

Reconstructing the Nigerian English Identity in Nigerian Literary Fiction: A Study of Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Purple Hibiscus*

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Abstract: Language has been identified as the most flexible and pervasive of the many symbolic resources available to man for identity construction. Nigerian novelists such as Chinua Achebe, Elechi Amadi, Wole Soyinka, and Gabriel Okara had in their generation explored this basic function of language not only for the reclamation of the African identity but also in the construction of an identity for the Nigerian variant of the English language. These identities were however regional. The onus therefore lies on contemporary Nigerian literary artists to consolidate the Achebean tradition and negotiate an all-embracing state-of-the-art national identity for the Nigerian variety of English. This study employs the framework of the cultural identity theory and through a descriptive approach examines Adichie's reconstruction of the identity of the Nigerian variety of English as national, legitimate, viable and adequate for fictional narration in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Purple Hibiscus*. In doing this, the paper advocates continued and persistent reassertion of the authenticity and collective ownership of the variety by Nigerian literary artists in order to finally put to rest all lingering reservations, enhance national cohesion and realize the codification of the variety.

Keywords: *Nigerian English, Identity (re)construction, Codification, Literary Discourse*

Introduction

When Chinua Achebe, in an interview with *The New Yorker* (1980) remarked that 'literature is not a luxury for us. It is a life and death affair because we are

fashioning a new man', he categorically acknowledged the power of literature to create, sustain and assert identity through the deployment of the rich resources, inherent variability and

stylistic potentials of language. He also lauded the pioneering but concerted effort of his generation to exploit this power in not only the reclamation of his country's history from generations of colonial writers but also in the construction of an identity for the variant of the English language which though 'still in communion with its ancestral home' had been 'altered to suit its new African surroundings' (Achebe, 1975, p.55). This identity creation was most expedient because: 'there is danger in relying on someone else to speak for you. You can trust that your message will be communicated accurately only if you speak with your own voice' (*The New Yorker*, May 26, 2008).

There was therefore a growing need to establish an identity for the entirety of the 'Nigerian voice', or the Nigerian English. This 'own voice' had to be socially acceptable and internationally intelligible: 'an English which is at once universal and able to carry the full weight of [African] peculiar experience' (*The New Yorker*, May 26, 2008). This need is as pertinent and pressing today as it was five decades ago especially because of the 21st century Nigerian need for a national language and identity. Such national identity will enhance national cohesion and stability that ethnic identities usually preclude. This paper, therefore, examines Adiche's efforts towards the reconstruction of the identity of Nigerian English as the collective property of Nigerians.

English in Nigeria

The beginning of the use of English in Nigeria may not be categorically stated but historical records speculate that the earliest contact was around the 15th century when the Portuguese sea merchants and pirates came to the West

coast of Africa in search of a new trade route to the Orient (Awonusi, 2004). Dike (1956), Ajayi (1956) and Crowther (1962) however date it around the 16th century. English in Nigeria, like other New Englishes, therefore has roots in trade relations, missionary activities and colonial interests which have been identified as the most important factors in the entrenchment of English on the Nigerian soil (Odumuh, 1987, Igboanusi, 2002).

Bamgbose (1995) identifies three strands in the development of Nigerian English: Contact English, made up of Nigerian Pidgin and Broken English; Victorian English, which was 'bookish' and School English, the variety taught to and used by majority of educated bilingual Nigerians. It is the school English, which has been subjected to nativization (Adetugbo, 1978) but all three strands are today interwoven to give the Nigerian variety of the English language. Nigerian English is thus the variety of the English language which has become institutionalized in Nigeria (Kachru, 1986) amidst the multiplicity of languages and cultures. Nigerian English reveals the evolution of distinctly Nigerian usages, attitudes and pragmatic use of language. It is characterized by phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic and semantic innovations and loan words from the many local languages (Bamiro, 1994; Bamgbose, 1995; Igboanusi, 2002). It is 'English in Nigeria doing what Nigerians want it to do' Adegbiya (2004, 20). Nigerian English is however not homogenous. No natural language is. It is a classic example of the inherent variability and flexibility of human language. Varieties (sometimes described as 'lects or levels) have been identified within the variety (see Banjo,

1975, Brosnaham, 1958; Adekunle, 1979, Adesanoye, 1980, Kujore, 1985, Awonusi, 1987, Jowitt, 1991, Banjo, 1993, Igboanusi, 2002).

