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## Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Decolonizing the Mind*: The Politics of Language in African Literature as a Postcolonial Text

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### Abstract:

With the identification of the English language as a global communication system it starts to grasp the regional and indigenous essence of the dialects such as Gikuyu in Kenya in Africa. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in the course of his vocation of writing comprehends this fact beneath and fights against this. His ideology is supported well in the analytical developments of power and knowledge in Michel Foucault, in the concept of hegemony of Antonio Gramsci, in the idea of hybridity of Homi K Bhaba and in the vain attempts of the Negros to imitate their colonial masters and its futility for it can never be their original identity and it is delineated in the works of Frantz Fanon very significantly.

**Keywords: Identification, English Language, Global Communication, System, Indigenous, Gikuyu Dialect, Kenya, Fact, Power, Knowledge, Hegemony, Hybridity, Imitate, Colonial, Futility, Original, Identity.**

The most formidable ally of economic and political control has long been the business of 'knowing other people because this knowing underpins the imperial dominance to become the mode using which the others are convinced to know themselves. A consequence of this process becomes an export to the colonies of English language And literature as a part of a 'Civilizing Mission' which involves the conscious suppression of the vast wealth of the indigenous factors beneath burden of imperial control as Edward Said identifies 'knowledge' and 'Power' as the invisible foundations of authority.

In the postcolonial discourse language is associated with a struggle. The ominous shadow over it of the imperial agencies is seen in the displacement of the native languages as impurities setting a standard 'of the 'language of empire'.

'Where and what is the West'-this question puzzled Christopher Columbus. In the historical process an idea of the 'West' emerged from Europe's growing internal cohesion and its challenging relations to non-western societies. Then formatting the 'discourse' in language, there came a description and representation of the difference between the 'West and the Others', it encountered in the expansion.

Literature is the mode to operate a very inventive role to explore the ever evolving society, reflecting its dynamism, issues, changes. Commitment in literature is a firm conviction to devote the self to a belief to enhance the will to employ the time and energy to bring thoughts into reality.

Chinua Achebe once said

"It is impossible to write Anything in Africa without a kind of protest, message and commitment."(Quoted in Gurram Seetaramulu,2009).

The obstruction of unequal existence of the colonial languages with the indigenous ones led to a discord between the African writers and critics. The language debate first appeared during the conference in Kampala(Uganda) in 1962 as some could visualize the hidden evils behind the official usage of language that was devoid of the concepts of universalism but with a reaction to the colonialism.

The Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'o asserts that the African writers should focus on the 'Postcolonial Problems' as in his 'Writers in Politics '(1981) he upholds the unity of the struggle of the writers and the common people to free themselves from the slavery, inferiority, subjugation and disappearance of the 'Self' to restore humanity even in the despair of life.

"I am talking millions of men who have been skillfully injected with fear, inferiority complexes, trepidation, servility, despair, abasement."

-Aime Cesaire, Discours sur le Colonialisme

In this introductory line of Frantz Fanon's 'Black Skin, White Masks ' there is an assured opposition to the freedom of expressions of normal human beings under the exerting propagation of manipulation.

"One with his fellows, the other with the Whiteman... that his self division is a direct result of colonial subjugation is beyond question"

Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

Through language 'reality' may be constituted. Colonialism deliberately constructs a system of its own preferred values in the concept of history, of difference, of myriad distinctions of socioeconomic and political discourses.

The name 'A Conference of African Writers of English Expressions' automatically excluded the writers of Swahili, Zulu, Yoruba as well as of the other African languages. In the realization of the intellectuals, the origin of African literature was brought into question. Prevailing the true values of his own language, Thiong'o begins to recognize the 'National' literature of Africa.

Fanon stresses upon it as he says'

"To speak means above all to assume a culture to support the weight of civilization"

With the book 'Decolonizing the Mind' Thiong'o bids farewell to English as a medium of his writings and accepts Gikuyu and Kiswahili with pride. He disperses the true sympathy for the Africans' hatred for colonization, the rage against the West and the Whites for generating this helplessness in their life to develop a very expected and normal utterance in the mother tongue. This proves his respect and love for the mother to turn the guilt and betrayal out of the mind for being with the English language previously.

This sensibility is retained in Edward Brathwaite's 'Nation Language'.

"because the conquerors insisted that the languages of public discourse and conversation, of obedience, command and conception should be 'Master's' language...any other language...its speaker, inferiorly was slave...non-human in fact."

In the expression of Postcolonialism, 'Decolonization' is the change that colonized countries go through when they acquire independence from the colonizers. Structures of government, institutions, the way of being organized economically as well as the path in which the people as 'subjects' were forced to think may still be determined by the domination of powers in a colonial appearance in such countries. In spite of the retained economic power of the formers chiefly, it is inevitable to decolonize the mind of the dominated ones to overcome the legacy of this mode.

