



Language Use in Alobwed'epie's *The Death Certificate*: A Postmodernist Analysis

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Abstract: This paper addresses language use in Alobwed'epie's *the Death Certificate* from a postmodernist perspective. It seeks to show that the author of the selected novel, like many postcolonial African writers, attempts to assert his culture through some sort of indigenisation and intentional flouting of old canons of literature. Given that the present paper is anchored on postmodernism, the postmodernist theory the author's is used to explain Alobwed'Epie's perception of life and literature to assert his cultural identity through some sort of linguistic revolution. As a matter of fact, language is used in a very carefree and innovative way in order to escape the idealistic dictum of literary norms. Indigenisation is then regarded as a postmodernist technique, which aims at valorising the African identity and rejecting all the metanarratives of how a work of art should be produced. Obviously, in the present article postmodernism are both a theoretical framework and an object of study. The use of local languages and other languages like Pidgin in the novel under study has demonstrated that the then marginalised languages have moved from the margin towards the Centre and become established languages of African literature. The paper briefly discusses the emergence of postmodernism and shows how the traditional conventions have been deconstructed and substituted for new ideologies that have revolutionised the African literary landscape. It equally reviews selected previous works on language in African novels as well as on postmodernism that came up in the late 1950s as revolutionary responses to preceding movements. The paper ends with an account of the linguistic features of postmodernism used in the novel.

Keywords: Indigenisation, postmodernism, language use, margin, centre.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In almost all the spheres of life. Postmodernism stems from the rebellion against the modernist grand narratives. It attempts to break away from the old literary canons which prescribed writers to produce works of art that agree with the classical tenets of literature. Unlike modernism that commands men of letters to rationalise their works to counter the chaos in the post-war society, postmodernism promotes the destruction of norms

viewed as a prison for imagination as Jola (1992) puts it. Postmodernism is then revolutionary by essence. According to Ross & Supriya (1997:297): "postmodernism refers to certain radically experimental works of literature that occurred during 1910 -1930 following the disillusioning experience of the First World War. In fact, the two world wars brought about tremendous changes in the worldview of human beings. As an ideology that took wing in the early nineteen century,

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postmodernism had a tremendous impact in the post-war era. It has mostly left peculiar imprints on the literary field; Connor (2004) regards literature as “one of the biggest laboratories of postmodernism.” In fact, in the aftermath of World War I, man’s faith in all the universals faded and followed a change typified by some sort of rebellion against the stereotypes, certainties, norms, absolutes of the old order. It is then crystal clear that such a context of untold misery mandated a new order to efficiently address new issues and meet new needs that classical grand-narratives failed to satisfy. This ideological revolution did not spare Africa; Though African and Europeans did not experience the war similarly, these global events triggered changes in the life of Africans. That is why Giddens (1990) regards the postmodern thinking as: “an aesthetic, literary, political or social philosophy which was the basis of the attempt to describe a condition, a state of being, something concerned with changes to institutions.” Obviously, the post-war era was an epoch of total incredulity since Africans came closer to their colonial masters during the war and found out that White men were nothing more than human beings like any other human being; an ideological revolution followed and the colonial belief system that used to be regarded as superior during the pre-war era, lost its prestige. As a matter of fact, the loss of faith in the western belief system affected African writers tremendously and they began to view narratives with the lenses of decolonised African intellectuals. They then moved from a westernised idealistic literature to a realistic protest African literature. It is against this backdrop that Blamires (1986:114) describes the postwar scene as: “a problematic epoch, an era of doom and misfortune for people despite the creation of the League of Nations.” Hence, we can understand that there was a remarkable shift of paradigm in all the domains including literature. This paradigm shift favoured the breakthrough of postmodernism and post colonialism as outlined by Kehinde (2003:8) in the citation below: “In short, postcolonial and postmodernist critical approaches cross in their concern with marginality, ambiguity, disintegrating binaries and all things are parodied, mimicked and borrowed.” To sum up, postmodernist literature is then a protest fiction; it is in this light that Stevenson (1992) highlights the fact that, in the literary field, the old conventions were reassessed. The exaggerated freedom exercised in postmodernist works was lamented by purists as expressed in the following quotation: “The old fixed canons of taste have lost their validity. The novelist ignores the earlier conventions of plot, vocabulary, literary structure and orthodoxy of opinion.” As made clear in this citation, the shattering of fundamentals intensified exchanges in a global world and in quest of the right key to understanding their predicament.