These varieties have been identified along ethnolinguistic or regional lines; thus, there are Igbo English in the East, Yoruba English in the West, and Hausa English in the North. These variations are however most distinct at the phonological and lexical levels. Linguistic scholarship have argued for a monolithic standard, at the syntactic, lexical and semantic levels, based on 'the twin criteria of social acceptability and international intelligibility (Banjo, 1995, p. 209) or grammaticality and appropriateness (Okoro, 2004). Consensus appears to favour the adoption of 'educated Nigerian English', the variety used by educated Nigerians irrespective of ethnic affiliation, as the standard (see Odumuh, 1984; Awonusi, 1987; Jowitt, 1991; Banjo, 1995; Kujore, 1995; Bamgbose, 1998; Igboanusi, 2002; Alo & Igwebuikie, 2012). Educated Nigerians include Nigerians who have, at least, a university degree (Banjo, 1971; Awonusi, 1987; Udofot, 2003; Gut, 2012). This category of users has supposedly acquired lect-related linguistic competence and has been spatially and socially conditioned by the Nigerian environment (Uzoezie, 1986). Codification and elaboration of the educated variety are among the current pre-occupations of scholars of Nigerian English (Adegbite 2010). The issue of social acceptability has, however, remained a problem and according to Schneider (2007):

standardization or the acceptance of local forms of English as a means of expression of a new identity involves acceptance of

structures as adequate in formal usage, the positive evaluation of structures, structural homogeneity of a variety and codification (49).

Nigerians, therefore need a re-orientation and an attitudinal change towards the Nigerian English variety in order for the codification and elaboration attempts to pay off.

The Nigerian English Literary Tradition

Nigerian literary English has its origin in Chinua Achebe's seminal *Things Fall Apart* (1958). It was born out of a burning need to correct the jaundiced Western image of Africa popularized by such literary texts as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) and show Africans as a people with a rich cultural heritage and identity. The term, Nigerian 'English Literary Tradition,' refers to 'the many modification processes the English language has undergone since it came into contact with the indigenous languages' (Aboh & Uduk, 2016, p. 7). It received global attention with Professor Wole Soyinka's winning of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986. Although couched in the English language, Nigerian English literature discusses issues that are Nigerian and shares the sensibilities, consciousness, worldview and other aspects of the Nigerian culture (Arayela, 2013). Nigerian writers have remained true to their cultural heritage especially in their employment of oral traditions, local idioms, and proverbs in their narrative. But since English was the weapon used 'for the colonizing and civilizing the untutored African' (Arayela, 2013, p.30), it is only logical that it be used to 'de-colonize' Africa.

Three generations have been identified in the pedigree of Nigerian English Literature. The first generation, the 'trail

blazers' (Arayela, 2013, p.31) include writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, Elechi Amadi, J. P. Clark, Gabriel Okara, and Amos Tutola, among others. These writers built on the Western literary traditions but couched their works in a language that is uniquely Nigerian. By employing local idioms and proverbs, and deploying stock English phrases in unfamiliar ways and capturing the rhythms and nuances of speech of their local languages in their narrative, they created a 'new English.' Bamiro (1991) observes that their English is characterized by direct translations from Nigerian languages, observance of the principle of least effort and economy of expressions, socio-contextualization of English language forms and hypercorrection of the norms and code of the use of English. He therefore groups their language into basilect, uneducated Nigerian English, mesolect, semi-educated Nigerian English, and the acrolect, educated Nigerian English. Their themes revolved around pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Nigeria, and the oppression and exploitation of the weak by the strong among others. They were nationalistic in their orientation.

The second generation, 'the experimentalists' was born out of 'a disillusionment with the gains of independence' (Arayela, 2013, p.32). The generation comprises writers like Femi Osofisan, Niyi Osundare, Festus Iyayi, Buchi Emecheta, Zulu Sofola, and Zaynab Alkali among others. Arayela (p. 33) reports that these writers 'experimented with the old forms to produce new and novel forms' and like their predecessors, borrowed from the oral tradition and history of the people. Literature, for them, was a social force

and an ideological weapon (Obafemi, 1994). As such they preached social change through collective effort.

The third generation includes contemporary Nigerian English literary artists like Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche, Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo, Chika Unigwe, Helon Habila, and Vincent Egbuso among others. These writers, many of whom are Nigerians in the Diaspora, are both heirs to the Nigerian literary tradition and symbols of a new creative movement. Their generation is characterized, on the most part by thematic innovations in addition to explorations of the social and cultural intricacies of the Nigerian state. A major difference between this generation and Achebe's however, is that their narratives, 'while sometimes set in Africa, often reflect the writer's experience of living, studying or working elsewhere and are flecked with cultural reference – and settings – familiar to western audiences' (Lee, 2014 as cited in Santo, 2016, p.4).

