JELLiC

Journal of English Language, Literature, and Culture

ISSN: **2304-6120 (Print)**
ISSN **2304-6163 (E-Version)**

Volume 7, No. 2

July 2024

International Peer Reviewed Journal of the
Cameroon English Language and Literature Association
www.cellacameroon.org

JELLiC: Journal of English Language, Literature, and Culture

ISSN: 2304-6120 (Print)
ISSN 2304-6163 (E-Version)

Send submissions to
info@cellacameroon.org

Submissions Guidelines @
www.cellacameroon.org

Published and Distributed by

Miraclaire Publishing LLC
Kansas City, MO 64133, (USA)
Email: info@miraclairepublishing.com

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JELLiC: Journal of English Language, Literature, and Culture
Volume 7; No. 02, July 2024
ISSN: 2304-6120 (Print) / 2304-6163 (E-Version)
www.cellacameroon.org/publications/jellic

Controversies surrounding the acquisition of English in the multilingual and multicultural context of Cameroon

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Abstract

The recurrent maxim that idolises Cameroon as Africa in miniature, has an undoubtable underpinning in its multilingual and multicultural configuration. No doubt, it is an aberration for an average Cameroonian not to sustain an eloquent conversation in at least three languages. This has ensuing consequences in the acquisition of English in Cameroon. This paper from an educational linguistic perspective, isolates the resultant controversies that surround the acquisition of English within the context and draws pedagogic relevance thereof. Data is collected primarily through a systematic review of literature from published articles. Results as triangulated with information from primary data collected through a focus group discussion with ELT teachers show an overt and sheepish compliance to hegemonic imported standards and a conspicuous neglect of environmental realities either by language planners, pedagogues, or even linguists to the detriment of the existing effortless realities of the linguistic environment in which the English language is acquired and used. Reliance on method to the detriment of practicality and possibility by pedagogues, is a call for concern in a richly endowed multicultural context like the one we have. The paper recommends a multicultural pedagogic approach to enhancing the acquisition of English as a second language in Cameroon. This approach will of course consider teaching identities, post methods pedagogy, translanguaging and imbibing the sociocultural dimension with adherence to the sociocultural evolution of English within the multicultural and multilingual context of Cameroon.

Key words: Multiculturalism, multilingualism, ELT in Cameroon, Second language Acquisition.

Introduction

The hallmarks of the 21st century are noticeable in the ample interconnections and interrelations which are visible in multicultural and multilingual interactions. It is no longer a matter of conjecture that the world has become a global village with varying possibilities for citizens of this global village to interact in multidimensional ways. In the 19th century, one of the key competences in the international arena was a demonstration of the ability to function in the key international languages with English leading. This made English to transcend ownership by one people and to spread all over the globe. Though this is still a reality, the tides seem to now be changing in favour of multicultural and metalinguistic abilities. Understanding this multicultural mix is crucial for children of the 21st century and an obligatory asset for functioning in todays' world.

English has often been the vector and symbol of international business, trade, education and in the current dispensation, the language is vector of multiculturalism. While many countries that were somehow monolingual are trying to adapt to foreign cultures, it is evident that the medium of transmission of these cultures is English. Beyond the international arena, Cameroon has been referred to as Africa in miniature due to its multicultural and multilingual landscape. While English is jostling for positions in Cameroon with many other local languages, the teaching and learning of English within such a multicultural and multilingual context seems to meet with intricacies that need to be managed. Cameroon therefore presents a unique opportunity for pedagogic reflections on how English language could meet exigencies of the current globalization which is essentially multicultural. With this complex linguistic setting, the key question here is to trace the complexities and resultant controversies that surround teaching English in such a multicultural context. This will of course draw

ramifications for the global village context and above all for effective English language teaching in Cameroon.

It is imperative that stakeholders in the teaching learning industry are aware of the contexts in which they work, and the specific intricacies. Establishing and collating knowledge about English language teaching (later ELT) in the multilingual and multicultural Cameroon can be significant to the teaching learning industry in other to present the status quo and what future priorities could be projected for ELT. One strategy for achieving this goal is to conduct reviews of the research literature that is specific to the context. This has a great potential to assist stakeholders and others in the industry to improve their work by understanding the key ramifications within the context.

Different authors have identified issues related to English language teaching in a multicultural context like Cameroon with rather isolated perspectives. This paper, from a holistic perspective, reviews all the perspectives that have been identified over the years to have a comprehensive summary of issues surrounding English language teaching in Cameroon and draw pedagogic implications thereof. This begins with a review of the ELT teaching situation and then moves to the identification of relevant literature, the methodology used to identify and an analysis of the key findings from the literature as well as pedagogic implications.

In this paper, we provide a systematic review of the literature focused on English language teaching in a multilingual and multicultural context. This is mostly referred to published literature in peer reviewed journals with the hope of inspiring both researchers and stakeholders and for meaningful implications to be drawn from the literature and applied in the ELT industry not only in a multicultural Cameroon but also in similar contexts globally.

Current trends on ELT in Cameroon

Ask highlighted by Mbibeh (2013) the multilingual setting of Cameroon with sociocultural realities like intermarriages between couples from different linguistic backgrounds, intercultural activities, migration and settlement for different socio economic exigencies has resulted in the use of English as a home language in mixed marriage situations[1]. For instance, families with parents from different backgrounds are noted to use English as a common lingua franca to bridge the communication gap. More to that, the offspring from such families turn to acquire English as their first language. Despite this, one may hesitate to call them native speakers of English; but if that were the case, it would be native speakers of Cameroon English. The teaching and learning of English today in Cameroon in such a context can only be a daunting reality. Needless mentioning the usual mechanical difficulties of insufficient teachers, didactic material, motivation for both teachers and learners just to name a few. While the government and stakeholders are grappling with the difficulties, there is more to these visible shortcomings. The sociolinguistic environment with well above 250 languages (Wolf 2001, Atechi 2006, Kouega 2007) is more of a mixed blessing to the ESL learner in Cameroon. The intricacies in the language (structural ramifications) have made scholars to refer to the English language as mad. In this light, Simo Boba's (2011) article talks of taming such madness of the English language. The wide spread lingua franca Pidgin English (which seems easier) is in a serious jostling for position with English and is gradually relegating English to the background in political, religious and market discourse or better still in discourse intended to meet the general population. This is definitely placing English at an elitist position vis-à-vis the other

[1] Marriage between people who speak different native languages in Cameroon

languages. That is, a language that is the reserve of a secluded class; getting back to colonial English as was the case in South Africa. The situation is so glaring that empirical research in Cameroon Pidgin English is already proposing the introduction of this language into the classroom (Fonka 2011, Atechi 2009, 2017). Above all, the multiplicity of varieties that are present in the Cameroonian context through the multimedia, only go to add more salt to injury. These rather mechanical issues are not as impelling as is the multicultural and multilingual context in which English language teaching in Cameroon is grounded. That is why many linguists have focused on describing the scenario from different perspectives thereby laying the groundwork for a review of the practice in Cameroon and impending pedagogic implications. Before we delve into the methodology, it is important to define multiculturalism and multilingualism which constitute key variables in the paper.

Multiculturalism

According to Eagan (2024), multiculturalism represents the view that cultures, races and ethnicities, particularly those of minority groups, deserve special acknowledgment of their differences within a dominant political culture. Multiculturalism from an etymological standpoint will immediately underscore the existence of many cultures. This can be misleading especially when not considered in terms of the different implications to different spheres of knowledge and domains. From this perspective, the term multiculturalism has a plethora of meanings within the sociological, political, and even philosophical domains. From a sociological standpoint multiculturalism is synonymous to ethnic pluralism which in everyday use represents the existence of varied ethnic and cultural groups or traditions in a single geographical sphere. In such a situation there will be multiple cultural practices in a single location

such as in the metropolis in Cameroon where inhabitants from various autochthonous groups have migrated for one reason or the other and settled in the townships. From a political dimension, multiculturalism examines the scale either big (for example the Anglophone and francophone culture in Cameroon) or small scale (the different ethnic cultures of the Northwest region or the Beti people as the case may be). Regardless of the scale, the capacity of the state to effectively and efficiently deal with cultural plurality within its sovereign borders is always significant in politics. The socio political crises that broke out in Cameroon in the later part of 2016 till present seems to have underpinnings on issues around non respect for multicultural dimensions of the Anglophone community (international crises group 2017) This paper while considering the complexity of ELT within the multicultural context will consider multiculturalism from a sociological perspective and common usage dimension.

Multilingualism

The term multilingualism from a sociolinguistic dimension basically refers to a situation of more than 2 languages in a speech community. (Maher, 2017, Awah 2021, Egan 2024) Such a situation could be related to a speaker of many languages or to a context in which many languages are spoken. Therefore, multilingualism can be referred to as either the ability of an individual to effectively use more than two languages or a community of speakers of 3 or more languages. A multilingual can be contrasted with a monolingual (someone who speaks one language). In today's global world as mentioned earlier, Multilingualism is a great asset to citizens of the global villages as it enables them to effectively participate in international transactions and to understand diverse socio cultural intricacies. Multilingualism

is no longer just a linguistic phenomenon, but also a sociocultural phenomenon shaped by the demands of the globalized world. In today's interconnected world, the internet provides possibilities of exposure to multiple languages.

In Cameroon, the phenomenon of multilingualism is quit complex and dynamic ranging from a multiplicity of local languages (over 280) to the two official languages (English and French) and the pidgins that have developed and have become lingua francas in different contexts rendering the country not just a linguistic but a cultural hodgepodge. It is in effect a rich and diversified multilingual landscape that does not only pride its citizens but also contributes to the socio cultural and linguistic complexities.

According to Awah (2021) multilingualism and the use of many languages has significant implications for the country's sociocultural and interpersonal interactions, identity construction and governance process. The languages alone, reflects the country's complex culture and history, playing a crucial role in linguistic determinism, and presents critical challenges to the language industry that this study will identify from an empirical perspective.

Methodology

This study used a mixed method design for data collection and analysis. Primarily, the major source of data is secondary collected through a systematic review of relevant literature in the domain and primary data collected through focus group discussions with linguists and English Language teachers in Cameroon. The data is further analysed using qualitative approaches.

The eligibility criteria for including articles in this review from a thematic perspective included the fact that the article should focus on English language teaching in Cameroon, should identify an issue related to the domain and should relate to the Multicultural and

Multilingual perspectives. To be included in this review, each study had to meet at least one of the criteria in each of the following five categories

1. Time frame – Published in a peer reviewed journal any time from 2000 to 2024,
2. A research study on English language in Cameroon with a bias on any variable related to the impact of the multicultural and multilingual perspective.
3. The study had to be one of the following types of documents: Peer reviewed articles and review articles; grey literature like conference proceedings, book chapters, and conference presentations were included if they met the other criteria.
4. Language of publication was English
5. The article must be publicly available in an online format.

The search terms English language in Cameroon and pedagogic implications, were used as well as the researcher's experience to identify articles and screen them for inclusion. In this process, 48 articles were identified to have some relationship to the thematic areas but only 30 articles were finally used for this study considered to have met a majority of the set criteria. These articles were then further read and analysed to identify the perspective the author handled. The data extraction template was designed with key review items above. The data was synthesised and inputted into an Excel file for further analysis. We used the functions available in Excel to tabulate the data and to generate synthesise recurrent themes for each category of information collected and for more detailed analysis. From this dataset, it was possible to identify recurrence of key themes in the articles.

From the excel workbook it was possible to group articles that discussed similar content and proceed with analysis. As such a systematic review of the literature about complexities of English language learning and teaching within the multilingual and multicultural context of Cameroon was identified, a thematic analysis of the intricacies sorted out. The results from this review were then triangulated with information from primary data that was collected from ELT teachers through focus group discussions. This mixed method design gave some credibility to the results that came from the review process and content analysis frameworks were used to synthesize the results. The results obtained from the review process were triangulated with information from the FGD with researchers and teachers of English.

The results are presented following the key thematic areas identified. The following research questions guided the review of literature:

1. What are the controversies surrounding the acquisition of English in Cameroon from a multilingual and multicultural perspective?
2. What are the pedagogic implications?

Study Results

The findings show a number of controversies in English language learning resulting from the multicultural and multilingual background of Cameroon. Results show that the English language teacher and even the learner find themselves in a dilemma, the English second language context in Cameroon needs a redefinition as well as linguistic, pedagogic and language planning complexities that need to be harnessed or reviewed within this context. These complexities can only plunge the ESL teacher and learner into a pedagogic quagmire that needs to be resolved.

The preceding issues are discussed in this section and relevant analogies drawn from the literature and discussions to highlight key implications that arise from the context of study. As a reminder, the results are derived first from the secondary data and then corroborated by information from FGD with researchers and English Language teachers in Cameroon.

The dilemma of the English language teacher

One key recurrent theme that surfaced in the review of literature and the focus group discussions was the issue of choice of variety of English in the Cameroon language teaching and learning context. The studies depict that this has been a bone of contention between ardent purists that undermine the significance of context and uphold the normative perspective of prescriptivism and flexible or rationalist pedagogues that privilege the role of context and their Cameroonian variety of English as an embodiment of their own sociocultural identities that cannot be undermined. This thematic has been handled in peer reviewed papers by Atechi (2008), Ngefac (2011) and Mbibeh (2013). Atechi (2008) exposes the pedagogic confusion in which the young teacher and learner of English plunge themselves into when exposed to the different varieties of English. The less elitist Cameroon English is relegated to the background to the advantage of hegemonic British English in textbooks and in language programs even though the ELT teacher in Cameroon has his linguistic umbilical cord planted in Cameroon English. This confusion is such that after analysing, Atechi (2008) underscores the need not to undermine the advantages that native varieties have over non-native varieties. Such advantages include documentation and codification and he prefers to conclude that dust is yet to settle on the matter. Ngefac (2011) drawing from Atechi (2008) is rather more categorical and emphatically states that imposing native

English standards in a Cameroonian classroom is undermining the cultural identify of a people and is therefore a fallacy. He further relates this scenario to a blind man leading a blind recounting field experiences of teachers introducing an RP rule in pronunciation and flouting the same role in the same classroom. This finding was corroborated by teachers who express their disappointment and frustrations when faced with such rules that have no practical presence in the non-native context and yet they are compelled to teach since it is the norm and in the program. Added to this dilemma is the presence of Cameroon English that both the teacher and learner may not ignore given the almost innate property as well as its significance in terms of the expression of the socio-cultural reality and/or identity. It is therefore no longer a tousle between British English (later BrE) and American English (later AmE) but equally between these native varieties and Cameroon English (later CamE).

Following the preceding authors, Mbibeh (2013) from a rather empirical perspective interviews 60 language teachers on this dilemma and the variety they will prefer to use in the Cameroonian context. According to his findings, the choice of CamE is related to its simplicity and closeness to the learner's social realities, whereas the choice of BrE is based on the necessity to meet the exigencies of the global village. AmE is rejected on stereotypical bases, with the claim that the variety is related to youthful language imbedded with crime oriented undertones. Statistically speaking, CamE should be used in the classroom. As sweet as the finding may look, the key issue still remains that in this multicultural and multilingual context of Cameroon the teachers find themselves in a pedagogic quagmire that needs to be resolved not with a panacea like the author purported but by understanding and accepting the status quo from a sociolinguistic dimension. That is why Berinyuy (2022) and Enama

(2022) think that despite indigenization of English in Cameroon the promotion of exonormativity continues to be the official goal of ELT in Cameroon even if this is more on paper than in practice given the evidence that teachers are entangled and cannot consistently distinguish British English from American English orthographical norms. As such the paper suggests that Cameroon English should be codified and promoted rather than promoting varieties whose orthographical aspects are not only confusing to teachers of English but tend to incarnate the colonial legacy.

Defining Second Language in Cameroon

Data from all the papers upholds the necessity to redefine English Second language in the multicultural and multilingual Cameroon. The standard definition of a second language as highlighted by Ellis (1997), Saville Troike (2006) and others, falls short of painting the picture in multilingual Cameroon especially for English as a second language. According to Saville Troike (2006:193) a second language is acquired after the first language has been established and learned in a context where it is societally dominant and used in education and employment. This definition looks very ok but for the Cameroonian context as found in the literature, children in the metropolis and those in mixed married homes (where parents speak different local languages) grow up to acquire English as the first language because no other language has been established and further develop or acquire pidgin English not necessarily in the classroom. Yet some learners acquire English, French and local languages simultaneously. The bilingual schools (see Enama 2015) offer an opportunity for a cultural and linguistic mix with children from varied backgrounds acquiring and using English and other languages in a rather simultaneous and interesting way. This context reveals the need for a review of what ESL is in the

Cameroonian context given that the standard definition of English as a second language does not tie with the Cameroonian multilingual context. This could have been minimized but the pedagogic implication calls for a review. That is why Nkwetisama (2017) thinks that *ELT in Cameroon does not seem to be* moving an inch from the obsolete ideologically loaded one-size-fit-all top-down prescriptions on what, when and how to teach English. He shares his experience confronted by issues of methodology in his cooperating teachers who failed to understand the context in which they were teaching and adhering to native speaker norms which did not fit the context. There is according to him a linguistic genocide that must be grappled with in what Mbibeh (2021) alludes to the David /Goliath mythical fight in which of course David defeats the domineering and imposing Goliath native standards. The implication of following native speaker or "standard" definition of English as a second language in a context like Cameroon is that the methodological prescriptions for teaching English in this context are bound to be a failure given that context specific issues as described by Agbor Tabe (2021) will not be accounted for and language will remain in the classroom without an inkling on the real life situations that are present in the multilingual and multicultural perspectives.

Pedagogic Issues

Given that the study focused on language learning and teaching in a multicultural and multilingual context, it was evident that most papers handled pedagogic issues. However, this section looked at papers that handled classroom practical issues in a multilingual context. In this domain most literature was grey literature from seminar reports and from the schools of education where the main focus is classroom practice to the detriment of issues around the language. In this light, Nkwetisama (2017) postulates that

> … discussions on ELT in national, regional and divisional level workshops, seminars and conferences; and even lectures in English Departments of Teacher Training Colleges in private and state-owned universities often centre on micro pedagogical matters like teaching methods and techniques, use of information and communication technologies, the "how to's" in classroom management... and Little attention is paid on more macro dimensions of ELT like the political, social and cultural issues which include language policies and their implications in the classroom as well as the crucial role of the teacher in (re)creating these policies in the classroom.

Though these issues may seem intangible, irrelevant or inconsequential than pedagogic ones, he further highlights that the social, cultural and political dimensions of ELT – are embedded in all the decisions and the cultural expectations, identities in terms of gender, race, ethnicity and nationality which should inform and constrain classroom practices. It is rather unfortunate that the critical pedagogical perspective is sacrificed in English language teaching and even in the training schools and issues of imposing methodology are privileged. That is why it is challenging to engage a language teacher in issues of critical interest about the language they are teaching and it is easier to talk about methods which as we shall see later are even not suitable for the multicultural context of teaching English in Cameroon. Failure to imbibe the socio cultural dimension and focusing more on the mechanical pedagogic skills of a good teacher is significantly detrimental to teaching in a multicultural context like Cameroon.

Even at the level of choice of didactic material, evaluating learner language and classroom practice a lot of limitations have been mentioned. According to Mbibeh (2023) the second language classroom in Cameroon today leaves much to be desired. The plethoric enrolments with averagely more than 70 students per class, has been decried over the years as a major impediment to the effective teaching/learning of English. With the deteriorating economic situation of parents, learners barely have reference books even if the textbooks in themselves are criticized for the bias on local colour and standards. At a time when the teaching of English is being associated with modern communication facilities, it is a pity that this is still a nightmare for most Cameroonian classrooms where energy is unavailable not to talk of the necessary didactic equipment. Needless to mention the difficulty that arises from the insufficient number of teachers not leaving out the training these teachers receive. It is within this backdrop that Fasse (2007:62) comments that it is common ground to hear teachers say "In my classes, I merely take care of the first five rows of students" and similar other statements. A good number of English language teachers in Cameroonian secondary schools are degree holders from various state universities with little or no pedagogic knowledge that is needed in the teaching of this language. English language teaching in the primary section is done mostly by secondary school leavers with either the G. C. E ordinary or advanced level in either 4 or 2 subjects respectively. No precaution is taken to select those who succeeded in English language. Even those who are supposed to have received training in the schools of education are no better given the fraudulent means most of them use to get in and out of the training school. May be the current closure of competitive entrance exam into teacher training colleges will result in those who are dedicated to teach but the key issue will continue to remain that of

imbibing the sociocultural component to language teaching and adopting a post method pedagogy in a multicultural context like the one in Cameroon.

Linguistic Issues

While there has been a clarion call by Mbibeh (2013, 2021, 2023), Ngefac (2011), Nkwetisama (2017) and many more for the introduction of Cameroon English in the classroom, the complexity of defining the English these linguists are calling for its introduction to the classroom leaves much to be desired. Though we do not lose sight of the enormous description of the language from different levels of linguistic analysis, there still remain pertinent questions to be answered. This is the argument that die heart pedagogues advance to keep aside dust to settle as Atechi (2008) will put it though the issue of waiting for dust to settle might turn into engaging in a mythical journey to oblivion given that we do not know who will sound the trumpets for Cameroon English to be considered codified (Mbibeh 2021). Questions such as what exactly is Cameroon English? What is its phonology, grammar syntax etc may sound inconsequential given the enormity of descriptions already done by eminent linguists and household names in the domain in the likes of Massanga, Mbangwana, Simo Boda, Atechi, Mforteh, Sala, Anchimbe, Ngefac, Nkemleke just to name these few. Each of the domains described by these linguists still have burning questions and Mforteh (2008) wonders whether Cameroon English is just another Fad. For instance, from a phonological perspective, what is considered Cameroon English pronunciation still leaves much to be desired in the papers. While Massanga and Mbangwana talk of educated English, Ngefac (2008) classifies Cameroon English into 3 social strata as baselectal, acrolectal and mesolectal. The literature exposes local colorations of Cameroon English as in lamnso

English, Kom English and an emergent and vibrant francophone English as described by Kouega (2018). It becomes a herculean task for a pedagogue to know which direction to follow. What should be sanctioned as an error in Cameroon English for instance are some of the burning conjectures that draw the teacher and observer aback. Language pedagogy is essentially normative, so the challenge of defining Cameroon English either from the Massanga, Mbassi Manga, Mbangwana, Bobda perspectives or from a socio phonological perspective looking at what is the etiquette for classroom practice leaves much to be desired in the pedagogic landscape.

Sociolinguistic perspectives and ELT

In effect, the focus of this paper has been to review the sociolinguistic variables of multiculturalism and multilingualism and their effect on English language learning in Cameroon in line with data from the current literature. This section examines the perspectives of linguists around sociolinguistic dimensions such as policy, planning issues, political issues just to name these few. To begin, with the acculturation theories propounded by John Schumann explain second language acquisition as second culture acquisition. From this perspective, it is practically impossible to attain efficiency in a language without imbibing the sociocultural component. Culture shock may set in when learners meet completely new phenomenon hitherto unknown to them. The Burning question for Cameroon English is what culture will a learner of English in Cameroon approximate in such a multicultural context? According to Mforteh (2006) an aspect of culture with implications to language learning in Cameroon such as honorifics is so varied and diversified. There is a glaring difference between honorifics in the Northwest and South West regions which can

plunge a learner into culture shock. Which paralinguistic signals should the learner adhere to? There is a glaring dichotomy between the rural context and urban contexts and Mbibeh (2021b) has expatiated on the challenge learners in rural areas face in urban learning environment contexts.

Furthermore, issues around language policy and planning in Cameroon were grappled with at independence of the young nation in 1960. When the law makers in Article 1 section 1 adopted English and French as official languages, no attention was paid to the variety that was to be used. This has continued in the further modifications of the constitution where no mention is made of Cameroon English. This can only be as Nkwetisama (2017) postulates either that they are not away or that they completely undermine the status quo and that paradoxically, instead of vitalising and using our local languages, policy makers, citizens, teachers and parents seem to have been made to believe in the imperialistic tenets of the English language and English language education. Acquisition and learning of any language follows language policy and planning and therefore the significance of such planning in a complex multilingual context like Cameroon is hectic and needs to be considered carefully (Ayafor 2005). The bilingual education policy that made students to learn both English and French such as the bilingual grammar schools, the current pilot bilingual programs have some resemblance to the context of multilingualism in Cameroon but still falls short of the contextual realities given that the French and English referred to in these programs is not Cameroonian. (Kouega 2005, 2018 and Kouega and Dempowo 2022, Kiwo 2023 on official bilingualism in Cameroon)

In such a multilingual context described by Mforteh (2006) as the Tower of Babel the development of Pidgins and creoles are characteristic of such a melting pot of languages. This is the case in

Cameroon where Pidgin English has developed and evolved to a language on its own (Fonka 2014, Atechi 2009, 2017, Kouega 2015). Other pidgins and variants include, Kamtok, Mbokotok that according Ngefac (2010) transcend regional, educational, linguistic and social boundaries and 'Camfranglais' that is serving the communicative needs of urban youths in Francophone towns, and 'Mbokotok' that has asserted itself as the language of rustics. A learner of English in this context needs to grapple with all these sociolinguistic intricacies and there is definitely no way their ability to approximate native norms will not be influenced by these languages. While the pedagogue has dismissed these languages as bad grammar that must be purged out of the language classroom, linguists think that the 'languages' are significant for communication in Cameroon and more of lingua francas to bridge communication gaps in a multilingual Cameroon and therefore need to be promoted to give that identity that defines Cameroonians. Having this caveat in mind, the learner of English is bound to handle these intricacies.

One current evolving issue that can arise in multilingual contexts is conflict related to language. The current and ongoing socio political crises in the Northwest and South West regions of Cameroon has a linguistic dimension to the causes in addition to other political issues described by (ICG 2018, Agbor Tabe 2022, Ngongkum and Fonka 2023). The crisis has shown that in a multicultural and multilingual context, the need to respect concurrent identifies is primordial if not a deadly conflict like what is being observed in Cameroon for the past 6years is possible. The pressure exerted by British norms in multilingual Cameroon has been referred to in the literature as linguistic genocide which according to Nkwetisama (2017) must be averted. Besides the negative implications of the conflict, the ensuing development and

modification of Cameroon English especially from a lexical perspective cannot be overemphasized (Agbor Tabe 2022). A key implication to acquiring English in a multilingual context like Cameroon is therefore to accept that the sociocultural evolution of the country has significant implication for language learning and must be considered and used rather that scorned. Many authors have thus embraced the language and are even using it for peace building (see Nengi and Nkwetisama 2022) as this project Fuh Njih and Basile Difouo (2023) on language, literature and peace building.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has so far identified controversies that surround the acquisition of English in a multilingual and multicultural context like the one in Cameroon. The evidence for discussion has been drawn from secondary literature of published articles by authors in the domain and corroborated by focus group discussions with researchers and teachers of English. Such controversies were discussed with reference to defining second language acquisition in Cameroon, pedagogic, linguistic and sociolinguistic implications of learning English in a multilingual and multicultural context. One key conclusion of the study is that there is an overt compliance to imported standards and a neglect of environmental realities either by language planners, pedagogues, or even linguists to the detriment of the existing effortless realities of the linguistic environment in which the English language is acquired and used. While linguists understand the need for the cultural component to be associated to language learning just a few of them do come out strongly to condemn reliance on imported hegemonic native speaker norms. The almost sheepish reliance on method to the detriment of practicality and possibility by pedagogues, is a call for concern in a richly endowed multicultural context like the one we have.

