LANGUAGE, POWER, AND IDEOLOGY IN KENJO JUMBAM'S *THE WHITE MAN OF GOD*

Godfrey Ngozi Ogbonna, PhD
ogbonnagodfrey82@gmail.com

And

Amadi, Gloria Ukamaka, PhD
gloria.amadi@alvanikoku.edu.ng

And

Cynthia Adaeze Onuegwunwoke. PhD
Department of English Language and Literature
Faculty of Arts,
Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education,
Owerri, Imo State
cynthia.onuegwunwoke@alvanikoku.edu.ng

Abstract

This study examined the relationship between language, power, and ideology in KenjoJumbam's*The White Man of God*, with a view to uncovering how linguistic and stylistic choices encode ideological meanings and power relations in the text. Adopting a qualitative approach, the study drew on insights from Leech and Short's (2007) stylistic model and principles of critical discourse analysis to investigate how language functions as a medium of domination, resistance, and identity construction. The analysis focused on key linguistic features, including lexical selection, syntactic patterns, figurative expressions, and discourse

structures. This is to reveal how missionary discourse is constructed as authoritative while indigenous belief systems are simultaneously challenged and negotiated. Findings showed that language in the text operated as a strategic resource for legitimizing certain worldviews and marginalizing others, thereby reflecting underlying ideological conflicts. The study further demonstrated that Jumbam's stylistic deployment of language foregrounds cultural tension, power asymmetry, and the struggle for ideological control. It concluded that literary language serves not only aesthetic purposes but also functions as a critical site for the negotiation of power and ideology in postcolonial contexts.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Ideology and Power, Language, Postcolonial Discourse, Stylistics.

Introduction

Language is widely recognized in contemporary scholarship as a powerful medium through which social realities are constructed, negotiated, and contested. Rather than functioning as a neutral tool for communication, language operates as a site of power and ideological struggle. It shapes how individuals perceive and interpret the world around them. Fairclough (2015) argues that "language constitutes a form of social practice that both reflects and reproduces power relations within society" (pp. 73-75). In a similar vein, Machin and Mayr (2012) maintain that "discourse encodes ideological meanings, often presenting particular worldviews as natural or unquestionable" (pp. 2-5). These perspectives underscore

the inseparable relationship between language, power, and ideology, particularly in literary and cultural texts. Postcolonial theorists emphasize that colonialism was not only a political and economic enterprise but also a linguistic and ideological project, imposed through language and discourse (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 2002, pp. 1–3). The privileging of European languages over indịgenous ones created hierarchical structures that continue to influence cultural production and interpretation in African societies. As Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (2018) observes, "language functions as a carrier of culture, and its imposition often leads to the marginalization of indịgenous epistemologies" (pp. 28-30). Within the Cameroonian context, the politics of language is particularly complex due to the country's colonial history under both British and French rule. This dual colonial legacy has produced a linguistic environment in which English and French coexist with numerous indịgenous languages, creating tensions around identity, governance, and cultural representation. "Scholars' note that the dominance of colonial languages in official and educational domains reflects broader power structures that privilege certain identities over others" (Anchimbe, 2019, pp. 45–47). These dynamics are often mirrored in literary texts, where language becomes a means of negotiating ideological conflicts and articulating cultural realities.

The introduction of Christianity in the novel is not merely a spiritual transformation but also an ideological imposition that redefines social values and power relations. This aligns with van Dijk's (2018) assertion that "ideology is reproduced through discourse by shaping what is

