

**Language and ideology in the fiction of Gabriel Okara's *The Voice*
and V.S. Naipaul's *A House For Mr. Biswas***

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Abstract

The present paper engages in an examination of the indivisible relationship between language, ideology and literary fiction to ultimately prove that ideology is coded in fiction in a what is terms ideological language and that it is a deliberate venture. By means of secondary sources and a highly qualitative approach, which predominantly comprised content analysis and interviews, the paper analyses the ideological language in Gabriel Okara's *The Voice* and V.S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*. By foregrounding the relationship between ideology and language, this study aims to demonstrate how fiction from different contexts carry different ideologies, the different stylistic features of the texts, the political, economic, socio-cultural and personal aspects coded in the ideological language, and finally the essential didactic element and purpose of the exercise. The findings suggest that there is an inextricable link between language and ideology in creative fiction, and that it is not a haphazard endeavour, but a deliberate political project. This paper concludes with a consideration of the overall significance of ideological language in creative fiction, and its implications in the promotion of social change and progress.

Key words: ideology, language, ideological language, creative fiction, didactic element

Introduction

A term first coined by Destutt de Tracy, 'ideology' was a controversial phenomenon, because of the power it yielded on the masses, as well as the authority it provided those knowledgeable of it (Tracy, 1817). Tracy's ideology, postulated in the post-French Renaissance period during which a rejuvenation of the human spirit was envisaged, was identified as a notion that supersedes micro-level co-ordinates of society, and provided a reference point to guide and regulate it for its betterment. Hence, ideology's role and impact on human existence cannot be insignificant, and has a specific purpose; especially if a society requires moving towards modernity from a regressive to a more progressive state (Habermas, 2007).

The need to revisit ideology for post-colonial cultures like Sri Lanka is timely relevant, since most fundamental issues at present lie in the fact that post-colonial nations are caught in a symptomatic deadlock, unable to escape from the past. Moreover, there is an urgent need to re-consider existing, canonical ideologies, especially since such communities are yet concentrated in

backward patriarchal settings where the empty 'paternal metaphor' or the 'Name-of-the-Father' functions as a Master Signifier (S1) with which a community is held together (Zizek, 1992) in a rallying point of collectivity, which ultimately deters social progress.

It can be observed that creative writers of fiction from these post-colonial contexts have value in terms of being reference points for reconsidering ideological apparatuses that govern present society and also for their often understated envisioning of a better society; their creative expressions are not mere cathartic outbursts. In this sense, creative fiction is definitely an articulation of the very issues of existing, dominant ideology, disguised in various linguistic forms for various reasons, since such resistance and revolution by intellectual authors in an era of authoritative, non-tolerant and undemocratic regimes could receive a response that is often not tolerated.

Language in this sense is the primary source of critical awareness and knowledge generation, and is closely linked with the notion of ideology. Yet, on analysing the purpose or function of language in ideology, language seems to have a split identity. Roland Barthes distinguishes this bifocal relation in language and summarizes it as *écrivance* and *écriture*. The two terms stand for two kinds of writing; *écrivance*- for language when used to transmit ideas or information, and the other when language is used for its own sake (Allen, 2003, p.97).

Accordingly then, language acts on behalf of ideology, and analysis of the form and content is primary to understand the ideology that is embedded / encoded within. Subsequently, the importance of analysing the ideologically loaded language in post-colonial fiction is highlighted and probably such analysis would answer some paradoxical situations of its subjects in present times.

Although *écriture* gives more focus to language in the hands of a writer / author, the reader's role must not be neglected. A text in *production* in this sense is also produced as much as by the reader as by the language of the text itself (Allen, 2003, p.84). The multitude of 'avenues of meaning' generated by the mere reading of a text, hence, is an exhaustive procedure in generating meaning and ideology, that is purely the effort of an intelligent readership, just as much as it is of the author's concern.

Given the various dimensions presented above, the analysis of the ideologically loaded language of creative fiction in the selected post-colonial contexts of Gabriel Okara's *The Voice* and V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* is timely for understanding the position of the post-colonial subject. Rather than considering creative fiction as a mere cathartic endeavour, such work must be given adequate attention as being articulate responses to the very victories, tensions and traumas of the post-colonial subject. Its analysis would help unravel existential dilemmas of post-colonial mentality.

Actual interpretation of key terms and phrases such as 'ideology' and 'ideological language' are prerequisite for conceptualizing a better outcome. Prevailing literature on the said key terms compelled the present understanding of the said concepts in relation to fiction as follows:

- Economic Aspects: A clash in the modes of economy introduced by colonial rulers and existing traditional structure
- Socio-cultural Aspects: A clash between traditional values and those projected by colonial influence
- Political Aspects: Individual political aspirations (author / fictional subject), authoritarianism of governing forces, maintenance of Law and Order in society
- Personal Aspects: Author's perception of the life world, the fictional postcolonial subject's perception of the life world, notions of 'Self' vs. 'Other'

It is evident that all the above aspects contribute to ideology and ideological language in fiction. This will serve as a working definition of ideology and ideological language in this paper.

The complexity of issues surrounding the key terms and their inter-textuality make analysis challenging. Yet, the broader the scope, the more necessary is the assessment of ideological language of fiction and its functional purpose.

