

Transcultural Creativity in World Englishes: Speech Events in Nigerian English literature

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Abstract

Drawing examples from the novels of two prominent Nigerian writers, Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe, the present paper explores the concept of transcultural creativity with particular reference to speech events in Nigerian literature. These speech events relate to modes of address, prayers, invectives, ritual communication, panegyric, and the doric style. The study indicates that, in contrast to code-mixed and pidginized varieties, transcultural creativity rejects reductive binarisms such as English/Yoruba, English/Igbo, and Englishes/Englishes in favor of hybridity and cultural syncreticity that do not privilege center or margin but provide the potential means for establishing a dialectic between dominant and marginalized discourses.

Keywords: Transcultural creativity, Nigerian literature, Englishes, Speech events, Modes of address, Prayers, Invectives, Ritual communication, Panegyric, Doric style

1. Introduction

In several publications, Kachru (1981, 1983, 1986a,b, 1995) employs the contiguous concepts of “translation equivalence,” “transcreation,” and “transcultural creativity” to refer not only to the various linguistic devices bilingual creative writers of English use to contextualize the English language in their own local cultures, but also for such processes which exhibit “a relationship between the use of linguistic nativization processes and resultant acculturation of English” (Kachru, 1986a, p. 143). Similar to the concept of translingualism, transcultural creativity refers to “the purposive and artful reproduction within one language of features from another language” (Scott, 1990, p. 75).

As pointed out in Bamiro (1991), the lexico-semantic category of “translation equivalents”, an important aspect of the bilingual’s transcultural creativity, is itself a bundle of contextually dependent speech-functions related to figurative language, proverbs, modes of reference, modes of address, loan translations, prayers, invectives, ritual communication, panegyric, idiomatic expressions, and kinship terms.

Speech events in Nigerian English literature result as Nigerian creative writers use translation from their native languages into English as one of the productive devices not only for correlating specific speech-functions and speech acts with their appropriate formal items but also for creating contextually and stylistically appropriate innovations for Africanizing Nigerian literary texts (see also Kachru, 1983, 1986a, 1986b).

This paper focuses on the specific speech events of modes of address, prayers, invectives, ritual communication, panegyric, and the doric style (idiomatic expressions). Examples for the discussion and analysis are drawn from the novels of two prominent Nigerian authors: Wole Soyinka, the Nobel laureate for literature in 1986; and Chinua Achebe, the winner of the Man Booker International Prize for Literature in 2007 and whose first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, is now generally agreed to have put African literature on the map of world literature written in English.¹

I focus on the novel because of its heteroglossic quality. For Bakhtin, the novel is the literary form which above all not only takes advantage of heteroglossia but, when it is most authentically itself, is the form which exploits the multiplicity of language (1987, p. 291). According to Zabus:

The Europhone [West African] novel provides an adequate testing terrain for the practice of indigenization because the novel is a flexible, polysemic form that can incorporate other genres . . . and other registers as well. As such, the analysis of its language poses interesting problems valid for other genres and other post- colonial literatures (1991, p. 4).

2. Modes of Address

Because Soyinka’s two novels are works of social protests with the major actions and events located in the urban centers, modes of address, as significant aspects of transcultural creativity, are not attested therein. However, modes of address are especially prominent in

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. This is to be expected in that in *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe looks back at the Igbo society, specifically at the period the British broke into it as missionary, trader, and administrator, while in *Arrow of God*, Achebe recounts the story of village life, centering on the struggle for authority of Ezeulu, Chief Priest of Ulu, the traditional god of his Umuaro people, against both rivals in his own tribe and also British district officers and Christian missionaries. It is in this respect that both novels aptly document linguistic and cultural contacts on the one hand, and cultural conflicts between Igbo and British cultures, on the other.

The modes of address not only reflect cultural norms but also symbolize a speaker's social position in relation to the people around him or her so that, by the use of one or other of them, the status of the speaker to the person addressed is readily recognized. Like kinship terms, these modes of address thus emphasize social relationships and serve to evoke the response implied in the particular relationship so indicated. The Igbo society is highly stratified in the sense that status is often defined by age-groups and other religious and social titles. These modes of address are often used among relatives, especially among very close kinsmen, and signify reciprocal or non-reciprocal relationships. For example, if the relationship of the interlocutors is based on a reciprocal pattern, the mode of address is often punctuated by humor and circumlocution, as in the following interaction between Ezeulu and Ogbuefi Akuebue:

1. Akuebue was one of the very few men in Umuaro whose words gained entrance into Ezeulu's ear. *The two men were in the same age group*. As he drew near he raised his voice and asked:
'Is the owner of this house still alive?'
'Who is this man?' asked Ezeulu. 'Did they not say that you died two markets come next Afo?'
'Perhaps you do not know that everyone in your age group has long died. Or are you waiting for mushrooms to sprout from your head before you know that your time is over? . . .'
'How are your people?'
'They are quiet.' . . .
'And yours?' he asked Ezeulu.
'Nobody has died.' (*AOG*, pp. 93-94, my emphasis).

