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LITERARY DIALECT IN NADINE GORDIMER'S *JULY'S PEOPLE* AND KEN SARO-WIWA'S *SOZABOY*

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Mémoire de recherche

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Introduction

Mark Twain and Charles Dickens were among the first writers to broadly use vernacular languages in their writings. Both of them were associated with the realism literary movement. In their texts, Dickens and Twain tend to represent minorities, such as children, lower-class people, or colored people, in a context corresponding to their respective country. Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, published in 1884, gives voice to an uneducated white boy and a young slave from the rural American south. Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* also puts forward lower-class characters using non-standard British dialects. These dialects are represented through the syntax, the lexis and the misspelling of certain words which is meant to imitate the pronunciation or accent of a designated character. This particular device is commonly called 'eye-dialect', and has been broadly used by 19th century writers, but also by 20th and 21st century writers. This research focuses on two African novels: Nadine Gordimer's *July's People* (1981) and Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy* (1985). These texts not only use eye-dialect, but also non-standard syntax, lexis and grammar. All these devices should be gathered in one general category, which will be referred to as 'literary dialect' throughout the study.

This study, which will focus on the two African novels mentioned above, will tackle different issues related to literature, the linguistic and the sociolinguistic fields, the political field and the historical field.

The use of literary dialect has raised many questions and debates in the field of literature as well as in the linguistic domain. Its ethical extent has been questioned: is it derogatory or racist to depict non-standard dialects and associate them with a particular social group, culture or ethnicity? Some characters are often stereotypical (regarding cultural, social, ethnical or personality traits) and the answer to the latter interrogation could indeed be affirmative. The social and ethnical background of the author could also be relevant in order to answer this question. It is particularly relevant in the study of Nadine Gordimer's *July's People*. As a white middle-class South African writer, her use of linguistic features mainly borrowed from Black South African English, on the behalf of a black character, could be looked upon as racist. Do writers have the legitimacy to represent dialectal backgrounds they do not belong

to? Nevertheless, most writers (including Dickens and Twain) put a huge amount of effort in the fabrication of their literary dialect in order to be as accurate as possible regarding the linguistic realities they aim at representing in their novels. Considering this, it would be too reductive to associate literary dialect with a simple role and effect of mockery, since these languages are as accurately represented as possible. This leads to another question: that of the authenticity of the language which is represented. How does the writer create the illusion of a dialect? If the writer chooses a particular language to imitate, are there any limits to the accuracy of its representation? The difficulty in figuring out a language in literature lies in the layers of variability. The language associated with a character could be the one of a local dialect, a vernacular, or an idiolect. An idiolect is the language used by a particular individual. A speaker can develop language variations of its own, as well as speaking a variety of a designated language. This issue is most notably present in Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy*, in which language variability is key. They are variations between the different characters, among characters themselves, between the narration and dialogues and according to situations the characters are put into. Moreover, in both novels, some features of the source language are not present. It could be argued that the differences between the literary dialect and the language being represented are intentional. In that case, what is the purpose of the writer in doing so? All these matters make it difficult to pinpoint the precise language represented and to rate the level of authenticity with the writer's choices.

These issues are related to the difficult, if not impossible, distinction between a language and a dialect. A dialect is often considered a sub-variety of a language. But in a post-colonial world where languages evolve constantly and in multiple scales, it is not so easy to give a definition to the term 'dialect'. What is irrefutable is the association of a dialect with a culture. What can be discussed, however, is whether a culture really is a definable entity. For instance, there is something that could be called a Nigerian culture. But there are more than three hundred ethnic groups in the country. What are the common traits that make that unify them as one culture? Is the Nigerian culture even a reality? Along with this debate, the question of the existence of smaller social groups, and even the question regarding the individual, should not be neglected. This leads to the realization of the existence of a multiplicity of identities. The notion of identity is undoubtedly linked to the notion of dialect. The construction of an identity (whether individual or in a bigger social scale) is influenced

by cultural, political, but also linguistic factors. The use of particular linguistic features (whether it is conscious or unconscious) is what particularly makes an individual stand out from the others. As mentioned earlier, the writers fabricate a literary dialect with linguistic features they choose to represent as well as the ones they omit. It is therefore interesting to wonder to what extent these choices (whether they are intentional or not) are politically motivated. This question does not only concern the political context of each novel's respective country (Nigeria in Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy* and South Africa in Nadine Gordimer's *July's People*), but it also opens discussions in sociolinguistics and the impact of politics on the development of identities, and by extension, the development of languages as well as their statuses.

Chapter 1-Historical and political context of *Sozaboy* and *July's People*

This chapter aims at presenting the political and the historical context in which July's *People* and *Sozaboy* were written. Nigeria and South Africa were both countries with particularly complex political backgrounds. It is therefore important to understand the environment in which Nadine Gordimer and Ken Saro-Wiwa came to publish their polemical novels. Issues regarding identity and nationalism will also be discussed in order to explore the theoretical background that could have influenced the genesis of both works.

1.1. Nigeria and South Africa

1.1.1. A brief history of South Africa and its society

A. Cultural diversity in South Africa

About eighty per cent of the South African population are Black people or native African . The black population includes a significant number of different ethnic groups which majority are of Zulu, Xhosa and Bapedi origins. The majority of white people have Dutch origins (commonly called Afrikaners) or have British origins. The term Coloureds refer to people with multiethnic ancestry. There is also a small Indian community which originally migrated to South Africa as indentured labours when slavery was abolished.

B. South Africa during colonization

South African colonization began with the settlement of the Dutch East India Company in 1652. The Dutch originally wanted to establish a trade center, since the land (today's Cape Town) was a strategic place for trading. However, the Dutch gradually explored the hinterland

with the intention to settle permanently. The presence of the Khoekhoe people on some of these lands resulted in two wars between 1659 and 1677. The Khoekhoe, already weakened by diseases brought by the Europeans, were enslaved along with other African communities. The Dutch East India Company being on the verge of bankruptcy, the British took over the Dutch colony in 1795. The British East India Company saw its potential as a halfway station to the East. In 1806, the British established their own colony, called the Cape Colony. It underwent many changes, from the language of administration (from Dutch to English) to the currency (from the Dutch rix-dollar to the pound sterling). The British expanded toward more African territories and, even though slave trade was abolished in 1807, enslaved people were still imported in the colony in order to build towns. Between the 1810s and the 1840s, conflicts occurred between the British and a prominent African people, the Xhosa. Contrary to common beliefs, white people were not the only invaders. The history of South African colonisation is in fact interwoven with conflicts between European colonizers and nomadic black populations as well as conflicts among black communities.

The discovery of gold in the 1880s contributed to the conflicts between Europeans. At the end of the 1800s, the British hegemony in South Africa resulted in two wars, the First Boer war (1880-1881) and the Second Boer War, also called the South African War (1899-1902). The Boers were related to the Dutch people and had their own independent territories, the Boer republics, or Boer states. During the South African War, the British forces dominated the conflict. They established confrontation camps in which more than 25,000 Afrikaner women and children died. In other camps around 14,000 black people died. The victory of the British was made official in the Treaty of Vereeniging. This treaty also granted the Boers decisions regarding the black population once they re-established their independency. Eight years of reconstruction followed the violent war and the Union of South Africa was finally founded in 1910. Although segregation was always part of the climate in South Africa, It only started to be legislated from the 1910s. The black population was taxed and denied political power by the new constitution. They protested against these new political decisions and organized their own political meetings. The Native African National Congress was born in 1912 and became the African National Congress (ANC) in 1923.

C. Beginning of apartheid and decolonization

In the aftermath of the Second World War, not only South Africa but all former European colonies had to face challenges regarding their political and economic future as independent nations. The National Party (NP) acceded to power in 1948 (in an exclusively white election), following the racial path of the colonisation. The project of the NP was to protect the interests of the Afrikaners and perpetuate white supremacy. From the end of the 1950s, apartheid (which literally means 'separateness' in Dutch) began to take form through different policies and strategies. Among these strategies can be noted the process and promotion of independence of rural territories referred to as bantustans (a word that still has a pejorative connotation nowadays). Indeed, the white South African government was concerned about the movement of the black population and wanted to prevent them from moving to urbanized areas. These homelands became more autonomous and granted more power but remained under white rule. The logic of apartheid policies encouraged discrimination against non-Europeans, that is to say Africans, colored people and Indian people. Non-whites suffered from widespread poverty in a country which experienced economic growth. The implementation of this racial rule was not without conflictual response on the behalf of the oppressed. The African National Congress Youth League emerged in the 1940s under president Albert Luthuli along with Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandala. The latter organized a meeting in 1955 called Congress of the people, which was attended by Indians, colored people as well as white people supporting the resistance of apartheid. The Freedom Charter was created, proclaiming equality and democratic values. The meeting was interrupted by the government which led to more than one hundred fifty arrestations. However apartheid resistance kept going through the years. A non-violent protest resulted in the infamous Sharpeville massacre on 21 March 1960. The South African police killed sixty-nine people and two hundred forty-nine people were injured. From this event, the ANC figured peaceful resistance was not enough and developed their own military unit. Many of their leaders were captured by 1964, including Nelson Mandela, who was not freed until 1990.

D. Post-apartheid era

In 1994, The African National Congress (ANC) came to power with Nelson Mandela, the first democratically elected president of South Africa. This year symbolises the end of decades of racial politics and political discrimination. The idea of a 'rainbow nation'[1] emerged, mainly representing the need for diversity, equality and freedom. In order to improve the living standards in the country (such as education, electricity, running water and housing), the ANC developed a moderate economic policy, in order to balance socialist values and the need for economic growth. After huge efforts of campaigning in order to get financial support from other countries, capital investments gradually increased in South Africa. In 1995, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was created by Archbishop Tutu, in order to gather testimonies and reveal the atrocities that occurred during the apartheid era, as well as giving amnesty to the ones who committed those crimes. The TRC was viewed by whites as targeting them, while black people saw it as a way to justify and forgive crimes that were made during the apartheid era. The new government had to face conflicts not only between white people and black people, but also among black communities living in KwaZulu-Natal. The climate of the political and economic transition was not without tensions, which did not prevent the ANC from being elected again in 1999 and then in 2004, with Thabo Mbeki as president.

[1] The term 'rainbow nation' was first coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu in 1994 and quoted by Nelson Mandela during his inauguration as president of South Africa.

1.1.2. A brief history of Nigeria and its society

A. Nigerian Cultural Diversity

There are over two hundred ethnic groups in Nigeria. The three main groups are the Hausa (twenty-one per cent), the Yoruba (twenty per cent) and the Igbo (seventeen per cent). Half of the Nigerian population are Muslims and about forty per cent of the population are Christians. Although most of the country is rural, the cities grow more and more and a significant number of young people move to urbanized areas. Generally speaking, Nigerian's culture nowadays is a mix of indigenous culture and western culture.

