

African Thoughts in English Words: Evidence from Andrea Masiye's Novel *Before Dawn*

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Abstract – Research has shown that, in an environment where two or more languages and cultures are in contact, there is likely to be cultural-linguistic interferences. Such is the case with African literature of English expression where writers, as a result of colonialism, are at times compelled to narrate their world views in the coloniser's language (i.e. English) which does not easily express the African socio-cultural reality. To cope with this artistic dilemma, African writers employ various writing techniques to express their beliefs, values, and experiences. Based exclusively on the examples from Andrea Masiye's novel *Before Dawn* (1970), this study attempts to examine how Masiye has appropriated and reconstructed the English language in his text in order to convey the mode of feelings and thinking peculiar to his cultural milieu. The paper starts out by outlining some of the debates around literatures in African languages, and then moves to a close reading of the novel. The argument made here is that, in his novel, Masiye uses some narrative strategies that include loanwords, direct lexical transfer, adoption and adaptation of Chewa proverbs, use of imagery, similes, semantic shifts, and code-mixing. Besides these linguistic strategies, some aspects of Chewa culture addressed in Masiye's novel are examined. It is also observed that, although Masiye has sometimes deviated linguistically from Standard English, he has not falsified the English language. Rather, he has been able to bridge the gap between the various local discourses and the appropriate English language diction suitable to the characters and themes he depicts. The paper concludes by suggesting that in this age of globalization, African writers cannot afford to deny their works a wider readership; therefore, they should consider the appropriation and reconstitution of English as a medium of African literature.

Keywords: Andrea Masiye, Chewa language and culture, linguistic strategies, Zambian novel

1. INTRODUCTION

Most people in the Western world assume that African literature began when Europeans explorers came with their so called mission of civilising Africa. This view has been disputed by several African scholars and critics who believe that African literature started long before Africans came in contact with Europeans. In their oeuvre titled *African Languages and African Literature*, Eme and Mbagwu (2011) aver that African literature had been predominantly oral up until the 19th Century when attempts to put some African languages into written forms began considerably. The attempts became more productive in the 20th Century. They however dwindled in the mid-twentieth Century with the acceptance of foreign languages by Africans

in attending to almost all their affairs. With this situation, Eme and Mbagwu (2011, p. 117) further observe, African languages have not striven well in literature.

Caught in the above kind of linguistic dilemma, African writers and critics of English expression gathered in June 1962 at Makerere University in Uganda at “A Conference of African Writers of English Expression”, to discuss the fundamental question of determining who qualified as African writer and what constitute African writing. Following the Makerere Conference, two camps have since emerged. One led by the late Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, and the other led by the Kenyan literary critic and writer Ngugi Wa Thiongo. The Ngugi Wa Thiongo’s camp advocates the need to decolonize Africa cultures, including the return to African languages. He argues that a literature done in non-African language cannot be regarded as true “African” literature. To the exponents of this view, “African literature can only be written in African languages, that is, the language of the African peasantry and working class” (Ngugi, 1986, p. 27). “Borrowed language”, they argue, can neither fully explore the depth, nor carry the weight of African experience (Cited in Nwabunze, 2016, p. 73).

On the other hand, proponents of African literature in European languages - led by Chinua Achebe - are of the view that African writers have no choice but to adopt “foreign” European languages in their writings. The Nigerian writer argues that English should not be rejected on the sole basis of its being “part of a package deal which included many other items of doubtful value and the positive atrocity of racial arrogance and prejudice” (Achebe, 1975, p. 58). Furthermore, Achebe expressed the conviction that, even though his mother tongue was Igbo, he felt that English can carry the weight of his African experience (cited in Ngugi, 1986, p. 7). He adds, however, that this will have to be “a new English, still in full communication with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings” (1975, p. 62).

Achebe further 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” (cited in Nwabunze, 2016, p. 79). Pushing back the limits of the English demands that the African writer “use[s] English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its values as 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 particular experience” (Achebe, 1975, p. 62).

Commenting on the ‘fate’ of English in the hands of postcolonial African writers, the Nigerian playwright and novelist Wole Soyinka (1988) avers that the writers “stress such language, stretch it, impact and compact, fragment and reassemble it with no apology, as requested to bear the ‘burden’ of their experiences, even if such experiences are not formulated within the conceptual idiom of that language” (1988, p. 107). Soyinka’s statement vividly captures some of the indigenization processes employed by African writers in their use of English. The writers find it a creatively expedient duty to appropriate and adapt the language to the contingencies of a new context, with a view to producing culturally marked English “which diverges from the Queen’s English lexically and semantically as well as in pronunciation” (Gilbert and Tompkins, 1996, p. 177), but “still [remains] in full communion with its ancestral home” (Achebe, 1975, p. 62). English is, therefore, capable of being appropriated and successfully Africanized, hence, the African writer through the medium of

English language can successfully navigate the stormy waters of language choice and cultural consciousness.

Lending his voice to the debate on the status and place of English in African writings, the Ghanaian writer Kofi Awoonor says: “African authors writing in their local languages are going to be circumscribed or limited to a much smaller society” (quoted from Kehinde, 2009, p. 79). Hence his linguistic preference is for localized English which can reach a larger audience than if African writers were to only write in their individual languages. Another Ghanaian writer, Ama Ata Aidoo, takes exception to the use of indigenous languages as the medium of African literature (James, 1990, p. 45). She believes that the English language has the ability to communicate with a wider audience. In the same breath, describing his own stylistic experimentation, the Indian writer G. V. Desani says: “I have chosen the craft of writing. And my entire linguistic creed [. . .] is simply to find a suitable medium. I find the English language is that kind of medium. It needs to be modified to suit my purpose” (Cited in Kachru, 1982, p. 284).