The paper recommends a multicultural pedagogic approach to enhancing the acquisition of English as a second language in Cameroon. This approach should of course consider teaching identities like Anglophones, francophones, and franglophones, rural and urban contexts as well as cosmopolitan contexts. This means there will be little to no reliance on dictated methodologies but a post method pedagogy as propounded Kumaravadivelu (2023) will be of great significance. Given the multilingual contexts with many languages translanguaging as propounded by Cen Williams (see Conteh 2018) can be a necessary option. There must be a complete breakaway from the current classroom practice that does not consider real life situations as expatiated by Agbor Tabe (2021). A conspicuous reliance on methods pedagogy and training of teachers on the what, when and where to teach must be undermined to focus on imbibing the sociocultural dimension and a post method pedagogy. Linguistically speaking, though the need for continuous codification is imperative as studies have shown, it is important not to wait for trumpets to sound (Mbibeh 2021) but to recognize and adhere to the sociocultural evolution of English within the multicultural and multilingual context of Cameroon.

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JELLiC: Journal of English Language, Literature, and Culture
Volume 7; No. 02, July 2024
ISSN: 2304-6120 (Print) / 2304-6163 (E-Version)
www.cellacameroon.org/publications/jellic

Hedging in Advertising Communication by Commercial Agents in Inter-Urban Transport Services in Cameroon: A Socio-Pragmatic Study

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Abstract
Consciousness in communication is a sign of maturity as people interact in multilingual and multicultural environments. Not every utterance is appropriate to every audience, especially such utterances that are considered age related. Inter-urban transport agencies in Cameroon are commercial centre par excellence by different marketing agents, who use stylish language to display their different products to potential buyers. This paper examines the use of hedging by these commercial agents as they deploy different techniques in their use of language to prevent minors from decoding the meaning from the words. This paper appreciates the consciousness in the use of language, but questions if the minors who are supposed not to understand the messages actually do not understand. This research was carried out in Bamenda town where children between the ages of five and 10 and adults from 20 years were targeted. An oral test was administered to 100 adults and 100 children in which they were asked to say what they understand from some selected phrases used by commercial agents. The results showed that many of the children could not say what such phrases meant, but some gave the meanings. Some decided not to give, though it was evident that they knew the meanings. Some adults could not also give the meanings. The research, which is grounded on adaptation theory, holds that hedging in the context of interurban buses is a face saving venture and not only a means to obstruct comprehension.

Keywords: Hedging, Communication, Cameroon pidgincreole, interurban, vendor

Introduction

Inter-urban transport buses in Cameroon have become great commercial centres for vendors, especially, of consumables products. They invade buses and brandish their various products with very appealing dictions that catch the sympathy of the audience. In commercial adverts in inter-urban transport buses in Cameroon, commercial agents have learnt to use language in a way that makes meaning fuzzy to the audience the communication was not intended. They are conscious that in the different buses that transport people by day or by night, from one urban town to the other, age groups vary and not all the things they communicate are relevant to everyone. They generally do hedging to communicate to the relevant group and cut others off their communication, especially when dealing with issues considered sensitive within that context such as sexual intercourse, defecation, reference to the genitals amongst others. As Wang (2010, p. 120) posits, "what language users do during the procedure of hedges employment, obviously, is continuously making choices too". The choices here have to do with who to include in the communicative act and who not to include. When people communicate, they are not always very sure about how the audience will react, so hedging can be considered an appeasement measures to avoid confrontation.

This paper examines the use of fuzzy language by commercial vendors, who have a common way of engaging potential clients in their discourse and the various strategies they deploy to keep their audience attentive and at the same time avoiding hurting their feeling in their use of language. I am going to project the different ways in which hedging is done and whether or not the reason for such fuzzy language is achieved. That is, finding out if little children who are always in the buses that the vendors attempts to keep away from their communication really don't understand the

communication or they only pretend because they are in the presence of their parents or elders. Since hedging is a broad pragmatic concept that covers almost any "expression of tentativeness or possibility or with a softening or downtoning function" (Johansen, 2020, p. 1) cited in Ngwobela et al. (2023), this paper equally brings one important sociolinguistic element, age, which serves as a reason for hedging in public transport vehicles.

Since pragmatic skills have to do with how we navigate through life, communicate our wants and needs to others, and express our thoughts and opinions verbally, and given that this paper is focused on how children and adult comprehend such communication, socio-pragmatic study is an appropriate label for this research. It is important to understand what hedging is and to situate the commercial agents' communicative acts within the context of Multilingualism.

Literature Review

In this section, literature on understanding hedging, hedging in specific context and advertising communication is reviewed.

Understanding Hedging

The term hedge is said to have been used for the first time in the domain of linguistics by Lakoff in 1972 (Gherdan, 2019, p. 124; Wang, 2010, p 120) as "words whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy". Citing Zuck & Zuck (1986); Brown & Levinson (1987); Hyland (1998); Btoosh (1999); Btoosh (2004); Varttala (2001); Vass (2004); Chavez (2004); Ayodobo (2007); Vazques & Giner (2008); Donesch-Jezo (2010), among others. Taweel et al. (2011, p.170) say the term hedging which was first used to refer to fuzziness has been widened to cover a number of interrelated concepts, namely indetermination, vagueness, indirectness and approximation. Ken (1996, p. 15) holds that hedging devices are

used to indicate a lack of complete commitment to the truth of the proposition, and a desire not to express the commitment categorically.

Hedging may also stem from the inner conflict between intention and desire: "being indirect is a mechanism for dealing with conflicting intentions and desires. The general form of the conflict is that the speaker wants to convey M for some reason and he does not want to convey M for other reasons. By being indirect he can convey M in one sense but not in another." (Pyle, 1975, p. 2). Indetermination, indirectness, vagueness, and modality are different strategies or means of the same phenomenon of hedging (Taweel et al., 2011). This is basically what takes place in buses where the advertising agents use language differently depending on the audience in the bus. Although their adverts are not written, they are professionally produced from a careful blend of words, images and symbols with strong attachment to consumer psychology since the audience is expected to be affected upon (Akpan et al., 2013).

Hedging is regarded differently in different contexts of use. In academics, hedges "imply then, that a statement is based on plausible reasoning rather than certain knowledge, and allow readers the freedom to dispute it" (Gherdan, 2019), cautious, annotative expressions of words (Yule, 1996). This paper adheres to Yule's definition in that it will rather look at the way users apply caution in their use of language for face-saving purposes.

In a more precise manner, Harutyunyan & Sargsyan (2019) hold that hedging is reducing the force of statements, to show doubt and indicate that information is presented as opinion rather than accredited fact. The speakers in this case try to appear humble rather than arrogant or all- knowing. So relevant to this study from Harutyunyan & Sargsyan is the fact that "hedging, being a kind of politeness marker, plays an important role in showing the

differences of its usage from a sociolinguistic perspective, particularly focusing on such social and contextual parameters as gender, class, age, ethnicity, setting" (p.45). This is important as this paper is focused on socio-pragmatic study. It should, however, be noted that since hedging is all about making language fuzzy, hedging devices do not end within the range of modal auxiliaries (e.g. may), main verbs (argue, believe), adverbs (possibly, perhaps), adjectives (potential, probable) and nouns (hypothesis, idea, notion) (Anh, 2018, p. 15); it uses devices based on the context and the academic level of users. The next section in this paper reviews some relevant works.

Hedging in specific context

Hedging has been widely examined in different situations, political discourse, academic discourse, market discourse and a lot more. In this section, I will give a brief review of hedging in some related fields.

To begin with, Akpan et al., (2013) did an aesthetic judgments on four select newspaper advertisements employing the visual analysis approach and hedging it on subjectivity and universal validity planks of Kant's theory. The four advertisements were selected from two Nigerian dailies, *Punch* and *Vanguard*. The paper concentrates on the visual elements and the aesthetic appeals through colours and textual matters such as capitalization and number of words used and how users appreciate them. The authors conclude that class of the respondents as well as the objectives that the ads were intended to fulfill equally played a dominant role in making some ads more aesthetically appealing than others.

On his part, Wang (2010, p. 121) in his paper points out that hedging takes place because any communication is a kind of activity with some degree of purpose. This will cause interlocutors to adopt some strategies in utterance which are meant to maintain the face of

both sides. Hedge can be used as an effective strategy to maintain the social relationship and preserve the face of communicators. His study looks at hedging from different perspectives- adaptation to the mental world, adaptation to the social world and physical world. In an example of the mental world, he brings a dialogue between a teacher and a monitor as seen below:

a. Teacher: How many students have come back to school safely?
b. Monitor: More than thirty.

The Monitor chooses the hedge "more than" as a device to tailor his reply. This frees him from responsibility and keeps the teacher wondering what "more than" really mean exactly.

In their own study which sought to determine which hedging devices were used in government information subsidies about the crisis in Anglophone Cameroon that started in 2016, establish the discourse and communication functions of these hedges, and determine the crisis response postures reflected through hedging, Ngwobela et al. (2023, p 34) adopted a documentation and records method to obtain 83 information subsidies. In this paper, the authors identified six categories of hedging devices which served different discourse and communication roles. Approximators and rounders were used to distance the government from particularly controversial claims about key crisis issues; while contrastive conjunctions served to highlight support for government crisis management strategies, protect government credibility, and diminish the amount of crisis responsibility attributed to the government. Conditionals were used to express beliefs, claims and stances about Anglophone crisis events in a way that restricts potentially controversial interpretations. In all, six categories of hedging devices were used in government information subsidies about the Anglophone crisis. The paper concludes that there is a need for greater synchrony in the use of hedging devices. This wish is actually not possible because as Hyland (1996, p.434) cited in

Anh (2018) holds, "hedging represents a writer's attitude within a particular context". Since no two contexts are exactly the same, the hedging devices will not be the same.

Advertising Communication

Communication, as Fonka (2020), puts it remains a chain whereby the speaker transmits a message to the receiver through a channel and receives feedback. Although commercial agents involved in advertisement have a little time to spend with their potential customers, they measure feedback on how much they sell after advertising their products. Ellis (2002, p. 13) opines that one of the hallmarks of successful communication is associated with the notion of being appropriate, that is, providing the right kind of communication to match the right kind of audience. This means no matter how good and important your message is, if it is communicated to the wrong audience, the desired effect will not be achieved. Advertising communication is marketing communication, which according to Bačík et al. (2012, p. 315) "can be described as an interactive dialogue between the organization and customer in the stages: prior to sale, during sale in course, use of the product and continue to the end-use product". In their examination of the different kinds of advertising communication, Binet & Field (2009) cited in Oñate et al. (2019, p. 113) presents one, Rational Empathetic (Persuasion), which "seeks to capture attention by drawing the interest of the audience by means of novelties and by adding an emotional element to make the message more memorable". This actually matches with this study because the advertising agents understand that the context under normal circumstances would not be welcoming. This is because they most often come into the buses early in the morning when passengers are tired after travelling a whole night or when the bus is just about to depart and passengers are yet to fully settle. They use emotional elements to lure their way

into the hearts of the tired passengers. By using hedging, advertisers understand that this would avoid confrontation from tired and angry passengers who might hang on any little uncomfortable word to reject their presence.

The language in advertising communication in inter-urban transport buses in Cameroon varies from one linguistic divide to the other. In the French part of Cameroon, the language is French and in the Anglophone part of the country, it is Cameroon Pidgincreole and sometimes a mixture of a few English phrases. Vendors understand the linguistic landscape of Cameroon.

The section that follows presents the theory that this work as adopted.

Theoretical Consideration

Propounded by Hutcheon (2006), adaptation theory is commonly examined from a survival of the fittest perspective because it is the ability of an organism to survive in a new environment. Verschueren (2000, p.55) claims that "using language must consist of the continuous making of linguistic choices", and the utterer makes choices in different levels for the adaptation to the contextual correlates till some satisfied communicative effects are made. It is no doubt that choice-making and adaptation is the key of the communication flow. Since linguistic constraints differ across languages, speakers must learn them for their communication to be effective (Chang et al., 2012, p. 259). This process of learning is adapting to new ways of using language. According to Piaget (2015), an important implication of Piaget's theory is adaptation of instruction to the learner's developmental level. The content of the instruction needs to be consistent with the development level of the learner. Cherry (2014) cited in Piaget (2015) opines that adaptation process is the inborn tendency to adjust more attuned to conditions

imposed by the environment. This is exactly the situation which leads to hedging by vendors in interurban buses in Cameroon. It is the business environment that has imposed the adjustment strategy. Hedge is therefore used as an effective strategy to maintain the social relationship and preserve the face of communicators (Wang, 2010, p. 121). The adaptation theory is very apt for this study.

Methodology

The main objective of this study is to find out if there is effective hedging in advertising communication in inter-urban transport buses as advertiser attempt to shield minors from aspects of their communication or it is only a face-saving strategy. Data for this study was drawn from inter-urban transport vehicles and from the neighbourhoods in Bamenda town. I did recordings of the various adverts from different commercial agents, especially those involved in selling traditional medicines. From the recordings, elements of hedging were taken and tested on the population. A structured interview was conducted to both children and adults. Children between the ages five and 10 and adults from 20 years were targeted. An oral test was administered to 100 children and 100 adults, wherein they were asked to say what they understand from some selected phrases used by commercial agents. The responses were classified according to the various hedging devices before analyzing. The interview guide had proposed responses to the various questions which were not read out to the interviewees. It was only used by the interviewer to match the responses given by respondents. Structured interviews were conducted in different neighbourhoods in Bamenda by both postgraduate and undergraduate students to whom I gave the instruments and guiding instructions. Since this was an interview, all our targeted respondents provided the needed data for this study. In the case

where a respondent was not ready to provide data, he/she was simply replaced by a willing respondent who made the desire criteria.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

From the words used by advertisers, it is noted that they use figures of speech such as hypallage or transferred epithet and metonymy, euphemism, synecdoche and uncertainty.

Vendors' use of Hypallage or Transferred epithet

It is a figure of speech in which the syntactic between two terms is interchanged. This means transferring human qualities to a thing or a thing's qualities to human. In our data, vendors do this when they talk about current seizing not referring to light but to human sexual activity. Equally, when they say *Bamenda get fiva* (Bamenda has fever), it is a human quality transferred to a place.

Table 1: ***Use of Hypallage or transferred epithet by Vendors***

Adults				Children	
Expressions	**responses**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
korent siz (Current seizes)	**correct**	55	55	40	40
	incorrect	45	45	60	60
	Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**
Bamenda get fiva (Bamenda has fever)	**correct**	85	85	100	100
	incorrect	15	15	0	00
	Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**
na yi weist **(**sexual strength)	**correct**	95	95	50	50
	incorrect	5	5	50	50
	Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

From table 1, the expression *koren siz* (current seizes) as in the sentence *Yu wan go tu minit wit yur patna,* ***korent sis*** (As you go fo two minutes with your partner, current seizes) refers to weak

erection during sexual intercourse. Out of the 100 adults interviewed, 55(55%) and 45(45%) gave correct and incorrect responses respectively. As for children, 40(40%) gave the correct option while 60(60%) gave an opinion that corresponded to the incorrect options. The expression *Bamenda get fiva* (Bamenda has fever) as in *ivin as wi don enta Bamenda fain, Bamenda* ***get fiva****. Mek wi kontiniu de prei* (even though we have entered Bamenda safely, Bamenda has fever. Let us continue to pray) is transferring human attribute to a thing, which in this case, contextually refers to war in Bamenda. In the various responses, 85(85%) and 15(15%) adults had correct and incorrect responses respectively. As for children, all the 100(100%) had the correct response. The expression *man pikin na weist*, in the expression *Man pikin* ***na yi waist****, no be noise* (A man is his waist, not noise), which means man is known from his sexual strength or resistance is understood more by adults than children. For adults, 95 (95%) and 5(5%) gave the correct and incorrect options respectively, while 50 (50%) each gave the correct and the incorrect options. The data presented here present something peculiar- in the case of *korent sis*, more adults understand what it means than children, although 40% is not a small percentage to understand what is intended to be hidden, but in the case of *Bamenda get fiva*, all the children got the right answer. This particular expression is surely not meant to hide anything from children than to sound stylish and polite and reduce fear as passengers enter Bamenda, especially those entering after a long time. While this can be considered the biggest surprise in the data, it only reveals that you cannot hide from people what is a common reality to them. It equally reveals that we only think children are ignorant about certain things because we have not interacted with them. This is the case with *man pikin na weist* where as high as 50% of children interviewed understand the expression.

Vendors' use of Metonymy

Metonymy is **a figure of speech in which one objector idea takes the place of another with which it has a close association.** In fact, metonymy means "change of name." As a literary device, it is a way of replacing an object or idea with something related to it. Three expressions in which vendors used metonymy are *no kontakt* (No contact) as in the sentence *Drink African Panacia 7 to 21 deis,* ***no kontakt****, no alcohol* (drink African Panacia for 7 to 21 days, no contact, no alcohol), *woman skin* (female body) as in *No put yur hand fo yur* ***woman skin*** **(**do not put your hand in your female skin) and *Pa Tanto* (Male name) as in *Wen* ***Pa Tanto*** *no de respond, yur woman no fit respekt yu* (if Pa tantoh does not respond, your wife will not respect you). The usage according to commercial agents is not what these names actually mean as indicated in bracket; the names and expressions are replaced with others which have close associations.

Table 2: ***Use of Metonymy by Vendors***

Adults				Children	
Expressions	**responses**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
No kontak (No sex)	**correct**	75	75%	50	50%
	incorrect	25	25%	50	50%
	Total	**100**	**100%**	**100**	**100%**
woman skin (Vagina)	**correct**	85	85%	10	10%
	incorrect	15	15%	90	90%
	Total	**100**	**100%**	**100**	**100%**
Pa Tanto (penis)	**correct**	95	95%	50	50%
	incorrect	5	5%	50	50%
	Total	**100**	**100%**	**100**	**100%**

Table 2 shows that adults generally understand the expressions used by vendors more than children, although the latter also show great understanding in some cases. In the expression *no kontak* (no contact) which refers to no sex, 75 (75%) of adult had it correct while 25(25%) gave the incorrect options. The expression *woman skin* literally means the woman's body, but it is used here to mean vagina. 85 (85%) and 15 (15%) of adult gave the correct and the incorrect options respectively. So many children didn't understand this as only 10 (10%) of them provided the correct option while 90 (90%) gave the incorrect options. In the last expression, Pa Tantoh, which literally refers to the name of a male, is used here to mean penis. More adults again 95 (95%) provided the correction option while only 5 (5%) did not know what Pa Tantoh means. As for children, 50 (50%) understood what it means and the same percentage did not know.

The data for metonymy shows that adults, as rightly judged by commercial vendors, understand the hedged expressions more than children. It is also noted that none of the expressions has a 100% score of correctness, indicating that even adults do not understand all the expressions. The only one with the lowest rate of comprehension is *woman skin* (Vagina) with only 10% of children able to understand. Others with about 50% indicate that a comfortable number of children understand the language commercial vendors in interurban buses do not want them to hear. What this also means is that adults need to be careful when they communicate among children in a language they think is reserved for adults. Children may not react when elders speak because they also want to hedge their feelings and fool the adults into thinking that they don't understand. In most of the cases here, it will not be wrong to say that hedging is "expressing and showing politeness and

modesty" (Taweel et al., 2011, p. 173) not hiding the message from children in this case.

Vendors also use euphemism and synecdoche as an attempt to hide message from children and show politeness and modesty to parents or adults in the buses as seen in the following section.

Vendors' use of euphemism and synecdoche

All languages have polite or euphemistic terms and phrases. Polite usage is used to deal with harsh or vulgar expressive forms. Vulgarisms are culturally defined as unacceptable forms of expression in most circumstances of public discourse, although they are acceptable in many informal settings (Shaw, 1989, p. 76). As for synecdoche, Ghosh (2019, p. 379) defines it as "a change of name, one term being substituted by another, but with this difference, that the substitute must not be an accompaniment of the original thing". Table three presents data on how adults and children make meaning out of euphemism and synecdoche as used by vendors in buses.

Table 3: ***The use of euphemism and synecdoche***

Hedging devices	Adults				Children	
	Expressions	**responses**	**Frequency**	**%**	**Frequency**	**%**
Euphemism	Tu plei (have sex)	**correct**	95	95%	50	50%
		incorrect	5	5%	50	50%
		Total	**100**	**100%**	**100**	**100%**
	technical unemployment (cannot have sex)	**correct**	25	25%	10	10%
		incorrect	75	75%	90	90%
		Total	**100**	**100%**	**100**	**100%**
Synecdoche	*liv smol ston* (excrement)	**correct**	20	20%	50	50%
		incorrect	75	75%	50	50%
		Total	**100**	**100%**	**100**	**100%**

The euphemistic expression to play (have sex) is understood by 95% of adults but not understood by 5%. As high as 50% of children understand the expression *Yu bi addicted tu drog* ***tu plei*** *wit yur patna* (you are addicted to drugs to play with your partner). In yet another euphemistic expression, *teknikal onemploiment* (cannot have sex), which is found in the sentence *Tell mama sei you* ***dei teknikal onemploiment*** *until afta 21 deis* (Tell your wife that you are on a technical unemplyment until after twenty one days), both the adults and the children could not really understand the meaning. The data displayed on table 3 shows that 25(25%) of adults gave the correct option while 75(75%) of adult gave the incorrect options-have no job (35%) and No idea (40%). As for children, 10 (10%) gave the correct option while 90(90%) gave the incorrect option-have no job (80%) and No idea (10%). It should be noted that the other options not found on the table but analysed have simply been merged under correct and incorrect.

One of the biggest surprises in this research is with the expression *liv smol ston* (excrement), which only 20% of adults who are expected to understand actually understood, whereas 50% of children actually understood. In the full expression *Woman yi oun fain plenti pas man pikin yi oun bikos wen yi shidon fo pis, yi go* ***liv smol ston*** *fo de pleis* (a woman's penalty is higher than that of a man because when she sits to urinate, she would leave a small stone (excrete) there), vendors are unaware that euphemism and synecdoche are word-play strategies commonly employed by youths to hide information from adults. The only purpose they serve in this situation is that they are aimed to avoid shock and sound elegant, pleasant, and dignifying or refined (Mbangwana, 2009, p. 137). If children could have such understanding, youths would probably have a 100% comprehension. This simply means the vendors are attempting to hide information where youths get their information.

It is however a good thing that they deem it necessary to sound pleasant to their potential customers. For the euphemistic expression *teknikal onemploiment* (cannot have sex), which both the adults and the children did not understand, it is clear that adults are used to direct language than euphemistic expressions as I have indicated earlier in this section. Since that particular expression has to do with sex, and children are not yet involved in it, the euphemistic expressions for sex are new to them. Youths who are involved in that activity would have done better because this might be one amongst the many expressions they use in concealing their involvement from parents. The last part of this data examines hedging by means of uncertainty.

Falahati (2008, p. 51) says that authors through the use of hedging devices and showing uncertainty, try to show the degree of accuracy of their statement and save face in case of probable falsification of their claim. The use of uncertainty by commercial vendors in buses is certainly also meant for defence if any person reminds them of their force claim. In the statement, *ivin dou wona don taya, mek wona ekskius mi for a* ***few minutes*** (Even though you are tired, spare me a few of your minutes). The question here is, how few are few minutes? Few as used by vendors here simply means indefinite. In this hedging devise, the following options were presented for them to choose the correct one- 1-5 minutes (b) 5-10 minutes (c) 10- 20 minutes (d) indefinite time. The correct option here is indefinite time because vendors, especially those with traditional medicines will not know how long they will stay in the bus. I had the following results for adult and children respectively- 70 (70%) and 50 (50%) for correct option and 30 (30%) and 50 (50%) for incorrect options. What I understand from this is that both children and adults are probably versed with the phrase *few minutes* and they are aware that the minutes are as few as the vendor wants,

not as the passengers in the bus want. Like in the previous hedging devises, every other option that is not correct is placed under incorrect. Figure 1 presents the options of the respondents.

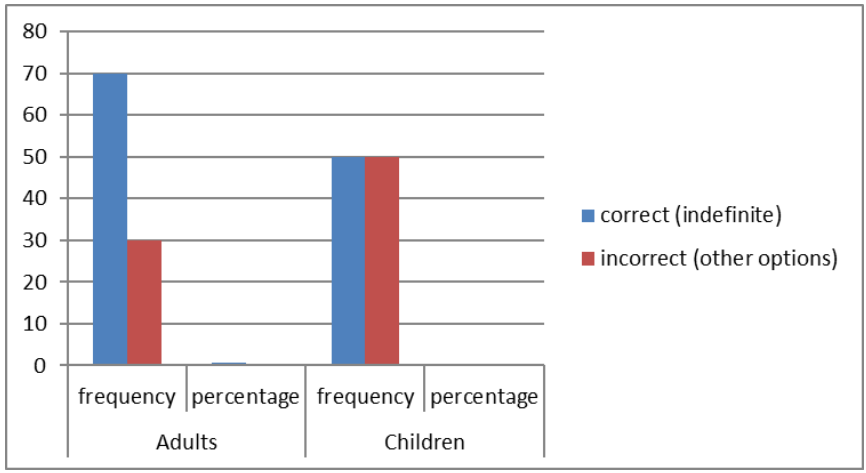


Figure 1: ***Few minutes***

The vendor simply does not want to say how long he/she would stay because his/her stay depends on the response of the passengers towards the product they are advertising. What we should note here is that adults understand the phrase **few minutes** more than children do. The next section examines the success rate of hedging between adults and children in our case study.

Success rate of hedging between adults and children

From the data presented and analysed, a cumulative percentage of the success rate of hedging considering only the level of comprehension shows that, only 63.63% of adults understand expressions they are all expected to understand and as high as 41.81% of children understand expressions they are not meant to understand.

Table 4: ***Cumulative comprehension rate between adults and Children***

respondents	Desired choices	Frequency	Percentage
Adults	expected to be understood	1100	100%
	Actually understood	700	63.63%
Children	Not expected to be understood	1100	100%
	Actually understood	450	41.81%

The eleven expressions used for this study had a total frequency of 1100. Considering that the vendor are using adaptation strategies in order to save face, all 100 adults on the one hand were expected to understand the expressions with a frequency of 1100 (100%) because they are potential customers the vendors were targeting. All the 100 children on the other hand were expected not to understand the hedges with a frequency of 1100 (100%). As recorded on the cumulative table, adult understood only at the rate of 63.63% while children, against expectation understood at the rate of 41.81%. Following the definition of hedging by Yagız & Demir (2014, p. 260) as a "tentative language to avoid any certainty or to mitigate the statements to able to avert possible criticism", it will not be wrong to claim that hedging in Cameroon in interurban transport buses is to mitigate the statements to able to avert possible criticism. This means the intension is not only to completely cut children off communication, but also to appear appealing to their parents.