As indicated above, there is a need to explore the content of the selected novels in pursuit of analyzing the ideological language it holds and its subsequent impact. Since the research is an exploration of ideology embedded in fictional language, the investigation requires a highly qualitative, in-depth examination of the selected texts. Hence, the present study is based on a relatively small study sample of two novels, making it possible for in-depth analysis in line with the objective. Content analysis of the selected novels would be the prime method of investigation, while secondary sources of literature and interviews, seminars, speeches conducted by the authors, and with them by various personnel in diverse forums and on various occasions would also be considered for justification of the objectives.

The main results of this research would fill the critical gap in existing literature in finding the relationship between ideology, ideological language and creative fiction, suggesting that the three elements are inextricably linked and that the author has a prime political project in educating the society of its strengths, flaws and weaknesses for the betterment of its own sake. Another purpose of the research is its attempt to push the analysis out of the context of the two novels, considering it a base for articulating and understanding the symptomatic feudal development in postcolonial contexts, including that of Sri Lanka.

Ideologically loaded phrases and their implications

'It': The most prominent ideologically loaded phrase in *The Voice*, Okara never explains what it means in the novel, and the semiotics, characters and

structure in which it is organized gives it accumulative meaning, making it the novel's centre:

“... he dared to search for *it*. He was in search of *it* with all his inside and with all his shadow... ‘How do you expect to find *it*? How do you expect to find *it* when everybody has locked up his inside?’...‘You have your M.A., Ph.D., but you have not got *it*,’”(Okara, 1970, pp. 23,34,44).

‘It’ is engrained in human conscience, and one could not but agree with Jaques Derrida when he states that all ideas of structure depend on the notion of a centre, and origin or foundation from which meaning flows (Allen, 2003). The centre of the novel in this case is this exploration of ‘It’, how it becomes Okolo’s quest in life and how this leads to his destruction.

The centre can also be the author, for without Okara’s deliberations, meaning is not explicit. Hence, one must derive meaning from this literary excursion at two levels as an ideological system: firstly defining what the structure directs as ‘It’ and secondly attempting to define Okara’s priorities as an author at the centre.

In both instances, Okolo’s search for ‘It’ is political; it resists Chief Izongo and his authoritative, village regime. Simultaneously, it problematizes western rational thinking, to which Okolo is exposed to. This positions the postcolonial subject in a dilemma; a schizophrenic, ambivalent situation, where the ‘self’ is in ideological conflict with the ‘other’ in a failed desire for identity by means of mimicry. Both chief characters Mr. Biswas and Okolo, face this situation, and an analysis of the ideological conflict faced places them in what Homi K. Bhabha (1994) calls the postcolonial subject’s ‘situational ambivalence’.

The notion of ‘It’ centres a huge political debate in the minds of readership; the postcolonial subject’s political existence, where the subject remains, to date, undefined and ambivalent, and hence pathetic. In a broader sense, the political crisis Okolo displays surrounding his quest for ‘It’ can be explained as one of the dire results of colonialism; its advent to and withdrawal from subservient nations.

‘the coming thing’: A prominent economic structural change in *The Voice* is the apprehension of economic independence in Nigeria. The very fact that Okara does not for once in his novel mention the word independence is quite iconic of the experiment done in the novel, and is in itself a form of resistance to the language of the west. Instead, he calls it ‘the coming thing’.

The wording generates anticipation and anxiety due to its non-specificity, which otherwise customarily gives fixation. The ideological connotation ascribes a monster-like quality to ‘independence’, making it an event not of freedom, but that of looming uncertainty:

“When he returned home to his people, words of the coming thing, rumours of the coming thing, were in the air flying like birds,

swimming like fishes in the river. But Okolo did not join them in their joy because what was there was no longer there and things had no more roots. So he started his search for *it*. And this stopped the Elders from slapping their thighs in joy because of the coming thing” (Okara, 1970, p.23).

Even the community leaders of the new era to dawn, have no idea of what is expected. The tone reveals that economic self-governance for Okolo’s people is a phenomenon far distant.

It is Okolo who theoretically sees the problematic economic ideology ahead; the fact that “what was there was no longer there and things had no roots” (Okara, 1970, p.23), the implication being having no proper economic structure in its original sense that the community could rely on to systematically govern itself, once the empire ceases. This supposed ‘crime’ is a huge atrocity against imperialists, who destabilized existing self-sustainable economies and supplanted them with excruciating economies that left the countries in chaos after economic liberation. Unfortunately for Okolo, he fails to linguistically explain and translate this ideology to the Elders, and this very inability labels him insane.

‘Elders’: The ‘Elders’ in Okara’s novel are prominent and symbolic representation of the socio-cultural (often leading to political) structure of governance in traditional Nigerian societies. They are a significant, dependable element in Amatu society, a group of appointed leaders, on which the leader relies on to support community jurisdiction. They are Chief Izongo’s strength and support his rule, which is often undemocratic and authoritative. Culturally, they are respected by the clan and community at large. Consider the ideology conveyed in the following lines:

‘Laugh!’ he commanded, and the Elders opened their mouths showing their teeth like grinning masks and made a noise that could hardly pass for laughter” (Okara, 1970, p.41).