Identity Construction in Nigerian Fiction in English

Identity is central to human existence and can be manifested at the individual or social group level. It defines and distinguishes an individual, a group, a society and a language. Deng (1995, p.1) defines identity as 'the way individuals and groups define themselves and are defined by others on the basis of race, ethnicity, language....' It is fundamental to a person's sense of self. Fearon (1999) traces the concept to the work of psychologist Erik Erikson in the 1950's. He argues that the semantic field of identity has widened in contemporary times so that the word now means 'dignity', 'pride' or 'honour'. In other words, one's identity

distinguishes him and makes him socially consequential.

Writers of Nigerian fiction in English have through the generations of the genre constructed various identities by means of a domesticated variety of English (e.g. Igboanusi, 2001; Wali, 2015, Lawal & Lawal, 2013) and through the explication of indigenous thoughts and ideals (Okolo, 2008; Lamidi & Aboh, 2011). These identities are constructed through a narrative form delineated by opposing legacies: the colonial legacy (English language and Western civilization), and the indigenous legacy (language, history, socio-cultural realities, norms and values). The writer is therefore a cultural and linguistic hybrid whose sources are his socio-cultural realities and traditional verbal sources, which he integrates into his narrative (Arayela, 2013). His Nigerianness is however seen in the balance between local colour and international intelligibility (Owolabi, 2012, p. 488).

Owolabi (2012) identifies transliteration, interference and importation of first language structures as the domestication strategies that have been employed by Nigerian writers to create various identities. This corroborates Igboanusi (2001) identification of the conscious manipulation of English, as well as influences and interference of the Igbo language and culture as identity negotiation strategies employed by Igbo English writers to create an identity for Igbo English, an ethnic variety of Nigerian English. Also, Abel (2005) speaks of Hausa English as signified through a narrative form circumscribed by the Arab-Muslim and Euro-Christian hegemonies and the indigenous tradition. The same could be said for the

identity of Yoruba English as evident in the literary works of Yoruba writers like Wole Soyinka and Ola Rotimi: an identity negotiated through linguistic experimentation. Lamidi & Aboh (2011) examine the symbolic uses of names in the construction of cultural and group identities in 21st century Nigerian novels. Wali (2015) however, differs from both Igboanusi and Lamidi & Aboh in focus. He investigates how Acbebe and Adichie's language use create identities about them that distinguish them from other writers.

The negotiating of ethnic identities, though desirable, undermines the negotiation of a national identity for Nigerian English. Okoro (2004) therefore warns against the stereotyping and divisiveness that such identities bring in their wake. Nigeria, by virtue of the amalgamation of 1914, is a nation of nations. Nigerian English is therefore the totality of the socio-linguistic and cultural peculiarities of these nations, ethnicities and users as well as the common core features, which the variety shares with other varieties. Its identity is not fragmentary. Walsh (1967 cited in Ogu, 1992, p. 88) acknowledges this communal ownership: 'the varieties of English spoken by educated Nigerians no matter their language, have enough features in common to mark off a general type which may be called Nigerian English'. Simo Bobda (1995) reiterates this:

Notwithstanding this diversity, there is evidence that a vast majority of features heard in Nigerian English cut across ethnic lines and can be considered typical of the Nigerian... (p. 252)

There is therefore need for Nigerian literary fiction to continually deconstruct the jaundiced often regional

identity of Nigerian English and reconstruct a national identity. Aluo (2017, p. 105) identifies the negotiation of national identities as ubiquitous in the writings of Adichie. In Adichie's words (2010, as cited in Aluo, 2017, p.106) 'literature can lead to change by creating a collective sense of who we are'. Literature is the vehicle for image rebranding (Urama, 2010).

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and the Nigerian literary tradition

The Nigerian born and bred Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a third-generation writer, was born in Enugu on 15th September, 1977 to Grace and James Nwoye Adichie. She grew up in Nsukka, where she began her educational career before proceeding to Drexel University, Philadelphia to read communication and later to John Hopkins, Baltimore, for a master's degree in creative writing. She is a novelist, short story and non-fiction writer. She was described by Achebe, to whom she credits her literary success, as coming almost fully made. *The Times Literary Supplement*, a weekly literary review published in London by News UK, describes her as 'the most prominent of a procession of critically acclaimed young Anglophone authors [who] is attracting a new generation of readers to African literature' (16th Dec. 2011, 20). In 2008, she was awarded a MacArthur Genius Grant. Her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (2005), won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for best first book; her second novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2007), won the Orange Broadband Prize for fiction in 2007 and her third novel, *Americana* (2013) was named one of the *New York Times* top ten best books of 2013. Her other works include *The Headstrong Historian* (2008), *The Thing Around Your Neck*

(2009), and *We should all be Feminists* (2014). The latter is a non-fiction essay adapted from a TED talk. Her most recent work is entitled *Dear Ijeawele or a Feminist manifesto in fifteen suggestions* (2017). In her literary works, Adichie explores the sociocultural realities of the Nigerian state and the Nigerian people within and outside the shores of Nigeria. She addresses the themes of identity, culture, racism, migration, colonialism, Nigerian politics, religious fundamentalism, domestic violence, Western interference, war and violence among others.

