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LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE: IDENTITY IN AFRICAN
LITERATURE THROUGH NEW ENGLISHES

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ABSTRACT

There are strident voices against the continued use of English as an inter-group language in Nigeria and other African nations where the language serves as a second or foreign language, on the ground that the language is an alien language. The criticisms are more caustic in literary creations. To the cynics it is a misnomer to refer as 'African', a literary work whose medium of expression is English (a foreign language). The antagonists postulate that using English as the medium of African literary expression amounts to linguistic imperialism. They argue that for any literary work to be truly "African", it has to be written in an African indigenous language. This paper has a contrary view. The paper is of the view that African literature has identity. It is distinct specie of literature ranking with European, Asian, American and other world literatures. This view is borne out of two reasons. One is that African literature has its origin in traditional African orature whose identity is not in doubt. Second, the ability of African creative writers to adapt and blend English to African environment – their ingenious, pragmatic, innovative, skilful and imaginative use of English – gives unique identity to African literature. The paper argues further that since the African language that commands universal intelligibility and acceptability in the continent and beyond is yet unborn, and since African writers can clearly express their thoughts in customized English without losing international intelligibility and acceptability, the language, for

now and in the infinite future, remains the only variable medium of expression for African literature.

INTRODUCTION

In normal society of human beings, the central means of communication is language. No meaningful interaction and inter-personal exchange can take place without language. Take away language, no society can grow and progress. For people to transact and do anything together, they use the symbol of language to make themselves understood. Anybody who cannot use language cannot function in the society of human beings because man is a language specie-animal. Man is the only animal that can use language to influence the behaviour of his fellow. With language man can manipulate his environment and reconstruct the world around him. Somebody can reach out to people of different cultures by using language. Without language, social functions can never take place. It is through language that we can express our mind and feelings for others to understand and share information with us. No human society can functionally exist without language.

To understand how the mind of man functions is not possible without language. Our perception of the world and our thoughts are influenced and shaped by language. We use language to affect and influence others, just as others use language to affect and influence us. Language is so central and pivotal to human existence that man cannot get along without it. In summation “language is in fact one of mankind’s greatest achievements and most important resources (Eschholz, Rosa and Clark V).

As in ordinary human social interactions in and without which language is the medium of communication, in literature nothing can be expressed without language. Language is the pre-requisite for any literary activity. Without language there cannot be any literary creation because literature is a communication piece. It is in literature that the power of language as a tool of communication is more elaborately experimented. Language is the instrument for the job of literary creation. The literary artist uses and manipulates the words of a language to say what he wants to say. To the literary artist, language is the most important tool he uses to say what he wants to say. He expresses his world view, his thoughts and feelings through language. By expressing thoughts and feelings through language, the writer reaches out to the world outside him. As the writer uses language as a vehicle to reach out to his readers, the latter also employs language to reach the soul of the writer. Through this way, the writer’s feelings are conveyed and understood. To have a glimpse into the writer’s world view and thought patterns, we need to understand his language. It is the language that carries the writer’s message.

In Africa, just as in other lands, the literary writer exploits language as medium of expression in his literary creations. The “proper” language in which he writes to

convey his experiences and sensibilities is essential. The subsequent sections of this paper dwell on African Literature and its language.

THE AFRICAN WRITER AND HIS LANGUAGE

The Nigerian literary artist, like other African writers, faces linguistic challenges. In Nigeria, the medium of inter-personal communication across ethnic and regional boundaries is English. The latter serves as a second language and lingua franca. This is because; Nigeria and all other English speaking African nations are multilingual. Each ethnic nationality has its own indigenous language(s). Writing in this kind of linguistic environment poses a great challenge to the African literary artist.

Africa has no continental language. Nationally, Nigeria has no national language. The only literary language of wider circulation is English. The latter is a historical and colonial heritage. Having been conquered territorially and linguistically, African writers have no option than to adopt and adapt the language of the conqueror to express his views about the world. It is not an easy experiment to use a non-native language as a medium of literary expression. But writing in a foreign language like English, French or Portuguese is not the only challenge faced by the African writer.

