Politics of Resistance: Construction of Matriarchal Agency via Linguistic Chromatism in the Novel *The Slave Girl*

Salma Qayyum

Abstract

This article uncovers the implicit linguistic techniques through which a female author constructs her multiple social identities. Language seems to be the sole raison d'être as it aids her in establishing different identities as a colonized, African black female. Emecheta mixes African words within the English text and hence creates linguistic chromatism which strips the English language off its identity and hybridizes it. She proves the 'feebleness' of the white as compared to the black by highlighting the overshadowing character of the latter. Colonization appears to be a two-way process as it affects both the colonized and colonizer. The majority of the English words in the text of the novel do not mean dominance of the English language. Similarly, fewer African words in the text do not imply a weaker status of the African language. Grammatically speaking, most of the English words have been placed in the predicate position of the sentence and almost all African words have been made the subject of the sentence. Thus, symbolic dominance and control have been given to the African. The author uses language as an effective tool to fight her battle with the mighty colonizer and for establishing African as a powerful language. She dismantles the Eurocentric concept of power and projects an Afrocentric view instead. She moves the Center towards the periphery and disrupts the established patriarchy by first weakening the colonizer's position in the conventional linguistic hierarchy and then finishes it off by empowering her mother tongue and establishing matriarchy as a new order. She gives structural control to her mother tongue by creating a non-traditional African/English binary and hence shakes the center.

Keywords: Social Identity Theory, chromatism, matriarchy

Introduction

The lust for power and to gain, maintain and perpetuate control have existed throughout human history. Strong nations in the world have always strived to exert dominance over the weaker ones causing issues of race, gender, religion, culture, and nationality. The weak races of the colonized are denied access to material resources held by the colonizers with the exception of language. It is the only material object possessed by the colonizers to which the colonized also have access and on which they can even exert control and by playing with it, those on the *periphery* can register their resistance to the *center*.

This article studies the language play in the novel *The Slave Girl* by an Afro-Nigerian writer Buchi Emecheta and it explores how a colonized, black female "writes back" to the center (a phrase by Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1993, p. 33) in her language. Through a unique way of linguistic appropriation, Emecheta deals with the issues of nationalism, race, gender and voice.

The novel is set in the late 19th and early 20th century Nigeria, a time when the British colonizers were trying to subjugate the locals. *The Slave Girl* is the story of a Nigerian girl Ogbenje Ojebeta who is sold at an age of seven by her elder brother soon after the death of her parents. She was a very dear child to her parents, their only surviving daughter after two sons. Her mother had lost almost ten children after her brothers; her exploitation at the hands of her own brother has symbolic connotations. She represents Nigeria made a hostage by its own people. Through the character of Ojebeta, Emecheta establishes nationalism.

Any description about nationalism is a "gendered discourse" as almost all writers represent 'nation' and the concept of 'motherland' as a female (McLeod, 2007). Thus, the patriotic feelings of the readers are stirred up through the character of Ojebeta. A female's exploitation symbolizes the mother's exploitation and thus, indirectly they are provoked to rescue their homeland. Emecheta catches the attention of her readers by presenting the protagonist of the story as a female whose identity as an African female is at stake.

Language use is significant as it helps establish one his/her identity in terms of nationality, gender and race. It also aids one *voice* his/her opinion. Thus, an ability to have *agency* to exert control over it is extremely important. Through the concept of agency over language use, the contested issues of nationalism, gender, race and voice have been explored in the novel The Slave Girl.

Emecheta creates *binaries* of various kinds for presenting contrasting ideas, for example, she presents the language of the colonizers as male, omnipotent and all controlling, since it is dominant and occupies much of the space in the text. As a contrast, she presents her mother tongue Nigerianas a female. It appears scantily and in a visibly dominated position.

Literature Review

One of the most influential names for explaining language during the 19th and the 20th centuries is Ferdinand de Saussure. He discussed language through concepts such as structuralism, sign, signifier and signified. He was influenced by the scientific *empiricism* and objectivity of his time. He explains language use as a willful act done *actively* by the

speaker but language itself as ability acquired in utter *passivity* (Bally & Sechehaye, 1915, p. 14). Thus, Saussure finds partial human agency in terms of language use. Through his terms *sign, signifier* and *signified*, he describes a linguistic *sign* to be a unified *whole*, a combination of a linguistic label (the signifier) and an idea (the signified). Saussure also uses the term *semiology* as an equivalent of linguistics (Trask, 2004, p. 270).

