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Faculté des Lettres, des Langues et des Sciences du Langage
(FLSL)

tenues les 18 et 19 Janvier 2023 sise à Kabala



Thème : Langue, Politique et Société



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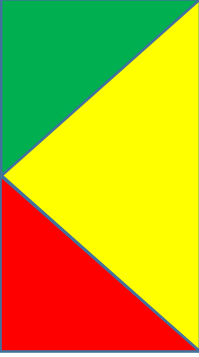
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The journal publishes only quality articles that have not been published or submitted for publication in any other journals. Each article is subjected to a double blind reading. The quality and originality of the articles are the only criteria for publication.



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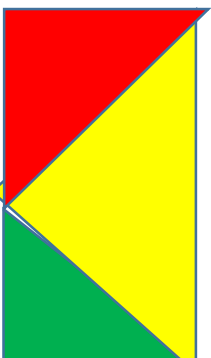
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Argumentaire de l'appel à communication de la 8^{ème} Edition des journées scientifiques de la FLSL

La langue est un fait social qui représente pour le politique un enjeu national et international. Partout dans le monde, langue et société sont l'objet d'une politique. En Afrique, la plupart des états, au lendemain des indépendances, tout en conservant les langues étrangères comme langue officielle, se sont engagés dans une politique linguistique visant la promotion des langues maternelles. Plusieurs voix s'élèvent sur le continent pour clamer haut et fort que les langues maternelles doivent accéder à un nouveau statut, celui de langues officielles, au même titre que la langue de communication internationale. Les tenants de ce choix politique avancent comme principal argument l'occupation par les langues maternelles, en fonction des besoins et des nécessités, de l'espace linguistique au même titre que les langues étrangères. Ce qui procurerait aux langues maternelles le privilège d'être des langues d'ascension sociales et d'intégration. Dans cette optique, les langues maternelles officialisées seront désormais des langues de travail dans tous les domaines de la vie publique : Institutions de la République, structures administratives et politiques, entreprises publiques et privées, établissements scolaires et universitaires, presse écrite et orale, associations culturelles et de développement, etc. Un regard porté sur la situation des langues maternelles et étrangères en Afrique sous cet angle, manifeste une différence d'approche politique et de représentation sociale.

Au Mali, par exemple, depuis 1960, le français, introduit dans le pays avec la colonisation, est la langue officielle. Ce statut de langue d'expression officielle est reconnu et formalisé par la Constitution du Mali de 1992, dans son article 25. La loi N°96-049 du 23 août 1996 portant modalités de promotion de treize langues nationales a octroyé le statut de langue nationale au bamanankan (bambara), fulfulde (peulh), songhay (sonraï), tamasheq, soninké, bozo, bomu (bobo), syenara (senoufo), mamara (minianka), dogoso (dogon), khashonke, hassanya et malinke. Le français demeure quant à lui la seule langue officielle.

On voit bien que la politique linguistique du Mali va du principe que toutes les langues se valent en dignité. De ce fait, elle se garde de choisir une langue parmi les treize langues reconnues du pays. Elle permet à toutes les langues d'avoir les mêmes chances. La plus dynamique sur le plan économique, démographique et politique s'imposera d'elle-même. Ce que Louis-Jean Calvet appelle « la politique linguistique par défaut » car ne pas choisir est également une façon de choisir.

Les questions qui se posent aujourd'hui sont de savoir :

- Nos langues maternelles, introduites dans l'enseignement, sont-elles suffisamment instrumentées de nos jours pour adosser les statuts de langues officielles ?
- Qu'est ce qui explique le maintien des langues étrangères comme langue officielle dans la plupart des pays africains.

Les journées scientifiques de la Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences du langage (FLSL), qui sont à leur 8ème édition cette année, se proposent d'approfondir la réflexion sur le rapport trilatéral entre Langue, politique et société.