The rise of modernism and postmodernism as transitional ideologies in a chaotic postwar world gave a new orientation to works of art in literature; Hutcheon quoted by Newton (1997:54) summarises the mission of postmodernism: “A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the works he produces are not in principle governed by pre-established rules and they cannot be judged according to determining judgment by applying familiar categories.” Postmodernism then questions the models, certainties, self-true evidences of the past and the present. This clearly means it favours creativity manifested through artistic freedom from the dictum of norms, thereby moving margins.

1.1 The Problem

The problem raised in this paper is that *The Death Certificate* exemplifies some of the salient characteristics of postmodernism exhibited through the demarginalisation of Cameroonian local languages and lingua franca like pidgin that are central in the novel. Language use in *The Death Certificate* does not agree with the old literary conventions of consistency prescribed by modernists. This motivated the present research; another motivation was that we found much literature on postmodernism and post colonialism in African fiction but with very little focus on the postmodernist appraisal of language.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

This paper sets out to analyse language use the selected novel from the postmodernist perspective. Specifically, it aims at identifying postmodernist features by showing how the novelist localises language through the mixture of Cameroon Pidgin English, Ewondo, French and Bakossi with a view to valuing his cultural identity. By means of exclamatory patterns code-switching and borrowing, Alobwed’Epie paints a realistic picture of his immediate environment to reach the downtrodden. By so doing, these languages that used to be relegated to the background are placed at the centre. Finally, the goal of this work is to appraise the peculiar use of postmodernist writing strategies in *The Death Certificate* in an attempt to show that by writing from a local perspective, Alobwed’Epie is fighting to assert African culture and debunk the certainties of the West which regard western culture and languages as superior.

1.3 Research Questions

The present paper intends to answer the following questions:

- 1- How does language use exhibit postmodernism in *The Death Certificate*?
- 2- What are the specific language features of postmodernism in *The Death Certificate*?

1.4 SHORT REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section of the paper talks about generalities on postmodernism and reviews selected past studies of language use in literary works.

1.4.1 Definition of Postmodernism

Several authors defined the word postmodernism. One of them is Lyotard (1984) who coined the term postmodernism and defined it as "incredulity towards metanarratives". For Ross and Supriya (1997:297): "Postmodernism refers to certain radically experimental works of literature that occurred during the period 1910-1930 following the disillusioning experience of the WWI. It is thus the movement that succeeded the reign of high modernism." MC hale (1987) argues that postmodernism is a peculiarly free art typified by an affirmation of multiplicity. Lyotard (1984) remarks that postmodern thought supposes the death of grand-narratives. This implies a reorientation, a new perception that definitely leads to the collapse of stereotypes, certainties of the past resulting in the decentring of centres as Manyaka (2011) would put it. Some of the salient features of postmodernism are discussed by Chan (2011), who points out that postmodernism is typified by the rejection of enlightenment, which is central in modernism. Best and Kellner (1997) support the view that postmodernism proposes relativism and pluralism. Welsh (1997) acknowledge the fact that pluralism is not an innovation of postmodernism but it became one of its leading and defining principles. Another salient feature of postmodernism is decentralization. Frichmann (2010) regards it as the process of dispersing decision-making or governance in order to transfer power from a single centre to smaller units. Put differently, it is a transfer of power from centres to margins. To sum up, it is crystal clear that postmodernism stands against universalism, an ideology developed by western people with a view to promote their own culture and impose it on others: capitalism, rationalism, God and democracy. In a nutshell, postmodernism distrusts all the certainties of the west to bridge the chasm between "low" and "high" cultures.

1.4. 2 Some past Studies on Language Use in African Novels

Postmodernism literature has been an object of research for years. MC hale (1987) asserts that postmodern literature deals with post-war literature, which lacks a "consensus of taste" as Lyotard (1984) puts it. Its salient literary features are fragmentation, absurdity, total freedom, a shift from conventions of literary cohesion and coherence. Many works have been chunked on postmodernism. In this section, we review past studies on postmodernism as well as on African novels.

