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Exploring Linguistic Decolonization: A Comparative Study of Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'O on Post-Colonial African Languages

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ABSTRACT

Chinua Achebe's "The African Writer and the English Language" and Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's "The Language of African Literature" are renowned postcolonial non-fiction works that garnered extensive recognition. Nevertheless, when dissecting postcolonial African literature, it is essential to recognize the multifaceted nature of the label 'African' and the intricate dynamics of 'colonialism' within the region. Achebe's pieces offer insights into the complexities of African linguistic and cultural contexts, highlighting the historical bases for conflicts between European settlers and native populations. While Achebe presents a genuine depiction of African civilization as depicted in non-fiction works and historical records, this portrayal is predominantly through European lenses. Ngugi, on the other hand, highlights the pervasive influence of European languages on African heritage since the initiation of colonial rule. As they discuss the ramifications of postcolonial interventions on global literature and history, both authors delve into various aspects of post-colonialism, incorporating insights from experts in the domain. This analysis does not purport to offer an exhaustive investigation of the myriad challenges facing Africans or propose solutions to the raised points. Instead, it aims to critically assess the central tenets of the two aforementioned works, illuminating their perspectives on cultural identities in terms of linguistic decolonization.

Keywords: postcolonial, nonfiction articles, critical acclaim, historical justification, colonizers, colonized, linguistic decolonization

1. Introduction

The critical influence of post-colonial African languages on the cultural and literary identity of the African continent is deeply interwoven with the history of colonialism. This legacy significantly affected language use and cultural practices, making it essential to comprehend the context of these languages to unravel the complexities of the linguistic landscape and its impact on African societies. The centuries of European colonial rule in Africa introduced European languages—specifically English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish—as official administrative, governance, and educational languages. This imposition contributed to the decline in the usage and promotion of indigenous African languages (Ngũgĩ, 1986), creating a hierarchy where European languages dominated and African languages were marginalized, instilling a sense of cultural inferiority (Achebe, 1965). This

linguistic disparity posed a quandary for African writers and intellectuals, some of whom opted to use European languages to reach a broader audience. Figures like Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'O navigated this landscape, making noteworthy contributions to the discussion on post-colonial African languages. In his essay "The African Writer and the English Language," Achebe stressed the necessity of authenticity in African literature and the integration of indigenous languages and cultural expressions (Achebe, 1965). Conversely, Ngugi, in "Decolonising the Mind," argued vehemently for the rejection of colonial languages and the reclamation of indigenous ones, viewing them as tools of cultural subjugation and the revival of African languages as pivotal for reclaiming African identity (Ngũgĩ, 1986). The purpose of this research is to explore the post-colonial African languages by investigating colonialism's impact on language use and African writers' responses, specifically Achebe and Ngugi. By assessing their works, the paper aims to illuminate the importance of linguistic revitalization in post-colonial Africa and its effects on cultural expressions and identity formation.

As influential figures in post-colonial literature, Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'O have greatly shaped the discourse surrounding African identity and cultural reclamation. Achebe, often hailed as the "father of modern African literature," challenged the Eurocentric narrative of Africa in his works, including the seminal novel "Things Fall Apart" (Achebe, 1958), promoting nuanced portrayals of African culture, traditions, and history. His essay "The African Writer and the English Language" explored the complexities of using English to articulate African experiences while advocating for the revival and appreciation of African languages. Kenyan writer and academic Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, known for advocating African languages and cultural revival, shifted his writing to his native language, Gikuyu, in the late 1970s, symbolizing his commitment to decolonization. His book "Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature" (Ngũgĩ, 1986) passionately emphasized the significance of African languages for the liberation of African consciousness. Both Achebe and Ngugi have profoundly impacted the post-colonial literary world, inspiring generations of African writers to explore their cultural heritage through native languages and reshaping Africa's narrative to highlight its cultural diversity, resilience, and contributions to global literature. By advocating for African languages in literature, they have played a vital role in the ongoing post-colonial discourse, their works standing as enduring symbols of African cultural pride and resistance against linguistic and cultural marginalization. Their significant contributions ensure that African voices continue to be heard and celebrated globally.

This paper, "Exploring Linguistic Decolonization: A Comparative Study of Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'O on Post-colonial African Languages," delves into the intricacies of post-colonial African languages through the lens of Chinua Achebe's "The African Writer and the English Language" and Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's "Language of African Literature." This investigation emphasizes the profound impact of colonial language policies on African writers and underscores the significance of linguistic revitalization. The objectives are multifaceted, encompassing a review of relevant literature, a critical analysis of Achebe and Ngugi's perspectives on language and cultural reclamation, and an examination of the contemporary implications of their contributions to today's African writers. The paper aims to highlight the role of language in molding cultural identity, fostering discourse on linguistic revitalization in post-colonial Africa, and enhancing our understanding of post-colonial African languages' complexities. The introduction provides a historical context of colonialism's linguistic impact in African societies, positioning Achebe and Ngugi as pivotal figures in post-colonial literature discussions surrounding African identity and cultural reclamation. With a clear statement of intent and a detailed structure, the introduction equips readers with a roadmap for the research, emphasizing its importance in the broader context of post-colonial studies.

2. Key Focus of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to compare and contrast "The African Writer and the English Language" by Chinua Achebe and "Language of African Literature" by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o from a post-colonial perspective. Both authors are considered leading figures in the field of post-colonial research due to their profound insights that aim to enlighten the world about post-colonial aspects. The paper seeks to justify the significance of scholarly endeavors in understanding and promoting post-colonial ideas. One crucial aspect discussed in both

works is the importance of preserving and supporting suppressed languages in the contemporary world to prevent their extinction, much like the fate of the Dodo birds.