Thus, based on the examples from Andrea Masiye’s novel *Before Dawn*, this study seeks to explore how, in his experiment of ‘pushing back’ ‘the limits’ of English, this Zambian writer uses and manipulates it (English) in particular ways so as to accommodate his cultural thought patterns and values. Masiye’s text is characterised by linguistic innovation which can be classified under the following categories: loanwords, direct lexical transfer, adoption and adaptation of Chewa proverbs, use of imagery, similes, semantic shifts, and code-mixing. Besides these linguistic strategies, Masiye’s novel addresses some aspects of Chewa culture namely family structure, sexuality and marriage, religious beliefs, names and naming, concept of time among others. It should however be noted that, there may be considerable overlaps among certain members of these categories since “typologies are never fool proof” (Adegbija, 1989, p. 171).

2. SYNOPSIS OF THE NOVEL

Andrea Masiye’s *Before Dawn* is set in a small village in the Chiparamba valley of Eastern part of Zambia. In this novel, Masiye documents the customs of the Chewa people, but centres his story on one character, Kavumba, son of Menyani Banda and Tinenenji. When his mother died of a septic ulcer, the young boy is left to fend for himself as his father deserts him too. Thus, Kavumba goes to work for the *Bwalo* or village council, and for the menial work he does, he is rewarded with leftovers because of scarcity of food. This marks the beginning of his ordeal. Kavumba subsequently leaves the village for the city to “see the bright lights of the towns” (p. 88), thinking that he would use his hard-earned elementary academic education to find employment there, buy beautiful clothes and return to the village. Unfortunately, unable to settle in the city, Kavumba eventually returns to his village – the world of roots, wild roots and herbs and other medicinal plants which governed the village life – determined to start anew and make his life a success. Kavumba did not like city life anymore, for “[the city] had made me miss things which now matter in my life”, he says (p. 122).

3. ANALYSIS OF MASIYE'S NARRATIVE STRATEGIES

The language of *Before Dawn* is simple but not simplistic. When beginning Andrea Masiye's novel, readers are often struck by the simple mode of narration and equally simple prose style, which can be seen as Masiye's desire to achieve an "English [. . .] colored to reflect the African verbal style [with] stresses and emphases that would be eccentric and unaccepted in British or American speech" (Povey, 1969, p. 93). He reshapes English in order to imitate the linguistic pattern of his Chewa mother tongue. Some of the narrative strategy adopted by Masiye in his novel include: loanwords, direct lexical transfer, adoption and adaptation of Chewa proverbs, use of imagery, similes, semantic shifts, and code-mixing. Aside from these linguistic strategies, Masiye's novel addresses some aspects of Chewa culture such as family structure, sexuality and marriage, religious beliefs, names and naming, and the concept of time among others. However, it should be pointed that, there may be some overlaps among certain members of these categories since "typologies are never fool proof" (Adegbija, 1989, quoted by Igboanusi, 2001, p. 57). For instance, one may consider some examples illustrated under loanwords as instances of direct lexical transfer.

3. 1. Loanwords

Every language has a vocabulary which is adequate for the needs of its speakers. However, the areas of life and thought which are covered by this vocabulary obviously differ from one language to another. There is a lexical gap due to the difference in lexical repertoire of the target environment. To feel this gap, one has to borrow some words from another language for, as Appel and Muysken rightly observe, "It is hard to imagine a language that has not borrowed words from some other language, just as there is no culture that has developed entirely from scratch" (Appel & Muysken, 1987). I can therefore posit that, all languages borrow from other languages at some point in their lifetime, and borrowed words constitute a large fraction of most language lexicon.

Before giving the meaning of loanword, let me state that by the term loan, I mean that item borrowed or adopted from one language (the donor language) into another (the recipient language), which has permanence in the recipient language. Simply stated, borrowing is the taking over of words from another language. What is loanword then? According to Kashoki:

By "loanword", "loan", "borrowed word" or "adoptive" [as used interchangeably in sociolinguistics literature] reference is here made to that item borrowed or adopted from one language (whether similar or dissimilar) into another which has a reasonable degree of permanence in the recipient language, is familiar to a wide spectrum of its speakers and is in common use or general currency. (Kashoki, 1994, p. 10)

Therefore, since there are some lexical terms that cannot be accurately translated into English in Masiye's story, in order to express certain cultural experiences and differences, the author makes use of some loanwords. Consider the following example where Tinenji complains to her husband Menyani of labour pains: "'*Ai-yoh!*' she screamed. 'Mother, death is mine today. What of yours have I eaten to deserve this?' she asked as she rolled on to her back, one hand nursing her womb" (p. 2). Shortly thereafter, she pleads with her husband to call the village midwife for her: "'*Ai-yoh!* Fetch Naphiri the *Namkungwi*, the midwife!" (p. 3).

