

Nativization as Style and Identity Marker in Barclays Ayakoroma's *Dance on his Grave*

Ebi Yeibo

Department of English and Literary Studies,
Niger Delta University
Wilberforce Island

Abstract

The study explores nativization in African literature as a counter-discursive canon, with illustrative focus on Barclays Ayakoroma's *Dance on His Grave*. With Bakhtin's (1981) Linguistic Hybridity, as the theoretical framework, it examines the supra-linguistic and para-verbal devices the author has deployed in the text, such as native rhetorical patterns, proverbs, transliteration, native tropes/figurations, code-switching and code-mixing, to capture and delineate the Izon linguo-cultural environment in which it is set. The study demonstrates the relevance of nativization not only in capturing indigenous forms, rhetorical patterns and language varieties in literary texts, but also in its potential for evoking a people's world view, philosophy, cultural nuances and ethos and the inherent reflexivity between a society's metonymic expressive forms and cultural practices. It posits that the import of nativized forms in African post-colonial literary texts rests on their subtle disavowal of vestiges of linguistic and cultural imperialism by juxtaposing indigenous and colonial languages in one semiotic space and, in the process, compelling the recognition or integration of local cultures and identities in global thinking and consciousness.

Key words: nativization, identity discourse, style markers, linguistic hybridity, local cultures, global consciousness.

Introduction

Our major concern in this study is to explore nativization as a style and identity marker in African literary canon, using Barclays Ayakoroma's *Dance on His Grave*, as the illustrative text. The central argument of the study is that, as Kristiansen (2003: 104) put it, "language forms are part of a larger system of symbolic markers of identity, including dress, dance, song, property and manners" (see Kaseem, 2009: 198). It is apparent that the scholar sees language, basically, as a vocal or expressive aspect of culture, like other symbolic or indexical markers of individual or group identity. This thesis is echoed by Alo (1995: 10) *inter alia*:

Language is culture-bound. Language is both an index and an integral part of culture. Since language is an integral part of culture, language becomes a mode of expressing a culture and a 'world view'. In learning another language, new cultural traits or behaviour are acquired in the process, in addition to one's own.

The study, therefore, hinges on the duality of linguistic and cultural traits that are compulsively manifest in the African and his existential engagements as a result of his colonial experience. Of critical relevance to the study is the fact that the complex situation of hybridity which imperialism has foisted on the African has become strategic and integral to the literature of the

continent, thereby creating a peculiar idiom? Izevbaye (1974:138) hints at the “background of vernacular cultures” that is most prominent in Nigerian literature and which has helped to give the literature “its character and can provide a touchstone for understanding and identifying (its) peculiar characteristics...” Hence Adedimeji (2008: 72-73) observes that African literature is defined by its focus on “...aspects of African life, society, philosophy and experience, regardless of whatever language in which it is written”. Igboanusi (2004: 219-220) expresses a similar sentiment when he averred:

The oral tradition is very important to Africans in general because their behaviours, thoughts, language and rhetoric are moulded and shaped by their tradition. Similarly, their creative imagination, history, medicine, technology and philosophy were orally passed down to different generations through various forms of oral performance. The writer’s experiences and world view are nurtured by this tradition, in spite of the language of expression.

Bamgbose (1995:20) identifies nativization as one of the three major characteristics of Nigeria English, the others being the influence of biblical language and importation of Americanisms (see Opara, 2016:138). According to the scholar (2004:612), nativization is realized in three ways viz: pragmatic, creative and linguistic (Onyema, 1998:47; Alo, 2006: 25; Opara, 2016:138). Bamgbose (Ibid) explains that while pragmatic nativization is innovation associated with the context of situation to reflect the world view, rhetoric and idiom of a

particular culture, creative nativization manifests in two major ways viz: coinages which may express or reflect the Nigerian experience or world view i.e. been to (one who has travelled abroad), four-one-nine (the act of duping); and the translation of the Nigerian native idiom into English to reflect the mood of the situation (See Alo, 2006:25). Aspects of linguistic innovation or nativization include the “formation of new words (neologisms), and new meanings or semantic extension... (and) deliberate alteration of linguistic forms and usage, for instance, a word, idea or meaning” (Alo, 2006:25). Alo (2006:25) explains that linguistic nativization also covers the process of translation i.e. when an existing word in English acquires a new meaning. It is, therefore, logical to state that, whatever form it takes, nativization refers to the modifying influence of African indigenous languages (in our context), in various ways, on the colonial languages. It refers to forms or varieties of language outside the native varieties, which are products of cultural or social realities in the new environments. These realities include the thought or speech pattern, the value system, philosophies, worldviews, attitudes, mores and lores, which aggregate the culture of a given people and which underscore the deep nexus between language and culture. In other words, native English words and utterances that reflect the English socio-cultural realities have been replaced with functional African forms which are alien to the language but which effectively reflect the values and experiences of the new environment and context.

Nativization is, thus, engendered by the need to circumvent the linguistic dilemma or imbroglio faced by the African writer vis-a-vis whether or not the colonial

languages such as Portuguese, English and French, would be able to adequately and authentically convey the socio-cultural and linguistic realities of the African continent in its literature. Essentially, the dilemma is predicated on the fact that language is central to literature and that there is a watertight connection or nexus between political independence and cultural emancipation (see Yeibo, 2011:202). Aboh and Uduk (2015:166) adumbrate this imperative inter alia:

Provided the discourse limns the reflexivity between the use of language and literary composition in West Africa or Africa as a whole, the question of which language to compose in will continue to interest both writers and critics of African literature.