In contrast to the work of most writers of her generation, Adichie's works evince the emergence of a 'new experience in literature of the English language and the renewal of the African literary canon (Santo, 2016, p.3). She opts for a traditional western style and the language of the colonizer to deliver her story (Santo, 2016) just like the Achebean era. In doing so, she explores the diversity of the English language in Nigeria and offers her readers a different perspective on Nigeria while emphasizing the dangers of a single story. Anyokwu (2011) describes her English as thoroughly domesticated and replete with Nigerianisms, slang, and buzz-words among others. Although her Igbo socio-cultural and linguistic heritage colour her works, yet in addition to projecting her Igbo identity, she negotiates a national identity. In an interview with Obie Brooke during her 2014 NBCC award Adichie acknowledges this fact:

I've always had Igbo [in my writing]...[because] for me what was more important, for the integrity of the novel, was that I capture the world I wanted to capture rather than to try to mold

that world into the idea of what the imagined reader would think. (Adichie, 'NBCC Fiction Award).

In her narrative enterprise, therefore, she focuses on rearticulating the Nigerian and Nigerian English identity through her competent mixing of the exoglossic and endoglossic codes.

Orakwue (2016) highlights and analyses some stylistic devices in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. She groups the devices into lexical categories, grammatical categories, code switching/mixing and context. She examines how these are used to reveal Adichie's ideas and the extent to which Adichie's cultural and linguistic background affect her style. Lawal & Lawal (2013) further examine language and ideology in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and focus on her language use as an explication of the ideological factors of power and gender. Ikediugwu (2013) differs from the two by investigating the feminist inclinations in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (HYS) (2007) and *Purple Hibiscus* (PH) (2005) whereas Aboh & Uduk (2016) try to account for the pragmatic relation between utterances and meaning explication in Adichie's three novels, *Purple Hibiscus* (PH) (2005), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (HYS) (2007) and *American* (2013). Aluo (2017) is a study of Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and 'A Private Experience' one of Adichie's short stories in her collection of short stories, *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009). Aluo argues that even though Adichie negotiates Nigerian national identity and African identity in the works, she comes 'close to misrepresenting Northern Nigerian identity in her fiction' (p. 105). He believes that a postcolonial identity is achievable through the mixture of many

ethnic identities, not through their denigration.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts the Interpretive Approach; an aspect of Cultural Identity Theory in pursuance of its objectives. Cultural identity is an umbrella construct for related group identities like nationality, race, ethnicity, ethno-linguistic identity, regional identity, etc. It is central to a person's sense of self and is shaped and reshaped by communication choices, behaviours, and negotiations within intercultural discourses. It is both an individual choice and a group choice and is adaptive, evolving, flexible, negotiable, distinct, communal and discrete (Chen & Lin, 2016). It can also be facilitated or compromised. Interest in understanding cultural identity began with the publication of Cross (1978) theory of Nigrescence. Cultural identity theory is an interpretive approach conceived by Mary Jane Collier and Milt Thomas in 1988. As identified by Collier (2005 as cited in Chen & Lin, 'Critical/interpretive approach, 2016), the interpretive approach aims to:

... advance understanding of the ways in which individual members of groups, organizations and social institutions discursively negotiate their positioning and identifications while simultaneously navigating the complex and particular contexts in which they live.

It regards cultural identity as traversing cultural positioning and identifications that are historical, contextual and relational (Chen & Collier, 2012; Chen & Lin, 2016; Collier, 1998). Cultural identity theory centres on how individuals use communicative processes to construct and negotiate their cultural group identities and

relationships in particular contexts (Chen & Lin, 2016). The theory acknowledges culture as one of the many identities conveyed in communication interactions. It posits a relationship between inter-cultural competence and cultural identity and believes that identities can be negotiated, co-created and reinforced.