3. The Rationale for Qualitative Findings

The historical context of research suggests that the results of the research and the findings are influenced by the opinions of the researchers and by the political/social situation at the time of the research. As usual, qualitative research was used to provide a detailed description and analysis of the specific programme, practice, or setting (Mertens, 1997) (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative research includes the collection of a wide range of empirical materials, including case studies, introspective life stories, interviews, observational studies, historical data, visual texts, etc., that describe problematic events and the understanding of individual lives (p. 2) (Donald, 2005). Qualitative research is the umbrella term for a range of research methods that use language data (p. 137).

4. Methodology

The methodology employed in this paper is qualitative research and analysis, aiming to achieve the paper's objective. To conduct this research, a substantial amount of existing literature related to African literary standards has been thoroughly reviewed and taken into consideration. This includes previously published articles, books, web pages, and dissertations that are relevant to the subject matter of the paper.

The primary focus of the research is on the two articles, "The African Writer and the English Language" by Chinua Achebe and "Language of African Literature" by Ngugi Wa Thiong'O. These articles are critically examined and analyzed to understand the underlying parameters that define the philosophy of post-colonial literature with a specific emphasis on the authentic aspects of African culture.

The qualitative approach allows for in-depth exploration and interpretation of the selected texts to gain insights into the perspectives and arguments presented by the authors. Through careful analysis and comparison, the paper aims to shed light on the parallels and differences between the two articles and their contributions to post-colonial research. And, this methodology enables the paper to delve into the nuances of post-colonial literature and its relationship with African culture while relying on a comprehensive review of relevant literature and a detailed examination of the chosen texts.

5. Literature Review

"Orientalism" by Edward Said, a postcolonial driving force, is well received by critics. Said makes the following four primary points in his book which help scholars to determine the outcome of the post-colonial study across the globe: First, despite *Orientalism's* pretense of objectivity, it served as a justification for the West's political hegemony over the East. Second, rather than studying the 'East' objectively, *Orientalism* was more about defining itself through the prism of the East. Third, by considering the 'Orient' as a single entity, points one and two are generated and strengthened. This essentialist perspective was erroneous in how it perceived various people groups and their cultures. Additionally, Said disputes the legitimacy of the terms 'Orient' and 'Occident'. Nevertheless, he uses them since this is how the Orientalists have framed their argument. Finally, Orientalist academics are the reflection of the culture they were raised in. They are, therefore, forced to distort the 'Other' as a result. The subaltern must therefore speak for itself if we are to achieve our goals (Said, Edward, 1979).

During the colonial period, western colonialists generally imposed their language on colonial people. Excluding the natives from speaking their native languages, they, in some cases, systematically imposed their language on the colonized. India, Kenya, and Nigeria experienced it when Britain, as a colonizer, ruled these countries. From the description of Gauri Viswanathan, we come to know how English, as a medium of teaching literature in Indian educational institutions, helped the British marginalize the native language of the Indians. She says, "British colonial administrators, provoked by missionaries on the one hand and fears of native insubordination on the other, discovered an ally in English literature to support them in maintaining control of the natives under the guise of a liberal education (p 17) (Viswanathan, 1989).

Language is a tool of colonization used to dominate the colonized. Antonio Gramsci regarded 'Language Domination' as sovereignty. A colonizer's language can limit the lingual sovereignty and cultural sovereignty of the colonized (Clark, 1985: 83). The colonizers, in their language, try to transmit their views and thoughts. Thus, they try to impose their language, literature and practices of everyday life on the colonized so that they can enhance the process of colonialism and penetration mechanism on others. It lets the colonizers conquer the dominant language and culture of the colonized nations to stabilize colonial influence. On the other hand, since the process of colonialism has a long-term impact on the colonized, it influences their way of life, including language, education, culture and literature. As a result, they continue to lose control over their native language and, at the same time, their language and culture begin to lose uniqueness and sovereignty.

The exploration of post-colonial African languages has been a subject of significant scholarly interest, with numerous researchers and authors examining the complexities and implications of linguistic and cultural expressions in the aftermath of colonialism. This literature review aims to provide an overview of existing research, academic articles, and books that have delved into the multifaceted aspects of language use and its influence on African societies in the post-colonial context.

The Africans were not allowed to speak their native language. As the colonizers saw language as a weapon, they forced them to master English, a process known as spiritual subjugation and chastised them for behaving in their native language. Ngugi Wa Thiong'O asserts that naturally, they were not allowed to communicate in their native languages while in Africa. Koreans were forced to learn the Japanese language. Therefore, no matter how people look at modern colonialism, the loss of the languages of the colonized provided the foundation for the acquisition of the colonizer's language. So, it is a conflict area. In the case of India, [British historian and statesman Thomas Babington] Macaulay was frank about his desire to produce a class of Indians with an English mindset. The English desired their involvement in overseeing the rest of the populace. It holds for Africa and any other region where there was colonialism. Africans were targeted by the weaponization of their languages.

Scholars have extensively studied the historical context of language in Africa during the colonial period. Works like "The Language Encounter in Africa: A Sociolinguistic Perspective" by Mesthrie, Rajend and "Colonial Language Policies in Africa" by Heugh and Skutnabb-Kangas explore the colonial language policies imposed by European powers and their effects on African languages and cultures. These studies shed light on how linguistic dynamics were shaped by colonial rule and how the dominance of European languages impacted indigenous languages.