The second and very serious challenge is that of identity crisis and acceptance. A group led by Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, argues that a literature done in a non-African language cannot be regarded as a true 'African' literature. To the exponents of this view, the only literary work that can be rightly referred to as "African Literature" is the one written in indigenous African languages. "Borrowed tongue", they argue, can neither fully explore the depth, nor carry the weight of African experience (Ngugi). They view the attempt to do that as a linguistic imperialism.

LITERATURE AND AFRICAN LITERATURE

At this juncture of our search for the identity of the African literature, we shall pause and establish what constitutes literature in general and *African* literature in particular.

To the layman, "anything written" is literature. In this sense a sales printed information or even a shopping list is a piece of literature. However, in the technical sense of the word, anything written like shopping list or printed sales information is not literature. This is because no artistic and imaginative creativity is required to write them. Artistic creativity and imagination are intrinsic characteristics of literature. Thinking along this line, this paper aligns with Bayo Ogunjimi who asserts that

Literature is a discipline that attempts to depict man and his environment within a creative mode. The creative imagination and the use of specialized form of communication medium-language (sic) and style make literature different from all other disciplines (1).

Deduction from the above excerpt is that in literature, language is not merely used to express an idea. Rather, in literary work, there is extra-ordinary, stylistic and aesthetic use of language which makes literature a work of art. Using language this way elevates literary language above mundane language of natural, social interaction.

Literature is a work of art about human society to which literary artists belong. Literature uses language extraordinarily to talk about man and his society. Through the work of literature, the literary artist mirrors the society back to man who may be ignorant and unconscious of certain events and activities influencing, shaping and manipulating his life and environment. The area covered by literature in human life is boundless. Hence, we can say that literature is primarily about man and his society. This conclusion tallies with a view which regards literature as “the private and public awareness given to both the individual and the society through the exposure of the hidden or open truth that the people seem to be ignorant of” (Ibrahim and Akande 2).

When a group of people “seem to be ignorant” of happenings around them, the people might also not know “where the rain began to beat” them (Achebe 104). In this kind of situation, the literary man comes to the aid of such people by x-raying and exposing, not only their problems, but also the genesis and possible solution(s) to such problems. This is where African literature has performed marvelously in letting the colonially traumatized African society know that it can still rise and shine out of the ashes of colonialism. Using a foreign language like English, the African literary artist, like a teacher, teaches the African man that there is nothing wrong with his society and culture. Thus, the African literature is in the vanguard of helping the continent to “regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement and let the African know that he is “not just as good as the next man but that (he) is much better” (Achebe 105). But before celebrating the merits of African literature, it is pertinent to establish what constitutes “African Literature”

Scholars of diverse hues have postulated on what African literature is and what it should be. Chinweizu avers that “African literatures are works done for the African audience, by Africans and in African languages whether written or oral” (56). Another similar definition describes African literature as “works done for the African audience, by Africans and in African languages whether these works are oral or written (Dada 36). Synthesizing the above two definitions, “African literature presupposes the existence of the ancient African literary tradition” (Ajadi 119). However, there is a flaw in seeing African literature just as “works done for the African audience.” This paper is of the view that African literature should also be for the international audience so that it will serve as a mirror through which the outside world can see Africa as it is truly.

As per the origin, the African literary practice dates back to the dawn of time and even pre-dates some European literatures (Boyejo 23). This claim punctures the

notion by white cynics that Africa had no literature by 1874 when the continent was balkanized among European and American languages and powers in Berlin. Through the writings of literary artists like Chinua Achebe, we now know with all certainty that before the incursion of the white man into Africa, the natives had flourishing civilization, culture and tradition which were celebrated in their orature – folklore, myths, proverbs, legends, religious rituals, idioms, riddles, songs and poetry. The oral nature of archetypal African traditional literature notwithstanding, historical and archival records have it that

..... Some parts of Africa had written literatures long before many parts of Western Europe. Long before Caesar led his Roman legions to bring civilization to barbarian Gaul, to Celtic Britain, and to the Druidic German tribes of Vercingtorix in the 1st Century BC, the African Nile valley civilization of Pharaohic Egypt, Nubia, Meroe and Ethiopia had literate cultures – in territories where Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt are located today (Chinweizu 26).