Les communications s'articulent autour des axes suivants :

Axe 1 : les enjeux des politiques linguistiques en Afrique

Axe 2 : politiques éducatives et langues maternelles dans l'enseignement

Axe 3 : langue maternelle et système d'écriture

Axes 4 : littérature et langue maternelle

Axe 5 : l'aménagement linguistique en Afrique

Axe 6 : langue maternelle et traduction

Axe 7 : langues en danger

Axe 8 : langue maternelle et TIC

Axe 9 : langue maternelle et inclusion scolaire

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LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND SOCIETY: AN UNDIVIDED TRILOGY TO ENGAGE NATIONAL READERSHIP IN AFRICA

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Résumé

Cet article vise à montrer les multiples relations intrinsèques qui existent entre la littérature et les langues africaines. Il souligne ici de façon plus large la manière dont les œuvres littéraires reflètent les réalités sociales. Pour cela, nous explorons l'importance de développer les littératures nationales produites dans les langues africaines. Le cas du Mali est développé pour illustrer ce point, c'est-à-dire, comment une littérature nourrie en bamanankan peut capter l'attention des jeunes et les aider à prendre conscience des réalités passées et actuelles. Puisque la littérature est une création sociale, la langue dans laquelle cette littérature est écrite devrait également refléter cette même société qu'elle dépeint. En se basant sur cette approche, nous développons dans cette recherche comment les langues maternelles ou nationales peuvent être utilisées comme des atouts viables pour amener les jeunes à s'engager dans la lecture active et à s'intéresser à la littérature. Pour atteindre cet objectif, nous avons sélectionné des auteurs tels que Chinua Achebe et Ngugi Wa Thiong'o parmi tant d'autres dont les œuvres abordent la question de la langue dans la littérature africaine.

Mot-clé : langue(s) (nationale(s), réalités sociales, littérature(s) (nationale(s), lectorat jeune, trilogie.

Abstract

This article aims to show the many intrinsic relationships that exist between literature and African languages. It highlights here more broadly the way in which literary works reflect social realities. For this reason, we explore the importance of developing national literatures produced in African languages. The case of Mali is developed to illustrate this point, that is, how a literature nourished in Bamanankan can capture the attention of young people and help them to become aware of past and current realities. Since literature is a social creation, the language in which it is written should also reflect the very society it depicts. Based on this approach, we develop in this research how mother tongues or national languages can be used as viable assets to get young people engaged in active reading and interested in literature. To achieve this goal, we have selected authors such as Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o among many others whose works address the issue of language in African literature.

Keywords: language(s) (national(s), social realities, literature(s) (national(s), young readership, trilogy.

Introduction

Language is an essential tool in the life of human beings. It is through language that we think and express our thoughts, and it is a means of conveying our feelings. It is seen as a cultural fact or identity and useful for the intellectual development. For instance, the language that a child grows up with is the corner stone of his cultural identity and a plinth for his intellectual development. Such a language is thus, considered as the mother tongue of the child.¹ Besides, it is of paramount importance to highlight the fact that literature uses language as its

¹ Abdramane Diarra, (2020), *Curriculum Bilingue dans l'enseignement Fondamental au Mali : Etat de Lieux de sa mise en œuvre*, France, UGA université Grenoble Alpes, p. 2.

primary source in writing novels, essays, and short stories. Boubacar Abdoul Wahida Maiga exhumes literature as follows:

La littérature est le principal support médiatique qui capte, conserve, véhicule, et transmet à la postérité le reflet de l'évolution des mentalités d'époque à époque.²

Literature is the main media that captures, preserves, and transmits to posterity the reflection of the evolution of mentalities from period to period.

The Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'o started his book *Writers in Politics (1981)* by asking the following question: "What is the relevance of literature to life?"³ This question, which, at first sight, can be considered by some scholars as too simplistic, is the cornerstone of the whole essay. It is the concern to bring an answer to this very complex question that guides Ngugi from the first lines to the end of his book. Thus, it is obvious that Ngugi, at the very onset, wants to draw the attention of the reader to the possible connections that exist between literature and different areas of life. He intends to show that literature carries the traces of social life and that the two are interconnected in multiple ways. For literature is used by writers to depict social realities in the past and present, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, it is also a social creation. This intertwinement between the two spheres is what Ngugi tries to highlight and capture through this simple and yet complicated question to answer. In other words, the two entities go hand in hand therefore, they are indissociable.

Like literature, language is also a social production, which is used by human beings in multiple circumstances and for different purposes such as during communication and in the education process. From the above argument, one senses that life would be much harder and difficult without language, not to say impossible. This statement shows that language is an essential component for the good functioning and progress of any human society that is structured around values referred to as traditions, customs and culture. These social values and norms are taught to people and transmitted from one generation to the other through language. According to Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, language hence becomes the "carrier of social norms and rules"⁴. To push the reflection further, he argues that writing in African languages is the only

² Dr. Aboubacar Abdoul Wahidou Maiga, (2021), « Mbougar Sarr a le mérite de faire ressusciter Yambo Ouologuem », Bamako, L'ESSOR.

³ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, (1981), *Writers in Politics*, Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Book Ltd, p. 7.

⁴ Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, (1981), *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, p. 8.

“way to maintain the dignity of African literature, culture, philosophy and other priceless treasures.”⁵ What Ngugi is trying to get at through this statement is that language is the heart of any society; and therefore, essential for the realization of all social and collective projects meant for the progress of that society. All the above-mentioned arguments put into light how crucial language is for any society in all aspects of life.

1. Writer-Doers: A New Form of Commitment

The question of the significance of African writers’ literary works in bringing about positive social changes and contributing to the betterment of people’s living conditions has always been central in African literature. African writers’ intellectual productions are generally assessed and judged based on their capacity and power to initiate socio-politico-economic changes. That is why writers such as Chinua Achebe and Ngugi’s Wa Thiong’o’s literary productions have been publicly praised all over the African continent. The social commitment of a writer reveals the social function of literature. And this aspect of African literature leads us to ask the following question: “How important is the author for his/her society, and does he/she contribute at all to the development of that society through his/her works? If so, how?”

Many European writers write for aesthetic purposes by applying the old and famous idea “*art for art’s sake*”⁶ which has, for centuries, guided their writings. This idea stipulates that a work of art should not be judged regarding its relationships to social, political and moral values. However, African writers play on different grounds and are more socially committed in their literary productions than their Western counterparts. This commitment has to do with the long history of African continent that has witnessed all forms of dehumanizing practices during the colonial period. To regain their lost cultural, political, economic, and social freedom, different writers have produced literary works to denounce the remnants of the colonial practices and vestiges right after independences. They did not only stop there, they also laid bare the various vicious practices that held their societies back. This is the case of Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and subsequently in the *Arrow of God* (1964). It is also in line of this thought that Wole Soyinka said in *The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness* : “Unlike the theologian, who

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 4.

⁶ <https://www.theartstory.org/definition/art-for-art/> accessed on January 10, 2023 at 3:55 pm.

takes his voice from the realms of deities, the poet appropriates the voice of people and the full burden of their memory.”⁷

For Soyinka, the writer he refers to as the “poet” must be the spokesperson of the whole society. It is the writer’s duty to voice out the suffering of people as an entity through his/her writing. If injustice rises up, he/she should stand up to it and address it through literature. The fact of using his artistic skills to help his communities is what is expected from him. The writer is thus at the service of the whole community and should walk hand in hand with this community. If he fails to live in harmony with his society and to come to its rescue, his art will be communally looked at as useless. The fact of using art to help one’s community move forward is what Achebe refers to as “*applied arts*”⁸ which is the opposite of “*pure arts*”⁹ mostly used in the West.