Although cultural identity theory was originally conceived as an interpretive inquiry to cultural identities, recent years have witnessed the incorporation of critical perspectives, attention to contextual structure, ideologies and status hierarchy (Chen & Lin, 2016). It may be nationalistic, ethnic, political, class, gender etc. Collier and Thomas (1988) distilled seven properties of the theory, strategies of identity communication by group members from the ethnography of communication and social construction. Among these properties are: avowal and ascription - how one sees and projects his group identity and how he is perceived by others; salience or prominence; modes of expression; individual, relational and communal identity; content and relational levels. However, the first three properties will be of interest to this study and in doing so, emphasis will be on identity re-articulation, co-creation, negotiation and reinforcement.

Nigerian English in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Nigerian English plays an important communicative, identity recreation, assertion and negotiation roles in Adichie's novels. She uses this linguistic medium to 'instantiate the Nigerian-ness of her narrative discourse (Aboh & Uduk, 2016, p. 8). Adichie's English in *Purple Hibiscus* (henceforth *PH*) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (henceforth *HYS*) evinces the

phonological, lexical, morphological, syntactic, and semantic characteristics of Nigerian English identified in Nigerian English scholarship (see Jowitt, 1991; Bamiro, 1994; Igboanusi, 2002; Dadzie, 2004; Daramola, 2004; Okoro, 2004; Ogunsiji, 2006). These characteristics include among others: reduced sentences, discourse particles, code-mixing/switching and innovative ordering and innovative use of grammatical categories at the syntactic level; loan words, coinages, influences from L1 and culture, translation equivalent and acronyms at the lexical level; semantic shift, extension and restriction due to influences from the local cultures and worldviews at the semantic level; idioms at the discourse level; loaning, clipping, affixation, etc. at the morphological level and mother tongue (MT) interference at the phonological levels.

The study identifies the following aspects and instances of Nigerian English in the novels:

(i) Code-mixing/code switching:

1. 'I na-ezuzu ezuzu? Are you stupid?' (*HYS*, 299)
2. 'Eh! You speak Igbo, I na-asu Igbo' (*HYS*, 151)
3. 'Safe journey, Ijeoma'. (*HYS*, 26)
4. 'O na-agakwa? Is it going well?' (*HYS*, 38)
5. '...you are a sheep, aturu' (*HYS*, 211)
6. 'Na gode. Thank you Hajia' (*HYS*, 46)
7. 'Kedu?' (*HYS*, 22) (How are you?)

(ii) Loan words and Acronymy

8. 'You know Papa nnukwu's akwam ozu is next week?' (*PH*, 203)
9. 'They have blockaded us *kpam kpam*.' (*HYS*, 293)
10. '...rub his body with *okwuma*...' (*PH*, 14)

11. 'I will leave tomorrow because I must attend an *umuada* meeting.' (HYS, 239)

12. '...Kambili just behaved like an *atulu* when my friends came.' (PH, 150)

13. 'Na gode. Thank you *Hajia*' (HYS, 46)

14. 'Those flies in the kitchen, sah, they are a sign somebody has done bad medicine from the *dibia*'. (HYS, 215)

15. 'Which one is for big *oga* to try and bribe me with an interview? I ask you, eh, which one is that?' (PH, 206)

16. '...this is not a good time for *NEPA* to take light'. (PH, 165)

17 '...and scribbled WCC: WAR CAN CONTINUE.' (HYS, 330)

(iii) Transliterated/translated local idioms and culture-bound expressions

18. 'They said he *did not rise well* three mornings in a roll'. (PH, 156)

19. '*Let the day break*' (HYS, 291)

20. 'I thought Odenigbo's girl is a human being; he didn't say you were a *water mermaid*'. (HYS, 283)

21. They will have Anulika's *wine-carrying ceremony* next Saturday'. (HYS, 176)

22. '*Bushman*. He does not know it is Bee-afra not Ba-yafra'. (HYS, 289)

23. 'Which one is for *big oga* to try and bribe me with an interview? I ask you, eh, which one is that?' (PH, 206)

24. 'Master found a *rain-holder* on the wedding day'. (HYS, 245)

25. 'That soup smells like something *Amaka washed her hands well to cook*'. (PH, 155)

26. '*God take power from the devil*' (PH, 242)

27. 'You people I *ate the money* for the zinc...'. (PH, 97)

28. '...this is not a good time for *NEPA* to take light'. (PH, 165)

(iv) Syntactic innovations and Discourse particles

29. Your cousins will be back soon. They *went out to say happy birthday* to Father Amadi...' (PH, 121)

30. '*Me and my madam and the children are leaving tomorrow...*' (HYS, 175)

31. 'Which one is for big *ogato* try and bribe me with an interview? I ask you, eh, which one is that?' (PH, 206)

32. 'Will you not go to school, *gbo*, Ugwu?' (HYS, 241)

33. '*Eh!* You speak Igbo, I na-asu Igbo' (HYS, 151)

34. '*Haba*, I will cut this line if you keep wasting my time.' ((HYS, 102)

Discussion

The discussion is divided into four parts: the first part deals with code-mixing/code switching; the second, loan words and discourse particles; the third, transliterated/translated local idioms and culture-bound expressions and the fourth, syntactic innovations and acronymy as identity avowal, expression, salience and reconstruction techniques.

