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Linguistic innovation in the New West African Europhone novel: Between Interlanguage and Indigenization¹

Abstract. Writers in West Africa have deployed innovative linguistic strategies to indigenize the language of the new West African novel. The novels of the Beninese writer, Adelaide Fassinou's *Modukpè: Le Reve brisé, Enfant d'autrui, fille de personne* and *Toute une vie ne suffirait pas pour en parler* and the Nigerian author, Abimbola Adunni Adelokun's *Under the Brown Rusted Roofs* are analyzed to demonstrate indigenous features that are applied in the European languages in which the novels are written. The paper posits that the language of the two writers is placed between their mother tongue, the Yoruba language, and the European languages (French and English) which they use to create their literary works. The paper concludes that African orature, translation, transliteration, metaphor, and metonymy constitute the strategies of linguistic innovation and indigenization employed by the writers.

1. Introduction

From Obi Wali's (1963) Makerere outburst, through Ngugi's (1981) Marxist idealist position to Achebe's (1965) moderate stance, African writers have been deploying different strategies to manipulate the European languages with which they create their texts. Language issue in African literatures has attracted an array of critical discourses by writers and critics such as Niyi Osundare (1983, 1984, 1995), Ahmadou Kourouma (1970, 1978), Gassama, Makhily (1995), Chantal Zabus (1991, 2007), Blachere, Jean-Claude (1993), Adewole Adejare (1992, 1998), Kayode Omole (1998), Bill Ashcroft (1998, 2001), Anatole Mbang (1999), Herbert Igboanusi (2002), Femi Osofisan (2006), Ayo Kehinde (2009), and Jane Bryce (2010).

In this paper, I classify the West African writers into three groups: first, second, and third generations. The first generation comprises writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka,

Christopher Okigbo, J. P. Clark, Ayi Kwei Armah, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Cheikh Anta Diop, Cheikh Hamidou Kane, Ousame Socé, Félix Couchoro, Abdoulaye Sadj, Amadou Hampâté Bah, Sembène Ousmane, Bernard Dadie, Camara Laye, Mongo Beti, Ferdinand Oyono, Nazi Boni, Olympe Bhely Quénou. The second generation writers are Niyi Osundare, Femi Osofisan (whose pen name is Okinba Launko), Isidore Okpewho, Kofi Ayindoho, Tanure Ojaide, Festus Iyayi, Ahmed Yerima, Ahmadou Kourouma, Jean Pliya, and the third generation of writers like Ben Okri, Remi Raji, Ademola Dasylva, Esiaba Irobi, Chiedu Ezeanah, Akeem Lasisi, Maik Nwosu, Toyin Adewale, Ogaga Ifowodu, Seffi Atta, Helen Oyeyemi, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Sule Egya, Lola Shoneyin, Ramonu Sanusi, and Abimbola Adunni Adelakun, Adelaide Fassinou, Chabi Dere Allagbe, and Abibatou Traoré.

The focus of this paper is the third generation of the new West African writers called, to borrow the expression of the Djiboutian writer Abdourahmane Alli Waberi, “*les enfants de la postcolonie*.” This group is very large, especially in Nigeria. It can be divided into two: the first part include writers like Ben Okri, Remi Raji, Ademola Dasylva, Akeem Lasisi, Esiaba Irobi, Ogaga Ifowodo, Chinedu Ezeanah, Toyin Adewale and Adelaide Fassinou, who is a Beninois writer, while the second category constitutes writers like Lola Shoneyin, Abimbola Adunni Adelakun, Ramonu Sanusi (from Nigeria) and Chabi Dere Allagbe from Benin Republic.

The majority of the writers of the third generation were born in the 1960s, the years of the independence of many West African countries like Nigeria and Republic of Benin. No wonder Waberi calls them “children of the postcolony”. It is also important to mention that many of them were taught in the Universities by their precursors of the second generation. For instance, Remi Raji was taught by Niyi Osundare, Femi Osofisan and Isidore Okpewho. Femi Osofisan, as a Visiting Professor at the University of Leeds, taught Esiaba Irobi. There is no

doubt that, in addition to their talents, they take inspiration and indeed formal training in creative writings from these precursors.

In this paper, I intend to show that the new writers, while trying to indigenize their writings, adopt more radical strategies of innovation in their language use than their forerunners. In their texts, they deploy, in a specialized manner, linguistic strategies like African orature, proverbs, translation/transliteration, pidginization, intra/intertextuality, euphemism, metaphor, and metonymy.

2. Politics of Language in African Literatures

The new generation of West African writers are daring in the subversion and appropriation of the European languages with which they produce their texts. They freely deploy different linguistic strategies to indigenize and domesticate the borrowed medium they employ. Like Achebe who claims, “I have been given the language (English) and I intend to stretch it to accommodate my African thoughts” (1964:348), Pius Adesanmi, apparently in response to Ngugi’s idealist posture, also boasts that the new generation of African writers will not only continue to use the European languages, they will also subvert, appropriate and decolonize them to express their African experiences and worldview. He says:

My generation writes predominantly in English, Nigerian English, and shall continue to do so in the foreseeable future. That does not in any way make us Europhiliacs or agents of imperialism. The Igbo genius is unmistakable in Oguibe’s poetry as the Yoruba genius is in the poetry of Adewale and Raji. (126)

This position taken by Adesanmi is not strange to the language debate in African literatures; it is one of the numerous responses to the extreme and idealist positions of Obi Wali and Ngugi wa Thiong’o respectively. Earlier on, Abiola Irele (1981:55) makes similar declaration about the undisputed competence of the African writers in European languages and claims that there is enough evidence to show that African writers can competently and successfully write in English and French. Irele and Adesanmi’s arguments, to my mind, tilt

towards the skilful deforeignization and indigenization of the inherited European languages in African literatures. Osundare, however, is more cautious as regards the competence of the African writer using a foreign medium, by reminding us that:

no matter what the extent of the African writer's proverbialization of a European language, no matter how much stylistic acrobatics he employs in an attempt to bend the borrowed language, there are innumerable aspects of African experience that defy rendering in a foreign medium (341).

Today, the young generation of West African writers in French and English are boldly 'extending the frontiers of their inherited colonial languages', thereby Africanizing them in meaning and structure, as I will demonstrate in the next section.