That literary activities were going on in African continent before the advent of colonialism and missionary activities, is not in doubt. But that they were performing the literary activities as an *African* thing is doubtful. What was obtainable was that each ethnic nationality was performing her arts in her distinct indigenous languages as an autonomous community whose members shared common cultural identity. The indigenous tribes that constitute what is known as *Africa* today were doing their things which were essential to their respective cultures and languages, quite oblivious of what obtained in other parts of the continent (Kunene 316, Adejunmobi 589). Then, there was not likely to be a concept like *Africa* because each tribe existed on its own with little or no external contact and influence. The civilization then was too simple and crude to fashion a nomenclature that could homogenize the heterogeneous ethnic groups that later came to be known as *Africa*.

Several scholars have attested to the heterogeneous nature of African oral literature. Albert Gerard enthused that “it is a matter of ascertained scientific fact that various African societies have elaborated various civilizations that are all the more diversified, as they grow without intimate or prolonged contacts with one another.” In similar vein B.W. Andrzejewcki and co. asserted that “African literatures do not seem to form a distinct group which could be contrasted, as a whole with all the other literatures of the world, oral or written” due to “linguistic fragmentation of the African continent.” They further revealed that “the differences between members of separate language groups..... are so great that it would be difficult to find any recognizable common features; as far as the possibility of communication is concerned, the differences between them are comparable to those between, Hungarian and Basque” (26). With this account, it will be inferred that before the emergence of written modern African literature, what was in vogue was distinct oral African literatures practised in

separate African ethnic nationalities. The pertinent question now is, “how and, when did what is today known as ‘African literature’ evolve?”

Giving the existing linguistic scenario, in which there was (is) no single indigenous language that was (is) mutually intelligible to Africans; the African literary artist is caught in a linguistic dilemma. Being that African indigenous languages were subjugated and suppressed by European languages, especially, English, French and Portuguese, the only option available to the few emerging African educated elite was to adopt one of the European languages in which he was educated to express himself. The new languages began to be used as a tool of communication not only in everyday life but also in literary creations. Though written in foreign languages, the emerging literatures were not designated as English, French or Portuguese literatures because they were written by Africans. In this way, what was later identified as *African literature* began to evolve gradually. By the middle of the 20th century both African creative writers and their white literary critics began to apply the term *African* as an identity for the literary works produced by Africans in European languages (Kunene 317; Adejunmobi 592; Moore 7).

CRITICISMS AND POLITICS AGAINST USING FOREIGN LANGUAGE AS A MEDIUM OF AFRICAN LITERACY EXPRESSION

There are strident voices against the use and continued use of English (and other foreign languages) as the inter-group language in Nigeria and other African nations, where the language serves as a second language, on the ground that the language is a alien, colonial language. The critics regard English as a colonial relic which reminds them of harrowing experiences of colonialism. Especially at the dawn of nationhood, Nigeria’s crusades against English got to a fever pitch so much that the government directed the West African Examination Council (WAEC) to drop the policy of making credit pass in English a pre-condition for the award of school certificate (Banjo 18).

One of the leading voices in the campaign against English in Nigeria was Ikara. His grouse, so to say, was that since English was spoken by a tiny minority of the population, Nigeria should pick one of the three major languages as the National language and lingua-franca. Ikara saw English as alienating and elitist language spoken by those who angled for “power and influence in the society at the expense of that vast majority of Nigerians” (qtd in Eyisi and Ezeuko 199).

Toeing the line of Ikara was Ikideh who, according to Eyisi and Ezeuko, described the language as a “language of conquest and imposition” (201). Another critic of the use of English as a medium of linguistic exchange in Nigeria was Tai Solarin. Solarin preferred any of the indigenous languages because it “is psychologically more acceptable than any foreign language (qtd in Eyisi and Ezeuko 201). An irrepressible social critic, Solarin was virulent against Achebe for writing in English.

He quipped he was “sickened by Achebe’s defence of the English Language,” and concluded that “Achebe’s books are, commercially speaking, necessarily, written in English” (qtd in Emenyonu 328). Even today in the village settings, people are derided and viewed as show-offs for interspersing their African language with English word. But come to think about this, there is nothing bad and evil about English to deserve vituperations and invectives. This is a sheer case of transferred linguistic aggression. In the words of Emenyonu, “English did [and does] not manifest any attitude per se” (328). The fact is that the hatred against colonialists was being transferred against their language. Also the arrogance and pompous attitude of the emerging educated elite in the wee hours and early days of independence, made them and their newly acquired language objects of envy and hatred. Today the hatred of English and what it stands for is more pronounced, especially as it concerns literary creation.