The critical fact in this study, as we have earlier stated, is that the dominant and pervasive use of nativization provides an index to its utilitarian value both as an identity and style marker in African literature, in the sense that it helps to assert, maintain and project the African linguistic and cultural heritage and experience even though the conveyor language is imperialist. The African writer seeks to achieve this goal by deploying idioms from his native or indigenous cultural and linguistic repertoire, which inevitably imbues the literature with local colour. Hence Grieve (1964:3) observes that, in Africa, English is a vehicle of African cultures, as well as of English and in these African cultures, concepts exist which do not exist in English culture. Against this backdrop, the scholar contends that if English is to be an effective mode of communication in Africa, it is essential that it adapts itself to the inherent

cultural and contextual realities, so as to be able to express these concepts. Alo (2006: 25) has outlined a variety of stylo-linguistic and discoursal strategies which African writers who write in the imperialist language deploy in order to contextualize aspects of indigenous/cultural meaning inter alia:

- i) *The use of non-native similes and metaphors*
- ii) *The transfer of rhetorical devices for personalizing speech*
- iii) *The translation (transcreation) of proverbs, idioms, etc.*
- iv) *The use of culturally dependent style.*
- v) *The use of syntactic devices.*

There is no doubt that the patterns of English usage in Ayakoroma's *Dance on His Grave*, with its "nativized flavour, express the deep inter-relationship between language and culture" which African writers exploit to serve functional and aesthetic ends in their works (Hunjo, 2002: 62). This is an apparent recognition of Wellek and Warren's (1948:105) thesis that "literature occurs only in a social context, as part of a culture, in a milieu". In a broader perspective, Tsaaier (2006:7) also avers:

It has become an established epistemology in linguistic, literary and cultural discourses that texts – whether oral, scribal or print – exist within concrete socio-cultural, political and ideological contexts. It is these contexts that give the texts birth and fire them with life and ontological existence.

The present study, therefore, examines the language patterns or forms that reflect native cultural concepts, values, experiences and worldviews which etch the identity of the Izon people, and also foreground stylistic functions in the text, in tandem with Alo's (2006:26) thesis that "non-native creative writers in English generally" resort to a variety of linguistic and discursal strategies, as well as the use of native rhetoric and figurative language, proverbs, transliteration, and translation to contextualize aspects of indigenous cultural meaning. In other words, the study privileges local colour in the text as a style marker, since it highlights linguistic innovations or novel forms which derive their value or sense from the context of the L2 environment, particularly if we view the term "style markers" as

... those linguistic (or literary) features deliberately deployed in a given text or discourse by an author, to encode aspects of meaning and also achieve particular aesthetic effects... the linguistic features of texts which are significant for their semantic implications and aesthetic functions (Yeibo, 2011:930).

Osani (2008:101) has drawn our attention to the fact that "literary aesthetics in Africa should entail the authentic representation of African realities". According to the scholar (Ibid), "this can be done.... if the writer rehabilitates the English language to suit his purpose". Thus, in a broad sense, the primary purpose of this study is to, as Lindfors (2002: 4) put it, determine "...the influence that one type of verbal art has had upon

another”, by exploring the “... skill with which ... writers exploit new aesthetic opportunities by incorporating traditional matter in the novels, plays and poems they write in a language which is not their mother tongue” (Lindfors, 2002: 3). From available literature, there has been robust and thriving scholarship on the engrafting of indigenous linguistic and cultural elements as a stylistic and discursal strategy in modern African literary texts written in English (see Achebe, 1975; Ojaide, 1992; Nwachukwu-Agbada, 1993; Bamiro, 1994; Bamgbose, 1998, 2004; Igboanusi, 2002; Adedimeji, 2003, 2008; Alo, 2006; Osani, 2008; Fashina, 2009; etc). The present study adds to the corpus of work on the subject.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) analytical model of linguistic hybridity. The theory of linguistic hybridity is derived from the concept of hybridization which means 'mixture' and "denotes anything of mixed ancestry or origin" (Josiah, 2014: 16; cited in Aboh and Uduk, 2015: 168). It implies the coming together or intermingling of two or more discrete or disparate objects or processes, to form a single object or process, as a result of certain bases or motivations. Though the term evolved from biology, it is used in sundry academic disciplines, intellectual domains or discourses that border on race, post-colonialism, identity, multiculturalism, biculturalism, popular culture and globalization, etc.

Hybridization is not a new concept in intellectual discourse; societies have always adopted or engrafted ideas, perspectives, worldviews, cultures, sciences, philosophies, etc, from other societies, thereby bringing

about hybrid or dual entities, processes or phenomena. In post-colonial discourse, the term is particularly associated with identity and culture as a counterpoint to cultural (in its broadest sense) imperialism or hegemonism. Its promoters include: Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Gayatri Spivak, Nestor Garcia Canclini, etc. Bhabha's (1994) text *The Location of Culture* is very significant in this regard. The point is that the dominance or subaltern predilection of colonial languages, which results in anxiety among the colonized, is neutralized by deliberate efforts of indigenous writers and scholars, to contextualize meaning in local idioms, against the backdrop that it brings the 'other' culture to the fore, thereby engendering the recognition of local cultures and identities in global thinking and consciousness. According to Wikipedia,

Languages are all hybrid in varying degrees, for centuries people borrowed from foreign languages, creating thus hybrid linguistic idioms. They did so for commercial, aesthetic, ideological and technological reasons (to facilitate trade transactions, express philosophical or scientific ideas unavailable in their original idioms, enrich and adapt their languages to new realities, subvert a dominant colonial literary canon by deliberately introducing words from the colonized people's idiom). Trade and colonization have been the main vehicles of linguistic hybridization across history. Since the classical conquests, both the colonizers and colonized tapped into each other's languages.

Hybridity, therefore, has either linguistic and cultural dimensions or colouration. It breeds multicultural or bicultural awareness or consciousness, which is inscribed or captured in metonymic linguistic forms, since all languages have their signifying systems and social nuances or structures.

