



Language Dynamics in African Literature and Education: The Moot Issue in Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's *Decolonising the Mind the Politics of Language in African Literature*

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Abstract- The paper explores the consequences of colonial linguistic hegemony, and the relevance of language dynamics in African literature and education, focusing particularly on Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's work, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. It examines the extent to which Africans are required to use colonial languages, which significantly impacts local cultural identity, before assessing diverse, contentious debates around language issues. The work also criticizes the lack of consideration vis-à-vis African languages politics before attempting to redefine their usage. This raises a question: what should be the languages of Africans which have the power to meet socio-cultural requirements? This paper contends that there is a need for a bottom-up, grassroots improvement in literary perspectives and education, based upon a wide-spread usage and free writing in African languages. It will significantly impact the changing mentalities and boost a deep understanding of indigenous values necessary for safeguarding their cultural heritage.

Keywords: Language Dynamics - African Literature and Education - Colonial Languages-Linguistic Hegemony - Indigenous Languages - Cultural Identity - Cultural heritage

I. INTRODUCTION

Language dynamics denotes a pivotal point of contention within the broader context of African literature and education. Significant works by writers explore the impact of colonization on cultural identity and the potential benefits of reclaiming traditional dialects as a strategy for liberation. Indeed, critics such as Obiajunwa Wali in "*The Dead End of African Literature*" (Wali, 1963), are in line with Ngugi's project of referencing African languages in literacy; while others like Chinua Achebe, argues that writing in indigenous tongues may limit access and readership given the dominance of colonial languages in modern art,

education, and publishing houses. Besides, Abiola Irele, in "*African Literature and the language Question*" (1981) sustains a lasting dependence of African literature on European languages. According to him, the current situation is concerned with the convergence of anomalies he termed as '*distortion of critical values.*' The current call for '*Remaking of African Literature*' is obvious to some modern African authors. Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's essay *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature* (1987), is written in this context to analyse the influence of the colonial language's hegemony on African literacy. He argues that this practice alienates Africans from their heritage. He supports his idea by showing how colonial administration employed language to change the pre-existing cultural values, hence the relevance of his term, the '*colonised mind.*' He strongly opposes those writings under the title *Imperialism of Language: English the language for the world?* Ngugi and three scholars, for instance, Owuor Anyumba, Taban Lo Liyong, comment on their rejection and affirmation:

Our statement said, we reject the primacy of English literature and cultures. The aim, in short, should be to orientate ourselves toward placing Kenya, East Africa and the Africa in the centre. All other things are to be considered in their relevance to our situation and their contribution toward understanding ourselves...In suggesting this we are not rejecting other streams, especially the western stream. We are only clearly mapping out the directions and perspectives the study of culture and literature will inevitably take in an African university (1987, p. 108).

The author crafts new visions in East African literature, mainly in his home country Kenya, mirroring African literature in its whole. All of them agree with the centrality of language which made the domination of faith and guns, which are main assets that colonisers brought with them. Literature stands as part and parcel of one people which and must embody its cultural involvement to



bear the stamp of a people from whom it comes. Whereas, language makes it easy for those who are involved to tell histories that match their real essence. Therefore, it will be more interesting if they are recounted in the native tongues of the audience. But still, it can make sense to other people of the continent because of sharing the same roots. For instance, in most African histories and fairy tales, the role and essence of the *Ananse*¹ The spider remains the same. Indeed, the recovery and promotion of African languages in literature and education in African schools and universities is crucial to empowering communities and challenging the phenomenon of *colonising* the African mind.

This paper analyzes the language dynamic issues arising through colonial hegemony and its impacts on literature and current education in Ngugi's work. It assesses the ideological dimension, which consists of redirecting the contrastive debates on language usage and references to lay the foundation of anticolonial discourse. The work also assesses the interest in establishing major *lingua francas* for Africans to meet the socio-cultural requirements. It equally takes into account the diverse existing dialects of the continent that can bring about easy access to knowledge and teaching approaches, though the literary discourse arises from the challenge and complexities of African languages regarding Western writing standards and teaching methods. The work delves into some questions such as: should Africans writers and decision-makers in

literature and education use indigenous languages for the preservation of their roots, or should they keep on promoting colonial languages without taking into account their sociocultural and political realities? How do they interpret the enduring context of cultural alienation and inefficiency in political strategies? These are issues that need relevant answers in African literature and education studies.

If language stands as a strong weapon of liberation from cultural dominance, and norms by which a people's literature and education are measured, a reference would typically be African tongues to be official and powerful enough to challenge foreign ideological obstacles. Yet, their introduction in literature and education would not only increase creativity but would considerably contribute to cultural assessment and poverty relief in societies.