A movement spearheaded by Ngugi Wa Thiong’ O, a Kenyan writer does not regard as African, any piece of literature that is not written in African indigenous language. He regards it as anomaly, the title of a literary conference held in Kampala, Uganda in 1962: “A Conference of African Writers of English Expression.” Other scholars of this hue teach that African literature “can only be written in indigenous African languages” (Ngugi, qtd Adejunmobi 584). This is because “European languages are totally inadequate to express the African philosophical reality” (Kunene 38). Hence, to this group “African literature refers to works done for the African audience by Africans and in African languages whether these works are oral or written.” (Dada qtd in Boyejo 23/24.)

Writing off the “Conference of African Writers of English Expression”, Obi Wali regarded the organizers as those “playing to the gallery of international fame” (283). He surmised that

The whole uncritical acceptance of English and French as the inevitable medium of educated African writing, is misdirected, and has no chance of advancing African literature and culture. In other words, until these writers and their Western midwives accept that any true African Literature must be written in African Languages, they would be pursuing a dead end, which can only lead to sterility, uncreativity and frustration (282).

To scholars and critics like Wali, Ngugi and others, any literature emanating from Africa that is written in English, is non-African literature. This is because is a “borrowed tongue”; and as borrowed tongues, it cannot “carry the weight of our African experience by, for instance, making (it) ‘prey’ on African proverbs and other peculiarities of African speech and folklore” (Ngugi 287). The stage for this unpalatable criticism was, perhaps, set in Rome in 1959 when the “Second Congress of

Black Writers and Artists” was convened. The conference was described as a gathering of “language stealers” (Adejunmobi 583).

VOICES IN FAVOUR OF ENGLISH IN NIGERIA

While campaign against the use of English was raging, some scholars “counseled caution” in view of the functional range of the language in Nigeria. It is no exaggeration to assert that the nation cannot dispense with English as a second language, because it is the country’s outlet to the outside world. Internally, Nigerians need English for their career success. Rejecting the language will amount to denying Nigerians the fountain of ever growing and expanding knowledge in sciences and the humanities.

As the foremost international medium of communication, Nigerians now regard English not as a despicable relic of colonialism but as an indispensable linguistic inheritance that can be adopted and adapted for the country’s practical needs. This view re-echoes Achebes’ perception that

...we can believe in the value of English to the survival of the Nigerian nation without feeling like deserters....we can use energies constructively in the important task of extending the frontiers of English to cover the whole area of our Nigeria consciousness (qtd in Eyisi and Ezeuko 202).

It is the “use of energies constructively to extend the frontiers of English” that has given rise to new variants of English in Nigeria; a brand of “new English still in communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings” (Achebe 218). This special use of English, that is, native English, gives a mark of distinct identity to African Literature.

IDENTITY IN AFRICAN LITERATURE THROUGH NEW ENGLISHES

Writing as a language skill is not as simple as it seems. The problem is compounded when the writer is using a second or foreign language as a medium of expression. Such problem is more complex and herculean in the area of literary creation.

In Nigeria and other English speaking African nations, the literary writer faces the fundamental problem of not having an indigenous language through which he can communicate to the outside world. Presently no African language can serve as an international medium of literary creation and expression. This is a serious linguistic limitation and dilemma. Being in such linguistic quagmire, African writers must, of necessity, write and express their world views within and beyond the African audience. The indigenous language strong enough to serve this purpose adequately must be internationally, intelligible. But since no African language is used for communication

beyond ethnic regional boundaries, foreign language(s) is the only option open to the African writer. This view was succinctly captured by Ayi Kwei Armah who posits that

We are presently suspended in linguistic neocolonialism while awaiting a decisive breakthrough; if an African language is adopted, it will be a big solution. Africa is vast and requires a vast language to put through all our ideals, and that language is not yet born.

And until such a language is born, African writers have to write in English, Portuguese or French for their voices to be heard beyond the shores of Africa.

Writing in English, for instance, presents the African writer with a peculiar setback which an English native writer does not have. The native African writer is confronted with the problem of “how to express the African experience in a language that was originally evolved to embody a different kind of experience and to convey a different kind of sensibility” (Obiechina 53). Moreover, the African writer of English expression has to create characters whose languages, attitudes and feelings will reflect African traditional background.