However, because of the sociolinguistic consequences of language and cultural contacts between the British and Igbo cultures, the non-reciprocal order of the address system is sometimes subverted as in the following encounter between the elders of Igbo society, represented by Ezeulu and Akuebue, respectively, and Captain Winterbottom's (the British District Officer's) Court Messenger, who has undergone, or is undergoing, the process of acculturation:

2. When the two strangers reached Ezeulu's threshold the escort clapped his hands and said: 'Are the owners of this house at home?' There was a slight pause before Ezeulu answered: 'Enter and you will see.' . . .

The Court Messenger removed his blue fez and planted it on his knee exposing clean-shaven head shining with sweat. The edge of the cap left a ring round the head. He cleared his throat and spoke, almost for the first time.

‘I salute you all.’ He brought out a very small book from his breast pocket and opened it in the manner of a white man. ‘*Which one of you is called Ezeulu?*’ he asked from the book and then looked up and around the hut. No one spoke; they were all too astonished. Akuebue was the first to recover.

‘Look round and count your teeth with your tongue,’ he said. . . .

‘You say you are a man of Umuru?’ asked Ezeulu. ‘Do you have priests and elders there?’ (AOG, pp. 135, 137, my emphasis).

The angry retort of the elders is to be expected because the Court Messenger has subverted the address system by alluding to the Chief Priest directly. Although he is a Court Messenger to the white man, compared to Ezeulu, he is still a person of lower status as defined by the social hierarchy among the Igbos. However, the Court Messenger, himself an Igbo man, symbolizes those caught up between two worlds, represented by English and Igbo cultures, respectively. In this context, the English language and culture become an instrument creating new social stratifications among the colonized in post-colonial societies. This phenomenon is illustrative of Kachru’s view of non-native Englishes which, he argues, are creating elites in post-colonial societies, who are then able to erect social and linguistic barriers within their own societies and develop English-based social practices which enact and reproduce their privileges (Kachru, 1990, pp. 4, 7-8). These are the so-called “Afro-Saxons” (Mazrui, 1975, p. 16) whose colonial education has forced them into a double bind. JanMohamed, ironically using the sexist pseudo-generic *he* throughout, explains this peculiar predicament in the following way:

For the indigenous person, the colonial situation . . . creates a dilemma from which he cannot easily disentangle himself. . . . If he chooses conservatively, and remains loyal to his indigenous culture, then he opts to stay in a calcified society whose developmental momentum has been checked by colonization. If, however, the colonized person chooses assimilation, then he is trapped in a form of historical catalepsy because colonial education severs him from his own past and replaces it with the study of the colonizer’s past. Thus deprived of his own culture and prevented from participating in that of the colonizer, the native loses his sense of historical direction and soon his initiative as well. . . . If he attempts to espouse Western values, then he is seen as a vacant imitator without a culture of his own. Thus colonialist ideology is designed to confine the native in a confused and subservient position (1983, p. 5).

In other situations, the non-reciprocal address system is used by a person of higher status to a person of lower status, as in the following example:

3. When all the egwugwu had sat down and the sound of the many tiny bells and rattles on their bodies had subsided, Evil Forest addressed the two groups of people facing them.

Uzowulu's body, I salute you,' he said. Uzowulu bent down and touched the earth with his right hand as a sign of submission.

'Our father, my hand has touched the ground,' he said.

'*Uzowulu's body, do you know me?*' asked the spirit.

'How can I know you, father? You are beyond our knowledge' (*TFA*, p. 64; my emphasis).

In the interaction above, the masquerade addresses Uzowulu as "body" as a means of accentuating the "ritual" distance between them and the non-reciprocity of the interaction. Compare the above with the following:

4. Somewhere near him someone was talking into his talk. He looked around and saw that it was Nwaka of Umuneora. Ezeulu stopped talking for a while, and then addressed the man.