Following the successful child delivery, the village women express their jubilation as follows: “*Lu-lu-lu, ha-ha-ha-yeh-lu-lu!* . . . ‘What a beauty! ‘It is a handsome boy,’ someone said” (p. 7). Another untranslated word is in the following sentence: “‘*Odi!*’ She called as she unloaded herself and knelt outside the guest hut” (p. 36). In the Chewa culture, and indeed among most ethnic groups in Zambia, the word ‘*Odi*’ is a respectful way to announce one’s presence the moment the person is at somebody’s doorstep; its nearest English equivalent is: “*knock, knock, is there anyone in here?*”

In the foregoing examples, we notice some Chewa untranslated words that are in italic. These words have been used to fill lexical gaps since they have no English equivalents. Moreover, since the use of English by Zambian writers is an instance of cultural conflicts, the language cannot adequately express all social and semantic nuances of the Chewa language items. Masiye, therefore, attempts to solve this sociolinguist burden by maintaining a selective fidelity to his mother tongue. Although an English native reader may not understand the full meaning of the loanwords, the context in which they are used may give some insights into their meanings.

3.2. Direct Lexical Transfer

Direct lexical transfer involves “the wholesale transfer of a term or expression from the source language to the borrowing language by maintaining its original meaning” (Kasanga, 2002, p. 187). Through this process, Masiye transfers lexical terms from Chewa into English with an explicit translation. In the following example, the explanation of the italicized borrowing is given in its immediate context: “Most of the myths and beliefs were revealed at the *Bwalo*, the village–court, where Headman Banda, my grandfather, settled the weighty matters of the people [. . .]” (p. 8). Obviously, Masiye realizes that merely providing a gloss translation of the term will not be of much help to a non-Chewa reader. He thus followed the term with an elaborate ‘in-text’ explanation which can only begin to shed some light on this complex item of Chewa cultural tradition. Like most villages in Zambia, among the Chewa speaking people, one is likely to find an open palaver hut called *Bwalo*. This shelter located in the centre of the village is the men’s meeting place where weighty matters of the people are settled, cases are judged with the help of elderly councillors, and boys listen to the wisdom of the elders, learn the ways of Chewa culture and tradition. It is also a place where men can savour the traditional skilful rhetoric such as folktales, proverbs, riddles, to mention just a few.

Another example is when Tinenenji was to be taken to the mission hospital to treat the ulcer that was eating up her leg, her son Kavumba says: “That week, the *machila*, the wooden hammock, in which Mother was to be carried to Bamoto Hospital, was ready.” (p. 43). It should be mentioned that, as indicated earlier, Masiye’s story documents the life and customs of the Chewa people before Zambia attained its independence, which is when the country was still a British colony. Thus, in the village, the only way seek people could be taken to the hospital was either on the wooden hammock or on other people’s back.

One other instance of direct lexical transfer can be seen in the following excerpt where Ganizo, the man responsible for ensuring that tradition and customs are obeyed, wants to fight Menyani the Headman’s son, in order to avenge himself for the earlier embarrassment he

suffered at the hands of Menyani: “Ganizo had not forgotten the loss of face he had suffered as a result of [Menyani’s] refusal to obey the customs of the village. He was, therefore, always raring to teach the incorrigible son of the Headman a lesson or two. Ganizo had even nicknamed himself *Mulandu Suola*, ‘a case never decays’. [He] was determine to avenge himself . . .” (p. 71). Still other examples include:

- (1) “There goes the *Aphunzitsi*, the schoolteacher” (p. 86).
- (2) “I was sleeping in the *gowero*, a hut set aside as dormitory for the boys” (p. 120).
- (3) “The leader of the *gowero* was named *Masoanjole*, ‘the lady-killer’ [because] he was reputed for his lascivious flirtations with a number of girls whom he deflowered” (p. 120).

One may wonder whether the presence of indigenous words and expressions in the African novel such as *Before Dawn*, is a manifestation of the inaptitude of African writers to master the “former colonial powers’ languages” (Bokamba, 1992, p. 125) that they use in their creative writings. On the contrary, I believe that, the use of native words and expressions is due to their social-cultural relevance. Furthermore, “besides preserving and compensating for a lack of adequate equivalent terminology, native words and expressions add local colour to the text” (Bandia, 1996, p. 143).

3.3. Adoption and Adaptation of Chewa Proverbs

Another striking stylistic feature of Zambian writers is the appropriation of indigenous proverbs into their creative writings. Proverbs are deployed in Masiye’s novel to depict the Chewaness of themes and styles. Many of the proverbs employed are direct translations from the Chewa culture. Proverbs are usually short, cleverly constructed beliefs statements which are used to perform different communicative functions. In Chewa land, and in Africa in general, proverbs are often employed by elders to engage very critical issues, this explains why for example, Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) says: “Among the Igbo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten” (1958, p. 6). Achebe’s idea is also shared by the Yoruba people who say: “Proverbs are the horses of speech” meaning that in an event where communication is lost, proverbs are used to retrieve it (Shipper, 1991, p. 1). Like in most African communities, proverbs among the Chewa are often born out of people’s experiences, and are passed on from one generation to another; this usually takes place in a palaver shelter -*Bwalo*- build in the middle of the village, where children learn tradition, culture and wisdom from the elders. Sometime this informal schooling occurs in the evening when elders and children sit round log fires, warming their bodies.

In the novel *Before Dawn*, the proverbs deployed by the characters are routed in the Chewa tradition, which becomes part of everyday life. For instance, the proverb used to remind people to be hospitable especially to visitors: “[A woman should] always remember to look at the stranger’s stomach and not at his face. Hallow stomach could not lie, whereas looks cold deceive anyone” (p. 36). Traditionally, a woman plays an important role, she is considered the homemaker and caretaker. A Gikuyu proverb entrenches this idea when it says: “The man is the head of the home but the wife is the heart” (Cited in Kiiru, 1999, p. 5). A woman should

ensure that beside her children and husband, her guests should also not starve. By giving food to her guest she ensures him/her to reciprocate when any member of her community happens to visit the guest's village. This proverb is didactic, it teaches and encourages hospitality among people; it is also an advice to married women to care for the well-being of their guests for cooperation to be strengthened.