Creative African writers and critics indeed come to terms with different outcomes going through the question about the legitimacy of African literature as far as language usage is concerned. This resulted in new critical thinking and methods in writing assessments. Indeed, the meeting titled "*Conference of African Writers of English Expression*," held in Makerere College of Kampala, in June 1962, was about the undecided future of African literature. This has led to Obianjua Wali's contribution in "*The Dead End of African Literature*" (Wali, 1963), to which he posits at the opening session of that:

The whole uncritical acceptance of English and French as the inevitable medium for educated African writing, is misdirected, and has no chance of advancing African literature and culture. In other words, until these writers and their western midwives accept the fact that any true African literature must be written in African languages, they would be merely pursuing a dead end, which can only lead to sterility, uncreativity, and frustration (p. 14).

These controversies during the conference brought about the rejection of Amos Tutuola's work in *The Palm Wine Drinkard* (1952), written in a style that combines English with Yoruba oral tradition for lacking reliability. But still, these purposes are for Wali a means to value African languages for more socio-cultural referencing. Besides, Janheinz Jahn's influential critics classify this author as a member of the Negritude school of thought and for being "*out of the line winning acclaim overseas for using that kind of English expression that is non-Ibadan, and none Makerere.... African literature as now understood and practiced is merely a mirror appendage in the*

¹ Anansi: spider is an Akan character, who is one of the most-important figures in the pantheon of cultural icons among West Africans. Asante, M. Kete (2024, July 12). Ananse. Encyclopedia Britannica.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ananse>. African scholars like Ayi Kwei Armah, Chinua Achebe of ten use the symbolism of wisdom owed to the trickster spider Ananse in different contexts, as well as Efua Sutherland in his play, "*The marriage of Anansewa*" (1975) to position women in contemporary Ghanaian society. Adwoa Badoe in collaboration with Malian illustrator Baba Wagué Diakité in which the author Badoe created "*the pot of wisdom: Ananse Stories*," that are collections of tales exploring themes of justice, money, marriage, vanity and self-respect. Whereas Yaw Asare in "*Ananse in the Land of Idiots*" (2006) tackles African societies and their leaders, using Ananse as a character to highlight carelessness and the impact of Western influence. <https://www.google.com>



mainstream of European literature” (p. 13) Therefore, he uses a language that fits the level of socio-cultural wreckage in colonized societies.

Chinua Achebe goes against these purposes, as he sustains in his essay *“The African Writers and the English language”* (1965) in which the main issue is: how African writers should use English to creatively express their African experience (p. 348). He adopts a realistic approach, which is in contrast to Ngugi’s and Abiola Irele’s Afro-centrist vision of using exclusively African languages for literary purposes. Irele denounces the continuing dependence of African literature on colonial languages, which he terms as a *“distortion of critical values...”* However, he postulates: *“We cannot feel that we are in full possession of this literature so long as it is elaborated in a language that does not belong to us in an immediate and original way”* (p. 45). Although, according to Achebe. *“... there is no other choice. I have been given the language and I intend to use it”* (p. 5). In his view, the English language must be a global language that can allow African writers to reach a broader audience. That is the reason why he focuses on the use of language in writings, which he effectively imbues with African orality assets such as proverbs, idioms, and rituals, myths, history telling, in addition to dialects such as *pidgin*,² which he uses as tools for his cultural expression as an attempt to *‘Africanize’* English. This very example can be seen in the writing of his first novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958). In doing so, he crafts a distinctive style that reflects the hybrid postcolonial African texts. Still, Kenneth Kinnamon *The Eloquence of Richard Wright: A study in literature and Society* (1973) shows *“a particular problem within the broad field of literature in English”* (pp. 121-122).

² Pidgin: “broken” languages and even as “chaotic,” or apparently without communal conventions. Nevertheless, several pidgins have survived for generations, a characteristic that indicates a fairly stable system. Some of the pidgins that have survived for several generations are also spoken as vernaculars by some of their users, including Nigerian Pidgin, Cameroon Pidgin, Tok Pisin (Papua New Guinea), and Bislama (Vanuatu), all of which are based on a predominantly English vocabulary. Mufwene, S. Sangol (2024, July 15). pidgin. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/pidgin>

Most of these writers are not for the confinement of literature in indigenous or colonial languages, but they are for a more flexible approach that matches postcolonial Africa. Besides, the legitimacy of language dynamics in literature and education is still causing a lot of controversies between writers and specialists in education. Therefore, it is for them a means to stand for their pan-Africanist ideologies and politics based upon their proper languages for cultural preservation. Using an Afrocentric approach to postcolonial literary criticism, we intend to analyse the colonial language identity and its impacts in African literacy before discussing the significance of referencing effective language politics for liberation and unity based on indigenous African languages for cultural preservation. Then, discuss possible ways to increase the use of African local languages in school curricula and culture.