'Ogbuefi Nwaka, *I salute you,*' he said.

Nwaka cleared his throat and stopped whatever it was he had been saying to those near him. Ezeulu continued. (*AOG*, p. 142; my emphasis).

The non-reciprocal nature of this address system inheres in the fact that although it is a statement and an apparent greeting, it performs various illocutionary acts at the same time: it is a request asking the addressee to keep quiet and, indeed, it is a reprimand. The perlocutionary effect is that the addressee stopped talking immediately.²

3. Prayers, Invectives, and Ritual Communication

The participants in these speech events or verbal performance are, in most cases, elders of the society who are supposed to be the repository of knowledge. However, in all cases in the interaction dyad, there is the presence of an unseen god or ancestor to whom the performer implicitly or explicitly alludes. As their labels suggest, prayers and invectives are speech acts meant to perform certain actions. It is interesting to note that the form of these prayers and invectives is, in the majority of instances attested in the novels, the optative or volitive mood which itself is an expression of a wish or desire that something be done. Huddleston (1981) gives examples of the volitive and optative moods as follows:

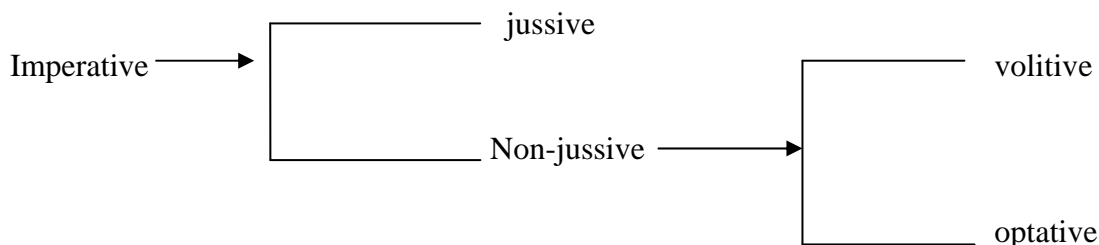


Figure 1. The examples of the volitive and optative moods

non-jussive volitive: 'May you be forgiven'

non-jussive optative: 'Let ABC be an equilateral triangle'

Concerning their modality, while prayers state a positive thesis, invectives affirm a negative

thesis in respect of the ideational content of what is being said.

Achebe makes copious use of prayers and invectives compared to Soyinka; the only example attested in Soyinka's *Season of Anomy* occurs in the environment of a ritual communication and it will be so treated. In the following examples, the source and kind of speech function is given in parentheses following such example:

1. 'Whether you are spirit or man may Agbala shave your head with a blunt razor! May he twist your neck until you see your heels!' (*TFA*, p. 73: VOLITIVE, INVECTIVE).
2. 'Life to all of us,' he said as he broke it. 'And let there be friendship between your family and ours' (*TFA*, p. 82: JUSSIVE INCLUSIVE, OPTATIVE, PRAYER).
3. '. . . May all you take out return again tenfold . . .' (*TFA*, p. 118: VOLITIVE, PRAYER).
4. 'He that brings kola nuts brings life,' he said. 'We do not seek to hurt any man, but if any man seeks to hurt us may he break his neck' (*NLAE*, p. 5: VOLITIVE, INVECTIVE).
5. 'Moon, ' said the senior wife, Matefi, 'may your face meeting mine bring good fortune' (*AOG*, p. 2: VOLITIVE, PRAYER).
6. 'Ulu, I thank you for making me see another new moon. May I see it again and again. . . . May we escape danger in the farm – the bite of a snake or the sting of the scorpion, the mighty one of the scrubland. May we not cut our shinbone with the machet or the hoe. And let our wives bear male children. May we increase in numbers at the next counting of the villages so that we shall sacrifice to you a cow, not a chicken as we did after the last New Yam feast. May children put their fathers into the earth and not fathers their children. May good meet the face of every man and every woman. Let it come to the land of the riverine folk and to the land of the forest peoples' (*AOG*, p. 6: VOLITIVES/OPTATIVES, PRAYERS).
7. 'May good confront the man on top and the man below. But let him who is jealous of another's position choke with his envy' (*AOG*, p. 95: VOLITIVE/OPTATIVE, PRAYER/INVECTIVE).
8. 'May he blind his mother and his father, not me.' She circled her head with her right hand and cast the evil towards the shop (*MOP*, p. 85: VOLITIVE, INVECTIVE).
9. '. . . I believe that the hawk should perch and the eagle perch, which ever says to the other don't, may its own wing break' (*MOP*, p. 122: VOLITIVE, INVECTIVE).