considered legitimate knowledge" (pp. 17-19).Jumbam's stylistic choices contribute significantly to the representation of power and ideology in the text. His use of simple yet culturally embedded language, including proverbs, oral narrative techniques, and indịgenous lexical items, reflects an attempt to preserve and valorize African cultural identity. Leech and Short (2007) emphasize that "stylistic analysis involves examining how linguistic choices produce particular effects and meanings in literary texts" (pp. 9-11). As Foucault (1980) notes, "power is not merely repressive but also productive, operating through networks of discourse that define what is true or acceptable" (pp. 131-133). In *The White Man of God*, power is manifested in the authority of missionaries, the institutional structures supporting them, and the linguistic forms through which their messages are conveyed. However, the novel also reveals the limitations of this power, as indịgenous voices and practices continue to assert their presence.Ideology, closely linked to power, refers to the system of beliefs and values that underpin social practices. It is often embedded in language in ways that make it appear natural or inevitable. In literary texts, ideology is expressed not only through thematic content but also through stylistic and structural features. The interaction between different ideological positions in the novel reflects the complexity of postcolonial identity, where indịviduals must navigate competing cultural frameworks. According to Wodak and Meyer (2016), "discourse analysis seeks to uncover the ways in which language constructs social reality and reproduces power relations" (pp. 6-8). In *The White Man of God*, multiple

discourses, religious, cultural, and social interact and compete, revealing the ideological underpinnings of each. The tension between these discourses highlights the role of language as a site of negotiation, where meanings are constantly contested and redefined.Moreover, the narrative structure and characterization in Jumbam's novel further illuminate the dynamics of power and ideology.

Fortunately, many scholars have explored the impact of colonialism and missionary work on African societies, particularly the ways religion was used to enforce cultural and political domination. Chinua Achebe (1958), in *Things Fall Apart*, offers a parallel narrative where the arrival of missionaries disrupts traditional Igbo society. Similarly, Ngugi (1986) emphasises the role of language and religion in cultural imperialism. According to Mudimbe (1988), the colonial library, comprising missionary texts and ethnographic accounts, served to define African identity in Western terms. In the Cameroonian context, scholars like Nyamnjoh (2001) and Fonlon (1965) have highlighted how missionary education and religion restructured local epistemologies. Jumbam, in *The White Man of God*, builds upon this tradition, using fiction to document the psychological tension between indigenous beliefs and imposed Christianity. Also, postcolonial theorists like Frantz Fanon (1963) argue that the colonized subject undergoes a profound identity crisis when forced to adopt the coloniser's worldview. Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988), for instance, explores analogous Shona/English tensions through Nyasha, who violently rejects her mother tongue as 'gibberish' a stark contrast to Tansa's ambivalent but persistent Lamnso fluency. Where

Dangarembga frames hybridity as traumatic fracture, Jumbam portrays it as a contested yet generative space, echoing Bhabha's'Third Space' more optimistically. Similarly, AyiKwei Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) deploys vernacular idioms to mock colonial bureaucracy but lacks Jumbam's deliberate oral storytelling structures. These comparisons underscore *The White Man of God's* distinct contribution: a narrative model where indịgenous language survives not despite but through strategic hybridity. Moreover, scholarly readings of the novel oscillate between political and spiritual interpretations. Howard (1981, p. 98) frames it as "a blunt indịctment of missionary hegemony", while Ebot (1997, p. 120) highlights its "unexpected moments of Christian-indịgenous syncretism". This study bridges the divide by demonstrating how the author's stylistic choices like embedding Lamnso prayers within Catholic liturgy enact both resistance and uneasy coexistence. This study, therefore, examines how language functions as a vehicle for the expression and negotiation of power and ideology in Kenjo Jumbam's *The White Man of God*.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the stylistic techniques (code-switching, integration of oral idioms and proverbs) the author uses to subvert colonial language hierarchies.

2. To evaluate the novel's ambivalent portrayal of English as a dual force of salvation/progress and cultural alienation, and its psychological impact on characters like Tansa.

3. To examine how Lamnso oral traditions and narrative structures function as acts of cultural resistance and identity preservation.

4. To demonstrate how the author's fusion of African oral aesthetics with the Western novel form constitutes a decolonizing literary strategy.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does Jumbam use stylistic devices such as code-switching and narrative hybridity to critique colonial linguistic domination?

2. In what ways does the novel portray English as a tool of both assimilation and alienation, reflecting broader postcolonial theories of linguistic imperialism?