Summary of the findings

Language scholars should be able to master their environment and know why people do things the way they do, especially when language is at the centre. It is easy to laugh over jokes like those produced by inter-urban transport vendors without noticing that they are actually playing with language to keep their potential customers

awake. It is also important to indicate that the language deployed by these vendors in the anglophone region is Cameroon Pidgincreole (CPc). The reason here, though was not investigated in this study because it has sufficiently been investigated in other studies on CPc, is due to the fact that it is a common lingua franca that cuts across all linguistic divides in Cameroon (Atechi & Fonka, 2007; Ayafor, 1996; Fonka, 2022; Mbangwana, 2004; Ojong Diba, 2021). All the phrases in which hedging devices were embedded were in CPc and from several vendors. It was also observed that some of the phrases were a mixture of English and CPc, indicating the multilingual nature of the environment in which they were found.

The environment in which vendors operate is made of people of different age groups and the same diction cannot be applicable to everyone. The vendors have learnt to adapt in order to be acceptable in their business environment. The theory of adaptation is very apt here as it fosters acceptability.

Some of the hedging devices used by vendors like euphemism turned out to be understood more by children than adults. This shows that in a multilingual and a multicultural environment, there is no monopoly of knowledge as everyone is opened to different sources of empowerment. The fact that children may not react to some of the phrases used by vendors does not mean they have not understood; they know their environment and need to portray a face-saving attitude.

Conclusion

Apart from Ngwobela et al. (2023), I have not seen any other works on hedging on the Cameroon linguistic sphere. There is a vast array of research opportunities on this subject in academics, politics and culture, just to name a few. While interurban transport buses are increasingly becoming commercial centres and vendors are

sometimes received with resistance by passengers, who are customers, the former have learned to use appealing language which at the same time recognises age difference. With the results which show that not all adults understand all the expressions that are required of them and that some children understand expressions that are not meant for them, the question is whether there a need to colour language? This paper is of the opinion that it is necessary for the sake of politeness and face saving, an act which vendors have learnt to do so well. As a socio-pragmatic study, sociolinguistics elements such as age, in this case adult and children, was used and in terms of pragmatics, the different politeness strategies show that hedging is a strategy to maintain the social relationship and preserve the face of communicators.

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JELLiC: Journal of English Language, Literature, and Culture
Volume 7; No. 02, July 2024
ISSN: 2304-6120 (Print) / 2304-6163 (E-Version)
www.cellacameroon.org/publications/jellic

Existential Despair in Martin Mcdonagh's *The Pillowman*

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Abstract
Exploring existential despair in Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman* serves to raise existential questions about human conditions, which include the disappointing and bitter sociopolitical realities of human life. In modern drama, despair is formulated in the philosophy of existentialism; a twentieth century philosophical thought that describes humanity's contemporary existential conditions. Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* is one of the works that highlights that philosophy and can be considered an existential manifesto. As a modern play, McDonagh's *The Pillowman* dramatizes existential despair as one of the sociocultural conditions that characterize life in the modern era. Through dramatic strategies like stage directions, monologues, plot and characterization the playwright exposes the Sisyphean struggle for survival. This paper seeks to explore the existential conditions; especially the existential despair faced by the modern man in Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman.* Thus, this purpose was achieved through an analysis of the existential conditions faced by characters in the play understudy. That analytical study is grounded on the premise that, as a modern play, Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman* showcases existential despair through the presentation of hopelessness, which results from the absurd realities of life. The study attempted to showcase that, as a work of modernism, the play understudy follows the vision of life as a quagmire of despair as described as the theorists of existentialism. Existentialism as a literary tool accomplished two goals, to emphasis on the absurd socio-cultural realities within the play, and the absurdity of life.
Keywords: Existentialism, Despair, Modernism, Modern Drama

Introduction

Existentialism espouses the concept of despair and can be defined as the feelings of anguish, hopelessness and desolation that arise owing to some disappointing phenomena and disillusion. Despair has been conceptualized by various philosophers and scholars, in various perspectives, depending on their different aims. Kierkegaard's *Sickness unto Death*, Jean Paul Sartre's *Existentialism is a Humanism* are some of the books that fully explain the concept. Jean Paul Sartre, in *Existentialism is a Humanism* he explains that:

> As for "despair", the meaning of this expression is extremely simple. It merely means that we limit ourselves to a reliance upon that which is within our wills, or within the sum of the probabilities which render our action feasible. Whenever one wills anything, there are always these elements of probability. (14)

He later asserts that, "Beyond the point at which the possibilities under consideration cease to affect my action, I ought to disinterest myself" (14). These two statements by Sartre qualify despair as the disinterest of man when the results of a situation go beyond the expected probabilities and possibilities. This conceptualization underlies the loss of hope as a result of disappointment.

In the twentieth and twenty-first century, scholars have also conceptualised the idea of despair, to make the concept suit and address modern issues. Indeed, Mary Louisa Lum in *Existential Despair and Moral Decay in Oscar C. Labang's This is Bonamoussadi*, explicitly argues that "Existential despair emanates from frustration which grows as the individual witnesses the disheartening conditions that pervade his socio-political environment" (64). This conceptualization underscores two main

aspects that make up existential despair: the absurd life, which is referred to as "the disheartening conditions" (64); and disillusionment, which is qualified here as "frustration" (64). That disillusionment leads to the establishment of loss of hope which is a manifestation of existential despair.

From these conceptualizations, the common idea that is showcased is the loss of hope, which derives from the absurd life, and at the same time represents a manifestation of despair. Thus, analysing *The Pillowman*, this essay follows that conceptual framework. Pertaining to the play itself, McDonagh's *The Pillowman* has been studied by previous critics, using existentialist lenses.

Ajda Baştan**,** in *Kristevan Intertextuality between Waiting for Godot and The Pillowman* explains that from the structure of the two plays, showcase existential questions. The author compares the life of Vladimir and Estragon with that of Katurian and is backward brother, highlighting the disappointing and despairing conditions in which they live. That article focuses on the intertextual presentation of the common existential features shared by the two plays. This endeavour lays emphasis on the illustration of existential despair in Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman*.

Sobia Kiran, in *Artistic Portrayal of Death as a Refuge from Morbidity: The Pillowman by Martin McDonagh and 4.48 by Sarah Kane*, compares the existential realities faced by characters in the two plays, in relation to death. Talking about the characters in the two plays, the Sobia states that:

> The bitterness of their existential experience has made them sadist and masochist but with a twist that death does not appear as a cruel act of violence rather it emerges as a shelter and refuge from the constant misery of life. (101)

Through this statement, the author underlies that both the characters in Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman* and those in *4.48 Psychosis* die in order to escape from the horrible existential conditions of their respective lives. Through the use of an existentialist framework, Kiran illustrates the intertextual relationships of the two texts. Yet, this essay, also using an existential framework, focuses of the issue of despair, illustrating its main aspects, as outlined by Albert Camus: absurdity and the loss of hope, which make up the source and manifestation of existential despair, respectively.

Absurdity of Existence as the Source of Existential Despair

In *The Myth of Sisyphus,* Albert Camus defines the concept of absurdity as: the "confrontation of this irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart" (14). This assertion puts the basis of the understanding of absurdity. In this excerpt, Camus insinuates that absurdity gets born from the clash between the real life conditions of the world, which are essentially irrational; and the desire of humans to make life meaningful. Camus aligns absurdity with the conditions of man in the world. He states that "the world is absurd" (14). The world being the embodiment of absurdity implies that, the life conditions proposed by the world is essentially irrational. Following that same logic, Camus revises his previous conceptualization of the absurdity, insisting on another detail. He defines absurdity, laying an emphasis on the man, not only on the irrational sociocultural and political circumstances of the world. He explains that:

> This world in itself is not reasonable, that is all that can be said" (14). In this statement, he establishes that the world does not make up the whole source of absurdity. However, Camus adds that: "The absurd depends as much on man as on the world. For the

> moment it is all that links them together. It binds them one to the other as only hatred can weld two creatures together (14).

This assertion implies that, both man and the conditions of the world create absurdity. Indeed, man has desires and objectives, which unfortunately cannot be achieved owing to the irrationality of the world. Therefore, existence remains meaningless: this is absurdity.

Through the elements of drama such as dialogues, characterization, plot and stage directions, Martin McDonagh, portraying existential despair, presents the characters' life as absurd. That absurd life is the source of loss of hope, and therefore the source of despair. Indeed, existence in *The Pillowman*, is as Basma Ali outlined in *Violence in Martin McDonagh's The Pillowman*: "a physical and biological warfare" (3). This comment by Ali demonstrates the extent of absurdity of existence in *The Pillowman*. That Absurd life in which existential despair has its roots, is seen through various aspects including: the gruesomeness of life, the purposeless of existence, and the strangely monotonous nature of life.

The gruesomeness of life, as one of the absurd realities in *The Pillowman,* orchestrates despair in the minds of characters. The most striking case that illustrates that gruesomeness is the "Tale of The Three Gibbets Crossroad". This is a frame narration written by Katurian the protagonist of the *The Pillowman*. Indeed, in the frame narration, Katurian tells the story of a man who is killed without knowing the reason why he is executed. The man wakes up, sentenced in a gibbet, along with three fellow prisoners who are rapist and murderer, respectively. While the other prisoners (rapist and murderer) end up being preyed upon, given food and removed from their gibbets (14), the man ends up being shot to death without being told why he is killed. The story insists that "As our Man is

dying, he screams out 'just tell me what I have done!'. The last words our Man ever says are 'we I go to hell?' And the last sound he ever hears is the highwayman quietly laughing" (14-15). This frame story stands for a metaphor of the gruesomeness of existence. Through this tale, existence is described as an arena of unfairness and injustice, as "our man" is killed for an unknown reason, then mocked by his killer, while the other prisoners are favoured. Here, existence is presented as what Lum, in *Nkengasong and O'casey: An Existentialist Analysis of the Call of Blood and Juno and the Paycock*, called "a quagmire in which there is no villain… as all efforts results in anguish" (25). This frame narration showcases the play as the depiction of absurdity, which in turn results in existential despair. "Our Man" as the prototype of the modern man is entrapped in an absurd existence, wherein there is no solution to the gruesome issues that make life bleak. Katurian, as the author or storyteller, explains that this story is "supposed to be just a puzzle without a solution" (14). The story thus represents a horrible circumstance that has no way out.

The purposelessness of life is another element that makes up the absurdity of existence in *The Pillowman*, resulting in existential despair. Indeed, in Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman*, existence is seen as purposeless, as *terra nullius* and meaningless; yet the quest for a purpose-based existence and a meaningful life leads to horror and bleakness. Further, the purposelessness of existence is showcased in the play through the frame story entitled "The Tale of the on the Town on a River". The tale describes the pitiful and miserable life of Boy, a little isolated child whose life is perceived as senseless and purposeless. However, the very first day he attempts to give some meaning to his existence, generously offering a sandwich to an unknown man, he gets his toes cut off. Boy "did not get along with the other children of the town. They picked on and

bullied him because he was poor, and his parents were drunkards, and his clothes were rags, and he walked around barefoot" (16). Boy's life is characterized by isolation, bulling, poverty and misery… yet Boy is a very kind child. However, looking forward to asserting himself as a "social animal" for the sake of social integration, Boy sees his toes getting cut off. He loses his toes in an attempt to socialize with the traveller. The cutting off of those toes is seen as a reward for Boy's kindness and the result of his quest for social integration.

The absurdity that orchestrates despair in *The Pillowman* is also seen through the strangely monotonous nature of life; especially the life of Katurian and his "backward" brother, Michal. Indeed, the plot used by McDonagh here, is a series of a repetition of gruesome events. The lives of Katurian and his brother are cyclical, monotonous and iterative series of strange phenomena. Their adulthood seems to be the repetition of their childhood. In their childhood, the two characters go through harshness in different ways, and in their adulthood, that harshness comes back in the same manner and in the same form: the two brothers being locked up in two different and opposing rooms, one being tortured and the other suffering from the screams of the tortured one. "The Writer and the Writer's Brother", a frame play written by Katurian displays the childhood of the Katurian and Michal. Describing that horrible childhood, the stage direction explains that: "In the nightmare semi-dark of the adjoining room, it appears for a second as if a child of eight strapped to the bed is being tortured with drills and sparks" (23). In that adjoining room indeed, Michal was being tortured by his parents. The screams produced by the tortured Michal make Katurian suffer mentally to the extent of making him lose his talent for writing romance and uplifting works. These screams indeed turned him into a writer of gruesome stories. The frame play

explains that: Katurian's stories "got darker and darker due to the constant sound of child torture as is often the case" (23). In *Kristevan intertextuality Between Waiting for Godot and*

The Pillowman, Adja Bastan, comparing the elements of absurdity in *The Pillowman* and *Waiting for Godot*, calls that ordeal as a nightmare. The author, explaining the nightmare, declares that:

> Nightmares are also mentioned in The Pillowman, when on the night of his seventh birthday, Katurian begins having scary dreams. In the next room at home, frightening noises, squeaks, punches, and a child's crying can be heard. When Katurian asks his parents what those noises are, his mother comforts him and calms him down just like Vladimir did in the other play. (527)

This explanation highlights both the torture of Michal by his parents and the disturbing of Katurian by the child torture noises. This "nightmare" as termed by Bastan does not stop in the childhood of Katurian and his backward brother. Instead, it reappears in their adulthood, making their life strangely monotonous and cyclical, and therefore absurd.

In their adulthood, the same gruesome issues are repeated as disclosed through the first stage direction in Act 2: "A cell. Michal sitting on a wooden chair, tapping his thighs, listening to the intermittent screams of his brother Katurian, being tortured a room away. A blanket on a thin mattress and a pillow lies a few yards away" (26). Here, the adult Katurian and Michal are once more locked up in two different rooms though there is a reversal. Katurian screams in one of the rooms from being tortured; and his brother suffers from the sounds of those screams. This reversal brings to mind the fortunes of Lucky and Pozzo in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. The screams are so deafening that he cannot concentrate on

the recounting of the frame story, "The Little Green Pig". This double appearance of the same event illustrates the monotonous nature of life in the play, indicating the absurdity of existence. It alludes to the strangely cyclical life that Beckett depicts in his *Waiting for Godot*; wherein the events that Didi and Gogo witnessed in the preceding day come back to the following day, in such a way that the characters can't decide whether the events happened on that day or on the day before. *The Pillowman* describes this phenomenon, to illustrate absurdity in his play. Thus, from the realization of that absurd life, the characters get haunted by disillusionment, losing hope and therefore entering in the stage of existential despair.

Existential despair also arises from the absurd relationship between parents and children. Indeed, children are meant to be loved and cared for. However, Katurian, expecting love and kindness from his parents, comes to realize that his father and mother are cruel. This condition in which children are being hated and oppressed by their parents is part of what Albert Camus called in *The Myth of Sysiphus*: the "irrationals" (14) of the world, which he refers to as the absurd conditions of the world. That absurd relationship is specifically characterized by torture. Michal is tortured by his parents who should instead love him. In a conversion with Ariel, Katurian reveals that absurd condition and relationship that they (Katurian and his brother) have with their parents; especially he reveals how many times Michal had been tortured:

> **ARIEL**: Oh. (Pause.) How old was he? When they started.
> **KATURIAN**: He was eight. I was seven.
> **ARIEL**: How long did it go on for?
> **KATURIAN**: Seven years.
> **ARIEL**: And you heard it all those years?

> **KATURIAN**: I didn't know exactly what it was, till the end, but yes. (52)

This excerpt justifies the irrational or absurd relationship between Katurian, his brother and their parents. Vera Shamina, in *Scary Tales of Martin McDonagh: The Beauty Queen of Leenane, A Skull in Connemara, the Lonesome West, The Pillowman*, describes that absurd relation between Katurian, his brother and their parents negatively affects the writing and attitude of Katurian; and the life of Michal. Shamina explains that:

> At the age of 14, he won the first prize in a literary competition but soon after learned that his parents had been tormenting his older brother in a secret room for all these years: as a result of this experiment, the older brother became mentally retarded. Katurian killed his parents and started taking caring of his brother. (45)

This excerpt describes the absurd conditions in which Katurian and his brother lived as children of oppressive parents. This absurd relationship and interaction between the writer, the writer's brother and their parents cause Katurian's despair. Katurian gets disillusioned and despaired after experiencing absurd and irrational relationship. The absurd relationship between parents and children does not limit to the family of Katurian. In *The Lipple Applemen* and *The Little Jesus*, children are being beaten up and abandoned respectively.

Summing up, this section presents and justifies the absurdity in which characters in *The Pillowman* live. As explained by Camus, absurdity here comes from the confrontation of the desires of those characters and the irrational conditions of the world in which they live. These absurd conditions lead to the rising of the feeling of

hopelessness, which appears as the manifestation of existential despair.

Hopelessness as the Manifestation of Existential Despair

In *The Sickness unto Death,* the concept of despair is defined by Soren Kierkegaard as follows: "Despair is the disrelationship in a relation which relates itself to itself" (21). This statement conveys that, despair is not the suffering of the self or the human; but the misrelation, or the lack of logic in human, which comes about the disillusioning conditions of the world. Indeed, despair is expressed when one's hope has been altered by the conditions I which one lives. Lum summarizes and reframes Kierkegaard's definition of despair; explaining that, when existence becomes so absurd owing to the "disheartening conditions", hopelessness is the very feeling that get incited in man. This is a manifestation of despair. In Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman*, the feeling of hopelessness that showcases the expression of despair in the minds of characters, is seen in various levels: The Pillowman (the protagonist of "The Pillowman", a frame story by Katurian) as the image of hopelessness; the disillusionment and hopelessness of Katurian; then the expression of hopelessness by Katurian in regard to the afterlife.

The Pillowman is seen as the image of hopelessness. Katurian the protagonist, as a storyteller, produces a story entitled "The Pillowman", in which there is a character named The Pillowman. He is a man made up of pillows. That Pillow-made man is seen in the play as an image of hopelessness, because of the nature of his job. His job consists of getting children "kill themselves and so avoid the years of pain that would just end up in the same place for them anyway" (31). This suggests that The Pillowman, upon the realization of the absurd nature of life, totally loses hope, and starts

preaching (to children) hopelessness, and death as a way out to avoid absurd life. The Pillowman's argument is that life is essentially horrible and there will be nothing better conditions in the future, therefore it is not worth living. The philosophy of The Pillowman is based on the total loss of hope, he negates any upcoming happy condition. Preaching hopelessness to young children, the Pillowman allegorically stands for the image, the embodiment and the representation of hopelessness. This embodiment of the loss of hope is a striking illustration of the manifestation of despair in the play. The preaching of death as a way out to avoid absurd life alludes to Albert Camus's concept of suicide. In *The Myth of Sisyphus,* Camus develops a sub section titled "Absurdity and Suicide" wherein he states that he explains the "relationship between the absurd and suicide, the exact degree to which suicide is a solution to the absurd" (6). Camus explains that Suicide is directly linked to absurdity because; the absurd conditions in which humans live actually lead humans to kill themselves in order to avoid further hardships or further troubles. He states that: "it often happens that those who commit suicide were assured of the meaning of life" (6). This statement entails that, initially, humans claim and expect to have a peaceful and enjoyable life, until they notice the contrary. That contrary is simply the advent of unexpected disappointing and absurd realities. Upon the facing of these unexpected disheartening conditions, humans, who were assured of a peaceful life, definitely commit suicide in order to get rid of the hardships of the world. This is the lecture of the Pillowman to the town's children.

The Pillowman convinces many of the town's children to commit suicide. One of such children is the Pillowboy, whom the Pillowman convinces him to commit suicide, after explaining and preaching the hopelessness of life to him. The boy in compliance, "poured the can of petrol all over himself" (33), then "he struck a

match and the Pillowman sat there watching him burn" (33). So, from the instruction of the Pillowman, the boy burns himself to escape from the existential drama of pain called life. Although sad, the job of The Pillowman is seen as an essential service from the perspective of existential despair. Though Camus insights that suicide is cowardice, the morbid reality of the adult lives of the children who escaped suicide indicates that one cannot escape hopelessness. Unfortunately, there is a downturn because, "whenever the Pillowman was unsuccessful in his work, a little child would have a horrific life, grow into an adult and who'd also have a horrific life and then die horrifically" (32). This is a clear indication that the loss of hope by The Pillowman is not random Actually there is no hope, because the children who give themselves a chance to keep existing, hoping for a better future never see anything getting better. Instead, those children have a very horrible life and then end up dying very horribly.

Besides the job of The Pillowman, which conveys a sense of total hopelessness, other facts showcase existential despair in the play. Indeed, Katurian also expresses the feeling of hopelessness, and just like The Pillowman, he preaches that hopelessness to his backward brother, Michal. Katurian, owing to the disheartening conditions and absurd realities of his existence, get disillusioned and ends up getting the feeling of hopelessness. From his personal experience, as a writer, he acknowledges that nothing ends happily in real life. Indeed, as a victim of a series of horrors, he teaches his brother: "There is no happy endings in real life" (41). Indeed, Katurian has totally lost hope for the existence of happiness in life. For him, nothing in real life ends happily. This is a declaration that is informed with hopelessness. Thus, just like The Pillowman, Katurian believes that existence is essentially a series of sad and

horrible events and phenomena; and nothing will ever get better in the future. Despair is thus seen through the words of Katurian.

The hopelessness of Katurian as his expression of existential despair, goes beyond the real world. Indeed, in his despair, Katurian goes further, claiming that, even in the afterlife, nothing better will occur. Rather, the afterlife, will be as horrible as, or even more horrible than the life they are living. Michal thinks, in the afterlife, "at least we will be together in heaven, whatever happens. And hang out with God and that. Have races" (39). Katurian extinguishes Michal's hope explaining him that, his afterlife will be hell-like. Katurian asks his brother: "Do you want to know where you are going to, when you die?" (39). He then explains:

> You are going to a little room in a little house in a little forest, and for the rest of all your time you are going to be looked after not by me, but by a person called Mum and a person called Dad. And they are gonna look after you in the same way they always looked after you, except this time, I'm not gonna be around to rescue you. (39-40)

Indeed, Katurian lets his brother understand that, dying does not mean the end of suffering. He insists that the same horrors that happened in childhood which were repeated in adulthood will obviously come back in the afterlife, and in a worse manner. This may probably be the highest expression of despair. It is a clear indication that the characters in *The Pillowman*, owing to their absurd life full of disheartening conditions, end up being in despair.

In exploring hopelessness as a manifestation of despair, one notices the lack of hope expressed by Katurian to succeed in changing society through his artistic creations. For theorists such as Vladimir Propp and Viktor Shklovsky, artistic creation is mainly made up of two parts: the fabula, which is the straight forward

manner of telling as story; and the syuzhet, which is the way in which the fabula is told. Shklovsky details these concepts in *Art and Techniques*. In *Steps Towards a Formal Ontology of Narratives Based on Narratology*, Valentina Bartalesi, Carlo Meghini and Daniele Metilli explain these concepts from the perspective of Viktor Shklovsky: "Russian formalist distinguishes between fabula, defined as a series of events taking place at a certain time at a specific location, and a syuzhet, which is the particular way the story gets narrated" (2-3). The fabula is the message of a narrative. Thus, it includes the social function of literature, allowing literary texts to teach moral and intellectual values. The outlining of a good fabula is thus the way in which a writer transforms his society. However, in *The Pillowman*, Katurian, as a writer, does not hope for the transformation of his society through his artistic productions. He believes that society is absurd and irrational, and that "there are no happy endings in real life" (41), and there will possibly be no happy endings. Therefore, he crafts gruesome stories. These stories do not improve the perception and the conditions of life in that society; but they instead contribute to spreading of darkness and horrors in society. Indeed, Katurian is disillusioned by the absurdity of his existence and that of his brother. He expresses the feeling of hopelessness, believing that, since "there are no happy endings in real life", there is no use writing edifying stories; instead, he should write the gruesome ones that depict the horrors of life. The frame play "The Writer and the Writer's Brother" indicates that, before being disillusioned about the realities of life, Katurian was a writer of romantic stories. These were meant to bring social improvement in the community, teaching love and romance. Yet, after understanding that existence essentially includes horrors such as child abuse and torture, "his stories got darker and darker and darker." (23). The stories getting darker simply implies that Katurian

has lost hope for the change of society. Therefore, he starts producing gruesome fabulas. The feeling of hopelessness goes to the extent of Katurian believing that he cannot help his own brother who is being tortured by their parents, as dramatized in "The Writer and the Writer's Brother". All these feelings of hopelessness are the manifestation of despair. Indeed, Katurian understands that existence is essentially gruesome and there will be no improvement.

Conclusion

Overall, despair, as one of the most striking concepts in existentialism, can be read in many modern plays, especially in Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman*. This endeavour particularly focused on the analysis and textual illustration of the concept of existential despair in Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman*. As a broad concept in the field of existentialism, the concept of despair has been defined and conceptualized in various ways. The various conceptualizations led to the formulation of definition that shaped the framework of this study. Thus, following the above-elaborated existential analysis, it is clear that from the frame plays and frame narrations of the play, the actions and reactions of characters, Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman* can be seen as a play reveals existential despair. This finding aligns with the aforementioned hypothesis that, as a modern play, Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman* showcases existential despair through the presentation of hopelessness, which results from the absurd realities of life

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JELLiC: Journal of English Language, Literature, and Culture
Volume 7; No. 02, July 2024
ISSN: 2304-6120 (Print) / 2304-6163 (E-Version)
www.cellacameroon.org/publications/jellic

Power Dynamics: A Feminist Reading of Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*

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Abstract

This paper titled "Power Dynamics: A feminist Reading of Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*" explores the oppressive nature of socio-cultural roles, Language and Power dynamics aimed at marginalizing women. Using the theory of feminism and post colonialism this paper explores aspects of Power from Kate Millets "Sexual Politics" to debunk the power structure put in place by the patriarchal society and the concept of Subalternity by Spivak to discuss the double marginalization of Ali's protagonist as well as the role of multiculturalism in the emancipation of women. The use of language and repressive structures stands as a different gender index used by patriarchy to enforce unequal power structures in heterosexual relations. While other critics have looked into female subjectivity in Ali' *Brick Lane,* this research investigates power dynamics from a multicultural standpoint through diasporic experiences of two Bangladeshi sisters. Ali laments on the power structure in heterosexual relationships within the traditional Bangladeshi culture that oppresses and abuses women. It also explores Ali's act of emancipation through the representation of women's self-assertion; if oppressed women understand that the basis with which they are oppressed are not natural but constructed and that power is not gendered, the power women will be able to wield because of what lies "within them" will free them from the shackles of patriarchy.