II. COLONIAL LANGUAGE IDENTITY AND ITS IMPACTS ON LITERACY

As a definition, colonial language identity stands as the languages of Western colonizers integrated in ancient colonies which serves to alienate the colonized through education; whereas, literature is a project that takes societies into account and has a vocational role for social changes. It also addresses high levels of literacy and communication concerns at national and international levels. Education comes as a support to socio-political and cultural development based on language acquisitions and their effective use. This includes aspects of literacy in indigenous African dialects and post-literacy. Indeed, language is a powerful tool in shaping once identity in postcolonial African society. It has become a strong weapon for cultural preservation and resistance against colonial hegemony. However, there are significant insights going through how language shapes African identities and how intellectuals undertake the challenge of colonialism and culture. These issues have not been totally solved in African literary research.

The major argument of colonial language identity in this paper focuses on its highly contentious language issues with other writers. In African literature, the discourse in the use of language in literature and education is crucial because language is tightly linked with identity and culture. Basically, the sensitivity of the language issue emphasizes the colonial past mainly the enduring dependency generating immediate effects on policies in literacy. There is a great interest for Africans to sustain their cultural heritage to which the already acquired knowledge remains significant.



Besides, it plays a role in the development of linguistic competences by ensuring an easy access to information as well as it enhances creativity, and is able to combat the ongoing cultural wreckage.

European linguistics' domination over colonized Africans has a number of social, political and economic impacts, including the control of people's wealth, distribution and sociocultural productivity. The question regarding the influence of postcolonial languages in African literary identity and schooling is crucial to the forefront project of promoting African literature and education in Ngugi's vision. For instance, the various institutions associated with different concepts used in countries speaking colonial languages are indeed particular politics in language usage as painting neo-colonialism in inner African societies. This has led to a significant shift in cultural and linguistic practice because these Lingua Franca of the former colonisers, for instance, English, French and Portuguese are considered as official in literature and education of the colonised African countries, while indigenous languages are relegated to the informal spheres. This linguistic hierarchy results in an identity crisis, as many Africans who mistakenly associate their native tongues to outdated.

The problem that rises here is, should African writers keep using colonial languages without taking into account the sociocultural and political realities of the milieu? One reason is they are caught in-between maintaining their cultural authenticity and the desire for a wide readership to help them engage in international exchanges. However, this has contributed to distancing African literature and education from its essence and roots. Adversely, Ngugi as an adept of indigenous languages promotion insists on the centrality of African languages for cultural preservation and credibility. According to him, using local languages means resisting cultural alienation. He contends that language is not just for communication but is a fundamental part of the cultural consciousness of a people. In the novel Ngugi argues that the imposition of colonial languages carries the imprint of colonial ideologies, which continue to oppress African minds even after political independence (p. 4). This argument is relevant in current African literature and education that are copies of the Western models. He firmly believes that African writers must write in their native languages as he did to resist the mental colonialism. Ngugi theorises the Western linguistic hegemony in African literature. He argues that: "*The bullet was the means of physical subjugation; language was the means of spiritual subjugation*" (p. 9). This is for him a way

to show the psychological and cultural dimension without which liberation in thinking and creativity will not be possible.

Education is at the basis of literacy and is one of Ngugi's main concerns. His analysis of the current educational system shows a bias which values European languages and literatures over Africans. In response to this mess he chooses to write his later novels in his native language *Gikuyu*.³ This is for him a way to reclaim his roots and instruct his people and readers by asserting his own narrative and identity through theatre and writing novels. The problem of education is charged with aspects of an on-going dependence on Western models giving more credits to foreign values over Africans.' Some African writers and education specialists mistakenly are in favour of Western education based on colonial languages to which they claim to be more official and best fitted for African literary purposes and education. Such drives do not match Ngugi's pan-Africanist approach to language which goes against all writings and teaching in European languages because of reflecting imperialism and alienation. This cultural reassessment is a way to acknowledge the argument of his fellow African writers to advocate the aspects of language identity in their works. Considerably, Ngugi has led the foundation of language reforms in modern African literature and education.