Though, as laudable as Adesanmi's position appears, one still notices some excesses in the "act of localization or indigenization of the language of West African literatures by some writers of his generation. Uzodinma Iweala's *Beast of No Nation* is, to me, a 'cheap mimicry' of Ahmadou Kourouma's *Allah n'est pas obligé*. Even the structure of Pidgin English deployed by Iweala is not known to the 'standard' Nigerian pidgin. Brilliant deployment of pidginization, however, is evident in a work like Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy*. My point here is that, while trying to surpass their forerunners, works of some of the writers of the new generation appear superfluous and grossly artificial. This, therefore, sometimes causes readers to wonder whether their language is a product of linguistic creativity or linguistic confusion. This observation agrees with Osofisan's (2006:72) argument that the quality of some of the writings being chunked out by writers of this (third) generation are thematically and stylistically low and feeble. The discomfiting trend in their linguistic manipulation seems to be a result of their *rootlessness*, as some of them were born and bred in the Diaspora, without the privilege of picking up and mastering their African languages at childhood.

3. What is Interlanguage?

Selinker (1972) opines that interlanguage, a cognitive theory of Second Language Acquisition, is the linguistic system ‘evidenced’ when an adult Second Language learner attempts to express meanings in the language being learned. Nemser (1971) refers to interlanguage as “Approximative System” while Corder (1981) calls it “Transitional Competence”. Corder posits that Second Language (SL) learners do not begin with their Native Language (NL), but rather with a ‘universal built-in syllabus’ which guides them in the systematic development of their own linguistic system (476). Features of interlanguage include interference, transference of the L1 to L2, and overgeneralization of the rules of the L2 or the Target Language (TL). I will employ the term *interlanguage*² in this paper, not as a cognitive theory of Second Language Acquisition, but as a process of linguistic evolution in the new Nigerian and Beninese prose fictions.

Chantal Zabus (1991, 2007), while researching into the processes of indigenization of the language of the Europhone West African novel, makes reference to the earlier works of the above mentioned sociolinguists (Nemser 1971, Selinker 1972, and Corder 1981). She views the process of indigenization of the language of the West African novel as a form of interlanguage. According to Jane Bryce (2010: 5-6), Zabus’ seminal book, *The African Palimpsest*, characterizes the West African language situation as a ‘palimpsest’, where ‘behind the scriptural authority of the European language, the earlier, imperfectly erased remnants of the African language can still be perceived.’ Zabus predicts that this unconscious process, which she calls ‘indigenisation’, will give way to writing in African languages and translations into European languages, so that ‘the palimpsest will ultimately “host the trace of a visible *original*”’. This prediction of Zabus seems to be as idealistic as Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s linguistic recommendation for African literatures.

However, this paper intends to pick up the discussion from where Zabus leaves it by looking closely at interlanguage as a process of indigenization of language of the new West African novels of French and English expressions. Zabus' works covered mainly novels of the first and second generations (1960s-1980s) of West African male writers; this present work will primarily look at selected prose fiction produced between 2000 and 2010. Unlike Zabus' scope, I deliberately examine selected works of two female writers, Adelaide Fassinou (Modukpè: *Le Reve brisé, Enfant d'autrui, fille de personne* and *Toute une vie ne suffirait pas pour en parler*) and Abimbola Adunni Adelokun (*Under the Brown Rusted Roofs*). While Fassinou writes in French, Adelokun writes in English.

I am particularly interested in these two writers because their works have not got adequate critical attention within and outside their various countries. Osofisan (2006:68) realizes this obscure condition to which young writers are subjected when he wonders aloud that "new authors-it takes special effort to discover them-were few and practically unknown. The books they published gathered dust on the shelves, because no one was reading them". This point is true of the situation of writers like Adelaide Fassinou and Abimbola Adunni Adelokun.

4. Strategies of Language Indigenization by the New West African Writers

4.1. African Orature

Modern African literatures are often seen as an offshoot of African orature (see Chinwezu, Onwuchekwa Jemie and Ihechukwu Madubuike, 1980), and this tradition of feeding the written African literatures with the ingredients of orature still subsists. Fassinou perspectivizes the modern and traditional interface in her collection of stories, *Toute une vie...*, but this is more pronounced in the story entitled "Celle qui avait tout donné" (51-69) where the traditional burial rites engage in a head-on collision with modernity.

Princess Cica refuses to subject herself to the unhealthy and oppressive elements of her culture in the name of mourning her late husband. It is important to quote at length the burial rites which conflict with the fundamental rights of Djingbe's wives:

On célébra sa mort,... Et les épouses furent recluses car, pendant quarante et un jours, elles ne devaient pas côtoyer des adultes males de peur que l'esprit de leur cher époux ne se fâche, croyant qu'aussitôt qu'il les avait quittées, elles se livraient déjà à la débauche. Pendant quarante nuits également, l'eau ne devrait pas visiter leur corps, au risque de les rendre belles et désirables pour d'autres hommes. Elles n'avaient rien à faire d'autres que de s'asseoir à longueur de journée sur des nattes, les cheveux en batailles, poivre sel pour certaines, entortillés comme des grains de poivre noir pour d'autres. Elles étaient des épouses des princes, et devaient respecter la tradition. Oh! Cruelle tradition... (58).

(They celebrated his death...and his wives were secluded because, during forty-one days, they should not be in the company of male adults for fear of incurring the anger of the spirit of their dear late husband, thinking that as soon as he left, his wives have started messing around with other men. During forty nights also, water must not visit their bodies, so that they will not appear beautiful and attractive to other men. They had nothing else doing than to sit on the mats throughout the day, with their hair unkempt...They were wives of princes, and must respect the tradition. Oh! Cruel tradition...)³

Cica's refusal to comply with the culture makes her seem odd among her 'co-wives' who do not question the tradition. Fassinou deliberately brings the funeral rites in her society to contrast with the European civilization that has established itself in the African society since the independence. The questioning of the moribund and retrogressive African tradition is carefully achieved through verbs (words and expressions).

The above excerpt shows Fassinou's specialized use of the French language to express her Yoruba culture. She carefully and skillfully chooses her words to depict the oppressive situation of widows in her society. The excerpt opens with the sentence "they celebrated his death...", but the word 'celebration' clearly contradicts the imprisoned situation to which the widows are subjected.

The writer continues to roll out the adverse conditions in which the widows must live in the spirit of their husband's burial rites. The widows are quarantined and removed from possible contacts with other men so that their late husband will not be angry. This clearly indicates that the widows, in addition to the loss of their bread-winner, must also be subjected to more agonizing conditions in the name of traditional practices.