3. How does the integration of Lamnso proverbs, rituals, and oral aesthetics assert indigenous resilience and cultural continuity?

4. What insights does a stylistic postcolonial analysis provide about the construction of hybrid identities in the colonial context?

Synopsis of the Novel

This novel is semi-autobiographical with a symbolic title that is set around the fictional village of Nkar in Bamenda,

Cameroon. It depicts a young boy called Tansa, navigating the tensions between his colonial education and his traditional upbringing. European missionaries, led by the authoritarian Big Father and the culturally sensitive Father Cosmas, introduce Christianity and Western education, reshaping the community's spiritual and linguistic landscape. While Tansa's mother embraces English and Christianity for social advancement, his grandmother Yaya defends Lamnso and ancestral traditions. This intergenerational conflict mirrors the broader societal struggle between assimilation and cultural preservation.The plot centerson the clash between traditional African religious beliefs and the imported Christian faith, as well as the broader implications of Western education and language imposition. Tansa's family serves as a microcosm of this conflict. His mother, Mama, wholeheartedly embraces Christianity and Western education, hoping for upward social mobility. In contrast, his grandmother Yaya remains a staunch defender of indịgenous customs, spiritual beliefs, and the Lamnso language. This familial tension reflects the broader societal divide, capturing the identity crisis and cultural dislocation experienced by many during this period. The author masterfully portrays the internal conflicts of characters caught between two worlds. Tansa, in particular, embodies the ambivalence of colonial subjects who are exposed to the allure of modernity but remain deeply rooted in tradition. The author's narrative voice is candịd, reflective, and at times humorous, providing insight into the psychological toll of colonialism on young Africans.

The novel also explores the politics of language. It emphasizes how English becomes a tool for both evangelization and elitism. Those fluent in English gain access to education, church leadership, and administrative positions, while native Lamnso speakers are increasingly marginalized. Through characters like Big Father, who insists on English-only policies, and Father Cosmas, who learns Lamnso to connect with the people, the author presents contrasting approaches to cultural integration. A notable stylistic feature of the novel is its fusion of Western narrative forms with African oral traditions. Proverbs, folktales, and indigenous idioms are seamlessly integrated lending authenticity and depth to the storytelling. This blend not only enriches the narrative but also serves as a form of resistance against cultural erasure. While Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* integrates Igbo orality to preserve pre-colonial identity, Jumbam's work uniquely foregrounds the psychic violence of linguistic imperialism through Tansa's hybridity, a tension less explored in the earlier novel. It provides a compelling literary representation of the encounter between European Christian missionaries and the indigenous people of Bamenda in colonial Cameroon. The setting is at the Nkar community in Nso. The novel foregrounds how colonialism, mediated through missionary education and religion. It also foregrounds how colonialism disrupts cultural continuity by privileging English as the language of salvation, progress, and social mobility, while marginalizing Lamnso, the native language of the Nkar people. Therefore, this study interrogates how the author deploys stylistic devices code-switching, oral idioms, proverbs, and hybrid narrative techniques to critique

linguistic imperialism and affirm cultural resilience in the novel. Guided by postcolonial language theory, the analysis examines how language functions as both a mechanism of colonial control and a medium of indigenous resistance, revealing the hybrid identities produced by this encounter. The author highlights the cultural, spiritual, and psychological disruptions caused by the arrival of the white man during the colonial era. Certainly, the arrival of the Christian missionary directly challenged the existing structure by presenting a monotheistic God and dismissing ancestral practices as sinful. As Tansa wondered:

Do squirrels go to confession? This one had been stealing and if he did not confess his sin he would certainly go to hell-fire. Then he would die with a sin on his soul. Would that be a mortal sin or a venial sin? Do animals have the same hell or heaven as men? (Jumbam, 1980, p.7).