Key Words: Power Dynamics, Patriarchy, Emancipation, Self-assertion, Feminism

Introduction

The discourse on Gender norms and cultural bias has been a prevailing topic in the literary milieu for generations. The society is male dominated which for Millet is an ancient and universal scheme that prevails in the area of sex. Men have established dominance over women as a result of patriarchal social constructs which they consider to be their birthright. Many Radical feminists have focused on exposing and dismantling this oppressive nature of socio-cultural roles, Language and Power dynamics aimed at marginalizing women evident in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane.* Ali' *Brick Lane* investigates power dynamics from a multicultural standpoint through diasporic experiences of two Bangladeshi sisters. She laments on the power structure in heterosexual relationships within the traditional Bangladeshi culture that oppresses and abuses women. Kate Millet (1970) describes the relationship between sexes as a political relationship characterized by "dominance and subordination" (25). This political structure identifies men with dominance and power while the woman is associated with weakness and subordination thus giving men the power to rule over women. For decades, the power relationship between men and women is considered as the dominant and the dominated which has remained the statuesque. Millet in her book "Sexual Politics" states that, "perhaps patriarchy's greatest psychological weapon is simply its universality and longevity… Patriarchy has still more tenacious or powerful hold through its successful habit of passing itself off as nature" (p58). She critics this traditional gender norms by stating that the society is embedded with patriarchal power structures that purposefully limit female autonomy and agency there by reinforcing male dominance. This research titled "Power Dynamics, a feminist reading of Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* will be divided into three subsections*:* language as a tool of marginalization, Systemic

Oppression and Self Assertion; multiculturalism as a tool of liberation aimed at exposing the repressive structures of patriarchal Bangladeshi culture as an indexes of female oppression and also unveil the extent to which multiculturalism contributes to women's emancipation experience. The fundamental questions that guides the analysis of this research is; how are women rendered powerless in Ali's *Brick Lane?* and how does multiculturalism contribute in the quest for freedom and emancipation of women in the text under study.

The fight for women's rights has been a continuous historical process since the proto-feminist Mary Wollstonescraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) reiterating the need for the establishment of women's rights. Millet (1970) calls Wollstoncraft's Vindication the first document asserting the full humanity of women and insisting upon its recognition. Simone de Beauvoir's path breaking work, *The Second Sex* (1949), equally represented a landmark that spurred the feminist movement. The ideas postulated by these authors ushered in the multiple feminist waves which have enabled significant rights for women globally. Monica Ali's novel has been reviewed differently by other literary scholars in terms of themes and Narrative techniques.

Noemi Pereira Ares (2012) in "The East looks at the west, The woman looks at the man: A study of the gaze in *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali" uses the theory of narratology with focus on the concept of focalization by Genette to examine the subversive implications of the narratological technique of focalization in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane.* Relying on postcolonial and gender studies, the paper argues that in *Brick Lane*, Ali uses focalization to subvert the prevailing centrality of both the white western gaze — the "imperial gaze" as defined by Kaplan (1997(p)2) and the male gaze.

Furthermore, Yousef Tawfiq (2019) focuses on "Cultural Identity in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*: A Bhabhian Perspective" and explores the question of identity by making specific references to Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity, third space, mimicry and ambivalence. By looking at the way the major characters struggle to realize their sense of cultural identity in their own different ways.

Hassiba, Bekheboucha (2016) thinks in the same light as Yousef in " Cultural Clash and identity Remapping in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane"* by analyzing the extent to which cultural clash can change the lives of immigrants who long for their roots and try to cope with the new life style at the same time. Hassiba opines that immigration creates a difference in identity that exists between the first and second generation which may lead to the creation of a whole new identity. The phenomenon of Diaspora in the postmodern century is affecting not only the life of Diaspora who struggle to accommodate into the fabric of host society but also the broader notion of identity.

The concept of power is investigated in both Meziani Ahlam's thesis entitled "Silence and the Female Migrant Identity in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*" (2017) and Hadia khan's paper "Silence and Resistance: A feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of the Female Subaltern in South Asian Fiction" (2019). They investigate the impact of the notion of silence on the female migrant identity in the light of Postcolonial Feminism with a focus on exploring the elements of female resistance that enhance women's journey out of male dominance. It is worthy to note that while Ahlam investigates silence in two forms, that is, as both a means of oppression from men and as a strategic behavior of power by women, Hadia uses silence only in the light of oppression. However, the ongoing research takes a trajectory away from the two by taking into account language as a linguistic index of gender.

Arefin Tasnim in "The Postcolonial Feminist Struggle of Nazneen in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*: An Intersectional Study" (2022) and Pratim in his paper "Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*: A Feminist Perspective" (2015) read *Brick Lane* in the light of oppression. They identify that in *Brick Lane*, Monica Ali deals with women's situation in an immigrant society and observe Nazneen's life and her condition in a male-dominated world and at the end, Nazneen liberates herself in a westernized setting full of opportunity. They differ in that while Tasnim shows Nazneen's oppression through intersectionality or the interwoven nature of systems of oppression like sexism, race and class, Pratim treats oppression only as patriarchy induced. The present research departs from these two by virtue of its use of language especially the tall tale as a strategy of enhancing gender construction and power.

Despite the fact that other critics have analyzed the novel from the cultural and identity point of view, this research differs in that it centers on Language as the major tool enhancing Power dynamics that causes female oppression and Multiculturalism as the tool for inclusion in Ali's *Brick Lane*.

Language as a Power Index

Language is the foundation of human communication and interactions. Abrams in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (1999) defines literary language as "A conspicuous departure from what competent users of a language apprehend as the standard meaning of the words, or else the standard order of words, in order to achieve some special meaning or effect" (96). This affirms the idea that the meaning of particular words is made standard by the users of that language. Thus language, can be constructed to suit the needs of a particular group of people. According to Angela Carter *(*1998), *Shaking a Leg: Collected Writings* Language is power, life and the instrument of

culture, domination and liberation. Language can therefore shape perceptions, control narratives and influence the social, political and cultural dynamics of life which some feminist have been debating on. In this light it is evident to acknowledge that language in literature is manipulated by patriarchal institutions like, culture, race and gender norms to oppress women. Since language is the medium for expressing culture, literature becomes a reflection of culture. Thus, Ali uses literature as a medium to criticize gender and cultural oppression of women by the use of media elements like the tall tale which is a symbolic representation that will go a long way to legitimize gender and power.

A tall tale is an oral form of entertainment that may sound true but is characterized by lots of exaggeration and actions that are hard to believe. Ali's tall tale in *Brick Lane* represents the psychology that influence the behavioral patterns of the characters involved in heterosexual relations. The tale entitled "How You Were Left to Your Own Fate" introduced by the oldest character Banesa reflects power imbalance in a patriarchal set-up and explains why things happen the way they do. It provides a rationale for the observance of socio-cultural roles and establishes the basis for sanctioning those who do not adhere to the roles by which they ought to conduct themselves.

"How You Were Left to Your Own Fate" is a tale that predates the female protagonist Nazneen. It is announced by the oldest character Banesa who is present at the birth of the protagonist. In the novel, the tale (though older than Nazneen) is captured through Nazneen's dream but with characters that she can identify. The tale shows the love relationship between Mumtaz and her mynah bird. After some years of shared love and inseparability between them, the bird changes and begins to exercise disheartening behaviors to Mumtaz. It begins to go out at will and return at will

irrespective of the kind and affectionate treatment received from Mumtaz who always stay home. The bird receives good treatment but returns the treatment with acts of hate such that Mumtaz even tags the bird "bad" and tells it to go away because her love cannot be reciprocated. Having caused pain to Mumtaz, the bird makes her laugh to forget her pain. She comes to a collective understanding and submits that the bird can only fly away or return to her depending on the will of God which is called fate. In the end, however, the bird and Mumtaz sort things out and live in harmony such that the bird never departs again.

In a gender-oriented perspective, language is used discriminatorily in the tale thereby drawing attention to power disequilibrium between the sexes (Ochieng, 2012). The principal characters in the tale (Mumtaz and the mynah bird) replicates the association between a man and a woman in a power relationship. It is said that when the bird chuckles it is similar to Abba's laugh: "The bird...had a new laugh, a chuckle at the back of its throat, and when Abba laughed as well, they sounded like brothers" (218). Ali's association of the bird's laugh to that of Abba in the tale of fate is as a result of symbolism. She likens Abba's laugh to that of the bird in order to show that the bird is a typology of Abba (a man). Nazneen makes this even clearer when she likens the bird and man in her statement: "Giving her love to a bird. Depending on a man like that" (218). In the same light, the bird's consistent flying away symbolically points to the outdoor, dominating and sexual flirtatious role that men exercise and women are forced to accept. According to Millet "sex is known to be unclean, sinful and debilitating when it pertains to the female, but the male identity is preserved as human, rather than a sexual one" (50). The idea of the bird flying in and out at will signifies the man's ability to what he wants. That is why even Amma laments that: "waste your love on a bird, but it cannot love

you back. It will fly away" (217). On the contrary, Mumtaz is a microcosm of womanhood in a world of patriarchy. She is that perfect example of a domestic woman who keeps on bearing every torment from a man because of cultural deception and ignorance on her part. No doubt despite the bird's behavior: "Mumtaz does not seem to know how terrible it is. She sang to the bird and the bird made her laugh" (218). This is a clear-cut portrayal of the patriarchal ideology at work because the bird (man) hurts Mumtaz (the woman) and then turns around to make her laugh to forget her pain. The bird's consistent flying away irrespective of the degree of feeding and care that Mumtaz gives the bird reminds Amma to submit that the love shown the bird (which is a prototype of man) cannot be reciprocated. The nature of this tale indexes gender and conforms with the view of Dale Spender in *Man Made Language* (1980) wherein she notes that language is not a neutral medium but an instrument through which patriarchy finds expression. From a gender view point, the degree of unconditional care from Mumtaz irrespective of the degree of the bird's constant flying away from her is a metaphorical representation of the woman in her oppressed and caring receptive role in a world ruled by man. For example, Abba and Amina's husband leave home at will and return at will as opposed to the consistent hearty welcome always given them by their wives. Equally important is the idea that the bird's act of flying away is ordained by God which implies that Mumtaz must not complain because complaining means complaining against God. Men become a trap laid by God to test women's obedience. Hence, in a metaphorical sense, the tale establishes the phenomenon that a woman is to bear all the actions of a man because that which the man does to a woman is naturally correct and any resistance against man by woman is resistance against nature and one's destiny. This destiny of submitting to men is called "fate" in the novel. This fate

principle is transfered from the oldest character Banesa through Amma and to Amma's daughter through socialization. Amma becomes Nazneen's model and so even when Nazneen is exposed to a new culture in the metropolis, Amma appears severally in the figment of Nazneen's imaginations to reinforce this doctrine of fate. One of such instances is when she dreams a horrifying dream of Amma holding the hem of her night dress telling her that life is a test for every woman and that she has come to teach her: "how to pass the test" (322).

In another instance, Amma tells Nazneen that if God wants them (women) to ask questions surrounding their oppression, he God, would have made them men. As Millet states "Patriarchy has God on its side" (51), meaning only men have a voice as opposed to women who are voiceless. This respect for tradition resulting from a constructed tale explains why Hasina's irresponsible escape from her duty and tradition is presented as if her father lost a daughter: "…you would not know he had lost a daughter" (16). The tale puts the woman's passive behavior in constant check. Ali's use of a tale as a language ornament embroiders *Brick Lane* by shaping the novel to perfectly situate the woman as the oppressed minority. Female oppression becomes a "game" played by men. This is substantiated by Grindy (2011) who in quoting Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* holds that women's physical difference from men is the only difference and so patriarchs devise constructs (example, through tale) to oppress women "It comes from playing man's game to say that the woman is essentially different from the man. There exists a biological difference, but this difference is not the foundation for the sociological difference" (343). This implies that the pillars of male-female difference are far beyond biology and is therefore more grounded in social constructs. Thanks to the use of tales as a strategy, these constructs are designed by patriarchs to favor men at

the disadvantage of women. However, just as the tale of fate is told from one generation to another, behavioral patterns of men and women are laid such that from infancy, children tend to associate themselves with particular roles in daily live as they socialize. Alami in "Approaches to Gender Studies" (2016) affirms: "Gender creeps into our day-to-day life so smoothly that we take it for granted and accept it as a natural part of our lives" (1).

The use of tales in transmitting gender content and manipulative power pervades many literary texts. Achebe like Ali represents power disequilibrium between sexes using the tale about the Tortoise and the Birds as a gender index. In the tale, all the birds are invited to a great feast in the sky and because the Tortoise is aware of this meeting, convinces the invited birds to lend him some feathers to enable him fly with them to the feast in the sky. Having been deceived by the Tortoise sweet tongue, they lend him their feathers and go as far as making the Tortoise their leader and spokesman. Before the Journey, the Tortoise convinces the birds to assume names and he adopts the names "All of You" (88). So while in the feast, when any variety of food is served, the Tortoise asks for whom it is served. In reply, the answer is always "For all of You". This wisdom permits the Tortoise to enjoy all the best part of the meals leaving the remains for the rest of the birds. This manifestation of greed angers the birds who withdraw their feathers leaving him upset in the sky. Having sent the parrot to tell the Tortoise's wife to gather many soft things and put on the compound so that he can jump on it unhurt, the parrot upon arrival rather reverses the message causing the Tortoise's wife to put hard objects. Since the Tortoise cannot see from such a height, he jumps and breaks his back into pieces. Its shell is only put together by the strongest medicine man, although the cracked nature of its shell remains unrepaired. The Tortoise is a representation of man while

the birds that are said to have painted their bodies with red cam wood and with beautiful patterns on them represent women. In this wise, man's wisdom employed in the manipulation of women is seen through the intelligence of the Tortoise. He is described as "sweet tongued" (88). On the contrary, the woman's mediocrity and oppression is seen through the Tortoise's (man's) ability to manipulate the birds and enjoy all the variety of meals. The tale therefore becomes a language index used by patriarchs as a means of subjugating women and appropriating customs to associate superior roles for men and inferior roles for females.

Through language, women's powerlessness and men's power is legitimized because language is not neutral. It is not merely a vehicle which carries ideas. It is itself a shaper of ideas and is programmed for mental activity which finds expression in physical action (Whorf, qtd. in Spender 1980).

Systemic Oppression

Women in *Brick Lane* see their passivity, pain, suffering and oppression as natural. According to Millet in Sexual Politics, "Patriarchy has a still more tenacious or powerful hold through its successful habit of passing itself as nature" (p58). The women have been brainwashed to consider physical and emotional oppression from men as a natural phenomenon. Women have been ascribed to subordination, care givers and maternal duties which infer physical weakness and intellectual inferiority. Oppression within the context of patriarchy also shows how the status quo limits women through structures causing women in *Brick Lane* to live in an illusion called a state of false consciousness as they think that what is, is absolute truth.

The use of religion as a tool of women's oppression back in Bangladesh is as evil as the way it is used as a tool of oppression in

London. Celestine Chukwuemeka et all (2016) quoting De Beauvoir in "An appraisal of women's slavery in the philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*" maintains that religion as an institution is not only an instrument of oppression but also deception; and this form of deception takes the distraction of woman's attention from present injustice to promises of rewards in an afterlife. From the perception of Amma who is Nazneen's model, she mistakes the social construction of men and women as natural and ascribes the misery that accompanies their sex to be God's design. In fact, the use of fate is aimed at silencing the woman such that she can embrace every action from a man. Fate is misinterpreted by Amma to be a work of God which cannot be disobeyed. For example, in one of Nazneen's reflections, she wonders about Abba's unquestionable flirtatious attitude only to be replied by her mother: "If God wanted us to ask questions, he would have made us men" (80). This is instructive about women's passivity. In another instance, Amma tells Nazneen: "You just have to endure" (323). In her opinion, she thinks she is a woman with assigned roles from God and fails to point out that the status quo is responsible for her painful experiences that result from tagging her "woman". Thus, this belief that women's plight is God-ordained makes their religion a pillar of oppression. The issue of women's oppression is further strengthened by the construction of religious institutions. Having migrated and formed a Bangladeshi community in the multicultural British metropolis, religion is seen to loom largely within the Bangladeshi immigrant quarters. Since the Qur'an is a typical gender biased text that favors men, Chanu hardly studies it and rather encourages his wife Nazneen to do so. This is because he understands that her proximity to the Qur'an will render her blindly obedient to whatever he says and do to her.

Religion restricts women from walking out of the house, working at same jobsites with men and are even forbidden from attending meetings with men. This is pointed out in one of Hasina's letters where she says a group of preachers criticize them for working together with men in the factory. Men are supposed to keep separate from women. Razia Iqbal, another woman like Nazneen also faces gender-based discrimination in London. Her husband does not allow her to have a career. It is only after her husband's death that she gets an opportunity of employment to support her family. This idea of separation is reinforced during one of the Sharia Conferences held by the Bengal Tigers wherein the Questioner addresses men and ignore the women. When two girls draw attention to the fact that they have not been addressed, the Questioner draws a counter attention to them to the fact that the Qur'an bids men and women to be separate and that the women ought not to even be there seated among men. This treatment is not different from that received by women in the traditional meeting where no woman is allowed to speak. Th religious belief forbids women from sitting together with men talk less of contributing in discussions and decision making. As if that is not enough, the request of these two ladies for their rights to be respected is ignored. Religion becomes an inhibitor of a woman's self-expression because even when the married Nazneen expresses her sexual actions by her own will to Karim (adultery), she stumbles on verses that condemn the act causing her to live in guilt because she understands that the act is against what religion dictates. The religion then becomes a power oppressive tool. Given that men like Abba commit same adulterous crimes and are not disturbed suggests that the Qur'an becomes a set of rules instituted to force and silence the woman to stay in unfulfilled burning desires. So, while men commit adultery, women are not permitted to. Nevertheless, the hypocrisy of religion

becomes glaring by vice of the fact that Razia's husband can not feed his wife and wretched children but is set out building Mosques back home and base his arguments on the claim that when he is no more, the brick will still be standing. His action is rather a typical encouragement of the patriarchal institution through religion. God becomes a collaborator with men to manipulate and oppress women through a document called the Holy Qur'an.

The Muslim Bangladeshi patriarchal community in Ali's *Brick Lane* pay a lot of attention to dressing and this can be inferred through Arzoo the farmer who says: "You think a clothing is just a clothing. But as a matter of fact, it is not. In a place like this it is a serious thing" (377). Dressing is a serious affair because men use it as an oppressive tool. When Nazneen wears a sari and walks with her husband Chanu in the streets of London, the narrator paints a clear contrast in dressing to reflect different dressing cultures and the underlying significance for each:

> A pair went by who were differently dressed, in short dark skirts with matching jackets. Their shoulders were padded up and out. They saw her looking and whispered together. They walked and laughed and looked at her over their puffy shoulders (43).

This strange sight of attire which Chanu calls "not respectable" because it is completely different from the dressing prescribed by his culture is a reflection of the freedom of the English women. No doubt they "walked" and "laughed". Ali lays emphasis on how and why the characters (female characters) dress the way they do. While the British women dress in skirts sometimes with their thighs and buttocks, the Bengali women appear in saris thereby representing them as active and passive dressers respectfully. Their appearance in the sari is not because they desire to appear as such, rather it is to suit the taste of their patriarchal Muslim husbands. This lack of

choice is a lack of power and so they find themselves in the mire of oppression as passive dressers. The use of the sari attire becomes very symbolic of what the female characters experience and represent. The sari is likened to a "python", "a prison" and "chains" and these metaphorical meanings all boil down to women's oppression. The sari reflects the subjectivity and oppression of its wearers. In fact, through socialization, the culture of dressing is passed from one generation to another as a way of maintaining a particular so-called "proper behavioral dressing code" for women. This explains why the sari dress and the behavior of passivity can be traced from the oldest character in the text called Banesa, to Amma and then to Amma's daughter Nazneen. Men on the other hand are constructed as active dressers because no one defines their own dressing.

Millet in *Sexual Politics* states that "patriarchal societies typically link feeling of cruelty with sexuality, the latter often equated both with evil and power" (44). Amma who is Nazneen's model, is described as a saint by her husband Abba on the basis that she accepts all the cruelty and torments from her husband without complaint. For example, she remains docile and silent despite his consistent adulterous practices. Because she is hurt and does not complain, Abba names her a Saint. Thus because of her reputation of passivity and stoicism, she is worn a sari at her funeral as a representation of the expected character from women and as a woman of good moral repute. Besides, Chanu at one point compares the sari to Nazneen by saying that she is as "subtle" as the sari dress. This is suggestive of Nazneen's silence and powerlessness in a male dominated world. Since Chanu is a custodian of patriarchy, he buys her as many saris as possible as a way of encouraging her to always stay bound to the expected behavior. At same time, the Sari acts as

a cover used by men to hid the pain, they cause women. No doubt the "troubled bones" of Amma are always folded in a sari.

Nazneen is treated as a subaltern in London. Subalternity deals with marginalized groups who are unable to exercise their autonomy effectively, and who constantly live under oppression and subordination (Smith, 2010). She suffers double marginalization; first as a wife under patriarchal control and second as an immigrant "other" in the multicultural British metropolis where the British citizens see Bengali immigrants as a threat to their culture. A society where a pig is personalised and an immigrant objectified: "The pig sat...with his fat little legs.... She looked at Nazneen...the way she might look at a familiar object" (390). Glazer (1973) quoted in Kara (2019) holds that: "Migration…always create problems and even the best integrated groups suffer under such circumstance" (52). Nazneen cannot speak English, go out alone or communicate with anyone who is not Bangladesh. She is alienated from values necessarily as a human being because she is first a woman under a patriarch and secondly because she is an immigrant. While battling with patriarchal constraints at home, she also struggles with the fatigue derived from the new society and this places Nazneen at a state of double oppression. Nazneen's inability to move alone is because she is under a patriarchal husband and a new culture that alienates her as the "other". Beauvoir quoted in Abey (2021) says "What peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman is that she, a free and autonomous being like all creatures-nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the other" (29). In a feminist lens, marriage is essentially an ownership relation, in which men own women. Thus, getting married is betraying the human equality equation. In *Brick Lane*, women have no will of their own regarding marriage. Marriage is an institution where a woman lives in a house and not a home. The house becomes

a prison where women find themselves entangled in never-ending repetitive house chores. They are not allowed to work and their lives are limited to house activities. Nazneen weeps on her marriage day and nothing changes the situation. This explains why Nazneen wonders about what she ought to have done to escape her marriage experience:

> If I had known what this marriage would be, what this man would be...! What? then? I would have run away, like Hasina? I would have eloped with the sweeper? Hah. I would have wept on my wedding day. I did! I did weep. What good did it do? (101).

It can be inferred from the excerpt above that Nazneen had someone she admired (the sweeper) but is given off into marriage to someone she does not admire and love. Her description of Chanu sheds light on her lack of admiration and emotional affinity to him. Peirera-Ares (2018) buttresses this by showing how Nazneen becomes faced with a painful marriage on the basis of marrying someone who is not her choice. The narrator exposes Chanu's most hidden defects in the eyes of Nazneen without any sense of pathos:

> After a minute or two in the dark when her eyes had adjusted and the snoring began, Nazneen turned on her side and looked at her husband. She scrutinized his face, round as a ball, the blunt-cut thinning hair on top, and the dense eyebrows that crawled across his brow…. Now that they were close she could see the way the skin puckered up across the lids and drooped down to meet the creases at the corners. (39-40,)

Nazneen bluntly scrutinizes and exposes Chanu's body before the eyes of the reader and this occurs repeatedly throughout the novel as a sign that Nazneen lives with her husband just because her father

(a custodian of patriarch) said so. The marriage institution places the woman in a position where she waits, receives and executes only the instructions from the husband. And coupled with the fact that all immigrants are the "other", Nazneen becomes a victim of double oppression.

Self-Assertion and Multiculturalism as a Tool of Liberation

Foucault (1978) remarks that power is the source of sovereignty, and that power is used as a repressive means to control and rule people. According to him, where there is power there is also resistance by the oppressed minority. Foucault goes as far as to argue that where there is no resistance it is not, in effect, a power relation. It is therefore in the light of this power relationship that this section explores the representation of women's self-assertion. Power disequilibrium becomes reversed with migration to London because of the absence of a patriarchal structure in the English host culture. Migration to the metropolitan London is therefore prime in women's liberation experience by virtue of the fact that the female oppressed characters are placed in the midst of other cultures from which they learn and borrow.

Inasmuch as clash of cultures leads to the alienation of women, multiculturalism is at the core of women's liberation experience. Identity construction is a key issue in post-colonial literature and in feminist studies. Citing Bhaba (1993), Lois Tyson uses the term "Double Consciousness" to define this reality as a way of perceiving the world that is divided between two antagonistic cultures: the culture of the coloniser and the colonized. Immigrants in the metropolis are placed at the mercy of the colonizer's culture. Nazneen is fused between two cultures in which she is perceived as the "other" and so irrespective of the double oppression experienced, she ends up gaining freedom thanks to the power of the

host culture. The female Protagonist grows up all her life ruled by the principle of fate, believing that "What could not be changed must be borne. And since nothing could be changed, everything had to be borne" (16). This thing that she thought could not be changed about her that was the basis of her suffering is her being fated with the female sex. She believes that she is a woman by destiny but fails to understand that her being a woman is a construction by society not God or nature. Irrespective of the fact that she is being looked upon as the "other", at a point in her life, her exposure and experience of the foreign culture enable her to realize that there are other women like the tattoo lady who are not bound with the same belief with which she is bound. This causes reason to grab hold of her and some fundamental questions begin to pop up such that she soon realises that she could change that which she had to bear irrespective of the fact that something about her (her sex) "could not be changed" (277). In other words, she realizes that culture is a construct and varies from society to society. For example, she perceives that a change in her dressing in preference for the western cultural attire can shake off the shackles of oppression on her. She realizes that her dressing, which is her culture is what influenced and ruled her life (not fate). She gradually metamorphosed into this new culture thanks to her learning of the English Language which is a gate way. The impact of the British host culture, which is stronger, pushes her into not just shoving aside her home culture but using the culture the way she wants (not as a dictate on her by man). This is inferred by her skating exercise done at the end of the novel while in a cross-cultural attire. Razia on her own part clearly spells it out that she cannot continue to "take little bird's steps" and so decides to work and even dress as a typical English woman which is a total contrast to Bengali expectations of her. This outright refusal to even wear the sari is a clear fight launched by Razia in other to redefine her own

life by herself. Multiculturalism therefore becomes a key factor in the change of power dynamics because the new reality seen in a different culture propels a revolution that takes several forms as unravelled in subsequent paragraphs.

Ali's use of sex and pornographic images of women portrays the influence of multiculturalism. The woman uses sexual intercourse as a means of shaking off patriarchy control. Shenaz's idea derived from her stay in a cosmopolitan setting instils resistance:

> There is another kind of labor we perform, and if we withdraw it that will be a discomfort only for the men…. A man cannot live without water. He cannot live without it, but he can bear the thought of no water. A man can live without sex. He can live without it, but he cannot bear the thought of no sex. This is my suggestion…That's how the women in my village got themselves a new well.... If you think you are powerless, then you are. Everything is within you, where God put it. If your husband does not do what is required, think what you yourself have left undone (65).