If proverbs, prayers, and invectives are forms of social communication, "By *ritual communication* is meant the use of language in conventionally specified contexts in which patterns of interaction and of linguistic choices are restricted along certain definable directions and set apart from those of ordinary conversational interaction" (Akinnsaso, 1982, p. 10, original emphasis). This view agrees with Sherzer's contention: "In ritual language, we typically encounter what might be called a 'co-efficient of difference.' That is, the language of ritual is usually (always?) different in some way from the ordinary language or languages of everyday communication of a particular community" (1982, p. 195). Apart from the fact that the form of ritual language is such that "The distinctiveness of each idea is further

enhanced by the preponderant use of grammatical parallelisms, a common example of which is the pairing of lexical items (usually content words) in a similar syntactic environment” (Akinnaso, 1982, p. 14), ritual communication strategies “are normally specially acquired and used primarily in formal settings, most commonly at the *shrine*. They are characterized by elaborate structural organization and *elevated* linguistic structures, and their usage is relatively independent of both the subjective experience of the users, and of their immediate social networks” (Akinnaso, 1982, p. 19, original emphasis).

A few examples of ritual communication in the form of ‘incantations’ are attested in Soyinka’s *The Interpreters* and *Season of Anomy* and Achebe’s *Arrow of God*, respectively. First, consider the following lengthy example from *The Interpreters*:

1. And of these floods of the beginning, of the revered fogs of the beginning, of the first messenger, the thimble of earth, a fowl and an ear of corn, seeking the spot where a scratch would become a peopled island; of the first apostate rolling the boulder down the back of the unsuspecting deity – for they must learn the first stab in the back and keep inferiors harmless within sight – and shattering him in fragments, which were picked up and pieced together with devotion; shell of the tortoise around divine breath; of the endless chain for the summons of the god and the phallus of unorigin pointed at the sky-hole past divination; of the lover of purity, the unblemished one whose large compassion embraced the cripples and the dumb, the dwarf, the epileptic – and why not, indeed, for they were creations of his drunken hand and what does it avail, the eternal penance of favoritism and abstinence? Of the lover of gore, invincible in battle, insatiable in love and carnage, the explorer, path-finder, protector of the forge and the creative hands, companion of the gourd whose crimson-misted sight of debauchery set him upon his own and he butchered them until the bitter cry pierced his fog of wine, stayed his hand and hung the sword, foolish like his dropped jaw; of the one who hanged and did not hang, who ascended on the Ilana to sky vaults and mastered the snake-tongued lightning and the stone of incandescence, long arms of the divine sling playing the random game of children, plucking houses, trees and children like the unripe mango; of the bi-sexed one that split himself into the river; of the parting of the fog and the retreat of the beginning, and the eternal war of the divining eyes, of the hundred and one eyes of lore, fore- and after-vision, of the eternal war of the first procedure with the long sickle head of chance, eternally mocking the pretensions of the bowl of plan, mocking lines of order in the ring of chaos; of the repulsive Scourge riding purulent on noontides of silent heat selective of victims the avaricious one; of the one who stayed to tend the first fruits of the ginger of earth with passages of the wind around him and of the heat and the rain, and the marks of the molting seasons. . . . (*Int*, pp. 224-225).

Notice the parallel grammatical structure of the passage (rendered chiefly by the prepositional phrases) and the allusion to Yoruba gods like Orunmila (‘. . . of the first apostate rolling the boulder down the back of the unsuspecting deity’), Ogun (‘of the lover of gore, invincible in battle, insatiable in love and carnage . . .’), and Sango (‘of the one . . . who ascended on the

Ihana to sky vaults and mastered the snake-tongued lightning’). Reacting to the same passage, one of Africa’s leading literary critics, Eustace Palmer, has remarked that the passage is not justified “even by the fact that Soyinka is making forays into the world of legend; where there is little justification it must appear that he is merely demonstrating his undoubted control over words” (1979, p. 265). However, Soyinka is not demonstrating his control over words as much as translating an incantation from his mother tongue, Yoruba, into English. This incantation is prelude to a sacrifice to the gods as some characters in the novel gather to celebrate the consummation of Kola’s painting of the pantheon of the gods. This is evident in the following passage just two clauses away from the incantation: “Egbo interrupted, ‘The moment that you say to, my knife will go into the neck of this ram. To, and a fountain of blood will strike the ceiling of this studio’” (*Int*, p. 225). In the Yoruba language, such incantation as above is variously known as *ofo* or *asoje*. Nevertheless, Palmer could not appreciate the full import of this ritual communication not only because he is not Yoruba, but also because it occurs in language use in the ‘outer frame.’ If the incantation had been performed by one of the characters – that is, as language use in the ‘inner frame’ – Palmer would have appreciated that it is a speech act meant to facilitate ritual passage.