In the novel, language becomes a tool not only for religious conversion, as prayers for the conversion of Africa were said in every Mass and Western education but also for cultural assimilation, marginalizing native tongues and reshaping societal structures. The novel critiques linguistic imperialism by showing how language operates as both a mechanism of subjugation and a medium for cultural survival. It highlights the deep and lasting impact of colonial language policies on personal identity and collective heritage, while also celebrating the enduring strength of indigenous voices amidst external pressures. It also reveals how colonial missionaries and administrators privilege English to impose foreign ideologies on indigenous societies, reflecting what Ngugi (1986) calls

"the domination of the mental universe of the colonized" (p. 16). In the narrative, language is not merely a means of communication but a site of cultural and ideological conflict. Yet, the author's narrative also emphasizes indịgenous resistance to linguistic imperialism. Despite the colonial emphasis on English, several characters insist on preserving and practicing their native language. Fai, in particular, serves as a cultural custodian who refuses to abandon Lamnso, maintaining both the language and the spiritual practices it encodes. Through such characters, the novel illustrates how indịgenous communities use language to resist erasure and assert cultural integrity. As Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989) observe, "postcolonial literature often reclaims the colonizer's language through abrogation and appropriation to reflect indịgenous realities" (p. 38). Father Cosmas, one of the missionaries, offers a contrasting model of engagement by learning Lamnso and communicating with the villagers in their mother tongue. His approach facilitates mutual understandịng and underscores the potential for linguistic respect and intercultural dialogue. In contrast, Big Father's English-only policies alienate the people and exemplify the dangers of linguistic authoritarianism. It is clear that the author's personal history illuminates his novel's tension between missionary education and cultural preservation. He was born in Cameroon's Nso region, "He attended Catholic schools, an experience mirrored in Tansa's ambivalence toward colonial schooling" (Howard, 1981, p. 97). According to Ngwa (2020), "His later studies in Nigeria and the UK exposed him to Ngugi's language debates, which likely influenced his insistence on Lamnso's

narrative centrality" (p. 333). This duality immersed in colonial systems yet rooted in Nso oral traditions shapes the novel's innovative style, where proverbs and code-switching become acts of literary decolonization.

Theoretical Framework

This is anchored on postcolonial language theory, which examines language as a political tool used to suppress indịgenous cultures and reconfigure identities. Ngugi argues that colonial languages serve as vehicles of cultural domination, carrying the values and worldviews of the colonizer (*Ngugi, 1986, p.* 16). He posits that reclaiming indịgenous languages is central to decolonization. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin emphasize that postcolonial writers often subvert colonial languages through abrogation (rejecting standard colonial forms) and appropriation (adapting them to express indịgenous realities) (*Fanon, 1963, pp.* 38–39). While Ngugi rejects colonial languages inherently oppressive, Jumbam's stylistic hybridity suggests a pragmatic middle ground, using English to subvert its dominance, echoing Bhabha's 'Third Space'. HomiBhabha's concept of hybridity, the "Third Space" where colonized subjects are "almost the same but not quite" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 89), provides a lens to understand Tansa's identity conflict. These theoretical perspectives illuminate how Jumbam's stylistic choices both critique and resist colonial linguistic hierarchies.

Invariably, scholars in this field argue that colonial powers historically imposed their languages on colonized societies to suppress indigenous cultures, reconfigure identities, and

establish hegemonic control. In this regard, language is not a neutral tool but a political weapon that shapes consciousness and social structures.Ngugi, a key voice in this discourse, argues that "language carries culture, and culture carries…the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world" (*Ngugi, 1986, p.*16). He criticizes the continued use of colonial languages in African literature and education, asserting that this practice perpetuates cultural alienation and psychological subjugation (Ngugi, 1986, p. 17). For Ngugi, reclaiming indigenous languages is essential for restoring African cultural autonomy and resisting neocolonial influence.