Schneider (2007) examines the evolution post-colonial englishes using the dynamic model and finds out that globalisation has entailed the globalisation of English language with the emergence of new Englishes there by placing them at the core of language studies. He concludes that through heavy borrowing from local languages, African englishes have become part and parcel of the global world. Manyaka (2011) wrote about *The Death Certificate*, she pinpoints that the novelist attempts to decentre the centre in his novel. She opines that centralisation generates all the social ills depicted in the novel. Through literary techniques such as the multiplicity of settings, of point of views, of themes, Alobwed'Epie seems to propose decentralization as a remedy to African states and Cameroon in particular.

Jolas (1992) talked about the revolution of language in modernist literary era and highlighted the changes adopted by modernist's writers. In his study, he stressed the independent nature of language in modern novels. He found out that Joyce's *The Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* focusses on the nature and functions of language and wonders if it reflects the sensible world or the inner individual. As mentioned by Jolas (op cit), Proust has proclaimed the autonomy of language vis à vis the physical world because he argues that the most fascinating aspect of experience is not what it represents but its means of representation. A similar vein, Proust is described as a writer who thinks that real life is literature only when emphasis is laid on pleasures and forms of language rather than on the world. His brief review of literature indicates that previous studies have not emphasized the linguistic aspects of postmodernism. Jolas' essay examined a number of modern novels and drew the conclusion that the whole twentieth century stressed on the strong skepticism about language which failed according to them, to represent reality. It was instead regarded as a trap for art by modernist writers who freed their art from the dictum of old canons of literature.

Bate Besong (2004) comments on Alobwede's *The Death Certificate* and remarks that as a fiction, it should be valued for its insights into the structure of a prebendal postcolonial framework, the DC is imbued with proper characterization and representation which are vital and salutary to the emergence of a new form of art. After giving a brief account of the narrative, the above author shows that through the huge embezzlement done by Mongo Meka, Alobwed'Epie exposes poor governance, megalomania, corruption and individualism: the main ills of the fictional republic of Ewawa. At the stylistic level, Alobwed'Epie style is seen as middle and varied. Language is used to proffer a panoramic

survey of forces tending to the debasement of standards and values held so dear to Cameroonians.

Enow (1988) studied language in Dipoko's *Because of Women*; he paid attention to some linguistic influences in the novel to find out how language use can be manipulated to suit various purposes. This author finds out that culture highly influences language forms. As a result, many English items called cameroonisms are identified by the researcher. Place names such as Bakweriland, Mbonjo, Kongwe as well as characters' names are all African and suit the setting of the novel. Given the frequent presence of nouns borrowed from home languages, Enow (1988) concluded that language use in *Because of Women* the author's cultural identity.

Njandeu Emmanuel (1985) examined language use in *Things Fall Apart* and *The Old Medal*; the researcher analysed the cultural and linguistic influences on the process of creative writing of black authors. He found out that language in both novels is impregnated with patterns of the author's mother tongue. So he concluded that the presence of Africanism result from the unconscious transfer of cultural, social and linguistic variables from one language to the other. Reduplication, the use of terms such as *Chi*, the marginal choice of stylistic devices is characteristic of these novels. The results of Fondong's research show that proverbs, semantic extension African novels in the postcolonial era have their roots in their home towns.

Fondong (2007) investigated the process of owning the English language in Cameroon literary works. This researcher shows in her study that Cameroonian writers often blur the understanding of their texts by introducing elements of local languages in their novels. Though the introduction of local patterns helps the writers match characters with their social backgrounds, it distorts meaning and hinders communication. Consequently, the researcher concluded that Cameroonian literary works are irrelevant to the school setting because of their hybrid narrative technique that can confuse immature learners.

The works so far reviewed show that language use has been the concern of Cameroonian writers but we have not found much literature on the postmodernist appraisal language in *The Death Certificate*. It is against this backdrop that we have decided to analyse language use from that perspective in *the selected* novel.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

Data was collected through reading on the topic. This means that a reading of the text provided

us with the data showing how the author departs from old canons of literature Postmodernism and post-colonialism were used as theoretical frameworks and guided the data analysis. Data are presented in excerpts, lists and tables.

2. Data Analysis and Interpretation

As reported at the introductory section of the present paper, we aimed at identifying the linguistic features of postmodernism in *The Death Certificate*. The first part of this section presents the salient characteristics of postmodernism with a focus on language use.

