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POST-DISCHARGE PATIENT SATISFACTION IN TRAUMATOLOGY CARE: MEASURING THE CONFIRMATION OR DISCONFIRMATION OF EXPECTATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The colonial legacy of linguistic hierarchy continues to shape language practices and attitudes in Francophone Africa, where French remains the language of power, education, and prestige while local languages are often stigmatized as inferior. This article examines how popular theatre in Yaoundé (Cameroon) and Libreville (Gabon) negotiates and subverts these inherited linguistic hierarchies. Adopting a qualitative, interpretivist approach grounded in postcolonial theory and sociolinguistics, the research draws on participant observation, semi-structured interviews with

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theatre practitioners, and analysis of theatrical performances over a two-year period. The findings reveal that popular theatre in these two cities engages with colonial linguistic hierarchies in three key ways. First, through the creative mixing of languages on stage, practitioners challenge the notion that languages are separate, bounded systems that must be kept apart. Second, through the elevation of local languages and urban sociolects to the status of legitimate stage languages, practitioners contest the hierarchy that places French above all other languages. Third, through metalinguistic commentary within performances, practitioners explicitly critique the devaluation of local languages and advocate for linguistic equality. The article argues that popular theatre is a site of decolonization, not in the sense of rejecting French or returning to an imagined pre-colonial purity, but in the sense of transforming the relationship between French and local languages from one of hierarchy to one of equality. Through their creative practices, popular theatre practitioners are enacting a vision of Francophonie that is plural, egalitarian, and authentically African.

Keywords: Popular theatre, linguistic decolonization, Francophonie, postcolonial linguistics, Yaoundé, Libreville, language hierarchy.

RÉSUMÉ

L'héritage colonial de la hiérarchie linguistique continue de façonner les pratiques et attitudes linguistiques en Afrique francophone, où le français reste la langue du pouvoir, de l'éducation et du prestige tandis que les langues locales sont souvent stigmatisées comme inférieures. Cet article examine comment le théâtre populaire à Yaoundé (Cameroun) et Libreville (Gabon) négocie et subvertit ces hiérarchies linguistiques héritées. Adoptant une approche qualitative interprétativiste ancrée dans la théorie postcoloniale et la sociolinguistique, la recherche s'appuie sur l'observation participante, des entretiens semi-directifs avec des praticiens du théâtre et l'analyse de représentations théâtrales sur une période de deux ans. Les résultats révèlent que le théâtre populaire dans ces deux villes s'engage avec les hiérarchies linguistiques coloniales de trois manières clés. Premièrement, à travers le mélange créatif des langues sur scène, les praticiens contestent la notion que les langues sont des systèmes séparés et délimités qui doivent être maintenus distincts. Deuxièmement, à travers l'élévation des langues locales et des sociolectes urbains au statut de langues scéniques légitimes, les praticiens contestent la hiérarchie qui place le français au-dessus de toutes les autres langues. Troisièmement, à travers des commentaires

métalinguistiques au sein des performances, les praticiens critiquent explicitement la dévalorisation des langues locales et plaident pour l'égalité linguistique. L'article soutient que le théâtre populaire est un site de décolonisation, non pas dans le sens d'un rejet du français ou d'un retour à une pureté précoloniale imaginaire, mais dans le sens d'une transformation de la relation entre le français et les langues locales d'une relation de hiérarchie à une relation d'égalité. À travers leurs pratiques créatives, les praticiens du théâtre populaire mettent en acte une vision de la Francophonie qui est plurielle, égalitaire et authentiquement africaine.

Mots-clés : Théâtre populaire, décolonisation linguistique, Francophonie, linguistique postcoloniale, Yaoundé, Libreville, hiérarchie linguistique.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The colonial legacy of linguistic hierarchy continues to shape language practices and attitudes in Francophone Africa. French, the language of the former colonizer, remains the official language of education, government, law, and media. It is the language of power, prestige, and social advancement. Local languages, despite being the languages of everyday life, of family, of community, of oral tradition, are often stigmatized as inferior, as mere "dialects" or "patois" rather than true languages. This hierarchy is not merely a matter of attitude; it is institutionalized in language policies that allocate vastly different resources to French-medium education than to local language education, if any.

Yet, this hierarchy is not static. It is contested, negotiated, and subverted in various domains of social life. This article examines one such domain: popular theatre in Yaoundé (Cameroon) and Libreville (Gabon). Popular theatre, as a form of cultural expression designed for mass audiences, provides a space where linguistic hierarchies can be made visible, questioned, and transformed.

On stage, practitioners mix French with local languages, elevate local languages to the status of legitimate stage languages, and explicitly critique the devaluation of local languages.