B. Colonial Nigeria

Even before the age of colonisation, Nigeria was divided in states which were related to ethnic groups. Commercial activities did not start with colonisation either, the Nigerians being involved in the Trans-Saharan trade, hence the presence of Islam from the 9th century. At the end of the 1400s, Nigerians were trading luxury goods with Europeans but when America was discovered, slave trade became a significantly beneficial activity, especially in the 18th century, until it began to diminish in 1850 (even though slave trade was abolished in 1807). Enslaved people were not only sold to Europeans, they were also traded within the Nigerian states in order to improve agricultural production and domestic work. The Oyo Empire (Western Nigeria) was the greatest exporter of slaves. The decline of the empire at the end of the 18th century triggered a series of civil wars until the end of the 19th century, referred to as the Yoruba Wars. The political climate resulted in the British intervening and negotiating peace in 1886. They established a protectorate which marked the beginning of the British colonial rule. By 1906, The British had taken over the whole country. They imposed their economic system and the pound sterling became the currency. Urbanisation was accelerated with the building of roads and railways. European missionaries started to introduce

Christianity and western values all over West Africa. Nationalist movements appeared from the 1920s, spread mostly by educated people and students. The West African Students' Union was founded in 1925. Nationalist movements primarily developed from the 1930s (The National Youth movement was founded in 1934). Similarly to South African politics, the British developed a divide-and-rule policy in order to divide the different ethnic groups of Nigeria. Overall, Nigeria was organized in indirect rule, with a central government and local administrations. During World War I and World War II, Nigerian troops were sent to East Africa in order to fight in German territories. Nationalist movements consolidated in the post-war era with the purpose of ending British rule.

C. Independent Nigeria and dictatorship

The hopes of Nigerians after the nation's independence from Britain in 1960 were cut short by the political instability that defines the post-independence era. The following decade was affected by issues of economy and development as well as political corruption and a series of military coups. Although plans were made to encourage development (economic growth, agricultural and industrial production, education) such as the First National Development Plan (FNDP) introduced in 1962, the military coups kept interrupting the achievement of significant improvements. Among other factors, the reliance of these plans on foreign resources did not help acquiring economic independence. On the contrary, it perpetuated dependence on foreign investments. Moreover, the regions of the republic of Nigeria (The Northern region, the Southern region, the Western region and the Eastern region) did not equally develop (the Southern region was for instance much more developed than the Northern region) during the colonial period which triggered tensions regarding whether underdeveloped areas should be prioritized or not in the FNDP project. Overall, the federal system was a source of political conflicts. In order to divide political power, the number of seats in each of the Federal House of Representatives depended on the population in each region, a number provided by the first census in 1953. In 1962, a second census took place and figures were very unlikely: it showed a seventy per cent increase of the population in the Eastern and the Western Region, as opposed to only thirty per cent in the Northern region.

The government was asked to organise another census, which was done the following year. Again, the numbers were doubtful. The census crisis is one in many events that showed how corrupted the Nigerian politics was. The first military coup began in January 15, 1966. The ones responsible for it asserted that they wanted to put an end to corruption and political chaos. Regional premiers were arrested and the Prime Minister was killed. Southerners had a positive viewpoint on the Ironsi regime, since most of the leaders and Ironsi himself were Igbo, the dominant ethnicity in the South. However, Northerners saw it as an attempt at Igbo domination. The new regime dismantled the federal and regional structure, creating a unitary system made of provinces. In July, another coup took place and Ironsi was assassinated. Gowon was elected by northern officers as the new leader. The Igbo were found to be the victims of the rest of the population. Around 100,000 easterners were massacred, mostly by northern officers. In return, northerners living in the Eastern region were killed. The question of the belonging of the Eastern Region in the Federation led to negotiations and Ojukwu, head of the state of Biafra, declared its independence.

D. The Biafran War

Beside the question of national unity, the secession of the state of Biafra was also problematic because it contained nearly seventy per cent of the petroleum sources in the country. This issue resulted in the Nigerian Civil War, or the Biafran War, which lasted between July 1967 and January 1970. Gowon, opposed to Ojukwu's decision, declared a state of emergency and developed policies which aimed at weakening the Biafrans. For instance, new states were created in order to divide minorities (who would, as Gowon hoped, turn against the Igbo) and a new currency was introduced to make the Biafran economic system collapse. The prices of goods and food considerably escalated and poverty increased. Gowon's government also blocked most importations of goods in the state of Biafra. The devastating consequences of Gowon's policies were used by the Biafran leaders against the Federal government and the conditions of the Biafrans rapidly reached international concern. The United States and the United Kingdom refused to give support to the Federals, who

eventually found help with the USSR. From 1968, the recognition of Biafra as a free state was declared by several African countries (Tanzania, Gabon and Zambia for instance) and some European countries provided them with supplies (France, Portugal). The Biafran resisted for a long time, but they were finally defeated by the Federal troops. The human cost is deplorable: between one million and three million people died during the conflict. Although Gowon insisted on the importance of unity and forgetting the past in the aftermath of the civil war, his victory showed how powerful a military regime could be to achieve its goals despite the will of the people. Still nowadays, corruption and violence are at the heart of Nigerian politics.

1.2. Identity and politics

1.2.1. The impact of politics on the Nigerian and South African society.

A. In South Africa

The displacement of black people into the homelands and bordering countries during the apartheid era contributes nowadays in perpetuating racial inequality and discrimination. Black people and non-south African citizens are still used as cheap labour in a context of high unemployment. The majority of the Black and the Coloured communities live in Townships, poor urban areas that were specifically built to segregate the South African population during apartheid. The racialization of cities is a concept that finds concrete demonstration in South Africa as well as in other African countries, like Nigeria.

Apartheid did not only separate white people from black people. The educational system divided schools according to ethnicities and languages. Linguistic apartheid was operated within the black communities, in order to encourage ethnical division. In each school, black children had to learn not one, but the two languages of the oppressors: Afrikaans and English. Politics of exclusion and inclusion[2] shaped many African societies and still have consequences nowadays.

[2] Laurent Fourchard and Aurelia Segatti, 'Introduction of xenophobia and citizenship: the everyday politics of exclusion and inclusion in Africa', *Cambridge University Press*, 2015

B. In Nigeria

A key issue in Nigerian society is inequality. From an educational standpoint, Northern Nigeria was, and still is, much less developed than Southern Nigeria. Between 1906 and 1966, there were only seventy-seven schools in Northern Nigeria as opposed to one thousand and five schools in Southern Nigeria. Regarding economics, The western part of the country is much more industrialized than the rest of the country. Finally the democratic status of Nigeria can be questioned by its political inequality. The number of seats and voters in each regional areas are uneven, which inevitably gives one party domination in a region. Due to inequality, Nigerian politics is designed to divide ethnic groups rather than providing a sense of coherence and unity. Racial categories are actually institutionalized in Nigeria, that is to say that difference is made between natives and non-natives. The problem of inequality in Nigeria can be linked with the ideology of Regionalism which was developed and institutionalized during the 1950s and the 1960s. This aimed at separating the main regions of Nigeria (North, South and West). Many inclusive and exclusive policies were adopted by each region to discriminate against people originating from the other regions.

1.2.2. The national question and the rise of nationalism in South Africa and Nigeria

A. In South Africa

During the pre-apartheid era and the apartheid era, the national question and the question of the South African identity was taken over by the white government. For decades, it adopted legislations aiming at denying black people as well as Black South Africans the status of citizenship. In 1913, the Immigration Act and the Land Act, which restricted movement in the country, claimed Black South Africans were non-citizens. Jewish people were also not allowed to enter the country by 1937 with the Alien Act. These policies of exclusion were combined with policies of inclusion developed in the fifties and in the sixties, such as legislations encouraging German people and British people to immigrate in order to increase the white population in South Africa. These legislations were based on race and according to Michael Neocosmos[3], around six million Black South Africans from the Bantustans were denied citizenship and forced to emigrate from their own country (25). Citizens from foreign countries (Mozambique or Swaziland for instance) and Black South Africans were treated as foreigners. This led to a rising sense of solidarity between black communities from all these countries and nationalist and liberation movements developed (Neocosmos, 26).

B. In Nigeria

The challenge of Nigeria after its independence was to figure out its national identity. As in many other former colonial countries, post-independent Nigerian society was designed with western models and ideologies which do not fit with its cultural and political specificities. The presence of different ethnicities was often subjected to division rather than unity. Ethnic

[3] Neocosmos, Michael, *From 'Foreign Natives' to 'Native Foreigners'*, 2010

groups have had for a long time before colonial rule their own political and economic organizations. It is still nowadays difficult to give concrete solutions to the National Question[4], particularly because of the different inequalities that are an ongoing issue in the Nigerian society. All these factors lead to a lack of democratic representation. Nigerian politics is not compatible with the National Question, because it perpetuates the domination of same groups and ideologies, therefore encouraging division and undemocratic representation of minorities[5].

Politics in Nigeria have often used ethnic heritage in order to convey a sense of unity and power in the country. Ajala's study[6] on cultural patrimony and nationalist issues focuses on how Nigerian political elites and media have used Yoruba patrimonies (whether material or immaterial) to create a national identity. The Yoruba have had their own cultural legacies before British colonialism. Their ancestors, who are viewed as powerful figures, are part of the building of their political identity. Among them are Oduduwa and Oranmiyan, both pre-colonial leaders, and also recent political figures like Awolowo (1909–1987) and Moshood Abiola (1937–1998). The Yoruba strong sense of commonality and political legacy, which was also favored by literary production, allowed them to spread their own identity at the national level. However, each ethnicity in societies like Nigeria has its own values and national ideas and therefore does not necessarily develop a nation-wide identity. Ajala argues that 'heritage and patrimony in any given society will inevitably reflect that of the dominant political, social, religious, or ethnic issues'(482). Not every element of the past is part of national identity, it is rather a construction that serves political interests.

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[4] The National Question refers to political, social or cultural issues in a given historical or socio-economic context. Here, the National Question focuses on post-independent Nigeria and the issue of national identity.

[5] Abdul Raufu Mustapha, 'The National Question and Radical Politics in Nigeria', *Review of African Political Economy*, 1986

[6] Ajala, Aderemi Suleiman, 'Cultural Patrimony, Political Identity, and Nationalism in Southwestern Nigeria', *Cambridge University Press*, 2015

1.2.3. The question of languages in relation to cultural and political identities

A. The issue of individual and cultural identities

The most common question about identity is to know whether it is essential or existential. In other words, Is identity determined by social, cultural and political factors or is it preexistent to the environment? The historiography of philosophical movements contains multiple answers to this question. Cultural materialism, associated with Marxism, claims that ideologies are shaped by the environment in which individuals evolve, and not the way around. The concept of determinism therefore asserts that each individual is conditioned by their social, cultural and political environment. Neema Parvini points out the opposition of cultural materialism to humanism and essentialism. Anti-humanists and anti-essentialists imply that an individual who lived a hundred years ago was not conditioned by the same environment as does an individual nowadays, meaning that human minds do not share universal values.[7] However this idea has been refuted by biologists and anthropologists who concluded that there is a human nature and that individuals are influenced by both their nature and their culture[8].