The writer couches this message in a subtle expression which seems to be a direct translation of the Yoruba thought. The next sentence: "during forty nights also, water must not visit the widows' bodies, so that they will not appear beautiful and attractive to other men" (58) demonstrates the agonizing condition of the widows. The writer, conscious of the cruelty of the traditional requirements, opts for the verb 'to visit' instead of 'to bath'. The employment of this verb is not only stylistic but also poetic, because 'water' is personified and made to act like a human being that can pay a visit to a fellow being. This expression, "water must not visit their bodies", seems to be less harsh or vicious than "they must not take their bath". The verb 'visit' also reinforces the state of seclusion in which the widows are subjected. This shows that they should restrict their visitors, including 'bathing water', which must not visit their bodies. The widows also experience the pang of boredom and solitude as they are expected to stay indoors alone, sitting on local mats and rust away. Fassinou poetically sums up the agonizing condition of the widows under a cultural guise as "Oh! Cruel tradition..." The ellipses are indicative of many more cruel tendencies of the tradition in the cosmos of the story, which does not care about the wellbeing of the womenfolk.

Orature is also apparent in the story entitled "Le Bouton BIS". Praise-songs are copiously employed to reflect the Africaness of both the plot and the style of the story. The people of Porto-Novo have Yoruba and Goun as their main indigenous languages. They deploy different types of lineage praise names for each occasion. In this context, praise name is employed in Goun language by Kali's mother-in-law, who seeks to settle quarrels between

her stubborn daughter, Nani and her husband, Kali. Using the traditional approach to brokering peace, the old woman starts the parley by singing the praises of Kali and his ancestors:

Koudédji	<i>Fils de Koudédji</i>
Kpogbaza	<i>A l'emblème de panthère Koudédji</i>
Adan we anon tchio	<i>La colère est ton manteau</i>
Masu widé dé mèò	<i>Mais ne t'y enferme pas</i>
Adanmandjèwé	<i>Car la colère est une mauvaise conseillère</i>
Ahovi	<i>Oh ! Fils de prince</i>
Ahovi Hambada	<i>Fils de divinités réputées sacrées</i>
Ahovi gan...	<i>Prince de... (47).</i>

[Italics in the original text]

After the long oratory preamble, the father-in-law invites Kali to state his own case. The socio-cultural significance of this genealogical praise-song is to briefly trace the origin of the concerned person as a way of reassuring him/her of the good relationship that exists between their families, and also to particularly invoke the emotional power of the lineage praise names to 'pacify' the angry person.

Another point of stylistic interest is that the above quoted genealogy is in Goun, another indigenous language, which co-exists with Yoruba in Porto-Novo. Kali's family is likened to the panther, a wild, fast, and dreaded animal. The woman recognizes the fact that Kali is entitled to be angry as a result of his wife's misbehaviour, but admonishes him not to "wear the coat of anger" because "anger is a bad adviser". This advice from the mother-in-law is couched in the imperative "...ne t'y enferme pas" (do not cover yourself with it [i.e., anger]). The above expressions are obviously direct translations of Goun and Yoruba thoughts into French. This style shows that it is a palimpsestal French expression presented by Fassinou. The flattery tendencies of the praise-song can be seen in the following expression: "fils de prince, fils de divinités réputées sacrées, prince de..." In all, the above context shows the Yoruba traditional approach to conflict resolution and peace maintenance.

In *Under the Brown Rusted Roofs*, Adedokun also deploys some elements of orature, especially praise-songs. Such genealogy praise-songs include the following:

Omo Abikan
Omo asowo ni wura loru
Omo atori aje re Ida
M'erin ni Moja
No mo ri Moro, ki n ba d'owo po
Ki o fi asiki ran mi

Child of Abikan
 One who trades and has gold and goods
 One who because of trade goes to Ida
 One who captured an elephant in Moja
 If only I see Moro to partner trade with
 That he might bring good luck to me. (14)

Praise-song is a strong element of Yoruba tradition as it is shown in Fassinou and Adedokun's literary texts. The above excerpt is called *oriki* 'lineage praise name' in Yoruba. It is written in verses like poems; with syntactic parallelism and repletion of some words. Examples of syntactic parallelism are *Omo Abikan // Omo asowo ni wura loru // Omo atori aje re Ida* 'Child of Abikan // One who trades and has gold and goods // One who because of trade goes to Ida' (14). The two writers translate the praise-songs employed in their texts into the European languages with which they write (French and English). While Fassinou gives a Goun praise-song, Adedokun presents a Yoruba praise-song, also known as *oriki*.

Apart from the *oriki* 'lineage praise name', Adedokun introduces some other traditional songs that women, especially, render during special occasions like funerals, marriages, and naming ceremonies. Such songs are displayed during the burial ceremony of Iya Agba by her daughters-in-law. It is instructive to take three of these traditional songs:

E wo gele genge, lori a ji gbotoko. (2ce)
Aye ni n oje n o ni jiya a
E wo gele genge, lori a ji gbotoko.

See the head gear delicately balanced on the head of the woman
 Who rises early to do her husband's bidding.
 My life will be sweet and never otherwise. (53)

The above song is a praise of well behaved, well dressed and efficient housewives in the traditional Yoruba society. The song intends to show that a wife who respects her husband and does his bidding will always be happy, beautiful, and enjoy her matrimonial life.

Stylistically, the above song is also poetic because it is written in verses and the verses are syntactically paralleled. The next two songs are composed by the women in praise of their husbands. It is to show-case their husband's wealth and to also demonstrate the good care they get from them and their families.

Sibi onide ikoko onide la wa fi n sebe o. (2ce)
Awa, a wa nile yio, aya olola la je. (2ce).
Sibi onide ikoko onide lawa fi n sebe o.

Spoon of brass, pots of brass
 That is what we use in cooking
 We in this land, we are wives of wealthy men. (54).

The next song, though traditional, has crept into the contemporary, culturally hybridized Yoruba society as we even hear educated young women sing it during ceremonies to praise their expensive mode of dress and their high taste and social status:

Ile la baso, ki i salejo ara. (2ce)
Aso ti a wo, olowo faramolowo
Bata ti a wo, olowo jogun idera
Gele ti a we, sukusuku bam bam
Eni to ba wu ko be
Ile la baso, ki i salejo ara.

We met cloth at home,
 It is no visitor to our body
 The clothes we are wearing,
 A rich man moves with his kind
 The shoe we have on,
 The rich inherited comfort
 Our head gear, properly set in place,
 Anybody that is swollen is free to burst
 We met cloth at home
 It is no visitor to our body. (54-55).

Stylistically, especially structurally, this song looks like the first two examples of songs given above. The rhythm is well structured and the entire song is lyrical.

4.2. Proverb

Proverb which constitutes a great part of African orature is deployed in the novels to depict the Yorubanness, indeed the Africanness of their themes and styles. Many of the proverbs employed are direct translations from the Yoruba culture. In Yorubaland, and in Africa in general, proverbs are often employed by the elders to engage very critical issues. That is the reason Achebe, in *Things Fall Apart* (1958), says “among the Ibo people the art of conversation is regarded very highly and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten” (5). Proverbs are often borne out of a people’s experiences, and are passed on from one generation to the other.