By analysing language dynamics in its relation with literacy, Ngugi's *Decolonising the Mind* and most of his plays like *The Black Hermit* (1968), shed light on the necessity of postcolonial African society to assert its true identity hence the relevance of using native languages to tell local rather than relying on foreign languages. This Afrocentric vision is a fruit of a long struggle of African intellectuals, for instance, scholars like Cheikh Anta Diop and outstanding writers like Okot p'Bitek in *Song of Lawino*, *Song of Ocol* (1985) in their quest for identity and *African Renaissance*⁴ as

³ Gikuyu or Kikuyu, Bantu-speaking people who live in the highland area of south-central Kenya, near Mount Kenya. In the late 20th century the Kikuyu numbered more than 4,400,000 and formed the largest ethnic group in Kenya, approximately 20 percent of the total population. Their own name for themselves is Gikuyu, or Agikuyu. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2024, April 25). Kikuyu. Encyclopaedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kikuyu>

⁴ In most, if not all, available documents which refer to the notion of *African Renaissance*, however, the



well as, many linguistics experts and education specialists. His novel thus emphasises the importance of language identity and the relevance for mental decolonisation to shape the African identity based on language sovereignty for a socio-cultural values reconstruction. Therefore, the African language dynamics and politics cope with personality to achieve a national unity and social cohesion.

III. AFRICA'S CULTURAL PRESERVATION AND LANGUAGE POLITICS

Ngugi's interpretation of the enduring context of Africa's cultural alienation and inefficiency in political strategies sets in his artistic vision. His novel *Decolonising the Mind* indeed is an attempt to redirect the existing writing methods and learning based on foreign languages, into news styles that would probably change mind-sets in postcolonial thinking. At the same time, it is a means for him to protect indigenous culture from deterioration. He significantly advocates the recognition and effective usage of local languages as basic marks of the cultural heritage and which must be safeguarded for posterity. This has been his driving force to writing challenging novels, plays and teaching in his native language. His call for a modern ideology in African writings is a contribution to enhancing the continent's rich cultural heritage. Therefore, there is a pressing need for writers in their collaboration with decision makers to invest considerable cultural assets in educational systems to align with the targeted objectives set forth by pan-Africanists' writers. Ngugi suggests that:

The classes fighting against imperialism even in its neo-colonial stage and form, have to confront this threat with the higher and more creative culture of resolute struggle. These classes have to wield even more firmly the weapons of the struggle contained in their cultures. They have to speak the united language of struggle contained in each of their languages. They must discover their various tongues to sing the song: 'A people united can never be defeated' (p. 3).

role of the indigenous African languages remains somewhat marginal if not obscure. Even where the "African soul, identity and creativity" is evoked, there is no linking of these concepts to the predominantly oral expression in the two thousand or more ancestral mother tongues (cf. Wolff 2003b).

The author's consideration of the necessity to wipe out the threat of imperialism must be a priority for the class strugglers in African literary discourse. This includes an exhaustive and effective use of their cultural assets hidden in different languages. Together they will stand as strong means to cultural recognition and preservation. For these reasons, the author keeps a strong consideration of languages that meet African requirements. The drives of the united African languages must be taken into account as a great step in the process of changing mentalities. This results in the identification of different existing cultures, but also the purposes to which histories including cultural values are told in the novels and effectively integrated in schools and universities curricula. A singularity can be observed in the crafting of African literature and education based on African languages and sociocultural realities. Eventually, African languages are strong means for economic resistance, as well as sociocultural weapons against the spreading of colonialism and its side-effects in societies.

Ngugi's commitment in the struggle for language adoption in literature stresses its crucial role in shaping a community's cultural identity, history and education. He even posits that: "*language is mediating in my very being*" (p. 15). Besides, he uses local heroes, stories, times and spaces in different narratives as in *Petals of Blood* (1977), he borrows some characteristics of oral narratives such as local traditions, histories, songs and proverbs. He strongly shows his commitment in safeguarding his Kenyan culture which is relevantly voiced in his original literary works, for instance, '*Caitani Mutharabani*' translated into English as *Devil on the Cross* (1980) and '*Ngaahika Ndenda*' which means *I will Marry when I Want* (1982), are written in his *Gikuyu*⁵ native language. It is therefore his response to the postcolonial government's empowering of English in Kenya's education. According to Simon Gikandi (1992), Ngugi "... was troubled by the irrelevance of producing literature

⁵ Gikuyu or Kikuyu, Bantu-speaking people who live in the highland area of south-central Kenya, near Mount Kenya. In the late 20th century the Kikuyu numbered more than 4,400,000 and formed the largest ethnic group in Kenya, approximately 20 percent of the total population. Their own name for themselves is Gikuyu, or Agikuyu. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2024, April 25). Kikuyu. Encyclopaedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kikuyu>



that was inaccessible to the community on which it was based" (p. 131). These perspectives bring him to lay the foundation of language empowerment in African literature and education.