Accordingly, the Elders are not a democratic, independent-thinking group, or even a socio-cultural structure that supports such. Rather, their place under Chief Izongo’s rule is subject to his authority, which pictures Nigeria as autocratic in post-independence. The allegorical reference in these lines resonates the socio-cultural and political climate of the 1960s in Nigeria, when it received independence and suffered from civil war between 1967 and 1960. Since the novel was written in 1964, four years after Nigerian independence from the British and three years prior to the Nigerian civil war, it is most likely that the reference in the above lines from the novel reflects the then troubled, tensed and corrupted local, traditional socio-cultural structure, which certainly bore remnants of British oppression and its autocracy.

The commanding tone of Chief Izongo and superficial smiles of the Elders denote the ideology that Okara neither was a supporter of his own community, its ways, and boldly portrayed its own failures, and people's unhappiness. This non-aligned, unbiased stance assumed gives an objective view of the socio-cultural realities of colonialism from both the colonizer's and colonial's stance. Okara presents facts in an author-absence. This proves the notion of "death of the author" (Barthes, n.d., p.3), where reality of the language constructed by an author, which Barthes terms as its ideology, is apart from the language which embodies it, and hence, "linguistically, the author who writes is never more than the man who writes..." (Barthes, n.d., p.3).

The 'Elders' who wish to indulge in the luxuries of this new found self-governance, are also a critique the socio-cultural ideology of self-governance and its surrounding issues, not forgetting the ground realities postcolonial communities had to face once the British imperialists withdrew.

The 'knowing-nothing footsteps': *The Voice* linguistically presents constant fluctuation between realities: the dialectic between the traditional, indigenous and the socio-cultural aspects acquired from the West. Often, the two ideologies are opposed, and have for long been a topic of debate:

"'Ssh!' Tuere hushed Okolo, cocking her head. 'I hear coming footsteps.' Okolo listened and he also heard the coming footsteps, the knowing-nothing footsteps, coming!" (Okara, 1970, p.34).

Here, Okolo is pictured as the 'one who knows' as a result of his "knowing too much book" (Okara, 1970, p.23), and contrasts Chief Izongo and the Elders whom Okara describes as the 'knowing-nothing footsteps'. The instant ideological reference is to the book-learned, outspoken, querying nature of the West as opposed to the comparatively degraded knowing-nothing people who are not even referred to as people, but as footsteps; the implication being a state of inferiority.

Yet, these 'knowing-nothing footsteps' eventually banish Okolo - the voiced one - from Amatu, and eventually tie him with Tuere in a boat and let them float along in the current and sink in Amatu's river; their fated punishment in response to being non-allegiant to Izongo. Therefore, the term's use is ironical and satirical, and depicts Okara's brilliance of word choice.

'Teaching words': A frequent recurrence in *The Voice*, this can be explained as a linguistic adaptation and equivalent of the word 'advice' in English. The deviation from use of the generally understood word 'advice' into a linguistic term that elaborates the action connoted by the word counter supports the 'Elders' and their words of wisdom. It is also Okara's experiment to instil in the minds of a non-Nigerian reader, the significance of 'teaching words' to a community; to show the authentic, unique socio-cultural aspect surrounding the importance of 'teaching words' in the formation of subjects in particular Nigerian communities:

“These teaching words their ears entered and their insides entered. So they locked every word carefully in their insides as they silently walked towards Okolo’s house without their mouths opening... ‘Always asking questions. Questions will take you nowhere. I keep telling you these teaching words’ ” (Okara, 1970, pp.26-41).

The phenomenon does not merely denote giving advice. Rather, it has social reverence in the Ijo community, especially if advocated by Elders to the young, and is a tradition passed down from one generation to the next. Hence, its validity across time and space.

‘Monkey-house’ (Hanuman House): For Hindu culture, Hanuman is sacred; even the reference to Hanuman as monkey in English is derogatory to the Hindu mind. Yet, ‘monkey-house’ is Mr. Biswas’ term for the Tulsi household. It has its own ideology, not open to the world beyond its doors, and the Tulsis are wealthy, work hard and are one of the few land-owning classes in Trinidad.

Hanuman House practises Hindu customs in an almost unfeeling routine, devoid of sentiment and true religious spirit any ordinary devotee would hold. It ironically also celebrates Christmas, where the children, as on other special Hindu occasions, are given special food, home-made ice cream and just as the festive season arrives and goes, so does the fascination and speciality in terms of food and spirit.

This presents the diabolic state of mindset, and one cannot but agree with Mr. Biswas’ reference to the House and its ways in a satirical, semi-angered manner by referring to it as the ‘Monkey-house’. For Mr. Biswas, the ‘Monkey-house’ is filthy, a place where people and their autonomy are reduced. Contrarily, a traditional Hindu household would be otherwise; cleanliness strictly adhered to and respect being of prime concern. Mr. Biswas always yearns to ‘escape’ from the bounds of Hanuman House, both metaphorically and literally. Although Mr. Biswas eventually moves out of the ‘Monkey-house’ and ascertains his autonomy as the head of the household, his character declines. The downfall is both apparent in terms of the extreme indebtedness he ventures into in order to buy his own house, ultimately leaving his family indebted at death.

