

## RHETORIC AND CULTURE IN JOHN NKENGASONG'S *ACROSS THE MONGOLO*

UDC 821.111(671.1).09-31

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**Abstract.** *This paper explores and discusses the synergetic link between language, culture and literature as underscored in John Nkengasong's Across the Mongolo. Nkengasong, in his novel Across the Mongolo, intertwines Cameroon culture and rhetoric through cultural thought patterns such as the family structure, greeting and salutation, communal life and hospitality, culinary delights, days of the week, as well as linguistic thought patterns such as transliteration of metaphorical expressions and imagery, direct loans, coinage, code-mixing, French discourse, and Cameroon Pidgin English discourse, as index of socio-cultural and linguistic identity. These expressions ornament the write-up of the novel giving it a Cameroonian romantic aesthetic in linguistic texturing. They equally reveal that the language of Across the Mongolo portrays the interconnection between language and culture, and language and socio-cultural identity construction. The paper argues that a good knowledge of the socio-cultural and linguistic context of Cameroon is necessary for a good understanding of the rhetoric of the novel Across the Mongolo.*

**Key words:** *culture, literature, language, socio-cultural and linguistic identity*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Talking about rhetoric in African novel, Anyokwu (2011: 80) makes the following relevant observation:

Part of the fallout of the incidence of Western incursion into Africa and the developing world is the issue of culture conflict, or, put less bellicosely, culture-contact between the imperial West and the indigenous cultures of traditional Africa. Indeed, it seems perhaps discursively inevitable that *all* talk of modern African literature cannot meaningfully be had without foregrounding the so-called "Language Question". [...]

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Submitted November 3<sup>rd</sup> 2016, accepted for publication April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017

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Literacy as a major element of modernity came with colonialism in Africa, and [...] those equipped with the ability to read and write in the language of the colonial masters, became the avatars of African *belles-lettres*. [...] Consequently, in Anglophone Africa, English became not only the official language but *the* medium of instruction in schools. [...] And due to the inevitable interaction between English and the several indigenous languages spoken in [Anglophone Africa], African speakers of English evolved their own varieties of English, varieties which reflect the speech patterns and habits of thought of the speakers.

With regard to the above-stated observation, it could be deduced that African literature today is characterized by linguistic diffusion and cultural diversity. Hence, literatures in English mirror the identity of African writers who are eager to weave linguistic and thematic elements in English so that their nationality, which appears in the characterization and various literary devices, would contribute to the uniqueness of new varieties of English (Bennui 2013). Though this argument holds sway, it is equally important to point out that African authors writing in English certainly contribute to the varieties of English or *englishes*, articulate their cultural position, point to cultural hybridisation/creolisation and/or in-betweenness. They also aim to familiarise wider audiences outside their countries with the specificities of their cultures, and express resistance to the cultural hegemony of “standard” varieties of English. This brings to the limelight the link between language and culture.

Culture is what people “must know in order to act as they do, make the things they make, and interpret their experience in the distinctive way they do” (Quinn and Holland 1987:4). In the same line of thought, Bloch (1991) opines that culture can be defined as that which people must know so that they can function level-headedly in their communal environment. This environment consists of social organizations and compartments that are the tools via which folk relate to each other. Hence, it can be deduced that culture is the physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual, and artistic heritage that a human group transmits to its descendants through education. It is a self-motivated phenomenon which encompasses the entirety of attitudes, behaviours, beliefs and world-views. Through it, man expresses himself, is conscious of his being, aware of his completeness, questions his achievements, untiringly quests for new meanings and finally creates works which transcend him (Kuo, 1985). This reveals that culture is a “complex pattern of behaviour and material achievement which are produced, learned and shared by members of a community” (Ameh, 2002: 165). Consequently, language, a creation which takes concrete form when expressed by the tongue, is the best expression of a context or of a culture.

There is not any culture without a linguistic basis. For this reason, when we speak of culture, the phenomenon of language comes first to the mind because it is “the first cultural imperative, the first cultural invention of man after thought” (Fonlon, 1965: 29). By saying that these two elements, culture and language, are interdependent, let us consider other interactions such as the one existing between language and literature and that established between literary creation and culture or cultural identity. It is in this perspective that, “the post-colonial work of imaginative art otherwise known as the cross-cultural text is generally regarded as a veritable virtual battle-front on which literary artists and writers fight the good fight of linguistic faith” (Anyokwu 2011: 80). As a result of this, African writers, for instance, spontaneously use different linguistic strategies to indigenize and domesticate the English language with which they produce their texts. Achebe (1963: 348) makes this point of view sway when he argues that “I have been given the language

(English) and I intend to stretch it to accommodate my African thoughts". Consequently, African writers subvert, appropriate, and decolonize the European languages to express their African experiences and worldview (Adesanmi 2002). With regard to this fact, the present paper explores and discusses the synergetic link between language, culture and literature as underscored in John Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo*. The paper is divided up into two main phases: aspect of Cameroon/*Nweh* culture and rhetoric in *Across the Mongolo*.