2.1 Autonomy of language or flouting of linguistic norms

The writing technique of Alobwed'Epie is reminiscent of postmodernism because he does not abide with literary and grammatical norms. Excessive freedom from was prominent in the novel under study. In an attempt to break away from old norms as well as to reject colonialist thought, Alobwed'Epie resorts to limitless creativity. Consequently, the reading of *The Death Certificate* shows that language is used in a very autonomous way. This means that it is used creatively in accordance with the author's desires. Such a freedom is characteristic of postmodernist works of art. In the novel, the author's freedom is transparent in the grammatical processes as well as in the use of capitalization that do not always agree with the norms of English language.

2.1.1 Grammatical Processes

In the course of reading, we realized that the author forms words in a free, even carefree way without always caring about the rules of grammar. For instance, in the text under analysis, acronym is also intensively exploited.

2.1.1.1 Acronym

Yule (1996) regards acronym as a process of word formation that consists in joining the initial letters of a set of words. Acronyms abound in the novel. They reflect the writer's freedom spirit. He uses words so freely that at times, he uses acronyms without previously explaining them word verbatim. Below is an example that illustrates their use in the text:

That work can be handled by *E.S.I.U* engineers. The Director of *E.S.I.U* is one of us.

In the novel, the acronym "E.S.I.U" is not explicitly explained: the reader is then free to brainstorm on what "E.S.I.U" is. This is obscure and confusing and this obscurity of language is a typical postmodernist feature, which reflects the rebellion against clear and logical language as a key principle

of modernism. Other acronyms are explained as it is the case in: The Commissaire Central rushed in with a walkie-talkie and dragged the *Delegate General for National Security* by the hand. The DGNS seemed to be jerking and quivering.

When it pleases the writer, he explains the acronym like in this case where he has used Delegate General for National Security along with DGNS. Once more, the autonomy with which he manipulates words contradicts the rule of clarity preached by modernists and pre modernists. All in all, the author's creativity in *The Death Certificate* hardly enables him to respect the old canons of literature. As an iconoclast, he writes in total freedom so as to deliver the message he wants regardless of the norms of correct usage such as consistency, economy, simplicity, coherence. Another aspect that does not comply with the norms of grammar is capitalisation.

2.1.1.2 Capitalisation

In *The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary Second Edition*, the use of capitalisation is clearly explained. It is explicitly stated that a capital letter is rightly used at the beginning of a sentence. They are equally used for countries, nationalities, languages, religions, names of people, places, events, organizations, trademarks. The same source stresses that day, months' titles must be capitalised as well. As far as *The Death Certificate* is concerned, the use of capital letters does not often adhere to the aforementioned norms. Alobwed'Epie capitalises words in a very unconventional way most of the time. Some examples of his faulty capitalisation are presented in the excerpt below:

- Dear fellow Ewawaians,
- The honourable Minister of Finance,
- Announces with deepest regret,
- The sudden death of our illustrious son,
- Monsieur Mongo Meka, Treasurer General,
- National Treasury, Dande,
- He died in a ghastly motor accident,
- Along the Ewawa/Kabon border,
- More, concerning his death will be,
- Broadcast to the nation in due course.

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As it can be noticed in the excerpt above, the faulty use of capitalisation is transparent. First of all, two verbs are capitalised in the middle of a sentence (Announces, Broadcast). Then, an adverb (Along) is capitalised as well. This is probably done in a bid to portray the importance of the announcement being made as well as the superiority of the deceased. Capitalising in a chaotic manner is a way to run down power abuse as well as the lack of professionalism of Ewawaian public media. At times, Alobwed'Epie deliberately fails to respect the rules

for the sake of irony. For instance, in the examples that follow, the odd capitalisation serves ironical purposes.

- “Yes, any impostor should address himself to Jacqueline Diwona, *Héritière* of Mongo Meka's property.