In this sense, Naipaul makes a critique of an ideology of communal living, where the ‘Monkey-house’ represents an entity that keeps itself within its walls; where daughters are given in marriage to upper caste, Hindus, only for the sake of maintaining social status relating to religion and culture; where the basic necessity of husbands is to have manpower for the Tulsi-owned fields- again in order to maintain the family name as the new land-owning class- a relatively higher status than many other Indian migrants in Trinidad who have not been able to ascend and have remained, as sugar and cotton field labourers.

Indeed for the reader, there is an obvious ideological conflict that Naipaul presents between the systems that the Tulsis attempt to maintain and the wider socio-cultural realities. The Tulsis’ attempts for preservation of

traditions are futile and conflict the wider socio-cultural context, where the Hindus are considered a mere fraction of a society.

Hence, 'Monkey-house' stands for certain ideological value. In the voice of critics, "Naipaul depicts Hanuman House as a symbol of traditionalism, rigidity, cultural infallibility, ritual duty, hierarchy and communal life" (Warner-Lewis, 1977, p.95). The presentation of the traumas, conflicts and issues in relation to the said symbols in Hanuman house via his various characters are ample evidence of much depth behind the ideological language of the term, and Naipaul's satirical usage of the term is a strong commentary on the symbols Warner-Lewis mentions.

The 'little gods', 'Big Boss' and 'queen' ('old hen'): Related to the 'Monkey-house' are its inhabitants. Through Mr. Biswas, Naipaul characterizes these household members in ideologically loaded terms, with a satirical tinge. The 'little gods' are Mrs. Tulsi's two sons, Owad and Shekhar, held in high reverence in Hanuman House. They conduct the puja at home, but wear the cross on their chest and attend Missionary School during day time. The term therefore satirically highlights the absurdity of their behaviour and mannerisms, and the absolute fallibility with which they are considered 'gods' of the household. 'Big Boss' refers Seth, the Manager of the Tulsi-owned fields and is Mr. Biswas' ironical reference to Seth's bossy manner of conduct in the Tulsi household, while 'queen' refers to the almost monarchic conduct and authority with which Mrs. Tulsi presides in Hanuman House. Hence, it is obvious that all the said terms have ideological value and are a critique on the various positions, behaviour and stances of those in Hanuman House.

The articulation of such expressions are deliberate. Naipaul, an expatriate himself, would have wanted to show the fallibilities of expatriate communities, who try to superficially maintain traditions in a context that does not even recognize their existence. Naipaul problematizes the alienated mindset and situational ambivalence with which such communities have to live in.

'Both certificate': Naming of individuals, things and places is very much Western. During British colonization, this was one of the fundamental issues the colonizers faced in their first-hand grappling with realities of subject territories.

The cultural conflict between such issues of registry, especially in relation to obtaining a birth certificate, is presented in Naipaul's work. Consider the dialogue between the Canadian Mission school teacher Lal, a low-caste Hindu convert and Bipti:

" 'How old you is, boy?' Lal, the teacher at the Canadian Mission school, asked, his small hairy hands fussing with the cylindrical ruler on his roll-book.

Mr Biswas shrugged and shifted from one bare foot to the other.

'How you people want to get on, eh?' Lal had been converted to Presbyterianism from a low Hindu caste and held all unconverted Hindus in contempt. As part of this contempt he spoke to them in

broken English. ‘Tomorrow I want you to bring your both certificate. You hear?’

‘Both certificate?’ Bipti echoed the English words. ‘I don’t have any.’
‘Don’t have any, eh?’ Lal said the next day. ‘You people don’t even know how to born, it look like.’ (Naipaul, 1989, p.41).

Obtaining a birth certificate is a metaphor that equalized caste differences in the community. Yet, the very localized manner (‘both certificate’) in which Lal, Bipti and F.Z. Ghany (a solicitor, conveyance and a commissioner of oaths) refer to the term all highlight the sense of alienness it brings to migrant Indian culture. Naipaul further shows how this ‘both certificate’ brings difficulty for the Hindu community:

‘All right, leave everything to me now. Expensive business, affidavits. Stamps and thing, you know. Ten dollars in all.’

Bipti fumbled with the knot at the end of her veil and Tara paid.

‘Any more children without certificate of both?’

‘Three,’ Bipti said.

‘Bring them,’ Ghany said. ‘Bring all of them. Any market day. Next week? Is better to straighten these things right away, you know.’

In this way official notice was taken of Mr Biswas’ existence, and he entered the new world.’ (Naipaul, 1989, p.43).

The excerpt elaborates Naipaul’s satirical comment on the absolute negation colonization has suffered its subjects: they only can become recognized in so much as they are registered at birth. On all occasions otherwise, their existence seems unrecognized. The simple, ideologically loaded phrase ‘both certificate’ remains evidence of ideological debate of the oppressive system of colonialism.

The domain of the personal as political is a famous feminist slogan, which initially gained momentum in the world with Carol Hanisch’s essay titled “The Personal is Political” (Hanisch, 1970, p.76). One possible interpretation of this slogan in general terms is that personal aspects matter and are a significant phenomenon. In the present paper, ‘personal’ is a reference point from two perspectives: as a personal element of the characters and as that of the authors.

‘Okolo’: Arthur Ravenscroft in his introduction to Okara’s novel states that “Okolo’s name means ‘the voice’, and Okara never for one instance lets us forget his characters interest in language, in the precision of thought and feeling which a careful use of language produces. Okolo usually makes up his mind about people by examining what their ways of using language tell him about their inner lives.” (Okara, 1970, p.13).