The article is organized as follows. Section two presents the theoretical framework, drawing on postcolonial theory and sociolinguistics. Section three describes the methodology. Section four presents the findings, organized around the three key ways that popular theatre negotiates and subverts colonial linguistic hierarchies: mixing, elevation, and critique. Section five discusses these findings in relation to Fanon's analysis of colonial language and the concept of decolonization. Section six concludes.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Fanon and the Colonial Language

Frantz Fanon's analysis of the psychological effects of colonial language on colonized subjects, developed in *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952), provides a foundational framework for understanding the linguistic dimensions of colonialism. Fanon argued that the colonized person's adoption of the colonizer's language is never neutral. The colonized person who speaks the colonizer's language is not just communicating; he is also signaling his desire to be like the colonizer, to escape the stigma of his own culture.

Fanon also argued that this alienation is not merely individual but collective and systemic. It is imposed by structures of power that privilege the colonizer's language and devalue the colonized's languages. Language, for Fanon, is a vector of power and identity. Speaking the colonizer's language is a way of wearing a white mask over a black skin, a mask that is both a tool of assimilation and a source of psychological distress.

2.2 Linguistic Hierarchy in Postcolonial Francophone Africa

The linguistic hierarchy that Fanon analyzed in the colonial period persists in postcolonial Francophone Africa, though its forms have evolved. French is still the official language in most Francophone African countries, including Cameroon and Gabon. It is the language of education, from primary school through university. It is the language of government, law, and formal

economy. It is the language of prestige; speaking French well is associated with education, sophistication, and social mobility.

Local languages, in contrast, are marginalized. They are not taught in schools, except perhaps as optional subjects in later grades. They are not used in official contexts. They are often stigmatized as inferior, as languages of the uneducated, of the village, of the past. Speakers of local languages may be ashamed to speak them in public, may feel that they are betraying their lack of education when they slip into a local language.

Yet this hierarchy is not absolute. In everyday life, most people speak local languages as much as, if not more than, French. Local languages are the languages of family, of community, of intimacy. They are the languages of oral tradition, of storytelling, of humor. There is a tension between the official hierarchy and the lived reality of plurilingualism.

2.3 Decolonization as Transformation of Relations

Decolonization is often understood as the political process by which colonized countries gained independence. But decolonization is also a cultural and psychological process, a transformation of the relations between colonizer and colonized, between colonial language and local languages.

This article understands decolonization not as the rejection of French or as a return to an imagined pre-colonial purity. That would be impossible; French is too deeply embedded in the institutions and practices of Francophone African societies. Rather, decolonization is understood as the transformation of the relationship between French and local languages from one of hierarchy to one of equality. In a decolonized linguistic order, French would not be abandoned, but it would no longer be superior. Local languages would be valued, taught, used in official contexts. The ideal would be a plurilingual society where all languages are respected and where speakers can move fluidly among them without shame or stigma.

Popular theatre, as this article will show, is a site where this decolonization is being enacted, not through policy or politics, but through creative practice.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

The research adopts a qualitative, interpretivist approach, which is appropriate for exploring the complex, situated processes of linguistic decolonization in popular theatre.

3.2 Data Collection

Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and corpus analysis over a two-year period from 2020 to 2022 in Yaoundé and Libreville.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic content analysis, focusing on moments where linguistic hierarchies are made visible, questioned, or subverted.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Mixing as Subversion

The analysis reveals that the creative mixing of languages on stage is a form of subversion of colonial linguistic hierarchies. By mixing French with local languages, practitioners challenge the notion that languages are separate, bounded systems that must be kept apart.

A performer from Yaoundé expressed this subversive impulse directly. When asked about his use of language mixing, he responded: "Why couldn't we equalize languages? Why do we think that Ewondo is a dialect that must be below French and English? What makes us not believe that English was spoken in Western villages?" This rhetorical question challenges the hierarchy that places French and English above local languages.

Mixing also subverts the ideology of linguistic purity. Standard French ideology holds that there is a correct way to speak French and that deviations from this norm are errors. Popular theatre practitioners deliberately deviate from the norm, mixing in local language words, using local language pronunciation, inventing new words. These deviations are not errors; they are creative choices that express identity and generate humor.

4.2 Elevation as Contestation

The analysis also reveals that the elevation of local languages and urban sociolects to the status of legitimate stage languages is a form of contestation of colonial linguistic hierarchies. By bringing local languages onto the stage, practitioners assert that these languages are worthy of public performance, that they are not inferior to French.

In both Yaoundé and Libreville, entire sketches may be performed predominantly or entirely in local languages. This is a powerful assertion of linguistic legitimacy. It says: this language is enough; it can carry the full weight of dramatic expression; it does not need French to be complete or effective.