The above, and many more challenges of writing in English are not lost to African writers. Achebe laments that “for an African, writing in English language is not without its serious setbacks. He often finds himself describing situations or modes of thought which have no direct equivalent in English way of life.”

Caught in the above kind of linguistic dilemma, Achebe advises the African writer of English expression to either “...try and contain what he wants to write within the limits of the conventional English or he can try to push back those limits to accommodate his ideas...”. Pushing back the limits of the English demands the African writer “to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its values as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry out his peculiar experience.” (Achebe 218).

In their experiment of ‘pushing back’ ‘the limits’ of English, using and manipulating it in peculiar ways to accommodate African thought patterns and values ‘without altering its value as a medium of international exchange’, a new variant of English with African flavour is created. By customizing English, African writers have achieved identity for African literature through what we term the *New Englishes* in this paper.

“NEW ENGLISHES” THROUGH AFRICAN PROVERBS AND PIDGIN LANGUAGE

The ability to customize the English Language by African writers is achieved through the use of African proverbs and Pidgin Language. To elaborate on peculiar use

of English through proverbs and Pidgin language, we shall briefly look into the literary works of Chinua Achebe, J.P Clark, Elechi Amadi and Wole Soyinka. The works to be cited are *Arrow of God* by Achebe, *The Voice* by J.P Clark, *The Concubine* by Elechi Amadi and; *Death and the King's Horseman* by Wole Soyinka.

African proverbs are telegraphic and Mnemonic linguistic devices used to spice speeches in oral speech events. It is a mark of native wisdom and natural sense to apply proverbs in traditional African speech events. A public speaker or orator is highly regarded and valued if he is able to use proverbs to say much in few words. Proverbs are regarded as “palm oil with which words are eaten” (Achebe 23). They serve a variety of purposes: to advice, admonish, educate, warn, teach morals, instruct, etc.

In contemporary African literature, writers have also used proverbs to capture African traditional life, world view, environment and wisdom. Through this technique African writers recast their *Africanness* in native English that neither deduces the international intelligibility of the language nor does it fail to reflect and preserve authentic African background.

Chinua Achebe is the most outstanding writer who maintains an elegant balance between unique use of English and retention of African originality and authenticity. A classical example from Achebe's *Arrow of God* shows how African writers maintain affinity with their traditional background and their medium of expression. In the novel Ezeulu explains his reason(s) for allowing one of his sons to join the Church people. He says:

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

Had Achebe rendered the above passage literally in normal English, it could have lost African flavor and literary aesthetics. As an artist he manipulates English to carry the weight of his African experience. He does this without violating the English syntax and the vernacular of his native speech. For instance, instead of writing *eyes my (anya m)* as demanded by Igbo syntactic sequence of noun plus adverbs, Achebe reverts to normal English syntactic sequence of adverb plus noun to say *my eyes*. *To be my eyes* is a popular Igbo proverb which every competent speaker of Igbo language understands.

J.P Clark is another African novelist and playwright who uses vernacular background to make English suit his African environment and context. In *The Voice*,

the writer makes the protagonist's dying father to exhort his son in the following English:

Let the words I am going to speak remain in your inside. I wanted you to know book because of the changing world. But Whiteman's book is not everything. Now, listen, son, believe in what you believe. Argue with no man about Whiteman's god and Woyengi, our goddess. What your inside tells you to believe, you believe and always the straight thing do and the straight thing talk and your spoken word will have power and you will live in this world even when you are dead. So do not anything fear if it is the straight thing you are doing or talking.

The writer of *The Voice*, J.P Clark is an Ijaw. In the above excerpt, he innovatively maneuvers the grammatical constraints imposed by English to express the African experience and world view embodied in his novel. This strategy enables the author to capture the pervading solemn mood and serious, moral tone of the novel. This style accommodates both his native Ijaw audience and the audience of English speakers outside Ijaw ethnic nationality.

Elechi Amadi is another African whose native language is used to adapt English language to his traditional African cultural context.