Regarding some politics that negatively positions the recognition of Africa's cultural assets in literature and education, some African writers and postcolonial officials still have problems to recognize and attribute status and prestige to society and culture. Actually, many Western collaborators align with these negative approaches which consist of marginalizing the illiterate masses for fear of positive social consciousness and innovations. This would probably affect their power dynamic and threaten their privileges. These supremacists wanted to keep Ngugi "away from the university and the village and if possible break me" (p. 64). This policy is the mark of colonial rule, which installs a context of disregard by excluding the creative minds and innovators. This is also the reason for the controversies between some postcolonial writers and political elites who oppose the empowering of African languages, versus those pan-Africanists having recognised obviously "the benefits of using first language instruction," with clear references to successful bilingual approaches.⁶ The later ones advocate important changes mainly in creative writing and educational programs based on Africa's rich cultural heritage, so as to enhance its preservation. Ngugi goes on:

Imperialism introduced literacy but often confined it to clerks, soldiers, policemen, and the petty civil servants, the nascent messenger class about which I was going to talk to my students. Thus even on the eve of independence; the masses of African people could not read or write (p. 67).

Ngugi's commitment to preserving his culture against the imperialists has made him a victim of a repressing system. He himself, like his predecessor *Gakaara Wa Wanjau*,⁷ has been

⁶ in Mali (Convergent Pedagogy), Burkina Faso, Eritrea, and the D.R.C. and (Brazil, Guatemala, Mexico, Haiti, and Papua New Guinea for that matter): "First language instruction results in increased access and equity, improved learning outcomes, reduced repetition and dropout rates, socio-cultural benefits, and lower overall costs" (World Bank 2005: [2]).

⁷ Gakaara wa Wanjau, who was jailed by the British for the ten years between 1952 and 1962 because of his writing in Gikuyu. His book; *Mwandiki wa Mau Mau Ithaamarioini*, a diary he secretly kept while in political detention, was published by Heinemann

apprehended by the British administration because of crafting poems, novels, plays and teaching in Gikuyu language, but he did not capitulate. Therefore, language politics in literature and education must not only be a clash between past and present conditions, it must be accompanied with effective strategies that can lead to economic and cultural advancement. Another reason is, it touches upon issues of dignity and identity hence, its decisive role in the struggle for safeguarding culture which is not exceptional to Africa.⁸

Most of Ngugi's concepts in *Decolonizing the Mind* focus on the call for cultural preservation through African languages and an easy access to knowledge. He emphasises the devastating role played by colonisers on the mind-sets of the colonized African people, mainly those who come out of their schools, for instance, the so-called *intellectuals*. In these perspectives, the Kenyan author is in line with some post-colonial authors like Mazisi Kunnene, Germacaw Takla Hawaryat, Ayi Kwei Armah, Okot p'Btek. All of them agree that language plays decisive roles in the continent's cultural problem solving. Ngugi postulates: "language of literature cannot be discussed meaningfully outside the context of those social forces which have made it, both an issue demanding our attention and a problem calling for a resolution" (p. 4). Consequently, an effective use

Kenya and won the 1984 Noma Award It is a powerful work, extending the range of the Gikuyu language prose, and it is a crowning achievement to the work he started in 1946.

⁸ The continued use of a dominant originally foreign (ex-colonial) official language after independence created a post-colonial class divided, as was noticed quite early by the French Africanist Pierre Alexandre (1962, Engl. translation 1974, quoted in Alidou & Jung 2002:65) and pointed out lucidly again by the late Kahombo Mateene, who maintained that the colonial and post-colonial education and language policies had divided the African populations into two national groups, a linguistic division which has been based on the fact that one group knows better the colonial language, has got access to an education considered better, whereas the other group in fact the majority, only knows the national African languages, which by government decision, give it no right of access to use full and valuable education, and consequently condemns it to remain always an ignorant class, dominated (Mateene 1980, quoted in Alidou & Jung 2002: 65).



and preservation of African languages in literature and education would help writers and intellectuals to convey distinctive cultural perspectives based upon already existing knowledge and socio-cultural values.

Language dynamics in African literature and education takes into a captivating case to support a comprehensive social planning. Indeed, language stands as a very important and symbolic tool that plays a mediating role in literacy. Therefore the significance of establishing its diversities for Africa's fiction and educative contents in this work is based on a political approach. However, it echoes distinctive ones; for instance, the adoption of African languages literacy can improve a cultural exchange and unity between Africans. However, it must be aligned with English as an international language to guarantee a wider readership. Indeed, African writers' adoption of a hybrid approach to language is a means to create a balance between preserving their culture and their international literary engagements. Writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Amos Tutuala and Ngugi Wa Thiong'O have effectively used hybrid texts in their literary experiences to capture a wider audience. For instance, Soyinka's works often incorporate Yoruba language and cultural assets. Whereas, Achebe while dealing with *Arrow of God* (1964) sustained that: "... the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experiences. But it will have to be new a new English still in full communion with it ancestral home but altered to suit new African surroundings." (p. 8) He effectively uses Nigerian Yoruba culture in his style of writing novels. These African writers attest an openness of African literature to the world by showing different approaches to deal with Africa's postcolonial realities; whereas, Ngugi as a committed afro-centrist writer have chosen his language and artistry to instruct his people and fight imperialism.