Saussure's idea of semiology is often compared and contrasted with Roman Jakobson's (Trask, 2004) idea of *semiotics*. The difference between the two is that Jakobson's concept of a sign is much broader because where Saussure confines the idea by treating it only as a linguistic entity, Jakobson accommodates both the linguistic as well as the non-linguistic signs in his discussions. Human communication comprises both linguistic and non-linguistic signs. So, Jakobson's concept of semiotics is much more comprehensive and accommodating for discussing human communication. Jakobson believes that linguistic communication is more rigid as most of the time, it is a matter of copying the linguistic traditions but the non-linguistic communication is flexible as humans can exert control over it. Through such an explanation, it can be said that Jakobson views human agency more over language use as compared to Saussure.

Roland Barthes further improvises the concept of a linguistic sign (Hawkes, 1977, p. 13) by talking about the *plastic* meanings of words which means that words do not have a definite meaning (Barthes, 1982, p. 68). By contributing the terms *denotation* and *connotation*, he introduces flexibility in the concept (Barthes, 1986, p. 89). According to him, the connotational use of language allows humans mold language according to their communicative intent and this means human agency over language use.

Michel Halliday is also among those linguists who view human agency in terms of language use. He discusses the *functional* use of language along with its *formal* aspects through his idea of *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (Halliday, 1994, p. 54). By the word "systemic," he means the broad system of language consisting of its rules and regulations whereas by the phrase "functional linguistics" he means an understanding about correct language use in different social contexts (Halliday, 2004, p. 180 &185).

Bakhtin (Burke, Crowley & Girvin, 2001, p. 270) also talks about human agency over language use through his theory on language. He was a Marxist and desired change through language. He starts with the concept of *utterance* which is generally viewed as a communication between at least two people. Through his concept of an utterance, Bakhtin gives the idea of dialog. He opposes the Western tradition of the Formalists which

favors uniformity and monologism. Bakhtin talks about subjectivity, diversity and creativity. Bakhtin's view of language is very dynamic and democratic as all participants get an equal share in the communicative process (Burke, Crowley & Girvin, 2001, p. 278).

To Bakhtin, every social moment in history has a right to be valued and "carnival" is the celebration of common, popular festivities. This idea of carnival is to break away from the suppressing, dominating and controlling culture which he calls the "official culture." As opposed to it, the popular culture of the rustic people is full of vibrancy and vitality. Bakhtin calls it the "unofficial culture" (Burke, Crowley & Girvin, 2001, p. 270).

The official culture as well as the language of the dominant and the domineering has a converging, fixing influence which tends to push towards a fixed center. Contrarily, the unofficial culture of the commoners and the dominated has a diverging, liberating effect and it acts as a centrifugal force. It generates heterogeneity. This heterogeneous force is central for multiplicity of dialects and for generating heteroglossia. If a society allows multiplicity of dialects, it is more tolerant than the one which imposes just one language. Thus, heteroglossia means change.

Through his concepts of multiaccentuality, polyphony (multiplicity of voices), heteroglossia and carnival (Burke, Crowley & Girvin, 2001, pp. 270-279), Bakhtin initiates the idea of human agency over language use and eventually independence, liberty and the right of decision making, as an ability to decide what to say and how to say it ultimately liberates one from the linguistic, communicative chains and might motivate to strive for physical independence.

Bakhtin developed his linguistic theory in the oppressive reign of Joseph Stalin in 1920s. Russia at that time was under the autocratic and dictatorial control. Bakhtin fought back that cultural and social injustice in a peaceful symbolic way through his theory of language. Just like him, Emecheta also fights back with the mighty colonizers a linguistic, peaceful but convincing battle.

In philosophy as well, there have been explanations on the issue of human agency over language use. Lacan's discussions (Chiesa, 2007) of language development and language use explain the issue of human agency in a philosophical way. His ideas are based on concepts coming from varied sources such as de Saussure, Jakobson, Freud, algebra and topology yet he modifies and transforms most of the basic ideas. Lacan focuses on the male language user and uses the term *subject* for him. The subject, as Lacan describes it is a product or an effect of language. This subject is born the moment a child is named (Pluth, 2007, p. 2). It is the

language that gives identity to him and so, has a patronizing controlling effect. An entry into the symbolic realm of language is a "forced choice" (Lacan's phrase as cited in Zizek, 2000, p. 19), as no one is born in a particular linguistic community by choice. Moreover, every language user gets exposed only to one or a limited number of *dialects* which are variants of the one standard form. Thus, no subjec*t* is ever exposed to the *whole* language. He remains incomplete. That is why, Lacan uses the terms "split," *barred* or the "divided subject" for the human language user (Fink, 1995, p. 45).