According to Achebe, a work of art is always produced for a specific purpose, and the writers who are engaged in this enterprise are considered as *writers engagé*¹⁰. It is in the line with this argument that he writes in “*The Novelist as Teacher*”: “The writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done. He should march right in front.”¹¹ In the mind of Achebe, the writer has to play multiple roles within the society. First of all, the writer must consider himself as an educator and direct people on the right track through their writings. For it is the writer’s duty to educate and sensitize people with critical ideas grounded and rooted in their own cultural values and the way they perceive the world.

In addition, the writer must also be a light that enlightens and leads people on the road of development and self-fulfillment. That was the case in the past in Mali with griots who used oral literature to guide people on the right track by telling stories containing moral lessons and pieces of advice vital for the integration and growth of the individual in his society. Being a

⁷ Wole Soyinka (1999), *The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness*, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 19.

⁸ Chinua Achebe (1980), *Hopes and Impediments*, Abuja: Heinemann, p. 45.

⁹ <https://www.theartstory.org/definition/art-for-art/> accessed on January 10, 2023 at 16:39.

¹⁰ Writers engagé are writers who use their writings to denounce social problems and dysfunctions. In their works, they generally paint the negative sides of their societies and get people to think about their living conditions critically. In addition, they oftentimes offer perspectives for the future. The literary productions of these writers are the mirror of their societies. Their sole purpose is to change the living conditions of their counterparts for better through their works.

¹¹ Chinua Achebe, *Hopes and Impediments*, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

product of the society that gave him everything in terms of values, the writer in his literary works, whether directly or indirectly, brings forth an ideal social organization that contributes to the equilibrium of the society. In this way, he puts forth a political system inspired by and grounded in social values and dominant ideology inherent to his society. In his writings, he also lays emphasis on the right moral attitudes, religious beliefs and the way his people view and perceive the world. All these attributes show that the writer in the African context ought to be a change-maker. But the question that rises when accomplishing his mission is: “Which language is to be used in this re-education task?”

In an essay named “*The Writer and His Community*”, Achebe raises a critical question by saying: “If I write in English in a country which English may still be called a foreign language, or in any case is spoken by only a minority, what use is my writing?¹²” This takes us to the thorny question of language in African literature. But the answer of this question is very clear for Ngugi Wa Thiong’o who states: “For a literature to be considered African, it must be written in one of the African languages and not in a colonial one.” That is to say, since writers write to describe and change social realities, it is best that these writings be done in the language of the reader, which will create a sense of connectivity and belonging. It is for this purpose that we advocate the birth of a *Bambaraphone* literature in Mali. Although it is inexistant for the moment, its birth will, for sure, grab the attention of young people and even elders who, most of the time, think that French is difficult and that it is the language of the colonizer.

In many parts of Africa such as in Kenya and Senegal, this sort of national literature is taking root little by little even though it is not on a large scale yet. Ngugi wa Thiong’o since the 1980s has written several books in Gikuyu. In Senegal, Boubacar Boris Diop, Felwine Sarr and other writers have begun to write books in Wolof. Whilst Boubacar Boris Diop wrote three novels in Wolof which are *Doomi Golo* (2003), *Bàmmeelu Kocc Barma* (2019) and *Malaanum Lëndëm* (2022), his fellow countryman Felwine Sarr published a novel entitled *Watit* (2022) in the same language. Sarr’s novel was published by the publishing house Ejo created by Boubacar Boris Diop. These two distinguished Senegalese writers intend to pave the way for young Senegalese scholars by showing them that it is possible to write in African national languages, an idea that was believed to be impossible in the past as these languages were thought to be unable to bear the weight of literature. This kind of undertaking is not only a viable means to

¹² Chinua Achebe, *Hopes and Impediments*, *op. cit.*, p.60.

enrich these languages, but it also gets young people to recognize themselves in the language used to write these literary works.