The language politics thus creates divisions between colonised African societies according to the language of the former masters creating groups of literate and illiterate. Those who master foreign languages and graduated from postcolonial schools are often the elite that can take all the advantages while the others the 'illiterate' masses are left to their fate. Their socio-cultural knowledge is not taken into account by the postcolonial administration. Therefore, educating Africans through their languages and cultures is a crucial step for empowering African societies. To this point, the reliance on such initiatives and institutions that value indigenous knowledge can help challenge the

dominance of colonial political standards and foster cultural development.

IV. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF REFERENCING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Decolonisation is a dynamic process that requires continuous efforts of stakeholders in societies such as writers, education specialists, and governments. These actions provide different ways for further exploration and adaptation, depending on specific contexts and the needs for marginalised societal groups. The use of indigenous languages in literature and education as Ngugi advocates for the preservation of cultural roots is relevant to his Afro-centrist vision to which African must implement languages that have the power to solve the existing ideological obstacles and alleviate development. The choice of the language brings the author, while dealing with *The Language of African Literature*, to insist on its centrality in socio-cultural and political fields reproduced in literacy. He postulates that:

... a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe. Hence language has always been at the heart of the two contending social forces in the Africa of the twentieth century (p. 4).

This statement requires the importance of languages in its universal dimension and ability of galvanising people's cultural values as quoted in Obi Wali "*the turn of phrase, the nuances and the imagery which abound in African languages, thinking, and culture are not worth letting the world know about*" (p. 15). Though, for that we need distinct indigenous languages reference as priorities. Besides, the relevant issue of referencing, language goes through the social, political, economic and cultural dimensions. These initiatives in language politics have not yet been effectively dealt with by post independent elite groups and intellectuals' concerns in African countries. However the author's question "*how can we enrich our languages?*" (p. 22) is relevant to language reference. Indeed, his use of the first plural person "we" is figurative since it includes African writers, education specialists, and decision makers together for the empowerment of African cultural legacy. He sustains that:

Language was the most important vehicle through which that power fascinated and held the soul prison. The bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. Let me illustrate this by drawing upon experience in my own education, particularly in language and literature (p. 23).



Education definitely paved the way for the ascendance of the African mind in the postcolonial period. However, the concerns have been accomplished in the languages and cultures of the colonizers introduced through literature and education in colonised African countries. This situation highlights the positions of pan-Africanists who are in a dynamic of bringing back Africa's socio-cultural realism adapted to their environment. Ngugi posits: "*language was the greatest obstacle to the spread of the new revolt. It was the most stubborn of the old word's weapon*" (p. 4). Such a vision denotes the pending process of *decolonizing* and *redefining* African literature and education, while enabling it to reflect the continent's various cultural legacies, for instance, languages, historical experiences, and effective teaching methods. So far, Ngugi termed this process of improvement during an interview with students as "*normalizing the abnormal*." Though, it is important to note that there is a strong interest in referencing indigenous languages in literature and education. But, the problems lay in the complexity of languages and the *controversial debate*⁹ between actors. From these standpoints, the Senegalese scholar Cheikh Anta Diop's contribution to history declares that:

An African educated in any African language, other than his own is less alienated, culturally speaking, than he is when educated in a European language which takes the place of his mother tongue ... the selection of a single language from the continent- one which any foreigner, whether French or British, would have to learn to

⁹ Writers and critics who gathered in Uganda in 1963 in a conference entitled "A Conference of African Writers of English Expression." faced the fundamental question of determining who qualified as an African writer, what qualified as African writing, and in what language it should be written. The high point of the ensuing debate was the famous essay by Obi Wali, "The Dead End of African Literature" (1963), in which he declared that the literature written in European languages did not qualify as African literature. This marked the beginning of the long language debate that has continued to date, with many critics foregrounding their views on the same. Although some, like Achebe, countered Wali's position, Ngugi Wa Thiong'O embraced it, transforming the call for a return to African languages into a critical crusade that has lasted for quite some time, with Abiola Irele bemoaning the continuous dependence of African literature on European languages.

communicate with any African on the Black continent – would thus, obviously lead to a simplification of intercourse with the outside world (Diop, 1978, pp. 12-13).