Other examples attested in Soyinka’s *Season of Anomy* are the following:

2. *Water is enough for a load, may it weigh you down but never slake your thirst. . . . may you be remembered as we remember carrion . . . the tree of hate you planted has touched the sky of pride – It must fall on you when you shelter beneath it . . . the death of a viper brings joy to the farmer’s household – may you bring joy in the heart of Gborolu . . . (SOA, p. 132, my emphasis).*

The above is an admixture of incantations and invectives.

3. ‘The child rots in the womb if it exceeds nine months, or else it emerges a monster. . . . The life-yolk rots in the shell if it is not opened in time, it creates a poisonous world of fumes and is suffocated in the trap. Haven’t you seen the butterfly struggle like mad out of the cocoon Suberu? What happens if your talisman is buried in rubble by your enemy? . . . Don’t you know that even the kernel in the palm nut turns rancid sooner or later, disease finds the weak eye in its hard shell and rots the inner flesh?’ (*SOA*, pp. 315-16).

The function of this incantation is to rouse one of the characters, Suberu, out of his lethargic state.

Finally, consider the following short and lengthy examples from Achebe’s *Arrow of God*:

4. *Tun tun gem-gem*

Oso mgbada bu nugwu

The speed of the deer

Is seen on the hill (*AOG*, p. 225).

This is an incantation meant to aid the speed of the masquerade; note that the author first

gives the Igbo language version and then translates into English.

5. The fly that struts around on a mound of excrement wastes his time; the mound will always be greater than the fly. The thing that beats the drum for *ngwesi* is inside the ground. Darkness is so great it gives horns to a dog. He who builds a homestead before another can boast more broken pots. It is *ofo* that gives rain-water power to cut dry earth. The man who walks ahead of his fellows spots spirits on the way. Bat said he knew his ugliness and chose to fly by night. When the air is fouled by a man on top of a palm tree the fly is confused. An ill-fated man drinks water and it catches in his teeth. . . . Even while people are still talking about the man Rat bit to death Lizard takes money to have his teeth filled. He who sees an old hag squatting should leave her alone; who knows how she breathes? White Ant chews *igbegulu* because it is lying on the ground; let him climb the palm tree and chew. He who will swallow *udala* seeds must consider the size of his anus. The fly that has no one to advise him follows the corpse into the ground. . . .

When a handshake passes the elbow it becomes another thing. The sleep that lasts from one market day to another has become death. The man who likes the meat of the funeral ram, why does he recover when sickness visits him? The mighty tree falls and the little birds scatter in the bush. . . . The little bird which hops off the ground and lands on an ant-hill may not know it but is still on the ground. . . . A common snake which a man sees all alone may become a python in his eyes. . . . The very Thing which kills Mother Rat is always there to make sure that its young ones never open their eyes. . . . The boy who persists in asking what happened to his father before he has enough strength to avenge him is asking for his father's fate. . . . The man who belittles the sickness which Monkey has suffered should ask to see the eyes which his nurse got from blowing the sick fire. . . . When death wants to take a little dog it prevents it from smelling even excrement. . . . (AOG, pp. 225-26)

This lengthy incantation is a rider to example 17 and is meant to “fortify” the performer – in this case, a masquerade, an ancestral spirit – and ward off evil spirits. Notice the parallel grammatical structures rendered by the restrictive relative clause structure: *person or object + relative clause* (e.g., ‘He who builds a homestead . . .’; ‘The fly that struts around on a mound . . .’, etc.). According to Quirk *et al.*: “*He or She* followed by a relative clause belongs to a literary and somewhat archaic style” (1985, p. 352). However, this particular form of the incantation just noted is hardly surprising since “The ritual language is a dialect (perhaps mutually intelligible), often including archaisms, of one of the languages of ordinary communication in the community” (Sherzer, 1982, p. 195).