Mandela once said: “If you speak a language that someone understands, you speak to his head. But if you speak his mother tongue, you speak to his heart.” African authors and Malian ones in particular must learn how to speak to the heart of young Malians by developing and nurturing a national literature carried by Bamanankan. This logic seems to be an efficient way in getting a large number of Malian young people to develop a keen interest in literature. For, it is easier for young people to read literary works in a language that they use on a daily basis. This familiarity with the language used makes the reading and understanding easier for them.

Of course, such a literature will raise some questions such as: “How will non-Bamanankan speakers be able to access these works?” The response to this question can be found through the translation of these works into other languages, which will create a parallel translation industry aside. Translation will be the means through which the content of these literary works produced in Bamanankan will be brought to the attention of the world.

2. The Role of Literature in the Society

Literature is a piece of writing that refers to some relevant points and events of the society. It enables human beings to know who they are, where they are from and from where they should depart. For instance, it displays the historical issues of a society so as they can better handle the present and the future. Through the essay of Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, he exhibits the way literature can help Kenyans children grasp not only the essence of their culture but also awake their consciousness about the struggle they have raised against social inequalities that they are victims of by the colonizers. This point is strengthened the following quotation where Ngugi stated : “I would like to see Kenya people’s mother tongues (our national languages) carry a literature reflecting not only the rhythms of a child’s spoken expression, but also his struggle with nature and his social nature.”¹³ Thus, this except pinpoints the paramountcy and social responsibility of literature in a society. As a result, the author thinks of the mother tongue as an essential element of this new type of literature that is more attractive and reflects the everyday lives of people. This new trend in writing tends to grab the attention of young readers who can identify themselves with the settings and characters of these new literary works. A

¹³ Ngugi Wa Thiong’o (1986), *Decolonizing the Mind the Politics of Language in African Literature*, Kenya, Heineman, p. 28.

concrete example is what candidates do during their campaigns. They mostly use their mother tongues rather than the official languages such as English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese to get their messages across and convince voters to vote for them.

However, once they become presidents or members of parliament, they speak less their mother tongues. This demonstrates that the mother tongue speaks more to the heart than the language of education. As the famous and former president of South Africa Nelson Mandela said: "If you speak to a man in a language he understands, you speak to his head. If you speak to him in his language, you speak to his heart."¹⁴ It is evident here that we touch people's heart by speaking their languages. You have to speak to people in their own languages because such a speech goes straight to their heart whereas if you speak in a foreign language different from theirs, they tend to shrink to themselves. This consolidates the idea that any human society is fully structured around language, one of the main tools of communication.

In the same line of thought, literature mirrors the image of society. It investigates the difficulties of a society. Literature has the ability to shed a light on general public's convictions and practices. It begins by posing critical questions, then triggering discussions and finally searching for answers, regardless of whether one genuine answer doesn't exist. The topics, characters and exercises in literature are ones that would all be able to be contrasted with the individuals and situations writers encounter in reality.¹⁵ It permits us to investigate another message of life, even from people who are isolated from us by time and social boundaries. As a way to illustrate this fact, Maryse Condé unriddles in *Segu* (1987)¹⁶ the royal system of the Bambara of Segu in Mali, Ashanti of Kumasi in Ghana and Dahomey of Abomey in Benin. All those kingdoms have boundaries between them, despite the fact that all of them were located in West Africa. Therefore, it asserts how far literary writings can transcend physical frontiers.

In her novel intitled *In the Ditch* (1972),¹⁷ Emecheta untangles the obstacles of racism and geographical problems that the main character Adah meets while living at English Mansions. Adah deplors being a victim of those two curses as the writer bares it out; "it is curse to be an orphan, a double curse to a be Black one in a white country [...] Her whole life

¹⁴ Pierre de Galbert (1019), "My favorite Nelson Mandela (mis) quote", <http://shoolar.harvard.edu> 30/11/ 2023 at 5 am.

¹⁵ Kakarla Sal Mitravinda (2020), "Literature and its Role in Shaping the Society", India, P S G College of Arts and Science at Bharathiyar University, p. 2.