Sometimes, a person switches from one dialect to another due to the situational demands and this means that one person can have many linguistic selves or identities. Thus, the *subject* is not a stable or complete entity (Homer, 2005, p. 74) and so is his ability to use language. It is always partial and incomplete. Due to diversity in the language forms (due to numerous dialects and accents) it is never possible for one person to master the whole language. He can have access to only a *part* of this *whole*. All the variants and dialects are derived from this one whole, standard form which is omnipotent and patriarchal.

Just like Freud, Lacan draws solely on "male" terms for discussing language, for example, he names the linguistic rules of a language as "the Law of the Father" or "the Father" (Chiesa, 2007). He describes the process of language use to be "castration" as it is based on *selections, substitution* and personal decision making or a reduction and modification of the standard, complete language. He also calls every individual language user to be *castrated* and *barred* as no language use can ever describe him completely and also because no one can ever master a language in its entirety. Seen this way, no language user is complete and thus, agency or control over language use is an illusion because it is the language that controls and is omnipotent not the subject or the language user.

Zizek agrees with Lacan as he defines the subject as "absolute negativity" (Zizek, 2000, p. 34). To him, an act of becoming a subject means becoming a *part* of the *whole* linguistic community. In a linguistic community, it is always the whole that gives identity to the part no matter what qualities the part has. This means a continuous negation of the self. Thus, the human subject always remains incomplete and so is the ability to exert control over language. Badiou (Pluth, 2007, p. 116), also describes human subject as a "destructive consistency," something whose identity is not stable and keeps on changing because of the changed use of language. Thus, he agrees with Lacan and Zizek. So, through the philosophical discussions, the human subject appears to be weak and transitory and his agency over language use seems even weaker.

This article studies how a black female plays with language which is "a man-made thing" (Dale Spender's phrase as cited in Burke, Crowley & Girvin, 2001, p. 139) and celebrates her nationalism, gender and race in a subtle way. Agency or control over language use is the key concept for exploring all these issues. Considering Lacanian terminology and the explanation of the subject, every language user is "castrated" or incomplete (Chiesa, 2007) and when it comes to women, it becomes even more feeble. Considering a black, colonized female's language agency, the protagonist seems to be "doubly colonized" in Petersen and Rutherford's terms (as cited in McLeod, 2007, p. 175), yet Emecheta proves such ideas to be nothing more than a façade.

Theoretical Framework

In this article, the issue of nationalism has been explored by incorporating the tenets of the Social Identity Theory proposed by Henri Tajfel and Turner (1979). Likewise, the issues of gender and race have been studied by using the analytical lens proposed by Lacan through his theory of Psychoanalysis, while the issue of voice has been explored by involving Bakhtin's ideas on language. The theoretical framework thus devised (by intertwining Lacan's and Bakhtin's ideas on languages and the Social Identity Theory) was used to uncover the linguistic techniques that were applied by Emecheta to present the problems of identity in terms of gender, race, language and voice. The concepts in these theories such as binary oppositions (from Social Identity Theory), castration, Law of the Father, Father and Symbolic Other (from Lacan's theory), official language, polyphony heteroglossia and dialogism (from Bakhtin's theory) were used in analyzing the data.

The Social Identity Theory

The Social Identity Theory views a person to be a combination of several selves, each displaying membership to a particular social group. Different social contexts orient an individual to think, feel and act differently (Turner et. al, 1987). So, the feeling of group membership shapes and determines the patterns of thinking and behaving. It also causes social categorization or *binary pairs*. Thus, the world is viewed as *us* versus *them*. This can even orient a person to exaggerate the similarities within the in-group category and also an exaggeration of the differences between the out-group category resulting in *stereotyping* the qualities of us as well as them categories. This can be done to emphasize a person's social identity due to nationality, race and gender (Meyerhoff, 2007). In the novel under study, the protagonist confronts all types of social identity issues. That is why the tenets of the Social Identity Theory have been incorporated in this study.