In the story entitled, “Celle qui avait tout donné”, proverbs are generously deployed by the characters. The proverbs employed are rooted in the Yoruba oral tradition, which is predominant in the Ajachè community of Porto-Novo. Some of the proverbs employed in this text have become parts of everyday language. For instance, the proverb used by Cica while lamenting her poor economic situation in Koutonou and exploring the option of relocating from the capital city to her village, Porto-Novo: “mon feu père disait: *quand on ne sait pas où on va, on se souvient d’où l’on vient*” (61). [My late father used to say: *when one does not know where s/he is going, one remembers where s/he is coming from*]. This proverb is translated directly from Yoruba into French. In Standard Yoruba, it is often used *as bi iwaju ko ba see lo, eyin laa pada si*, ‘if it becomes impossible to advance or continue a journey, one should opt for a retreat’.

Abimbola Adelakun’s *Under the Brown Rusted Roofs* is also rich in proverbs that are borne out of Yoruba culture. Examples of such proverbs include “the one we do a favour [for] and [who] is not grateful (our fathers say) is like a thief who has stolen our goods” (6). This proverb is translated and transliterated from Yoruba into English. In Yoruba, it is originally

eni ti a se loore tí ko dupe, bi olosa ko ni leru lo ní. This proverb shows the high importance the Yoruba put on the expression of gratitude for good deeds.

In the Yoruba culture, proverbs are seen as an exclusive preserve of the wise old people because of their age and experience of life; this is why Cica says “mon feu père disait” [my late father used to say] and in *Under the Brown Rusted Roofs*, the above proverb is punctuated by “our fathers say”. This is a way of signalling that the proverbs are borrowed from the elders, a reference that Yoruba speakers always make before deploying any proverb, especially in a gathering of older people. Also, when a young person uses proverbs in the presence of older people, such a person is expected to take permission from the elders by saying: *tótó, ó se bí òwe o* (Excuse me, it looks like a proverb); in response, the elders will chorus: *oó pàmí ràń* (You will use more proverbs in the future). This statement signifies approval and blessing of the elders, who are regarded in Yorubaland as the custodians of wisdom. It is a blessing because the response, in addition to carrying an approval, also carries prayers of long life for the young speaker (locutor).

Another very interesting proverb transliterated from the Yoruba language to English by Adetakun is the one in the context in which *Baba nsale* rebukes Sikira for her bad manners, “a woman loses character and blames her head for not giving her a good husband” (18). This proverb in the original Yoruba form is *obinrin sowa nu, o so pe oun ko mori oko waye*.

Another striking deployment of proverbialization by Adetakun is noticed in the conglomeration and democratization of proverbs in her novel. Proverbs are used by characters across age, sex, and social status. The elders’ group of Chief Akeweje and Alhaji Arigbabuwo spices its words with accumulation of proverbs, especially, during the political meetings. Chief Akeweje says about Iyiola, an erring member of the party: “Alaga, we will not say because the child will die, we should give him his father’s pennies to play with. If Iyiola is going to be suspended from the party, let it be” (34); this proverb is not only funny but vulgar.

It supports Olajubu's (1972) argument that, occasionally, elders in the Yoruba society mention directly sex organs and sexual acts openly without being accused of vulgarity. In the submission of Alhaji Arigbabuwo, proverbs are lined up to buttress his argument as to why Iyiola's matter should be handled with care. He says:

This is a matter that farts in someone's mouth and at the same time puts salt into it...we can't swallow the fart, yet we cannot spit out the salt. Chief Iyiola's drum is beating too hard and will soon tear". (35).

From the above examples, it is apparent that Adedokun goes beyond translation to indigenize her novel. Like Tutuola and Kourouma (see Bryce, 2010:17), she adopts and adapts transliteration, especially, in her process of proverbialization.

There are other expressions that are common sayings among the Yoruba people but which are closely related to proverbs. They are proverbial in meaning but idiomatic in nature and structure. An example is seen in the story "Le bouton BIS" in the context in which Nani's mother, while trying to broker peace between her daughter and her son-in-law, reminds her daughter (Nani) of the important position of a mother before her child. While commanding her daughter to apologize to her husband, she says:

Si c'est moi qui t'ai gardée neuf mois dans mon ventre, je n'ai pas dit huit mois et demie, mais bien neuf mois, et si tu es la chair de ma chair, alors, tu va ravalier toutes tes mauvaises paroles, t'agenouiller pour demander pardon à ton époux, afin que l'ordre revienne dans cette maison bénie de Dieu. (45).

If I am the one who kept you in my belly for nine months, I did not say eight and a half months, but a good nine months, and if you are the flesh of my flesh, then, you will eat all the insults you have put on your husband, you will kneel and ask for forgiveness from your husband, so that peace will return to your God blessed home.

The above quotation shows the great influence of African parents, especially mothers, on their children. The condition which the mother lays down makes it difficult for Nani to refuse the instructions of her mother, and she complies by apologizing to her husband. The idea of 'kneeling down' to ask for forgiveness is central to the Yoruba tradition, and there is a proverb which is suggestive of the importance of kneeling down in conflict resolution among

the Yoruba, *bi elejo ba mo ejo re lebi, ko ni pe lori ikunle* ‘whoever accepts her/his culpability will not *kneel down* (beg) for long’.

Some of the proverbs and idioms used in *Enfant d’autrui* can be traced to both Yoruba and Western cultures, most probably because of the hybridized characters involved in the novels. Examples include “Qui veut voyager loin, ménage sa monture” (18), “avoir d’autres chats à fouetter” (16), and “si ça arrive au menton, la barbe également en profite” (144). These three sayings have their Yoruba equivalents. The first proverb exists in Yoruba as *à tò kèrèrè lolójú jínjìn tí mékún sun*; which means ‘it is from a far distance that a person who has hollowed eye-socket begins to cry or sob’. The second proverb appears in Yoruba as *òwúrò lojó* ‘make hey while the sun shines’; and the third as *ohun tóbá ojú yòò bá imú náà* which can be literally translated as ‘whatever affects the eyes will not spare the nose’. It is obvious that Fassinou realizes these expressions at what Adejare calls “prime-order level of translation” (24). The non-copious usage of proverbs in the three texts of Fassinou under review is a byproduct of the plot of the novels. The characters involved are mostly young men and women. In Yoruba culture, proverbs are often found on the lips of older people and they are regarded as the repository of wisdom.