5.1. Language and Cultural Identity in Post-Colonial Africa:

The link between language and cultural identity in post-colonial Africa has been a recurring theme in academic discourse. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's influential work "Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature" is a cornerstone in this area, passionately advocating for the revival of indigenous languages as a means of reclaiming African cultural identity. Other works, such as "Language, Identity, and Conflict: A Comparative Study of Language in Ethnic Conflict in Europe and Eurasia" by Toft, Philpott, and Williams, have examined how language and identity intertwine, especially in the context of post-colonial societies grappling with cultural reclamation.

5.2. Linguistic Revitalization and Decolonization:

The push to rejuvenate native languages and reform language strategies in Africa is prominently featured in contemporary studies. Bokamba and Obeng's "African Languages, Development, and the State" offers an in-depth analysis of initiatives and policies directed at amplifying African languages in educational and administrative contexts. Similarly, Ricento's "Language Policy for the Multilingual Classroom: Pedagogy of the Possible" delves into the complexities of language policy, emphasizing the importance of linguistic variety and its ramifications for education and societal unity.

Chinua Achebe offers a distinct stance on the role of English in the postcolonial linguistic debate. He views mastering English, and subsequently writing in it, as a tactical move to 'infiltrate the enemy's ranks and subvert it from the inside.' For him, this approach serves as a potent tool to protect one's cultural roots and ensure self-identity. Achebe asserts that by using the colonizers' language, African authors can counteract imperial dominance. This tactic aligns with the Eastern idea of the 'kickback strategy', using the oppressor's communication medium against them. Achebe is convinced that English can faithfully represent his African experiences, but he envisions a modified version—rooted in its origins but adapted to the African context (pp. 342–49) (Dannenberg, 2009).

5.3. African Literature and Language:

The relationship between African literature and language has been deeply studied. Research works like Ngara's "African Literary Language and the Politics of Language Planning" and Ndlovu-Gatsheni's "African Language Literatures: Perspectives on Isolation and Integration" delve into the intricacies African writers face when oscillating between colonial and native languages. These insights highlight the influence of language in shaping African literary identity and the importance of linguistic diversity.

Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o have significantly influenced the post-colonial African linguistic discourse. Achebe's "The African Writer and the English Language" and Ngugi's "Decolonising the Mind" are pivotal in discussions about language as a means of cultural resistance and preservation. Their works, widely explored by scholars, highlight the centrality of language in African cultural identity.

The extant literature emphasizes language's role in post-colonial Africa. These studies offer a foundation for a nuanced comparison of Achebe and Ngugi's perspectives, enriching the discussion on post-colonial linguistic dynamics and African cultural heritage.

6. Examination of Key Works by Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'O

The history of African literature has benefited greatly from the West African Anglophone tradition. The Anglophone tradition, in which the histories of colonization and warfare between the African tribe and the Whites are recounted in English, replaces the African oral tradition. In J M Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello*, the nominative character interprets: "The English novel is written in the first place by English people for English people. The Russian novel is written by Russians for Russians. But the African novel is not written by Africans for Africans. African novelists may write about Africa, about African experiences, but they are glancing over their shoulder all the time as they write at the foreigners who will read them. Whether they like it or not, they have assumed the role of the interpreter, interpreting Africa to the world (p 51)." M. Keith Booker states that "the chapter of the Anglophone novel in English presents an introduction to the historical development of important issues and trends in the African novel (p 30)."

The literary contributions of Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'O have left an indelible mark on the discourse of post-colonial African languages and cultural expressions. Their key works, "The African Writer and the English Language" by Chinua Achebe and "Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature" by Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, provide profound insights into the complexities of language use in the African literary landscape and the impact of colonial languages on cultural identity.

6.1. "The African Writer and the English Language" by Chinua Achebe:

Published in 1965, Achebe's essay "The African Writer and the English Language" critically examines the challenges faced by African writers in using English as a means of literary expression. Achebe grapples with the paradox of adopting a language associated with the colonial oppressors while attempting to convey authentic African experiences. He argues that African writers must retain their linguistic and cultural authenticity even as they write in English. Achebe emphasizes the importance of incorporating indigenous languages and cultural values into African literature to convey the true essence of African experiences. His work highlights the tension between using English as a medium for global communication and preserving African identity in literary expressions.

6.2. "The Politics of Language in African Literature" by Ngugi Wa Thiong'O:

Published in 1986, "Decolonising the Mind" by Ngugi Wa Thiong'O ardently champions the rejection of colonial languages in African literature. Ngugi perceives languages like English and French as cultural chains, fostering a sense of African inferiority. He emphasizes the paramount importance of reviving African languages to restore cultural identity. His shift from writing in English to Gikuyu epitomizes his commitment to this cause.

Achebe and Ngugi have greatly influenced discussions on post-colonial African linguistic and cultural narratives. Achebe recognizes the dual-edge of English in African literature and promotes blending indigenous languages (Achebe, 1965). Conversely, Ngugi advocates the outright rejection of colonial tongues, emphasizing native languages (Ngũgĩ, 1986). Their influential stances have spurred African literary scholars to address the colonial linguistic legacy, igniting dialogues on cultural reclamation.

The study of their works further explored in "Exploring Linguistic Decolonization: A Comparative Study of Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'O on Post-colonial African Languages," provides valuable insights into their perspectives on the interplay between language, literature, and African identity in a post-colonial setting.

7. Comparative Analysis of the Authors' Views on Post-Colonial African Languages

Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, two prominent African authors, have significantly contributed to the discourse on post-colonial African languages. While both writers advocate for the preservation of African cultural identity through language, their approaches and perspectives differ significantly.