Code-switching/code-mixing

One of the identity avowal and reconstruction techniques Adichie employs is code-switching and code-mixing. Code-switching and code-mixing are two related sociolinguistic notions common in bi-lingual and multi-lingual communities or diaglossic situations. Both concepts involve the juxtaposition of two language systems or two language varieties (codes) but while the former reflects the grammar of both codes working concurrently, the latter does not involve the grammars, rather mere intra-sentential switching (Singh, 1985). In Gumperz (1982, p.59) words: [code-switching] 'is the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or sub-systems'. Romaine

(1989, as cited in Aboh and Uduk, 2016, p.11) adds that the constituents of a code-switched discourse are 'tied together prosodically as well as by semantic and syntactic relations equivalent to those that join passages in a single speech act'. Adichie uses the technique to convey the dual cultural make-up of Nigerian English: The exonormative code co-existing with the indigenous code(s) in a symbiotic relationship. The italicized expressions in excerpts 1-7 are instances of code-switching/code-mixing and are regular features of Nigerian English.

The code-switched elements in the excerpts function to reinforce each other by way of emphasis or reiteration. In excerpt 1, Olanna's emotional discomposure is emphasized; in 2, the emphasis is on the wonder, delight and kinship Nnaemeka feels when Richard speaks Igbo to him. Adichie seems to say here that features of the indigenous codes in the foreign code serve to connect Nigerians to each other. Excerpt 3 underscores Odenigbo's earnest desire for Olanna's safety just as excerpts 4 and 5 underscore Olanna's concern for her cousin's education and Jomo's impatience with Ugwu's naivety, respectively. Excerpt 6 involves the Hausa word '*Na gode*' juxtaposed with the English equivalent 'Thank you'. Adichie uses this to show the multiple socio-cultural and linguistic influences on Nigerian English.

Worthy of note is the skillful way Adichie uses code-mixing in the excerpts to avow the identity of Nigerian English: sometimes the indigenous code precedes the foreign code and sometimes the foreign code precedes the indigenous code, suggestive of a struggle for relevance. Moreover, the code-mixed expressions

are usually exact equivalents, reminiscent of nouns in apposition. Why then does Adichie juxtapose the two codes? The excerpts reveal that whenever there is the need to express deep emotions or emotional attachment or cultural values, Adichie makes recourse to code-switching/mixing as if to say the foreign code alone is inadequate in this respect. Achebe refers to this inadequacy of the English code to express Nigerian socio-cultural realities when he warns that one can trust that his message will be communicated accurately only if he speaks with his own voice. (*The New Yorker*, May 26, 2008). Nigerian English is thus for Adichie '[Nigeria's] own voice', Nigeria's identity.

Olanna's switch from English to Igbo in excerpt 7, 'Kedu' (How are you?) is particularly instructive. In making a woman, Ugwu describes her English as 'a superior tongue, a luminous language, the kind of English he heard on master's radio, rolling out with clipped precision' utter the Igbo word, Adichie places the Igbo tongue on the same pedestal as the English! When she adds: '...her Igbo words were softer than her English... he had not expected English that perfect to sit beside equally perfect Igbo' Adichie masterfully renegotiates the identity of the Igbo language and justifies its influence on Nigerian English.

Acronym and loan words

The second identity reconstruction and assertion technique Adichie employs in the novels is acronym and loan words from the indigenous cultures and language. She again, by means of this technique, shows the rationale for a Nigerian variety of the English language - a variety that will exhaustively catalogue the things, events and processes in the Nigerian environment

(Carroll, 1966). Adichie uses this mode of expression to give prominence to the core symbols, shared meanings, norms and values which may only find expression in the Nigerian variety of English. By so doing, Adichie asserts the adequacy of Nigerian English as a linguistic code: a language must serve the interests of its users. The loan words *papa nnukwu* (grandfather), *akwam ozo* (funeral), *okwuma* (shea butter balm), *umuada* (daughters of the family), *atulu* (sheep), *Hajia* (Hausa for 'senior wife' or a woman who has been on pilgrimage), *dibia* (witch/native doctor), *oga* (Yoruba for 'senior') in excerpts 8-15 do not have the Standard British English (SBrE) equivalents with the same cultural import, associations and pragmatic force as the loan words from the indigenous languages.