## 2. ASPECTS OF CAMEROON/*NWEH* CULTURE IN *ACROSS THE MONGOLO*

Every human being is born in a distinctive cultural milieu, which results in acquiring its diverse aspects of life. The novel, *Across the Mongolo*, presents a multifaceted probe of the sociocultural values of the Cameroon/*Nweh* people. Five aspects of Cameroon/*Nweh* culture are implicitly presented in the novel: the family structure, greeting and salutation, communal life and hospitality, culinary delights, and days of the week.

### 2.1. Family structure

The traditional Cameroon/*Nweh* family structure is polygamy. The family lives together in a compound where each woman has her own hut. This is implicitly illustrated by the following instance from the text: "The house of my mother *pfeuk* stood on the extreme side of the compound" (p.8). The name *pfeuk* denotes the second wife. This implies that the mother of the speaker is the second wife to the father. This echoes the idea of polygamy. In these polygamous homes, the father is venerated and has the natural duty of upholding a stable grip on the household and enforces discipline by preventing and settling disputes. Though jealousy between wives is a possibility, it is not considered a rule.

### 2.2. Greeting and salutation

Greeting a "Fon" (i.e., a chief) in the Cameroon/*Nweh* tradition is done by stooping, clapping, chorusing and invoking the title given to him. This is exemplified in the novel by the expression "The nine stooped, clapped and chorused *M'mboh Achiabieuh*"(p.3). In this example, the title that is given to the "Fon" is *M'mboh Achiabieuh* (i.e., "a man above all men"). This is because the "Fon" is looked upon as the custodian of culture; hence, the highest personality in the community: "The Fon, the royal father of the land (p2)". In this capacity, the "Fon" does not shake hands with ordinary men. Though the "Fon" does not shake hands with ordinary people, the latter do shake hands with their peers. Thus, a refusal to take a stretched hand is a face-threatening act, an indication of impoliteness, inhospitality, or hostility.

### 2.3. Communal life and hospitality

Communal life and hospitality is a feature of Cameroon/*Nweh* people. Aspects of communal life manifest themselves through religious rituals and sacrifices. Consequently, the concept of god is not new in African belief. In the novel, the African religion is personified by Ngwe's father, Ndi Nkemasah. He is the chief priest. As a chief priest, he is the mouthpiece of the gods, and he equally performs rites and rituals to appease the gods. This is grounded in the novel by his response to Ngwe when the latter tells him of Father

Francis' proposal to transfer him to the Bishop's Seminary where he will become a priest. On hearing this, Ndi Nkemasaah retorts to reject the idea and asks Ngwe the following rhetorical questions: "who shall continue to worship my fathers, when you go to that thing? Who will throw *Njieh* and salt when I feel the heat on the ground?" (p.83). Hence, Ngwe's father does not only reject the idea of priesthood but also reminds Ngwe of his ancestral lineage and the need for continuity of ancestral heritage.

As addendum to religious rites, the spirit of gods is invoked through incantation and singing: "We sang *eseih* we entered" (p. 93). This is a song sung during ancestral worship or any occasion where peace is solicited. In the same vein, offerings of varied items are made to the gods: "[...] all kinds of offer *colanut*, *cowries*, *njieh*, a small calabash of palm wine" (p. 35). Besides religious rituals and sacrifices, African communal life and hospitality is brought to the limelight through the construction of "*lemoo*" (p.8): a traditional hall in Cameroon/*Nweh* tradition where guests are received and ceremonies take place. It is often built at the centre of a compound. In the same vein, hospitality is equally highlighted in the novel through:

- (i) the feeling for one another expressed in the term "ashia" (p.117) as in "*Ashia*, he said, feeling certain parts of my face with her fingers" (p.117). The term "*ashia*" is an expression which is used to express or feel sympathy for someone.
- (ii) the invocation of peace through a plant called "Nkeng" (p. 35). This plant, which is locally known as and called in the Cameroonian community "peace plant", symbolizes peace.