In the foregoing examples, it should be noted that like proverb performance, the absence of self-reference words, for example, first-person pronouns, and modulated phrases like “I think” and “in my opinion” attests to the depersonalization of the performer's utterances, thus placing the experience domain within the general context of ancestral usage.

4. Panegyric

Unlike proverbs, prayers, invectives, and ritual communication which are highly depersonalized verbal performance since, especially in the case of ritual communication, the performer negotiates through the ancestors and the gods as a strategy of ritual distance reduction, panegyric are highly personalized because the speech role is marked by the first-person pronoun “I”. In panegyric, the performer asserts his or her identity and thus becomes the locus or epicenter of the speech act. It is in this sense that panegyric are what I would like to call ‘ego-boosters’. This kind of speech function is not attested in the novels of Soyinka, but the following are few examples from Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, respectively:

6. ‘I am Evil Forest, I am Dry-meat-that-fills-the-mouth, I am Fire-that-Burns-without-faggots. . . .’ (*TFA*, p. 66).
7. ‘. . . I, Ogalanya, Evil Dog that Warms His Body through the Head, I took neither kith nor kin and yet went to this place’ (*AOG*, p. 39).
8. ‘It is I, Eke, the One that makes a strong man bite the earth with his teeth . . .’ (*AOG*, p. 71).
9. ‘It is I, Oye, the One that began cooking before Another and so has more broken pots . . .’ (*AOG*, p. 71).
10. ‘It is I, Afo, the great river that cannot be saluted’ (*AOG*, p. 71).
11. ‘I am Ezeulu, the hunchback more terrible than a leper’ (*AOG*, p. 71).

The foregoing speech functions are all performed by masked spirits.

5. The Doric Style: Idiomatic Expressions

‘Yes, the white man is not like the black man. He does not waste his words’ (Jekopu, Captain Winterbottom’s Chief Messenger: *AOG*, p. 139).

The Commissioner did not understand what Obierika meant when he said, ‘Perhaps your men will help.’ One of the most infuriating habits of these people was their love of superfluous words, he thought (*TFA*, p. 146).

The doric style, writes Halliday (1987, p. 142), represents natural language “in its commonsense, everyday, spontaneous spoken form,” as it functions “way below the usual level of consciousness” (Halliday, 1987, p. 143). In other words:

The doric style, that of everyday, commonsense discourse, is characterized by a high degree of grammatical intricacy – a choreographic type of complexity. . . . It highlights processes, and the interdependence of one process on another. The attic style, that of emergent languages of science, displays a high degree of lexical density: its complexity is crystalline, and it highlights structures, and the interrelationships of their parts – including, in a critical further development, *conceptual* structures, the taxonomies that helped to turn knowledge into science (Halliday, 1987, p. 147, original emphasis).

As several scholars have indicated (e.g. Zabus, 1990, pp. 19-30), Achebe generally subjects

the English language to a process of adaptation to meet his Nigerian experience by incorporating into dialogues and narration many art-forms translated from his mother tongue. I am thus concerned in this section with how Achebe is able to capture in English the idiom, metaphor, the “hidden” grammars, and the ordinary spoken language – in their everyday, commonsense contexts – so typical of the Igbo people. I alluded to Achebe only because this kind of doric style is not attested in Soyinka’s novels.

It is the doric style that underlies the two prefaces to this section. It is not that the Igbo man “wastes his words” as Captain Winterbottom’s Messenger alleges or that he is given to “superfluous words” as the British District Commissioner observes, but the kind of idiom used by the Igbo to relate their experiences is often constrained by such sociolinguistic variables as participant, topic, setting, and situation. Achebe himself, as a bilingual creative writer, is aware of the doric style. Achebe (1975, p. 61) uses the following classical passage from *Arrow of God* to illustrate his approach to the use of English in specific contexts, the doric style:

I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eyes there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share. The world is like a Mask, dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying had we known tomorrow (*AOG*, pp. 45-46).

The author then gives us what he considers the standard English equivalent of the same passage:

I am sending you as my representative among these people just to be on the safe side in case the new religion develops. One has to move with the times or else one is left behind. I have a hunch that those who fail to come to terms with the white man may well regret their lack of foresight (Achebe, 1975, p. 62).

According to Achebe: “The material is the same. But the form of the one is *in character* and the other is not. It is largely a matter of instinct, but judgment comes into it too” (1975, p. 62, original emphasis). The main point is that while the first passage above reflects the doric style, the second reflects what Halliday (1985, p. 321) has termed “grammatical metaphor.”