4.3. Translation and Transliteration

Translation, which is a distinctive feature of the language of African literatures, is deployed to marry the communicative and cultural characters of the specialized language(s) employed by African writers. As Osundare (1995:342-343) opines, in African literatures, translation is more than a mere “replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language” (Cartford, 1965:20). Osundare further argues that since the text being created by the African writer is not ready-made in the indigenous language, we cannot talk of translation. The African writer has to, first and foremost, create the story and then devise a means of mediating his experience in the European language. In this case, the

European languages are maneuvered to reflect the African traditions. Albert Gérard (1991: iv), in his preface to Chantal Zabus' *The African Palimpsest*, rightly observes that African writers do not only adopt translation of African words and proverbs as an indispensable attribute of their writings, they go further to transliterate African syntax and idioms into their European style. For reasons ranging from lack of appropriate expression to capture some African thoughts and imagery to stylistic quest, African writers are obliged to look inward and translate such ideas, literally into the foreign medium. Adejare (1998:27), in tandem with Gerard's position, agrees that translation process in African literatures is indicative of linguistic and cultural differences which exist between the medium (language) and the experience (thought) being expressed. Translation process is copiously employed by Fassinou in her writings to bridge the gap between her African experience and the foreign medium she uses (French). Translation strategy is therefore applied to the use of proverbs, popular sayings and fixed expressions in her texts under review.

In *Enfant d'autrui* and *Under the Brown Rusted Roofs*, it is the element of transliteration that preponderates. Abiola Irele (1981) views the process of re-expressing African thoughts in the European languages of African literatures as transliteration rather than translation. Such re-expressions, for instance, are seen in the context in which Ananou discusses the preference that her society puts on male children over female. She affirms that "ainsi dès que l'enfant quittait le sein de sa mère, il avait sa place au champ" (thus as soon as a child quits her mother's breast, he would have his place in the farm). This statement in Standard English means that as soon as a child is weaned, he has his portion of farmland. The author uses the expression *quitter le sein* to bridge the 'metonymic gap' and depict the imagery of child growth in the Yoruba tradition. *To quit the mother's breast* draws the picture of someone who physically walks away with his legs. In the traditional Yoruba society, a child is normally breastfed for a minimum of three years, and it is assumed that a normal child

of three years should be able to walk, thereby *quitting his mother's breast*. The same expression also exists in the Yoruba part of Nigeria. It is used as *fi oyon sile* 'drop/abandon the breast'. It can be inferred that the act of 'dropping/abandoning the breast' can be done by a relatively grown up child, that is, a three year old child. The expression "drop the breast" is not standard French but transliteration from the Yoruba language. The writer resorts to this strategy to adequately capture the thought.

In Adedokun's *Under the Brown Rusted Roofs*, elements of transliteration dominate a substantial part of the novel. It is instructive to cite some examples in detail. In the context in which there is a quarrel between Sikira and her co-wife, Afusa over who should prepare food for their mother-in-law; their husband Alhaji Arigbabuwo intervenes, and this escalates to physical combat between him and Sikira, who falls down and wails:

My life is spoilt! She cried. I have married the wrong husband. They warned me not to marry another woman's husband; I was the one who did not listen! ... He beat me because of Iya Alate. My life is spoilt ... (18)

The above excerpt is pure oral Yoruba that the writer transliterates into English. The wailing and utterances from Sikira are common occurrences in most traditional polygamous settings in Yorubaland, where quarrels frequently occur. *Aye mi baje o* 'My life is spoilt' means in Standard English "my life is ruined or I am ruined". 'My life is spoilt' may be difficult to understand by a non-Yoruba reader of Adedokun's novel. "I have married a wrong husband" *Mo ti si oko fe*, which is transliterated from the Yoruba language is a common parlance from wives who feel dissatisfied with their husbands in the traditional Yoruba society. This style, naturally, reminds us of the language of Amos Tutuola's *The Palmwine Drinkard* and Ahmadou Kourouma's *Les Soleils des indépendances*. Jane Bryce (2010:5-6) succinctly puts this:

This phenomenon is not, in itself, 'new'. Ahmadou Kourouma's *Les Soleils d'Indépendance* performed in 1968 the same sleight of hand with French as Tutuola had done with English in *The Palmwine Drinkard* ten years earlier. This process of recreating in a second, European, language

the structures of a first, African language, Irele calls ‘transliteration’. The distinction he makes between Tutuola and Kourouma, however, is that in the former it is an *unconscious* process, while in Kourouma and Gabriel Okara it ‘becomes a conscious recasting of the European language.’ (Irele, 17)

This phenomenon may seem not entirely ‘new’, but the ease and dexterity, and extensive deployment of the feature by Adedokun and Fassinou in their fiction makes it unarguably innovative. I also strongly believe that this process of recreating in English and French by Adedokun and Fassinou, respectively, is a conscious one.

Fassinou also achieves indigenization in her texts by deliberately altering some French words phonologically to conform to the Yoruba sound system, and especially for ease of pronunciation. Words like ‘Cotonou’ becomes ‘Koutonou’ (*Le rêve* 34, 97; *Enfant* 23), ‘baccalauréat’ becomes ‘bakoléa’ (*Enfant...* 14) and ‘docteur’ becomes ‘doto’ (*Enfant...* 123). These words are Yorubaized and put in the mouths of illiterate characters like Dukpè’s mother, Ananou and her fellow market women as an indicator of their social status, and particularly to underline their non-mastery of the French language, which is a mark of social status. In the three examples, above, the words undergo a phonological transformation to reflect the Yoruba phonological structure which discourages consonant clusters. ‘Koutonou’ can be phonetically transcribed as [kotonu], ‘bakoléa’ as [bakolea] and ‘doto’ (docteur) as [doto]. The word ‘Cotonou’ has three syllables: co/to/nou; only the first syllable is transformed to accommodate the Yoruba sound system; ‘co’ [ko] becomes ‘kou’ [ku]. It is, however, pertinent to mention that the words *Koutonou* and *doto* are common lexical items of the Yoruba variety spoken in the Republic of Benin.

4.4. Metaphor and Metonymy

Fassinou employs metaphor and metonymy as linguistic strategies in her two novels. The discourse of metaphor can be traced back to Aristotle, who describes it as an implicit comparison based on the principle of analogy. Aristotle believes that metaphor is primarily

ornamental (Ortyn 3). Metonymy is traditionally described as a referential phenomenon where a referent stands for another referent. But this definition has proven to be inadequate in the sense that metonymic functions extend into metaphorical interpretations as a result of the sharp links between the two notions (Panther & Thornburg, 2003). Lakoff and Turner (1984), and Gossen (1990) agree that metaphor and metonymy interact intricately, because there can be metonymy conceptually motivated by metaphor and vice versa. Taking cognizance of the close link between metaphor and metonymy, which he calls ‘metaphonymy’; Gossen (1990) discusses the frequent and interesting interaction between metaphor and metonymy and concludes that we can deduce metaphor from metonymy and also metonymy from metaphor.