Language and culture are inseparable especially because culture is transmitted through language and a people's culture and, invariably, identity are given expression in their language. It is therefore not surprising that Adichie borrows from the indigenous codes because by doing so, she distinguishes the Nigerian variety of the English language from the British and other native varieties. She avows the identity of the variety as that which is relevant to its users: the variety that captures and reflects the socio-cultural realities of Nigeria the same way American English does for America, British English does for Britain, and Australian English does for Australia. Adichie thus uses these loan words to make a statement about the inadequacy of the foreign code and the adequacy of the 'domesticated' variety of the foreign code in the Nigerian context.

The loan words 'papa nnukwu', literally 'big father', (grandfather) and *akwam*

ozu' (funeral), in excerpt 8 have the cultural connotations that their seeming equivalents in the foreign code 'grandfather' and 'funeral' do not have. Papa nnukwu, in the Nigerian context, is not just a grandfather. He is a revered family head, leader, elder, and soon-to-be ancestor! 'Akwam ozo' is not just a funeral ceremony: it is a rite of passage, a preparation for a great journey, a sending off to the ancestors. 'Kpamkpam' in excerpt 9 has a note of finality and hopelessness which the English equivalent 'completely' lacks. It is possible that the repetition of the morpheme 'kpam' is responsible for this. 'Okwuma' in excerpt 10 is more vivid and suggestive of its use among the indigenous peoples than 'shea butter cream' ever could be. 'Umuada' in excerpt 11 represents a strong force in Igbo land. They are not just daughters but gate-keepers and custodians of family traditions. No wonder mama says she must attend their meeting. The consequences of not attending could be dire! Its English equivalent 'daughters of the family' seems drab in comparison. Adichie's use of 'atulu' (Igbo word for sheep) is both symbolic and evocative. In the Igbo context; atulu means 'foolish, useless, senseless, purposeless, abnormal, foolishly naïve, dull-witted etc.' Amaka's reference to Kambili as an 'atulu' shows her deep-seated resentment of and impatience with Kambili's reserve and naivety. 'Hajia' in excerpt 13 and 'oga' are used to show respect, deference and distance. A 'dibia', excerpt 14, is a doctor of sorts: herbalist, providing traditional herbal remedies; diviner, wizard, and spiritualist, someone who can 'make good and bad medicine' (give healing and killing portions) etc. Adichie's use of the loan word has all these meaning

associations which no one English equivalent can have.

Excerpt 17 and 18 are instances of acronym: NEPA means National Electricity Power Authority (or Never Expect Power Always) and WCC means World Council of Churches (or War Can Continue). Acronyms are a regular feature of Nigerian English. Adichie uses them to impress upon her readers the nature of Nigerian English: innovative adaptations to reflect the Nigerian environment and people.

Transliterated/translated local idioms and culture-bound express

Idioms, by definition, are frozen expressions whose meanings are arbitrary and not retrievable from the meanings of the constituent parts (Gibbs & Colson, 2012) but from the socio-cultural worldview and meaning conventions of the users. They are thus culture and context bound and may not be understood outside the cultural context. In deploying this technique, Adichie again reasserts the identity of Nigerian English as the variety that captures the socio-cultural realities of Nigerians. The expressions are decipherable only within the Nigerian context. Excerpts 18-28 are in this category. Interestingly, this technique together with the code-mixing technique is the most frequently used in the novels. By its deployment, Adichie reveals that although Nigeria English shows influences from the many indigenous languages, many of its features transcend ethnic and regional borders: the variety is 'Nigerian', a property of all Nigerians.

Excerpts 18, 19, 25, 26, 27 and 28 depict transliterations of local idioms. '*Did not rise well* three mornings in a roll' in 18 is Auntie Ifeoma's way of saying her father has been sick for three

days in a row; the English version of 19 'let the day break' [away from the misfortunes of yesterday and into a better tomorrow] 'goodnight' seems grossly inadequate; 'To wash one's hand well to cook' in 25 is the local idiom for a meal cooked with competence, finesse or expertise - a savoury meal. Adichie uses the expression to succinctly capture the anticipated culinary delight. Excerpt 26's closest SBrE equivalent is probably 'God forbid' and excerpt 27's 'embezzle money' but these too lack the vividness, imagery, cultural weight and pragmatic import of the local versions. The phrase 'take light' in excerpt 28 has become idiomatic in Nigerian usage. It does not just refer to the frequent power cuts but to failure or lack of success generally. So for Amaka, the electricity company has failed its customers once again.