Moreover, cultural materialism does not tackle the important issue of individuality. As Parvini notes, it is incontestable that each individual, even though belonging to a more or less restricted social or cultural group, has a distinct personality and different tastes. The individuation, or individuating behavior, is a process in which individuals try to differentiate from the social group they belong to. It seems that there is a contradiction in the notion of identity: whether the result of an individual or a collective impulse, identity cannot be built

[7] Parvani, Neema, *Shakespeare's History Plays: Rethinking Historicism*, chapter 'An Argument Against Anti-Humanism', *Edimburgh University Press*, 2012

[8] Psychologist Steven Pinker, specialized in language development and cognitive psychology, has demonstrated that language is an innate capacity. The work of anthropologist Donald E.Brown, which Pinker used in his own research, also shows that there are hundreds of human universals shared by all cultures.

without one or the other. Patrick Charaudeau's perspective on the shaping of the individual identity emphasizes the paradoxical relation between culture and individuality[9], as individuality is performed in relation to the notion of otherness:

> On voit le paradoxe dans lequel se construit notre identité. Nous avons besoin de l'autre, de l'autre dans sa différence, pour prendre conscience de notre existence, mais en même temps nous nous en méfions, éprouvons le besoin soit de le rejeter, soit de le rendre semblable à nous pour éliminer cette différence : si on le rejette, plus de possibilité de se voir soi-même différent ; si on le rend semblable, nos particularités disparaissent. (8)

This being said, Charadeau draws a parallel between cultural identity and linguistic identity, and what problems this association may pose.

B. The paradoxical relationship between linguistic and cultural identities

As seen above, Charaudeau argues that identity is shaped in relation to others. The paradox also applies to language, since it has always been associated with unity. Language is always at the core of national debates. Which one should be the official language of a nation? This question was asked in newly independent countries, such as Nigeria, South Africa or India. Charaudeau also mentions the apparition of grammar in European Middle Age as an attempt to unification. Although, he also points that language might not be everything to culture. The distinction between language and discourse is his solution to the paradoxical relation between cultural identity and linguistic identity. The discourse is the use one makes of language in a given context. To him, it is the discourse which should be associated with culture, and not language. There is one simple demonstration to clarify this idea. Countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada or Australia share the same language, but cannot be said to share the same culture. Language is the expression of one's way of thinking, that is, the

[9] Charaudeau, Patrick, 'identité linguistique, identité culturelle: Une relation paradoxale, *Presses Universitaires de Perpignan*, 2013

way one uses words and syntax in order to convey ideas. This is what discourse is about and why it should be associated with culture. In cases when linguistic identity is intertwined with cultural questions, Charaudeau argues that it is mainly a political issue. This happens when a collective group is threatened by other cultures that imposed themselves like it happened during colonisation for instance. At some point in history, these communities urge to reinstate a common national identity with a collective language. This leads to another conclusion. No language is more suited to be universal than others. Charaudeau insists on the fact that if a language disappears, the reason for that has nothing to do with a supposed flaw in its system, it is always due to political matters.

C. The building of a nation in relation to the notion of linguistic identity

There is a tendency to associate linguistic identity with national identity. In ‘Antoine Meillet et le futur des empires après la Première guerre mondiale’, Sebastien Moret presents some theories about the close relation between language and nation. For instance, A. Meillet’s research on the Russian Empire comes to the conclusion that there is a Russian Nation due to the fact that the Russian language is spoken in the center, whereas other languages (such as Lithuanian and Yiddish) are spoken on the borders. To Meillet, there is a coincidence between linguistic border and political border. He asserts that language and nation form a natural unity. If it is not the case (as he noted about countries like Slovakia and Czech-Republic where the same language is spoken but the ‘nation' is separated), the situation is not natural and has to be changed. Following his logic, the independence of Ukraine from Russia was not natural. Moret enhances the political bias of linguists like Meillet who propose solutions for a more coherent world, a political stance which coincides with the chaos caused by the Second World War, hence the importance of contextualizing linguistic theories.

In post-colonial countries, the one nation/one language tendency can be problematic. Wolff[10] argues that unilingualism is a western ideology which favors homogeneity and the unification of languages that are considered superior to ethnic languages (English for example). This ideology is closely linked with Darwin's exceptionalism which regards non-Western cultures as inferior and bound to disappear. There are approximately 2 138 languages in Africa, therefore around forty languages per state. This means that ninety-nine per cent of African ethnic groups do not have their own state. The nationalization of African countries is a process which does not take into account linguistic particularities. Instead, it even attempts to suppress the multi linguistic aspect of these countries. Moreover, in comparison to the thirty-five percent of European languages which are considered dying languages, it is only up to seventeen per cent in Africa (Wolff, 5). These elements show that African languages are in constant development. It is also a good demonstration that bilingualism is not an obstacle to intellectual development, a prejudice against multilinguistic states that has been perpetrated since colonialism.

[10] Wolff, H.Ekkehard, 'The ideologies of language and the politics of language in post-colonial Africa', *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics Plus*, 2017

1.3. Writing *July's People* and *Sozaboy*

1.3.1. Nadine Gordimer's *July's People*

A. Nadine Gordimer's context of writing

Apartheid was introduced in 1948 and abolished in 1991 by the ANC (the African National Congress) coming to power with Nelson Mandela. This policy presented itself as a 'separate development' for Black and White South Africans. Needless to argue that this policy was discriminating against the Black community only, as these instances of laws[11] demonstrate:

> (i) An African living in town cannot impart education to other Africans even without remuneration. This law is not applied to the white community.
> (ii) No white man can teach his African servants to read or write. Doing so is a criminal offense.
> (iii) If there is only one waiting-room in a railway station, it is lawful for the authorities to reserve it for the exclusive use of white persons. Any black citizen entering it is guilty of a criminal offense punishable by a fine amounting to 100 R or imprisonment for three months or both.
> (iv) Every African male and female between the ages of eighteen and sixty- five is liable to pay a special tax over and above the one that all South Africans have to pay.

At the end of apartheid, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was founded, gathering testimonies and giving justice to people who suffered from apartheid and its wrong doings as a process to heal the nation after a long and racial society. This phase of transition from Afrikaner or White nationalism to black nationalism is often referred to as

[11] Wizarat, Talat A., 'Apartheid and racial discrimination in South Africa - An overview of the control network', *Pakistan Horizon*, 1980, p.84

‘interregnum’, which was broadly conceptualized and anticipated in Nadine Gordimer’s writing.

When studying the editorial context in South Africa, one should not forget about censorship. The 1975 Publications Act, or The Publications Appeal Board (PAB) set the principles and extent of censorship in the country. J.M Coetzee, in his paper ‘Censorship in South Africa’, makes an account of Van Rooyen’s concept of censorship in South Africa. According to him, The PAB should be seen as an ‘impersonal arbiter’ which keeps the balance of respect of all groups. In the context of apartheid, though, it is not surprising to argue that censorship was mostly used against minorities. Van Rooyen gives the following criteria subject to censorship[12]:

> a) it is ‘indecent or obscene or offensive or harmful to public moral’
> b) it is ‘blasphemous or offensive to the religious convictions or feelings of a section' c) it "brings any section into ridicule or contempt"
> d) it is ‘harmful to inter-section relations’
> e) it ‘prejudices security, welfare, peace and good order’
> f) it 'discloses part of a judicial proceeding in which offensive material is quoted.’ (Van Rooyen 1987, 7)

Nadine Gordimer discusses the link between censorship and writing in South Africa in her paper ‘English-Language and Politics in South Africa’ (1976). She argues that all writers are, consciously or not, pressured and influenced by the politics of the country they are from. Though South Africa is very different from any western country, because politics is so immersed in the people’s lives, as a result to apartheid. According to Gordimer, censorship cannot be avoided as long as apartheid exists. In the article, she points out the way black writers or white writers writing about the oppression of black people were banned from the literary market-place. She also remarks that though undoubtedly honorable they are, white writers fighting against censorship and apartheid through their writings still participate in the racial system since they shadow as important and as skillful black writers.

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[12] Coetzee, J.M, ‘Censorship in South Africa', *English in Africa*, 1990

Gordimer was the winner of the Booker Prize in 1974 and Nobel Prize in Literature in 1991. Her main works are *The Conservationist* (1974), *Burger's Daughter* (1979) and *July's People* (1981). Throughout her career, she was an opponent to apartheid, and had a clear vision of her own time and the future of South Africa. She was also a controversial writer, denouncing censorship and inequalities in her country and fighting against it. Nadine Gordimer was indeed an activist and political writer, but David Medalie insists upon the fact that she should not be reduced to this: 'Her work was also informed by her awareness of the complex allegiances of the writer. For all her activism and political engagement, Gordimer had a powerful belief in the fundamental autonomy of art and its responsibilities to itself' (Medalie, 10). Nadine Gordimer 'believed that the dual impulses in the writer - towards social obligation, on the one hand, and the loneliness of an inner truth, on the other - are a form of entwinement so complex that she tended to represent it as a battle, but one which sparks crucial energies' (Medalie, 10).

B. *July's People*

July's People was published in 1981. It is set in a post-apartheid era imagined by Nadine Gordimer. White people, taken over by the then oppressed black communities, are rejected by their own society and have to give up on the material comfort and privileges they used to have. The white middle-class Smales family, from Johannesburg, are sheltered by their black servant, July, in his native village. The exercise of power is now reversed and July gradually evolves in a more and more empowered character. In 'Apartheid Inequality and Postapartheid Utopia in Nadine Gordimer's *July's People*' (2006), Ali Erritouni focuses on the reversal of roles and how the exercise of power is represented in *July's People*. Just as what Nadine Gordimer states about white writers defending the South African cause, The Smales family is paradoxical in their relationship to black South Africans. Even though the Smales are progressive and pro ANC (African National Congress), the couple start blaming July for having changed whenever he is not obedient. Indeed, throughout the novel, July is less

inclined to ask for permission and acts independently, regardless of the couple's opinion, like when he refuses several times to give the keys of the bakkie to the Smaleses and uses it without asking them. This behavior tends to irritate Maureen, the mother, and, Ali Erritouni notes, Maureen still has a racist mindset, since she always thinks about her behavior towards July and his community in terms of what it means regarding apartheid. Plus, July allows himself to blame the Smaleses for contenting with their former life even though they defended black people, by refusing, for instance, to stop calling them his 'masters'. Through the character of July and the Smaleses, Nadine Gordimer skillfully pinpoints the moral contradictions within the pro ANC white community and the insufficiency of simply having anti apartheid thoughts. Nevertheless, as Erritouni remarks, the character of Gina, the daughter, is a counterpart of the hypocrisy of the White community. Indeed, Gina develops friendships with the African children in the village. She learns African lullabies and languages. Victor, her older brother, embodies the difficulty of insertion in this post-apartheid era (he still has a materialistic behavior and sense of property, for instance he does not want the other children to touch his toys). Gina, by growing up and adapting to the community's language and culture, has a hybrid identity. The blending of cultures and languages is utopian and opposite to the segregational aspect of the South African context.