Metonymy is used by Fassinou to maneuver, even subvert the French with which she expresses her (African) thoughts. Metonymy can be likened to interlanguage because the two notions seek to bridge the linguistic gaps that exist between two different cultures, French and Yoruba in the case of Fassinou, and English and Yoruba in the case of Adelokun. Fassinou bridges these gaps by injecting lexical elements from Yoruba into her French expression. The incorporation of Yoruba lexical items is to create *la couleur locale* in her writings and also to project her cultural identity. These words are translated by Fassinou in form of footnotes or appendix, but in some cases they remain un-translated, and readers are left to infer their meanings within the context. Adelokun sometimes gives the English meaning of the Yoruba words right in the body of the texts and also deliberately leaves some un-translated. In Fassinou’s *Le Rêve brisé*, such words include: *cocota* ‘coup de poigne sur la tête’ (a punch in the head) (16), *tohossou* ‘monstre des eaux’ (water monster) (16), *sara* ‘aumône’ (alms giving) (32). *Sara*, and *Cocota* exist in Standard Yoruba, while *cocota* is called *ikó*; *sara* is written as *sàràràà*. Phonologically, *cocota* and *ikó* sound almost alike because the linguistic element *cocota* might have originated from the word *ikó* in the Standard Yoruba spoken in Nigeria.

In *Enfant d'autrui*, the incorporation of Yoruba words is more widespread than in *Le Rêve brisé*. Such words include: *dada*: 'senior sister or sometimes children address their mother' as *dada* (14), *boba*: 'a kind of shirt' (it is called *bùbá* in Standard Yoruba) (114), *akoto*: small specie of snail eaten by Yoruba. It is called *òkòtó* in standard Yoruba (29), *kuabo*: 'you are welcome' (33). This word is a combination of two words in standard Yoruba: *kú àbò* also means 'you are welcome'. In *Under the Brown Rusted Roofs*, the incorporated Yoruba lexical items include *agboole* 'compound' (39), *eede* 'passage' (15), *Iya Agba* 'old woman' (15), *Iya Alate* 'a woman who does petty trading' (19) and *Baale wa* 'our husband/ our head of the house' (19).

The use of a part to represent a whole employed by Fassinou is a metonymic form which could also be metaphorically interpreted because of the intricate links between metaphor and metonymy. For instance, in *Enfant d'autrui*, in the context where Ananou teaches her daughter how to grow up as a responsible wife who knows how to take care of her husband, she says:

Un homme, c'est *le ventre et le bas ventre*. Quelque soient tes diplômes ma fille, ton mari t'échappera si tu ne prépares pas des mets appétissants pour lui *donner des forces*, et si ton corps ne *dégage pas une odeur envoûtante de goyave mûre* (37).

A man, is the *belly and the below the belly*. Whatever your certificates may be, my daughter, your husband will abandon you if you don't prepare appetizing meals that will *give him energy* and if your body doesn't *ooze out seducing fragrance of ripe guava*.

The words and expressions in italics are examples of metonymy. "Le ventre" (belly) is a part that represents a whole which is (the man). The other word is "le bas-ventre" (below the belly) which also represents 'the man'. These are referents as they represent the man through contiguity or causal relations. These words, because they suggest erotic feelings, can also be metaphorically interpreted that a woman has to take good care of her husband in order to enjoy him sexually. The expression, "donner des forces", refers to the 'man's having strength

as a result of the good food from the wife to perform the sexual acts'. The last expression, "dégager une odeur envoûtante de goyave mûre", means that a woman needs to maintain certain degree of cleanliness to attract her husband to sexual activity. It is also noted that lexical items like *belly* and *below the belly* are metaphors for the man's sexual organ and eroticism. The above excerpt also underlines the belief that issues related to sexual acts and sex organs are not and should not be openly discussed by the Yoruba people, who avoid being too direct; hence the sex organs are not often called by their names.⁴

In a similar context, metaphor is deployed when Ananou inquires of her daughter, Cica, whether Koko her boyfriend, or someone else has destroyed her virginity. The quotation goes thus: "Ananou ne cessait de demander à celle-ci, si Koko ou un autre avait déjà violé *le sentier qui mène à son intimité* (47). (Ananou never ceased asking her daughter whether Koko or someone else had destroyed the *path that leads to her intimate part*). In this context, the expression, 'the path that leads to her intimate/private part', is a metaphor for vagina, virginity and the passage that leads to the uterus. These expressions are no doubt borne out of the Yoruba language and culture. The thought is just wrapped in French words as the palimpsest, with Yoruba as the original text behind this authorial European language.

It is further observed that whenever Ananou discusses sex and sexuality with her daughter, she ensures that sex organs are not called by their names because in the traditional Yoruba culture, that amounts to vulgarity, *isokuso* 'bad talk or the use of obscene words' as Olajubu (1972) rightly puts it. Olajubu attempts to debunk the fact that the Yoruba people avoid the direct mention of sex organs and sexual acts which they term as *isokuso* or *isekuse* 'bad act' respectively; he could not help but agree that the Yoruba culture permits its people to use such vulgar words only during some annual festivals like Oke'badan, Egungun, and Oro festivals. (see Olajubu, 1972).

The word ‘intimate’ is repeatedly employed in the novel, *Enfant d’autrui*, to refer to female sex organ: “ses parties les plus intimes” (her most intimate/private part) (76), “faire sa toilette intime” (to do private/intimate wash or take a bath) (76). The word ‘intimate’ is used as a metaphor of the female sex organ. Another example of such metaphor is seen in the context in which the sexual relationship of Koko, the medical doctor, and her colleague/girlfriend Emma, is discussed. Koko could not imagine why it takes him so long before he begins to have sexual intercourse: “il se demandait à chaque fois pourquoi avoir tant attendu pour *goûter au fruit défendu*” (He was always wondering why it took him that long *to taste the forbidden fruit*) (81). ‘Goûter au fruit défendu’ (to taste the forbidden fruit) refers to ‘having sex/sexual relationship’. ‘Le fruit défendu’ is a metaphor for sexual act and female sex organ. In the Yoruba society, the expression “to eat the forbidden fruit” is generally employed to mean “have sex or sleep with a woman”. This expression is definitely neither Yoruba nor French but a *fossilized* word evolved by the writer. Fassinou frequently deploys such specialized words to describe sexual act. For instance, when Cica’s relationship is heading for the rocks, her friend advises her to go traditional by soliciting the assistance of ritualists as church and prayers seem incapable of resolving her failing relationship with Koko (103). She describes how Koko and his new girlfriend, Emman, play love and the need for the innocent Cica to brace up for such sexual activities with her estranged boyfriend as a way of wining back his love. The author therefore employs a specialized word to describe the action: “Et dès qu’ils s’enferment dans la chamber, la *bagarre* commence” (as soon as they [Koko and Emman] enter the room, *the braw/battle/fight* commences). The word *bagarre* which may probably have come out of the ‘Français populaire’ gives a graphic description of the struggle and action that go into sexual act, especially between the young and energetic man and woman.