As earlier mentioned, of particular relevance to the present study is Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) concept of linguistic hybridity which has two prongs viz: 'organic' or 'unconscious' and 'intentional'. According to the scholar, while the former is self-explanatory - unconscious - the latter refers to a writer or speaker artistically or advertently deploying forms, perspectives or texts in one language, but reflecting the semantic, cultural or philosophical moorings or nuances of another language. The implication of this thesis is that, as with Ayakoroma's engrafting of Izon linguistic and cultural elements in the text under study, the two languages (i.e. Izon and English) are focally present in one semiotic or textual space. Hence, Issifou (2013: 47) avers that the term "is a post-colonial construct that aims at countering all binaries based on notions of ethnic, cultural, racial and political purity" and that "it refers to the new trans-cultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization" (see Aboh and Uduk, 2015: 169). There is no doubt that this postulate is particularly applicable to the African post-colonial context, for, as Ngugi (1993:42) avers, "...the economic and political conquest of Africa was accompanied by cultural subjugation and the imposition of an imperialist cultural tradition whose dire effects are still being felt today".

Biography of Barclays Ayakoroma

Barclays Ayakoroma was born on the 3rd of February, 1956. He hails from Angiama in Sagbama Local Government Area of Bayelsa State and had his early education at Agbarho, Delta State, before proceeding to the University of Calabar to study Theatre Arts. He later obtained an M.A. and a PhD in Theatre Arts from the University of Ibadan and Port Harcourt, respectively. Ayakoroma has worked in various establishments including Professor J.P. Clark-Bekederemo's PEC Repertory Theatre, Lagos; Rivers State Television (RSTV), Port Harcourt; University of Port Harcourt; and the Bayelsa State Council for Arts and Culture, Yenagoa, as Executive Director. He is, at present, the Executive Secretary of the National Institute for Cultural Orientation, Abuja. Ayakoroma's published plays include: *A Matter of Honour*, *Dance on His Grave*, *A Chance to Survive*, *Castles in the Air*, *Once upon a Dream* and *A Scar for Life*.

Synopsis of the Play

The main issue addressed in Ayakoroma's *Dance on His Grave* is patriarchy and women revolt, with its dire consequences or implications for societal cohesion and progress. King Olotu and the elders are the promoters of patriarchy, while his wife, Alaere, is the arrowhead of the women revolt against the status quo. In the play, the women, through their leader, Alaere, struggle to share power with the men and have a say in the affairs of the land, on the basis of equity and fairplay. The main tools the women deploy to potentiate the struggle are sexual deprivation of the men and sheer abandonment of domestic chores or duties. Shocked and embarrassed, the men decide to beat up the women and force them to

give into their sexual demands. Unable to withstand the physical, emotional and psychological pressure, the women surrender and succumb to the men's continued hegemony. However, Alaere introduces another weapon which completely devastates the king – that he is not the biological father of his only child (daughter) – Beke. King Olotu interrogates his wife, probing deeply to get at the sacrosanct truth about Beke's paternity. He ultimately loses the battle and commits suicide.

Textual Analysis

The status of language as the most expressive cultural attribute of man, is incontestable. Also incontestable is the fact that language contact engenders borrowings and innovations. The contact between African languages and European languages, as a result of colonialism, has thus, created new forms of expression which are palpably present in the “variety of discursal and stylistic peculiarities and innovations” in the literary products of African writers who make conscious efforts to contextualize aspects of indigenous meaning (Alo, 1998: 27). Alo (1998: 26) highlights this imperative inter alia:

There is the natural human tendency to innovate in language, either for the sake of being creative and original or as a result of the need to express new objects, things or ideas. People are creating new expressions or altering old ones to fit new ones. Innovations in language are chiefly controlled by the necessities of communication... innovations in non-native English occur as a result of new cultural realities.

Following from the foregoing, therefore, this section focuses on aspects of Izon L1 speech patterns and modes of meaning making in Ayakoroma's *Dance on His Grave*, which give the text a distinctive and compelling linguistic and cultural backdrop or texture, including the use of native rhetorical patterns, proverbs, transliteration, native tropes or figurations, euphemism, and code-mixing and code switching.

Native Izon Rhetorical Patterns

Native Izon rhetorical patterns are advertently incorporated or woven into the dialogues or utterances by characters in Ayakoroma's text, clearly to capture the L1 context of these forms of language use. One prominent aspect of this strategy is the deployment of the call-and-response technique, which actually cuts across the entire text, and which is fundamentally used in all social and political gatherings in the text. Apparently, the strategy facilitates or engenders the emotional, psychological and mental involvement of participants of such gatherings. At other times, it could be for purposes of ensuring harmony, solidarity or the projection of a single voice, particularly if a consensual position must be taken on critical issues. What is fundamental or paramount in all of these situations is that the technique instills absolute silence and order, and captures the requisite attention for the person taking turn to address the gathering. In the text, for instance, EREBU greets the gathered women to, as the author put, "bring order in the crowd" (P.21):

EREBU:	<i>Aahn Ama!</i>
ALL:	<i>Iyah!</i>
	<i>The call is done three times.</i>
EREBU:	<i>Ama keme emi yan?</i>
ALL:	<i>Emi yooo!</i>

EREBU: *Good women of Toru-Ama, I greet you all!*
ALL: *We greet you in return!*
EREBU: *Are we women or not?*
ALL: *We are women!*
EREBU: *If we see, can we act?*
ALL: *We can act!*
EREBU: *I greet you all.*
ALL: *Iyaa! (P. 21/22)*

Thus, Erebu prepares the ground for the Amananarau, ALAERE, to address the women folk, who also calls three times when she takes her turn, as a prelude to a well-rehearsed revolutionary speech. It is noteworthy that Erebu also introduces a more ecstatic and triumphant variant of the technique, which is more of a solidarity chant, apparently to capture the mood of the situation:

EREBU: *Women Oh yee!*
CROWD: *Oh yeee! (p. 22)*

Significantly, at critical or convenient moments during the speech of the Amananarau (ALAERE), Erebu interjects with appropriate variants of the technique, ostensibly to sustain the attention and enthusiasm of the crowd. A solid instance in the text is when there is an admixture of open derision and applause from different sections of the crowd, in response to 1st WOMAN's interjection that it was not out of place for the womenfolk to ultimately aspire to rule the land, EREBU promptly comes in, not only to drive home this bloated and bizarre ambition (in the context of the text) but, perhaps, more importantly, to restore the requisite attention for the Amananarau to continue her speech:

EREBU: Aniyaba yeee!
CROWD: Yeee! (P. 23)

It must be noted that the call-and-response technique is also integral to story-telling in African folklore, essentially for the same purposes highlighted above. However, in Ayakoroma's text, the story about the white egret's decision "not to be king of the Bird's Kingdom" (P.28), does not adopt the opening coda or formulaic line:

STORY-TELLER: Egberi yo!
AUDIENCE: Iyaa e!