'On National Culture' of 'The Wretched of The Earth' Fanon carries this ideology in "In order to achieve real action, you must be yourself a living part of Africa...of the great battle and suffering humanity."

In spite of writing in English to make his messages reach to a wide range of people

Thiong'o explosively depicts the predicament of the disappointed Africa for being enormously dark in the prevalent image in all the writings. His program restore the ethnicity of the national identity embedded in the mother tongue involves this refusal to use English in writing to access a world of reality. The use of English language implies the 'hegemony' of the submission to the political boundary. To deconstruct it he measures the destruction in the fatalistic logic of the unassailable position of English in African literature.

"We never asked ourselves; how can we enrich our languages? Why not have Tolstoy, Sholokov , Lenin, Marx, Galileo, Brecht, Aeschylus, Plato in African language?"

For the lack of efficiency to be loyal to their languages of childhood, it has gone downwards because of the want of recognition.

In the chapter 'Power and Institutions', this idea is stored that power is something which a group of people or an institution possesses concerning only the oppression and constraining of the others within everyday relations through 'Discourse'.

Also in 'Power and Knowledge' Michel Foucault describes 'knowledge' as being conjoined with power relations and information(seeing,1980).

The paradox is there in that the 'English language will be able to carry the weight of African experiences...new English...full communion with the ancestral home..to suit...African surroundings. 'As a result of the mixture of the two, one in the form of language and another with proverbs, phrases, repressions, the former one will be ever higher in the hierarchy. Thus Thiong'o clearly portrays the impotence of the condition that is inefficient, weak and withered one.

In the chapter 'Colonial War and Mental Disorders', of 'The Wretched of the Earth' Fanon expresses a notion about the brain washing of the intellectuals to attack those elements from the inside that constitute the 'National Consciousness' to speak on the value of the merits of colonization.

Similarly, in the arrangement of education to determine the construction of the literature in Africa in English, discarding the real worth and role of the Africans' life, the physical violence of the battlefield is transformed into the psychological violence of the classroom as if healing with the same art that is issued to kill. Because of the ever felt superiority of the masterly surveillance on them, the cultural and peaceful existence of the Africans was ripped out and objected.

In the chapter 'Base and Superstructure' Antonio Gramsci hints at the historic and social reasons in the life of particular ideas and forms of cultural practice in the statement, 'life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life (Marx, 1977:164).

Even when identifying English as the indispensable linguistic media for the education the author notices the abnormality of the entire situation in the function of this foreign domain within the aboriginal one. This unacceptable disparity is found between the conflicting influence of the language of education and culture respectively. English becomes a master receiving the obey of the others not only as a language but also a colonial regime.

“A colonial school and the harmony was broken”

The wicked effects of colonialism in Kenya did not disappear with Independence that made it a more disastrous country with political, economic and cultural weakness. In the chapter ' Negro and Language' of 'Black Skin, White Masks' the game language is in, “ The Negro will come closer to a being , a real human...in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language.” Such is the embodiment of the hegemony of language that in colonial Kenya the achievement of English is ready to receive the universal platform in the reign to the realms.

Frantz Fanon in his 'Black Skin, White Masks' exposes the origin of colonization in the death and subsequent burial of the authentic cultures' ethnicity and in the confrontation with the 'civilizing culture' to uplift the people to adopt their perceptions of culture. “He becomes whiter as he renounces blackness, his jungle...”

Such imposition is inculcated relentlessly into the subjugated people in Kenya through the literary education to be estimated in the rejection of the oral culture of nativity and in the acceptance of the systemic gentle slow poisoning of injection in the anatomy of their own literature.

Thiong'o brings the concept of the 'language of real life' as a substance to produce wealth to add the value that needs no categorization in language, but must be the source of the basic amenities of human life. It initiates and instigates the communicative sphere with speech and written signs. It enriches the stream of culture through the evolution in history as the member of community.

This identity's acknowledgement must be performed by the speakers of the indigenous languages for the colonizers tries effortlessly to deny and disdain their significance as the participant of a group.

Colonialism attempts to defuse the nationalist demands by manipulating the economic doctrine to project a comprehension with intense faithfulness that the land is suffering from serious underdevelopment. Thiong'o expresses the weaving of the cunning reality of the inflammation set by settlers to generate the cultured class of colonized intellectuals.

The author calls this process of learning through the predominant images of the bestowed language on the subject as 'seeing oneself from outside oneself'. In the enhancement of the security for the ruling class there is a strategy of individualization and marginalization that produces its effect in the probable truths and predictability to be in excess for the stereotype. This has to be empirically proved and logically constructed. The route to return to the root according to Thiong'o is to be loyal enough to the national language.