Similarly, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989) propose that postcolonial writers often engage in **abrogation** which is the rejection of standard colonial linguistic formsand **appropriation**, the creative adaptation of these forms to reflect indigenous realities (p. 38). These strategies allow writers to subvert colonial language norms and assert cultural agency. Through such linguistic interventions, postcolonial literature becomes a site of resistance and reinvention.HomiBhabha (1994) introduces the concept of **hybridity**, emphasizing how colonized individuals occupy an ambivalent space, what he calls the "Third Space", where cultural meanings are negotiated rather than fixed (p. 37). Language, in Bhabha's view, becomes a site of tension and transformation, reflecting the contradictions inherent in colonial encounters.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design, anchored in textual analysis. The methodology integrates the principles of literary stylistics with postcolonial critical theory. This dual approach allows for a detailed examination of linguistic features (stylistics) while interpreting their cultural, political, and ideological functions (post colonialism).

Method of Data Collection

The primary data for this study is KenjoJumbam's novel, *The White Man of God* (1980). The data collection process involved a close reading of the primary text, with a focus on identifying and extracting passages that exemplify:

a)Code-switching and Register Variation.

b) Integration ofOrality

c) Narrative Hybridity

Secondary data was drawn from key theoretical works in postcolonial studies, including NgugiwaThiong'o (1986), Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989), and Bhabha (1994), to provide the analytical framework.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Linguistic Imperialism in the Novel

The **traditional religion**, centered on **ancestral worship, sacred rituals, and indigenous leadership**, was suddenly deemed **paganand evil.** The white priest condemned

practices like libations, polygamy, and festivals, and insisted that salvation could only be found in the **Christian God.** This is seen from the big Father's comment:

You people of Nkar, he said, I came to bring Christ to you and I have found out that you are not ready for Him. You are not ready for Christ even on Easter day! You cannot have God and juju; you have preferred juju to God and so I must go back, (Jumbam. 1980, p. 60).

The people responded in mixed ways some, especially the youth, were drawn to **Westerneducation** and Christian teachings, while other elders like Fai, Fonjo, tried to **resist**or**preserve their traditions**.This novel reveals that the coming of the white man was **not only about religion**, but also about **colonial control, cultural erosion**, and the **struggle for self-definition** during a time of forced change. European missionaries and colonial administrators in this novel treat English as "the language of light", pushing it into every corner of Nkar's religious and educational life and relegating Lamnso to obscurity.Yaya stresses on this as she notes:

And I am older than you. I see that you pray to the ancestors of the white man. You ask them to take your requests to God. But let me ask you, do they understand your language? …. The second snare I see is this: your new religion has impossible laws and its God is cruel (Jubam, 1980, p. 33).

Yaya refuses to pray in English, reminḍing her daughter that "our own ancestors … see God in the world beyond" (Jumbam, 1980, p. 46). Father Cosmas, unlike his

authoritarian colleagues, learns Lamnso and delivers homilies in it, a concrete gesture toward what Ashcroft et al. term "appropriation," the bending of colonial discourse to serve indigenous ends (41). Such episodes affirm that language can be a site of resistance as well as subjugation. The long term consequences of linguistic marginalization are stark. Children schooled exclusively in English develop contempt for traditional knowledge systems, and village rituals lose participants who can no longer decode their Lamnso chants. Yet the author also shows that resistance need not be spectacular. Every time a grandmother tells a folktale in Lamnso or a youth code-switches to reassure an elder, the community reclaims a fragment of cultural authority. By the novel's close, Tansarecognizes the possibility of "speaking two worlds at once", embracing English for pragmatic survival while refusing to silence the cadence of Lamnso (Jumbam, 1980, pp. 81-2). This novel weave narrative techniques that are deeply rooted in African oral traditions to counter colonial erasure and affirm indigenous identity.

Our compound consisted of two houses facing each other with a small courtyard between them. The walls were of bamboo and mud, and roofed with grass…, The Fai and his wives were gradually being left alone in the big compound, but he was still respected and acknowledged as the head of all families. In fact, the children spent most of the day in the big compound and Papa and other men often spent their evenings with the Fai (Jumbam, 1980, pp.1-2).