1.3.2. Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy*

A. Ken Saro-Wiwa's context of writing

Ken Saro-Wiwa was himself a civilian administrator at the time of the Biafran War and was a strong opponent to the conflict and the Shell oil company. The writer, human right activist and defender of the environment, was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996. Ten years after the publication of *Sozaboy*, in 1995, he was executed by the Nigerian government. *Sozaboy* is the story of a young soldier, Mene, who is recruited by the Nigerian army to fight in the war. Mene, like many Nigerian soldiers at the time, does not know anything about the conflict and has a very restricted conception of the historical and political context he is trapped in. The unraveling of the novel makes the naive narrator more and more aware of the violence, the corruption and the harsh reality of the Nigerian Civil War.

B. *Sozaboy*

The story of *Sozaboy* is set in the 1960s Nigeria. The homodiegetic character, Mene, is a young man from the fictional village called Dukana. The novel starts with a sense of hope and happiness:

> Although everybody in Dukana was happy at first.
> All the nine villages were dancing and we were eating plenty maize with pear and snacking tory under the moon. Because the work on the farm have finished and the yams were growing well well. And because the old, bad government have dead, and the new government of soza and police have come. (1)

Even though the Biafran War is never mentioned as such in the novel, it is at the heart of Ken Saro-Wiwa's depiction of how it impacted ethnic minorities. The 'old, bad government' refers

to the Federal government that ruled the state of Biafra before it decided to secede from Nigeria in 1967 which resulted in the conflict. Mene's biased perspective on the political context introduced by the pejorative adjective 'bad' is an implication of the nationalist stance imposed upon the people living in Nigeria at the time. The indirect reference of the Biafran war can be linked with censorship and political issues. Most of all, it places the reader in the point of view of the minority people who were confused about the war. *Sozaboy* reflects the struggle of the Ogoni people who were manipulated into fighting for the interests of both the Igbo and the government. In ' "Work is War": The Biafran War and Neoliberalism in Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy*', Nimanthi Perera-Rajasingham argues that Ken Saro-Wiwa describes the relations between neoliberalism and colonialism. According to her, neoliberalism reproduces colonial forms of power. While neoliberalism defines itself as praising individual freedom and a market place free from political intervention, *Sozaboy* illustrates how neoliberalism can be seen as a system of governance and shows its relation to the formation of class and racial categorization. The article puts an emphasis on the salt trade mentioned throughout the novel as the main reason why war is necessary. Economic necessities for the neoliberal market place (salt trade is also an indirect reference to oil exploitation) are intertwined with ethnic conflicts which started during colonial rule. The British divided Nigeria in different ethnic regions and this structure was perpetuated by the Nigerian government after its independence. The presence of oil in the state of Biafra turned a war which claimed was about ethnic issues into a war about economics. Perera-Rajasingham takes the example of the character Zaza who tells Mene how proud he was when he fought in the Second World War in order to bring salt back to his community. The irony here is while Zaza thought he vanquished the enemy ('Hitla'), he was actually fighting for the British colonial trade. In *Sozaboy*, Mene, who represents the Ogoni people, goes to war because he is told that being a soldier is a sign of masculinity and bravery. In the beginning, Mene sees war as beneficial for him. At the time of the Biafran War, minorities were given a depiction of the conflict as an opportunity to fight for their values and their belongings. The more Mene is involved in the war, the more he realizes its devastating effects. The Ogoni people were subjected by the Biafran forces in order to serve neoliberal interests, perpetuating a colonial power structure.

As former British colonies, Nigeria and South Africa still nowadays carry the legacy of colonialism. Conflicts and violence are omnipresent in these multicultural societies. Gordimer and Saro-Wiwa chose to carry the burden of writing in a particularly oppressive environment, no matter the price. Both activists, Nadine Gordimer was very often considered a controversial writer and had to face censorship, and Ken Saro-Wiwa kept fighting against the wrong doings of his political leaders until he was executed by his government.

Chapter 2 - Linguistics and sociolinguistics in South Africa and Nigeria

In this chapter, the main linguistic features of the languages represented in *Sozaboy* and *July's People* will be reported along with sociolinguistic theories and debates surrounding them. It is useful to fathom these fields of research in order to grasp each writer's perspective on issues such as the relation between politics and languages.

2.1. Languages in Nigeria and South Africa: a general presentation

2.1.1.The development of languages in Nigeria and South Africa

A. Kachru model

Two linguistic theoretical models aim at describing the development and status of the English language in the colonial and post-colonial context. The first one is the concentric model, developed by Indian linguist Yamuna Kachru, in order to make sense of the role of the English language in countries. The concentric model is made of three circles: the inner circle, the outer circle and the expanding circle. Countries where English is the mother tongue or L1 (the United Kingdom, the United States or New Zealand) are found in the inner circle. The outer circle gathers countries where English is learned as a second language (L2), for instance India, Kenya and Nigeria. The specificity of this circle is also the fact that the English language was imposed on the people. South Africa, where only ten per cent of English speakers are native speakers, is often said to belong to the expanding circle. English is only the fourth spoken language and the three most common languages in South Africa are Zulu, Xhosa and Afrikaans. Nonetheless, English is the language used by the government and mass media, and it can be argued that South African English also belongs to the outer circle and the

inner circle, since different types of English varieties can be considered to be South African English.

B. Schneider's model

The other model that can be used in order to understand the phases of development of the English language is Edgar Schneider's dynamic model. This evolutionary model sets five chronological stages that colonial Englishes have undergone. The foundation stage is the first one: colonies are founded, giving place to the phenomenon of koineization and pidginization. The second phase is the exonormative stabilization: it is when the colonized people adopt the colonizer's identity (through education for example). The third stage is the nativization stage. This phase corresponds to the rise of independence when the local culture and languages are valued more than the Western culture. The endonormative stabilization phase comes next: it corresponds to the post-independence era when local accents and varieties are codified and emphasized, in literature for instance. The last stage is the stage of differentiation. It refers to an increase in regional variation (at the scale of a defined state or country) and local variation (at the scale of social groups). South Africa went through the five stages. The first one, as seen above, is when the British settled their first colonies near Cape Town from 1822 and in Natal from 1856 respectively , resulting in the mixing of English and native languages (koineization and pidgninization). The exonerative stabilization phase took place between the end of the 18th century and beginning of the 20th century with the development of Church mission schools, established in order to convert native South Africans to Christianity and teach them the English language. The nativization phase in South Africa corresponds to the rise of nationalist movements, followed by the endonormative stage when, for instance, South African varieties are no longer considered non-standard, but rather as dialects.

2.1.2. Diversity of languages in Nigeria and SA and spheres in which they are used

A. South Africa

There are eleven official languages in South Africa. A South African speaker either speaks English as a first language, an additional language or a replacement language[13]. Since the British were present in South Africa, several English varieties developed, the main ones being White South African English (WSAE), Black South African English (BSAE) and Indian South African English (ISAE). These are considered sub-varieties of South African English (SAE).

B. Nigeria

Nigeria has the greatest number of languages in Africa, with five hundred languages spoken nowadays. The three main languages are Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. Hausa was the official language of the northern states between 1951 and 1967. Nigerians generally speak only one of these languages. Therefore, English cannot be considered a foreign language, since it is the main language of communication in this multilingual country. It is spoken by the majority of people as a second language. English has been the official language since the time of colonization. Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) has developed since the growing presence of the English language in Nigeria and functions as a *lingua franca*. It is spoken by more than half of the population today. A pidgin is a mix of two languages. The process of pidginization occurs when a population imposes its language to population. The formation of

[13] Language replacement refers to the linguistic phenomenon in which a speech community shifts to another language (usually the predominant one). The shift can be imposed upon the community (in the case of colonization) or voluntary (regarding the status of the language in question)

the new language is therefore quicker than the development of a creole, which is the result of a natural and spontaneous fusion of two languages. In the case of NPE, the lexifier (the dominant language in the process of pidginization and creolization) is the English language. The English language monopolizes the media, politics, the economy, institutions, administration and education.

2.2. Nigerian English and South African English linguistic features

2.2.1. General Nigerian English features

A. Lexical features

In 'Nigerian English', Grace Ebunlola Adamo relates lexical and semantic features present in Nigerian English. She separates these features into three main categories: loanwords (words borrowed from another language), coinages (invented words or phrases) and semantic shifts (the change or evolution of the traditional meaning of a word) or extensions (use of the same word for broader meanings).

a) Loanwords

These are borrowed terms from Nigerian dialects used in the English language, for example:
-*agbada*: a typical dress for men, mostly worn among the Yoruba community.
-*babanriga*: a typical long dress for men, mostly worn among the Hausa community.
-*akara*: a food item, also called 'bean cake'
-*akpu,banga,eba,egusi,ogbono,tuwo*: all refer to a soup from different Nigerian languages
-*danfo, okada*: means of transport
These different words are directly used in their original language due to the cultural gap and the difficulty to translate them.

b) Coinages

Some lexical items are borrowed but can be used with a different meaning. They are 'coined in local English to suit the Nigerian environment':

-*backyard*: original meaning as well as 'buttocks'

-*been-to*: a person who returned to Nigeria after a long period of time spent overseas. -*chewing-stick*: a wood stick that can be chewed in order to clean the teeth.

-*cover-cloth*: a piece of cloth that can be used to cover someone who is sleeping. -*Ghana-must-go*: a bribe

-*overload*: used to describe a car over-carrying passengers or objects.

-*scale through*: overcoming a problem with ease

b) Semantic shifts or extensions

The standard meaning of some lexical items are 'shifted, restricted, or extended': -*trek*: to walk a short distance

-*machine*: a motor cycle

-*station*: one's working place

-*settle*: 'offer gratification of one form or another in order to win favor, bribe' -*long* legs: 'corruption involving nepotism'

-*big*/*senior boys*: rich and influential men

-*four-one-nine*: an imposter, cheat

-*brother*: extended meaning, does not only refer to a biological brother, but also to a member of a tribe, for instance.

-*sorry*: not only used to apologize, but every time sympathy is required

Politeness is also a key principle in the Nigerian culture. People in position of authority or older people are addressed as *Chief,Prof, Doctor, Sir, Pastor*.

B. Grammatical features

In ‘Is Nigerian Pidgin English English?’, Akinmade T. Akande states the following grammatical features of Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE):

-The absence of the inflectional suffix -s in the third person present: ‘Hin go school everyday’ (‘He goes to school everyday’ in Standard English’)

- The presence of TMA (Tense-Aspect-Mood) auxiliaries (been, don, for, go, dey): ‘I don sell it’ (‘I have sold it’ in Standard English’). Here, it is a verbal phrase in NPE.

- Certain relative pronouns (wey and wetin) are found only as in: ‘Na me go see the man why go bring money’ (‘It is me who will see the man who will bring the money’ in Standard English) and ‘I don do wetin you say make I do’ (‘I have done what you said I should do’ in Standard English)

- The presence of the pronouns *am* and *una*: ‘People don talk am plenty time’ (‘People have said it several times’ in Standard English) and ‘Me I see una for town’ (‘I saw you in town’ in Standard English).