In another instance, Ganizo, who had accidentally speared his wife Naphiri, is taken to the village Chief's court for trial and possible sentencing; surprisingly, the victim pleaded with the Chief for leniency as follows: "Ganizo is my husband. I know he speared me. That is wrong. But what does our own wisdom say? Doesn't one of our proverbs say when a rat sits on a pot you cannot kill it? I pray you to be lenient with Ganizo. He sat on me, your possession. Any harm done to him will be harm to me. I am the pot" (p. 79). This proverb is didactic in nature for it teaches people to forgive regardless of the wrong done.

Another example to consider is when Foloko came back from the mining city of copperbelt region, where he had found a job as cook for a certain White man. Upon returning to the village he had a discussion with his village mates who had never been to the copperbelt and wanted to know everything about city life. During the discussion, one man said: "It was generally believed that wives could not be trusted because they sat under the tree to pound their maize together. In the process women loosened their tongues and opened their hearts to one another. Women were dangerous!" (p. 83). This proverb portrays a woman as unreliable and unpredictable in her actions and behaviour. The import of this proverb is that a woman is a person you cannot afford to trust at all. Naturally, a woman has the tendency to divulge secrets. In the words of Ncube and Moyo (2011), a woman is "unpredictable, weak-brained and too easily overcome by emotion so that she acts irrationally even in the way that can be dangerous to the well-being of the home" (2011, p. 137). This justifies the man, as the "head" of the family, to arrive at certain crucial decisions that affect the whole family without the input of the wife. In short, the essence of this proverb is to warn men never to trust a woman for, if she knows your secrets, you will leave in fear for the whole of your life.

The above proverbs are contextually relevant traditional Chewa proverbs. Though they have been rendered into English, they retain the vivid imagery and culture of the Chewa language. The preponderance of Chewa proverbs in the work of Andrea Masiye attests to the continuity of the oral tradition in Chewa literature.

3.4. Use of Imagery

In addition to proverbs, Masiye also uses imagery chosen from the oral tradition. Like proverbs, there are as many definitions of imagery as there are scholars in this field. This is because imagery vary considerably depending on the culture of a given society. Cuddon (1977) cited in Motebele (1977, p. 6) defines imagery as "a general term that covers the use of language or represents objects, actions, feelings, ideas state of mind and sensory and extra-sensory experience. An image does not necessarily mean a mental picture. In the first place we may distinguish between literal, perceptual and conceptual images." Packard (1989) is of the opinion that: "imagery is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an

instant of time. When we become clear about an idea we say: 'I get the picture', as if this clarification came in the form of an image" (1989: 93).

From the foregoing definitions, it can be concluded that imagery may be literal or figurative. It involves both mental and physical images that are produced by metaphorical language. Imagery makes use of human senses, and is produced by figures of speech. Furthermore, imagery refers to pictures represented in a person's mind. It also involves describing an object or concept in terms of another by drawing similarities between the two.

In one of his works titled *Igbo Tradition in Nigerian Novel*, Igboanusi (2001, p. 67) argues that images are adopted in speeches or narratives in order to convey specialized kinds of information. As a speech device, images express specific meanings, which derive from the socio-cultural contexts of the speech community. Their meanings can be interpreted on two levels—the literal and the metaphorical. The literal meaning is deduced from a combination of word meaning and sentence meaning. The metaphorical meaning, on the other hand, is derived from a consideration of some extra-linguistic factors such as pre-suppositions, socio-cultural contexts and attitude of speakers, which may influence the overall meaning of the utterance. English writers frequently draw images (particularly through metaphors and similes) from the indigenous cultures of the Igbo and have incorporated them into English through translation. It should be noted that, while proverbs are well-known statements that "enable the speaker to display his wit, wisdom, and his distinctive ability to manipulate the language" (Emenyonu, 1978, p. 157); images adopt imaginative comparisons to convey a meaning. The English equivalent of the images identified in Masiye's novel are provided in brackets under every example:

(4) "The illness has caught Tinenenji seriously" (p. 5).

(English Equivalent: "Tinenenji is seriously ill".)

(5) "Father furiously shot his eyes in that direction. His eyes reddened with anger. He spat and Shook his fist menacingly" (p. 10).

(English Equivalent: "Father furiously looked in that direction [. . .].")

(6) "This is a heavy matter [. . .] It's Menyani who has made it heavy" (p. 24).

(Reference to "heavy" suggests that the issue under discussion is so serious.)

(7) "At that rate, the land would soon be taken over and the strangers would kill off the black people by using their stinging metal pricks" (p. 48).

(Reference to "stinging metal pricks" means syringes.)

(8) "When I die, you will be like chicks whose mother has been taken by a hawk" (p. 51).

(English Equivalent: "When I die, you will remain orphans without a mother to care for you".)

(9) “Don’t start with the branches. Begin with the trunk of the matter” (p. 152).

(English equivalent: “Don’t beat about/around the bush. Go straight to the main point”.)

3.5. Similes

Other linguistic strategies that find eloquent expression in Masiye’s novel are similes. Similes are expressions which convey the idea of comparison in the imagination between two things using the words 'like' or 'as'. Consider the following excerpts:

(10) “Father looked at Ganizo like a cock. With his chin thrust out and eyeballs bulging, suspicion and hate possessed him. ” (p. 11).