The author's storytelling technique does more than entertain or inform. It preserves the linguistic and spiritual heritage of the Nkar people. Take for instance:

…. Then we discovered that it was a spider, a big, hairy spider with long legs. We jumped up and Maria grabbed a stick. Don't kill it in the house or the poison will fall on the floor and someone may step on it. Take it out, dig a hole and put it in and kill it, Mama said. Don't dare! Cried Yaya from the bed. Spiders are never killed. They tell the future and can shape one's future", (Jumbam, 1980, p. 98).

The author performs an act of literary resistance, asserting that African ways of knowing and telling are valid, resilient, and central to communal survival. Fai, who is the eldest and spiritual head of the family maintains his tradition and position despite all odds:

The Fai was offering a sacrifice on behalf of the family. He stood on a tombstone with the sacrificial cock in his hand. Then he bent down and put the cock's legs under his right foot and wings under the left and recited the following prayer: O shafe! O Lambu! O Dule! Come and take your chicken…. (Jumbam, 1980, p. 18).

A key technique he uses is **the incorporation of oral storytellingwithin prose narration**. Yaya, Tansa's grandmother, is the main custodian of this tradition. She frequently tells stories laced with ancestral wisdom, teaching values, social norms, and spiritual truths. One such moment occurs when she tells Tansa: "Let no one ever tell you that the tongue is not a spear. With it, you can protect your people or betray them to ruin" (Jumbam, 1980,

p. 36). While English appears in missionary and school settings, the emotional and communal life of the village is expressed in Lamnso. For instance, when Big Father insists that children recite prayers in English, Yaya's response is a fierce rejection:

You kneel in front of a god who speaks only the white man's tongue. But our God, the God of Nkar, understands our words, our dances, and our drums (Jumbam, 1980, p. 47).

This defiance reveals that oral tradition is not only linguistic but spiritual. It is a worldview through which the Nkar people understand their existence, their ancestors, and their connection to the divine. Also, the author draws upon **the structure of oral narrative** like repetition, communal dialogue, and cyclical storytelling, to shape the form of the novel. Scenes of community gatherings, storytelling around the hearth, and public ceremonies follow the rhythm of oral performance. These narrative elements defy the linear, Eurocentric model of plot progression. Instead, they affirm collective memory and tradition as valid narrative anchors.

Moreover, **rituals and ceremonies**, including naming rites, funerals, and ancestral invocations serve as narrative focal points where oral language is activated and transmitted across generations. This could be seen when Fai conducted the cleansing rite for incest:

…. Let the wine intoxicate those who drink it. Pom! Pom! Mbre-er-er. Let him that carry shit himself endure its smell. Pom! Pom! Pom! The he-goat kicked its legs, stretched out its tongue and died, bleeding profusely through the mouth

and nose. Even when the child was born a still birth, everyone was forbidden to cry, (Jumbam, 1980, pp. 74 - 79).

This emotional resonance signals that, despite colonial schooling, the oral tradition remains alive in memory and emotion. It provides continuity and identity in a world being linguistically and spiritually transformed.

Dominance vs. Resistance in the Novel

The white man came not just with a **Bible,** but with the **power of the colonial government**, symbolizing both **religious conversion** and **foreign domination**. Dominance through brute actions is captured vividly,

Lukar's mother had one of her sudden fits of coughing…. Fear seized the congregation when the priest, fuming with anger, began to walk down from the pulpit. Lukar's mother could not thread her way among the people quickly enough. He met her half-way out of the door and kicked her on the bottom and she fell down forward hitting her stomach on the ground and coughing even louder than before. To hell- to hell- to hell! He blurted. Everybody breathed a sigh of despair. He has cursed her; did you hear it? They whispered to one another", (Jubam, 1980, p. 59).