Excerpts 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24 are culture bound expressions transliterated into English. Adichie uses them to give expressive force to Nigeria's sociocultural reality. Thus there are uniquely Nigerian English expressions with meanings that are retrievable within only the Nigerian context, though couched in English. Excerpt 21 'wine carrying' may be interpreted as 'betrothal ceremony' and 22 'Bushman' as (an uneducated or unenlightened fellow); 23 'big oga' is the Nigerian English coinage for a highly influential man - a man in a position of high authority. In the novel, Ade Coker uses it to refer to the head of state. Its standard equivalent, 'president' or 'head of state' does not capture the meaning and cultural associations the Nigerian equivalent, 'big oga', captures. 'Rainholder', excerpt 24, literally 'someone who holds the rain', is the Nigerian

English coinage for someone with supposedly magical powers to control the rain. Adichie through this technique identifies the Nigerian variety of English as the variety that fills the semantic gap occasioned by the differences between the English culture and the Nigerian culture and echoes Achebe's (1965) sentiments about the African writer aiming to fashion out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience. Adichie's use of their standard equivalents would strip her creative enterprise of vigour, colour and relevance to the Nigerian situation. 'Wine carrying' in excerpt 21 is not exactly a betrothal ceremony. It may mean anything from an indication of interest in a girl to the actual marriage. The use of the English code would therefore be grossly misrepresentative. The same can be said of 'rain-holder' in excerpt 24: no one English equivalent can capture the cultural implications of the term: not 'magician' and definitely not 'weather forecaster.'

Syntactic innovations and discourse particles

Adichie's linguistic choices in the novels reveal some syntactic innovation processes in Nigerian English: ordering of sentence elements and the use of discourse particles. We have grouped the two together because the two have been identified as processes of syntactic innovation in Nigerian English (Igboanusi, 2006). These are indicative of the influence of the structure and speech habits of the local languages and cultures. Excerpts 29 and 30 are instances of such syntactic innovations. They reveal a transfer of the syntax of the local languages to the English code. Instead of SBrE 'have gone to Father Amadi's birthday party' or 'gone to

wish Father Amadi a happy birthday' and 'My mistress, the children and I...', respectively, Adichie chooses to express the actions of Kambili's cousins and Chinyere's parting words to Ugwu in the syntax of the local languages: Excerpt 29: 'They went out to say happy birthday to Father Amadi...' (PH, 121) 'Ha gara ikele fada maka ncheta ubochi omumu ya' (Igbo), 'Won jade la tiki Alufaa Amadi ku ojo ibi' (Yoruba) and Excerpt 30: 'Me and my madam and the children are leaving tomorrow...' (HYS, 175) 'Mu na nne m ukwu na umuaka...' (Igbo), 'Emi ati iyawo mi ati awon omo n kuro l'ola' (Yoruba), 'Ni da madam na, kuma da su yaran ta...' (Hausa). These are used to capture the rhythm and speech nuances of the indigenous languages.

Excerpts 31-34 contain the discourse particles, 'eh', 'gbo', 'Eh!' from the Igbo language and 'Haba' from the Hausa language. Igboanusi (2006) regards them as sources of syntactic innovation in Nigerian English. They serve to express surprise, interrogation and indignation in the respective contexts. Adichie uses this technique to reiterate the characteristic nature of Nigerian English and the indigenous host languages and cultures.

Conclusion

Recent globalizing tendencies have amplified the need for repeated cultural, social and self-identification worldwide but particularly for post-colonial cultures and languages and emerging languages that need to reclaim their historically marginalized identities and gain a voice. The Nigerian variety of the English language is not exempted from this global need. The variety needs constant identity enactment, reconstruction and negotiation for national and international authenticity.

The contemporary Nigerian literary artists are rising to this challenge. However, as desirable as the identification of ethnic varieties may be, they emphasize differences and may create stereotypes. The varieties should therefore not be seen as independent varieties but as tributaries of a national variety (i.e. the Nigerian English). Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, soaring on the wings of her rich Nigerian literary heritage and dual cultural heritage uses her linguistic choices in *Purple Hibiscus*

and *Half of a Yellow Sun* as tools for the construction, assertion and sustenance of the identity of the Nigerian English variety. Through avowal, salience and shared norms, she adroitly and stylistically weaves a tapestry of both standard Nigerian English expressions devoid of ethnic and regional colourings and the Igbo variety of Nigerian English which reflect particular socio-cultural realities of the Igbo nation in her identity reconstruction enterprise.

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