(11) “Ganizo hit out at father like a terrified animal” (p. 12).

In example (10), Menyani’s posture is compared with that of a cock ready to attack its enemy. This comparison simply shows how angry Menyani is. In example (11), Menyani and Ganizo pounced on each other like two wild beasts. This comparison shows the degree at which the two individuals were enraged.

3.6. Semantic Shift/Extension

Chisanga and Kamwangamalu (1997) define semantic shift as “a process whereby an English word is assigned a new meaning which is more relevant to the new users and is not native to the native users” (1997, p. 94). Semantic extension occurs when meanings from one language are transferred into another language resulting in extended, restricted or redefined meaning in the second. In the context of Masiye’s novel, the author appropriates English words and imbues them with new meanings in consonance with the Chewa cultural context, as shown in this excerpt: “The excruciating pains were now pulling at the heart strings” (p. 2). In other word, this phrase means that Tinenenji was in much pain, she felt as though someone was pulling her heart’s nerves, which she terms ‘strings’. Here the word ‘pain’ has been given a person’s attributes so as to explain the intensity of the labour pain that Tinenenji was feeling. Another semantic extension occurs in the following sentence where a pot of boiling water is described as follows: “Dingani [. . .] threw more wood into the fire and blew into it. Flame leapt and glowed. The water in the pot began to sing a slow melodious tune” (p. 38). Note that in this sentence, the verb “sing” is given a different meaning from the one found in the dictionary; it undergoes a shift in its meaning by means of semantic extension. Here, while the “fire” is metaphorically beating the drum or playing the music, the water in the pot is singing melodiously.

Also part of semantic shift is the metaphorical language to designate other concepts or things which, for cultural reasons, are rarely designated by their terms in public. In one of his works, Mutunda (2006) observes that in Lunda and indeed most Zambian cultures, reference to sexual matters is seldom explicit but couched in metaphors, since sex is largely a taboo topic. Explicit mention of sex-related matters such as pregnancy would be viewed as lacking in

decency (Mutunda, (2006). Consider the following excerpt: “[. . .] baneful things started to happen inside her body, especially in the bulging natural tumour she had been developing ever since she became a wife” (p. 1). This sentence has been assigned a figurative meaning which is different from Standard English. The words “bulging natural tumour” refer to the pregnancy Tinenenji had. Here, the speaker/narrator is describing how Tinenenji’s pregnancy was gradually growing.

3.7. Code-mixing

A further linguistic strategy found in Masiye’s novel is code-mixing or loan-blend, also referred to in sociolinguistics as code-switching. According to Bamiro (2006), code-mixing is “a linguistic process that incorporates linguistic features from a second language [e.g. Chewa] into a base language [e.g. English]” (2006, p. 317). In the same breath, Luanga and Kalume (1996) aver that “Code-mixing is the transfer of linguistic units from one language to another and includes extended borrowing of both single lexical items and of longer stretches, such as clauses, collocations and idioms” (1996, p. 61). In an attempt to distinguish code-mixing from code-switching, especially in literary contexts, Kachru (1978) offers these definitions:

Code-switching entails the ability to switch from code A to code B. The alteration of codes is determined by the function, the situation, and the participants. In other words, it referred to categorization on one’s verbal repertoire in terms of functions and role [. . .] Code-mixing on the other hand, entails transferring linguistic units from one code into another. Such a transfer (mixing) results in developing new restricted or non-restricted codes of linguistic interaction. One may consider code-switching a process which can result in code mixed varieties. A multilingual or multidialectal person is generally able to associate a function and an effect with various types of language or dialect mixes. (1978, p. 108-109)

However, especially in literary contexts, code-mixing should be used for those instances where there are lexical transfers from the writer’s native language into the mode of narration such as English, while code-switching should be reserved for those instances where a character or characters in the text switch from code A to code B. Nevertheless, as Bamiro (2006) argues, “if we consider the fact that, at the highest level of abstraction, it is actually the writer who is doing the code-manipulation or alteration for various sociolinguistic reasons, it becomes difficult to make a clear distinction between code-mixing and code-switching” (2006, p. 24).

From the foregoing, it can be argued that in the case of Masiye’s novel, code-mixing involves the combination of items from English and Chewa to form new meanings. This phenomenon which consists of interspersing African languages with English items is what Agheyisi (1977) refers to as “speech interlarding” (1977, p. 97). The English items often function as guides for the reader to understand the meaning of the Chewa items. Below – (12) to (15) – is a sample of excerpts involving code-mixing of English and Chewa. In these extracts italics are as given in the original text. The meaning of italics are given in brackets under each example.

(12) ‘You slept well in your hut? The *Namkungui* queried.’

‘A little, *Mama*’ (p. 4).

(‘You slept well in your hut? the *Midwife* queried.’)

(‘A little, *Mother*.’)

(13) ‘Greeting traveller! [. . .] Did you sleep well?’

‘No, *Mama*. I slept badly. My legs, my back, my chest – all my body is aching’ (p. 37).

(‘No, *Mother*. I slept badly. [. . .]’)

(14) ‘*Iai, Mama!*’ The missionary protested at the gift.

‘It’s only a fowl’, *Mother* explained. ‘This is not payment. It is *chilowa-mthengo*’ (p. 43).

(‘*No, Mother!*’ The missionary protested at the gift.)

(‘It’s only a fowl’, *Mother* explained. ‘This is not payment. It is *something to unable somebody to go into the bush and look for the medicine to cure a sick person from his/her ailment*.’)