Okolo’s name itself (note the near homophonic resemblance to the author’s name) then bears connotations of being articulate, and his articulateness is so profound that it costs his life.

The selection of Okara's character and the manner in which Okolo is given life is also sonorous of the author's experiences. The period in which the novel was written coincides with that of the Nigerian civil war (1967 - 1970); the result of economic, ethnic, religious and political tensions between the Hausas and Igbo people in the country, and an era of massive tension and destruction in the face of monarchic rulers and influx of western culture. Like actual circumstances, Okolo in Okara's novel is banished from the village, due to his 'western voice' against the community's blind faith towards the tribal leader Chief Izongo, and is ultimately killed upon his return later on.

Okolo in this sense seems to be a clear marking out of Okara's own voice against the malpractices of tribal monarchy, cheating of its community and tensions between western and indigenous cultures, and their conflicting ways of thinking and structures of education and intelligence. In short, Okolo is monumental evidence for the results of those who resist conformity; a debatable topic for postcolonial societies, even Sri Lanka.

Mohun (Mr. Biswas): A near fated similar protagonist exists in Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*. Mohun means 'the beloved', the name given by the milkmaids to Lord Krishna. It is the name given to Mr. Biswas, the one "born in the wrong way. At midnight..." (Naipaul, 1989, p.16).

Although Naipaul's protagonist is named 'Mohun' at birth, it is seldom used afterwards. The reader finds the author's constantly using 'Mr. Biswas', while his wife calls him 'Man.' The possible inference being that although named 'the beloved,' with orthodox religious connotations, he is the least so: Mr. Biswas is irritable, fails parental efforts to groom him as a pundit, and is found to be constantly dissatisfied with the love and affection he receives throughout life. As a result, constantly driven from one place to another, Mr. Biswas in his alienation seeks refuge and solace in building his own house and as his quest ends by the time he is the man of his own house, so does his life and the span of the novel.

Naipaul's reference 'Mr. Biswas' also connotes Western influence on migrant Indian Trinidadians; a reminder of the conflict in ideological constructs pertaining to two different cultures. At the same time, the reference to the character as 'Mr.' unconsciously demands respect, both personally and socially for Mr. Biswas, who is authentically from a lineage of Indian migrants, and is a stark contrast throughout the novel since it is respect that he is very much denied.

Mohun also has synonymous references to Naipaul, for like Mr. Biswas, Naipaul too is of Indian origin was born in Trinidad, migrated to England for studies and continues to live and write as an expatriate. Critics have often pointed out to the similarities in the twice removed status of Naipaul as an expatriate writer, and it is no wonder that his characterization of Mohun resonates the same and presents the ideological issues behind the alienation of one who is twice removed.

‘Insides’: The specific ideologically loaded phrases in Okara’s *The Voice* has stirred much debate among literary critics and often most have looked at Okara’s attempts at language as gone too far in its oddity. Patrick Scott (1990) talks of how Okara develops the translingual technique, where translingualism is defined as “the purposive and artful reproduction within one language (in this case English) of features from another language (in this case Ijo)” (Scott, 1990, p.75). Scott further iterates that the theoretical problem is how exactly non-Ijo readers deal with these translingual features, as readers have to construct or negotiate meanings from the text.

In this sense, as readers of non-Ijo community, Okara’s ‘insides’ have its own connotations, where the reference is not to the mind, brain, soul, consciousness or sub-consciousness, but to Okolo’s ‘inside’:

“His inside then smelled bad for the town’s people and for himself for not being fit to do anything on her behalf” (Okara, 1970, p.31).

The various characters’ references to ‘insides’ prove that the term is actually a shared communal Ijo-term, and an examination of its use confirms it refers to an individual’s personal aspect. This remains one of the most striking ideological queries, even after the novel has been read. Okara himself explains:

“Well, the inside is, should I say, about the soul, my soul. The very inside, you know. The very inside. There is nothing beyond it, in man. The whole body, the feelings, emotions and so on are built around that inside, the deepest part of being” (Wiedel, 2014).

Wiedel (2014) explains ‘inside’ is a word translated from Okara’s native language Ijaw, the original being ‘biri’. However, the translation of this word using the Ijaw Dictionary Project website, produced the word ‘place’. A possible explanation for this could be that Okara views this mystic ‘inside’ as a place in and of itself, one that every human being has. This ‘inside’ gives a sense of mystic spirituality that is reminiscent of the Holy Spirit, the belief in a part of God found in the soul of humans. Okara, a Christian, expands on this idea of the ‘inside’ as a spiritual connection. Therefore, when Okara uses the term ‘inside’ in his novel, it is a likely to be an allusion to God as Creator (Wiedel, 2014).

The usage of the term seems deliberate. It is Okara’s statement of resuscitating his own Afro-Ijo ideology. On the other, it is an educative motive inspiring readers to question their souls; to never let the ‘inside’ rest with the grappling realities and controversies experienced in reality. Hence, the ideological manifestations are profound.

Linguistic structures and embodied ideologies

An obvious linguistics feature of Okara’s English usage is that it heavily depends on Ijo culture. The very fact that Okara mixes Ijo stylistic phrases into what is known as standardized English is itself resistance towards the West, and an act of re-establishing indigenous identity.