Diop advocates for a unique African language as the *lingua franca* of Africa which would significantly ease national relations. But the problem lies in the linguistic and cultural diversity of the continent. This has been one of the concerns of the conference that attempted to define African literature and writing issues to which contributors "*generally, agreed that it is better for an African writer to think and feel in his own language and then look for an English transliteration approximating the original*" (MphahJele, 1962, p. 5). The notion of unity and cultural integrity in this work takes into account the existing cultures and social realities. The process of referencing indigenous languages in literature and education to Ngugi serves as improving the 'voice of Africa' to which they will find themselves in. Differently to Diop's standpoint, it would be challenging to have many *lingua franca* for Africans and English to serve as a bridge between different nationalities and needs for translations.

The failure in African language dynamics is a key issue in the process of giving accurate references and prestige in African literature and education. In the light of the evident failure to reach the targeted objectives, the problem during the action is obvious; therefore, it would be important for African decision makers to undertake critical reviews of their language politics in educational curricula by including their local languages. This would be valuable to both elites and their people, even the marginalised communities. It will solve the disadvantages in cultural values assessment through literature and education promotion with equitable resources distribution. It will also generate a fair cultural experience to challenge the colonial power dynamics by creating an easy access to world opportunities with English as a support to the project.

Recent scientific research in African language reassessment indicates that the early exited models are likely to be unsuccessful in the long term due to imperialists' politics that value the languages of the former colonisers in colonised African countries which led to a limited literary production learning in the indigenous tongues. However, the noticeable issues addressed in this study, namely the eminent role of the modern African writers and pan-Africanists like Ngugi's project, are relevant to the creation of multilingual educational systems. Indeed, the rise of a global consciousness of modern



African writers to cultural decolonisation must be well considered by the different actors. One of the reasons is education in mother tongues opens up possibilities for quick mastery and performances that instigate creativity. Another is that it can also boost considerable changes in decision making. Nevertheless, the reforms must be systemic and would activate social changes, and a clear vision in language referencing in African countries and the worldwide. Therefore, the effective formulation and implementation of language politics, in literature and education, must be a national and challenging struggle led by Africans.

The present alarming situation of deficiency in African literature and education has a significant link with the colonial past because it deeply affects the principle of local languages in all their aspects and usage. As a result, Africans are called to reiterate their engagements to writing novels in their proper languages and find best standards. This is relevant through their formal and informal incorporations in both sectors. Indeed, the empowerment of African languages needs a gradual integration. It will probably solve the question of the failure of African children in modern education to which the language factor is mainly responsible. Some alternatives to this mess would be the acceptance of indigenous languages to boost learners' understanding and creativity in their learning process. The theme of cultural alienation is painted in Ngugi's *Weep Not Child* (1964), for instance, Nioroge as a young man who places his faith in colonial education as a way for success, and finds difficulties while learning English. Following his aspirations he was later distanced from his family and community. This is a way to illustrate the psychological effects of colonisation through education. Though, it would be more formal for an African learner to gain proficiency by drawing on his native language as Cheikh Anta Diop suggested. Consequently, some local languages must be integrated in literature according to the geographical spaces and education curricula to lay the foundation of Africa's cultural studies in its socio-cultural diversities.

Here are some language factors that must be taken into account for a successful literacy. First of all, the colonial cultural hegemony on African languages with its literary styles and norms must be disintegrated to help African writers and education specialists to take the ultimate control of their own literary productions and teaching methods based on their social realities. Second, African writers and scholars must face the problem with the complexity of languages spoken across the continent by creating

available resources as well as their translations into English to reach a wider audience. It will not only help them boost their local languages, but will contribute to the continuity and spreading of their cultural values for coming generations and around the world. Third, overcoming these obstacles compels collective efforts of different actors, for instance writers, scholars, academics, political leaders; as well as local publishers like African Writers Series, Zimbabwe Publishing House to propel African literary experiences, publishing opportunities and enhancing new teaching programs in schools and Universities. Ngugi terms this process as a "*communal self-regulation and self-determination*" (p. 4). All the more there is a significant contribution of African intellectuals in the development of latest technologies among which research engines and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to effectively boost African experiences on a global scale. This will increase the development of African literary production, its visibility in different versions and impacts in education. The achievement of such awareness will facilitate creativity by providing relevant support, original resources, agenda, and scope for emerging African writers, houses of publications and education specialists to impact positively both sectors.