Apparently because of its anecdotal use within a speech. In a typical or proper Izon story-telling session, as with other African languages, the story-teller "calls" and the audience responds, in the opening. In fact, the performer and audience must work together for an African tale to be successfully or effectively rendered. Hence, Akporobaro (2012:115) contends that there must be a "dramatic (rhapsodic) opening of the folktale", which the audience must respond to and which sets the stage for the actual rendering. According to the scholar (Ibid)

The African story-teller does not just introduce his story anyhow, but with a set formulaic statement or phrase which his audience knows and recognizes to be the formal opening of a folktale.

Okoh (2008:136) also highlights the relationship between the African tale and riddle, in terms of pattern of rendering, delivery or performance, inter alia:

Like the tale, the riddle is also conceived of by both the performer and audience as a dynamic corporate literary activity. The structure of the riddle (and the tale) is such that both the performer and audience have traditionally assigned roles. The call-and-response pattern here means that participation by both parties is paramount in the realization or performance.... (A) Cannot stand alone, but is necessarily complemented, and completed by (B)....

Proverbs

Proverbs are also significant aspects of Izon rhetorical identity deployed in Ayakoroma's text. These are profound, terse and witty sayings of the people of traditional societies, which capture the truths and experiences of such societies. They are allusive and analogical in content and provide a pragmatic code of conduct or behaviour in all matters or subjects under the sun that are consequential to the peaceful and progressive coexistence of the inhabitants. Alo (1998:30) defines the term as "short, popular witty sayings with words of advice or warning". Proverbs are, thus, products of man's imagination and observation and perfunctorily reflects the social and religious environment in which he lives. Needless to state that, they are an integral aspect of the folklore which is transmitted from one generation to another, in the sense that they "carry a density of cultural signification" (Fashina, 2009:263). Hence Okoh (2008:132) posits that "proverbs convey considerable cultural information regarding a particular society". In fact, proverbs are so prominent and treasurable in the art of conversation or speech making, in the African sense,

that Achebe memorably observes in *Things fall Apart* (1958:5) that they are the “palm oil with which words are eaten”. Osani (2008: 95) avers that,

In terms of content proverbs may refer to any situation because they emanate from the reservoir of a people’s collective history, knowledge, and wisdom. They embody their norms and values, thoughts, ideas and beliefs. They also reflect and articulate a people’s philosophy, mythology and religion as well as their empirical observations of their physical and social environments.

As we have earlier stated, the critical fact in this study is that, as the contexts below show, proverbs are used overwhelmingly or preponderantly in Ayakoroma’s text, specifically to evoke Izon sensibility and values and to capture the creative idiom of the people. Below is a juxtaposition of some proverbs and explanatory comments to give us a sense of their pragmatic value in the text:

- i) “It is the heedless hen that turns her back to the wind” (P. 27). Alaere uses this proverb to drive home her homily on the imperative of self-control if women must achieve their revolutionary aims.
- ii) “I am not opening my mouth because I believe in the saying of the goat that the mouth which does not chew smells.” In other words, the old woman is saying that she does not just exercise her vocal chords: she has a critical and timeous contribution to make.

- iii) “The face does not quarrel with the nose, which gives it beauty” (P. 29). Further to her plea for caution, the old woman reminds her younger compatriots that man and woman cohabit the earth and must be given a chance to cooperate for a productive and mutually beneficial existence.
- iv) “He who has not secured a place on the floor should not look for a mat” (P. 57/58). Chief Mowei insists with this proverb that there is a burning need to unravel the reasons behind their wives’ decision to flex muscles with the menfolk, before any considerations on how to outwit them.
- v) “It is from the pole that water gets into the canoe slowly” (P. 74). This proverb is apparently the Izon equivalent of the English adage “a stitch in time saves nine” or “to nip in the bud”. The King (Olotu) expresses his concerns about the enormity and untoward direction of the women’s revolution and urges the chiefs to fashion out strategies to checkmate them at the initial stage before it is too late to do so.
- vi) “Those who eat eggs forget that the hen labours to lay them” (P. 64). Alaere uses this proverb to underscore the selfless sacrifices and hardwork women put into the day-to-day running of the home which men inherently.

There is no doubt that the foregoing catalogue and variety of proverbs from Ayakoroma’s text illuminates or illustrates our earlier view that the communal nature of proverbs makes them a veritable part of the folklore of a people. A salient fact about African proverbs, which needs to be underscored, is their relevance and applicability to diverse praxis or contexts, in the sense

that they “can be made to say different things in different contexts” (Barbar, 1990:167). Ayakoroma (2002:29) has outlined distinctive functional contexts in which Izon proverbs can be deployed viz: religious belief system, social practices, economic and political praxis. Fundamentally, this fact also clarifies their deliberate deployment in literature by African literary artists, “not only to project the cultural values of the people, but more importantly, to also achieve aesthetic effects” (Osani, 2008: 95). The critical fact is that, as we have earlier mentioned, the use of proverbs in African native rhetoric shows an individual's grounding in the contours and architecture of pristine African folklore and tradition, as the proverbs both embody and provide a window into the nitty-gritty of the African worldview and philosophical moorings. Hence Fashina (2009: 261) avers

Proverbs are indices of immersion in cultural civilization and oral/loric versification. Sometimes, the use of proverbs may also imply the speakers's knowledge of human and natural organic history; even though the proverbs are communal intellectual property.