Methodology

Content analysis has been used to uncover the techniques employed by Buchi Emecheta for recording her resistance. The written text of her novel *The Slave Girl* has been analyzed. Analysis has been done manually and computer-assisted methods have been avoided, as they give control to the computer by putting it in the *Center* and pushing the researcher on the *periphery*, creating binaries*.* Through this article, the researcher emphasizes the concepts of freedom and equality. That is why she chose to do the analyses manually. The researcher has focused on the most recurrent features of the text to understand the ideology and the politics of resistance behind the novel. She has paid attention to both the linguistic as well as non-linguistic aspects of the novel giving the analysis a semiotic twist.

The linguistic content of the novel has been analyzed for interpreting the meanings hidden or latent in the text. Thus, the sounds, words, sentences, etc., have been treated as the linguistic or *manifest content* whereas the interpretation has been used as the non-linguistic or *non-manifest content* of the novel. The African words have been tabulated after categorizing them as names of people (Table I), names of places (Table II), concrete nouns (Table III), abstract nouns (Table IV), titles/professions (Table V), tribes/communities/members of a community (Table VI) and greetings/expressions (Table VII). The tables appear in the section below. The second column in each table, shows the total number of times the same word was used:

Data Presentation & Analysis

Table I: Names of People

Names of People	Frequency
Owezim (a male name)	11
Okolie (a male name)	49
Okwuekwu (a male name)	15
Umeadi (a female name)	11
Oda (name of a person)	5
Ukwabegwu (a male name)	11
Ogbenje (a female name)	18
Uzo (a name meaning: born on the way)	1
Nwa (a name meaning: born on the way)	1

Ojebeta (a female name)	88
Ozubu (a female name)	3
Nkadi (a female name)	1
Nwadei (a male name)	1
Nwosisi (a male name)	2
Uteh (a female name)	30
Eze (a male name)	17
Olopo (a female name)	1
Ma Palgada (a female name)	53
Pa Palgada (a male name)	23
Chiago (a female name)	45
Nwayinuzo (a female name)	14
Amanna (a female name)	25
Ma Mee (a female name)	9
Maduka (a male name)	1
Ugbo Ukwu (a male name)	2
Ijeoma (a female name)	16
Kiriford (a male name, a wrong pronunciation of "Clifford")	1
Jienuaka (a male name)	11
Nwoba (a male name)	1
Emekuku (a male name)	1
Okeke (a female name)	2
Kilisi (a female name, a wrong pronunciation of "Christy")	1
Ngbeke (a female name meaning: born on Eke Day)	1
Ifenkili (a female name)	4
Okonji (a male name)	2
Onyeaboh (a male name)	3
Mbeke (a female name)	1
Akenzua (a male name)	1

Table II: Names of Places

Names of Places	Frequency
Oboshi (name of a river meaning: river goddess)	5
Ibuza (name of a town)	59
Ogwashi-Ukwu (name of a place)	1
Umuigsagba (name of a village)	4
Eke (name of a market)	10
Ezuku (name of a place)	1
Idu (name of a place)	1
Umuodafe (name of a place)	7
Isele (name of a place, wrong pronunciation of "Isle")	1
Azagba (name of an isle)	1
Ogbeogonogo (name of a place)	1
Ogbogonogo (name of a place)	1
Idu (name of a place)	1
Asaba (name of a place)	15
Out (name of a market)	27
Yoruba (name of a place)	2
Aniocha (civilized area)	1
Agbor (name of a town)	2
Ogbaru (name of a place)	1
Okpanam (name of a place)	1
Olunmili (name of aplace)	1
Opobo (name of a place)	1
Ogbeowele (name of a place)	1
Calabar (name of a province)	2
Arochukwu (name of a place)	1
Sapele (name of a place)	1
Warri (name of a place)	2
Iyienu (name of a town)	2
Aba (name of a place)	4

Afia (name of a place)	1
Benin (name of a place)	1
Ifo (name of a place)	1
Ibadan (name of a palce)	1
Onitsha (name of a market)	63