Eventually, the language dynamics in African literature and education involving people from different cultural backgrounds in this work must be taken into account, due to its significance in both sectors. It is also a powerful asset to local languages improvement in sharing diverse competences between Africans and the Diaspora while supporting language repertoires. Ngugi's advocacy for indigenous Kenyan language has been its driving force of inspiration to liberating the African mind and creating new generations of modern pan-Africanist writers and activists capable of activating discussion around cultural preservation in a globalized context of contemporary arts and education. The perspectives offer valuable insights and need for expressing identities, histories, and socio-cultural experiences. Ultimately, African languages usage beyond the pervasive deficiencies in the performance of the current literary context and educational systems in African countries still have a set of problems that continue to impede their advancement within both sectors since independence. These issues include the long lasting absence of African languages from conventional literary discourses and educational strategies due to an external influence that have taken the control of these sectors and making Africans unable to effectively engage with the existing social issues.



Nevertheless, the considerable insights, that Ngugi stresses in his essay to incorporate and sustain indigenous languages in these areas have the merit to be well considered for the achievement of the struggle for cultural integrity.

Here are some prospective recommendations going through indigenous languages references and usage. The *Swahili*,¹⁰ which does not refer to an ethnic belonging and is one of the most spoken languages even considered as the *Lingua Franca* for many African countries, is a great step. It also brought Julius Nyerere, head of the ruling party, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) to declare on July 7th 1954 that *Swahili*, was an important tool in the fight for independence. It is “among the 10 most widely spoken languages in the world, with more than 200 million speakers.”¹¹ Moreover, the *Fula*¹² a dialect

spoken across numerous African populations as well as the *Wolof*¹³ a language that meets different ethnic groups in West African countries mainly in Senegal and Gambia due to a historical cohabitation and cultural backgrounds are relevant examples that open ways to other African dialects. The effective use of these indigenous languages in global education will not only increase the learner's cognitive skills, but will help future writers and readers increase productivity in creative writing and enhance efficiency in socio-political development. Moreover, it will enforce African unity through distinct means of national standards for communication. Subsequently, these indigenous languages like *Swahili*, *Fula*, *Wolof* should equal *English* to facilitate cultural exchanges and education through available resources of the oral arts such as short histories, myths, legends, epics, folktales, riddles, songs, and proverbs which are vital genres of African literature and education capable of shaping a rooted and open society.

V. CONCLUSION

In essence, the language dynamics mainly in literature and education in Ngugi's work beyond the controversies is an essential aspect of a societal improvement. It also engages with great interest and discussions pertaining to post-colonial identity, and cultural preservation. This has prompted critical reflection on the lasting effects of colonialism, which prevents any attempt for positive advances in democratic process of transformation within African societies. It also suggests some potential paths that can boost creativity in the fields under study. An effective adoption of local codified languages will probably meet the needs of African societies. Failing to activate such challenges in language issues will result in African literature and education

¹⁰ Swahili: is a Bantu language spoken either as a mother tongue or as a fluent second language on the east coast of Africa in an area extending from Lamu Island, Kenya, in the north to the southern border of Tanzania in the south. (The Bantu languages form a subgroup of the Benue-Congo branch of the Niger-Congo language family.) People who speak Swahili as their sole mother tongue are usually referred to as Waswahili, but this name refers to their language only and does not denote any particular ethnic or tribal unit. Swahili is widely used as a lingua franca in: (1) Tanzania, where it is the language of administration and primary education; (2) Kenya, where it is, after English, the main language for these purposes; (3) Congo (Kinshasa), where a form of Swahili is one of the four languages of administration, the main language for this purpose being French; and (4) Uganda, where the main language is again English. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2024, February 23). Swahili language. Encyclopedia Britannica.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Swahili-language>

¹¹

<https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2021/swahili-gaining-popularity-globally>

¹² Fula: (also called Fulani, Peul, Fulfulde, and Toucouleur), accounts for more than half of this number and is the most widely scattered language group in Africa, having substantial groups of speakers in almost all the savanna lands from Senegal to Sudan and large numbers in northern Nigeria and Cameroon. Bendor-Samuel, J. T. (2015, January 16). Atlantic languages. Encyclopedia Britannica.

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¹³ Wolof: is spoken along with Senegal Wolof by more than 160,000 people in The Gambia. Wolof is a national language of Senegal, where it is spoken by approximately 4.6 million people as a first language (mother tongue). An additional 7.8 million people use Wolof as a lingua franca. Significant numbers of Wolof speakers also are found in France, Mauritania, and Mali. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2013, November 5). Wolof language. Encyclopedia Britannica.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Wolof-language>



being considered as having low status and worldwide prestige.

Eventually, this paper argues for an implementation of a bottom-up grassroots improvement in literary perspectives based on a for free writing in indigenous languages and appropriate teaching methods for effective language politics. However, English will serve as a medium language useful for international communication and needs for translating the available resources of oral art. Significantly, African language reformation is an important challenge to neo-colonialism, and a strong weapon to changing mentalities as well as safeguarding the cultural heritage in Arts and education which are the central features without which societies' cultural integration and development will not be possible.

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