The excerpt supra shows an understanding of the inner feminine wisdom at work in the patriarchal society. Mrs Islam shares this anecdote to draw attention to a woman's worth. Like Millet posits in *Sexual Politics*, "we must first break those chains of our own making through our blind acceptance of common ideas" (p22). The journey of developing the feminine power in *Brick Lane* is determined by this anecdote because it shows the inner probing to determine what needs to be done. Yet, as a younger woman, Nazneen has to learn to apply this wisdom to obtain direct power. In addition, sex with Karim opens Nazneen's mind to the "power within her" as she

realizes for the first time that she has a "will" of her own and can make choices by herself for herself. It downs on her that the power of her will which she exercises in committing adultery with Karim is greater than that which she used in submitting to her father in marrying Chanu as well as the power which she used in submitting to Chanu as a husband. Her discovery of the ability in her to make decisions by herself becomes a nucleus from which she generates power and influence in her home. Sex with Karim endorses Nazneen's consciousness that she can decide how to use her own body. Nazneen's adulterous sex experience with Karim becomes radical, interesting and ironical when she ends up rejecting Karim with whom she enjoyed sex by ousting him from her life. This aligns with Chinwezu (1990) who speculates that women are the privileged group because their body and place are equally a source of power that can catapult them out of men's dominion and posits that male incontrollable desire for sex is one of women's areas of strength over men.

Silence is one of the resistance instruments used by women to self-assert themselves in *Brick Lane*. Silence in terms of resistance is manifested in two forms. Through the absence of verbal arguments and through suicide. When Nazneen proposes to learn English as a way of fitting in a new culture, Chanu refuses but Nazneen does not dispute with him over it but goes ahead silently to learn it and her learning of English is a gate way to learn and live a new life of liberation. Suicide as an act of resistance is also clearly laid bare through Nazneen's image of the woman who dies because she jumps from a sixteenth storey. After Nazneen's arrival in London upon her arranged marriage to Chanu Ahmed, she comes in contact with Razia and Mrs Islam who become her new friends. Not long, in one of their visits, they parade the latest gossip about their neighbour who commits suicide. However, suicide being an

unspeakable act in Islam, they imply rather than state outright that the woman had taken her own life. It is inferred that the shame that comes with the lack of children is the basis for her suicide. That is, she takes away her life as a way of resisting the status quo because she is considered by the community as not being within the bounds of propriety and convention. Mrs. Islam states: "You have to bear in mind...she had no children … after twelve years of marriage...It is a shame" (27). Nazneen remains silent during the exchange, but later, she mirrors the suicide victim through her thoughts when she opens a window and leans into the breeze:

> The woman who fell, what terror came to her mind when she went down? What thoughts came? If she jumped, what thoughts came? Would they be the same ones? In the end, did it matter whether she jumped or fell? Suddenly Nazneen was sure that she had jumped. A big jump, feet first and arms wide, eyes wide, silent all the way down and her hair wild and loose, and a big smile on her face because with this single everlasting act she defied everything and everyone (40).

The image of the female body in flight depicted through carefully selected words sums up to the effect that the woman jumped on purpose. While Razia and Mrs. Islam focus on analysing the woman in terms of what society demands of her as a wife (childbearing), Nazneen analyses her in terms of why she commits suicide. Nazneen imagines the suicide as an exuberant act of defiance to the patriarchal status quo that is carried out in joy given that the falling woman had "a big smile on her face" in the course of the act. Ali frames the suicide, and Nazneen's fascination with it, in terms of a body moving through the air. The woman's falling body and the ice-skating lady watched on TV becomes a vehicle for Nazneen's own

fantasies of freedom and liberation. The suicide functions as a device through which Nazneen can experience an escape from domestic entrapment.

Women's empowerment is key in inspiring Nazneen to write *Brick Lane* (Pavla 2007). Empowerment is the expansion of people's capacity to make and act upon decisions and to transform those decisions into desired outcomes, affecting all aspects of their lives, including greater autonomy which allow them to achieve their goals. It entails overcoming socio-economic and other power inequalities in a context where this ability was previously denied (Alsop et all 2006). Empowerment in this paper focuses specifically on empowering women because of the inequalities in their socioeconomic status. Grindy (2011) quoting Beauvoir argues that a woman's complete freedom depends on economic independence. She underscores that it is through work that woman has been able, to a large extent, to close the gap separating her from the male. To her, work alone can guarantee her concrete freedom. In other not to experience the effects that come with patriarchy, Nazneen gets economically empowered thanks to her exposure. Because her husband's plans never come to a fruition, she by her will accepts to learn sewing after which her husband buys a sewing machine for her. The availability of her husband who buys the machine, Razia who teaches her to sew and Karim who brings her work is critical in her empowerment. Empowerment is not limited to sewing. It extends to her ability to struggle and master from scratch the English Language that helps her interact around. When she learns of the destruction of the Twin Tower in America, it dawns on her that the economic centre is no more limited to the West and that she herself can become a centre through her work. Working even in factories like Hasina becomes an empowerment and emancipation strategy. Economic wise, the fall of Chanu is the rise of Nazneen. Mrs Islam

uses men as tools to enrich herself. While her husband is a middle man for her secret suspicious business, her two sons are used as thugs to terrorize those to whom she gives money on usury at very high profit rates. All these renders them economically empowered thereby limiting men's influence over them. In terms of political empowerment, during the "Bengal Tigers" Meeting wherein Nazneen is being invited by Karim, her vote changes the dynamics and makes a difference giving Karim victory. This action of hers give her more impetus to believe in herself that she can make a difference given that her vote influences the elections.

Unity of purpose is strategic in women's emancipation experience. Women's unity of purpose towards their freedom is exercised through community voice. Lanser quoted in Yuan and Dong (2018) opines that community voice is a term about a spectrum of practices that articulate either a collective voice or a collective of voices that share narrative authority. The struggle for women to gain voice contribute to women's emancipation. Even when female individuals speak, they speak as prototypes of all marginalised and silenced women. For example, looking at the two ladies in the sharia conferences who appeal for a fight for women's rights and sex education, their plight epitomizes the plight of women as a whole in their patriarchal world. According to Susan Lancer, their voice is the voice of all women shouting out and advocating for a change. In the same light, during the traditional meeting where a group of women sit apart isolated and only listen, the women decide to scream which scatters the men disorderly. This collective action of screaming is a way of asserting themselves through speech which is associated to power. Their action symbolizes a yearning to be part of the decision-making team in the community.

Conclusion

This paper which is built on the subject of power dynamics uses the feminist concept of power by Kate Millet and the post-colonial concept of Subalternity by Spivak to excavates and lay bare the issues of patriarchy against women. Subtitle one explored language as a power index that aids men in their violent act of dominance upon women. the second section looked into Systematic oppression which discusses how the Bangladeshi religious system encourages the oppression of women. The men think it is their God given right to dominate women while the women think subordination and compliance is their natural design. The third sub section, Self-assertion and multiculturalism as a tool of liberation seeks to bring to light a solution or an emancipation plan for the women who after immigrating to the diaspora learn how to assert themselves and find freedom from the traditional system. The thematic and theoretical approaches employed in the analysis of this research points to the findings that the repressed woman under a system of patriarchy can be freed from her constraints thanks to multiculturalism.

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JELLiC: Journal of English Language, Literature, and Culture
Volume 7; No. 02, July 2024
ISSN: 2304-6120 (Print) / 2304-6163 (E-Version)
www.cellacameroon.org/publications/jellic

The Use of Linguistic Violence on Social Media: The Case of Followers of Selected Cameroonian Facebook Pages

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Abstract
This paper examines the type and intensity of linguistic violence that Cameroonians use on social media pages to express their anger, frustration, disagreement, or hatred towards others. It also explores the causes and consequences of linguistic violence on the face, identity, or well-being of the speaker and the hearer. The paper adopts the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1987) as the main theoretical framework and uses the concept of face-threatening acts (FTAs) to analyse the linguistic forms and strategies of linguistic violence. The paper employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data from three popular Cameroonian Facebook pages: Mimi Mefo Info (MMI), Cameroon News Agency, and ADE Divine. The paper collects and analyses a corpus of 110 comments from the pages, using a coding scheme based on the types and intensities of linguistic violence, such as abusive language, hate speech, and cyber bullying. The paper finds that linguistic violence is prevalent and pervasive on Cameroonian Facebook pages, and that it varies in type and intensity depending on the topic, the target, and the context of the interaction. The paper concludes that linguistic violence is a serious social problem that needs to be addressed by the authorities, the media, and the public. The paper also suggests some possible solutions and recommendations to reduce or prevent linguistic violence on social media. The paper contributes to the field of linguistic studies and has implications for other fields, such as sociology, psychology, education, and communication.

Key Words: linguistic violence, social media, politeness theory, face-threatening

1. Introduction

The digital age, characterised by the omnipresent dominance of internet discourse and social media interactions, has become breeding ground for the proposition and acceptance of certain violent linguistic forms. Specific to this analysis are Cameroonian Facebook pages, which have become stages for outbursts of linguistic violence among followers. This article adopts Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987), along with the concept of face-threatening acts (FTAs), to elucidate the diverse forms and strategies of linguistic violence used on four popular Cameroonian Facebook pages: Mimi Mefo Info, Cameroon News Agency, and ADE Divine. This paper aims at answering the questions: What are the prevalent types and intensities of linguistic violence (abusive language, hate speech, cyber bullying) used by Cameroonians on selected Facebook pages, and how do these patterns vary across different pages and discussion topics? How do Cameroonians employ face-threatening acts (FTAs) within politeness theory to express anger, frustration, or hatred online? How does exposure to linguistic violence on social media affect the online and offline well-being, identity, and social interactions of both perpetrators and victims? The hypothetical contention here is that Cameroonians on selected Facebook pages frequently engage in various forms of linguistic violence, particularly utilizing face-threatening acts targeting negative and positive face needs. This prevalence of linguistic violence negatively affects the well-being and identity of both perpetrators and victims, contributes to online polarization and offline social fragmentation, and is perceived as a significant problem by a large portion of Facebook users.

1.1. Literature Review

Online communication spaces, while offering opportunities for connection and expression, can also become breeding grounds for linguistic violence. Linguistic violence encompasses a range of verbal and nonverbal acts that inflict harm, including insults, threats, and discriminatory language. Politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) offers a framework for understanding how individuals navigate positive and negative face concerns in communication. While studies acknowledge the interplay between politeness and linguistic violence (Watts, 2003), further exploration is needed to understand how specific politeness strategies might contribute to or mitigate verbal aggression online. Cameroon boasts a multilingual and multicultural landscape, with French and English serving as official languages alongside numerous indigenous tongues. This intricate linguistic tapestry shapes online interactions, where code-switching and linguistic markers of identity play a crucial role (Ebbole, 2011). Social media pages like Facebook and WhatsApp have gained immense popularity in Cameroon, creating vibrant online communities with their own dynamics and norms. However, issues such as digital divides, unequal access to resources, and the prevalence of "fake news" pose challenges and further complicate online communication landscapes (Fongang et al., 2017).

Studies across Africa reveal diverse forms of linguistic violence online, including hate speech, cyber bullying, and political vitriol (Ololube, 2019; Uwalaka, 2017). These studies highlight the complex interplay of factors such as ethnicity, religion, and political affiliation in shaping online aggression. Notably, research suggests that cultural nuances and specific linguistic features of local languages might influence the expression and interpretation of linguistic violence (Okeke, 2018). Building on existing research, this review underscores the need for in-depth analysis of linguistic

violence in the specific context of Cameroon's online sphere. While previous studies have explored online aggression in Africa, few have focused specifically on Cameroon, taking into account its unique socio-linguistic makeup and the nuances of its online communities. Furthermore, a deeper understanding of how politeness strategies are employed in Cameroonian online communication, both to perpetuate and mitigate linguistic violence, could offer valuable insights.

1.2.Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide a comprehensive analysis of linguistic violence on social media platforms (Creswell, 2014). The data for this study were collected from three popular Cameroonian Facebook pages: Mimi Mefo Info, Cameroon News Agency, and ADE Divine. The data was curated from posts dating between January 2022 and January 2024. These pages were selected due to their high user engagement and the diversity of their audience, which provides a rich source of data for analysis (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). The data collection process involved manually extracting a corpus of 110 comments from these pages. The comments were selected using a purposive sampling technique, focusing on posts that generated high levels of interaction and elicited strong emotional responses from users (Palys, 2008). All comments under each high-interaction post were included in the corpus to ensure a comprehensive dataset. The collected data were then analysed using a coding scheme based on the types and intensities of linguistic violence, such as abusive language, hate speech, and cyberbullying. The coding scheme was developed in line with the theoretical framework of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987), focusing on the identification of face-

threatening acts (FTAs) in the comments. The language of the comments was predominantly English, with some instances of code-switching between English and French, reflecting the linguistic diversity of the Cameroonian context.

1.3. Conceptual Framework

Brown and Levinson's politeness theory is a sociolinguistic theory that focuses on the concept of 'face', which is an individual's social value that comes under risk during interactions, resulting in face-threatening acts (FTAs). According to Brown and Levinson (1987), "face consists of two related aspects: the positive face, or the desire to be liked and approved of by others, and the negative face, or the desire to be unimpeded in one's actions". The theory proposes that language can serve as a medium to preserve social equilibrium and curb potential confrontations. Brown and Levinson's politeness theory has been influential in the field of sociolinguistics and has been used to study politeness across cultures. Other scholars have also contributed to the development of the theory, such as Watts (2003), Ide (1989), and Gu (1990). The theory has been applied to various fields, such as psychology, communication, and education.

Linguistic violence, broadly defined, refers to the strategic use of language to violate, belittle, or disparage another's identity or reputation. Often, this humiliating language constitutes an act that threatens the 'face' of others, infringing on their rights, or compelling them into uncomfortable situations, thereby termed as face-threatening acts (FTAs). The emergence of social media pages, especially Facebook, with vast worldwide connectivity has amplified these issues. In the context of the politeness theory, social media pages like Facebook put users in a unique position where they can afford to either show politeness or resort to rudeness without fearing direct confrontations. The freedom, anonymity, and distance

provided by these pages often result in FTAs where statements can be intentionally or unintentionally designed to attack, defame, or insult others, resulting in linguistic violence. The Facebook pages in focus have varying objectives, ranging from political and social news dissemination (Mimi Mefo Info, Cameroon News Agency) to sports conversations and (ADE Divine), attracting distinct follower demographics.

2. Analysis

2.1. Types of Linguistic Violence

In the corpus of comments from the three Facebook pages (ADE Divine, CNA, and MMI), we can identify several types of linguistic violence, including abusive language, hate speech, and cyber bullying.

Table 1: Type of Linguistic Violence

Type of Linguistic Violence		**Frequency**
Abusive Language		35
Hate Speech		25
Cyberbullying		50
Total		**110**

The data reveals a concerning prevalence of linguistic violence on these Cameroonian Facebook pages, with cyberbullying being the most common form encountered (50 instances). Notably, hate speech, despite being less frequent (25 instances), still represents a significant presence. It is important to note that the categories presented in the table are not mutually exclusive, as some comments exhibited characteristics of both abusive language and hate speech. The researchers' coding scheme accounted for the possibility of overlap between these categories, distinguishing them based on the

intensity and target of the linguistic violence. Abusive language was characterized by the use of demeaning, derogatory, or profane language directed at individuals, while hate speech involved the use of biased, prejudiced, or dehumanizing language targeting specific groups or communities. This approach provided a deeper understanding of the linguistic violence present in the data.

2.1.1. Abusive language

Abusive language, characterized by the use of offensive words or phrases to demean or belittle someone, is a prevalent form of linguistic violence in the examined corpus. Here are the rewritten and analyzed comments:

> Comment ADE_7: "The decision to substitute Onana for Ondoa was the most amusing spectacle I have witnessed twice." This comment uses sarcasm as a form of linguistic violence, subtly mocking the decision to substitute one player for another.
>
> Comment ADE_3: "Are you aware of South Korea's recent nuclear fusion experiment? I understand it achieved temperatures surpassing that of the sun." This comment, while not overtly abusive, could potentially be seen as a sarcastic remark with a hyperbolic tone.
>
> Comment CNA_35: "Song, I suggest you consider reducing your consumption of marijuana; it might improve your reasoning. You're embarrassing people with your poor command of Pidgin." This comment employs direct insults and demeaning language, a clear example of abusive language.
>
> Comment MMI_5: "They seem to desire more bloodshed in the name of warfare… God is watching." This comment uses

metaphorical language to express disapproval and condemnation, implying a form of linguistic violence.

The above instances show that abusive language on Cameroonian Facebook pages are multi-layered, ranging from direct insults to more subtle forms like sarcasm and metaphorical language.

2.1.2. Hate Speech

Hate speech involves the use of language to express prejudice or discrimination against a particular group of people based on their race, religion, ethnicity, or other social characteristics. Examples from the corpus include:

> *Comment CNA_25:* "Imposing taxes on people while the BETI, BULU & EKANG embezzle money with full confidence knowing that nothing will happen to them because their brother is in power. Nemesis will catch them this particular year." This statement employs harmful generalizations and negative stereotypes against certain ethnic groups, suggesting a link between ethnicity and corruption. It also carries a veiled threat, potentially inciting violence.
>
> Comment CNA_36: "This life no balance. Lawlessness in LRC has become a Law, At the eave of the collapse of most dictatorial regime. Everything start to fall apart including body part." This comment contains hate speech, expressing strong dislike and criticism towards the regime in place.
>
> *Comment MMI_46:* "Religion of peace always fighting war. In Gaza they are reaping what they sowed. What an Islamic scholastic bombastic cataclysmic holocaust." This statement generalizes about an entire religious group, associating them with negativity and violence. It uses historically loaded terms like "holocaust" in an offensive manner.

> *Comment MMI_32:* "The highest witchcraft is the Cameroon Government." labeling the Cameroon government as "witchcraft" might incite harmful stereotypes and negative perceptions.

2.1.3. Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying involves the use of digital communication tools to harass, intimidate, or harm someone. It can take many forms, including personal attacks, threats, or spreading rumors. Examples from the corpus include:

> *Comment CNA_22:* "After punishment, what next… they will soon be out of time. Will their sanctions reduce Cameroon's problem?" This comment expresses frustration and criticism towards the authority. The tone and phrasing could be interpreted as a form of cyber bullying, since it belittles the importance of punishment and sanctions put in place by the authority.
>
> Comment MMI_15: "You know how many times Ni John be morn big pa e own for Ntarinkon? We waka all round town with coffin and die rat inside. Last last Ni die, pa still deh di brush two mop." This comment is a personal attack on 'Ni John', using metaphorical language to mock and belittle him.

2.2. Variations in Intensity of Linguistic Violence

The intensity of linguistic violence in the corpus varies based on several factors, including the topic of discussion, the target of the comment, and the context of the interaction.

2.2.1. Topic of Discussion

The topic of discussion can significantly influence the intensity of linguistic violence. For instance, comments related to politics or

controversial issues tend to exhibit higher levels of linguistic violence.

> *Comment CNA_25:* "Imposing taxes on people while the BETI, BULU & EKANG embezzle money with full confidence knowing that nothing will happen to them because their brother is in power. Nemesis will catch them this particular year." This comment is a clear example of linguistic violence, expressing strong resentment and accusations towards specific ethnic groups and the ruling power. The language used is aggressive and confrontational, reflecting the user's anger and frustration.
>
> *Comment MMI_32:* "The highest witchcraft is the Cameroon Government." This comment, while metaphorical, is a severe critique of the Cameroon Government, equating it with witchcraft. It reflects a deep-seated dissatisfaction and mistrust towards the government, a form of linguistic violence that can contribute to a hostile online environment.

2.2.2. Target of the Comment

The target of the comment also plays a role in determining the intensity of linguistic violence. Comments directed at public figures or groups often contain more intense linguistic violence compared to those directed at individuals.

> *Comment ADE_8:* "Honestly that una coach is clueless. But I don't blame being given a chance as indigenous, just as the Senegalese coach. Better luck next time though." This comment targets a public figure, the coach, and uses a dismissive tone to belittle his abilities. The language used is less aggressive but still constitutes a form of linguistic violence.

Comment MMI_46: "Religion of peace always fighting war. In Gaza they are reaping what they sowed. What an Islamic scholastic bombastic cataclysmic holocaust." This comment targets a religious group and uses strong, provocative language. The use of hyperbolic and derogatory terms constitutes a severe form of linguistic violence.

2.2.3. Context of Interaction

The data collected from the ADE Divine Facebook page reveals a diverse range of comments, some of which exhibit linguistic violence in varying degrees. The comments cover a wide spectrum, from playful banter to more aggressive and abusive language. In terms of the thematic context, many of the comments are related to football and Cameroonian national teams, reflecting the high level of interest and passion for the sport among the page's users. The temporal context also plays a significant role, as several comments were posted during or immediately after important football matches, which can heighten emotions and lead to more intense linguistic interactions.

For example, comment 7 - "Benching ONANA against ONDOA is the greatest funny show I ever watched twice" - and comment 8 - "Honestly that una coach is clueless. But I don't blame being given a chance as indigenous, just as the Senegalese coach. Better luck next time though" - both demonstrate a level of frustration and criticism towards the team's management and coaching decisions, which may have been exacerbated by the immediate context of a match result.

Similarly, comments 22-23 - "I like Cameroonians. We all suffer from bipolar. It's just a matter of time before Epassy becomes the villain too" and "Please stop making noise we are trying to concentrate on epassy" - reflect the emotional rollercoaster

experienced by fans, who can quickly shift between praise and criticism of individual players and the team's performance.

The data also includes instances of more explicit linguistic violence, such as comment 1 - "Thank you for this salt wey you di add'am for the injury" - which uses abusive language and metaphors to criticize a player's injury. Similarly, comment 12 - "If Nigeria try win this Match, Anthony Joshua will auffor in Nannnniún" - employs hyperbolic and potentially derogatory language to express frustration with the team's performance.

These examples demonstrate that the context, both thematic and temporal, can significantly influence the intensity and nature of linguistic violence observed in the comments. Understanding these contextual factors is crucial in developing effective strategies to address and mitigate the prevalence of linguistic violence on social media platforms like the ADE Divine Facebook page.

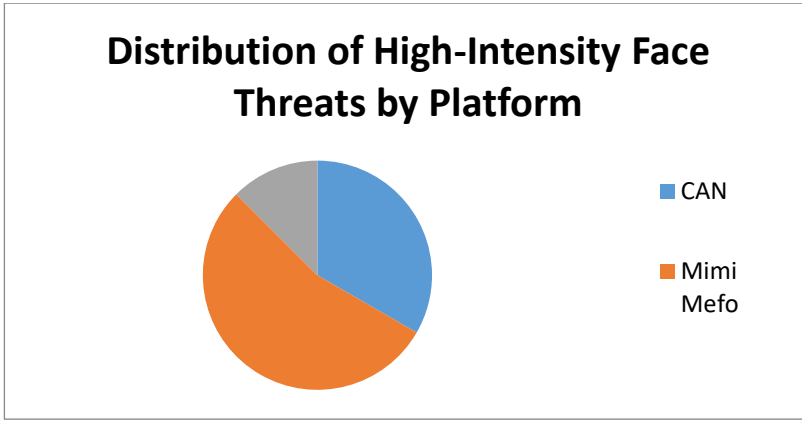


Figure 1: Distribution of High-Intensity Face Threats by Platform

This analysis provides an overview of the occurrence and nature of these positive face FTAs in different Cameroonian pages whose distribution of high intensity threats have been identified above as

CNA: 8 (33.33%), Mimi Mefo: 13 (54.17%) and ADE Divine: 3 (12.50%).

2.2.4. High-Intensity FTAs:

High-intensity FTAs are characterized by their explicit aggression and blatant attacks on the target's face. These comments directly challenge the target's positive face (their need to be appreciated) and negative face (their freedom from imposition), often invoking strong emotional reactions and the potential for further conflict. For instance, on Mimi Mefo, (Comment #5) reads: *Bec they want more blood to drink in the name of fighting war…Ana God di wait una.* (Because they want more blood to drink in the name of fighting war... God is waiting for you.)

This explicit threat invokes divine punishment, directly attacking the hearer's positive face (need to be appreciated) and potentially invoking fear (negative face threat). Its intensity stems from the blatant aggression and religious reference.

> CNA (Comment #25)
>
> *Imposing taxes on people while the BETI, BULU & EKANG embezzle money with full confidence knowing that nothing will happen to them because their brother is in power. Nemesis will catch them this particular year.*

This comment employs ethnic slurs and accuses specific groups of corruption, directly attacking both their positive face (reputation) and negative face (freedom from imposition). The intensity arises from the targeted nature of the attack and the implied threat of future retribution.

2.2.5. Moderate-Intensity FTAs:

Moderate-intensity FTAs exhibit a more subtle level of linguistic violence, often using indirect criticism or moral judgment to

pressure the target to conform to specific expectations. While less overt than high-intensity FTAs, these comments can still have a significant impact on the target's social standing and face. For example, Mimi Mefo (Comment #10) says: *Les enfants de Chantal enjoy le palais et la présidence mieux que Brenda et son jeune frère.* (Chantal's children enjoy the palace and presidency more than Brenda and her younger brother.)

This seemingly neutral statement compares lifestyles, potentially implying unfair privileges and creating social pressure on the individuals mentioned. The moderate intensity stems from the indirect criticism and its potential to damage social standing.

ADE Divine (Comment #18)

Mathias Pogba should develop the attitude of gratitude... He should be remorseful for this act.

This statement employs moral judgment and implies wrongdoing, pressuring the individual to conform to specific expectations. The moderate intensity arises from the subtle shaming and attempt to control the hearer's behaviour.

2.2.6. Low-Intensity FTAs:

Low-intensity FTAs are characterized by their ambiguity and dependence on interpretation. These comments may unintentionally damage the target's face, but their lack of overt aggression makes them less explicitly violent than the high and moderate-intensity examples. An illustration of a low-intensity FTA is comment #43 from Mimi Mefo: *Bobda is a gentle man with no blame, all the videos and pictures we can see how happy those girls with him are, they only complain after kick out, not achieving what let them to him, even with all the complaints girls are still flowing around him*
This comment defends an individual while potentially implying negative motivations for the complainants. The low intensity stems

from the ambiguity and its dependence on interpretation, but it might unintentionally damage the complainants' face.

2.3. Linguistic Strategies in Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs)

Online communication poses unique challenges for maintaining a respectful and harmonious interaction between interlocutors. Without the presence of physical and social cues, online users may resort to language that threatens or damages the positive face of others. Positive face refers to the desire to be liked, appreciated, and approved by others. This analysis explores two types of face-threatening acts (FTAs) that target the positive face of the hearer: bald on-record and off-record threats. Bald on-record threats are clear and direct forms of verbal aggression, such as insults, accusations, or threats that do not mince words or show any regard for the hearer's feelings. Off-record threats are more indirect and subtle forms of verbal aggression, such as sarcasm, irony, or humour that imply a negative message or attitude towards the hearer. These off-record threats can be more difficult to detect and respond to, as they often depend on contextual and cultural knowledge.