His use of linguistic hybridity also plays out symbolically in the characterizations of Father Cosmas and Big Father. Father Cosmas learns Lamnso, delivers sermons in it, and attempts to harmonise Christian teachings with local customs:

The Reverend Father Cosmas had an ear for, and interest in, languages. In less than a year's time he already had a smattering of Lamnso and could put his ideas across in it without much need for an Interpreter…. Perhaps he had at the back of his head the Nso proverb that whoever captures the child is sure to capture the parents, (Jumbam, 1980, p. 108).

His linguistic sensitivity makes him more effective and respected among the villagers, symbolizing the possibility of intercultural understanding. In contrast, Big Father insists on English-only policies, representing colonial rigidity and cultural erasure. The divide between the two missionaries illustrates the divergent outcomes of linguistic integration versus imposition. Consequently, a linguistic caste system arises: English-speaking converts occupy church and civil posts, while monolingual Lamnso speakers are read as backward. Tansa, the adolescent narrator, embodies the psychic cost of this transformation. Each new English lesson wins him social prestige yet widens the gulf between himself and his grandmother Yaya:

What will God do to Yaya? Ah Yaya! She does not go to church, not even on Sundays. Will God put her in hell-fire too? Such a good and kind woman as Yaya? Please God, don't (Jumbam, 1980, p. 8).

Yaya, openly questions this new religious model: "You follow this new way of the white man. He leads you to beg God through his own ancestors… What is wrong with your own ancestors"? (Jumbam, 1980, p. 45).Her protest reveals the community's discomfort with abandoning ancestral

spirituality and underscores the cultural dissonance triggered by linguistic imposition.The author's characters shift between English and Lamnso depending on their audience and context: "Nyuyservivenadzem! (God bless you all) the Father said in our language. Nyuyserviwo Tata! (God bless you Father) the people replied spontaneously" (Jumbam, 1980: 106).English is used in formal, authoritative, or religious settings, particularly in interactions with missionaries or during school sessions while Lamnso dominates domestic and communal conversations. For instance, when the people interact with missionaries, they are expected to respond in English, reinforcing a linguistic hierarchy: "The prayer for the conversion of Africa", Big Father instructs. (Jumbam, 1980, p. 60).This directive reflects how language becomes a symbol of submission and control.

The Narrative of Decolonization

In the novel, in mission schools, English is elevated as the language of spiritual legitimacy and intellectual progress, while Lamnso is devalued. Tansa's catechism lessons, where prayers are recited in English despite his limited understanding (Jumbam, 1980, p. 36), illustrate how English becomes a gateway to salvation, aligning with Ngugi's critique of linguistic domination (*Ngugi, 1986, p.*16). Tansa's growing fluency earns him prestige but alienates him from Yaya and his cultural roots, embodying Fanon's observation that colonial education induces psychological estrangement. This linguistic hierarchy restructures identity, producing hybrid individuals suspended between two worlds.

Sadly, colonial education in the novel promotes a binary between the 'civilized' Christian identity and the 'backward' traditional one. This dichotomy becomes internalized by the learners, who begin to measure themselves and others by their proficiency in English and conformity to Western norms. Characters like Pa Matiu (Mathew) the interpreter, and Tansa the central figure navigating both worlds, becomes a symbol of this transformation. For instance, Tansa's ability to speak English elevates his status in school and the church, yet it also distances him from his grandmother, Yaya and the traditions she upholds. He remarks: "Sometimes I felt embarrassed when Yaya spoke loudly in Lamnso in front of Father. I wished she would be quiet" (Jumbam, 1980, p. 51). This confession reveals the emergence of shame and alienation, a loss of pride in one's language and heritage, brought on by colonial schooling.

Furthermore, the curriculum erases indigenous epistemologies. Traditional rites, folktales, and ancestral wisdom are not only excluded but often demonized. The author uses this exclusion to highlight how mission education facilitates cultural amnesia. The students are taught to memorize European saints, geography, and catechisms while forgetting the stories of their ancestors. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin argue that such systems represent "the deliberate silencing of the native voice" (*1989, p.* 33). However, he does not present this transformation as total or uncontested. While Pa Mathew's and Tansa's formal education distance them from their roots, their exposure to traditional ceremonies, especially

funerals and naming rites continues to stir a sense of belonging (Jubam, 1980, p. 143).