¹⁶ Maryse Condé, (1987 [1984]), *Segu*, USA: Viking Penguin Inc, (**Translated by Barbara Bray**).

¹⁷ Buchi Emecheta (1972), *In the Ditch*, Britain! Heinemann, p. 45.

had been like that of a perpetually, unlucky gambler."¹⁸ Likewise, Condé inhumes the same situation during Eucharistus' travel to England. British people humiliated him for being Black. They touched his skin and asked each other about his ability to speak when he expressed himself in English.¹⁹ Thus, the geographical and racial effects that are divulgated by the Nigerian writer, Emecheta, allows the novel to be considered as highly important knowing that the novel of Maryse Condé highlights the same racial segregation against black people in the West.

In addition, one realises another dissonance that Halima Bashir points out in her autobiographical novel *Tears of the Desert*. She delineates a racial bias in a market through a quarrel that erupts between a black man and an Arab. The Arab insults the black man with some racist words;

Idiot! What do you think? The Arab yelled. You think we will allow you Black dogs to beat us, to rule over us? Is that what you believe? [...] Abeed! Abeed! –slave! Slave! –he yelled. Take your eye off me! You are nothing but Black slave. Get yourself away from me before there is trouble.²⁰

Halima's autobiographical novel betokens racial discrimination of Arab against black people in Sudan. The Arab thinks that his people are made to rule over Blacks and not alternately. They see as a shame they cannot accept. Indeed, Maryse Condé, Buchi Emecheta and Halima Bachir denounce social inequalities through their characters in given societies.

Literature can also uncloak religious syncretism practised in a society. This is asserted by Amadou Kourouma in *En attendant le Vote des Bêtes Sauvages* (1998).²¹ Kourouma disinters the syncretic knowledge of the Coran and traditional practices of Bokana Yacouba for the President Koyaca ;

Il manipulait avec bonheur et réussite les prophéties de Mohamed qu'il tirait du Coran. Les Djinns et les âmes des ancêtres ne lui taisaient aucun de leurs secrets quand ses doigts les interrogeaient par le sable de la géomancie.²²

He handled well and successfully the teachings of Mohamed (pbuh) that he drew from the Coran. Devils and ancestors' spirit confessed him their secrets when he practiced geomancy on the sand with his hand.²³

¹⁸Buchi Emecheta, *In the Ditch*, op. cit., p. 71.

¹⁹ Maryse Condé, *Segu*, op. cit., p.407.

²⁰ Bashir, Halima and Lewis, Damiel (2009), *Tears of the Desert: A Memory of Survival in Darfur*, New York: Random House, p.122.

²¹ Ahmadou Kourouma, (1998), *En Attendant le Vote des Bêtes Sauvages*, Paris, Editions du Seuil.

²² Ahmadou Kourouma, *En Attendant le Vote des Bêtes Sauvages*, op. cit., p. 51.

²³ Translation mine

The above quotation expounds Bokano's proficient handling of two religions: traditional religion and Islam. As a result, the writer elucidates the marabout's practice of religious eclecticism in many parts of Africa in the past and even in the present day.

In the same line of thought, Amadou Hampaté Bâ deciphers the life of an interpreter in his novel titled: *L'étrange Destin de Wangrin* (1992-1993).²⁴ The author discloses eclecticism as part of the life of Wangrin. He worships his traditional gods and manes secretly and practices Islam with Muslims in public. This denotes changing in Wangrin as a very syncretic person. This clarifies to the reader that, in spite of the fact that Wangrin is a Muslim, it does not impede him from resorting to the fetish to solve his own problems. He wrote:

Wangrin faisait salame, mais cela ne l'empêchait point de recourir de temps à autre aux dieux traditionnels de son terroir et aux mânes efficaces de ses ancêtres.²⁵

Wangrin used to pray (Muslim), but this did not prevent him from resorting to the traditional gods of his soil from time to time and to the manes of his ancestors.²⁶

Nonetheless, Hampaté Bâ underscores the traditional people's dependency on syncretism. From these assertions by Ahmadou Kourouma and Amadou Hampaté Bâ, we witness that literature untangles the religious aspects of a society as well.