Fashina (2009: 261) has also drawn our attention to the fact that the user of proverbs earns “... some kind of compelling respect for his inviolate wisdom and psychic energy of archetypal nature”. Osani (2008:99) expresses a similar viewpoint in his averment that “proverbs impact memorably on the listener because they emanate from the reservoir of ancient wisdom and therefore have the force of tradition behind them”. No doubt this scenario motivates adults and even the young ones in rustic African societies to strive to master and

deploy these proverbs in appropriate contexts or occasions, thereby engendering a common knowledge and understanding that entrenches their status as communal or public property, as demonstrated in Ayakoroma's text when the crowd helps 5th WOMAN to conclude her proverb:

5TH WOMAN: *Our Amananarau, do not listen to the nonsense that we emit. They say he who pours water in his compound...*

CROWD: *... will always step on wet ground!*

Proverbs are, thus, a veritable part of African native rhetoric, against the backdrop of their “aphoristic beauty” and “telling effect” (Chuma-Udeh, 2011:71) or their “delightful and profound expressiveness” (Osani, 2008:101). Lawal (2011:91) also believes that “there is a subtle correlation between language and thought, and a people's language is the profound witticism of the native tongue which finds natural outlet in hard-core proverbs and pithy anecdotes”. According to Fashina (2009:262), proverbs take

Discourse to the level of the sublime.... (and) function in the same way as gestural kinesics complements meaning in everyday communication and reception process as well as in literature. Proverbs help to reinforce the direction of epistemic fulfilment in every verbal discourse in Africa, using the 'force' of rhetoric.

Akporobaro (2012:23) hints at the fact that the ready acceptance and impact of African proverbs is contingent upon their overt and incontrovertible truth value:

The element of truth or self-evidence of proverbs enables proverbs to be asserted to or believed as truths readily by the listener. In this way proverbs have persuasive force. For this purpose elders, story-tellers, parents alike use proverbs to illustrate, explain or argue a point.

Transliteration

Transliteration is also auspiciously deployed in Ayakoroma's *Dance on His Grave* to approximate or capture Izon, native idiom and usage and contextualize aspects of the people's experience and sensibility. No doubt, this strategy gives the language of the text a distinctive or peculiar artistic charm or appeal and functional effect. A good textual example is found in the scene where the crowd responds in the affirmative to Alaere's catalogue of duties women specifically and selflessly perform in the home front. "Yes! Say it let them hear!" (P. 24). Another example can be located during the vociferous altercation between 1ST WOMAN and 2ND WOMAN when the former suggests that "... from now on, the woman should be on top when sleeping with her man..." (P. 23), to which 2ND woman promptly responds: "Tufia! Abomination" (P. 23). The exchange is reproduced below for clarity and easy references:

<i>1ST WOMAN:</i>	<i>Look O, I have said it and I will stand by it. Why is it that we are always under men? It is because they</i>
------------------------------	--

- sleep on top of us. May be if we sleep on top, we will gain our rightful position.*
- 2ND WOMAN: *I think there is madness in your head.*
- 1ST WOMAN: *Ehen? Did you all hear that? You are all my Witness o... (Prepares to fight). I will teach this daughter of a nobody a lesson she'll never forget.*
- 2ND WOMAN: *(Taking up the challenge as she too prepares). You can't do anything! Come near me and you will see pepper. This madness that never stops flowing in your family tree!*
- 1ST WOMAN: *Sho Sho Sho! Look at who is talking! You whose father died with a calabash between his legs. And did your great grandfather not die of the swollen foot? Big calabash. [....]*
- 2ND WOMAN: *Come, I'll pluck out those eyes of yours, mad woman!*
- 1ST WOMAN: *You hear that? Leave me! Let me teach her a lesson! (P. 26)*

In fact, Ayakoroma's text is littered with such eloquent or palpable transliterations, in line with the overall Izon cultural backdrop of the text against which any meaningful interpretation can be made. When chief

Apodi tells chief Osima, for instance, that "... you have been looking for my trouble these two market weeks. If you are looking for my head, go and tell them you did not see me!" (P. 56); or when King Olotu tells Alaere that "You call their carrying away our daughters like Kites a good thing?" (P. 39); or when Chief Apodi tells King Olotu that "... These women will kill us in this land O!" (P. 72); or when Alaere tells the king: "... you can cry blood if you like..." (P. 84); or when Chief Biri deploys the euphemistic "... she made the thing to stand all night" (P. 55); or when King Olotu insists that "... we have to make them hear ground" (P. 77), we clearly see transliteration at work, essentially, as we have earlier mentioned, to effect transfer of meaning from one distinctive culture to another.

Native Tropes/Figurations

Native tropes or figurations also endow Ayakoroma's text with resilient freshness and profundity. The most prominent native Izon figures of speech deployed in the text are similes, metaphors and euphemism. As typical of any gathering or social context in traditional Izon society, native figurations are deployed in the text to reflect or evoke ingrained social vestiges, experiences, wisdom, values and the communal sensibility and expressive idiom. In movement one of Ayakoroma's text, right in the opening, for instance, the author draws our attention to the fact that the gathered women are "... chattering away like weaverbirds" (P. 21). Undoubtedly, this figuration makes the description vivid, concrete, enchanting and memorable. The following contextual instances of the use of native tropes/figurations, for example, have similar aesthetic and functional value in the text:

- i) *"... You call their carrying away our daughters like kites a good thing?" (P. 39/40).*
- ii) *"Do you consider the enormity of their encroaching on our ponds and water fronts as if they have bells tied around their waists, challenging us to wrestling matches (P. 39/40).*
- iii) *"This action of the women has been like rain. It is befallen all houses" 9P. 58).*
- iv) *"... They think taking care of the affairs of this land is the same as haggling in the Zarama market?" (P. 58).*

Item (i) to (iii) above were used by Chief Olotu in a probing and tension-soaked exchange with his wife, Alaere, while in item (iv), Chief Osima ridicules or denigrates the revolutionary initiatives of the womenfolk to share leadership with their male counterparts.