In this context, *bagarre* does not mean real physical fight, but rather is employed metaphorically to describe an engaging sexual act. In both Yoruba and standard French, the word *bagarre* does not mean *sexual act*, but Fassinou employs the word because it aptly portrays the action and also saves her from being too direct or vulgar. This specialized language deployed by Fassinou is poetic and quite evocative.

When Bossou, Cica's elder brother, complains about her seemingly irresponsible outings with Koko, their mother quickly calls his attention to the fact that she has grown up enough to keep a stable relationship with her proposed husband. To further justify this position, Ananou asks rhetorically “que veux-tu que je dise à une fille qui a déjà *connu l'homme*. Désormais son destin est entre ses mains. Elle fera ce qu'elle voudra” (What do you expect me to tell a girl who *has known a man*? Henceforth, her destiny is in her hands. She will do whatever she likes with it) (127). The above statement reflects the indigenous cultural as, generally, in the Yoruba society, a woman who has been sleeping with a man is considered as having ‘known a man’. *Knowing a man* in the context is a metaphor/euphemism for the attainment of the age of puberty by a woman and her subsequent sexual act with a man. It is often used to express sexual acts in Yoruba language and it has a pejorative sense because it gives the impression that the woman is having sex with a man who is not her husband; *knowing a man* is not used to describe a married woman because it is taken for granted that she is entitled to sleep and have sex with her husband.

It is clear that this ‘traditional way’ of naming sex organs and describing sexual acts is not only peculiar to Ananou but also common among Koko, Cica, and Emma, who represent the younger generation and who have contacts with Western education and culture. Cica uses a similar expression while declaring her readiness to allow her fiancé, Koko, to break her virginity. She confesses her naivety, that is, immaturity in that act, and implores the young man, having tasted the *forbidden fruit elsewhere*, to feel free and show her the way.

Throughout this discussion, Cica does not mention directly words related to sexual acts and sex organs:

Tu m'apprendras à devenir femme chéri, lui dit-elle. Je veux être pour toi une femme à part entière afin que tes yeux et ton cœur ne soient rivés que sur moi seule. *Je n'ai pas d'expérience en la matière*, comme tu le sais, je suis une bonne élève et j'apprends vite, très vite. (103).

(You will teach me to become a woman, darling, she tells him. I want to be for you a special woman so that your eyes and heart will be focused on me alone. 'I don't have experience in this matter', as you know, I am a good student and I learn fast, very fast).

The childhood relationship between Cica and Koko runs into turbulence when Emma enters the latter's life. This leads to some months of estrangement between them. After the reconciling the two lovers by Ananou and her declaration of support for the relationship, Cica decides to take some lessons on sexual acts from her fiancé, the latter having got experience from Emma "[qui] l'avait révélé à lui-même, à l'amour. Il était désormais un homme au sens complet du terme" (who had exposed him to real love. He was now a complete man in the real sense of it) (81-82). "*Je n'ai pas d'expérience en la matière*" (I don't have experience in this matter) is a humble confession of an innocent girl. *I want to be for you a special woman so that your eyes and heart will be focused on me alone*, is a solemn promise from a lover to her partner. The statement is poetic and very evocative. It captures, poetically, the parts of human body such as the *eyes* and the *heart* that relate to love, emotion and erotic evocation. Personal pronouns such as *toi* (you) and *moi* (me) clearly map the proposed couple out of bachelorhood and spinsterhood respectively. Possessive pronoun like 'your' is a re-affirmation that Koko's entire attention is for Cica, while the adverb 'seule' (alone) indicates his total possession by her. It is clear from the above excerpt that Cica expresses her emotion in a language devoid of vulgarity. The style is surprisingly prominent among characters like Koko and Cica, who can be considered culturally hybridized. This further attests to the preponderance of Yoruba cultural influence in Fassinou's language.

The Yoruba words and expressions employed in the stories include: in “L’hôte indisérable”, *Dada* ‘elder sister’, [24], in “Le bouton BIS”: *Gbo tèmi* ‘listen to me’ [35], and in “Celle qui avait tout donné”: *agoun* ‘pounded yam’. Literally *agoun* means ‘something that is pounded’, [64], *gounsi* ‘melon’ [64], *akowé* ‘educated person who has a white collar job’ [65], *yalé* ‘first/eldest wife’ [65] and *mamiwata*, it is called ‘mammy water’ in the Anglophone community. It is transformed into the Francophone society, and the words are structurally and phonologically distorted to sound as [mamiwata]. There exists the injection of Goun words in the text because of the fruitful co-existence of Yoruba and Goun in Porto-Novo. The two languages are frequently used in the Ajachè community as the local languages with which the French language has to compete. The Goun words and expressions in the selected stories include: in “L’hôte indisérable”: *tchachanga* ‘roasted beef’ (19), *yaya* [dry fish, 28]. In “Le bouton BIS”, there is an injection of lexis from Fongbe, another indigenous language of Bénin, *vidomègon* ‘street child’ [46]. In “Celle qui avait tout donné”, the Goun words include: *Da* ‘prince or dignitaries from the royal family’ [52], *tchapalo* and *adoyo* ‘local types of drink brewed from maize’ [62]. It is obvious that the writer resorts to incorporating the words in their original Yoruba, Goun, or Fongbe forms to enable her appropriately project their meanings and her own identity as a Yoruba, Goun or Fon, using French language. This linguistic hybridity is a form of indigenization of the language of the new West African novel (see Chantal Zabus, 2007).

There is metaphorically induced metonymy in “Celle qui avait tout donné”. For Some expressions are metaphors of eroticism: “Alors il osa regarder un jour avec insistance une femme dont l’anatomie éveillait en lui quelque gargouillis, aussi bien dans *le ventre* que dans *le bas-ventre*” (37). [then he dared to look one day, with insistence, upon a woman whose anatomy evoked in him....in the *belly* as well as in the *below the belly*] ‘Below the belly’ is a

metaphor for eroticism, and the word ‘anatomy’ does not only describe the beautiful shape of the woman but represents her personality.