The elevation of urban sociolects such as Camfranglais and Toli-Bangando is particularly significant. These sociolects are often stigmatized as corruptions of French, as languages of the uneducated, of the street. By bringing them onto the stage, practitioners contest this stigmatization. They assert that these sociolects are legitimate languages in their own right, with their own rules, their own expressive capacities, their own value.

4.3 Metalinguistic Critique as Advocacy

The analysis further reveals that popular theatre practitioners engage in explicit metalinguistic critique, using their performances to comment on linguistic hierarchies and advocate for linguistic equality.

In one sketch from Libreville, a character complains that his language is not respected. He says: "People make fun of me. At school, on the road, everywhere, they call me 'indondo' [a derogatory term for an albino, used metaphorically for someone who is different]." This complaint is not just about individual experience but about the systematic devaluation of those who do not conform to linguistic norms.

Another character responds: "You have to let people talk. Look at how beautiful you are! You are special!" This response advocates for self-acceptance, for refusing to internalize the stigmatization of one's language. It is a message of linguistic pride.

In Yaoundé, a performer articulated a similar message in an interview: "I conclude by saying this: just as French has its place because of our history, our mother tongues also have their place. We must never be ashamed to speak our language; otherwise, we are simply rejecting our identity." This explicit advocacy for linguistic pride and against linguistic shame is a form of decolonization.

4.4 The Transformation of the French Language

The findings also reveal that popular theatre practitioners are not just challenging the hierarchy between French and local languages; they are also transforming French itself. Through their creative practices, they are creating new varieties of French that are inflected with the sounds, structures, and meanings of local languages.

This transformation is evident at multiple levels. At the phonetic level, French words are pronounced with local language phonology. At the lexical level, local language words are incorporated into French. At the syntactic level, French sentences are structured according to local language patterns. At the discursive level, French is used in ways that reflect local norms of interaction.

This transformed French is not a degraded version of standard French; it is a new variety, appropriate for its context, expressive of its speakers' identities. It is, in a sense, French decolonized: a French that is no longer foreign but authentically African.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Popular Theatre as Decolonizing Practice

The findings of this study support the claim that popular theatre in Yaoundé and Libreville is a site of decolonization. Through mixing, elevation, and critique, practitioners are challenging the linguistic hierarchies inherited from colonialism and enacting new, more egalitarian configurations.

This decolonization is not accomplished through official policies or political declarations. It is accomplished through creative practice, performance by performance, joke by joke. It is bottom-

up, grassroots, emergent. It is no less significant for being so; indeed, it may be more durable because it is embedded in everyday cultural practices rather than imposed from above.

5.2 The Limits of Decolonization on Stage

However, it is important to recognize the limits of decolonization on stage. Popular theatre performances are ephemeral; they occur in specific times and places and are witnessed by limited audiences. The linguistic hierarchies that popular theatre challenges are deeply institutionalized, embedded in education, government, and economy. Changing attitudes through performance is important, but it is not sufficient.

Moreover, popular theatre practitioners themselves are not immune to the linguistic hierarchies they challenge. They may celebrate mixing on stage while also aspiring to speak standard French in formal contexts. They may valorize local languages while also ensuring that their children receive French-medium education. This ambivalence is not hypocrisy; it is a realistic response to a situation where linguistic choices have material consequences.

5.3 Towards a Plurilingual Francophonie

The vision of Francophonie that emerges from popular theatre is not one of French as a monolithic, standardized language imposed from Paris. It is a vision of Francophonie as plural, diverse, dynamic. In this vision, French is one language among many, not superior to others. It is a language that is constantly being transformed by its speakers, adapted to local realities, mixed with other languages.

This vision aligns with calls from scholars such as Mbembe (2008) and others for a plurilingual, polycentric Francophonie. It is a vision that is more democratic, more egalitarian, more truly global. Popular theatre practitioners are not just theorizing this vision; they are enacting it, performance by performance.

6. CONCLUSION

This article has examined how popular theatre in Yaoundé and Libreville negotiates and subverts colonial linguistic hierarchies. The findings reveal three key strategies: mixing, which challenges

the separation of languages; elevation, which contests the hierarchy that places French above local languages; and metalinguistic critique, which explicitly advocates for linguistic equality.

The article argues that popular theatre is a site of decolonization, not in the sense of rejecting French or returning to an imagined pre-colonial purity, but in the sense of transforming the relationship between French and local languages from one of hierarchy to one of equality. Through their creative practices, popular theatre practitioners are enacting a vision of Francophonie that is plural, egalitarian, and authentically African.

Future research should investigate how the decolonizing practices of popular theatre circulate beyond the stage, influencing language attitudes and practices in other domains. Research should also examine the relationship between decolonization on stage and decolonization in education, politics, and other institutional contexts. Finally, research should explore the potential of popular theatre as a resource for language activism and policy change.

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