In this excerpt “*Héritière*” is wrongly capitalised for the sake of mockery. In fact, the novelist wants to laugh at Mongo Meka and Jacky Diwona who embody sadism in the novel. Nevertheless, he fails to capitalise (the judge) that is a title and rightly deserves a capital letter. In short, Alobwede d'Epie makes use of language at his convenience to suit different purposes. The peculiar use of capitalization challenges the established rules of correct usage. This therefore means that the fragmented language, used in *The Death Certificate* is far from being conventional. From the data so far collected, we can't help noticing that the inconsistent and chaotic mixture of words is reminiscent of postmodernism. In the postmodern ideology, chaos is generally celebrated through exaggerated relativism: this violation of norms reflects the postmodern society, which is anomic and characterised by all sorts of ills that can be detrimental to stability. Loans are so frequently used in the novel that they make the language abstruse for a non-Cameroonian. This lack of clarity breaks away from the contract of lucidity prescribed by traditional writers. Consequently, language use is full of ambiguity, implied rather than stated clearly. This ambiguity is an aspect of postmodernism which deconstructs the idea that must be reasonable, and transparent. It instead advocates chaos and state that language can be interpreted from any perspective. The second sub-part of this section discusses indigenization as a salient postmodernist feature in *The Death Certificate*.

2.1.2 Indigenisation of language

Though postmodernist writers believe in postmodernism and use it as an instrument at the service of their political and ideological battles, their works at times are oozed with an anti-postmodernist doctrine because of their status of main defenders of African culture. Alobwed'Epie does not depart from this rule. So in *The Death Certificate*, the narrative is reflective of the author's eagerness to assert the African identity because postmodernism is open to cultural relativism. Indigenisation, which is predominant through language use, is one of the key postmodernist features of the novel under analysis. This technique is reflected in his novel through borrowing, code-switching and exclamatory patterns.

2.1.2.1 Borrowing in the Death Certificate

Crystal (1987:183) views borrowing as: “an attempt to reproduce in one language, patterns that have been previously found in another language called the matrix language.” Alobwed’Epie borrows intensively from his immediate environment. As a result, cases of borrowing abound in the text. For instance, characters’ names, geographical names remind the reader of multicultural Cameroon with its myriad of languages, customs and ethnic groups. Here are some examples of characters’ names in the novel.

Table1: names of characters

Characters’ names	Region
MONGO MEKA	Centre (Ewondo)
NCHINDA	West (Bamileke)
TANKEU	West (Bamileke)
MUSA	North
JAQUELINE DIWONA	Centre (Ewondo)
DIMVONDO	Centre (Ewondo)
JEAN PIERRE ENGO	Centre (Ewondo)
NDJOCK	Centre (Bassa)
MULA	Littoral (Douala)
ISA JOROMA	North
SENDE	Littoral (Douala)

The characters are borrowed from the various regions of Cameroon. It was found out that names from the centre are the most numerous. This could be due to fact that the first province is a dominant circle in the novel. Through sarcasm the author ridicules the characters who come from the centre in a bid to decentre the centre. In addition, with a postcolonial intention to appropriate fiction, other names are the combination of an African name and a western surname. It is the case of names such as Jacqueline Diwona, Jean Pierre Engo. Most characters’ names are typically African and they vehicle the author’s fight for the African identity as well as the rejection of any form of colonialism. Post-colonialism is fundamentally a plight for Africa’s culture and emergence. To sum up, the African traditional values that were lost in colonial Africa are being regained in the postcolonial novel under analysis. It is equally transparent in Alobwed’Epie’s use of toponyms.

2.1.2.2 Names of Places

The choice of geographical names appears like a way to celebrate his alma mater, his fatherland. Consider some examples below.

Table 2: Geographical names

Names of places in the novel	Towns
Dande	Yaounde
Boleye	Mvolye
Ndotelle	Zoa Etele
Dastos	Bastos
Kabon	Gabon
Ewawa	Ebolowa
Biberia	Nigeria
Dagos	Lagos

Though these geographical names are invented by the author, they are calqued from existing places in Cameroon and in Africa and are recognisable in the text. By playing consciously with words to depict in a realistic and committed way, the author of *The Death Certificate* criticizes and despises the western culture he considers to be the stigma of colonization. Indifferently, Alobwed’Epie makes use of exclamations made in Cameroon to continue to construct the African identity, which is the greatest concern of postmodernist writers.

2.2. Exclamatory patterns in The Death Certificate

By means of exclamatory patterns, indigenization is signaled. Below are some illustrations:

- 1- P4: “Hei! Mula”
Hei is used to call people in the african context
- 2- P26: “Ateh! you see?”
Ateh is a typical Douala exclamation.
- 3- P194: “Haba! I exclaimed”
Haba is a North West exclamation.
- 4- “Essape!” Monge Meka was a kind man
Essape means my goodness in Ewondo.
- 5- “Chia Nchinda!”
Chia is a Pidgin kind of exclamation.
- 6- “Wa! Mula exclaimed”
Wa is a Bamoun exclamation.