3. The Use of Mother Tongue in Writing Literary Works

One considers the mother tongue as the first language that a child learns when he gets in contact with human beings, mainly his mother. It is the language that he first acquaints with and starts to use as a means of communication with people around him/her. Besides, the national language represents a means of communication that is spoken by and within a nation. It refers to a language that is considered as the legacy of a nation and recognized by the political authorities of a country.²⁷ In Mali, 13 languages are recognized as national languages whereas there are more than 30 mother tongues. For instance, a Soninké child who grows up in a Bambara area, has Bambara as his mother tongue, whereas the language Soninké can be his national language. According to the new project of constitution, all the thirteen national languages become official languages and French as the working language in the administration.

²⁴Amadou Hampaté Bâ, (1992-1993), *L'étrange Destin de Wangrin*, Paris, Département d'Univers Poche.

²⁵Amadou Hampaté Bâ, *L'étrange Destin de Wangrin*, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

²⁶ Translation mine

²⁷ Oumar Koné, Brouréma Kaba, Alacéine Kodio, and Ag Hamata Mohamed Ahmédou (2015-2016), *Cours d'initiation à la Linguistique Générale : Classes T II*, Bamako, Lycée Kodonso, p. 5.

In that sense, these thirteen official languages become somehow the medium of instruction, that is to say, they are going to be thought at school.

In the sense of being ourselves, Jamaica Kincaid's novel: *The Autobiography of My Mother* in [*Literature for Our Times Postcolonial Studies in the Twenty-First Century*]²⁸ suggests us to distrust others. Her proposal is then as follows: "The people we should naturally have mistrusted were beyond our influence completely; what we needed to defeat them, to rid ourselves of them, was something far more powerful than mistrust".²⁹ This explicitly indicates that we should not be influenced by the former colonizers. Relying on one's language is more beneficial than to continue using their language if we aim at capturing our inner realities in African literature. As a result, African literature ought not to be a mere copy of the colonizer's literature. It must be distinct in terms of themes addressed and languages used.

In the same line of thought, Jamaica Kincaid lays emphasis on the impression of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o when he first read the Old Testament in his mother language, Gikuyu. He shows that he finds all his cultural characteristics in the Gikuyu version of the Old Testament. He later discovers the existence of the English one that is the source text of the Gikuyu version. Thus, the Gikuyu Old Testament matches more the reality of his society than the English one. The following statements mirror his reaction about the Old Testament in Gikuyu:

So, the founding text of my literate culture was a translation of a translation of several translations. Not that I was aware of it, but even if I had been, it would not have worried me in the least. I found the stories interesting and my only concern was the fact that the pages were literally falling apart. I was happy when, years later, I was able to own a copy of the whole Bible, again in Kikuyu³⁰.

So, the Bible translated into his mother language has the same utility as the one written in the source text. We can understand that the Gikuyu-language Bible goes hand in hand with his social reality than the English one. Ultimately, it is not too far-fetched to say that even human society is itself founded on the practice of translation.

Without any doubt, literature pictures the realities of the society. What happens in a society is reflected in literary works in all its forms. Literature is a set of oral and written works

²⁸ Bill Ashcroft, Ranjini Mendis, Julie McGonegal, and Arun Mukherjee (2021) "Literature for Our Times: Postcolonial Studies in the Twenty-First Century", Amsterdam! Editions Rodopi B.V.

²⁹ Bill Ashcroft, Ranjini Mendis, Julie McGonegal, and Arun Mukherjee, "Literature for Our Times: Postcolonial Studies in the Twenty-First Century" *op. cit.*, p. 46.