C. Phonological features

Generally speaking, English is spoken by a syllable-timed rhythm (like the French language) in contrast with RP (Received Pronunciation) which is spoken by a stress-timed rhythm. Since Nigeria has a very diverse linguistic background, and English is a second language to most Nigerians, speakers tend to adapt the phonological system of their own mother tongue to the English language. The phonological features of Nigerian English thus vary according to the speaker’s mother tongue. As seen above, the three main spoken native languages in Nigeria are Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. For example, the pronunciation of follow by Igbo speakers would be / folo/ instead of /fɔlou/ in RP (the distinction between /o/ and /ɔ/ is not made, and the succession of /o/ and /ɔ/ does not exist in Igbo). Most Yoruba speakers do not distinct between /i:/ and /i/ (in beat and bit for instance). Interdental fricatives (/θ/, /ð/) and alveolar plosives (/t/, /d/) in Standard English are realized as alveolar plosives in NPE.

Here are other features that are notably present in most Nigerian English speakers[14]:

1 there are certain characteristic stress patterns for certain words, *eg: ma*ˈ*dam, main*ˈ*tenance,* ˌ*tri*ˈ*balism,* ˈ*circumference*;
2 English is spoken with a syllable-timed instead of a stress-timed rhythm;
3 compared with most varieties of English, the Nigerian variety has a more restricted system of intonation and a smaller number of vowel distinctions;
4 there is generally an absence of word-final syllabic consonants since a vowel is usually inserted before such consonants, *eg:* [*bɔtᵘl*] for 'bottle', [*litᵘl*] for 'little', [*lesⁱn*] for 'lesson';
5 unstressed syllables which have vowels such as /*i*/ or /*ə*/ in British English generally have other vowels in Nigerian English, *eg:* [*kɔn*ˈ*sist*] for [*kən*ˈ*sist*], 'consist', [ˈ*braitest*] for [ˈ*braitist*], 'brightest',

[ˈ*draiva*] for [ˈ*draivə*], 'driver', and [*a*ˈ*raival*] for [*ə*ˈ*raivəl*], 'arrival'.

[14] Spencer, John, *The English Language in West Africa*, 1971, p.42-43

2.2.2. General South African features

A. Lexical features

In White South African English (WSAE), most lexical items are borrowed or influenced by Afrikaans. However, lexical features are not exclusively used in one particular dialect, varieties being in contact on a daily basis and merging to one another to some extent. Contrary to what might be expected, the term ‘now now’ does not mean ‘right now’, but rather ‘shortly’. The term ‘now now’ comes from the Afrikaans ‘nou nou’, meaning ‘soon’. The modal ‘must’, contrary to its use in RP for example, is used as a polite equivalent of the modals ‘shall’ and ‘should’.

In BSAE, lexical features are borrowed by Bantu languages. The term ‘skorokoro’ (from Sotho) means ‘jalopy’. The expression ‘she is late’, in BSAE, actually means ‘she is dead’ (a phenomenon called ‘idiosyncrasy’).The popular word ‘braai’ (*braaivleis* in Afrikaans, meaning barbecue) was originally used by Afrikaners, but is nowadays part of most English speakers lexis from various ethnic origins. The term ‘bakkie’, referring to a pick-up truck, very common vehicle in South Africa, as well as the term ‘braai’, is used in *July’s People*. They are both present in BSAE as well as in WSAE, since they belong to the standard South African vocabulary.

B. Grammatical features

Regarding the grammatical features of South African English, this research will focus on Black South African English in particular, since the focus of literary dialect in *July’s People* is mainly on the character July, a Black South African servant. BSAE’s grammatical development is highly influenced by the native languages, the most commonly known being

the Bantu languages (Zulu, and Xhosa for instance). One particular feature is the substitution of the personal pronouns *he* and *she*, due to the fact that gender is not marked in Bantu languages. Topicalization, consisting in placing the topic at the beginning of the sentence, is also a common grammatical phenomenon in BSAE. It is characterized by the anaphoric use of pronouns after the subject of the sentence was already indicated, for example: 'The wife and the husband, *they* love each other' (these anaphoric pronouns are the subject of the sentence in Bantu languages). Left dislocation (the object of a clause is placed on the left in the subject position), is a feature similar to topicalization. The personal pronouns are put in the object position for emphasis: 'My *children* I will see *them* tomorrow'[15].
In BSAE, non-count nouns are used as count-nouns: 'We bought two furnitures'.

Two principles characterize BSAE. The economy principle, also defined as 'overgeneralization', with the use of the progressive with stative verbs ('Some people are believing in God'). The hyper clarity principle, for instance the association of the subordinations 'although and 'but' ('Although nuclear power can be very destructive but it can produce benefits')[16].

The use of tenses is an important point. Tense sequencing is frequent in BSAE. Not all verbs are marked in the past tense in Sepedi, Setswana and Sothoto. For example: 'They baked the cake and eat it immediately', 'They saw me at the party and pretend as if they don't see me'.. The sentence 'Re ile trooping ra reka diaparo', meaning (We went to town and buy clothes) can be represented as such: We + go-PAST +town + NARRATIVE PRON + buy-PRESENT + clothes.[17] In Bantu languages, the temporality in a narration is seen as a continuation of a whole.

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[15] Bekker, Ian, 'The Story of South African English: a brief linguistic overview', 2012

[16] Makalela, Leketi, 'Making sense of BSAE for linguistic democracy in South Africa', *World Englishes*, 2004, p.361

[17] Ibid, p.360

C. Phonological features

South African English (SAfE) displays many different varieties. As seen above, the most common ones are labelled in racial terms: Black South African English (BSAE) and White South African English (WSAE).

a) WSAE

Broadly speaking, White SAfE can be represented in a trichotomy, similar to the Australian English (AuE) continuum: Broad South African English (BrSAfE), General South African English (GenSAfE) and Cultivated South African English (CulSAfE). GenSAfE, also referred to as the 'respectable SAfE', is the standard variety, spoken by most White South African English speakers. CulSAfE, also known as the 'conservative SAfE', is the closest variety to RP (Received Pronunciation) and nearly spoken among the young population. Finally, BrSAfE, also called the 'extreme SAfE', often associated with patriotic, right-wing supporters, or even with hostile activity or opinion against African causes.

A study was held concerning what is commonly called 'weak' vowels in linguistics. The vowels in question are happY, commA and lettER, according to Wells' lexical set. The happY vowel, usually realized as /ɪ/ in RP, is commonly pronounced [iː], realization corresponding to the FLEECE vowel. Both commA and lettER vowels are usually realized as a 'low schwa' [ɜ] instead of /ə/ in RP. However, in Broad SAfE, the vowel can be more opened and realized as [ɐˑ] or [ɐ] in Cultivated SAfE.

b) BSAE

Black SAfE, like most English varieties with a colonial past, is divided in three main social groups: the basilect (associated with uneducated speakers), the mesolect (the intermediary language) and the acrolect (associated with educated, upper-class speakers). Here are some

features of BSAE:

-affricates are realized as fricatives

-fricatives are realized as plosives

-rhoticity: realization of [r]

-consonant deletion in coda clusters

-absence of differentiation between the KIT and FLEECE vowels (‘sit’ and ‘seat’)

-fewer contrast of monophtongues

-final open syllables in mother, further, measure, prisoner realized as [a] or [ɑ]

2.3. The question of the status of languages

2.3.1. The status of ‘non-standard’ languages in South Africa and Nigeria

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A. The question of acceptability of languages

It is difficult to give a definition to ‘dialect’ and ‘language’ and to distinguish from one another. In the *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics*, William J.Frawley gives Ammon’s definition as the most effective: ‘A dialect is a language such that (i) there is at least one other language with which it has a high degree of similarity; (ii) there is no language which is regionally included within it as a proper part; and (iii) neither its writing system nor its pronunciation nor its lexicon nor its syntax is officially normalized.’. Following these three criteria, a dialect is often considered a variety of a language that has not been institutionalized and normalized. Contrary to standard languages, dialects are usually not acceptable in a formal context. British English is nowadays one of the most standardized form of English, but its diverse varieties, such as Scottish English, Irish English or Welsh English, do not have the same degree of acceptability and a normalized system of writing. These varieties are considered dialects of the English language. Among these varieties, there are also sub-varieties. As seen previously, South African English is a variety of the English language, and its subvarieties are Black South African English, White South African English and Indian South African English. But the development of the English language is so wide (to the point that we may refer now to Englishes in the plural form) that it is difficult to figure out when and which dialects can be granted the status of language of its own and not just a non-standard form of another language. The first criteria could be the number of people speaking this variety. For instance, African American English, a variety of American English, is spoken by a great number of Americans and has now variations that are acceptable in formal contexts.

Another criteria, although more debatable, is the degree of stabilization of the language. The more a language is stabilized, the more it is acceptable. However this point contradicts the previous one, since languages such as Englishes are in constant development all around the world. This development produces variations on the local level but also on the individual level. The individual variation is called idiolect. This distinction between dialect and idiolect is linked with the question of essentialism and individualism. Where is the line between the collective identity and the individual identity? Should one be prevailed more than the other?

B. Education and languages

The languages of the lexifier (Dutch and English) and Afrikaans were the official languages in South Africa during colonization and apartheid. African languages were not granted official status until 1994. Nowadays, there are eleven official languages in South Africa. During the apartheid era, the Bantu Education Act (1953) shaped an educational system based on the 'mother tongue principle'[18]. This principle divided schools according to the language used as a medium of instruction. The system was highly discriminatory. black children education mainly consisted in training them for manual labor and menial jobs. The aim of this linguistic policy was obviously racial division but it was also to prevent the development of nationalist ideologies among African people themselves.

With more than five hundred languages still spoken nowadays, Nigeria is the African country with the greatest number of languages. English has been the language of education in Nigeria since colonization. As opposed to education used as a dividing tool in South Africa, Nigeria has adopted a uniting education policy. Vernacular languages are still part of the educational curriculum as a subject in primary school and then as an option in secondary schools. Yet outside these classes, dialects are forbidden in Nigerian schools. This reinforces the idea that despite decolonization, the status of languages in countries like Nigeria and South Africa is still influenced by colonial ideologies.

[18] Barkhuizen, Gary and David Gough, 'Language Curriculum Development In South Africa: What place for English?', *TESOL Quaterly*, 1996

2.3.2. The English language: linguistic imperialism?

A. English as an elite language

Even though nationalist ideologies developed in colonized countries as means to reject imperialism, the hegemony of the English language in the post-independence context can be seen as reproducing imperialist ideologies. The standard form of the English language is often British English, no matter how the population perceives it. In South Africa, Received Pronunciation (RP) is associated with the upper-class and prestige. As in Australia, this subvariety (mainly spoken by White South Africans), is also commonly nicknamed 'Cultivated' South African English. Similarly, labels like 'White', 'Black' or 'Indian' demonstrate the subjacent racist relation to languages. The appellations of the varieties are more and more put into questions in linguistic studies[19].

In Nigeria, British English is very present but considered snobbish. After a long and violent colonial past, it is not surprising that the Nigerian population associates British English with an elitist ideology. To compensate, Nigerians would tend to adopt features of American English. As opposed to vernaculars, English is still an important subject in schools, and, as seen earlier, students are forbidden to speak their native language. The English language, especially standard forms of English, has always had a pretentious status of superiority over its varieties. It is interesting to study the linguistic behavior of the populations in independent countries to realize to what extent they are aware of their difficult past and the relation they have with the imperial language.