In the corpus of comments from the three Facebook pages (ADE Divine, CNA, and MMI), we can identify several linguistic strategies employed in the FTAs. These strategies can impact the face (positive or negative) of the speaker and the hearer.

Category	**Count**	**Percentage**
Positive Face Threats	51	46.36%
Insults/Name-calling	29	26.36%
Threats/Harm	1	0.91%
Humiliation/Degradation	21	19.09%
Negative Face Threats	5	4.55%
Impositions/Demands	0	0.00%
Threats/Commands	0	0.00%

2.3.1. Positive Politeness Strategies

Positive politeness strategies are used to minimize the threat to the hearer's positive face, or their desire to be liked and approved by others. These strategies often involve expressions of solidarity or compliments. For instance:

> *Comment ADE_10:* "It's obvious his contribution rate to Super eagle's success is even 9… I know players like him may not hit the net but will put opposition under pressure throughout a game. Kudos to the African king."

This comment employs positive politeness by expressing appreciation and admiration for the player's contributions, even if they may not have scored goals. The use of the term "African king" is a compliment that elevates the player's status and shows solidarity with their identity.

> *Comment CNA_41:* "This Malachi guy is one of, if not the best minister in Cameroon. Have been following up this dude for some time now. Very bilingual and fluent in both English and French, always available with the press to give an update of any public incident regarding health and hospitals like the case of the pregnant woman in Douala. More grace to you Sir and God bless you for the job you are doing."

This comment also uses positive politeness strategies, such as praising the minister's abilities and language skills, as well as expressing appreciation for their work and invoking blessings. These expressions serve to enhance the target's positive face by highlighting their positive qualities and reinforcing their status and importance.

> *Comment MMI_12:* "This is humility!! This is realness!! This is the man of the season!! There is plenty to learn from

> him. With all the Wealth he chose to be real!! No faking. Some people with a couple pounds in their accounts will be renting hotels, trying to live lavishly to please a people who are only interested in what they see on the media and nothing beyond that."

In this comment, the use of exclamations and superlatives, such as "This is humility!!" and "the man of the season," convey admiration and respect for the individual being discussed. The contrast drawn between the target's humility and the ostentatious behavior of others further strengthens the positive politeness strategy by highlighting the target's virtues.

Through these positive politeness strategies, the commenters aim to mitigate the potential threat to the targets' positive face and promote a sense of solidarity and appreciation, even in the context of a social media platform where linguistic violence may be more prevalent.

2.3.2. Negative Politeness Strategies

Negative politeness strategies are used to minimize the threat to the hearer's negative face, or their desire to be autonomous and free from imposition. These strategies often involve indirectness or hedging. For instance:

> *Comment ADE_8:* "Honestly that una coach is clueless. But I don't blame being given a chance as indigenous, just as the Senegalese coach. Better luck next time though."
>
> *Comment CNA_22:* "After punishment, what next… they will soon be out of time. Will their sanctions reduce Cameroon's problem?"
>
> *Comment MMI_1:* "Cameroon again on the spotlight for negative energy."
>
> Mimi Mefo (Comment #36)

> *God shouldn't allowed Eto to roll this beautiful Continent Cameroon, Eto politics might be worst than that of president Paul Biya, let Paul Biya roll for the next 1000 years, Eto might be dangerous, he is full of tribalism.*

This comment employs name-calling ("dangerous") and negative attributions ("tribalism") towards a specific individual (Eto'o). It also indirectly insults the hearer by suggesting their preferred candidate is worse than the current leader. This constitutes a moderate-intensity bald FTA, attacking the individual's reputation and positive face needs.

2.3.3 Off-Record Strategies

Off-record strategies are indirect speech acts that allow the speaker to avoid direct responsibility for the face-threatening act. These strategies often involve sarcasm, irony, or metaphors. For instance:

> *Comment ADE_1:* "Thank you for this salt wey you di add'am for the injury."
>
> *Comment CNA_35:* "Song abeg try reduce the rate way u di smoke mbanga maybe u go get sense. Waka di disgrace people them with pidgin whe you no know."
>
> *Comment MMI_5:* "Bec they want more blood to drink in the name of fighting war…Ana God di wait una."
>
> CNA (Comment #3)
>
> *And recently the Cameroon officials voted Yaoundé as the cleanest city in Cameroon.* (said sarcastically)

This sarcastic statement mocks the officials' decision, implying it is untrue or based on self-serving interests. It constitutes a low-intensity off-record FTA, indirectly criticizing the hearer's actions and undermining their positive face.

> Mimi Mefo (Comment #13)

Really funny, the kids are happy seeing their uncle, and playing with him. (regarding a politician visiting children)

This seemingly positive statement uses humor to mock the politician's actions, implying they are superficial or performative. This constitutes a low-intensity off-record FTA, indirectly criticizing the hearer's behavior and potentially damaging their positive face.

ADE Divine (Comment #12)

No one forced Njie to sign for Cameroon. (regarding the player's performance)

This seemingly neutral statement implies the player is responsible for his own performance, potentially shifting blame away from coaches or the system. This constitutes a low-intensity off-record FTA, indirectly criticizing the player's performance and challenging his positive face.

These examples highlight the diverse nature of FTAs used across the pages. Bald FTAs often involve direct insults and threats, while off-record FTAs employ sarcasm, humor, or seemingly neutral statements to indirectly criticize or mock the hearer. The intensity of the FTAs varies depending on the platform, topic, and specific language used.

Platform Affordances and Influences:

Platform	Anonymity	Moderation	Positive Face Threats (Count)	Negative Face Threats (Count)	Total Face Threats (Count)
CNA	Yes	Moderate	14	2	16
Mimi Mefo	Yes	Loose	22	3	25
ADE Divine	Yes	Strict	15	0	15

Pages with stricter moderation, like ADE Divine, had fewer FTAs, suggesting moderation impacts online behavior. Conversely, anonymity may embolden users to express themselves more aggressively. These findings can inform future regulation and policy efforts to combat linguistic violence on social media. This implies that policymakers and platform developers could implement more effective systems to foster inclusive and respectful digital environments, if they recognize the role of moderation in mitigating FTAs.

3. Findings

3.1. Prevalence and Variability of Linguistic Violence

The analysis of the comments from the three Facebook pages (ADE Divine, CNA, and MMI) reveals a high prevalence of linguistic violence. The majority of the comments contained some form of negative or critical language, indicating a widespread use of linguistic violence in these online interactions.

The intensity and type of linguistic violence varied across the comments, influenced by factors such as the topic of discussion, the target of the comment, and the context of the interaction. For instance, comments related to politics or controversial issues tended to exhibit higher levels of linguistic violence, while comments directed at public figures or groups often contained more intense linguistic violence compared to those directed at individuals.

3.2. Impact of Linguistic Violence on Face, Identity, or Well-being

Table 2 : Impact of Linguistic Violence

Impact of Linguistic Violence		**Example Comment**
Impact on Face		CNA_25
Impact on Identity		MMI_32
Impact on Well-being		ADE_8

The linguistic violence observed in the comments can have detrimental effects on the face, identity, or well-being of the individuals involved.

3.2.1. Impact on Face

The Politeness Theory concept of positive face, which refers to an individual's desire to be respected and appreciated by others, is often threatened by linguistic violence. This can be seen in the comment CNA_25: "If we stay silent we are part of the conspiracy. I applaud this courageous lady. Doing what many can't do. Normally the public should stand by and defend this lady. She must be protected." This comment directly praises the target's actions, but in doing so, it also implies that the target's reputation and social standing are being publicly scrutinized and criticized, potentially threatening their positive face.

3.2.2. Impact on Identity

Linguistic violence can also target an individual's sense of identity and belonging, as illustrated by the comment MMI_32: "The highest witchcraft is the Cameroon Government." This comment associates the government with the negative and derogatory term "witchcraft," which can undermine the target's sense of belonging and legitimacy within the social and political context. Such linguistic violence can lead to feelings of marginalization and disempowerment, directly impacting the target's identity.

3.2.3. Impact on Well-being

The use of linguistic violence in the form of direct criticism or insults can also have a detrimental effect on an individual's emotional well-being. The comment ADE_8 exemplifies this: "Honestly that una coach is clueless. But I don't blame being given

a chance as indigenous, just as the Senegalese coach. Better luck next time though." This comment employs a dismissive and derogatory tone, which can contribute to feelings of inadequacy, shame, and decreased self-worth in the target. Such emotional distress can have significant implications for the individual's overall well-being.

4. Discussion

The findings from the analysis of the comments on the three Facebook pages (ADE Divine, CNA, and MMI) suggest that individuals strive to maintain their 'face' or public self-image during interactions. In this context, 'face' refers to the positive social value a person effectively claims for themselves in a given interaction, as proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). A stark reality revealed by the analysis is the pervasive presence of abusive language and direct threats. Insults, profanity, and dehumanizing rhetoric were commonplace, targeting both individuals and specific groups. Examining the frequency of these occurrences across topics and pages highlights significant variations. For instance, comments on political discussions displayed the highest concentration of overt aggression, while entertainment-focused pages exhibited lower rates. Beyond the blatant hostility, the data reveals a nuanced and often insidious use of indirect face-threatening acts (FTAs). Sarcasm, passive-aggressive remarks, and veiled threats emerged as frequent strategies employed to undermine the addressee's positive face (self-esteem, social identity) or negative face (freedom of action, non-imposition). This underscores the complex interplay between politeness theory and linguistic violence, where seemingly innocuous language can inflict significant social harm.

4.1. Causes and Consequences of Linguistic Violence in the Cameroonian Context

The persistent use of linguistic violence on these Cameroonian Facebook pages has significant social consequences. The findings clearly indicate that online communities can become fragmented and hostile, with users resorting to exclusion and ostracisation of those perceived as different or threatening. This digital polarization hinders constructive dialogue and erodes the sense of online common ground (Tamfuh, 2022). Furthermore, the study reveals a direct link between linguistic violence and mental health. Victims of repeated face threats and online aggression experience emotional distress, decreased self-esteem, and a sense of social isolation (Ngwainmbi, 2019). This psychological impact of online hostility is a crucial concern that must be addressed to promote responsible online communication and safeguard user well-being. Existing literature on the Cameroonian context corroborates these findings. Studies have consistently demonstrated the detrimental effects of linguistic violence, with victims reporting elevated levels of anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal. The causal relationships between language use, community dynamics, and mental health outcomes are well-established in this body of research. In conclusion, the use of linguistic violence on Cameroonian social media has clear and significant consequences. It contributes to the fragmentation of online communities and imposes serious psychological harm on victims. Addressing this issue is essential for fostering healthy, inclusive, and constructive digital spaces in the Cameroonian context.

4.2. Triggers and Escalators of Conflicts Arising from Linguistic Violence

The analysis reveals several potential triggers and escalators of conflicts arising from linguistic violence. These include the use of

direct criticism, hate speech, and abusive language, which can provoke or escalate conflicts among users. The intensity of the linguistic violence, as well as the topic, target, and context of the interaction, can also influence the likelihood and severity of conflicts. These findings have broader implications for online communities. They highlight the need for effective moderation policies and interventions to mitigate the impact of linguistic violence and promote positive and respectful interactions. They also underscore the importance of understanding the triggers and escalators of conflicts in order to prevent or manage them effectively. This is particularly crucial given the potential societal harms of linguistic violence, including the exacerbation of social divisions and conflicts.

5. Conclusion

This study examines linguistic violence as manifested in the comments on three Facebook pages (ADE Divine, CNA, and MMI). The findings reveal a high prevalence of linguistic violence, with variations in intensity based on factors such as the topic of discussion, the target of the comment, and the context of the interaction. The study concludes that linguistic violence, through its various forms such as abusive language, hate speech, and cyber bullying, poses a serious social problem, impacting the face, identity, or well-being of the individuals involved. To mitigate the impact of linguistic violence on social media, several measures are recommended. First, social media pages should implement more effective moderation policies to identify and remove instances of linguistic violence. Second, authorities should consider legislation to address online harassment and hate speech. Media organizations can play a role by promoting positive and respectful online interactions. Lastly, public education initiatives could help raise

awareness about the harmful effects of linguistic violence and encourage more respectful online communication.

The findings of this study make significant contributions to the growing body of Cameroonian research on linguistic violence and online communication. Within the local research landscape, this work builds upon and expands previous studies that have examined the psycho-social impacts of hostile language use on social media platforms in the Cameroonian context (Ngwainmbi, 2019; Tamfuh 2022). These findings are essentially contextual as Cameroonian scholars have cautioned against simplistic generalizations from Western-centric models that may overlook important local variables (Binyam, 2020). The implications of this study extend beyond the field of linguistics, showcasing its interdisciplinary relevance. Sociologists may find the findings on online community fragmentation and digital polarisation particularly relevant, as they echo concerns raised in Bail's (2023), which challenges myths about echo chambers and reveals solutions to political tribalism by exploring innovative online experiments and in-depth interviews with social media users. Psychologists, in turn, will likely be interested in the well-documented links between linguistic violence and individual mental health outcomes, which can inform their understanding of the psychological impacts of online hostility. For educators in Cameroon, this study underscores the pressing need to integrate digital citizenship and media literacy components into school curricula, empowering students with the skills to navigate online spaces respectfully and constructively. Communication professionals, too, can leverage these insights to promote positive online discourse and foster more inclusive, cohesive digital communities within the Cameroonian context. In summary, this study's contributions are multifaceted, addressing pressing concerns

within the Cameroonian research landscape while also resonating with global scholarly conversations.

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Appendices

Data Collected from Facebook Pages

ADE Divine Comments

- Comment ADE_7: “The decision to substitute Onana for Ondoa was the most amusing spectacle I have witnessed twice.”
- Comment ADE_3: “Are you aware of South Korea’s recent nuclear fusion experiment? I understand it achieved temperatures surpassing that of the sun.”
- Comment ADE_8: “Honestly that una coach is clueless. But I don’t blame being given a chance as indigenous, just as the Senegalese coach. Better luck next time though.”

- Comment ADE_10: "It's obvious his contribution rate to Super eagle's success is even 9… I know players like him may not hit the net but will put opposition under pressure throughout a game. Kudos to the African king."
- Comment ADE_12: "No one forced Njie to sign for Cameroon."

CNA Comments

- Comment CNA_22: "After punishment, what next… they will soon be out of time. Will their sanctions reduce Cameroon's problem?"
- Comment CNA_25: "Imposing taxes on people while the BETI, BULU & EKANG embezzle money with full confidence knowing that nothing will happen to them because their brother is in power. Nemesis will catch them this particular year."
- Comment CNA_35: "Song, I suggest you consider reducing your consumption of marijuana; it might improve your reasoning. You're embarrassing people with your poor command of Pidgin."
- Comment CNA_36: "This life no balance. Lawlessness in LRC has become a Law, At the eave of the collapse of most dictatorial regime. Everything start to fall apart including body part."
- Comment CNA_41: "This Malachi guy is one of, if not the best minister in Cameroon. Have been following up this dude for some time now. Very bilingual and fluent in both English and French, always available with the press to give an update of any public incident regarding health and hospitals like the case of the pregnant woman in Douala. More grace to you Sir and God bless you for the job you are doing."

MMI Comments

- Comment MMI_5: "They seem to desire more bloodshed in the name of warfare… God is watching."
- Comment MMI_12: "This is humility!! This is realness!! This is the man of the season!! There is plenty to learn from him. With all the Wealth he chose to be real!! No faking. Some people with a couple pounds in their accounts will be renting hotels, trying to

live lavishly to please a people who are only interested in what they see on the media and nothing beyond that."

- Comment MMI_13: “Really funny, the kids are happy seeing their uncle, and playing with him.(regarding a politician visiting children)”
- Comment MMI_15: “You know how many times Ni John be morn big pa e own for Ntarinkon? We waka all round town with coffin and die rat inside. Last last Ni die, pa still deh di brush two mop.”
- Comment MMI_32: “The highest witchcraft is the Cameroon Government.”
- Comment MMI_36: “God shouldn’t allowed Eto to roll this beautiful Continent Cameroon, Eto politics might be worst than that of president Paul Biya, let Paul Biya roll for the next 1000 years, Eto might be dangerous, he is full of tribalism.”

JELLiC: Journal of English Language, Literature, and Culture
Volume 7; No. 02, July 2024
ISSN: 2304-6120 (Print) / 2304-6163 (E-Version)
www.cellacameroon.org/publications/jellic

The Psychotherapeutic Value of Cameroonian Urban Music

La valeur psychothérapeutique des musiques urbaines camerounaises

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Abstract
The revolutionary, reformative, redemptive, resistant and recreative purpose of societal realities in Cameroon, have continued to be evident in the thematic structures of the compositions and performances of popular music in Cameroon. Yet its psychotherapeutic value has been unheeded even though music elsewhere is being used to cure psychological problems. Hence, this study sets out to highlight the psychotherapeutic value of Cameroonian music. The Reader's response and the Psychoanalytic theory of literary criticism foregrounds this study as it adopts a content analysis and deductive methods of research. Audio and video tape materials of Aveiro Djess and Krys M's songs titled "Nyama" and ''A Chacun Sa Chance'' were used for deductions and analyses based on their thematic content and structure. We argue that the effective use of figurative language and poetic techniques in both songs diagnose socio-economic repressions in Cameroonian society today for psychologically treatment. Consequently, the socio-economic contexts of Cameroon music play a significant part in its psychotherapeutic value.
Keywords: Psychology, repressions, psychotherapy, Cameroon Music.

Résumé

Les effets révolutionnaires, réformatifs, rédempteurs, résistants et récréatifs des réalités sociétales au Cameroun ont toujours été évidents dans les structures thématiques des compositions et des interprétations de la musique populaire au Cameroun. Pourtant, sa valeur psychothérapeutique est ignorée, même si ailleurs, la musique est utilisée pour soigner les problèmes psychologiques. À cet effet, cette étude vise à démontrer la valeur psychothérapeutique de la musique camerounaise. Les principes théoriques de la réception, l'historicisme et la psychanalyse vont guider l'argument de cette étude comme elle adopte l'analyse de contenus en recherche. Les bandes audio et vidéo des chansons d'Aveiro Djess et de Krys M., intitulé "Nyama" et "A Chacun sa Chance" respectivement, ont été analysées à base de leurs contenus thématiques et structurelles. Notre hypothèse est que l'utilisation efficace des figures de style et des techniques de la poésie révèle des répressions socio-économiques dans la société camerounaise d'aujourd'hui pour le traitement des problèmes psychologiques. Par conséquent, les contextes socio-économiques de la musique camerounaise jouent un rôle important dans sa valeur psychothérapeutique.

Mots-clés: Psychologie, repressions, psychothérapie, Cameroun, chansons.

Introduction

Music plays an important role in everyday life (Gabrielson, 1991). In recent times, studies have shown that adolescents and adults listen to music for at least three hours a week (Sloboda & Juslin, 2001). The main reason why people listen to and engage themselves with music seems to be at least in part, the emotional experiences and the change of mood (Koelsch et al., 2015) elicited by listening to it. It works as a transcending tool of wellness, lifestyle and attitude within humans, and it plays a vital role in all the petty, big activities performed by the human race. This is the reason for which (Osadebay, 1949) declared that ‘‘we sing when we

fight, we sing when we work, we sing when we love, we sing when we hate, we sing when a child is born, we sing when death takes a toll'' (154). This means that our emotional state dictates the utility of the music we sing. In Music therapy, it is a common view that emotional effects with therapeutic consequences have to be understood in the context of the personal situation of the patient (Koelsch et al., 2015). This brings us back to the notion that emotional state dictates the effect of music on mood and emotional change.

The performance of Cameroonian music has received an inconceivable interest from researchers both at home and abroad. Their research endeavors have been unapologetically emphatic on the incumbent role of the art in entertaining, moralizing, resisting, revolting and educating on the postcolonial realities in the Cameroonian society. According to Cheney-Coker (1981), there are ''few channels of dissent'' (3056) for the masses who suffer in silence under the brunt of ''fascist repression from political and military adventures'' and are exposed in the words of (Mouneke, 1994) to the disastrous effects of hunger, disease, malnutrition and general unrest'' (1). This shows the significant role which music has played in waging a war against disturbing social realities in Cameroon. Some authors (Brunner, 2013; Rathnaw, 2013; Ngongkum, 2017) discuss the significant role of music in the struggle for liberation from all forms for oppression and gestures towards the consideration of Cameroonian music as a resistance art. Moreover, the art has also been examined as a medium for social reformation through the beguiling fantasies of female archetypes by revealing the humorous but serious issue of handling prostitution and the negative image of women involved in this activity (Sone and Mesumbe, 2014).

The psychological and physiological therapeutic value of music has acquired a considerable recognition in the foreign sphere. Even though Raglio and Vico (2017) contend that "it is not clear which type of music should be proposed, and which processes support the effects of pleasure, distraction or something else" (1). Scientists have researched the effects of singing music lyrics (Koelsch, 2014; Koelsch et al., 2015) and it has proven to be a helpful therapy to stoke or brain injury, post-traumatic stress, speech problem, heart attack, stress, depression just to name a few. Moreover, a varied group of studies have contended that music enhances human health and performance (Schellenberg, 2012; MacDonald, 2013; Stanley, 1995). Thus, music has been seen as a therapeutic tool in the treatment of a vast majority of psychological health conditions.

Statement of the Problem

Elsewhere, music is used for curing psychological problems yet in Cameroon its psychotherapeutic value is unheeded. Moreso, research on Cameroonian music reveal significant role played by the socio-economic contexts of performance in bringing out its revolutionary, moralizing, educative, redemptive and entertaining value. This insinuates the need to investigate whether the socio-economic context contributes to the psychotherapeutic value of Cameroonian music.

This study therefore sets out to analyze the psychotherapeutic value of Cameroonian urban music by investigating two recent Cameroonian music titled "Nyama" and ''A Chacun Sa Chance'' by Aveiro Djess and Krys M respectively to ascertaining whether the socio-economic contexts of performance play a role in its psychotherapeutic value. It does so by objectively analyzing how the effective use of figurative devices and poetic

techniques in the performance experiences diagnose socio-economic repressions in the Cameroonian society today and psychologically treats them.

The analyses are therefore guided by the questions.

- How does the effective use of literary devices diagnose socio-economic repressions in the Cameroonian society today?
- How does the use of aesthetic qualities treat psychical traumas?

Hypothesis

Arising from the problem statement and the objectives of this study, we argue that the effective use of figurative language and poetic techniques in Aveiro Djess and Krys M's "Nyama" and ''A Chacun Sa Chance" respectively diagnose socio-economic repressions in Cameroonian society today for psychotherapy. Consequently, the socio-economic contexts of Cameroonian music contribute to the psychotherapeutic value of Cameroon music. In that regard, Cameroonian music is a Psychotherapy.

For this paper to be properly comprehended, it is important to define some key concepts. This is in keeping with Bernard Fonlon's (1982: 79) submission in the "The Idea of Literature" that the first Principle of any scientific discourse is the definition of one's terms or concepts so as to know "clearly and precisely right from start" what these concept or terms mean. The concepts are Psychology, Repressions, Cameroon, Music, Psychotherapy.

The word "psychology" is gotten out of the Greek word *psyche* which means mind, soul, or spirit and *logos* which means knowledge, discourse or study. From a literary point of view therefore, psychology is the study of the mind. Freud (1949) singled out repression as a special cornerstone in which the whole structure

of psychoanalysis rests. Quoted in (Habib, 2005: 574), Freud contends that repression is a primary defence mechanism whereby the ego was obliged to protect itself against any new threat. This means that repression is a therapeutic method whereby people self-heal their minds by pushing out difficult or unacceptable thoughts out of their consciousness. Therefore, a psychological repression is a study of the therapeutic methods which the mind uses to heal by expelling its unacceptable traumatic situations.

Next concept to be defined is the concept of Cameroon. And in this paper, it refers to a geographical location. Nyamnjoh and Fokwang (2009), Brunner (2013), Nyamnjoh (2003), Nyamnjoh (2005), Sone (2009), Kashim and Jick (2008) and Jick and Ngeh (2008) raise their arguments with respect to Cameroon as a geographical location and add that it is more of a historical, political, sociological, cultural and linguistic concept. Meanwhile music as the last concept to be defined in this paper is defined relative to the concept of Cameroon in recent times. It is for this reason that Cameroonian critics make bold to submit that, oral poetry which music is part of, has been appropriated and adapted to serve the pressing issues in the modern urban landscape. According to Nyamnjoh (2015), music in Cameroon is closely associated with urbanization, electrical instrumental cosmopolitan rhythm and dance styles, and modern technology. It is also informed by a mixture of Cameroonian indigenous music from diverse ethnic and cultural regions of colonial Cameroon with European encounters.

Music therefore is an actualization of words of the mouth, accompanied by a mixture of folk instruments, modern instruments and body gestures where in, feelings, reactions and culture are embedded in the ceremonial occasions. In a nutshell, this paper examines how poetic and structural elements have been effectively used to highlight the role of socio-economic themes in the music of

Aveiro Djess and Krys M as expelled traumatic and painful memories of the historical era and thereby a healing for the mind.

Methodology and Theoretical Considerations

Mindful of the fact that it is best to be a participant observer in oral performances if such data has to be collected for this study, this researcher could not and has never been opportune to participate in any of the live performances of the music under reference in this study. She had to rely on watching the music on YouTube in order to collect the data she has analyzed herein. The fact that 100% of the language used in the music could be readily understood by the researcher posed no problem in understanding the lyrics of the song.

No single literary approach can effectively be employed to appropriately study any oral piece of literature at a given time. Nevertheless, three critical assumptions were used. The psychoanalytic theory is primarily appropriate because it is interested in the identifying and releasing unconscious repressed feelings, thoughts and desires that are negatively impacting people's life and help resolve them (Frank, 2003). The application of psychoanalytic principles to this study is important because of Sigmund Freud's fundamental contribution to the concept of repressions. Hence the assumption that interpretation of a text can only be done by considering that the text is motivated by and intended for repression of unconscious traumatic memories.

The New historicist theory complements the psychoanalytic theory for the arguments of this paper since it highlights that literature is the product of a particular sociohistorical and cultural context and should therefore be interpreted against the background of its context (Habib 2005). Also, the fact that it examines how people express themselves through language and how structures of power shape people communication in the society. Moreso, the fact

that it recognizes that certain factors can affect a person or people perceived power. The theory is therefore helpful to demonstrate the effective use of language to express the socio-economic truths that are repressed memories.

The Reader-response theory is the last theory to be used for these analyses because it emphasizes the role of the audience of a performance. The assumptions of Wolfgang Iser on the concept of the Implied reader which states that the manner in which the reading process mimes the process of experience in general (Habib, 2005) and the fact that meaning is located in the dialogic interaction between the text and the reader was the central of focus. Thus, we assume that the musical performances of Aveiro Djess's song titled "Nyama" and Krys M's "A Chacun sa Chance" are a dialogic interaction where the effective use of language in the performance experiences mime socio-economic truths of the society such that repressions are removed from the mind.