As in the instances of simile we foregrounded above, Ayakoroma also deploys indigenous Izon metaphors to contextualize meaning in the text. For instance, King Olotu refers to the women gathering as "a gathering of hens" (P. 36); his messenger, Odibo's dashing speed as "... those legs of an antelope..." (P. 74); and himself as "Akpobirisi. No bird flies over my head and lives for a second" (P. 40/41), an appellation or cognomen which equates him to the tree "which is believed to possess strong supernatural powers. Birds are said to die if they fly over it" (P. 91). 2ND WOMAN also insists that the war in the home front (starving their husbands of sex) continue, accusing 1ST WOMAN who thought otherwise of being "hungry for that elephant husband of hers" (P. 64), to which 1ST WOMAN responds:

“Did you hear her” foul insults? She who has a praying (sic) mantis for a husband” (P. 65).

Euphemisms are also significant aspects of Izon language features deployed in Ayakoroma’s text to achieve specific effects. When king Olotu tells his ancestors that “... I am not ready to join you ...” (P. 40/41), or makes the very pungent and haunting statement “... I have to find solace in silence” (p. 87), or when 1STMAN says “... Even now, I have to go inside, to make up for the long period of starvation” (P. 80/81); or when Chief Biri says “... she made the thing to stand all night” (P. 55), we know that they are talking about death, copulation and penile erection, respectively. What is particularly significant in the foregoing instances of the deployment of figurations is that the imagery reflects not only the flora and fauna of the immediate environment of the text, which makes them strikingly familiar and comprehensible, particularly to those who share this environment with the author, at a deeper level, it also unravels or projects the myths and cultural and philosophical nuances of the traditional society. Though Lindfors (2002: 20) argues that “... accomplished works of art communicate in such a universal human idiom that they are capable of transcending their particular time and place and speaking to all mankind”, the scholar agrees

... Bearers of a culture are better equipped to interpret that culture than aliens who have experienced its realities only vicariously. Those who share a writer’s background can more readily comprehend the full implications of his message.

However, this obvious privilege of the indigenous scholar/critic has its own peculiar responsibility, for, in spite of the watertight veracity of the foregoing thesis, it should be noted that, as Iyasere (1975: 25) observes, the indigenous scholar must explain "the aesthetic and functional import or significance of such cultural elements in the context of use". Otherwise, the advantage may backfire, as their works may turn out to be a mere catalogue of cultural or native rhetorical elements, which is a dire critical deficiency or aberration. Iyasere (Ibid) hints at this scenario when he averred that the critics may "deviate from the task of illuminating the work of art and become overly concerned with the socio-cultural and traditional aspects of the work".

Code-Switching and Code-Mixing

Code-switching and code-mixing are also pivotal aspects of the language of Ayakoroma's text. This technique is apparently integral to the bilingual and multilingual text. Hence Hudson (2001:51) observes that "code-switching is a consequence of bilingualism". Alo (1998: 28) explains that,

An individual who is able to employ more than one code-language or dialect can switch codes for various socio-cultural functions. Code-switching which means a total change from one language to another in a speech serves a variety of social and stylistic functions.

According to the scholar (1998: 27), many non-native writers in English "...establish local identities in style, in

culture and linguistic experimentation in code-mixing and code-mixing, use of local idioms, collocational deviation and grammatical deviation, etc” and that these writers often use these devices to “reflect the local reality...” In the call-and-response technique we alluded to earlier, as a veritable aspect of native rhetorical patterning in the text, for instance, there is a clear instance of code-switching:

<i>ALAERE:</i>	<i>Aahn Ama!</i>
<i>CROWD:</i>	<i>Iyaa! [...]</i>
<i>ALAERE:</i>	<i>Ama keme emi yan?</i>
<i>CROWD:</i>	<i>Emi yoo! (P. 22)</i>

The first part of this excerpt is a greeting. The second part literally translates to “are there people in the town?” which is meant to challenge or stir the crowd to action, and the crowd responds “Yes, there are people!” Olotu also code-switches when Alaere tells him that he is wasting his time to stand against or obstruct the collective and iron-cast wish of the women. “Ama Alaere, ye ekere dab a” (P. 41) meaning “if I get my hands on you” or “If I catch you”. We also find an instance of code-switching when Olotu uses the proverb “... when a handshake goes beyond the elbow, it has turned to another thing” (P. 76) and the crowd (the people of Toru-ama) concurs: “That is true. It has turned to wrestling. Gesi egberi, anda ke padol!” (P. 76). The last sentence, which is in the Izon language, re-echoes and reinforces the initial part expressed in English. Alaere also code-switches when king Olotu, her husband, kneels down before her to press her to reveal the true father of his supposed daughter: “Abei! Sisei, eterimo O!” (P. 84). This literally means “You man, please hide me O!” The reason

for Alaere's impassioned plea is not far-fetched. As the author states in the glossary, in the Izon cultural milieu,

... It is an abomination for an elder to genuflect for a younger person, not to talk of a husband (who is the king of the land) kneeling for a wife. If the brothers-in-law know (about) it, such a woman would be fined (P.91).

Instances of code-mixing, which has to do with the use of words of two or more languages or varieties side by side in a single utterance for effective communication, also abound in Ayakoroma's text. Hudson (2001:53) observes that,

To get the right effect, the speakers (or writers) balance the two languages against each other as a kind of linguistic cocktail – a few words of one language, then a few words of the other, then back to the first for a few more words and so on.

When King Olotu and his wife vociferously debate their daughter's future, for instance, the king asks his daughter to leave them: "Ama Beke, I said go inside" (P. 50). There is another instance where king Olotu highlights the troublesome and intractable nature of a woman and her tongue to his confidant, Chief Apodi: "The day Tamarau added women to our fold, our troubles began" (P. 71). The same device of code-mixing is used when Chief Apodi hushes the king's daughter, Beke, thusly: "Tah! Enough...". "Ama Beke", "Tamarau" and "Tah" in the three excerpts, above mean "You Beke" (the

term used specifically for the female gender), “God” and “shut up”, respectively. In a fundamental way, as the illustrative contexts show, the term ‘code-mixing’ can be said to eloquently reflect the concept of hybridization since it represents a bringing together or “mix” of different cultures and codes, particularly as it is evoked or utilized by bilingual writers for purposes of foregrounding cultural identity and stylistic effect.