(15) ‘*Ndigwaza! Ndigwaza!*’ *Ganizo* cried hysterically as father grapple with him.

Mugwaze! [. . .] the encouragement continued (p. 73).

(‘*I will spear! I will spear!*’ *Ganizo* cried hysterically [. . .])

(‘*Spear him!* [. . .]’)

By including instances of code-mixing in his novel, Masiye intended to contextualize the plot in the novel, by preferring the use of the language belonging to the time and location of the plot. Consequently, use is made of Chewa, besides English, reminding the reader of the location of the novel in Zambia (Eastern part of the country bordering Malawi).

4. ASPECTS OF CULTURE IN *BEFORE DAWN*

Besides the linguistic strategies discussed above, Masiye’s *Before Dawn* offers a complex exploration of the dynamics of the socio-cultural values of the Chewa people of Zambia. For the purpose of this study, some aspects of Chewa culture addressed in the novel are examined. These are associated with family structure, sexuality and marriage, religious beliefs, hospitality, names and naming, and concept of time.

4.1. Family Structure

The Chewa traditional family structure is generally monogamous but in some instances it is polygamous. In the case at hand, *Menyani* has three wives and each woman has her own hut. Like all polygamists, *Menyani* has built a fence around his huts to allow him keep a watchful eye over his wives. Older children sleep separately according to their gender. The older male children sleep with other boys in their own hut called *gowero*, a hut set aside for the teenage boys led by a senior boy. The boys live in this dormitory until they are ripe for

marriage. Kavumba, the protagonist, “was sleeping as per custom, with other boys in the *gowero*. The leader of the *gowero* was named Masoanjole” (p. 120).

In the African context, the family is much larger than the father-plus-mother-plus-children phenomenon that exists in the Western nuclear family system. Hence, a child can call any man, “my father,” or any woman, “my mother.” The child will call those who are older than himself, “my sister,” or “my brother,” and any elderly person should be regarded as if they were the children’s real mother, father, or sister. This idea of extending kinship terminologies to non-kin members is in line with the African world view, as exemplified in the dialogue below:

(16) – ‘Greeting, Menyani, son of Banda,’ [Naphiri] greeted him.

– ‘Greeting *Mama*, replied Menyani as he squatted before [Naphiri]’

– ‘Did you sleep well in your hut?’

– ‘A little *Mama* . . . We did not sleep . . . *Mama*. Tinenenji is ill. . . She has severe pains in the stomach.’ (p. 4).

In the above excerpt, Menyani calls on Naphiri, the village midwife, to attend to his wife who is in labour pains. He addresses Naphiri as *Mama* (Mother), and yet the old woman is not his biological mother. We also notice that when talking to Naphiri, Menyani squatters instead of standing, this is a sign of respect or politeness. Among the Chewa people and indeed in all Zambian communities, this behaviour pattern and terms used within the individual family are however, extended even further than the family circle.

4.2. Sexuality and Marriage

While in the *gowero* (dormitory), the boys are introduced to different traditional roots and herbs including those that enhance manhood strength. As the protagonist reveals:

I had now entered the world of roots, wild roots and herbs and other medicinal plants which governed the village life. And in the *gowero* I found that my friends had deep knowledge of the herbs. They had to, for they were all in the crucial age when girls and marriage were the main topics of conversation and attention. Enthusiastic about the prospects of getting married soon, I joined my friends in search of potent plants in the bush. Each evening we produced our small pots to prepare the necessary medicine. [. . .] The more herbs we chewed, the less time we spent in the *gowero*. We prowled around in the villages hunting girls to make love to and to marry. I, for one, was in a hurry. I went to every village in pursuit of my desire. Dance were shop-windows. They were public shows at which the local girls displayed themselves and sang about their values. (pp. 120-121)

4.3. Religious Beliefs

There is the concept of god in African belief and atheism is alien to African philosophy. Communal life revolves around religious rituals and sacrifices (Mbiti, 1970). The Chewa

believe that living things were created by God – *Chiuta* – who lived in form of a sacred serpent called *Thunga*, living in the two hills near the village (p. 20). According to the villagers, lightening, thunder and rainbow were the symptoms of *Thunga*'s presence (p. 21). In one instance, as Menyani and Naphiri the midwife were walking to Menyani's hut to attend to his wife, "a lightening flash streaked across the firmament. A booming thunder echoed in the distance" (p. 5). At that moment, as a way of appealing to the god not to strike them, Naphiri, who was also the village medicine woman, spat into the sky saying: "Stay there lightening" (p. 5). *Thunga* was also known by various names including *Chiuta*, the great Bow, also called *Leza*, the lightening" (p. 21). He was also regarded as keeper of the spirits of the dead and the people worship them with ceremonies. Thus, in one instance, people felt that all was not well in the village. Therefore, "Headman Banda ordered his people to prepare some beer. This was to be offered to the shrine and the graves of the dead" (p. 18).

Like most Africans, the Chewa people are superstitious and believe in witchcraft. This is "the practice or art of influencing the well-being of another [person], usually to their detriment, by magical means or with the aid of familiar spirits" (Odetola, et al., 1983, p. 45). Consequently, whenever evil or bad luck befalls someone, there is always the tendency to set the cause of one's trouble outside one's self by saying that it is the work of the devil or witchcraft. Some people have come to fear witches because they believe in their magical or supernatural powers to cause difficulties for them. In Masiye's novel, the reader comes across instances of such superstitious belief. Consider the following examples:

(17) "Pick up all the hair [shaven from your heads] lest greedy wizards use it for their charms and we [shall] all perish in this village" (p. 57).