Cameroonian Mbolé and Bendskin Music

Cameroonian Mbolé music is born from an amalgamation of Bikutsi, Bendskin and Makossa. Its primary purpose was to comfort mourners at funeral wakes, street entertainments and other youth gatherings as it was based on hand clapping, hitting pot lids, drumming on wooden benches and buckets alongside rhythmic singing by delinquents. First appeared around the early months of the year 2000 in the underprivileged neighborhoods of Yaounde, Cameroon, it was now played at weddings and baptism ceremonies as it gained more popularity and sophistication. It grew from live performances to the record houses as the big West African drums and keyboards replicated the musical pattern making it a national musical genre as of 2016. The lyrics are mostly sung in Camfranglais slang and often revolve around poverty-stricken

topics and related issues such as the desire for success or drug trafficking and consumption (Musah, 2021) and a powerful form of expression for its frustrated youth. It is a fine vehicle for denouncing poverty, drugs, sexism, hopelessness and insecurity as these are the recurrent themes among its young performers, some of whom have almost iconic statuses in their neighborhoods.

Cameroonian Bendskin (*bend skin*) on the other hand is a kind of popular musical genre closely linked to Mangambeu. It is performed with drums and Maracas (made from soda cans) by the people of the West Region. The vocalists sing in French, Yemba, Medumba and other Bamiléké dialects as it is closely associated with the West region of Cameroon. Bendskin originated in New Bell around the Bangangté neighborhood in Douala during the economic crisis and has been strongly pushed by the Bamiléké's. Today, current trends have shown that performers of Bendskin are not only the people who originate from the West Region but every other person can do so.

Textual Analyses

The two songs that constitute the primary data for this study are Aveiro Djess's "Nyama" which is of the Mbolé genre and Krys M's "A Chacun sa Chance" which is a Bendskin music. Excerpts from these two songs (poems) are used to demonstrate the role played by the socio-economic contexts of the performance of Cameroonian urban music are psychological cures of socio-economic truths in the Cameroonian society of today.

Before carrying out any analysis, it would be appropriate to first decode the titles of the selected songs. Consequently, this essay makes bold to contend that both titles are pregnant with meaning and contribute to highlight the socio-economic context of Cameroon today as a reflection of its psychological repressions. The title of

Aveiro Djess's poem (song) is "Nyama". This title in Camfranglais presupposes two things; firstly, that Aveiro's Society is characterized by a downtrodden class or the "wretched of the earth" and the capitalist class. Translated into English the title means "food" or "daily bread". Its metaphoric nature is a commemoration of the struggles of the downtrodden masses and at the same time, it is a call on the capitalist class to review their laws to better the socio-economic situation of the masses. This analysis leans on the new historicist principle of discourse by Micheal Foucault which states that certain groups of people are in positions to influence the pool of knowledge and what we believe to be true.

Secondly, the title is a recognition of poverty, deprivation, marginalization, unemployment and inequality in the society. Consequently, one recognizes that the inequitable distribution of the national cake is a socioeconomic traumatic and painful feeling in the mind of Cameroonians. Thus, we notice that the socio-economic nature of the title does not only diagnose the neurotic symptom in the psyche of the people today, but it also serves as an outlet for these painful realities faced in our society today. This is due to the fact that during the listening process or the oral performance we place our consciousness at the disposal of texts such that it takes over our mentality and as such one is obliged to shut down his/her individual disposition and character (Iser, 1974: 292-293). This way Cameroonian music is a psychotherapy through the role played by the socio-economic nature of the title.

Krys M's title of poem (song) "A Chacun sa Chance" is a French expression which presupposes people's different chances in the things that happen in their lives. But then, the big question is whether the singer pleased with the way chance manifests itself in our society today? The existential concept of chance comes to mind when this title is mentioned. The Oxford Dictionary defines chance

firstly as "a possibility of something happening" (456). This means that the possibility of something good or bad happening varies per person. A good number of philosophers believed in chance. Aristotle briefly considered the possibility that the universe as we know it evolved by chance (Moran,1982). According to him, chance is an accident which occurs only occasionally. Yet, the chance depicted in the title of Krys M's song insinuates a socio-economic context and a society where there is a possibility of unemployment, marginalization, material deprivation, dishonesty and frustration of the youths to happen than the other way round. This paradoxical nature of the title reveals the painful and traumatic socio-economic realities of the historical era, and it heals this neurosis during the reading/listening process through the act of aesthetic recreation. Iser says that reading/listening,

"…is not a smooth process or linear process and it actually relies on continual interruption of the flow of reading/listening: we look forward, we look back, we decide, we change our decisions, we form expectations, we are shocked, by their nonfulfillment, we question, we muse, we accept, we reject; this is the dynamic process of recreation". (288)

This is implicative of the fact that we experience art in our psyche, and it is for this reason that the moment it correlates with our repressions it affects us psychologically. In this case, the effect of the paradox during the listening experience correlates with the painful experiences of people's socio-economic state and understanding the title as a contradiction generates psychological healing. Just like in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Hamlet remarks that "it must be cruel to be kind". The contradiction here, is realized for readers to comprehend that Hamlet has to kill Claudius to avenge the death of his father. He will break his mother's heart because she is married to him, yet it is to honor his father. And the same way, in

George Orwell's in *Animal Farm* we realize the inequality of the new society by the contradictory understanding of the new rule which states that "all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others". This is the same way we understand that in the Cameroonian society today positive chance belongs to the capitalist class and the chance of the masses is to suffer. This also means that chance is no longer a natural phenomenon.

Central to these two songs (lyrics) are performance situations (setting in time and occasion) of struggling against unemployment, material deprivation, displacement, poverty and dishonesty. These situations are painful impulses and instincts that are operating in the people's minds, and which people are unconscious about. This is in line with Freud's hypothesis quoted in Habib (2005; 574) that, in the neurotic, any powerful impulse or instinct which was embarrassing continued to operate in the realm of the unconscious where it retained its full "cathexis" or investment of energy. In Aveiro Djess's song, which goes thus:

Nous tous on fala le nyama, le nyama
Personne ne yamo le nguémé, le nguémé
Nous tous on fala le nyama, le nyama
Personne ne yamo le nguémé, le nguémé
Avec mes diplômes eh eh
J'ai marché partout pour le work éeeeh
J'ai déposé mes dossiers lé lé lé lé
Mais personne ne m'a rappelé, rappelé.

The socio-economic situation (setting in time) of struggling against poverty seen through metaphoric images and the quest for employment is revealed through the irony of being educated yet ending up unemployed are seen as psychological occasions that orchestrates its performance. These are psychological unavoidable truths of the Cameroonian society today, being reflected in the

music. In the listening process, these truths reflected in the song, mime the peoples' instincts that have been unconsciously operating in their mind about their poor and unemployed state. Their psychological experience is reflected in these socioeconomic situations evoked in the music. Iser (1974) states that the manner in which the reader experiences the text will reflect his own disposition and, in this respect, the literary text acts as a kind of mirror (280-281).

This implies that people's state of mind influences their interpretation of power and as such the value they give to text affects them. That metaphorical and ironic nature of the context of performance, (occasion) expresses their psychological experience and it becomes a substitutive means of satisfaction. The metaphor paints a mental picture to represent their reality by activating their imagination of their reality thus allowing people to expunge their hard feelings and healing their psyche through day dreaming. With this the role of the socio-economic context to Cameroonian music as a psychotherapy is evident.

In Krys M's "A Chacun sa Chance'' socio-economic situations of performance mime psychological repressions and just like in Aveiro's song. These situations evoked in the song (poem) trigger people's unconscious fears that have been inactive in their minds. This is evident in the lyrics when the singer says that:

Vingt ans d'études
Tu as aimé l'école ah
Quand tu finis,
Tu cherches le boulot
Même dans les snacks dossier rejeté aah
Eeh aah eeh aah eeh aah ah
Ngue deuxième bureau qui t'a installé
Même dans l'immeuble tu n'es même pas

Ta place est que là-bas près du vigile aah
Eeh aah eeh aah eeh aah ah

The paradoxical nature of the socio-economic situations reveals the societal truths which are traumatic experiences of the listeners. The fact that people spend twenty years of education but are subjected to unemployment is a known fact in the society today. Yet, it is even more paradoxical that qualified and educated people are fighting for the same opportunities as the non-literate people. The paradox on the socio-economic situations are opportunities to mock powerful structures that have conditioned the society in that way. The effect of the paradox on the psyche releases traumatic stress that had been recollected in the minds of the people. Moreover, when the singer in her lyrics, adds that:

Tu vois L'autre go en aventures
Eh ngnuak France
Et toi aussi tu pars te lancer que vroup
Ça tak sur toi aah
Eeh aah eeh aah eeh aah ah
Tu épouses Le Blanc de quatre-vingt ans ah
Ngue il va mourir je vais hériter
Te voilà qui die
Die avant lui aah
Eeh aah eeh aah eeh aah ah

This excerpt demonstrates the ironical situation in which Cameroonian immigrants find themselves in today abroad in the quest for survival. Some attempt the unorthodox means of traveling are met with the worse experiences of kidnapping and even death. Meanwhile, in the quest for survival young ladies fall into wrong calculations leading to wasted sins. Through this ironical situation, people's psychological fears are expunged as it creates a forum for them to accept the power of chances but also to blame the capitalist

class for their situation of insufficiency and lack which has pushed them to choosing displacement as a solution. Here, the existentialist concept of chance seems have evolved in the recent time in Cameroon. The natural nowadays chance is owned by the powerful people of the society who determine what knowledge and truth should be. It is thwarted at will such that chance is no longer natural but artificial. Afterall, it is new historicists who sustain the view that power is the ability to exercise control especially as it is wielded by the powerful over the powerless.

The physical setting of both songs is suggestive of the socio-economic standards of the people of the society as well as their unconscious fears. In Krys M's song, an excerpt of the lyrics goes thus:

> Nous voilà qualifié en coupe du monde
> Tous devant le match dernière action
> De Choupo Moting bimm
> ENEO a coupé eh.

Here, it is obvious that the physical setting is inhabited by struggling people who suffer material deprivation, poverty and unemployment. They do not even have a right to enjoy instances of national pride due to "seizures" of electricity. The physical setting of this song mirrors a gathering in historical period of the 2021 World Cup qualifiers. This moment was characterized by a series of seizures. The material deprivation here symbolized by ENEO and through this symbolism the people's disgruntlement with the situation of electricity shortage is unveiled. In the same vein, through the effective use of symbolism in "Nyama" by Aveiro, the traumatic memories are revealed through symbolism in the physical setting. He says that:

> Ça fait quoi si je vends les chaussures à Mokolo
> (au marché Mboppi)

Tant que je nourris ma famille eh ça va !
(Au marché central eh)
Mais ça fait quoi si je fais la brouette à Mvog-ada (ooooh)
Tant que je soigne ma mère eh c'est bon**!**

In this excerpt, we notice the physical settings of the major markets in Yaounde and Douala. The Mboppi Market and the Mokolo markets are known for inhabiting amongst many of the deprived and the wretched. As such, the markets are symbolic of unemployment, poverty and deprivation, which are psychological anxieties in the minds of the people. Through these symbolisms the people's psychological repressions are uncovered and the effect of the symbolism creates emotions which heal the psyche by manipulating their minds with representation of their painful experiences with objects so as to make it look abstract and as such reduce anxiety. Freud calls it indulging in day dreams (Habib, 579).

In both songs, the people for whom the songs are lamenting are presented by their socio-economic standards. In the early part of his song, Aveiro presents the people for whom he is crying. These are those struggling for survival in his society. It is to this downtrodden class that he dedicates the song. When he says that:

Hié éeeeh (dédicace spéciale à tous les mbagandos les broussailleurs, les warmans, ça c'est pour vous)
Dédicace spéciale aux taximen éeeh
Et les bensikineurs éeeh
Et les apacheurs éeeh
Ne baisse jamais les bras même si tu tchop le gari
La vie c'est le match Coton-Canon au Mali.

We notice that the people for whom he is singing are taximen, bike riders and pickpockets. This group of people are a symbolic representation of the downtrodden class, whose socio-economic problems are evident through their professions. Since the singer and

this criticism is said to be impacted by the time and period they live in (Veeser, 1989), it will not be wrong to make bold that, most of these people to whom the song is dedicated to, including the singer, are people who have the qualifications, yet the system has rendered them hardened strugglers. Moreover, he encourages them not to lose hope even if they eat "garri". Garri as a survival plan is a symbol of their poverty. The use of garri is a symbol of hunger and malnutrition of the masses while the capitalists live in excess. This historical truth dawns on the audience psychological repressions and like its mirror it sends out the disappointed psychological state and replaces it with consciousness of their real situation with the hope of a change because in new historicism history is an everchanging factor.

In Krys M's case the socio-economic context of performance also reveals the nature audience of their psychological repressions. As she says that:

> Vingt ans d'études
> Tu as aimé l'école
> Quand tu finis, tu cherches le boulot
> Même dans les snacks dossier rejeté aah
> Eeh aah eeh aah eeh aah ah
> Ngue deuxième bureau qui t'a installé
> Même dans l'immeuble tu n'es même pas
> Ta place et que là-bas près du vigile aah
> Eeh aah eeh aah eeh aah ah
> Tu vois L'autre go en aventures
> Eh ngnuak France
> Et toi aussi tu pars te lancer que vroup
> Ça tak sur toi aah
> Eeh aah eeh aah eeh aah ah
> Tu épouses Le Blanc de quatre-vingts ans ah

Ngue il va mourir je vais hériter
Te voilà qui die
Die avant lui aah
Eeh aah eeh aah eeh aah ah
Ngue tontinard tu es toi dedans ah
Tu veux épargner
C'est à ton tour ton tour de bouffer
Caissière recherchée ah
Eeh aah eeh aah eeh aah ah
Nous voilà qualifié en coupe du monde
Tous devant le match dernière action
De Choupo Moting bimm
ENEO a coupé eh

The information on the social status of the audiences is revealed, alongside their cultural inclination, and the age of the audience through figurative language. Her metaphoric style reveals implied reader in his psychological dispositions (Iser,1978). That is to say that the audiences are functions of the text. They are considered at this level as part of the structure of the text without whom the holistic interpretation of the entire text is deficient.

By these standards, the text (poem) enunciates that the historical situation of the masses (youths), which is also their psychological disposition is one where, their educational qualification matches unemployment, the educated employees are reduced to the same level with non-literate employees, lack of opportunities push youths to displacement, while female immigrants practice hypergamy for survival. It is also a psychological disposition where struggling youths practice banking and the bankers are dishonest enough to abdicate with the money due to poverty. Moreover, it is a psychological disposition where the audience identity themes are characterized by material deprivation

seen through the symbol of ENEO the electricity company which is known for its disruption of electricity peculiarly a situation experienced by the masses only.

These socio-economic situations of the masses replicated in the psychological experience of the socioeconomic context of performance also is a healing for the mind. As the interpretation of their psychological experience paves a way for expunging their trauma. Afterall, the therapeutic effect of music is being proven through correlational studies which has proven that music activates neurotransmitters involved in modulating stress (Cortisol, Khalifa, Calla Bella, Roy, Peretz and Lupien, 2003), and that it can serve the adaptive purpose of emotion regulation (Muro et al., 2009).

It has been found out that the psychological functions of listening to music is seen in its ability to offer valued companionship, provide comfortable level of activation and a positive mood (Schäfer et al., 2013) in research elsewhere. Meanwhile the education, revolutionary and resistant function of the art is still making headlines back home. This gives one the impression that music in Cameroon is only valuable in as much as it is radical and resistant. Meanwhile it is worthy therefore to investigating its psychological role which the socio-economic contexts of its performance are seen to be an activation of positive mood. The use of language and the linguistic pattern in both songs reveal the role of the socio-economic contexts of performance in music as a psychotherapy. The use of linguistic currents reveals of the psychological repressions in the Cameroonian society. Tabi-Manga (2000: 70) makes it clear that:

> Incontestablement, la République du Cameroun présente une configuration, unique dans tout le continent Africain, du fait de son bilinguisme officiel : Français- Anglais. Il faut, en outre, ajouter une

> diversité incomparable des langues. En plus d'un nombre impressionnant des parlers, on y retrouve toutes les grandes familles linguistiques Africaines. C'est d'ailleurs l'une des raisons pour lesquelles ce pays est considéré comme l'Afrique en miniature.

This except certifies the richness in the linguistic diversity of the Cameroonian nation which is reflected in their songs. As they both use the French language to communicate, they borrow from Camfranglais and ngemba to alternate for a musical rhythmic effect. In fact, Ebongue (2014) contends that linguistic diversity in Cameroonian songs is for marketing purposes, yet we think that, it is also used to achieve different psychological ends such as creating certain moods states and changing levels of emotional arousal because the value of music is more dependent the listening context.

In "Nyama" Aveiro borrows words like "Fala" (struggling), "Nyama" (food, money), "nguémé" (poverty) "Mbagandos" (the struggling population, masses), "Tchop" (eating) which are patterns in Camfranglais to highlight the issues of poverty and struggling for a daily bread which are not only the socio-economic context of performance of the song but are psychologically stressful emotions of the people. In effect, only people who belong to the lower class understand this linguistic code. It reveals their psychological traumatic state of poverty and daily struggles. The hope that comes with the code-switching appeals to their psychical frustrations and creates a positive mood state as well as a positive emotional arousal.

In Krys M's song the use of linguistic traits from Ngemba reveals the satiric yet paradoxical relationship that exists between educated youths and unemployment in this historical era. In so many instances, she mixes the ngemba word "Ngue", with the French language. And this we interpret as having psychological effects on the listeners. This is evident when she says:

Ngue deuxième bureau qui t'a installé
Même dans l'immeuble tu n'es même pas
Ta place et que là-bas près du vigile aah
Tu épouses Le Blanc de quatre-vingt ans ah
Ngue il va mourir je vais hériter
Te voilà qui die
Ngue tontinard tu es toi dedans ah
Tu veux épargner
C'est à ton tour ton tour de bouffer
Caissière recherchée ah

The code switching here is mainly figurative. She criticizes how youths find strategies to succeed in life yet by chance things always find a way to turn out negatively. Through these code-mixing psychological repressions in the society today are uncovered and the effect of the paradox provides an outlet for them thus healing the psyche. This explains the reason for which listening to music is considered as medicine to reduce levels of stress hormone cortisol and in some areas, it is more effective than prescribing drugs (Novotney, 2013).

Musicians in Cameroon owe their fame not only to their ability to inform, educate and entertain the masses by singing about the sufferings of the poor and most importantly for holding the leaders accountable but also to the emotions they arouse with their tone, mood, voice, gestures, facial expressions cultural inclination and style. Both musicians, through their employment of these aesthetic devices particular to their style, are able to heal the psychological repressions of their time and provide outlets for distresses. Djess consistently gesticulates with the show of his hands and fingers to indicate the lack of and search for money and also the hatred for poverty when he says

Nous tous on fala le nyama, le nyama

Personne ne yamo le nguémé, le nguémé
Nous tous on fala le nyama, le nyama
Personne ne yamo le nguémé, le nguémé

The non-verbal aesthetic elements employed here is figurative. It is metaphoric in demonstrating the socioeconomic situation of poverty and the struggle to make ends meet by the lower class and his hardworking nature which speaks volumes to his listeners. Moreover, the artist's tone is satiric and reproachful of the poor and struggling situation of the masses in spite of their educational qualifications. From his tone in the song, we understand that the atmosphere/mood of the song is consolatory and encourages the masses to hold on to the little they have while hoping for a change. In "A Chacun ca chance" the non-verbal performance aesthetic is also figurative. This is evident an instance like when the singer says that

Tu épouses le blanc de quatre-vingts ans ah
Ngue il va mourir je vais hériter
Te voilà qui die
Die avant lui aah
Eeh aah eeh aah eeh aah ah
Ngue tontinard tu es toi dedans ah
Tu veux épargner
C'est à ton tour ton tour de bouffer
Caissière recherchée ah
Eeh aah eeh aah eeh aah ah
Nous voilà qualifié en coupe du monde
Tous devant le match dernière action
De choupo moting bimm
ENEO a coupé eh

Here we notice three instances of paralinguistic features performed by the artists that are ironic. The irony in them portrays socio-

economic situations which are psychologically traumatic in the Cameroonian society today.

The first is the death of the young immigrant lady who marries the eighty years old Whiteman with the hope that when he dies soonest, she will inherit his property and ironically, she passes before him. In a second instance, a local banker abdicates with money meant to be given to a faithful saver ironically, he who contributed for others is duped on his turn to benefit.

Lastly, it is ironical that, there is electricity disruption at the moment when it is needed the most, just that moment when everybody is engaged to see the goal that qualifies Cameroon for, the World Cup Football Competition. These situations are traumatic and the irony that exposes them also provides an outlet for the liberation of these painful anxieties through the mockery that results from them. The irony rebukes these traumatic experiences and as such it eases the pain that accompanies them. Moreso, it questions the element of chance which seems to be more of the manifestation of bad luck only to the masses. Thus, nowadays chance manifests positively only to the capitalist class.

Conclusion

To conclude, we have argued that the socio-economic context of performance of Cameroonian music plays a role in its psychotherapeutic value. With evidence from two recent Cameroonian urban music by Aveiro Djess and Krys M titled "Nyama" and ''A Chacun Sa Chance" respectively, we noticed that the effective use of style on the elements of the art diagnoses and heals socio-economic psychological repressions in the society. Thus, we notice that paradox, irony, metaphors and symbolisms on the title, physical setting, audiences the artist's and the linguistic currents of the performance context revealed socio-economic

distress and provided outlets for the distresses due to the fact that during the listening process or the oral performance we place our consciousness at the disposal of texts such that it takes over our mentality and as such one is obliged to shut down his/her individual disposition and character (Iser, 1974: 292-293), indulging in day dreams, aesthetic recreation and the fact that the text is a reflection of our historical context.

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JELLiC: Journal of English Language, Literature, and Culture
Volume 7; No. 02, July 2024
ISSN: 2304-6120 (Print) / 2304-6163 (E-Version)
www.cellacameroon.org/publications/jellic

Hate Speech in Herman Melville's Moby Dick: A Setback to Multiculturalism

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Abstract

This study sets out to examine the repercussion of hate speech on the progress and promotion of multiculturalism. It seeks to show the extent to which bigoted language affects the mixing and mingling of people from different cultures in different parts of the world. The study thus asserts that the use of foul language by a person or group of people towards another person or group greatly hampers the advancement of multiculturalism. This, as hate speech has contributed to fuelling and encouraging discrimination, segregation, marginalization, otherness, and subaltern. It has equally helped in widening the gap between the centre and the margin. The research further showed that hateful language has led to the disintegration and disjoin of communities, nations, and families, which is an adverse effect to multiculturalism and globalization. This study thus proves that if hate speech is not mitigated or eradicated, it will be a major drawback to the furtherance of multiculturalism, as it will be practically almost impossible to embrace the customs and traditions of the people we injure through the use of hate speech. The postcolonial studies theory has been used as the theoretical framework for the analysis of the work under study. This theory will help us to establish the relationship between the perpetrators of hate speech and their victims, and how their interaction can adversely affect the development of multiculturalism. The study will benefit from tenets of postcolonial theory such as centre margin, otherness, subaltern, mimicry, identity, race, resistance, hybridity, hegemony, and migration.

Keywords: Hate speech, Herman Melville, Moby Dick, Setback, Multiculturalism, Postcolonial Theory

Introduction

Hate speech can be traced as far back as many centuries ago. The 19th century epoch for example saw a rise in the movement of people

of different races from one part of the world to another either because of missionary activities, exploration, colonization, trade, or discovery. The intercourse between the different races gave birth to such expressions as black, slave, Negro, nigger, savage, primitive, native, pagan, colonized, barbarian, cannibal, and Dark Continent. In spite of the fact that hate speech has been around now for quite a long time, it only started gaining notoriety in recent times when it became a threat to social cohesion and global peace. It is believed that:

> The influence of hate speech, hatred and intolerance today has acquired impressive proportions. Its destructive impact is partly increased by the use of new information technologies. The rhetoric of enmity and hatred spread in social media and instant messengers undermines the social cohesion of citizens, breeds distrust and intolerance, sows panic, provokes people to illegal actions, creating the ground for conflict tension. (From Hate Speech to Non-violent Communication 7)

The prevalence and influence of hate speech around the world today is therefore quite devastating, thereby calling for a global action and response in combating this venomous phenomenon. This explains why the United Nations (UN), the organization in charge of world peace, has multiplied efforts and strategies aimed at combatting hate speech and guaranteeing peace in regions where hate speech is a threat to peace. In the UN Strategy and Action Plan to Combat Hate Speech, UN Secretary-General António Guterres emphasizes that "combating hate speech does not mean limiting or prohibiting freedom of speech. It means preventing hate speech from escalating into something more dangerous, especially incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence, which is prohibited by

international law" (Quoted in *From Hate Speech to Non-violent Communication* 7, 8).

Definition of Key Terms

There is no exact legal definition of hate speech that is universally accepted in international human rights law, but there are definitions that are followed by international organizations with extensive experience in this sensitive area. Many proposed definitions of hate speech have been formulated in response to specific and perniciously discriminatory social phenomena or incidents. Definitions have also been adapted over time to address new situations, and to accommodate shifts in language, shifting understandings of equality, and the harms of discrimination, or developments in technology. Put simply, hate speech is any expression of discriminatory hate towards people: it does not necessarily entail a particular consequence (*Article 19* 9, 10).

The international human rights organization Article19 defines hate speech as any manifestation of discriminatory hatred towards people based on a particular aspect of their identity. Discriminatory hatred is an intense and irrational feeling of enmity towards a person or group of people because of who they are, based on an identifying characteristic recognized in international human rights law. The Article went on to add that hate speech is any expression imparting opinions or ideas – bringing an internal opinion or idea to an external audience. It can take many forms: written, non-verbal, visual, artistic, and may be disseminated through any media, including internet, print, radio, or television. The UN considers hate speech any kind of communication, verbal, written or behavioral, that is hostile or uses derogatory or discriminatory language against any person or group of people on the basis of who they are, or, in other words, on the basis of their

religion, ethnic origin, nationality, race, skin color, social origin, gender and other identity factors. Any publications or statements in which there is a contrast between "we" and "they" most often contain hate speech. They form stereotypes, provoke hatred and discriminate against people or a group of people on various grounds. (Quoted in *From Hate Speech to Non-violent Communication* 8, 9, 16).

This paper posits that hate speech, which is aimed at humiliation, insult, aggression on ethnic, religious, gender, racial, social grounds, blocks the progress of multiculturalism. Multicultural and Multiculturalism are the words frequently used to describe the ethnic diversity. Multiculturalism denotes a society in which several cultures co-exist. It means that it is a society, state, a nation, a country, a region or even a geographical location as town or school, which is composed of people who belong to different cultures (*Multiculturalism: A Theoretical Framework* 31). *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines multiculturalism as the practice of giving importance to all cultures in a society and it includes people of several, different races, religions, languages and traditions.