[19] see Coetzee-Van Rooy and Bertus Van Rooy, 'South African English: labels, comprehensibility and status', *World Englishes*, 2005

B. English as a medium of communication and unifying language

Overall, there is line between the English language as an elite language and the English language as an appropriated language by the former colonized populations. The English language has developed so much in so many different contexts that it is more and more fair to talk about Englishes in the plural. English has been a successful medium of communication in post-colonial countries. When two persons or more do not share the same mother tongue, the English language is naturally chosen as the language of communication. Since most native languages (In Nigeria, South Africa as well as in other former colonies) do not have a writing system, two persons with the same mother tongue, even if they are very close (for example husband and wife), would write to each other in English. People from former colonies have adopted a facility in switching from one language to another according to their needs. In linguistic studies, this sociolinguistic behaviors are called 'code-switching' and 'style-shifting'. Code-switching is when a speaker switches from one language to another, while style-shifting is when a speaker changes his speech style according to the addressed person or the context (for instance a student would not speak the same way to his friend as he speaks to his teacher). Speakers in countries like Nigeria and South Africa have adopted and manipulated the English language in a remarkable way with a general understanding of the sociolinguistic contexts. The English language is ambivalent: it is a unifying language as well as a language characterized by its different levels of variations. The diversity of the language shows how the populations are able to use a language that had been once imposed on them and make it their own. Nigerians have actually developed a real sense of ownership regarding the English language.

The study of English variations in Nigeria and South Africa are useful to understand the scope of linguistic theories and debates on modern societies, and how connected it is to politics. Overall, the English language has an ambiguous identity in former colonies. It is both the language of the colonizer and a medium of communication which allowed hundreds of communities to appropriate it as their own language. This process has led to a constant development of variations of the English language which has demonstrated the unlimited human capacity to create new languages. This idea will be useful in the way Nadine Gordimer and Ken Saro-Wiwa use literary dialect and languages for political means.

Chapter 3 - Literary dialect and language in *July's People* and *Sozaboy*

This final chapter will demonstrate the relation between both writer's use of language and their political stances. The use of literary dialect in *Sozaboy* and *July's People* is indeed implicitly showing the writers' assertions on sociolinguistic debates and political issues. First of all, the study of the notion of literary dialect is relevant to comprehend the interest in incorporating this device in writing.

3.1 Literary dialect: a satirical representation of languages?

3.1.1. The offensive approach of language representation in literature

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A. Victorian literature and literary dialect

Most Victorian works displaying literary dialect do so in a stereotypical and comic way, often considered offensive regarding certain British people. For example, Irish English is often used in literary works for comic effects. Charles Dickens, one of the most famous Victorian novelists, used literary dialect in a way that was sometimes considered offensive. His characters, whether American or British, are very stereotypical. His use of literary dialect aims at representing linguistic clichés to convey humour. About the depiction of Dickens' American and British characters, Louise Pound writes: 'They are caricatures embodying certain characteristics, as it is often to be expected from this novelist. But they are no more eccentric and little more addicted to dialect than are his English characters […]. One can understand, however, that they made the American readers restive. Dickens tends to picture

our countrymen as offensive, conceited, bad-mannered, and ignorant, but he does so humorously.' (126). Charles Dickens received many negative critics about his pejorative portrayal of American people. He was himself very critical of the American society (particularly regarding slavery). Literary dialect was often considered offensive, at least by its contemporaries.

B. Nadine Gordimer as a white female writer representing Black South African dialects

When July's People was published, Nadine Gordimer faced backlash regarding her representation of dialects associated with the black population. The novel was banned from schools by the Gauteng Province, South Africa's most important province, presumably because 'the subject matter is questionable ... the language that is used is not acceptable, as it does not encourage good grammatical practices ... the reader is bombarded with nuances that do not achieve much ... any condemnation of racism is difficult to discover - so the story comes across as being deeply racist, superior and patronising.'[20]. Her position as a white writer may be what triggered Gauteng province to consider *July's People* as a racist work, which is ironic given the fact that Nadine Gordimer has spent most of her life denouncing racial and social inequalities in South Africa. Literary dialect seems to be a taboo subject whenever the writer does not belong to the ethnic background they seek to represent through language. Ironically, Gauteng Province, by stating that 'the language that is used is not acceptable', is the one giving a patronizing and racist statement. Literary dialect is at the heart of issues regarding racism and Nadine Gordimer had to face misinterpretations of her work.

[20] Cartright, Justin. 'Stranger Than Fiction', *The Guardian*, 2001

3.1.2. Literary dialect: between stereotypical, linguistic and aesthetic representations

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A. The evolution of the status of literary dialect in literature

Overtime, the purpose of literary dialect has evolved. From the beginning of the 19th century, an increase in dialect representation has been noted in British fiction. The widespread use of literary dialect is linked with the acceptability of the represented languages. The question is to know whether literary dialect is more and more used because dialects are more and more acceptable, or if they are more acceptable because they are more and more represented in fiction. According to Jane Hodson and Alex Broadhead, 'it is important to be wary of celebrating the development of dialect representation in the novel as *de facto* evidence of increased acceptability for dialect and dialect speakers' (329). In American literature, literary dialect was initially used in order to mock Afro-American communities. More contemporary works using literary dialects have shown the evolution of both the function and the reception of such device. Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*, a novel about black maids during segregation, was written by a white novelist. Even though it widely borrows African American English features, the novel received critical acclaim, giving voice to minorities (black women in particular). It was referred to as the other side of the coin of *Gone With the Wind,* a work known for its offensive depiction of black people.

B. The artistic function and necessity of literary dialect

One issue that surrounds the subject study of literary dialect is the authenticity of the language represented. However, the adjective 'literary' should remind us of the fictional dimension of dialects in literature. In 'Recent Studies in Victorian English Literary Dialect

and its Linguistic Connections', Sue Edney insists on the irrelevance of the dialectal accuracy debate:

> Dialect enables different perspectives; *literary* dialect – what the artist chooses to put in – increases rather than reduces diversity. In their natural desire to map, elucidate and bring to the fore the many varieties of English in written form during the 19th century, linguists often appear to miss this necessary aesthetic principle. The story is usually the main event and the telling of it adds to or detracts from its *artistic* integrity – accuracy is only important if it assists the

Thus, literary dialect is first and foremost an artistic device. As Jane Raymond Walpole claims, 'no reader demands complete authenticity' (191). What matters is the effect it has on the readers. Whether it is 'linguistically illogical' and 'socially offensive', literary dialect is 'dramatically indispensable' (Walpole, 191). Following the same idea, Edney associates the notion of 'performance' to literary dialect rather than the notion of authenticity. She also focuses on the term 'ficto-linguistics' coined by Susan Ferguson: 'both [literary dialect and socio-linguistic representation] deviate from accepted or expected socio-linguistic patterns and indicate identifiable alternative patterns congruent to other aspects of the fictional world.' (qtd. in Edney 670). With this, Edney notes that attempting to measure the level of authenticity in linguistic representation is implying that there is a standard language to which to refer to, plus denying variability in sociolinguistic contexts. Similarly, Manuel Jobert, in 'Graphie et encodage dialectal : le Cockney de Somerset Maugham dans *Liza of Lambeth*', asserts that literary dialect has an impressionist function, meaning that it aims at 'alluding' to reality, not to 'duplicate' it[21]. Overall, the question of authenticity is quite limited in fiction and the issue of aesthetic and effects are much more relevant.

[21] Complete and untranslated quote: 'L'utilisation du dialecte en fiction aurait donc un rôle fonctionnel dont le but serait d'évoquer le réel sans tenter de le dupliquer' (Jobert, 72-73)

C. General differences between Gordimer's and Saro-Wiwa's use of literary dialect

The main difference in narrative is that *July's People* is a third person narrative novel and *Sozaboy* is a first person narrative novel. Instances of linguistic variations are therefore much more present in *Sozaboy,* both in dialogues and in the narration. Ken Saro-Wiwa explores language and its evolution through the combination of multiple Nigerian varieties and variations in the novel. Literary dialect in *Sozaboy* is a linguistic experimentation, yet revealing severe issues rooted in the Nigerian context. Nadine Gordimer, as a white female writer, represents dialects associated with the black community in South Africa, which can be controversial. However the use of eye dialect in particular is quite limited in *July's People*, and is equally present on the behalf of black and white characters. In *July's People*, they are only present in dialogues. Some lexical features are present in the narration, but always along with the narrator's reflexion on them (like the definition of the 'bakkie' which will be discussed in the following part). July's dialect is linguistically stable; the reader can easily comprehend the coherent dialect built by Gordimer. On the contrary, *Sozaboy* offers a much more diverse and distorted linguistic narration. Standard English does not dominate the text, as opposed to *July's People*. The instances of literary dialect are not consistent and vary according to the characters and the contexts in which they are implemented. It could be argued that the use of literary dialect in Nadine Gordimer's *July's People* contributes to the assertion of the authenticity and acceptability of South African dialects associated with black communities. July's dialect is created in a way that allows the reader to understand and embrace the language. In *Sozaboy*, the incoherence and constant variation of the dialects, yet still borrowing features from Nigerian Pidgin English, interfere with the reader's grasp on language. Literary dialects in both novels are based on solid knowledge of linguistic realities, but their utilizations produce different aesthetic results, even though their social and political goals are similar.

3.2. The linguistic and sociolinguistic approach of literary dialect

3.2.1. Linguistic accuracies found in the two novels

A. July's People

a) Lexical features

Instances of lexical features are quite limited in the novel. The first lexical reference is the term 'bakkie' along with its definition: 'a small truck with a three-liter engine, fourteen-inch wheels with heavy-duty ten-ply tyres, and a sturdy standard chassis on which the buyer fits a fibreglass canopy with windows, air-vents and foam-padded benches running along either side, behind the cab' (5). To this interestingly long detailed definition, the narrator specifies that this vehicle is particularly used by white families, especially Afrikaners. By giving a definition of this well known South African word, Nadine Gordimer keeps a distance from her own writing environment and acknowledges the extent of her readership, which is not limited to South Africa. The long definition provided by the writer conveys a sense of satire, considering the bakkie as a *cliché* object among the White South African community.

On pages 96-97, July says to Maureen Smales 'The women have their work. They must do it. This is their place, we are always living here and they are doing all things, all things how it must be. You don't need work for them in their place'. The term 'place' seems indeed to mean 'role'. Following this, the narrator, with the internal focalization on the character Maureen, specifies this lexical variation, putting it as an inappropriate use of the term ('He might mean 'place' in the sense of role'). Gordimer's point of view on this judgmental tone regarding linguistic variation can be visible with the use of italics in 'When *she* didn't understand *him*'.

The personal pronouns are indeed emphasized to enhance Maureen's bias on language communication, who considers her own language as superior.