7.1. Language as a Tool of Expression and Authenticity:

In "The African Writer and the English Language," Chinua Achebe recognizes the utility of English for global dialogue but stresses linguistic and cultural authenticity in African literature. He advocates for the infusion of indigenous languages and values to truly represent African experiences.

Conversely, Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, in "Decolonising the Mind," advocates for a staunch rejection of colonial languages, viewing them as instruments of cultural domination. He champions the resurrection of African languages to genuinely capture African experiences and to restore the continent's cultural pride and identity.

7.2. The Role of Language in Resistance and Empowerment:

Both authors recognize the role of language in resistance against colonial hegemony. Achebe suggests that incorporating African languages in literature serves as a means of resistance and challenges the dominance of colonial languages. He believes that by using African languages, writers can assert their cultural identity and resist cultural imperialism, even when writing in English.

Similarly, Ngugi views language as a crucial tool in the decolonization process. He argues that by rejecting colonial languages and adopting African languages, writers can reclaim their minds from colonial influences and empower themselves. He sees linguistic revitalization as a path towards achieving political and cultural liberation for African communities.

7.3. Linguistic Decolonization and National Identity:

Achebe sees linguistic decolonization as a harmonious blend, integrating African languages into literature while also acknowledging English's global relevance. He suggests writers can utilize multiple languages to capture Africa's cultural richness.

Ngugi adopts a more stringent stance, emphasizing the exclusive use of African languages to reclaim identity and confront colonial vestiges. He views abandoning colonial languages as essential for achieving true African independence.

In summation, both Achebe and Ngugi champion the preservation of African cultural identity through language. However, their methods differ: Achebe endorses balanced incorporation of indigenous languages within an English framework, whereas Ngugi advocates wholly for the return to African languages as an act of

defiance and empowerment. Their contrasting views contribute significantly to discussions on linguistic revitalization in African literature.

8. Historical Context of Post-Colonial African Languages

8.1. Colonial Impact on African Languages and Cultures

The colonial impact on Africa's linguistic and cultural milieu was profound. European powers imposed their languages, leading to significant shifts in indigenous language use and culture.

During colonial rule, Africans incorporated the colonizers' languages extensively. As Cecilia and Davidson observe, Africans turned to foreign languages for most affairs (pp. 114–127) **(Cecilia, A. Eme, and U. Mbagwu Davidson, 2011)**. This sentiment is echoed by Bamgbose, noting Nigerians' deep admiration for a foreign tongue **(Bamgbose, A, 1970)**.

Furthermore, the colonial era propagated racism, urging individuals to perceive themselves through biological lenses, emphasizing chromatic and physiological differences. The notion of "race" cemented the indelible marks of colonial domination. As Fanon articulated, the racial identity remained constant despite location changes: "Wherever he travels, the Negro remains the Negro" (p 192) **(Ngugi, 1977)**.

8.2. Language Suppression and Imposition:

During the era of European colonialism, African languages faced suppression and marginalization. Colonial powers, such as Britain, France, Portugal, and Belgium, enforced their languages as official languages of administration, education, and governance. This language imposition led to the neglect and decline of indigenous languages, which were often relegated to informal settings and local communication **(Nichols, Patricia C, 1977)**. As a result, many African languages lost their prestige and faced the risk of extinction.

8.3. Loss of Cultural Identity:

Language is intimately tied to culture, serving as a vehicle for the transmission of cultural knowledge, beliefs, and traditions. The imposition of European languages resulted in the erosion of indigenous cultural expressions and worldviews. Indigenous knowledge systems, folklore, and oral traditions, which were primarily transmitted through local languages, faced significant threats due to the dominance of colonial languages. This loss of cultural identity had profound implications for African communities, as their unique cultural heritage was devalued and marginalized **(Mahmood Mamdani, 1996)**.

8.4. Impact on Education and Literacy:

Colonial language policies profoundly impacted education in Africa. With European languages as the instructional medium, many African students, unfamiliar with these languages, faced educational barriers. This not only marginalized local cultures but also widened educational disparities **(Spitulnik, Debra, 1995)**.

In conclusion, colonialism deeply influenced African linguistic and cultural landscapes. While it led to the dominance of European languages and suppressed indigenous ones, recent efforts have emphasized linguistic diversity and the rejuvenation of native languages. Addressing this colonial legacy is essential to reclaim and preserve Africa's diverse cultural heritage.

9. Linguistic legacies of Colonialism in Africa

The historical context of post-colonial African languages reveals enduring linguistic legacies left by colonialism on the continent. European colonial powers implemented language policies and imposed their languages, leaving a profound impact on the linguistic landscape of Africa.

9.1. Language Hierarchy and Prestige:

One of the linguistic legacies of colonialism in Africa is the establishment of a language hierarchy, with colonial languages gaining prestige and dominance over indigenous languages. Colonial powers elevated their languages, such as English, French, Portuguese, and others, to the status of official languages, used in

administration, education, and governance (Nichols, Patricia C, 1977). As a result, these languages acquired social prestige and became symbols of modernity and advancement, while indigenous languages were relegated to subordinate positions.

9.2. Language as a Marker of Social Status:

The colonial language policies created linguistic divisions along social lines. Proficiency in colonial languages became a marker of social status and access to opportunities. Those who could speak the colonial languages were often favored in education, employment, and political spheres, while speakers of indigenous languages faced marginalization and limited upward mobility (Mahmood Mamdani, 1996). This legacy continues to shape social dynamics in post-colonial Africa, impacting language use and social stratification.