All these exclamatory patterns are typically Cameroonian and they demonstrate that, language use has undergone the process of indigenisation in *The Death Certificate*. It is then a strategy to impose African ways of speaking therefore moving from the margin. Because of the predominant tendency to nativise language use in *The Death Certificate*, this can be considered a deconstruction of European postmodernism that advocates globalization, which implies the death of micro cultures. It is crystal clear that the author of *The Death Certificate* blatantly rejects white imperialism and seems therefore to deconstruct the deconstructionists. Postcolonial African literature can then be regarded as an original African postmodernism which is skeptical of western ideologies regarded by postmodernists as a threat to African tradition. By using such a localised language, the author seems to be a postmodern intention to distance the reader from the characters

and disqualify him or her as the sole and rightful interpreter of the text. This indeterminacy is a typical postmodernist and post colonialist feature and enables the writer to reach the downtrodden in Africa. It seems to be a narrative of Africa by Africans and for Africans, which is a genuine deconstruction of the modernist tenets. Code-switching that remind us of the African tradition, flourish in the novel under study. In the next subsection, a look is cast at them in the next section.

2.2.1. Code-Switching in *the DC*

Gumperz (1982:59) defines code switching as the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages belonging to two different grammatical systems or sub-systems. Throughout research, we noticed that language in *The Death Certificate* is a melting pot of European and Cameroonian languages. The author uses code-switching which is an aspect of postmodernism for several purposes. Tag-switching and intersentential switching is very prominent in the novel.

2.2.1.1 Tag-Switching

Djuidje (2007) suggests that tag switching consists in incorporating a tag, an exclamation or a parenthetical element in another language other than the rest of the sentence. A case of tag switching is presented in the extract below:

Wild cries of jubilation greeted the pronouncement of the figure. Women made high-pitched shrieks of appreciation. That opened the floor for a *man pass man* spree.

In the example above, the last sentence is a good example of tag switching, it starts in English language then a pidgin element is inserted at the end '*man pass man*'. The switch from English to Pidgin English is ironical. Alobwed'Epie seems to mock the shameless political elite of Ewawa that indulges in mismanagement of public funds. Besides, the use of tag switching is an implicit way of criticizing embezzlement and tribalism in the fictional republic of Ewawa. Language is then reflective of the writer's intention to assert his identity through Cameroonian culture. Moreover, the mixture of languages departs fundamentally from modernism, which advocates the use of transparent language, language without ambiguity but Alobwed'Epie makes use of language without constraints. He seems to be guided by inspiration. Once more, in the extract that follows, the author switches from Ewondo, a Cameroonian language to English.

- "A mod" I called him the way of his people "we have a proverb that says 'when a stranger eats and belches he should be given a machete so that others may eat of his bounty.'

In this example, the insertion of a Ewondo linguistic element 'A mod' connotes flattery. However it also reflects Beti culture. This therefore means Alobwed'Epie's use of language breaks the old literary canons that recommend consistency of language from the beginning to the end. He uses language at his will according to the meaning he wants to communicate. Such a freedom is characteristic of postmodernism but it is also reminiscent of post-colonialism that abhors the culture of the coloniser. Through language use, the writer somehow deconstructs the idea that English language is the only language of literature.

2.2.1.2 Intersentential Switching

Djuidje (2008) argues that intersentential Switching occurs at the sentence or at the clause level. As she emphasises, a part of the sentence is generally in one language and the other part is in another language. This type of switching may serve to emphasize a point made in the other language or to signal a switch in the conversation or even to indicate the person to whom the message is addressed. Below is a list indicating examples of intersentential switching taken from in the novel:

1. "We don see weti? He asked in pidgin. I now begin to see what Mula used to say."
2. "Monsieur le Commissaire du 8e Arrondissement, on the 2nd of this month, you instructed a band of your Policemen to waylay and murder Major General Mbaneko."
3. "Monsieur le Ministre! Monsieur le Ministre ! Ce n'est pas possible! Ce n'est vraiment pas possible! The Commissaire Central screamed several times. -"Fine cover for master dem thing", some of them shout in displaying ladies' pants.
4. "j'ai cassé le prix, others shout.
5. "Jomba give me bottom belle cold my heart" blare 3000w.loud speakers below, and so on and so forth.
6. He got 150 Frs and asked the bar-hand to give our man *pain chargé*.
7. "Yes any impostor should address himself to Jacqueline Diwona, *Héritière* of Mongo Meka's property."