Table III: Concrete Nouns

Concrete Nouns	Frequency
amoku (arms)	1
chi (god)	5
Olisa (name of a god)	2
npe (waist cloth)	2
otuogwo (white cloth)	5
iyaji (black dyed cloth)	1
efi Awusa (roasted beef in honey)	1
Accra (name of a food)	2
ede (a vegetable)	1
agidi (name of a food)	4
Ericho (name of a steamer from "Eric")	1
ugbo-amala (a canoe)	1
Awun-nta (mosquito)	1
handikershishi (a piece of cloth from "handkerchief")	1
akayan (palm leaves)	1
Nkisi (name of a river)	1
Aguele (a giant)	1
Mossulu (a kind of fabric from muslin)	1
Popo (shirt)	1
otangele (paste)	3
gam (a kind of clothing from "gown")	3
ntukwasi (a piece of cloth)	1

Azu-Ndu (a green book)	1
Epsom (a kind of salt)	2
apku (a pulp made from cassava)	1
nzu (sacrificial chalk)	1
galawa (an empty kerosene tin)	1
ogili (a type of match box)	1
Loco (name of a shop)	1
kinsheni (a place for cooking from "kitchen")	1
kelenkele (name of a soup)	1

Table IV: Abstract Nouns

Abstract Noun	Frequency
Idu (name of an old empire)	2
Oda (order)	2
Felenza (name of a disease from "influenza")	12
palgada palgada (name of a particular sound)	1
Ifejioku (name of a festival)	1
olu oyibo (white man's work)	8
Efik (name of a language)	1
Ibo (name of a language)	9
esusu (a kind of saving)	2
Ogu Aya Okolo (Okolo's war)	1
abada (a specific style)	2
Nkwo (name of a particular day)	1
Kano (a style)	1

Table V: Titles/Professions

Titles/Professions	Frequency
Kortu-ma (court messenger from court man)	2
tapilita (interpreter)t	1
dibia (doctor)	4
Nna ayin (our father)	1
diopka (the oldest man)	2
diopkas (the oldest men)	1
Obi (a great man)	3
adah (a daughter of the family)	1
Uloko (the youngsters)	6
Nnemoo (mother)	1
oyibo (a white woman)	2
Sa (a title from "sir")	1
Oba (inhabitants)	3
Jesu (title from "Jesus")	1
Jesu Christi (from "Jesus Christ)	1
Sah (title from "sir")	1
Ma (a title frm "ma'am")	1
Misisi (a title from "Mrs")	1
Ndi-Nmo (dead people)	1
Ujo Ugbo (the farm truant)	2
Owerri (rich white people)	2

Table VI: Tribes/Communities/Members of a Community

Tribes/Communities/Members of a Community	Frequency
Potokis (people of Portuguese)	5
Germanis (people of Germany from "Germans")	1
Ijaws (people of the tribe Ijaw)	1
Ijaw (name of a tribe)	1

Ibo (name of a tribe)	7
Ibo (a person from the tribe Ibo)	2
Ibos (people from the tribe ibo)	4
Palgada (a person from the Palgada family)	1
Palgadas (people of the family Palgada)	8
Palgada (name of a family)	14
Urhobos (people of the tribe Urhobo)	1
Efiks (people of the tribe Efik)	1
Hausa (name of a tribe)	2
Hausas (people of the tribe Hausa)	2

Table VII: Greetings/Expressions

Greetings/Expressions	Frequency
Aku nna yi ka (a greeting meaning: your father's wealth is the greatest)	1
Ejekom be loya (a song meaning: I have a date with a lawyer)	1
gbim gbim (the sound of swallowing)	1
Yessima (an expression meaning: yes ma'am)	5
Kai sua ani (a slogan meaning: we plant the field and scatter)	1
Akwukwo-Uka (the Sunday school)	1
Nnua (a greeting for welcoming somebody in home)	1
Ise (an expression meaning: Amen)	1

Note: The purpose behind showing data in separate tables was to present all the word classes clearly so that the reader can see that all the African words used in the text are nouns.

All the African words mentioned in Tables I-VII are nouns. Grammatically speaking, the noun is usually the doer or receiver of the action. Emecheta has placed most of these nouns at the subject place (in the *nominative case*). Visibly, these African words have been *marginalized* and appear in a subjugated position because generally, the subject or the agent of the sentence is placed towards the left side of each sentence and also because the African words appear scantily in the text yet occupying

the subject position, these nouns get control over the rest of the sentence which is in English. Thus, the marginalized or the one on the periphery is given symbolic control. Mostly, Emecheta has placed only one African word among many English words, yet grammatically, it is the most important word in that sentence.