9.3. Impact on Indigenous Languages:

Colonialism had a detrimental impact on indigenous languages. The imposition of colonial languages as mediums of instruction and administration led to the neglect and decline of many African languages. Indigenous languages lost ground in formal settings, leading to language shift and endangerment. Many languages faced the risk of extinction as younger generations shifted to using colonial languages as their primary means of communication (Skutnabb-Kangas, T., & Heugh, K. Eds. 2012).

9.4. Language and Cultural Identity:

Colonialism's linguistic legacies also influenced cultural identity in Africa. Indigenous languages serve as carriers of cultural knowledge, traditions, and practices. With the dominance of colonial languages, many aspects of African cultural heritage tied to specific languages faced erosion. The loss of indigenous languages has, in turn, contributed to challenges in the preservation and transmission of cultural traditions across generations (Kraidy, M. Ed. 2005).

9.5. Bilingualism and Code-Switching:

Colonialism's imprint on post-colonial African societies is evident in the widespread bilingualism and code-switching. Many Africans, fluent in both native and colonial languages, seamlessly blend linguistic elements in everyday conversation. This linguistic duality aids in navigating diverse social and linguistic spheres (Myers-Scotton, C., 1993).

In conclusion, colonialism's linguistic imprints persist in Africa, shaping language use and cultural identity. Recognizing these legacies is vital for addressing linguistic disparities, safeguarding linguistic variety, and celebrating cultural heritage in today's African contexts.

10. Language as a Tool of Cultural Suppression and Resistance

In the historical context of post-colonial African languages, language emerged as a powerful tool used both for cultural suppression by colonial powers and as a means of resistance by African communities. Colonialism witnessed the deliberate imposition of European languages on African societies, contributing to the marginalization and erosion of indigenous languages and cultural expressions. However, despite these challenges, language also became a potent weapon for African communities to assert their cultural identity and resist colonial domination.

10.1. Language as a Tool of Cultural Suppression:

European colonial powers strategically employed language as a means of cultural suppression in Africa. The imposition of colonial languages, such as English, French, and Portuguese, was used to dismantle existing social structures and cultural norms within African societies. The promotion of colonial languages as the medium of education, governance, and administration resulted in the devaluation of indigenous languages, which were considered inferior or primitive by colonial authorities (Nichols, Patricia C, 1977). As a consequence, indigenous cultures and traditions, often closely intertwined with local languages, faced erasure and marginalization.

10.2. Erosion of Indigenous Languages:

The dominance of colonial languages led to the erosion of many indigenous African languages. The use of colonial languages in formal settings and education resulted in a language shift, with younger generations increasingly adopting colonial languages over their native tongues. This language shift not only contributed to language endangerment but also weakened the transmission of cultural knowledge and values tied to indigenous languages (Skutnabb-Kangas, T., & Heugh, K. Eds. 2012). Consequently, many African communities faced the challenge of preserving their cultural heritage in the face of linguistic marginalization.

10.3. Language as a Tool of Resistance:

Colonialism sought to control and suppress through language, but it inadvertently provided African communities with a medium for defiance. The very tongues imposed by the colonizers were harnessed by African luminaries to counteract colonial narratives. Pioneers like Chinua Achebe employed English to both depict authentic African tales and critique colonial misrepresentations, while Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o chose to pen his works in his native Gikuyu as a statement of cultural allegiance and pride (Achebe, 1965). Through their writings, these authors not only championed the richness of African heritage but also debunked the Eurocentric myth of African cultural inferiority. Their works stood as beacons of linguistic and cultural resistance, asserting the undeniable value and depth of the African ethos.

10.4. Linguistic Revitalization Efforts:

In the aftermath of colonial rule, the push to rejuvenate native languages became a symbol of cultural defiance. African societies began to appreciate the intrinsic value of their linguistic diversity, viewing language as a vessel for safeguarding cultural heritage. Actions to elevate and incorporate indigenous languages in educational curricula, media broadcasts, and cultural endeavors have risen in reaction to colonial-era linguistic dominance (Brock-Utne, B. 2000). Such endeavors not only bolster cultural esteem but also ensure the legacy of ancestral wisdom for subsequent generations.

The post-colonial narrative around African languages is twofold: it showcases both the colonization's use of language as a mechanism of cultural subjugation and the spirited response from African entities using language as a medium of dissent and cultural resurgence. The colonial mandate often marginalized native tongues, pushing them to the brink of oblivion. Yet, in the face of this adversity, language became a potent weapon for African thinkers, crusaders, and communities, allowing them to counteract colonial influences and robustly affirm their unique cultural identities.

11. Chinua Achebe's Perspective on Post-Colonial African Languages

11.1. Exploration of Achebe's Views on the English Language:

Chinua Achebe, a pivotal figure in African literature, navigated the complexities of using English in post-colonial Africa. In "The African Writer and the English Language," he concedes English's practicality for wider communication while cautioning against its inherent cultural pitfalls (Achebe, 1965). Booker views Achebe as the father of the modern African novel, asserting African cultural identity against colonial narratives (Guthrie, 2011). Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" exemplifies his mission, blending Western language with African experiences. Emphasizing language's power, he stated, "Language is a weapon, and we use it" (Katbi, Hadia Adel Khaznah and Layla Farouq Abdeen, 2016).

Recognized as the "Father" of African Literature, Achebe underscored the importance of "the national language" and culture in his writings (Anaso, George and Christopher Eziafa Nwabudike, 2014). He showcased African traditions, advocating against language and cultural divides within the continent. Achebe believed the prevailing literary medium could change with sociopolitical shifts.