The notion of hybridity as it is proposed by Homi K Bhaba as an instrument of 'colonial subject' to reverse the stereotyped identity imposed by the authority on the subordinate objects. But the alliance of the suppressed ones with the dominators is not agreeable at all as Thiong'o depicts the fact about the 'petty bourgeoisie' as an 'intermediary comprador' one to play a role not for the welfare of the self, of the community and the nation as well but for executing the malicious desires of colonialism. The psychological process to diminish this is that the tortures, discourses and systemic restricted existence must be thrown out. In *'The Wretched of The Earth'* the Algerian patriots challenged the beliefs inculcated in the colonized negotiations being unafraid. It liberated every facet of the involved personality.

The author in *'Decolonizing the Mind'* registers analogically the cohesive tradition, confidence in Africa's past, culture of dignity and humane complexity to resist the racist ideas. Though there is apparently no end of the linguistic fence of the colonial teachers, in *'Culture and Racism'* Fanon stresses on the rediscovery of the tradition as a defense mechanism with purity and salvation and of the past as a constellation of true values. The existing language in Africa, the Africanized English, is described as a 'false robe of identity' for being used as a pretention in African literature that is a Neo-African one in reality.

Nations have been extremely responsible in the discussions of colonialism, especially the forms of nationalism involved in the anti colonial struggle and postcolonial reconstruction. This struggle unlocks the culture to prosper in its way of creation.

“I started writing in Gikuyu language in 1977” is an inevitable progress for Ngugi Wa Thiong’o to acknowledge the ‘abnormal normality’ coming out of the colonial hierarchy to humanize and sympathize with the language of the self as the mother tongue. This language itself becomes a part of the anti imperialist struggle of Kenya, as well as of Arica to set free the childhood from the contemptuous temperament of the settlers’ interests to lead it to a restored harmony and collective good with revolution and democracy. It is an answer to the challenges posed by the fears of homeland’s rejection and universalism to emphasize the aesthetic human endeavors unifiedly.

“Universality resides in this decision to recognize and accept reciprocal relativism of different cultures once the colonial status is irreversibly excluded.”

*Racism and Culture, Towards an African Evolution,*

Frantz Fanon

To turn the common people out of this circle of humiliation, Ngugi like a true fighter first first decided to set an exemplary standard as he say,

“to usher a new era of true communal self-regulation and self-determination. It is an ever continuing struggle to seize back their creative initiative in history through a real control of all the means.”

Thiong’o in the regard of the capacity of the people addresses the selection of the language to apply it as to define, justify, understand themselves so that they may design proportionately’ the natural and social environment and...entire universe’ that should be benign to them.

The realization and its process of continuation are difficult to endure and at the same time they are very sloth to be moved in an agile manner that patience should be maintained always to retain and renew them.

The discourses of colonialism with its sly intention made the domination of the mental universe of the colonized with the control of culture. It ultimately resulted the most tender age of the child and his or her learning into a ‘cerebral activity’ and not into ‘ an emotionally felt experience’. This should be reversed with the freshness of the root instead of allowing anymore



accessibility to the destruction of the soul to prevent the 'disassociation of the sensibility of that child from the natural environment' This environment and its spontaneous culture are on the verge of disappearance due to 'Colonial Alienation'.

Fixity is a paradoxical mode of representation for there cannot be any permanent sign of the cultural, historical and racial difference. Its use is vain actually to connote totality and an unchanging order.

As Ngugi in 'The language of African Literature,' of '*Decolonizing the Mind*' speaks of the native world's indigenous reflection before an enforcedly superior one to be with humiliation and corporal punishment' and some of the intellectual degradation also ravage the domain calling it 'negro's inferior sphere'. These severe and altogether futile charges on the condition of 'Africa' are turned into a barren land of childhood with the disappearance of harmony in humanity amidst the immense injustice done to them by the settlers.

In '*Culture and Racism*' Fanon says that 'rediscovering tradition, living it as a defense mechanism, as a symbol of purity, salvation...the culture put into capsules which has vegetated since the foreign domination is revalorized...the past, becoming henceforth a constellation of values of truth.'

The spirit declared by Frantz Fanon is responsibly carried by Thiong'o in the chapters of 'Language of African Literature' of '*Decolonizing the Mind*' as in the various issues and initiatives ; invoked by the infrastructure of Africa like the aboriginal languages the national heritages of Africa were kept dignified by the peasant class with their cultures in the rich stores of oratures, poems , stories and riddles.

Ngugi opines for the 'restoration of harmony...collective good , self, language, and environment with positivity, humanity, democracy and revolution in the contents of different literatures and carrying of cultures'. Literature has also been identified as an answer to the challenges, posed by the fear of rejection of the 'homeland' and the 'universalism'. It is also a proof of the recovery of the anxiety to escape of the writers and an adherence to the way of creating a literature to further proceedings of philosophy. It is intensely helpful to encourage humane endeavors aesthetically and unifiedly in the midst of the multilingual diversity as a rare achievement of victory in the history.

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