Stylistic Strategies of Resilience

The author employs a range of stylistic strategies to resist cultural erasure and celebrate the vitality of Nso traditions. By intertwining Western novelistic techniques with African oral aesthetics, the author confronts colonial linguistic dominance while safeguarding indigenous modes of expression. His narrative as we can see above highlights rituals, ancestral invocations, proverbs, and Lamnso idioms. He uses them as tools of cultural affirmation within a text otherwise shaped by colonial language practices.Traditional rituals receive vivid and detailed depictions, where Lamnso chants and cultural practices take precedence over translation. For instance, in a cleansing rite for incest, the elders invoke local spirits as they chant:

Let the wine intoxicate those who drink it. Pom! Pom! Mbre-er-er. Let him that carry shit himself endure its smell. Pom! Pom! Pom! The he-goat kicked its legs, stretched out its tongue and died, bleeding profusely through the mouth and nose" (Jumbam, 1980, p.74).

By presenting the ritual in Lamnso without explanatory translation, the author preserves the authenticity of the ceremony and underscores Lamnso as a language of power, resilience, and spiritual continuity despite missionary condemnation of such practices.Code-switching emerges as a deliberate stylistic device. This could be seen when Lukar'smother choir leads

…. Our greetings our greetings you're welcome. Shikum kumkoshi kumkumko the river bird. Shikum kumkoshi kumkumko the river bird" (Jumbam, 1980, p.48).

While English dominates colonial spaces, classrooms, church sermons, and conversations with Big Father, Lamnso remains the medium of emotional, familial, and spiritual life. This duality is exemplified when Father Cosmas greets the villagers: "Nyuyservivenadzem!" ("God bless you all"), to which they reply, "Nyuyserviwo Tata!" ("God bless you, Father") (Jumbam, 1980, p. 106). Through such moments, the author illustrates that Lamnso persists as a communal language of intimacy and connection, countering its marginalization in formal contexts.Moreover, the author embeds oral narrative techniques, repetition, cyclical storytelling, and communal dialoguethat challenge the linear, Eurocentric structure typical of the colonial novel. Scenes of storytelling by Yaya, highlights this oral aesthetic, as when she instructs Tansa:

> Let no one ever tell you that the tongue is not a spear. With it, you can protect your people or betray them to ruin (Jumbam, 1980, p. 42).

These proverbs, rooted in Lamnso and translated for readers, convey moral wisdom and political awareness while reinforcing the legitimacy of indigenous linguistic forms. As Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin observe:Such practices "subvert the power of the colonizer's language by inscribing it with local speech patterns and references" (1989, p.39).Through these stylistic techniques ritualistic language, code-switching, and oral narrative structures the

author ensures that *The White Man of God* functions as both a documentation of cultural disruption and a testament to resilience. The novel becomes a hybrid space where African voices endure, affirming Lamnso and oral traditions as vital counter-narratives within a colonial framework.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Jumbam's *The White Man of God* offers a sophisticated critique of colonial language policies as instruments of domination and identity reconfiguration. Through a rigorous stylistic-postcolonial analysis, we have seen how techniques like code-switching, the integration of oral traditions, and a hybrid narrative structure serve not only to document cultural erosion but, more importantly, to actively reclaim and celebrate Lamnso and Nso cultural identity. The novel thus stands as a powerful testament to literature's capacity to function as both a record of historical injustice and a space for decolonization.Beyond literary analysis; the author's stylistic strategies invite urgent conversations about language policy and pedagogy in postcolonial Africa. The novel's critique of English-only education prefigures contemporary Cameroon's struggles to integrate indigenous languages into national curricula. For literature classrooms, pairing the novel with oral performances could model Jumbam's own hybrid pedagogy.

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