Without a doubt, all the novels of Achebe bristle with the doric style but, for purposes of illustration, I will take a few examples from *Arrow of God*. In the examples that follow, the doric style is highlighted, while the English “grammaticalized” approximation is given in parentheses.

12. May children *put their fathers into the earth* (p. 6: . . .bury their fathers).
13. I should remind you *to hold your tongues in your hand* (p. 19: . . . to keep quiet).
14. Otikpo, let us go outside and *whisper together* (p. 22: discuss privately).
15. Nwaka was known for speaking his mind; he never paused *to bite his words* (p. 38: . . to think).
16. I have already said *what this new religion will bring to Umuaro wears a hat in its head* (p. 45: . . . warned of the dangers inherent in this new religion).

17. What that man Ezeulu will bring to Umuaro is *pregnant and nursing a baby at the same time* (p. 52: . . . trouble).
18. . . . asked the Chief Priest, *holding his rage firmly with two hands* (p. 54: . . . controlling his anger).
19. She was forbidden to cook for any grown man on account of her *uncleanness* (p. 64: menstruation).
20. Moses Unachukwu, although very much older than the two age groups, had come forward to organize them and *to take words out of the white man's mouth for them* (p. 77: . . . to translate and interpret the English language for them).
21. Akuebue was one of the very few men *whose words gained entrance into Ezeulu's ear* (p. 93: . . . to whom Ezeulu listened).
22. 'I think *there is water in the sky*,' said Ezeulu (p. 95: . . . it is going to rain).
23. When Obika's bride arrived with her people and he looked upon her again it surprised him greatly that he had been able to let her go *untouched* during her last visit (p. 115: . . . without having sex with her).
24. When he took his wife to his hut after the sacrifice, *would he find her at home?*' (p. 118: . . . would he discover that she is a virgin?)
25. Every girl knew of Ogbanje Omenyi whose husband was said to have sent to her parents for a matchet to cut *the bush on either side of the highway which she carried between her thighs* (p. 122: . . . her overgrown pubic hair).
26. But let me see you come back from the stream with *yesterday's body* (p. 123: . . . your body unwashed).
27. Somewhere near him someone was *talking into his talk* (p. 142: . . . interrupting him).
28. When I called you together it was not because I am lost or because *my eyes have seen my ears* (p. 145: . . . I am mad).
29. . . . too much palm wine was harmful for a man *going in to his wife* (p. 193: . . . who desires to have sex with his wife).

As I indicated earlier, the doric style is often constrained, among other things, by topic, setting, and situation. Obviously, in examples 32, 36, 37, 38, and 42, the doric style is used to circumvent bawdy and obscene expressions. Notice the conflict and tension between the representational and rhetorical modes in the five examples just highlighted. While the representational mode allows the writer to circumvent tabooed expressions, the rhetorical mode foregrounds Achebe's focalization and totemization of the female body and sexuality. As Bamiro has noted, "by failing to interrogate the patriarchal linguistic structures of his world, Achebe's rhetoric [sometimes] makes him complicit with the English language's devaluation and semantic pejoration of the female ontological status in the Nigerian context" (2006, p. 327).

6. Conclusion

Transcultural creativity foregrounds ongoing critical debate in colonial discourse/postcolonial theory, especially as the issue relates to the continued use of English as the medium of creativity in postcolonial literatures. There are scholars like Ngugi Wa Thiong'o who call for

the abrogation of foreign languages as the media of African literary aesthetics. Ngugi thus particularly attempts to formulate a disruptive counter-discourse to the colonial hegemony. By refusing the offered subject position, represented by the dominance of English, Ngugi is in effect “counter-identifying” with the dominant discourse, to borrow Pecheux’s (1982) terminology. However, despite his avowed repudiation of English and his eagerness to be situated directly in opposition to the dominant discourse, Ngugi’s relationship to the English language is one of ambivalence and paradox. Ngugi’s ambivalent relationship to the English language is underscored by the following remarks in *Decolonising the Mind* which seemingly heralded his “farewell” to English as a vehicle for any of his writings: “I continued writing explanatory prose in English. Thus *Detained: A Writer’s Prison Diary*, *Writers in Politics* and *Barrel of a Pen* were all written in English. . . . However, I hope that through the age-old medium of translation I shall be able to continue dialogue with all” (1986, p. xiv).

