers should fight in order to free the continent from foreign powers. Thus, Ngugi proves himself useful when he (1986: 28) asserts *'I believe that my writing in Gikuyu language, a Kenyan language, and an African language is part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggles of Kenyan and African peoples'*. In this context, an author of African literature is not only the one who writes about Africa but also the one who uses an African language to write about Africa. Put differently, Ngugi claims authenticity and a return in writing in indigenous African languages, avoiding imperialism and subjugation of the colonizers. So far, he argues that most parts of the world today are writing in their own languages, as such Africa should not be an exception. Accordingly, Ngugi (1986) provides three reasons why he is encouraged to write in one of the African languages:

First, writing in L1 allows the writer to share the same culture and ideology with his people through the eyes of others. Second, the writer would not be cut off from his people: he would help them to overcome the neo-colonization of Europe and be free. And thirdly, the people would also not be cut off from the writer.

The purpose for writing should be for Ngugi to address thoroughly the entire community, and to do that, a writer would refer to common language spoken by this people. That is why, for him African literature in which another language is used rather the African language doesn't meet the goal as it will reach only a limited class. To him, writers like Achebe, who are mainly writing in European languages, are merely reaching the middle-class, not the entire masses.

Ngugi's position about the language of African literature is backed up by many other scholars. One of them is Obi Wali. Accordingly, Wali believes that any literature written outside African languages cannot be termed African literature, no matter how clearly it describes the African experience. To him, African writers must use the African languages, which is the languages of African peasantry and working class, the major alliance of classes in each of our nationalities and the agency for the coming inevitable revolutionary break with neo-colonialism. So far, Wali raises the worry of extinction of African languages if not managed carefully. In this connection, Wali (2007: 284) writes:

African languages would face inevitable extinction, if they do not embody some kind of intelligent literature, and the only way to hasten this, is by continuing in our present illusion that we can produce African literature in English and French.

From this excerpt, the author present the danger which may happen to African languages if no revolution or protest is raised by the people victim of subjugation. Additionally, Ayo also opines on the issue supporting the use of local languages in literature. Indeed, in his *Deprived, Endangered and Dying Languages* (1993), Ayo Bamgbose fears the evanescence of indigenous languages. For him, if actions are not taken to avenge the westerners with their languages, ours will no longer exist.

Alternatively, some views are raised opposing conservators of the African languages in writing African literature. Among them there are Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe and others. If for Soyinka European languages are appropriate in African literature for unifying countrymen and establishing free communication within the continent, Chinua Achebe presents a paradoxical view. As a matter of fact, in a speech (1962) entitled '*The African Writer and the English Language*' Achebe said: *Is it right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else's? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling. But for me there is no other choice. I have been given the language and I intend to use it.* But prior this, in 1962 at the conference Achebe reported the event in these terms:

In June 1962, there was a writers' gathering at Makerere, impressively styled: "A Conference of African Writers of English Expression."... But there was something which we tried to do and failed that was to define "African literature" satisfactorily...and then the question of language. Should it be in indigenous African languages or should it include Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, Afrikaans, and so on? (Qtd. In Routledge 427).

From question to question Achebe leaves his readers with a gloomy understanding, though his view is to promote the use of European languages to convey African beliefs, experiences and thoughts in literature instead of African ones. He is certain that English, the new English will be able to vehicle African culture in accordance with ancestors. In French-speaking countries also opinions are given concerning the issue of language use. In fact, Leopold Sédar Senghor's view is for the use of European languages in African literature. If he had to choose between French and his mother tongue, he would prefer French rather than his mother tongue for the latter reminds him of 'slap and blood'. In this group, the above writers have all continued to argue that a literature created and documented in languages other than African languages is not qualified to be regarded as an African literature for it lacks authenticity. They are mainly in favor of adopted foreign languages. To them, the colonial languages provide the possible solution in addressing African literature as there are so many diverse ethnic languages in Africa.