³⁰ Bill Ashcroft, Ranjini Mendis, Julie McGonegal, and Arun Mukherjee, "Literature for Our Times Postcolonial Studies in the Twenty-First Century", *op. cit.*, p. 18.

in different forms such as poetry, plays, stories, prose, and fiction. It may also consist of texts based on information as well as imagination that occur in a society³¹. Therefore, to uncloak that situation in literary writing, we use the language of this society, which directly engages them rather than another language that they cannot speak and understand. One can take the case of Europe before the full development of European native languages. “In Europe, the literature written in native languages had received marginalized position in comparison to Greek and Latin until the native languages were widely used by the writers and accepted by the people after the Renaissance”.³² Thereupon, African writers have the duty as their European counterparts to develop literatures in their own languages, which is the only means to guarantee their survival and competitiveness among other languages. For their native language enables them to thoroughly express not only their thoughts but also covers their everyday life realities and struggles. This point is more strengthened by Bacon’s essays. This literary work firstly appeared in Latin that was not appealing to the English people. But, when the author rewrites it in English instead of Latin, it draws the attention of the English people, and thus became popular worldwide. The rushing of the English people towards this newly translated book is due to the fact it has been rewritten in a language they totally understand and to which they adhere. Consequently, they re-appropriated the book because they saw themselves in the English version, in particular rather than the one in Latin, in general. For the English version makes reference to their cultural traits, reflected in the English language. For, as stated further above, language is a component of culture, and culture is carried by language. When you write in someone’s language, you will forcibly let out the cultural traits and references of the person. Finally, it is of paramount importance that, in dealing with a literary work, writers should write in the mother tongues and national languages of their audience. If they do so, they talk to their hearts and not to their heads.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can affirm that, after many years of mind decolonization, literature and language are two indissociable domains. They are considered as the two lungs in the same body. So, to develop our nations, African writers must insist on the teaching and use of African languages in the educational system. This implementation can push many writers to write books and articles in their national languages so that local people can easily understand what they depict in their writings. Writing in African languages can enable writers to contribute to the

³¹ Arjun Dubey (2013), “Literature and Society”, India, Journal of Humanities and Social Science, V9 (pp. 84-85), p. 84.

³² Arjun Dubey, “Literature and Society”, India, Journal of Humanities and Social Science, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

development of their countries and languages as well. It is for this reason that Ngugi never agreed with the definition given to African literature by writers like Achebe and Soyinka. He thinks that the more we speak Westerners' languages, the more we contribute to the development of those languages and the more ours become stagnant and worse, weakened. This fact explains the reason why he underscores the fact that African literature can be defined as the literature, which is only written in African languages by African writers.

Achebe thinks that the author must shape the colonizer's language in a way to carry his cultural traits. Achebe himself experimented this writing style. For instance, when Achebe says : "words are like palm-oil with which we eat" or "The world is like a mask dancing. If you want to see it well, you don't stand in one place"³³. Of course, it is true that Achebe has used English, but the kind of English that is used in these two excerpts is bent to bear the weight of Achebe's thoughts. Achebe molds the English language in his own image and make it look like him. In short, the kind of English that Achebe uses in his literary works is specific and *igbonized*. Even if this writing style created by Achebe is highly praiseworthy, it is clear that a foreign language, no matter how we handle it, cannot fully be made to capture the realities of another society because language carries cultural traits, which define the way a people perceive the world in its wholeness. Achebe's re-shaping of the English language is not still sufficient to full embrace the culture and customs of Ibo people.

Nevertheless, it is clear that no country can develop with foreign languages because the more we use them instead of ours, the more our nations will be contributing and affirming the linguistic hegemony of these languages over ours. Africans, therefore, have to speak and write books in African languages so that their compatriots can understand their messages as illustrated through this paper. To reach the mental decolonization so wished, writing and working in African languages remain the best ways.

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³³ Achebe, Chinua, "Things Fall Apart", London: Heinemann, 1981.

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