The term 'baas' is used on page 117 in 'He - Bam, if he wants to gloat with *umlungu*, white baas, *nkosi*, more, *hosi* and his family delivered into their hands - there was nothing he would say to them'. *Baas* means 'master' (or boss) in Afrikaans. It is frequently used in SafE, mostly by black people, and can be considered offensive.

b) Grammatical features

The grammatical features of BSAE are the most represented in *July's People*. The character is the only character directly speaking in his own dialect, except for the headman of the village July introduces to the Smales family (110). These are the main features regularly present in July's dialect:

-the use of the progressive for stative verbs (common in BSAE): 'How they know I'm not driving'(13), 'One time he's working there in Bethal', 'When it's stopping to rain you come with me' (53). All these instances show stative verbs (to drive, to work and to rain) with the progressive form. This is the main grammatical feature in BSAE.

-the unmarked tenses: 'I tell them you give it to me', 'The white people are chased away from their houses and we take' (13), 'we like to have the picture' (32), 'One time he's working there in Bethal' (53). In these examples, the past tense and the conditional as they would be used in standard English are replaced by the present tense. The tense system in a lot of African native languages are not the same as in English. As seen earlier, time is continuous and conceived as a whole.

- the levelling of irregular verbs to the third person: 'Plenty people is know me', 'Some soldiers was coming by the shops' (54).

-the inflectional morpheme -s in third person conjugated verbs tends to disappear: 'She speak nice and always, she pay fine for me when I'm getting arrested, when I'm sick one time she call the doctor'. (70), 'He know who is it me...' (100). This is feature is not typically BSAE, but it is present in most English varieties. It is, for example, present in African American English. It can easily be recognized by the reader.

-the lack of interrogative auxiliaries in interrogative sentences: ‘You like to have some tea’ (1), ‘You want I make fire now?’ (10), ‘You heard something what they say?’(94).
-the unique use of the question tag ‘isn’t it?’: ‘Everybody is like that, isn’t it?’ (13), ‘I’m from here since I’m born, isn’t it?’(54), ‘Is no good someone else is driving the car isn’t it?’(59),‘You don’t like I musk keep the keys isn’t it?’ (69). The question tag is a typical English feature. It can be confusing to anyone learning the English language as a second language. This feature can be present in many English varieties, not only BSAE. It adds to the coherence of the literary dialect shaped by Nadine Gordimer.

c) Eye dialect

Phonological features are represented by writers with the use of eye dialect. Its aim is to transcribe pronunciations and accents and make them visible in the writing. In this novel, Nadine Gordimer uses eye dialect for both Black and White characters.
The instances of eye dialect with black characters (July or the chief) are as follows:
-‘You make small fire inside today, s’coming little bit cold’(52). The morpheme -s is a contraction of the contraction *It’s*.
-‘Ev-’ry village’ (112). Again, the dash along with the apostrophe is used here to enhance the oral contractions.
-‘The chief wants to know exactly what it is that’s happening there, Jewburg’ (116). What follows is a specification in parenthesis by the narrator ‘The contraction is not antisemitic, it’s a matter of pronunciation’. ‘Jewburg’ is a derogatory pun for Johannesburg. The writer chose not to write it as ‘Jo’burg’, as it would be written in eye dialect. Instead, Gordimer stresses the conflictual and racist aspect of the South African society through the spelling of the city which first seems, as the narrator states, just ‘a matter of pronunciation’.
The following examples of the use of eye dialect are the ones from the side of white characters:
-‘Wha’d’you think I am’ (127). Here, the contractions emphasize the aggressiveness of the character Bam (Maureen’s husband).
-‘What if someone’s buried it? C’mon, let’s dig, Vic?’ (144). This line is Royce addressing to

his older brother Victor. The contraction seems to be used as a mean to express a form of childlike excitement.

-'You c'n tell the police dad' (Victor to Bam, 145).

Interestingly, Nadine Gordimer does not use eye dialect that much, and it tinges the speech of black characters as much as white characters. July's language, non-standard yet coherent and understandable, constitutes an 'in-between' language. Ali Khoshnood, in 'The Impact of Deracination on Colonial Zone: Nadine Gordimer's *July's People*', sheds light on July's proximity to the white community: "July represents the culturally in-between figure of the urban Black who speaks a hybrid English and occupies the space between Martha who is "black−black" and the white Smales" (qtd in 182).

B. Sozaboy

a) Lexical features

Most lexical items in *Sozaboy* can easily be found in the author's glossary at the end of the book (182-187), and they usually are written in italics in the text. For that matter, only a few a them will be discussed in this sub-part:

-*chop* (frequently used): to eat, food

-*tiefman* (2): a thief / thieves

-*fit* (83, 'we fit see everybody well'): can

-*commot* (40, 'till blood commot from my mouth'): come out. Interestingly, on page 122, come out is used as such: 'and blood did not come out of my body'. The prepositions are also different: 'from' and 'of'.

-*cut* (47, 'my heart was cutting'): beat

-*gratulate* (2). This is an archaic term. It is written in italics in the text.

-some adjectives are used twice, as such: 'big big', 'well well', 'proper proper' (p.1), 'fine fine' (78).

-'jollying' (101): the old-fashioned term 'jolly' is turned into a verb.

b) Grammatical features

Here are the main grammatical features found in *Sozaboy*:

-determination zero: 'because of new government', 'as young man and apprentice driver' (1), 'I am very old man' (52).

- absence of the inflection -s at the end of a third person verb: 'it is Chief Birabee who want to chop your money' (8), 'When I ask my master what he think' (9). In other instances, the third person singular -s is present: 'So he likes to call meeting of Dukana elders to ask what is happening and what he will do' (4), 'When the lorry spoils we must send it to the garage' (12).

-verbalization of adjectives: 'I was prouding myself' (28), 'You will sick' (61), 'You will sorry me' (101), 'the water have full the mangrove' (108).

-verbalization of nouns: 'The thing pained me' (11), 'He cannot prison anybody' (41)

-intransitive verbs turned into transitive verbs: 'reply me' (37), 'begin move' (96)

-the progressive form is replaced by the infinitive after 'instead of': 'instead of to be happy', 'instead of to pay fine' (52).

-possessive pronouns levelled to subject personal pronouns: 'Gun sef they no give we', 'Hitla no be we brother' (29), 'As the drink come enter we body' (101). On the same page, the possessive pronoun is used: 'all our guns were inside pit'.

-irregular verbs levelled to infinitive form in third person conjugation: 'I think she like me'(57), 'he have gone to that soza captain' (101). In other instances, they are conjugated standardly: 'Chief Birabee does not bother' (9), 'He was saying that he will take police to hold anyone who does not agree to pay' (10-11).

-presence of the NPE conjunction 'wey' (meaning *who* or *that*): e.g 'you cannot find better woman wey you go dey take make small cooleh?'

-presence of the NPE verb dey (meaning 'is' or 'are', see instance above)

-tense sequencing: 'Then Chief Birabee stood up and begin to speak' (6). In other instances, tense is very standard, even complex for a non-native speaker: 'All those things that they have been telling us before is stupid lie' (114).

c) Eye dialect

- th-fronting: ‘tink’, ‘dese’, ‘dere’, ‘dis’, ‘dem’ (2). These instances are taken from a dialogue piece by a character called Okonkwo. This particular device is not used in the narration. Here the orality and th-fronting are emphasized by omitting the letter ‘h’ (fricative sounds are absent from Nigerian dialects)
- ‘porson’ (43): the misspelling of the word ‘person’ suggests it is realized as /ɔ/ instead of /ə/. However, the regular spelling is also present on the same page.
-‘praps’ (52): ‘perhaps’. The sound /h/ is deleted (aspirated sounds do not exist in Nigerian dialcets). As a consequence, the word is pronounced as one single syllable.
- ‘will’gree’ (57): the apostrophe implies that the schwa vowel in *agree* is not pronounced
- h-dropping: ‘look as’e dey stand’ (58) and ‘whenever’e see soza’ (59): here, the letter ‘e’ followed by the apostrophe suggests the absence of the aspirated ‘h’ in *he*.
- ‘kain’ (59): the misspelling of the word ‘kind’. The consonant /d/ disappears. This could be related to the fact that consonant clusters are not common in Nigerian dialects. The combination of the vowels ‘ai’ also suggests that it is realized as the FACE vowel instead of the PRICE vowel in RP (see J.C Wells’ vowel chart)

What is interesting is that both non-standard features and standard features are present in the novel in each linguistic category.

3.2.2. Sociolinguistic assertions made by the writers

A. July's People

The key issue reflected in Gordimer's novel is the question of acceptability of languages. One criteria of a standard language is its level of stabilization. The more it is stabilized, the more it is considered reaching standard form. July's language is consistent throughout the novel, as opposed to the Smales family. Indeed, occurrences of eye dialect are condensed in the last pages of the novel, and most of the instances are in white characters' dialogues. This could be an anticipated reflection on the linguistic evolution of the white community in a society where black people rebelled and took over the whites. It is also an interesting way to reverse the use of eye dialect, which is generally associated with an attempt to mock minorities through the representation of their languages. The stability of July's language, on the contrary, makes it the language of standardization, if not authority. In the novel, language is a key element in relationships of power. Maureen's prejudice on July's language shows her own assertion that her language is superior, especially in the way she supposes that July 'might mean "place" in the sense of role' (97). On the same page, the narrator writes: 'When *she* didn't understand *him* it was her practice to give some noncommittal sign or sound, counting on avoiding the wrong response by waiting to read back his meaning from the context of what he said next'. This emphasis on 'she' and 'him' is an interesting hint at supposing that Maureen, who embodies western ideologies, is the missing element in effective communication. She is the one who does not understand July because she considers his language non-suited for mutual understanding. According to the Smaleses, Black people are the ones who have to make an effort at understanding or making themselves understood. Maureen says: 'I've found out that Martha does understand — a little Afrikaans, not English. It's just that she's shy to try'. Nadine Gordimer points out white peoples' tendency (whether it is unconscious or not) to prioritize languages like English or Afrikaans as media of communication. The youngest of the family, Gina, learns local children's lullabies and is the

only one to actually engage with the vernacular spoken by black people. Her skills in learning a non-standard language can be a consequence of her innocence and lack of prejudices.

B. Sozaboy

In *Sozaboy*, standard English is depicted as the language of the elite. When Mene talks about how much he wanted to study, standard English seems to be a key to success: 'I wanted to be big man like lawyer or doctor riding car and talking big big English' (11). Similarly, when Mene meets the Chief Commander General, he refers to his English as 'fine fine grammar', 'using big big words that [he] cannot understand' (78). Moreover, when he meets Agnes, his future girlfriend, Mene comments on his name: 'Agnes. Na good name. Na English name. I like am' (18). English is associated with authority and success. The adjectives 'fine' and 'big' repeated twice aims at creating dialectal representation as well as emphasizing the weight of standard English in postcolonial societies. The narrator also seems to distance himself from the colonizer's language, a language he cannot understand. There is an ambivalence here, as the adjectives suggest both superiority and distanciation. Ken Saro-Wiwa implies here that both languages, Mene's language and standard English, are not the same. Mene's use of archaic terms, such as 'gratulate' (2) is a vestige of the long-lasting colonial past. This is confirmed later on in the novel, after Mene realizes the atrocity of war and attempts to run away and starts to pray: 'Oh my God, why has thou forsaken me? That is what I was saying to myself as they used to say in the Bible' (117). The expression 'why has thou forsaken me' is very formal and archaic. It is what remains of centuries of christianisation, but it does not sound spontaneous in the mouth of Mene. Rather, and as the narrator specifies ('as they used to say it the Bible'), it is the language that was imposed upon him.