The colonizers subjugated the colonized by exercising explicit, coercive power and gaining control and extending their territories (Bullock, Stallybrass & Trombley, 1989, p. 409). The resistance of the colonized has been generally implicit. Territorial control results in the expansion of the colonized lands. Emecheta displays the colonizers' control by displaying their language in a dominant position. At the same time, she celebrates her own nationalism in a subdued manner by using her mother tongue in a subjugated manner. In this way, she registers her resistance to the center.

At the lexical level, she breaks away with the standard English orthography by including the African words with unusual spelling combinations such as *nna* (p. 26), *ndi* & *nmo* (p. 33), *nta* (p. 80), *nwayinuzo* (p. 87) and *Mbeke* (p. 170). This violation of the Standard English conventions right at the start of a word has symbolic connotations: The African is free and does not care for the rules imposed upon him/her and can break away with the unseen chains upon him/her. The pronunciation of such sound sequences at the initial position of the words displays the toughness of the Africans and displays that they are willful, strong and cannot be tamed through rules and regulations. It also displays the uniqueness of the African language. Through their use, the writer clearly exhibits that her language is different from the English language and hence has a separate identity. Emecheta also Africanizes many English words such as kortu-ma (court man), oda (order), tapilata (interpreter), Potokis (Portuguese), felenza (influenza), Germanis (Germans), kinsheni (kitchen), handikershishi (handkerchief), Kiriford (Clifford), gam (gown), mossulu (muslin), Yessima (Yes ma'am), Jesu (Jesus), Jesu Christi (Jesus Christ), Sah (Sir), Mah (Ma'am), Kilisi (Christy) and Misisi (Mrs). This gives the African language a symbolic taming, orienting and controlling agency. "Black" color overshadows "white" color, as through linguistic chromatism, Emecheta gives a twist to the English words stripping them off their identity. This is to show how the language of the colonizer has been colonized by the Africans. English appears in a subjugated, subservient position. Thus, as a contrast to the Eurocentric view, Emecheta establishes an Afrocentric identity.

This process of *clipping* has been done with words belonging only to the noun class which can be viewed as stripping the official language off its conventional features. This results in hybrid or incomplete language of the center. Lacan presents language as male, omnipotent the grande-

autre or the Symbolic Other, having patronizing and controlling effects over its users as it orients the ways one's identity and opinion get formed and projected. The process of clipping the features of the English language continues throughout the text resulting in a castrated, incomplete Father which is continuously *under erasure* (Derrida's phrase about the sign, p. xvii). By playing with the colonizer's language at each linguistic level, Emecheta proves it to be a "destructive consistency" to use Badiou's term, something whose own identity is unstable and thus, cannot be the ultimate standard. Through clipping the features of the English language, she presents it as a "castrated" patriarchy which further weakens its patronizing effects. As a contrast, she gives symbolic control and stability to her mother tongue and implicitly creates matronizing effects. The gradual patricide of the language of the center results in taking away control from patriarchy (the English language) and shifting it to the periphery (Emecheta's mother tongue). Through this linguistic battle, Emecheta weakens patriarchy and empowers matriarchy.

Flexibility of the African Words

The use of single African words to mean many things such as Ibo (as the name of a tribe, a language, a person from this tribe: See Table VI) and Palgada (the title of a family, a member of this family, a particular sound: See Table VI), displays the multifaceted character of the Africans and displays the African ability to adapt and mold according to the English grammatical conventions whereas the impossible spelling combinations and sound sequences such as Nwa (p. 19), Nwadei (p. 24), Nwosisi (p. 24 &25), Nkadi (p. 25), Nna (p. 26), Ndi (p. 33), Nmo (p. 33), npe (p. 35 & 72), Nwayinuzo (p. 51, 88, 90, 91, 92, 94, 106, 121, 124, 125, 131, 138 & 177), Urhobos (p. 60), gbim (p. 66), nta (p. 80), Nkisi (p. 95), Nnemoo (p. 99), ntukwasi (p. 103), ndu (p. 105), Nwoba (p. 119), Nnua (p. 134), nzu (p. 149) Ngbeke (p. 154), Nkwo (p. 169), Mbeke (p. 170) exhibit the otherwise in the English language: Such spelling combinations (in a single syllable) and such sound sequences are impossible in the English language.