At the end of this discussion, I have to recall this section has dealt with the language of African literature. It sorts out that two opposing trends, each on its side defends its position, standing for or against the use of European languages. Thus, my opinion is that talking of the language of African literature would be possible but hardly achievable. It would be advantageous to find firstly an African official language for it to be easily realistic. Otherwise, it would be desirable to talk of national literature instead of African literature as such a literature is only limited to the country. The choice of much dominant languages might be done within a country but the implementation might trigger political forces of civil war as one language prevails on the others. However, in the continental level this choice becomes more ambiguous because no single language unifies the continent.

Beyond all considerations, the language of African literature remains factual as long as Africa is subjugated. I believe that the way out of African in the issue might be to free itself from this state of multiform dependence, of relying upon Westerners and getting self-government. Once Africa controls its economy, politics, and culture, the problem of the language of African literature would be otherwise. In this respect, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's wordings are meaningful when he (1986:4) writes:

Imperialism continues to control the economy, politics and culture of Africa. But on the other hand, and pitted against it, are ceaseless struggles of African people to liberate their economy, politics and cultures from that Euro-American based stranglehold to usher a new era of true communal self-regulation and self-determination.



Based on the above train of thought, I am of the opinion that the state of dependence constitutes a barrier for the African people to decide on his destiny. Once liberated from all these constraints, the choice of the language of African literature would be done much easier and from then, we can talk of African literature as it will be written in either one, two or three African languages. However, the ambivalence between two positions raised above leads me to suggest a number of proposals which serve as conciliator. The suggestion given by Wole Soyinka on the language of African literature could be beneficial for the continent but still ambiguous regarding the myriads of local and official languages the continent has. As a matter of fact, for Wole Soyinka,

... A meeting be summoned of African writers and linguists, representations in equal numbers from every state in Africa who shall decide, at a closed session, on an official language for the black continent, including the black peoples of America and set a time-limit for the adoption of this language by all African States (Soyinka, July 1971).

The choice of the language of African literature is still an ongoing issue. Soyinka's idea is not to be neglected but till when such a meeting could be hold? In this connection, I believe that the authentic African literature should be:

Either written in African languages (lingua franca) for the African authenticity and interest of all social classes. However, this choice doesn't favour non-African people who wish fathom the African experience. This leads to tribal aspect of the science (since these languages are not world widely known) which should be open to anyone. Thus, translating these writings into European languages would also be a way out for foreigners.

Or written in European languages with an African setting and experience but translated into African languages (lingua franca). This is to say that the present African literature (written in European languages) is recognized as African literature since what matters is not the language in which the writer writes, but rather the content of his writing, that is the yearnings or ardently desiring of African society, the African values as a whole. However, these writings should be translated into African lingua franca for reaching all layers of society.

From the above proposals, we can understand the need for Africa to find some lingua franca languages, what is easier than official languages. In fact, African literature should be written in indigenous languages. But due to the historical and cultural circumstances that African nations opted western languages and consequently, African writers were forced to write in these languages serving as official ones. However, my strong desire is to reverse this trend, a wish that I think is common to all people African people, though difficult but possible.

## V. Conclusion

To round off this study, it is worthwhile recalling that it has purported on the way African creative writers convey their message as well as the language used to reach either the audience or the readers. The analysis has shown that African writers communicate orally in pre-colonial era and in a written form, mainly in postcolonial Africa. It has also been acknowledged that African writers use colonial languages in their writings. However, many African writers have chosen to write or express their opinions by adopting most of the colonial languages, whereas a body of scholars hold the view that African experience, belief and identity should only be better expressed by indigenous African languages. In likewise manner, it has been said that historical circumstances compelled these writers to use European languages. A mention was also put that though these European languages in Africa are undoubtedly part of the European imperial intrusion into Africa, they paradoxically act as a unifying force in many of the African national territories. Thus, facing a dilemma between two opposing groups on the language of African literature, I have suggested an agreement on one or two common languages in the continent with writings in both African common languages and European languages translated into local ones. Nevertheless, it is certain that this problem on the language of African literature is still an ongoing debate since then. However, I hope that an agreement is possible but the process needs much longer time.

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