Siddharth Katragadda's quote on culture's reflection in its festivals complements Achebe's perspective on national identity in his work "An Image of Africa" (Siddharth Katragadda, 2022). Yet, Achebe persistently reminded of the nuanced challenges faced by African writers using English, emphasizing the necessity to retain genuine African voices amidst Western influences (Achebe, 1965).

11.2. Balancing English Language Usage with Preserving Indigenous Languages:

Chinua Achebe emphasized the integration of native African languages into literature while also recognizing English's role in global communication. His belief in the enrichment of African literature through indigenous language integration is evident in his works, like "Things Fall Apart," where he seamlessly melds Igbo cultural elements with English prose, fostering African cultural pride (Achebe, 1965).

Given Nigeria's linguistic diversity, Achebe felt that writing in English was essential to communicate effectively across the nation. In such a multilingual context, English, introduced by colonizers, becomes a unifying medium. Achebe championed using English to convey African narratives to a global audience, presenting it as 'a new voice coming out from Africa, speaking of African experience by an African'.

11.3. Achebe's Contributions to Post-Colonial Language Revitalization:

Chinua Achebe's dedication to post-colonial language revitalization encompasses more than just his literary works. He mentored African writers, urging them to embrace their cultural and linguistic roots. His support for indigenous languages in African literature has ignited a passion for linguistic preservation and diversity (Achebe, 1965). Moreover, Achebe championed educational efforts promoting proficiency in both local tongues and English, empowering writers to seamlessly convey their native experiences to global audiences.

Achebe viewed English both as a tool and a colonial vestige. He believed in a harmonized approach: preserving indigenous languages while leveraging English for broader outreach. His mentorship and advocacy have indelibly influenced African languages and cultural representation.

In "Things Fall Apart" (1958), Achebe masterfully weaves African ideologies and heritage. His integration of Igbo with English offers readers a unique perspective, bridging the African and English experiences, emphasizing cultural pride against colonial suppression.

Katbi and Abdeen regard "Things Fall Apart" as a reflection on the repercussions of imperialism on marginalized cultures. Achebe celebrates Africa's social cohesion and rich traditions, advocating for their recognition and respect instead of colonial suppression (Guthrie, 2011).

While Achebe's relationship with English is intricate, he saw mastering it as a means to protect African cultural identity. He felt that by appropriating the colonizer's language, African writers could counteract imperialism. This "new English," rooted in the African context, would adequately represent the African experience (Dannenberg, 2009).

Though seen by some as dismissive of African languages, Achebe's ultimate goal was to enrich his culture with global understanding. He valued English as a lingua franca within postcolonial regions, emphasizing its utility for cross-border communication (Gallagher, Susan VanZanten, 1997).

For post-colonial African nations, language remains central. As they grapple with national identity and authenticity, writers like Ngugi Wa Thiong'O and Achebe illustrate the nuanced relationships with the English language in post-colonial literature.

Achebe's storytelling skill is evident in his ability to maintain a multifaceted narrative tone. Dannenberg observes that Achebe's narrative techniques effectively blur boundaries (p 176). Fagrutheen notes Achebe's presentation of competing cultural forces without favoring one over the other (p 36). The protagonist, Okonkwo, embodies the internal and external tensions of a changing society. His transformation, echoing the tragic trajectory of characters like Oedipus, captures the cultural clashes between generations and the shifting dynamics of power and masculinity (Achebe, 1958).

12. Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's Perspective on Post-Colonial African Languages

12.1. Ngugi's Rejection of Colonial Languages in African Literature:

Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, in his work "Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature," passionately argues against the use of European languages in African literature, viewing them as symbols of

colonial domination (Ngũgĩ, 1986). He believes that native languages are central to understanding African culture, asserting that language is not just a means of communication, but the vessel of culture and history.

Ngugi emphasizes the importance of African writers embracing their native tongues, challenging the status quo that upholds European languages as superior (Mazrui, Ali A. and Alamin M. Mazrui, 1998). He asserts, "Language and literature were taking further and further from us to other-selves, from our world to other worlds." For Ngugi, language plays a pivotal role in colonization; it is used both as a weapon and a means of control. This weaponization of language, seen in historical examples such as the Spanish in Latin America or the French in Africa, served colonial goals (Ngugi, 2018).

Ngugi recalls how he learned of his culture and legacy through oral tales shared by elders, highlighting the richness of African traditions (Ngugi, 1986). He believes that writing in African languages is crucial for cultural autonomy, challenging the colonial legacy and re-establishing African identity. In essence, Ngugi's stance is a call for linguistic decolonization, emphasizing the importance of native languages in the cultural and historical fabric of Africa.

12.2. Emphasizing the Significance of Indigenous Languages in Cultural Reclamation:

Ngugi's perspective underscores the importance of indigenous languages as the bedrock of cultural identity. He asserts that language is not just a tool for communication but also a vessel of culture, history, and collective memory (Ngũgĩ, 1986).

By advocating for writing in African languages, Ngugi envisions fostering cultural pride. He believes that using native tongues allows African writers to convey authentic experiences and counteract the cultural imperialism of colonial languages, ultimately leading to a decolonization of the African psyche.

This linguistic revival is not merely about expression for Ngugi; it is a profound act of resistance. Writing in one's own language becomes a symbol of rebellion against a system that has historically marginalized African cultures. By championing African languages in literature, Ngugi aims to ensure that Africans reclaim their narratives and identities, emphasizing that true cultural and political independence arises when Africans take control of their stories and history.