Conclusion

So far, it is clear that the study locates Ayakoroma’s text in Izon cultural and linguistic roots, which help us to define or deconstruct the underlying linguo-cultural psychology behind the events, utterances and actions in the text. This thesis is in tandem with Nabofa’s (1997: 63) contention that “... music, dance and drama, most of which are consequent upon a deep sense of inner illumination and religious awareness cum expressions, are powerful tools for promoting cultural identity”. Though, it is also germane to reiterate the point made in the study about the language dilemma being faced by the African writer and his instinctive or concomitant recourse to nativization as a way out, it must be noted, in a general sense, that this strategy is a testament to the inherent dynamism or variability of the concept of language itself, in the sense that distinct contexts of language use breed new varieties. These new varieties serve specific functions in given environments where users naturally enjoy mutual intelligibility, in view of the fact that there is a common core in the people linguistic and cultural sensibilities. Hunjo (2002: 63) has drawn our attention to the fact that, in the Nigerian context,

It is glaring that pragmatic use of English is not without the effect of the Nigerian cultures on the users of the language. Prominent Nigerians in the field of literature agree with the cultural influence on their thought system whenever they want to express experiences that are alien to the English culture in the English language.

It must also be noted that linguistic innovations can occur at any level of language study viz: sound, lexis, syntax, semantics and discourse. What is important is that, as Alo (2006: 25) put it, "It is in the new socio-cultural environment that the innovations in the L2 derive their communicative value and meaning". Crucially, such innovations must be motivated and also serve distinct purposes (Nicholls, 1983). Hence Alo (2006:26) avers that innovations in the African context "cope with the problem of expressing features of the indigenous culture and ... remain as culturally authentic as possible". What is perhaps, more crucial, as the study shows, is the dire implications of linguistic dualism on African literature. Kachru (1987: 130) observes that, as bilinguals in colonial languages and the indigenous languages, African writers such as Barclays Ayakoroma demonstrate immense creativity

.... In the facility and ease of mixing, switching and the adoption of stylistic and discoursal strategies from the total verbal repertoire available to a bilingual. One has to consider not only the blend of formal features, but also assumptions derived from various cultural norms and the blending of

these norms into a new linguistic configuration with a culture-specific meaning system.

The Kernel of this viewpoint is that, as the Whorfian hypothesis espouses, each language both embodies and imposes upon the culture a particular world view (see Sapir, 1921; Whorf, 1956; Alo, 2006).

From the evidence provided above, it is clear that Ayakoroma's text contains a preponderance of Izon socio-cultural meanings and speech patterns or linguistic frames which necessitate the evocation of the appropriate L1 linguistic and non-linguistic context for effective interpretation. It is also clear that Ayakoroma's pragmatic nativization in *Dance on His Grave*, as well as in his other plays, has benefitted immensely from Okara's (1963) thesis that, as a bilingual African writer, he has perfunctorily endeavoured in his writing to keep as close as possible to Izon vernacular expressions, which is concretely and programmatically manifest in his *The Voice* (1964). In the main, as with other African writers, the nativization of both writers, ostensibly borne out of the hybrid character of their creative heritage,

Traverses stylistic wordplay to reflect speech forms and cultural practices that are akin to a people.... to expand the frontiers of language to accommodate as well as express the social needs of a people and their cultural orientation or realities (Aboh and Uduk, 2015:166-167).

There is no doubt that this expansive goal of the African writer's nativization of the imperialist languages and delightful evocation of the African linguistic and cultural ambience in their works prompted Issifou (2014:49) to declare that it is "a linguistic and literary counter-attack from the former colonized against the colonizer".

References

- Aboh, R. & Uduk, H. (2015). "Linguistic Variations in the Nigerian Novel: A Socio-Pragmatic Investigation". *Wilberforce Island Review*. Vol.13
- Achebe, C. (1958). *Things Fall Apart*. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.
- Adedimeji, M.A. (2003). "The Semantics and Pragmatics of Nigerian Proverbs in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Ola Rotimi's *The Gods are not to Blame*". *ALORE: Ilorin Journal of Humanities* (13) pp. 54-79.
- Adedimeji, M.A. (2008). "Culture and Language in African Literature. An Appraisal of Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*". *Papers in English and Linguistics*. Vol.9.
- Akporobaro, F.B.O. (2012). *Introduction to African oral Literature*. Lagos: Princeton Publishing Co.
- Alo, M. (1995). *Applied English Linguistics: An Introduction*. Port Harcourt: Aeddy Link.
- Alo, M.A. (2006). "Creativity and Lexical/Discourse Innovation in Yoruba – English Translation". *Ibadan Journal of English Studies*. Vol.3. pp. 17-39.
- Awa, J.O. (2015). "African Literature a Celebration of Artistic Freedom: An Examination of Chimamanda Adiche's *Purple Hibiscus*". *Global Journal of Arts*,