(18) "These owls are sorcerers' messengers. Their hooting is a death-call. And when the Witchdoctors kill someone they share the flesh. So, don't ever go out at night when owls start their songs. [This means that] someone is going to be killed!" (p. 148).

4.4. Names and Naming

Although personal naming is a universal cultural practice (Alford, 1988), naming is highly significant in Africa. Unlike in the Western culture, where for selecting a personal name people go through a dictionary of names and pick out a name from the stock that would satisfy them (Liu, 2001), choosing personal names in Africa go beyond the narrow limits and confines of seeing them as mere tags that distinguish one person from another. As Mushangwe and Madzokore (2014) rightly point out, name givers do not arbitrarily bestow names on children; rather they observe situations around them and express their feelings, wishes etcetera through names. To put it differently, the name giving process in Africa is sensitive to various factors such as physical, socio-cultural, historical and religious; hence the conclusion that names are never neutral.

Chewa names in the text are affected by social aspects of the family, hopes, traditional beliefs and wishes for the child, circumstances surrounding the birth of the child. Others are

proverbial names. These are names that have been sourced from proverbs and other forms of oral literature, such as poems, riddles, songs and so forth (Mutunda, 2017, p. 108). For example, Kavumba is the protagonist in *Before Dawn*. Literary, his name means, as he explains: “I was named Kavumba – the whirlwind – because my mother had eloquently complained about my sex” (p. 8). Indeed, Kavumba’s mother had preferred a female child, she claimed that: “Male children are useless to women-folk. When they grow up they are like whirlwind. They move from place to place. Today here, tomorrow there! Boys are for the world. Only other parents will benefit from them whenever they marry” (p. 7).

The name *Kavumba* (whirlwind) also has a particular religious significance to the villagers. As the protagonist narrator explains: “[...] the cyclone was a significant centre of my people’s beliefs. This natural phenomenon appeared to account for almost every occurrence in our village” (p. 20). For example, it is believed that in one of the hills that surround the village, lives a sacred serpent (Thunga) who brings life and death (p. 20). Thus, each time a whirlwind sweeps through the Chiparamba village, it is a manifestation of the serpent returning to his abode from a visit to villages that had incurred its displeasure. In such an instance, spirits have to be worshipped and sacrifices offered, to prevent the anger of the serpent whirlwind from destroying the village.

Menyani, Kavumba’s father, is the son of Banda, the village Headman. Literary, his name means a child who is expected to beat/excel in diligence, hard work, leadership, competitive activities (Penda, 2013). Thus, being the Headman’s son, Menyani is expected to be the heir of his father’s throne. Banda the father wants to prepare his son in leadership skill by ensuring that Menyani frequently visits the men’s meeting place, the open – air village court (*Bwalo*), where he can acquire wisdom and learn from elders the Chewa traditional way of life. Conversely, Menyani seldom visits the *Bwalo* and remains confined to his compound with his wives and continue defying his father’s advice to “Leave [his] wives alone [as he] will learn nothing from them; instead stay at the *Bwalo*, listen to the wisdom of [his] elders; understand the affairs of the people. That way [he will] become a good leader” (p. 10).

Despite his father’s advice, Menyani remains defiant. This explains why he has been dubbed “solitary hunting hyena”. In one instance, Headman Banda summons Menyani to the *Bwalo* to explain his failure to report – as required by tradition – the birth of his child to the keeper of the *Bwalo*. Menyani’s arrival at the *Bwalo* attracted comments from elders, and Headman Banda said to his son: “you’re almost a stranger here at the *Bwalo*, Menyani. That’s why people call you lone hunter” (p. 10). For his disregard of tradition and omission of his duty, Menyani has to be fined: “Custom demanded that [he] kill[s] a goat and give[s] the head and one hind-leg to the *Bwalo*-keeper” (p. 11). And the *Bwalo*-keeper reiterated: “Menyani must not be allowed to ignore our ways of living. As the son of our Headman, he should be a good example to others. Otherwise, the village will break up” (p. 11).

But, Menyani continues with his defiance. Unhappy with the decision of the *Bwalo*, he promises to beat up Ganizo the *Bwalo*-keeper: “I will see you Ganizo, one of these days” (p. 11). A fight ensues, but Ganizo is still determined to make Menyani obey the customary rules: “I am Ganizo. I’ll teach him to obey the rules of our village” (p. 12), he says. The irony of the situation is that, Menyani’s behaviour does not meet the expectation of his father. Going by his name, Menyani was expected to beat in leadership. On the contrary, he beats anyone

who opposes his will. As Mutunda (2017, p. 9) rightly points out, Menyani's behaviour is reminiscent of Okonkwo, the protagonist in Achebe's (1958) *Things Fall Apart*. Like Okonkwo, Menyani sets out to show his animus – the male soul image – and obliterate any inclinations of anima that is, in his view, associated with his father and the entire village eldership. Menyani thus sets value of physical strength. For this, he is rejected by the community that considers him a stranger. Menyani's nature is such that he needs to subject everything to his will. What he cannot subject to his will he rejects (Mutunda, 2017).