12.3. Ngugi's Impact on the Discourse of Language Decolonization in Africa:

Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's advocacy for language decolonization has had a profound impact on the discourse of African languages. His call for the rejection of colonial languages and the revival of indigenous languages has sparked widespread debates and discussions on language policies in post-colonial Africa (Ngũgĩ, 1986). His work has inspired not only writers and intellectuals but also policymakers and educators to rethink the role of language in education, literature, and cultural preservation.

Ngugi's influence extends beyond his literary works, as he actively participates in educational initiatives aimed at promoting African languages and cultural expressions. He has championed the establishment of literary institutions that prioritize African languages and has mentored a new generation of African writers who write in their native tongues.

Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's perspective on post-colonial African languages is characterized by a rejection of colonial languages, an emphasis on indigenous languages for cultural reclamation, and a significant impact on the discourse of language decolonization in Africa. His advocacy has played a crucial role in challenging the linguistic legacy of colonialism and promoting the revitalization of African languages as a means of asserting cultural identity and autonomy.

Ngugi says that they know their culture but cannot feel the rhythm of it. But in a contrastive way, Achebe signifies the international language so that it can spread out all over the world. Fanon had an almost similar opinion. He says, "The colonial world is a Manichean world" meaning that "European and African societies come together in a mode of radical difference (p 67)." English "was the most significant means via which its force enthralled and imprisoned the soul." Ngugi describes how speaking his native language of Gikuyu in class

resulted in punishments such as beatings or humiliation after Kenya declared a state of emergency in 1952. As the colonial educational machinery was expanded to promote metropolitan English as the standard language and all others or varieties as backward, Kenyan languages were suppressed and Orature (the tradition of oral literature) faded. When necessary, English was promoted violently in order to establish it as the language of truth and to create a linguistic hierarchy. Ngugi believed that Kenyan culture was being eradicated. He said, "Language as culture is the collective memory of a people's experience in history. Culture is almost indistinguishable from the language that makes possible its genesis, growth, banking, articulation, and indeed its transmission from one generation to the next ... The domination of a people's language by the languages of the colonizing nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonized (p 196)" (Ngugi, 1977).

13. Comparative Analysis of Achebe and Ngugi's Views

13.1. Similarities in Their Goals and Objectives:

Following the last four or five hundred years of European engagement with Africa, a body of literature emerged that painted both Africa and Africans in extremely unfavorable terms. The necessity to defend the slave trade and slavery was the driving force behind this. This persisted until the middle of the 20th century when the Africans themselves decided to take control of the telling of their own story (Achebe, 2000). A.S. Alimi notes that this well-known book is basically all about 'collapse, breaking into pieces, chaos, and confusion (p 121). Alimi has also quoted 'internal division in the tribe' (p 121) as another theme that is present in the book. This literary canon begins an endeavor that draws readers' attention to the 'scramble for Africa' in the phase of the 1880s and 1890s, which is the age of imperialism.

Ngugi Wa Thiong'O and Chinua Achebe are exceptional and top-tier examples of African authors who take unique components in the English language and post-colonial literature. Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, two iconic figures in African literature, share fundamental similarities in their goals and objectives regarding post-colonial African languages. Both authors are driven by a profound love for African language, literature, culture, and civilization. They recognize the significance of language as a powerful tool for cultural reclamation and the expression of authentic African experiences.

Both Achebe and Ngugi are committed to challenging the cultural domination perpetuated by colonial languages and envision a future where African writers can authentically express themselves without compromising their cultural identity. They aim to dismantle the linguistic legacy of colonialism and foster linguistic diversity by promoting the use of indigenous languages in African literature. Both authors emphasize the importance of creating a literary space that reflects Africa's diverse cultures, traditions, and histories (Ngũgĩ, 1986), (Achebe, 1965).

13.2. Contrasting Approaches to Language and Cultural Preservation:

While Achebe and Ngugi share common objectives, their approaches to language and cultural preservation differ significantly. Achebe advocates for a balanced approach, using English as a medium for global communication while integrating indigenous languages and cultural elements into his works. He believes in the potential of English to reach a broader audience and contends that African writers can navigate between languages to convey a richer understanding of African experiences (Achebe, 1965).

On the other hand, Ngugi takes a more radical stance, outrightly rejecting colonial languages in African literature. He argues that embracing indigenous languages exclusively is essential for reclaiming cultural identity and challenging the remnants of colonialism. Ngugi views linguistic decolonization as a necessary step towards achieving true political and cultural liberation in Africa (Ngũgĩ, 1986). For him, linguistic revitalization is inseparable from the broader project of decolonization and empowerment.

Both Achebe and Ngugi are Africans. They are from the same root of African blood and culture. They try to give significant emphasis on enlightening their culture and civilization. Ngugi says that they know their culture but cannot feel the rhythm of it. But in a contrastive way, Achebe signifies the international language so that it

can spread out all over the world. Fanon had an almost similar opinion. He says, "The colonial world is a Manichean world" meaning that "European and African societies come together in a mode of radical difference (p 67)." As English "was the most significant means via which its force enthralled and imprisoned the soul." Ngugi describes how speaking his native language of Gikuyu in class resulted in punishments such as beatings or humiliation after Kenya declared a state of emergency in 1952. As the colonial educational machinery was expanded to promote metropolitan English as the standard language and all others or varieties as backward, Kenyan languages were suppressed and Orature (the tradition of oral literature) faded. When necessary, English was promoted violently in order to establish it as the language of truth and to create a linguistic hierarchy. Ngugi believed that Kenyan culture was being eradicated. He said, "Language as culture is the collective memory of a people's experience in history. Culture is almost indistinguishable from the language that makes possible its genesis, growth, banking, articulation, and indeed its transmission from one generation to the next ... The domination of a people's language by the languages of the colonizing nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonized (p 196)" (Ngugi, 1977).