- Humanities and Social Sciences* Vol.3, No.5, pp. 53-65.
- Ayakoroma, B. (2002). "Proverbs and Aphorisms among the Izon of the Niger Delta". *The Mariner*. Vol.1, No.1
- Ayakoroma, B. (2010). *Dance on His Grave*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd.
- Bakhtin, M. (2004). "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse (1940)". *The Dialogic Imagination*. 41-83.
- Bamgbose, A. (1995). "English in the Nigerian Environment". In *New Englishes: A West African Perspective*. Ibadan: Mosuro: pp. 9-26.
- Bamgbose, A. (1998). "Torn Between the Norms: Innovations in World Englishes". *World Englishes*, 17, (1): 1-17.
- Bamgbose, A. (2004). "Negotiating English through Yoruba: Implications for Standard Nigerian English". In Owolabi, K. And Dasylva, A. (Eds.) *Forms and Functions of English and Indigenous Languages in Nigeria: A Festschrift in Honour of Ayo Banjo*. Ibadan: Group Publishers. Pp. 612-630.
- Barber, K. (1990). "Review of Lekan Owomoyela's A. Kii: Yoruba Proscriptive and Prescriptive Proverbs". *Research in African Literatures*. Pp. 166-168.
- Bhabha, H.K. (1994). "Discourse in the Novel (1935)". *The Dialogic Imagination*. 259-442.
- Chuma-Udeh, N. (2011). "The Ozidi Saga – Demonstrating the Continuing Vitality of the Epic Tradition in the African Context". In Ododo, S.E. & Mbajiorgu, G. (Eds.) *Songs of Gold: Fresh Perspectives on Clark*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd.
- Fashina, N. (2009). "Proverbs and Linguistic Meta-Criticism: Towards a Re-reading of Proverbs as Narrative Sublimation in Achebe's *Things Fall*

- Apart. Papers in English and Linguistics PEL*. Vol.10.
- Grieve, D.W. (1964). *English Language Examining*. Ibadan: AUP.
- Hudson, R.A. (1980). *Sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: CUP
- Hunjo, H.J. (2002). "Pragmatic Nativization in New Nigerian English". In Babatunde, S.T. & Adeyanju, D.S. (Eds.) *Language, Meaning and Society: Papers in Honour of E.E. Adegbija at 50*. Ilorin: Haytee Press and Publishing Co. Nig. Ltd.
- Hybridity concepts in Postcolonial Studies. <https://www.ukessaus.com> pp. 1-7. Accessed 2012/2018
- Hybridity <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index>. Accessed 20/2/2018
- Igboanusi, H. (2004). "African World-Views in Western Languages: Semantic Dislocations in African Literature". In Oyeleye, L. (Ed.) *Language and Discourse in Society*. Ibadan: Hope Publications.
- Issifou, M. (2013). "Beyond the Language Debate in Postcolonial Literature: Linguistic Hybridity in Kojo B. Laing's *Women of the Aeroplane*". *The Journal of Pan African Studies* (6) 5, 49-62
- Iyasere, S.C. (1975). "African Critics on African Literature: A Study in Misplaced Hostility". *African Literature Today*, 7, pp. 20-27.
- Izerbaye, D.S. (1994). "J.P. Clark-Bekederemo and the Ijo Literary Tradition". *Research in African Literatures* Vol.25, No.1. pp. 1-21.
- Izevbaye, D.S. (1974). "Nigeria". In King, B (Ed.) *Literatures of the World in English*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Josiah, U. (2014). "Multilingualism and Linguistic Hybridity: An Experiment with Nigerian Spoken

- English.” *Review of Arts and Humanities*. 3.2, 157-184.
- Kachru, B. (1981). “The Pragmatics of Non-native Varieties of English”. In Smith, L. (ED.) *English for Cross-Cultural Communication*. Hong Kong: Macmillan.
- Kachru, B. (1987). “The Bilingual’s Creativity: Discoursal and Stylistic Strategies in Contact Literatures”. In Smith, L.E. (Ed.) *Discourse Across Cultures*. New York: Prentice Hall. Pp. 125-140.
- Lawal, H.O. (2011). “Language as a Means of Transmitting Culture in Wole Soyinka’s *Death and the King’s Horseman*”. *Journal of the Literary Society of Nigeria (JLSN)*, Vol.3, No.1.
- Lindfors, B. (2002). *Folklore in Nigerian Literature*. Ibadan: Caltop Publications (Nig.) Limited.
- Lyons, J. (1981). *Language and Linguistics: An Introduction* Cambridge: CUP.
- Nabofa, M.Y. (1997). “Mysticism, Religion and Cultural Identity”. *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies*. No.7. pp. 54-66.
- Nicholls, A. (1983). *Managing Educational Innovations*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Nwachukwu-Agbada, J.O.J. (1993). “Proverbs in Prison: The Technique and Strategy of Proverb Use in Chinua Achebe’s Novels”. *Proverbium* (14) pp. 247-276.
- Ojaide, T. (1992). “Modern African Literature and Cultural identity”. *African Studies Review*. Vol.3, pp. 43-57.
- Okoh, K. (2008). *Preface to Oral Literature*. Onitsha: African First Publishers Ltd.
- Onyema, C.C. (1998). *The English Language in Nigeria*. Port Harcourt: Projects and Books Press Limited.

- Opara, S.C. (2016). *Applied English Linguistics: An Introduction* Owerri: Gabtony and Associates Ltd.
- Osani, D. (2008). "The Aesthetics of Proverbs in Nigerian Fiction: D.O. Fagunwa and Chinua Achebe". *Papers in English and Linguistics* PEL. Vol.9.
- Owolabi, D. (2012). "The Domestication of the English Language for Literary Purpose in Nigeria: Creating a National Identity". *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity* Vol.2, No.6.
- Owomoyela, O. (1988). *A Kii: Yoruba Proscriptive and Prescriptive Proverbs*. Lanhan, Maryland: American Press.
- Tsaaio, J.T. (2013). "Mobilizing Masked Martial Metaphors: Tiv Nationalist Songs as Alternative Sources of History". *Wilberforce Island Review*, Vol.11.
- Wellek, R. & Warren, A. (1949). *Theory of Literature*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Whorf, B. (1956). "Language, Mind and Reality". In Carroll (Ed.) *Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee-Whorf*. Massachusetts: M/T Press.
- Yeibo, E. (2011). "Group Types as Style Markers in J.P. Clark-Bekederemo's Poetry". *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*. Vol.1, No.8. pp. 929-934.
- Yeibo, E. (2011). "Nativization of English in African Literary Texts: A Lexico-Semantic Study of Transliteration in Gabriel Okara's *The Voice*". *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. Vol.1, No.13.