Also, while discussing the death of the old Singbo and the attendant comments from the people in the community, the writer deploys the following metonymic device: “*les mauvaises langues* dirent à sa mort, que c’est un rival jaloux qui s’en débarrassé pour mieux s’occuper de sa jeune et jolie veuve” (56). [On his death, *bad tongues* said that a jealous rival killed him so that he would take charge of her young and beautiful widow]. In the above excerpt, ‘bad tongues’ the part metonymically stands for the whole. In this context, ‘bad tongues’ stands for ‘bad people’. The expression, ‘bad tongue’, is transferred from the Yoruba culture into French. In the Yoruba society, anyone who talks or does evil is often regarded as bad tongue; the tongue is thus taken to signify the person in question. The tongue is very delicate in the Yoruba culture because it is synonymous with the words it utters as it can make or mar a person or a situation. According to Yoruba belief, a tongue can be used positively or negatively. When it is used negatively, it is described as a bad tongue. The Yoruba, recognizing the danger in the use of a tongue or a mouth, always pray that *enu wa ko ni pa wa* ‘may our month/tongue never kill us’. In the Yoruba society, the flesh of the tongue is considered as the sweetest part, and it is also metaphorically seen as the bitterest part of the body because it can be used to destroy someone or cause conflicts in the society.

One notices also the injection of Hausa words in the story entitled “Le boutons BIS”. Fassinou injects the word *mèguida* which means ‘landlord’ or, literally, ‘the owner of the house’. The writer does not give the meaning of this word in a footnote as she does for other non-French words; she allows the reader to guess its meaning within the context. The context, indeed, seems helpful in deducing the meaning of the word *mèguida*. An extensive quotation from the passage will further illustrate my argument and ease its understanding:

Deux «mèguida» venus de leur *Sahel lointain* vendre le bon *chachanga* qu'affectionnent les habitants de la cité-poubelle avait tôt fait de se convertir en gardiens de jour et de nuit. (33) [Emphasis mine].

(Two « mèguida » [who] came from their *far away Sahel* to sell good *chachanga (suya)*, that the people in the village love, had soon converted themselves into day and night guards).

A reader who is familiar with the Hausa language and culture can easily infer that the word 'sahel' aptly describes the climate and region of the Hausa people. They are mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, in the Sahel or Sahara desert area of Niger, Mali, Northern Nigeria, Northern Togo, Northern Ghana and Northern part of Republic of Benin. *Chachanga* which the author explains in the footnotes as grilled goat meat is called 'suya' in Nigeria, and it is produced and sold by the Hausa. Another suggestive contextual usage is the description of the work of *mèguida*, as a night and day guard/watchman (or security man in Standard English). Hausa people, especially men, mostly work as security personnel, watching over private properties in the big cities of the southern part of Nigeria and Republic of Benin.

Unlike in Fassinou's novels, where sex and sexuality are treated as unspeakable, Adalaku names sex organs and sexual acts. These words sometimes occur in the gossip among the wives of Alhaji Arigbabuwo and also during meetings among elders when proverbs relating to sex organs and sexual acts are deployed. An instance of such gossip occurs between Sikira and her friend Alake about a wayward young lady, Mulika, who refuses to heed her parents' advice. Sikira says: "you don't stop a young girl from growing a large vagina, so far she can grow enough hair to cover it. If you tell those young girls not to fuck now, they grow restless". (42). While discussing Mulika's physical disability, whom Alake describes as "a one and a half legged woman" and the interest of his boyfriend in her, Sikira says: "maybe what is doing her leg did not affect the sweetness of her vagina". (42). Adalaku freely mentions both male and female genital organs in her text. This is another instance of the audacious nature of Adalaku's style.

5. Conclusion

Today, in Africa and especially West Africa, many writers are trying to contribute through literary texts their points of view on the problems confronting the continent. The writers, especially those of the third generation, employ specific linguistic and stylistic approaches to address their subject-matter. I have shown in this paper that the language of Fassinou's literary texts is neither exclusively standard French nor Yoruba language, which is her mother tongue, but a fusion of both the Yoruba and French languages. In the case of Adhlakun, she tries successfully to create a new literary language which is placed between her mother tongue (Yoruba) and English. It is a kind of what Dapo Adelugba (1978:214) calls "Yorubanglish"⁵. The language of Adhlakun is particularly dominated by a conscious transliteration of Yoruba proverbs and expressions. The analysis of Fassinou and Adhlakun's novels in this paper has also shown that interlanguage as a feature of indigenization can be helpful in the exposition of linguistic innovation in the new West African writings. Analyzing their novels, one perceives a trend of systematic linguistic deployment to meaning projection. Their careful employment of African orature, proverbs, translation/transliteration, metaphor and metonymic processes to manipulate the English and French languages to accommodate their Yoruba thoughts has greatly enriched their styles. They seem to be skillful in the subversion of both languages, which they blend with their mother tongue, the Yoruba language. This methodical manipulation of the European languages makes their fiction innovative. Fassinou and Adhlakun do not only employ Yoruba linguistic strategies of interlanguage to indigenize their texts, but adapt them to their thematic discourses.

Notes

1. This study was carried out during my research stay at the Institute of Asian and African Studies, Humboldt University of Berlin. I wish to thank the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) for its generous research support. I also wish to thank Professor Dr. Susanne Gehrman of the Institute of Asian and African Studies, HU, Berlin for providing a fruitful academic leadership during my research stay.

2. For “Interlanguage” see Larry Selinker (1972), Nemser (1971), Corder (1981) and Tarone (2001). Fossilization is a stage of Interlanguage where Second/Foreign Language learning stops. The language (competence) produced at this stage is neither the Native Language (NL) nor the Target Language (TL).

I argue that the languages of West African literatures in European languages are neither the African indigenous language of the author nor his/her inherited colonial tongue: French or English but a separate idiosyncratic language.

3. All translations, of excerpts from Fassinou’s works and elsewhere, are made by the author of this paper.

4. This may constitute a serious problem for the development of sex education among the Yoruba of West Africa, especially in this age when HIV/AIDS, STD and related diseases constitute a threat to human existence.

Sex education always suffers a setback in the traditional Yoruba society, since issues relating to sexual acts and sex organs are hardly discussed with children and young people because they are considered obscene and unspeakable. This therefore prevents parents from discussing openly sex issues with their children. They pretend as if those things do not exist and they shy away from confronting them. This absence of sex education therefore exposes their children to the danger of STD, HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancies.

5. Dapo Adelugba (1978:216) argues that “Yorubanglish” is a language that “is not just Yoruba English or Yoruba mixed with English, but a many-sided attempt to catch the flavour, tones, rhythms, emotional and intellectual content of Yoruba language and thought in an adventurous brand of English”

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