13.3. How Their Works Have Influenced Post-Colonial Discourse on African Languages:

Achebe and Ngugi stand as towering figures in the annals of post-colonial African literature, each carving distinct paths in the discourse on language and identity. Achebe's works, like "Things Fall Apart," exemplify a nuanced merger of indigenous culture within English, advocating for a harmonized literary approach (Achebe, 1965). Conversely, Ngugi's fervent call for linguistic decolonization has galvanized discussions on the centrality of indigenous languages in African literature and education, pushing for a departure from colonial linguistic legacies (Ngũgĩ, 1986). Beyond literature, Ngugi's influence permeates educational spheres, fostering a budding generation of African writers devoted to their native tongues.

When juxtaposed, Achebe and Ngugi's stances on post-colonial African languages reflect both shared ideals and differing methodologies. While both champion the indispensability of African languages for genuine cultural expression, their views on the inclusion of colonial languages in this endeavor differ. Nonetheless, their monumental contributions have sculpted the dialogue on African linguistic diversity, lighting the way for subsequent writers, thinkers, and decision-makers in their pursuit to honor and preserve Africa's rich linguistic tapestry.

14. Contemporary Implications and Future Directions

14.1. Current State of Post-Colonial African Languages and Literature:

Post-colonial African languages and literature today grapple with a historical backdrop of colonization, which still reflects in the prevalence of languages like English, French, and Portuguese in formal sectors (Mesthrie, R., & Rajend, M, 2014). Indigenous languages often find themselves on the periphery, threatened by diminishing use and relevance.

Yet, there's an undeniable resurgence. Governments and cultural groups are championing the revival of African languages, complemented by writers, scholars, and activists fervently contributing to indigenous literature (Ngũgĩ, 1986). With digital media's ascent, African languages find new platforms for promotion and growth.

Despite the colonial legacies, English in Africa has evolved uniquely, serving diverse roles. It is not just a colonial remnant but a tool for unity, opportunity, and dialogue across and beyond the continent. In African literature, English, along with French and Portuguese, dominates, but the vastness of the literary spectrum includes oral traditions and works in native tongues. This diverse linguistic tapestry makes African literature a rich blend of the traditional and the contemporary.

14.2. Ongoing Efforts in Language Revitalization and Preservation:

Efforts to revitalize post-colonial African languages are gaining momentum. Many African nations now endorse indigenous languages in education and administration, bolstering cultural identity (Brock-Utne, 2000).

The literary domain also champions this movement, with events and programs supporting African languages as literary tools (Ngũgĩ, 1986).

In essence, we propose standardizing select African languages for broader communication and promoting literature in both colonial and native tongues. This dual-language approach can bridge linguistic divides among African writers.

14.3. Lessons from Achebe and Ngugi for Contemporary African Writers and Scholars:

The legacies of Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'O are pivotal for current African writers and post-colonial studies. Achebe championed integrating indigenous languages in literature, demonstrating that African writers can engage global readers while asserting cultural identity (Mesthrie, R., & Rajend, M, 2014). Conversely, Ngugi's push for linguistic decolonization emphasizes the role of indigenous languages in cultural preservation and societal transformation (Ngũgĩ, 1986).

Both figures underscore the significance of African languages in literature. Their examples guide modern writers to prioritize linguistic diversity and mirror the richness of African experiences. Achebe and Ngugi's contributions are foundational, advocating linguistic freedom and the amplification of native voices, inspiring a future that values Africa's literary and cultural heritage.

Nevertheless, it should be asserted that the future of African languages and literature is likely to continue growing and evolving, influenced by developments in technology, globalization, and changing cultural attitudes. As the use of technology continues to spread and become more accessible, it may help to preserve and promote African languages and literature by providing new platforms for expression and distribution. At the same time, globalization may also expose African languages and literature to new influences and audiences, leading to increased diversity and creativity. However, there is also the risk that some African languages and literary traditions could be lost as younger generations adopt dominant global languages and cultural forms. Nevertheless, it is important to support the preservation and promotion of African languages and literature, as they are an integral part of the continent's cultural heritage and identity.

15. Conclusion

The in-depth study of post-colonial African languages, with particular emphasis on the perspectives of Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'O regarding linguistic decolonization, offers enlightening revelations about the intricate dynamics surrounding African literature and cultural articulation. Achebe's holistic engagement with the English language champions its role as a global communicative instrument but simultaneously underscores the imperativeness of weaving indigenous linguistic and cultural fabrics into it. Conversely, Ngugi's staunch critique of colonial languages propounds the primacy of indigenous tongues as essential tools for cultural reclamation and a challenge to residual colonial imprints. Although they tread different paths, both literary giants converge on the aspiration to exalt linguistic plurality, fortify cultural sovereignty, and equip African literati with the agency for authentic self-expression. This comparative analysis magnifies the contemporary relevance of their discourses, suggesting an acute need for linguistic rejuvenation and cultural conservation as counterforces to the shadows of colonial hegemony. Indigenous languages, as underscored by the findings, are not merely modes of communication but powerful anchors of cultural identity and reservoirs of shared knowledge. As African literature strives to bridge local nuances and global sensibilities, the embrace of its vast linguistic tapestry is imperative, eschewing restrictive monolingual ideologies. The indelible legacies of Achebe and Ngugi, transcending their literary oeuvre, illuminate the pathways for Africa's ongoing journey in the post-colonial epoch, emphasizing a literary terrain that celebrates its profound linguistic and cultural diversities.

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