The theoretical framework to be used for the analysis of this study will be the Postcolonial Theory. This theory refers to the critical analysis of the history, culture, literature, and modes of discourse that are specific to the former colonies of England, Spain, France, and other European imperial powers. These studies have focused especially on the Third World countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean islands, and South America. Some scholars, however, extend the scope of such analyses also to the discourse and cultural productions of such countries as Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, which achieved independence much earlier than the Third World countries (*A Glossary of Literary Terms* 236). Postcolonial

theory considers vexed cultural-political questions of national and ethnic identity, "otherness", race, imperialism, and language, during and after the colonial periods. It draws upon Poststructuralist theories such as those of Deconstruction in order to unravel the complex relations between imperial "centre" and colonial "periphery", often in ways that have been criticized for being excessively abstruse. The principal luminaries of postcolonial theory after Edward Said have been Gayatri C. Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* 200). Some of the main concepts of postcolonial theory such as centre margin binary, otherness, subaltern, mimicry, identity, race, resistance, hybridity, hegemony, essentialism, eurocentrism, orientalism, and migration will be used in the analysis.

Literature Review

In his thesis entitled "Transcendentalism and Multiculturalism in the Selected Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville," Roger Bofua submits that Hawthorne and Melville have raised issues of multicultural concerns in their works which has gone a long way to enhancing the process of multiculturalism, adding that they have shown that love, tolerance, and mutual respect for one another are the watchwords for a better multicultural world. This research endeavour asserts that when the love, tolerance, and mutual respect for one another are being shrouded by hate speech, multiculturalism suffers a major setback.

A study carried out by Judit Bayer and Petra Bard at the request of the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs reveals that hate speech and hate crimes poison societies by threatening individual rights, human dignity and equality, reinforcing tensions between social groups, disturbing public peace and public order, and jeopardising peaceful

coexistence. They effect private lives, or in cases of violent bias crimes, even victims' life and limb. They stigmatise and terrify whole communities. They erode social cohesion, solidarity, and trust between members of society. Bayer and Bard add that hate speech blocks rational public debate, without which no democracy can exist; it leads to an abuse of rights that endangers the rule of law (*Hate Speech and Hate Crime in the EU and the Evaluation of Online Content Regulation Approaches* 13).

In their article titled "Problems in Multicultural Society: From Language Politeness to Hate Speech" Rahmadsyah Rangkuti and Andi Pratama Lubis contend that cultural diversity that includes ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity is a gift and grace from God Almighty that must be managed and well maintained by all elements of the nation. They further note that caring for diversity and harmonization in multicultural society in the era of information technology or globalization is the biggest challenge of the day, as their article reveals that the problems that can threaten the unity and integrity of this republic (Indonesia, and other multicultural societies) are not only derived from differences of certain political and ideological attitudes, but may also originate and begin from languages impoliteness to hate speech (*Proceedings of the 1st Annual International Conference on Language and Literature, 18-19 April 2018, Fakultas Sastra, UISU, Medan, Indonesia* 255).

Furthermore, Marcel Maussen and Ralph Grillo warn that hate speech in various ways demeans, denigrates, defames, essentialises or otherwise 'harms', an individual or group, typically one which constitutes a 'minority'. It also entails some element of 'incitement', by inciting or legitimising violence, discrimination or hostility vis-à-vis (members of) a group. In their article, "Regulation of Speech in Multicultural Societies: Introduction," they note that the purpose is not, however, to revisit that normative debate (about

hate speech), but rather to analyse empirically and theoretically how multicultural societies in Europe are struggling with the challenge of addressing the balance between controlling hate speech and protecting freedom of expression.

As far as multiculturalism is concerned, Hajiali Sepahvand shows traces of multiculturalism in *Moby Dick* in his article entitled "Hybridity as Instrument of Decolonization in Herman Melville's Moby Dick", when he considers "the very plot of this novel as American melting pot which contains multiculturalism, a part of which is hybridity, through the masterly spiritual and physical heroism and the high capacity of Queequeg /Ishmael" (*Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 900).

In line with Sepahvand, Michael Kouroubetes asserts in his article entitled "*Moby Dick*: From a Multi-genre, Multi-Cultural Perspective" that:

> *By focusing on the novel's use of the hybrid genre, and by reading from a perspective attuned to multiple perspectives, we can see that the novel is showing that it favors a global perspective, inclusive of multiculturalism and not just showing a white monoculture America. We become more attuned to global perceptions used in the allegories, images, and narration that assumes a more global perspective.* (*IUSB Graduate Journal* 60-61)

The blend of multi-genres in *Moby Dick* is akin to the multi-cultural growth that occurred in the antebellum era, especially due to the American expansionism that occurred after the Mexican-American war that was won by America in 1848. The increased cultural diversity that the American expansionism resulted in is also analogous to the diverse types of writing that were occurring in Melville's day.

This study will reiterate the dwindling effects that hate speech can have on multiculturalism by drawing inspiration from Herman Melville's *Moby Dick.* The study aims at identifying hate speech related expressions made by characters in *Moby Dick*, and then showing the extent to which such speeches hamper and curtail multiculturalism as a whole.

Hate Speech in *Moby Dick* and its Ramifications on Multiculturalism

Moby Dick; or *The Whale* is an 1851 novel by American writer Herman Melville. The book is the story of Captain Ahab's self-destructive obsession with the white whale called Moby Dick. It is told through the narration of Ishmael, a sailor new to Ahab's ship, the Pequod. The plot of the novel follows Ahab's manic drive to kill the whale, even as it endangers his crew. As the characters interact and mingle with one another, they use utterances that injure and hurt the feeling of others.

To start with, when Ishmael arrives New Bedford on transit to Nantucket, where he has to board a whaling ship and "sail about a little and see the watery part of the world" (*Moby Dick* 1), and discovers that the ship to transport him to Nantucket had left, he is forced to look for an inn to stay in till Monday, since he arrived there on a Saturday night. As he moves around in search of where to spend the night, he enters an arena where people of black descent are certainly having a worship service. Upon seeing them, Ishmael says the following about them: "It seemed the great Black Parliament sitting in Tophet. A hundred black faces turned round in their rows to peer; and beyond, a black Angel of Doom was beating a book in a pulpit. It was a negro church; and the preacher's text was about the blackness of darkness, and the weeping and wailing and teeth-gnashing there. Ha, Ishmael, muttered I, backing out, Wretched

entertainment at the sign of "The Trap!" (*Moby Dick* 9). His utterances towards the black race show that he considers the black race as satanic, devilish, evil, monstrous, and despicable beings fit for hell. Even when he realizes that it is a "negro church" (which is still another offensive way to address Africans) with worshippers who have obviously been converted to a religion that was not originally theirs but Ishmael's, he still refuses to identify with them and qualifies the preacher as "a black Angel of Doom," certainly the devil in hell preaching about hell to his disciples. This explains why he considers that "Black Parliament" as a trap set for him and backed out in haste. His backing out hinders him from coming into communion and fellowship with the black community there that would have made him experience their culture and their approach to the gospel they were learning from the pulpit.

Also, when he finally finds a place to sleep in – the Spouter Inn – the landlord made him to understand that he was going to share his bed with "a dark-complexioned harpooneer" (15). When he hears that, he becomes furious and his thoughts and speech about the harpooneer show hatred and abhorrence towards the person he is supposed to share the bed that night with. He says: "I could not help it, but I began to feel suspicious of this "dark complexioned" harpooneer. At any rate, I made up my mind that if it so turned out that we should sleep together, he must undress and get into bed before I did" (*Moby Dick* 16,17). The fact that he grows suspicious of the harpooneer and considers it an abomination to sleep on the same bed with him even without having met him in person attests of his hatred for him. This detestation and fright of the harpooneer causes him to refuse to sleep with him or meet him. This attitude negates the progress of multiculturalism as he considers the harpooner not worthy enough to mingle with him as he is not of his own cultural orientation. However, after much contemplation and

without having any choice, he made up his mind to sleep with the harpooneer in the hope that "I'll have a good look at him then, and perhaps we may become jolly good bedfellows after all — there's no telling" (18). Even though he summoned the courage to share the bed with his fellow human being, he still describes him in despicable terms – "infernal", "blackish looking squares", "unearthly complexion", "stranger", "rascal", and "devil." He even adds that, "it was now quite plain that he must be some abominable savage or other shipped aboard of a whaleman in the South Seas and so landed in this Christian country" (ibid). All these considerations and appellations cause him to want to run away from the harpooneer and hence running away from mixing with someone from a different cultural background, which hinders multiculturalism.

Still talking hatefully of the harpooneer, the voyager announces that the savage went about something that completely fascinated his attention and convinced him that he must indeed be a heathen. He recounted that going to his heavy grego, or wrapall, or dreadnaught, which he had previously hung on a chair, he fumbled in the pockets and produced at length a curious little deformed image with a hunch on its back, and exactly the color of a three days' old Congo baby. The narrator says as he remembers the embalmed head, at first, he almost thought that this black manikin was a real baby preserved in some similar manner. But seeing that it was not at all limber, and that it glistened a good deal like polished ebony, he concluded that it must be nothing but a wooden idol, which indeed proved to be. For now the savage goes up to the empty fire-place, and removing the papered fire-board, sets up this little hunchbacked image, like a tenpin, between the andirons. The chimney jambs and all the bricks inside were very sooty, so that he thought this fire-place made a very appropriate little shrine or chapel for his Congo idol. The narrator thus makes a mockery of the harpooneer's god,

calling it "Congo boy", "Congo idol", "wooden idol", "hunchbacked image", black manikin. All these because he believes that he is worshipping a God who is more superior than that of the harpooneer. The mention of Congo boy and Congo idol is allusion to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* which is set along the banks of the Congo River and depicts Africans as barbarians, cannibalistic, savagery, evil, and devilish.

Contrarily, when he interacts more and more with Queequeg and his culture, his mentality about religions and worship changes completely in favour of multiculturalism. He philosophizes thus:

> I was a good Christian; born and bred in the bosom of the infallible Presbyterian Church. How then could I unite with this wild idolator in worshipping his piece of wood? But what is worship? thought I. Do you suppose now, Ishmael, that the magnanimous God of heaven and earth—pagans and all included—can possibly be jealous of an insignificant bit of black wood? Impossible! But what is worship?—to do the will of God—that is worship. And what is the will of God?— to do to my fellow man what I would have my fellow man to do to me—that is the will of God. Now, Queequeg is my fellow man. And what do I wish that this Queequeg would do to me? Why, unite with me in my particular Presbyterian form of worship. Consequently, I must then unite with him in his; ergo, I must turn idolator. So I kindled the shavings; helped prop up the innocent little idol; offered him burnt biscuit with Queequeg; salamed before him twice or thrice; kissed his nose; and that done, we undressed and went to bed, at peace with

> our own consciences and all the world. (Moby Dick 58)

We see that when Ishmael's perspective about cultures and beliefs changes, he no longer abhors Queequeg's god and calls it derogatory and humiliating names. He moves from calling "Yojo" as "Congo boy", "Congo idol", "wooden idol", "hunchbacked image", and "black manikin" to calling it lovely and adorable names like "innocent little idol." He even goes as far as personifying it by referring to it as "him" and "his" ("So I kindled the shavings; helped prop up the innocent little idol; offered him burnt biscuit with Queequeg; salamed before him twice or thrice; kissed his nose"). The fact that Ishmael resorted to worshipping and offering sacrifices to "Yojo" shows his willingness to embrace the customs and traditions of people from different parts of the world to complement his. This clearly demonstrates that if he had continued to remain hateful of Queequeg and his ways, he would have hindered the process of coming into contact with Queequeg's belief system and thus slowed down the process multiculturalism.

Furthermore, when Ishmael and the harpooneer, now Queequeg and friend to Ishmael, go to sign with the Pequod to sail with, captain Peleg addresses Queequeg in the most scornful manner that only saw the intervention of Ishmael to save the situation. The narrator recounts that as they were walking down the end of the wharf towards the ship, Queequeg carrying his harpoon, Captain Peleg in his gruff voice loudly hailed them from his wigwam, saying he had not suspected his friend was a cannibal, and furthermore announcing that he let no cannibals on board that craft, unless they previously produced their papers. To this, the following dialogue ensued between both men:

> "What do you mean by that, Captain Peleg?" said I.
> "I mean," he replied, "he must show his papers."

> "Yea," said Captain Bildad in his hollow voice, sticking his head from behind Peleg's, out of the wigwam. "He must show that he's converted. Son of darkness," he added, turning to Queequeg, "art thou at present in communion with any Christian church?"
> "Why," said I, "he's a member of the first Congregational Church." Here be it said, that many tattooed savages sailing in Nantucket ships at last come to be converted into the churches.
> "How long hath he been a member?" he then said, "not very long I rather guess, young man."
> "No," said Peleg, "and he hasn't been baptized right either, or it would have washed some of that devil's blue off his face."
> "Do tell, now," cried Bildad, "is this Philistine a regular member of Deacon Deuteronomy's meeting? I never saw him going there, and I pass it every Lord's day."
> "I don't know anything about Deacon Deuteronomy or his meeting," said I, "all I know is, that Queequeg here is a born member of the First Congregational Church. He is a deacon himself, Queequeg is."
> "Young man," said Bildad, "thou art skylarking with me—explain thyself, thou young Hittite. What church dost thee mean? answer me."
> (Moby Dick 98,99)

The fact that captains Peleg and Bildad insist on Queequeg being converted into Christianity with clear proof before he can be accepted to sail with them only shows how discriminatory, bias, and uncultured they are. Their actions thwart the progress of multiculturalism. Their aim is to push the culture of Queequeg to the

periphery while projecting theirs to the centre. They believe that Christianity is superior to any other religion and should therefore be adopted by anyone who interacts with them.

In addition, another harpooneer on board the Pequod is described in the most hurtful manner by the narrator and later on by some other crew members. When the narrator is announcing him, he states that the third harpooneer was Daggoo, a gigantic, coal-black negro-savage, with a lion-like tread—an Ahasuerus to behold. He remarks that suspended from his ears were two golden hoops, so large that the sailors called them ring-bolts and would talk of securing the top-sail halyards to them. The narrator recounts that in his youth Daggoo had voluntarily shipped on board of a whaler, lying in a lonely bay on his native coast. And never having been anywhere in the world but in Africa, Nantucket, and the pagan harbors most frequented by whalemen; and having now led for many years the bold life of the fishery in the ships of owners uncommonly heedful of what manner of men they shipped; Daggoo retained all his barbaric virtues, and erect as a giraffe, moved about the decks in all the pomp of six feet five in his socks. There was a corporeal humility in looking up at him; and a white man standing before him seemed a white flag come to beg truce of a fortress. Curious to tell, this imperial negro, Ahasuerus Daggoo, was the Squire of little Flask, who looked like a chess-man beside him. Daggoo is referred to as a gigantic, coal-black negro-savage, with a lion-like tread, and also as an imperial negro. He is equally seen as barbaric, as the narrator claims that he still retains all his barbaric virtues.

One thing that is even more disturbing is the fact that the storyteller reveals that in every domain of life in America and elsewhere in Europe, the natives are the ones who are the masters and the employers, while the rest of the world especially Africans are the servants and the employees. The masters provide the brain,

while the servants provide the muscles. This becomes more annoying when the narrator says when the masters have used these work force to their satisfaction they dump them back where they picked them and only come for them again when they need them the next time. There is therefore no room for a cultural intercourse between the servants and the masters since the servants are also qualified in despicable terms as seen in the way Daggoo, Queequeg, and Pip, are qualified. In fact, Ahab exclaims, "What an odd feeling, now, when a black boy's host to white men with gold lace upon their coats!" (589). He considers it idiosyncratic to see an inferior black boy playing host to superior white men because he believes that conventionally whites must always be the ones to host the blacks as their underdogs. Captain Ahab refers to Pip as "Thou blackling!" and "Pagan." Once when he was looking for Pip, Ahab pronounced him a useless boy when he asked, "Who's seen Pip the coward?" (576). Then he continues, "Monsieurs, have ye seen one Pip? —a little negro lad, five feet high, hang-dog look, and cowardly! Jumped from a whale-boat once; —seen him?" (589). Plus, in an attempt to instruct Pip not to go overboard the boat again, Stubb tells Pip: "Stick to the boat, Pip, or by the Lord, I wont pick you up if you jump; mind that. We can't afford to lose whales by the likes of you; a whale would sell for thirty times what you would, Pip, in Alabama. Bear that in mind, and don't jump any more" (*Moby Dick* 460-462). Stubb thus insinuates that a dead whale is far better than Pip's life, and that they cannot afford to lose whales because they want to safeguard the life of a worthless black pagan whose life cannot fetch them anything compared to what a dead whale can give them in the market. He therefore reduces Pip to a level that is lower than that of a fish. This is hate speech that quite negatively affects the enhancement of multiculturalism.

In the same light, in a general discussion on board among the sailors from different parts of the world, the Spanish sailor gives Daggoo a huge dose of hateful verbal attacks as he, advancing menacingly towards Daggoo tells him that, "Aye, harpooner, thy race is the undeniable dark side of mankind - devilish dark at that" (194). He insults not only Daggoo, but his entire race, reminding him of who they are, dark, black, evil, and devilish side of the human race. We get the feeling that as someone who claims to be from the "clear", "white", "good", and "Godly" side of mankind, it will be practically impossible for the Spaniard to be yoked to Daggoo as far as his culture is concerned. Even when the 5th Nantucket sailor sees something and asks whether it was lightning that he saw or what, the Spanish sailor refuses that it is not lightning and mockingly says it is Daggoo's teeth showing. We see then that instead of promoting multiculturalism, their coming together has instead hindered its progress. In the same light, in his discussion with Flask about Fedallah, Stubb describes Fedallah as a "ghost-devil with an unearthly idiot face," adding that he is "Beelzebub" (*Moby Dick* 365). He also laughs at the way he reads English, as he tries to conjugate the verb to look. Fedallah so much irritates him that he does not want to see him or be in his presence. Flask corroborates this by speaking thus of Fedallah: "I don't half like that chap, Stubb" (362). Stubb and Flask agree that Fedallah is strange and creepy, while Stubb suggests Fedallah is actually the devil in disguise, come to tempt Ahab to give up something in return for successfully killing Moby Dick. The view they hold about the black race on the ship does not in any way favour the progress of multiculturalism.

Also, to further display his superiority over the black race, one of the chief mates of the ship by name Stubb gives the Cook the most humiliating treatment and subjects him to ridicule. This is seen from even the way he calls him to his presence, "Cook, cook! —

where's that old Fleece?" (*Moby Dick* 328). Fleece is a 'black' who works on board the Pequod as a cook (it was said that the job of sea cooks, as on the Pequod, often went to black men). He probably does not have a dish in his culture called steak or whale-steak, and he must learn how the dish is prepared so as to serve his superior 'white' masters. But when he prepares it for Stubb, the latter instead uses it as an opportunity to mock Fleece and make a fool out of him. When the cook comes to answer his call he rebukes him thus: "Cook," said Stubb, rapidly lifting a rather reddish morsel to his mouth, "don't you think this steak is rather overdone? You've been beating this steak too much, cook; it's too tender. Don't I always say that to be good, a whale- steak must be tough?" (ibid). And after rebuking him, he sends him to go preach to the sharks that were making noise nearby. He instructs him thus: "There are those sharks now over the side, don't you see they prefer it tough and rare? What a shindy they are kicking up! Cook, go and talk to 'em; tell 'em they are welcome to help themselves civilly, and in moderation, but they must keep quiet. Blast me, if I can hear my own voice. Away, cook, and deliver my message. Here, take this lantern," snatching one from his sideboard; "now then, go and preach to 'em!" (ibid). The exclamation mark shows that he is shouting at the cook; and the fact that he sends Fleece to go preach to the sharks only shows how he belittles the cook to the extent of reducing him to the level of an animal. Even as the cook goes to preach to the sea animals Stubb still follows him and rubbishes his preaching as can be got from the following lines: "Cook," here interposed Stubb, accompanying the word with a sudden slap on the shoulder, — "Cook! why, damn your eyes, you mustn't swear that way when you're preaching. That's no way to convert sinners, Cook!" (329). As a result of all the reproaches, the cook gets angry and replies to him out of anger "Who dat? Den preach to him yourself," sullenly turning to go. But

Stubb made the cook continue preaching his sermon to the sharks till the benediction. And when the sermon is over, Stubb comes back to the steak issue and uses religion to frighten and subjugate the cook to his whims and caprices.

The questions that Stubb asks Fleece: "do you belong to the church?", "where do you expect to go to when you die?" and the phrase "you must be born again" all show Stubb's attempt at converting Fleece into his religion. The cook has shown his inclination towards multiculturalism by making attempts to learn and speak the language of the foreigners he has come to live with, his white masters. He has also made enormous efforts to master the art of preparing their meals. Yet instead of Stubb encouraging his efforts and making his own attempts to learn about the culture of the cook, he humiliates him and make a mockery of his efforts. The fact that he sends him to go "preach" to the sharks and follows him there to tell him that the way he preaches to the sharks is no way to convert sinners only shows the level at which he rubbishes Fleece's attempt to convert to Christianity. Stubb even tells him the posture he has to take before receiving orders from him. Even when he dismisses Fleece from his presence he immediately calls him back to give him commands and instructs him to bow to him before going: "Cook, give me cutlets for supper to-morrow night in the mid- watch. D'ye hear? away you sail, then. — Halloa! stop! make a bow before you go. — Avast heaving again! Whale- balls for breakfast— don't forget" (*Moby Dick* 332). The posture indicates and reinforces the idea of otherness. According to Stubb, he is trying to 'civilize' the 'savage.' But is that the right or best way of doing it? Is he not being unnecessarily bossy, rude and arrogant towards his fellow man? And this unfriendly behaviour towards the cook leads him to cursing Stubb and wishing him dead. This explains why on leaving Stubb's presence, the cook declares: "Wish, by gor! whale eat him, 'stead

of him eat whale. I'm bressed if he ain't more of shark dan Massa Shark hisself," muttered the old man, limping away; with which sage ejaculation he went to his hammock" (333). He prays God that the whale should eat Stubb who has become like a shark to his flesh. The wish to see a whale eat Stubb stems from his desire to free himself from his master's hateful and inhumane treatment of him. Whereas if his master had treated him without bias and prejudice, and created an enabling environment for their different cultures to mix and complement each other, the wish would have been that of long life, peace, unity, and love to flourish between them.

On his part, Stubb receives the most humiliating insults from Ahab that makes him do everything not to have anything to do with Ahab again. In a meeting with Ahab, he is called a dog who lives in a kennel. In reaction to this Stubb says "I am not used to be spoken to that way, sir; I do but less than half like it, sir." "Avast!" gritted Ahab between his set teeth, and violently moving away, as if to avoid some passionate temptation. "No, sir; not yet," said Stubb, emboldened, "I will not tamely be called a dog, sir." "Then be called ten times a donkey, and a mule, and an ass, and begone, or I'll clear the world of thee!" As he said this, Ahab advanced upon him with such overbearing terrors in his aspect, that Stubb involuntarily retreated. Calling Stubb names like dog, donkey, mule, ass, shows that Ahab considers Stubb an unpleasant, contemptible, stupid, foolish, and an idiotic person. He sees him as a beast of burden who should be willing to execute the whims and caprices of his master at all the times. This relationship estranged Stubb from Ahab thereby barring every means of them gaining from the cultures of each other. Though the captain of the Pequod on whose board were crew members of different cultures, Ahab fails to harness this multiculturality to his advantage because of the despicable manner he talks to the crew on board and his high handedness in

commanding everyone on board. He behaves exactly the way people who consider that they are at the centre behave towards those they consider to be at the periphery. It is said that "socially, Ahab was inaccessible. That though nominally included in the census of Christendom, he was still an alien to it. He lived in the world, as the last of the Grisly Bears lived in settled Missouri" (*Moby Dick* 168-169). His inaccessibility makes it difficult for multiculturalism to pass through him, and the allusion to the Grisly Bears only shows how isolated and estranged Ahab is from the rest of the crew members. Since he does not feel any social or cultural connection to them, he is bound to insult them and speak scornfully to them whenever he comes into contact with them. Here is another instance of his rudeness, "Why don't you snap your oars, you rascals? Bite something, you dogs! So, so, so, then; softly, softly! That's it, that's it! long and strong. Give way there, give way! The devil fetch ye, ye ragamuffin rapscallions; ye are all asleep" (242). Calling the harponeers and other crew members rascals, dogs, ragamuffin, and rapscallion is certainly not the best way to treat people from different social and cultural backgrounds than us. Such an attitude compounds multiculturalism.

Finally, the narrator believes, as do many of his cultural background that: "Long exile from Christendom and civilization inevitably restores a man to that condition in which God placed him, i.e. what is called savagery" (*Moby Dick* 303). Queequeg, Daggoo, Fedallah, Pip, Tashtego and other harpooneers on board the Pequod are considered by the other crew members as savages by virtue of their race. When Ahab wanted to know their opinion about the whale he bundled them and called them pagans, "Ahoy, there! Tashtego, Queequeg, Daggoo! What say ye, pagans! Will ye give me as much blood as will cover this barb?" (543). To show otherness, the crew members of the Pequod has been segmented into Christian and pagans (savages) as can be got from this statement: "…while that

wild cry remained within hearing. The Christian or civilized part of the crew said it was mermaids, and shuddered; but the pagan harpooneers remained unappalled" (577). But is man not better off being a savage than being civilized? Is man not better off in the state God placed him in than in the state he has carved out for himself? Don't we all miss Eden? Is God not the Supreme judge? Why would someone be considered a savage if they remain in the state in which God placed them? Is God a savage? People who are considered as "uncivilized" and "unchristian" are viewed by those of the supposed civilized and Christian world as savages. They believe that their customs and traditions are equally savage, barbaric, and evil. As a result of this misconception, they abhor and detest the modes of life of these "savaged" people and set out to convert them into their own cultures where they will be assimilated into other cultures foreign to them. This phenomenon will not only make the "savages" lose their belief systems, it will also hinder the progress of multiculturalism since both cultures do not co-exist to complement each other, but rather, one culture feels superior and thinks it has to subject the other culture under suppression.

Conclusion

Hate speech, be it soft, medium, or harsh, undermines the social cohesion of citizens, breeds distrust and intolerance, sows panic, provokes people to illegal actions, creating the ground for conflict and tension. This conflict and tension emanating from hateful language towards a person, especially from one who considers themselves superior to others, makes it difficult for multiculturalism to excel. The foregoing analysis proves that in most cases, the black race receives the most shameful treatment from the white race by virtue of their culture and skin colour. It equally shows that those who claim superiority over others in terms of education, knowledge, religion, civilization, social status, and custom and tradition often speak to those they consider inferior in the most rude,

arrogant, and disrespectful manner. This manner of behaviour strains the relationship between people from different cultures and races and equally bars the way to the effective implementation of multiculturalism. Generally, the analysis proves that hate speech bars the way to multiculturalism. Thus, the work contends that to ensure the effective advancement of the course of multiculturalism, hate speech must be mitigated, if not completely eradicated.

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