Consequently, in spite of his rejection of English as a medium of his literary endeavors, Ngugi finds it difficult to extricate himself from the linguistic and cultural capital and the “profit of distinction” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 55) of English as a medium of international exchange. The linguistic and cultural capital of the language is “convertible to economic capital through the institutions of publishing, teaching, lecturing, and award-granting” (Arnove, 1993, p. 288) from which Ngugi has benefitted tremendously. In this sense, “Ngugi’s decision to publish in Gikuyu does not place him outside the market, but in a particular distinctive position within it” (Arnove, 1993, p. 290).

In contrast, Achebe and Soyinka adopt what Pecheux calls a third modality, transforming the subject position offered by the dominant discourse in an act of “dis-identification.” Rather than succumbing to the reductive binarisms of English/Yoruba or English/Igbo – with all their inherent ideological baggage of written culture/oral culture, civilized/primitive, foreign/native, and subject/object – these writers display a more subversive agenda. By rendering essentially oral Yoruba and Igbo speech-functions in a decidedly written Nigerian English, Soyinka and Achebe subvert cultural norms on both sides to radically reorganize their antagonistic relationship.

In the novels analyzed in this paper, congruent with the linguistic practice in the majority of other postcolonial English literatures, there is a subtle linguistic articulation of resistance to colonial discourse. Soyinka and Achebe thus seem to work on the levels of representational mode and linguistic refiguration. For example, at one level, the novels show their allegiance to oral linguistic forms. Yet, their rendering in a written, foreign language would seem as transgressive of their Yoruba and Igbo origins as their use of Nigerian English is to the traditional English novel. The politics of transcultural creativity in world Englishes is very clear because it epitomizes Bhabha’s (1989) concept of “hybridity” *par excellence*: transcultural creativity tends not only to bridge the cultural and linguistic gap between the colonized and the colonizer, but also to signify the mutual constitution of “inside” and “outside,” “self” and “other.” In other words, to paraphrase Slemon’s (1987, pp. 1-16) thinking in this area, if colonial discourse is the enforcer and embodiment of ideology, then it can only be constituted in relation to what it is not: the concept of ‘colonizer’ can exist only by virtue of what it excludes: the ‘colonized.’

Consequently, transcultural creativity – in contrast to pidgin Englishes and code-mixed varieties which “challenge the authority and hegemonic territoriality of the so-called Queen’s English” and therefore “polarize African and colonial discourses” (Bamiro, 2006, p. 319) – displays a cultural syncreticity that does not privilege center or margin but provides the potential means for establishing a dialectic between dominant and marginalized discourses. As Ashcroft *et al.* rightly observe:

. . . the syncretic and hybridized nature of post-colonial experience . . . refutes the notions that often attract post-colonial critics: that cultural practices can return to some ‘pure’ unsullied cultural condition, and that such practices themselves, such as the use of vernacular terms or grammatical forms in *english* literature, can embody such authenticity. Therefore, syncretic views of the post-colonial distance themselves from the universalist view of the function of language as representation, and from a culturally essentialist stance which might reject the use of *english* because of its assumed inauthenticity in the ‘non-English’ place (1989, pp. 41-42, my emphasis).

Yet, in spite of their valorization of cultural syncreticity, the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* maintain a Manichean opposition between “English” and “englishes.” English with capital ‘E’ refers to the hegemonic standard of British English or American English, while “englishes” refer to the decolonizing and decolonized forms of the language as used, for example, in parts of Africa, the Caribbean, and Asia. However, a study such as Bamiro (2000, p. 23) rejects the notion of “englishes” because writing English with the lower case ‘e’ unwittingly privileges the so-called standard English in the binarism. The term “Englishes” with the upper case is preferred since the plural form itself signals that no single norm of English is privileged and that all the various Englishes are in cross-cultural interaction.

Notes

1. Examples are drawn from Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), and *A Man of the People* (1966); and Soyinka’s two novels, *The Interpreters* (1966) and *Season of Anomy* (1973). These novels are abbreviated in this paper as follows: *Things Fall Apart* = TFA; *No Longer at Ease* = NLAE; *Arrow of God* = AOG; *A Man of the People* = MOP; *The Interpreters* = Int; *Season of Anomy* = SOA.
2. Following Austin (1962), in every speech act we can distinguish three things. What is said, the utterance, can be called the *locution*. What the speaker intends to communicate to the addressee is the *illocution*. The message that the addressee gets, his/her interpretation of what the speaker says, is the *perlocution*. If communication is successful, the illocution and the perlocution are alike or nearly alike.

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