The flexibility of the African language has also been displayed through the African words which take the English inflections such as Potokis, Germanis, Ijaws, Ibos, Palgadas, Efiks, Hausas, diopkas and Urobos. This shows the 'untamed native' can accommodate and adjust the 'alien' features. Similarly, the feature of capitalization of the initial letters of the African words such as Ijaws, Ibos, Palgada, Efiks, Urhobos, Hausa, Nna, Ndi, Owezim, Okolie, Okwuekwu, Umeadi, Ukwabegwu, Ogbenje, Ojebeta, etc. furthers the adaptability of the African language to withstand the changing situations. At times, the rules of the English orthography are violated (as in the expression efi Awusa (p. 44), agidi Akala (p. 53), Azu-Ndu (p. 105), agidi Accra (p.142) and resistance is registered. Once again,

Emecheta uses this violation among the rule-following as a contrast to register her resistance.

Through formation of the unusual sound sequences and unique orthographic experiments, Emecheta brings in *polyphony* and *heteroglossia* in the text. All the African utterances have been addressed to someone. Hence there is *dialogism.* Emecheta celebrates multiplicity of voices by presenting the English as well as the African expressions in the text.

The use of African expressions in the text creates 'blind spots' or 'aporias.' The writer is aware of the inability of the Engllish reader as s/he won't be able to comprehend the African language. Thus, she provides English translations immediately after an African expression. Contrarily, no African translations have been provided for the English expressions which is to show that the Africans are not dull or dumb.

Creation of Manichean Polarities

Linguistic conversion has been used as an analogy for the African's conversion to Christianity. The hybrid language and hybrid identities have been presented through the hybrid names of the African people as a result of conversion to Christianity such as Ogbenje Alice (p. 154), Alice Ogbenje (p. 156), Ojebeta Alice (p. 159), Mrs. Ogbenje Ojebeta Alice Okonji (p. 173), Christy Ngbeke (p. 154), Ifenkili Angelina (p. 159 & 169), Angelina Ifenkili (p. 161), Jacob Okonji (p. 160), Rebecca Mbeke (p. 170). These two-word, hybrid names can also be analyzed as binary pairs. Generally, the advantaged element in a binary pair is placed towards the left. In all the examples mentioned above, it is not always the English word that is placed towards the left. Thus, in five instances out of ten (mentioned above), the English part of the name appears towards right, and the African part of the name to the right. Through this linguistic display, Emecheta creates equality and establishes justice among these binary oppositions. By Africanizing the names, Emecheta gives a subtle twist to the colonizer and shakes the center. By creating *Manichean* dualities, Emecheta gives voice to the black, colonized female (Janmohamed's term).

The *kernel* English sentence (that is, a simple, active, declarative sentence) in this text can also be treated as a binary pair, that is, Subject/predicate where the Subject is the first word in the kernel sentence and occupies the most important position towards the left. As a contrast, the predicate appears only secondarily in a subjugated position towards the right. By placing the African word in the 'subject' place and the English word in the 'predicate' position, Emecheta creates the binary African/ English and gives structural supremacy to the African.

Conclusion

Emecheta dismantles the center by shifting agency towards the margin. Thus, the text initiates divergence from the center, and creates a liberating effect. It thus has an emancipatory effect on the reader. Through an Afrocentric language use, the writer doubly empowers the "doubly colonized" African females: once by shifting the language of the center with the language of the margin and then by giving agency to them. Through this patricide of the Law of the Father, the explicit patriarchy is shaken and the silenced matriarchy (the mother tongue) of the periphery is empowered. The matriarchy thus created has a matronizing effect.

Although visibly, the African language appears in a subjugated, subordinated position, yet the analyses above disclose that even when they are less in number, they are much more powerful than the dominant English language. The main language of the text is English yet it is the African language that implicitly hegemonizes the reader's mind. Thus, the visible *body* of the text invisibly controls the *mind* of the reader. Seen this way, the subaltern, can speak (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1993, p. 24) in Gayatri Spivak's terms, at least in this text.

Emecheta pleads her case through mixing of two languages and fights a linguistic battle with the mighty colonizer. Language seems to be the sole raison d'être for combating the oppressive colonizer. Emecheta registers her resistance at many fronts and finally wins this battle by giving symbolic control to her mother tongue.

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