In the first example, the second speaker starts with a whole sentence in Pidgin English then he switches to English. This intersentential switching portrays skepticism, dismay and emotion. This speaker is scandalised by the ongoing immorality in their country. Occasionally there is a switch from French to English in *The Death Certificate* as can be seen in the second example where the sentence starts in French and ends in English. The use of French specifies the position of the person described. It also implies that the author

denounces power abuse. The predominance of French seems to inform the reader that all the strategic positions in Ewawa are held by Francophone Ewawians. Discrimination is then criticised. Code-switching is then used for criticism or mockery. By moving from French to English, pidgin to English or Ewondo, the writer's Cameroonian identity is somehow revealed and asserted. This is reminiscent of postmodernism and postcolonialism which advocates the promotion of the African culture. Code-switching is cherished by the author of *The Death Certificate*; several cases were identified in the novel under analysis.

In the selected corpus, Pidgin and French, French and English are used alternatively in total disrespect of the rule of consistency prescribed by modernists. This rule states that modern English should be written in a single language in order to avoid ambiguity and encumbrances. Yet, Alobwed'Epie chooses deliberately to ignore these norms of good usage; one of the reasons for this stylistic choice is that he wants to give a touch of realism to the story. As a post-colonialist, he chooses to localise language in order to pay homage to his Africa. This desire echoes through the novel if we consider the frequent use of Cameroonian words and expressions: "*pain chargé*" a typical Cameroonian expression, is inserted because the addressee of the message is of French background. It equally indicates the poor background of the person the writer is describing. Occasionally, an element of a different language is also introduced for the purpose of irony. To conclude, it is obvious that the writer of *The Death Certificate* blends English, French, pidgin and Cameroonian local languages. Such a blending of languages flouts the modernist norms of clarity and consistency adheres to the tenets of postmodernism. As a genuine African, Alobwed'Epie puts spices in the words of his characters to bring out their wisdom and culture as well as to sell and promote the African culture. That use of language is equally indicative of the author's commitment to socio-political causes and ongoing attempt to assert African identity. The language in *The Death certificate* is coloured with a constant feeling of anti-colonialism. The author is then a typical African postmodernist which is a mixture of post-colonialism and postmodernism.

2.3 CONCLUSION

This paper sought to identify the language features of postmodernism in *The Death Certificate*; through a postmodernist analysis of language use; the present research has revealed that indigenisation of language is a key feature of postmodern literature. This blend of French, English with African languages such as Ewondo, Bakossi and Cameroon Pidgin promotes African culture. Through

the mixture of several Cameroonian local languages, the author intends to assert his identity as a Cameroonian. This self-assertion of the African culture is a typical postmodernist principle since African languages were considered long ago as minor languages fit for home communication. By so doing, Alobwed'Epie moves the margins through language and literature by proving that a serious piece of literary work can be written not only in English but also in pidgin or in any local language.

Linguistic eclecticism is characteristic of the postmodern thinking. It is important to highlight the fact that this technique has an aim for postmodernists. In postmodernism, the leitmotiv is cultural relativism in order to de-marginalise minority languages and de-centre western languages that were long considered superior to the others. Borrowing is then a salient feature of postmodernism in the novel under study. It can be interpreted as a rebellion against purism celebrated in modern literature. That apart, there is a heavy borrowing from Bakossi, Bulu, Bassa and Bamileke languages in order to diversify his lexicon. Some examples are *man pass man; we don see weti* in Pidgin English; *Essape* in Ewondo, *Nakam* in ghomala *turutu melonde* in Bakossi; *pain charge* and *heritiere* in Cameroonian French. Finally, the diversity of Cameroon is transparent in the way languages are used. This means the author is striving to value local languages, marginalised for years. By using them in a literary work, these languages are being de-marginalised and placed at the centre of literature. From languages of casual conversations to languages of scientific business, they have moved from the margin to the centre of postmodern African literature. In addition, the purposeful flouting of grammatical norms seems to indicate that Alobwed'Epie has freed his art from the dictum of prescriptivism.

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