Another name worth discussing, though I have alluded to it earlier, is *Ganizo*, the keeper of *Bwalo* (men's court or elders Council). *Ganizo* is a proverbial name meaning "Thought". It derives from the verb *ganiza* – "to think". He was given this title because of his wisdom and leadership qualities. His main role is to ensure that villagers obey traditions and adhered to them. In a nutshell, he is the 'hears and eyes' of Headman Banda, Menyani's father. An example of his leadership is shown when Menyani fails to report the birth of his son Kavumba to the *Bwalo* as required by Chewa custom. For Menyani's contempt of court, *Ganizo* tells him: "I am *Ganizo*. I will teach [you] the rules of our village. [You have to pay a fine]. Custom demand that [you] kill a goat and give the head and one hind-leg to the *Bwalo*-keeper" (p. 11-12).

The name *Namkungwi* (midwife), also deserves a mention, considering her social and religious importance. Her real name is Naphiri. *Namkungwi* is a title name given to Naphiri because of her profession (traditional midwife). Besides her midwifery role, Naphiri, the *Namkungwi*, is also the village medicine woman and priestess. She conducts all worshipping ceremonies and leads the people in sacrificing rites to the ancestral spirits.

In one instance there was a strong whirlwind that swept through the village. When the whirlwind subsided, Naphiri who was standing among the stricken villagers, pointed to the sacred hill saying: "Thunga has come. He's returned from his wonderings and he's displeased with us. We must worship him" (p. 20). As a leader, Headman Banda could not let the village perish at the hands of Thunga. Thus, he and his entourage called on *Naphiri*, the village witchdoctor and soothsayer for assistance: "*Mama Naphiri*, what bring me, and the elders, to you is the disaster [. . .]. We do not know why we should be visited by the whirlwind. I have been headman since I inherited the stool; we have always lived in peace. But now, what have we done to deserve this suffering?" (pp. 22-23). In response the soothsayer said: "This is a retribution [. . .] people of this village had forgotten the spirits [. . .]. Thunga is angry with all of you [. . .]. This son of yours Menyani, is responsible for the disaster [. . .] Menyani has done evil to the village. Many seasons have gone by since his wife had a male child. We did not worship the spirits!" (p. 23). *Naphiri* thus ordered that, to appease the spirits, neither flour nor beer was required. Thunga (the sacred serpent) could only accept meat. By implication, only human flesh would be accepted by the spirits: "Thunga wants Menyani's blood [. . .]. All meat is not meat; Thunga wants special meat, Menyani's flesh" (p. 27). After negotiation, Headman Banda offered a fat cow, much to *Naphiri*'s satisfaction: "Yes, a fat cow! All is well now. [The] spirits tell me that Thunga will accept" (p. 27).

4.5. Concept of Time

The notion of time is not foreign to African experience. As Chisanga and Kamwangamalu (1997) rightly point out, “duration in Africa is traditionally usually counted in terms of days or nights or moons” (1997, p. 95). Indeed, before the ideas of clock and calendar came into Zambia – through colonialism of course – the people had their methods of time measuring and time keeping. They used a single sun, a single moon, a cock crow, seasons, memorable events such as disasters or famine, or traditional festivals as time makers and time keepers. Consider the following excerpts:

(19) “We did not sleep [. . .] we heard all the cocks crow throughout the night” (p. 4).

(20) “Many seasons have gone by ever since [Menyani’s] wife had a male child. We did not worship the spirits” (p. 23).

Note that in the above examples, the sentence “we heard all the cocks crow throughout the night” (in 19) reveals how long Menyani and his wife stayed awake throughout the night; while in (20) the phrase “many seasons” shows how long ago Menyani’s wife had a child. These phrase and sentence may sound meaningless, but they underscore the fact that African had their means of tracking time before the invention of clocks and the contact with Europeans. Masiye has therefore performed the role expected of African writers as advocated by Chinua Achebe (1965), that of teachers of their African cultures. In Achebe’s (1965) view, African writers should try to teach their foreign readers that before the arrival of the colonialists, Africa had its own cultures, contrary to what some Westerners claim. Therefore, in his story, Masiye was able to verbalize the African time keeping system in English.

5. CONCLUSION

My main concern in this study was to analyse the form and use of English in African writing through the novel *Before Dawn* by the Zambian writer Andrea Masiye. The novel was chosen because of its abundant use and variety of devices to contextualize the English language. The foregoing discussion has revealed some the linguistic strategies the writer has employed to transplant his Chewa culture into the imported (English) language. These include loanwords, direct lexical transfer, adoption and adaptation of Chewa proverbs, use of imagery, similes, semantic shifts, and code-mixing. Besides these linguistic strategies, some aspects of Chewa culture addressed in Masiye’s novel were examined. It is revealed that Masiye has ingeniously transformed the English language. He has been able to bridge the gap between the local colour and the appropriate English language diction suitable to the characters he depicts and his international audience, with appropriate indigenizing strategies.

It is worth mentioning that, although English is being used as the central medium of African literature with the view of having a wider readership, it is not out of love but out of necessity; the language is just a convenient solution for the multilingualism found in many African communities. The argument here is, therefore, that “African writers should not strive for the abrogation or denial of the privilege of English as postulated by critics and writers like

Wali or Ngugi” (Kehinde, 2009, p. 87). Rather, they should try to remould the language to new usages because English is the medium of communication in many African countries. Masiye has been able to achieve this feat in his story. He has endeavoured to please both his local and foreign readers by tempering with the syntax and phraseology of English to the ear of the immediate African readers as well as the foreign readers. In this age of globalization, African writers cannot afford to deny a wide readership for their works. The critics and writers who advocate for the dismissal or rejection of English as the major medium of African literature should reconsider its implications.

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