As the previous section of this paper evidenced, Okara seems to be resisting the push of native languages to the periphery by adopting English, in a mix of native variety. Like many African writers of his generation, Okara saw a major role for literature as the expression of cultural authenticity. In fact he states that he believed in “the utilization of African ideas, African philosophy, and African folklore and imagery to the fullest extent possible” (Scott, 1990, p.76).

One of the very initial linguistic structures that Okara introduces to us readers is a gentle embedding of idioms and indirect speech:

“This they said was the result of knowing too much book” (Okara, 1970, p.23).

“Okolo had no chest, they said. His chest was not strong and he had no shadow” (Okara, 1970, p.23).

As the novel proceeds, more dominant syntax expressions of the native dialect is adopted into local character utterances:

“Me know nothing? Me know nothing? Because I went not to school I have no bile, I have no head? Me know nothing? Then answer me this. Your hair was black black be, then it became white like a white cloth and now it is black black be more than blackness... If this the ears of Izongo enters, we will fall from our jobs. You know this yourselves” (Okara, 1970, p.25).

Okara also attempts literal translation of Ijo idioms and proverbs:

“Where do you think you will find *it* when everybody surface-water things tell, when things have no more root?” (Okara, 1970, p.34).

“How many years has she killed rending the dying embers of her fire...” (Okara, 1970, p.34).

“But I have a sweet inside and clean as the eye of the sky” (Okara, 1970, pp.105-106).

Okara also uses quite the opposite linguistic technique, where he attempts to embed in Chief Izongo’s dialogue, an English proverb “one man’s meat is another’s man’s poison”:

“My wanting you may be a man-killing medicine to you but it is the best food for my body” (Okara, 1970, p.37).

According to Williamson (1963) (1965), Okara also utilizes a special treatment of verb phrases, especially in the verb ‘to be’ with its auxiliaries. Williamson states that in Ijo, certain classes of verbs require the use of two separate verbs, one placed early in the verb phrase, and one more general verb placed later,

which is called verb serialization. The novel displays evidence of this linguistic feature adopted in the English language in instances such as:

“Who are you people be?” (Okara, 1970, p.26).

“...we are of the same womb be and we are of the same father be” (Okara, 1970, p.103).

Contrary to the standardized form of using the auxiliary verb alongside the root verb, Okara splits the two in the adaptation of Ijo dialect in his style:

“You cannot a thing I have done not put on my head” (Okara, 1970, p.66).

“Without him can’t we something do?” (Okara, 1970, p.107).

The Voice also has ample evidence of how word clusters are used to convey descriptions of people and things. For example, “happening things” (Okara, 1970, p.34) mean events, “said things” (Okara, 1970, p.70) mean words, a person Okolo meets is described as “black-coat-wearing-man” (Okara, 1970, p.60) and Okolo at a certain point feeling ashamed is described as having a “wrong-doing-filled-inside” (Okara, 1970, p.31). All these are ample evidence of how the author makes English, a non-native language for him, his own.

However, as almost all African writers recognize, language poses an apparent problem for such stylistic freedom. Especially in the case of Ijo, a linguistic isolate, not clearly classifiable in any larger family of African languages, and where the whole language-group in the early nineteen-sixties totaled fewer than a million speakers (Williamson, 1965), the Ijo linguistic situation is far pushed to the periphery and is hardly recognizable in the core realms.

The bravery of a writer like Okara to therefore use the linguistic features of his people in English, would not only call for a restricted readership, but would also bring independence from the European tradition, bringing the periphery to the limelight. At the same time, it would possibly isolate his readership from other Ijo, Nigerian and African writers in general. Hence, the multi-faceted politics of Okara’s language use.

One of the fundamental propositions of a natural language- its ‘creative’ principle- advocates that although language has few structural rules, it has an abundant possibility of linguistic creativeness. Yet, criticism against this ‘creative’ aspect is the notion of ‘unintelligibility’- a claim that often subdues less-dominant varieties of English that often are in the periphery.

This very accusation was levied against Okara’s linguistic strategy. As commentators have repeatedly emphasized, Okara was a linguistic “innovator” and *The Voice* was a “unique experiment”, a “restructuring of the language” that constituted “the boldest, most imaginative, and most systematic experiment that [had] so far been attempted in creating an African vernacular style in English” (Roscoe, 1969, p.16) (Burness, 1972, pp.18-19) (Lindfors,

1971, p.423) (Ngara, 1982, pp.39-57).At the same time, this very ‘creativity’ is seen by some as temptation into a “linguistic perversity” (Okara, 1970, p.19).

Such opposing views denote the struggle between the core and periphery for ‘appropriate’ control and say over the use of English, which is often associated with power. It is also evidence of the fact that a writer and his/her use of linguistic creativity could possibly translate into considerable power and authority for a particular social group. Nevertheless, one must accept that Okara’s use of a non-standard dialect of English, expressive of cultural idioms is a symbolic stand against linguistic imperialism, and stands strong in the debates of language standardization, imperialism and unintelligibility of native languages.