3.3. The political approach of literary dialect

3.3.1. The lack of communication: a form of oppression

A. The oppression of Nigerian communities by the government in *Sozaboy*

Ken Saro-Wiwa defines language in Sozaboy as 'rotten English'. In 'Author's Note', he writes:

> Sozaboy's language is what I call 'rotten English', a mixture of Nigerian pidgin English, broken English and occasional flashers of good, even idiomatic English. This language is disordered and disorderly. Born of mediocre education and severely limited opportunities, it borrows words, patterns and images freely from the mother-tongue and finds expression in a very limited English vocabulary. To its speakers, it has the advantage of having no rules and no syntax. It thrives on lawlessness, and is part of the dislocated and discordant society in which Sozaboy must live, move and have not his being.

Then, language in *Sozabo*y is a reflection of society. According to Erin James, 'standardized grammar itself is a system of oppression in the Niger Delta' (428) in the novel. Harry Garuba argues that the use of standard English and Nigerian Pidgin only is not efficient to represent Ken Saro-Wiwa's reality and Mene's experience, and that a 'different variety of English has to be invented to do the job.' (qtd. in James 433). This new language is a way to show Mene's confusion regarding his own socio-historical context. The limited vocabulary of the narrator is indeed a good instance of the lack of communication between the political order and Nigerian citizens. Jeffrey Gunn justly notes the repetition of 'vague, meaning less words' (4) such as 'trouble' , 'sozas', or 'ennemy' as the expression of confusion among the Duakana people. The elusiveness of terms like 'bad' or 'good' can also be Ken Saro-Wiwa's denunciation of

how politicians manipulate language in order to manipulate the people. Noam Chomsky believes that there is linguistic conspiracy between politics and the media which limit vocabulary in order to make citizens consent their political environment. One of his famous examples is the 'War Department' becoming the 'Defense Department'. (Joseph 19). 'Defense' is indeed a more acceptable term from an ethical point of view. What is also interesting is the fact that the Nigerian civil war is not named as such in the novel. Language and its manipulation in *Sozaboy* is mirroring the oppression of the vulnerable, local people like the people from Dukana in the novel or the Ogoni people in the Nigerian context.

B. Racism, oppression and language in *July's People*

Similarly to Ken Saro-Wiwa, Nadine Gordimer tackles the issues of racism and oppression through her use of language. As demonstrated earlier, Maureen Smales considers July's language as inferior to her own. As Michael Andindilile illustrates in 'Reimagining African communities: Achebe, Ngũgĩ, Gordimer, Farah and the Anglophone African novel', languages in *July's People* are represented in terms of cultural and social gap. The Smaleses and the local people have a hard time communicating: Maureen tells her son Victor that July's locals 'don't understand our languages', Bam says that none of the women he meets can 'speak his languages' and when he joins a few men to drink he finally can communicate a little because one of them 'could speak could speak a few words not of English but of Afrikaans' (qtd. in Andindilile 146). As it is suggested, communication can only be established thanks to efforts on the behalf of black characters. Andindilile rightly remarks that even though Maureen and Bam are liberal whites, they never learned July's language during all this time he worked for them: 'Why is it the whites who speak their languages are never people like us, they're always the ones who have no doubt that whites are superior?' (qtd. in Andindilile 147). Here, Maureen differentiates herself and her husband from the white people who speak indigenous languages. Bam explains: 'Whites in the pass offices and labour bureaux who used to have to deal with blacks all the time across the counter' to whom 'speaking an African language was

simply a qualification, so far as they were concerned, that's all. Something you had to have to get the job' (qtd.in Andindilile 147). It is implied that when white people learn African languages, it is only for economic reasons, as a tool of exploitation. On the contrary, the black characters who can communicate with Bam are the ones who speak English or Afrikaans, which are specifically the languages of the oppressor.

When Bam and Maureen meet the chief of the village with July, the latter pronounces Johannesburg as 'Jewburg'. What follows is a sentence between parenthesis: 'The chief wants to know what it is that is happening there, Jewburg. (The contraction is not antisemitic, it's a matter of prononciation.)' (116). This narrator's intrusion, comparable to the passage of the definition of the bakkie, seems to serve as an acknowledgment on the behalf of the writer that the society she writes about is rooted in racism. By jumping on an explanation in order to inform the reader that the pun is not racist, Gordimer seems to anticipate the reader's reaction, and this anticipated reaction shows how omnipresent and oppressive the issue of racism is in the South African society.

3.3.2. Re-establishing communication

A. Giving voice to minorities

Post-colonial novels share a common trait: they refuse to perpetrate western discourse and want to show the perspective of the subalterns instead. *Sozaboy*'s narrator is homodiegetic and everything is represented from Mene's point of view. The first person narrative and constant internal focalisation places the reader in a confusing story world, just like the narrator. *Sozaboy* is the story of a young man going to war but the traditional historical and political discourse is reversed. It is a version of history that is barely represented in History books. The representation and use of language in the novel is relevant to political subversion. It shows how diverse the experience of the Nigerian Civil War and History can be. On the contrary, western authorities tend to monopolize historical discourse. Each character in the novel has its own way of speaking. Language not only is a variation of another language but each one of them are recognizable by varieties which differentiate one another. In terms of socio-linguistics, it can be said that each character has their idiolect. This linguistic aspect enhances individuality. Moreover, Mene's language undergoes variations, his language evolves and varies constantly throughout the novel. For example, Mene's use of determinants varies. There is a lack of determinant in 'I am very clever boy' (11) contrary to 'She is a very clever girl' (57). On page 43, both the standard spelling 'person' and 'porson' are used. 'Commot from' and 'come out of' are also both used by Mene: 'they will beat me proper proper till blood commot from my mouth and body' (40), 'I am like dead goat only I never begin smell, and blood did not come out of my body' (122). Mene's changing language is a counterpoint to the idea that language should be unified. It is also a way to show that the experience of History is multiple and should not be told by the voice of the oppressor only.

July's People is also a subversive novel in the sense that the political order is disrupted. From page 18 to page 23, July and his wife are talking about the Smaleses . Their language is represented indirectly, through the prism of the English language. The word 'overseas' in italics is a reminder that both characters are actually speaking another language. It is said:

‘The English word broke the cadence of their language’ (20). Even though the language is not represented in *lingua franca*, the two characters’ conversation is shown to the reader. This seems to be a self-reflexive commentary on the fact that white people, even when they are liberal and black people rights defenders, still perpetuate white domination. Nadine Gordimer still acknowledges the value of indigenous languages with the use of terms in lingua franca: the Zulu words ‘*ihlikanhi*’ (95), ‘*hubyeni*’, ‘*kgotla*’ (109), ‘*umlungu*’, ‘*nkosi, morema,hosi*’ (117) are some examples. Most of the time, these words are accompanied by a definition, either by the character or the narrator, which is a didactic way to open the reader to languages that have been so far overlooked. Gordimer creates a ‘polylingual environment’ with characters who live in a ‘multi-lingual space’ (Andindilile, 117).

B. Intermediary between minorities and majorities

By confronting different languages, *July’s People* and *Sozaboy* re-establish a connection between the western world and ethnic minorities. The target readership in both novels is particularly obvious. In *July’s People*, the narrator’s commenting on language like the definitions of foreign words is welcoming for readers outside South Africa. Similarly, non-English words in *Sozaboy* are written in italics and gathered in the Glossary at the end of the novel (182-187). It is a didactic way to open the reader to the wide range of languages. It is also the acknowledgment of both writers that they are writing for an international readership. Of course, their approach is political. Gordimer and Saro-Wiwa want to share and denounce the ongoing racial and social oppression in their country. In *July’s People*, July is in-between the western world and society as it is experienced by minorities. He is a translator which allows communication between the white community (represented by the Smaleses) and ethnic groups (represented by his family and locals). For instance, July serves as an intermediary during the scene when Bam and Maureen meet the Chief of the village. Instances of reported speech places July as the medium of communication between the two communities: ‘He’s say he can’t believe that’ (116), ‘He says, the government […] they going

to take his country here from him' (118). In *Sozaboy*, the narrator often addresses the reader directly. For example, on page 40, Mene says 'If I owe you money and I cannot pay, than you will call soza for me'. The personal pronoun 'you' could be generic but another instance on shows the reader's implication in the narration: 'I think you understand as that camp dey that day'(112). Just like Nadine Gordimer implicitly acknowledges an international target readership, Ken Saro-Wiwa enhances the presence of the reader in his writing through the character of Mene. The latter may be addressing western readers to trigger a sense of responsibility and political commitment.

When writing *July's People* and *Sozaboy*, Nadine Gordimer and Ken Saro-Wiwa had a thorough knowledge on the languages they were representing. Both writers were aware of the sociolinguistic theories and what they implicated in the political context. They used literary dialect and language in their writing as a tool to emphasize their role and importance in political and social contexts. Language has everything to do with identity and issues of racism and political oppression.

Conclusion

July's People and *Sozaboy* are both novels from the African continent published in the 1980s. Nadine Gordimer shapes an imagined post-apartheid society, whereas Ken Saro-Wiwa sets the narration in a specific historical context, the Nigerian Civil War, even though it is not clearly stated in the novel. Both authors write in restrictive and racial conditions and share the same fervor to fight against them. With the use of literary dialect, Nadine Gordimer and Ken Saro-Wiwa implicitly participate in the sociolinguistic debates about the evolution and the social and political status of languages. *July's People* subverts the political order. It is no longer the whites who are in power. July's language becomes the language of both authority and communication. *Sozaboy* represents a distorted and chaotic world by showing the perspective of minorities through his use of a literary dialect which varies constantly. This aspect is connected with the idea that the standardization of a language does not mean much in a country where there is almost as many ways of speaking as there are individuals. Contrary to the overwhelming presence of dialectal features in *Sozaboy*, *July's People* only displays literary dialect in dialogues, mainly on the behalf of black characters like July. But eye dialect, which was once commonly used by white writers in order to mock racial and social minorities, is mostly present in the white characters' novel. This way Nadine Gordimer finds a balance in her representation of languages. Her novel is much more standard than Saro-Wiwa's novel, but her intention is to open the western readership to ethnic languages and languages wrongly considered 'broken' English. Ken Saro-Wiwa has a similar approach with his glossary of non-standard terms to help the reader understand. Overall, their use of literary dialect goes along with their political motivations and it shows how significant debates surrounding languages are in politics. Literary dialects in both novels are based on solid knowledge of linguistic realities, but their utilizations produce different aesthetic results, even though their social and political goals are similar.

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