The type of English used by Elechi's characters shows them as rustic, rural and vernacular people who are not very educated in English. This explains the oral nature of the narrative. There is close bond of kinship relationship which is typical of African traditional family setting; people address themselves by their names often with local terms indicating social status, age and level of kinship relationship (Obiechina 59). In our text, *The Concubine*, we hear Wigwe address a neighbour's wife, Nnenda, as "my daughter," to whom Wigwe's wife cheerfully says, "I see your eyes at last, Nnenda, my daughter." The flow of speech here is naturally oral and colloquial, depicting African oral traditional setting. Wigwe calling 'Nnenda' daughter, does not mean she is his biological daughter in the strict sense of the word. But in the wider and extended meaning, Nnenda is Wigwe's daughter. In African traditional context a child belongs to the entire village. Everybody's wellbeing is the concern of every member of the society. Parents assume generalized and selfless responsibility towards the young ones. The entire village is seen as an extended family of interrelated and inter-dependent people. The young ones regard and refer to the older ones as their parents. Hence, Nnenda has to address Wigwe as 'Dede or father'.

The expression "I see your eyes at last..." depicts the character (Wigwe's wife) as a simple, country woman who is at home with her natural linguistic environment. She is not much educated in English. A more educated character conversant with English idiomatic expressions would perhaps say, "I have not seen you for some time now" or "it has been long we met." But the writer has decided to achieve literary

aesthetics by making his characters speak the way they do in order to reflect his traditional African background without debasing the international intelligibility of English.

Wole Soyinka ranks high amongst African writers whose exemplary use of Pidgin language and proverbs make African literature distinct from other world literatures.

In *Death and the King's Horseman* Soyinka assigns Pidgin language to his semi-illiterate characters to show their social level. Amusa, one of the Semi-illiterate characters, in conversation with another character says:

Madam, I arrest the ring-leader who make trouble but me I no touch 'egungun'. That 'egungun' itself, I no touch am. And I no abuse am. I arrest ring-leader but I treat 'egagun' with respect. (p. 25).

The above excerpt is characterized with complete deviation from Standard English language. The writer uses the language to reflect typical traditional African setting where pidgin is used as lingua-franca among the semi-illiterate folk. Its usage adds to the authenticity of African Literature.

Soyinka also deploys proverbs to spice up the English language of his characters. By so doing he adds African flavor to English language. In one of the conversations, Iyaloja is made to use proverbs to ridicule Elesin who cowardly declines to perform ritual suicide role as demanded by tradition. Iyaloja tells Elesin; "How boldly the lizard struts before the pigeon when it was the eagle itself he promised us he would confront" (p.67). Here Iyaloja makes jest of Elesin who had promised or boasted of being able to undertake a ritual suicide so as to save the entire village. Elesin later chickens out and languishes in the Whiteman's (pilkings') prison.

In another address to Elesin, Iyaloja charges on Elesin "I gave you a warning. The river which fills up before our eyes does not sweep us away in its floods" (p.69). The above proverb literally means that Elesin who grew up under the watchful eye and probable care of the village, cannot be allowed to ruin the destiny of the entire community by refusing to perform his traditional role.

On his part, Elesin in an earlier conversation with Iyaloja rhetorically asks: "Who does not seek to be remembered? /Memory is the master of Death..." (p.20). Here Elesin expresses his desire to be remembered after his demise. He hopes to live on in the memory of the villagers after he might have performed the ritual suicide which he never did.

Soyinka's use of proverbs in this drama marks the work out as an African literature. Proverbs are timeless and boundless linguistic device used to authenticate identity of African literature. The practice (use of proverbs) is a carry-over from the

traditional African orature. Therefore, African literature is rooted in traditional oral African literature. With this the identity of African literature is no longer in doubt.

Conclusion

English is no longer an exclusive preserve of its native speakers. It only has England as its source and origin. Having spread boundlessly to other lands and climes, it adapts to the local environment displacing the local languages. In Nigeria the language is so creatively and innovatively used that there is now what is called Nigerian English which possesses international intelligibility and acceptance. In literature, precisely, the skill and ability with which Nigerian and other African writers of English expression have pushed back the frontiers of the language, has made African literature acquire distinct identity, being at par with other world literatures. The *new Englishes* borne out of literary ingenuity have also given a linguistic trademark to Nigerian English-“a new English which is still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings” (Achebe 220). Therefore, conclusively, we can say that being able to use English language in an African style by African literary artists to reflect their Afrianness is a mark of identity per excellence for African literature.

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