With regard to the incongruities that exist between English and Ijo, the present research identifies a sense of mutual exclusiveness; The very inability of a reader of the novel to find English equivalents for Okara’s words in the text is evidence that different cultures have to be understood in their own ideological realms in a mutually exclusive sense, without cultural relativity. Lindfors (1971) explains this view most appropriately:

“Okara repeats these [Ijo expressions] in one context after another until gradually the words define themselves...the reader finds himself at the end of the novel unable to supply a satisfactory “English equivalent” for each word. Okara has, in effect, taught the reader several Ijaw concepts which cannot be translated. This is the triumph of his style” (Lindfors, 1971, pp.423-424).

Okara in his own words clears out what he intends to do with his immense native lexical experimentation and verbosity in the novel:

“I have endeavoured in my words [he explained] to keep as close as possible to the vernacular expressions. For, from a word, a group of words, a sentence and even a name in any African language, one can glean the social norms, attitudes and values of a people” (Okara, 1963, pp.15-16).

Okara’s method of such assertiveness in a period immediately following Nigerian independence would have been considered an outcry of post-independent resistance to imperial ideological structure.

An instant comparison of the highly identifiable non-Standard English linguistic structures used by Okara in *The Voice* as against the language Naipaul uses in *A House for Mr. Biswas* would place the latter in a secondary position of approval by those who stand for the resuscitation of the vernacular, for Naipaul’s linguistic dialect and expression is far more closer to Standard English.

However, critics have often pointed out to the Trinidadian non-standard dialect, exemplified in the narrative voice and also in the novel’s characters, as elements of linguistic autonomy. Yet more have observed and commented that Mr. Biswas speaks Creole English (Akung and Onwugbueche, 2011) in Hanuman House, where everyone else of the Tulsi family speaks

Hindi; an act that justifies not only that a non-standard variety of English exists among the migrant Indian population, but is also evidence of how English is utilized as a weapon of resistance in the household of that particular context. Hence, the various ideological preoccupations of language are obvious.

To note some of the traits of a Trinidadian local dialect in English, consider for example, the use of the word ‘all-you’, instead of the Standard English second person pronoun ‘you’, which naturally encompasses the plural: “ ‘With mother? With brother? With father? Or with all of all-you?’ someone asked, and Mr. Biswas recognized the sardonic voice of the *Sentinel* photographer.” (Naipaul, 1989, p.515).

The Trinidad and Tobago Dictionary (2008-2009) identifies the phrase ‘all yuh’ as standard Trinidad English use, a localized expression similar to the American idiom ‘you-all’. More specifically, ‘all-you’ in Naipaul’s work can mean ‘all of you’, ‘this group’, ‘every last one of you’, ‘everyone’ or ‘everybody’. The expression is stated as deriving from the West African language heritage, and is evidence of Trinidadian dialect usage in reality.

Another evidence of the use of a local dialect is found in the use of ‘eh’ in the structures of speech among characters. The expression ‘eh’ is

[a] multi-purpose word/expression of African origin that can be used: **1:** In place of “isn’t” - *Dat eh right*, **2:** In place of “didn’t” - *She eh come*. **3:** At the end of a plea or threat in place of “okay” - *Bring some for meh, eh*, or *Watch out, eh*. **4:** On its own as a query to mean, “what was that?” or “what did you say?” (Amazing-Trinidad-Vacations.com, 2008-2009).

Furthermore, as with Okara’s *The Voice*, the linguistic structures in the words of Naipaul’s characters also display a routinely drop, disagreement with number or odd-syntactic positioning of the verb ‘to be’. Consider, for example, the following quotes:

“How old you is, boy?” (Naipaul, 1989, p.40).

“You people don’t even know how to born, it look like” (Naipaul, 1989, p.41).

“ ‘Well, *some* people satisfy now’ ” (Naipaul, 1989, p.491).

“Make up your mind. You blocking the way” (Naipaul, 1989, p.449).

“Who you writing to?” (Naipaul, 1989, p.462).

“Feel how the car sitting nice on the road? Feel it, Anand? Savi?” (Naipaul, 1989, p.494).

The non-standard English is visible amidst other structural failures. For instance, the absence of the verb 'to be' in combination with the lack of use of appropriate tense:

"I was driving motorcars before you even learn to drive a donkey-cart. Look at me. You think I pining to drive in your sardine can? You think that?" (Naipaul, 1989, p.493).

The near-native but non-proficient spoken English dialect of the migrant Trinidad community Naipaul displays is not only suggestive of the use of English for mere communicative purposes, but is also evidence of the fragmented lives of the characters it embodies:

"I was thinking. About the house. It would be nice to have concrete pillars. Not naked though. I don't think that does look nice. Plastered and smooth" (Naipaul, 1989, p.230).

In addition to the above, the author also moulds unforgettable remnants of Indian ancestral origin; more precisely, occasional Hindi phrases and terms into the English, which is symbolic of the dual origin of the postcolonial displaced subject:

" 'Maharajin, maharajin, and little boy.' " (Naipaul, 1989, p.41).

"Aré, what have we here?" (Naipaul, 1989, p.345).

"Boy, get me the *Collins Clear-Type Shakespeare*. And my pen" (Naipaul, 1989, p.450).

And of course, Shama's often thrown phrase to Mr. Biswas when she asks him:

"What's the matter, man?" (Naipaul, 1989, p.462).

Naipaul also displays idiosyncrasies of a non-standardized usage of English by means of a dialect which has improper subject-verb agreement:

"It sound nice" (Naipaul, 1989, p.230).

"About those sheep. Savi get one, Anand get one, Myna get one, Kamla get one. Make four in all" (Naipaul, 1989, p.377).

As common with certain Indo-European and Dravidian languages, including Sinhala, Tamil and Hindi, there is also visible evidence in the Trinidadian English dialect of an absence or drop in the use of articles, a possible influence of the characters' mother tongue (Hindi):

" 'Name of boy?' " (Naipaul, 1989, p.42).

"Instead of giving every child a sheep, better to give them a horse. Ride to school. Ride back" (Naipaul, 1989, p.380).

"Some people only have mouth and belly" (Naipaul, 1989, p.440).

Often, the characters in the novel use only mere essentials for sentence construction to convey meaning. Hence, both examples below do not have the verb 'do' as part of the question formation:

"How you know?" Savi said. (Naipaul, 1989, p.217).

“How much you want?” (Naipaul, 1989, p.447).

With all the examples presented so far of a non-standard use of English, consider the following phrases which utilize an amalgamation of the so called perceived errors:

‘Come up. That boy with a shirt that looks like one of his mother bodice. How much?’ (Naipaul, 1989, p.44).

“ ‘Wanting to drive my car,’ Mr Biswas said. ‘As if I would let him. I know the way he does drive cars. Lick them up in no time at all. No respect for them. And getting vexed into the bargain, I ask you.’ ” (Naipaul, 1989, p.494).

However, despite the frailties of his characters, in comparison, Naipaul’s narrative voice seems to embody a fairly standard diction and linguistic structure, although at times, it too displays the same unclear, non-standard, disjunctive style the characters often possess. Consider for example the syntactic and lexical choice in the following sentence as an excerpt of the narrative, in which the reader is enticed to believe that ‘as bewitching as the news was’ to be an independent clause in its own right:

“As bewitching as the news was the generosity with which it was welcomed by the older members of the staff...” (Naipaul, 1989, p.467).

The minute confusion resulting from a slight deviation from core English structures as exemplified above is evidence that the socio-cultural and background realities of the people who utilize such linguistic structures bear origins of a marked community in the periphery. Critics hold that Trinidadian English is a Creole of Queen’s English; an inevitable result of Trinidad and Tobago being under British rule for over a century.

Naipaul too consciously engages in language politics, where he voices for a new variety of English that would otherwise often go unrecognized among core English users. His use of Trinidadian English in this sense, is a deliberate venture that highlights marginal Trinidad-Indian migrant community, of which the author himself is a real-life part of.

Conclusion: Identifying the link

This paper, with its exploration of ideological language in relation to Okara’s *The Voice* and Naipaul’s *A House for Mr. Biswas* instantly highlights the obvious: that there is most certainly an undeniable link between language, ideology and creative fiction. To be more specific, it is possible to state that while the relationship between language and ideology remains mutually inclusive, the use of language and ideology in creative fiction as a particular means of expressing or connoting an intended ideology is seen as a functional aspect.

Although one could possibly relate to notions which state that there is no single adequate definition of ideology, the present study proves the social

nature of ideology: that it is about social relations, consciousness and power struggle which play important parts in carrying out ideological objectives. This further validates that fact that ideology, thus, is also about the consciousness of those relations. The presentation of data and detailed analyses of the novels in the present study hold evidence that the authors do intend to generate such a consciousness of relations in the readership.

The study also proves that authors in their various ideological presentations of language in their works of fiction bring out a hidden agenda; one in which there is a conscious articulation of generating a voice for a particular culture, tradition, set of values, diction of which the authors are very much a part of. In this sense, the authors' endeavours are not hap-hazard and cathartic, but deliberate and political; their varying linguistic and stylistic registers are actually attempts to jostle for recognition and space in a cosmopolitan international language where still 'Standardized English' is preferred.

It is possible to identify the purpose of such ideological language in creative fiction in a much broader functional sense, where, as Hegel claims, mutual development arises only when a human being cultivates nature and the cultivated nature in turn, changes the human being (Hegel, 1977). This dialectic process of formative interchange between a human being (the subject) and nature (the subject's externalized reality) can grant more insight towards liberation of mankind. Hence, the importance of examining ideological language in creative fiction as attempted in the present study, is a timely venture.

The study also proves that such qualitative analyses and interpretation of texts can only have a positive impact on society, provided the readership adopts a qualitative leap in which the present stage is dialectically negated and is superseded by a higher stage. For this negation to take place, people as agents of change, need insight and a proper understanding of the present situation. This is partly what authors of creative fiction attempt to instil in a readership by means of their ideological language in their creative work.

Yet, limited realization of this and the nature of the 'self' in relation to the exterior world and its productions could cause considerable limitations in the rationalization of existence. When the realization is defined to a level where the postcolonial subject returns to his stagnant, alienated position, there occurs a terrible constraint in their dialectic synthesis in progressive reaction towards tradition and nature. This is the reason why the characters in the novels in general resort back to tradition than to a higher level of cognitive perception to change their own lives by negating the present. In conclusion, this paper reiterates that ideological language in fiction does necessarily have an important functional purpose.

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