#### 2.4. Culinary delights

Africans have their traditional dishes which give them identity. Some of the culinary delights of Cameroon/*Nweh* found in the novel include:

- (i) *kwirikwiri*, *bobolo* (p.62) - "*kwirikwiri*" is a snack made from groundnut paste and "*bobolo*" is made from cassava paste;
- (ii) *corn fufu* and *ndolé* (p.172) - "*Corn fufu*" is cooked maize flour and "*ndolé*" is soup made from a combination of bitter vegetable, groundnut, meat, dry fish, and other spices. *Ndolé* is a complement of *corn fufu*;
- (iii) "*abeh nchi*, Mbe Benu" (p.153) - a traditional meal made up of "*fufu*" (i.e., pounded cooked cocoyam and cassava or cooked maize flour associated with prepared vegetable made from pumpkin leaves and stems);
- (iv) "*puff-puff balls and beans, dodo*" (p.187) - "*Puff-puff*" is doughnut and "*dodo*" is fried ripe plantains;
- (v) "*bonga*" (p.17) - a specific type of tasty dried fish which is a delicacy in the African society.

#### 2.5. Days of the week

Nkengasong succeeded in underscoring the fact that the notion of the days of the week is not foreign to *Nweh* experience. The *Nweh* people have their ways of tracking the days of the week and time. For instance, the Cameroon/*Nweh* tradition has an eight-day week. Thus, the days of a traditional *Nweh* week are: *Anzoah*, *Alena*, *Amina*, *Afaah*, *Angong*, *aseih*, *Alung*, *Ankoa* (p.3). Also, the notion of time is not foreign to the *Nweh* culture. This is expressed using either a day of the week: "Go and start preparing to go with me on *Afaah*, the

day after tomorrow (p.23)”, or cosmic bodies: “Do that before the eye of the day darkens (p.3)”, i.e., before night falls.

Therefore, the Cameroon socio-cultural identity, as underscored by Nkengasong in the novel *Across the Mongolo*, is marked by aspects, which can be perceived at the level of religious rituals and sacrifices, family structure, greeting and salutation, culinary delights, titles, and days of the week. A scrutiny of these bits and pieces give a picture of the socio-cultural features, which express the Cameroonians/*Nweh* socio-cultural identity.

### 3. RHETORIC IN *ACROSS THE MONGOLO*

The linguistic and cultural ecology of Cameroon shows a lot of diversities through a multitude of languages and cultures which are found in the country. From a variety of perspectives, Cameroon is termed Africa in miniature. Linguistically, it is marked by the presence of three (Afro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan, Niger Kordofanian) of the four linguistic phyla: Afro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan, Niger Kordofanian, and Khoisan, attested in Africa (Bilola, 2004). Also, there exist languages of wider communication (i.e., lingua franca) such as: Mongo Ewondo (spoken in the Centre and South regions where speakers of the Fang-Beti language group are found), Arab Choa (spoken in the Far North region), Fulfulde (spoken in the Adamawa and North regions) and Pidgin English (dominantly spoken in the South West, North West, West, and Littoral regions) (Epoge, 2012) as well as two official languages – English and French. It is within this linguistic mosaic that the English language is used in Cameroon. That is why Cameroon Literature, which carries her socio-cultural and sociolinguistic identity, is bound to exhibit linguistic features resulting from the prevailing ecology. With regard to the novel *Across the Mongolo*, the following linguistic features are identified.

#### 3.1. Transliteration of metaphorical expressions and imagery

There are certain socio-cultural realities or concepts that are found in the writer’s home language or environment which the English language cannot articulately account for. Nonetheless, via the linguistic process of transliteration, these socio-cultural realities or concepts are expressed in the English language. So, transliteration, a linguistic process whereby lexical items, proverbs and other metaphorical indigenous speech habits and patterns are written in the English language, enables these speech habits and patterns to maintain their cosmic vision and socio-cultural identity. Hence, Nkengasong, on his part, uses transliterated metaphorical expressions and imagery to accentuate Cameroon/*Nweh* socio-cultural identity. The following excerpt taken from the novel *Across the Mongolo* explicitly illustrates this point:

Who said the *porcupine* and *cutting grass*<sup>1</sup> could share the same hole without eating each other; that the *scorpion* and *viper* could parade on the same floor without exchanging jets of venom; that *water* and *oil* could sit in the same calabash hand in hand without separating from each other? It was a tricky thing but only time could tell (p. 42).

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<sup>1</sup> hedgehog

Through this citation, Nkengasong presents the impossibilities that accrue as two masters co-habit a home. He uses metaphorical language to compare and contrast two things in order to highlight the insightful way of making a people have a mental image of the situation in which they find themselves. Thus, the use of animal imagery such as *porcupine*, *cutting grass*, *scorpion*, and *viper*, invokes a mental image and situates the cultural milieu in which the action takes place. Such vivid mental image is further explicitly captured through the simile “the train glided along its rail like a princely python” (p. 45).

It is important to note here that the metaphorical language is greatly embellished by the use of proverbs. This is because, to the African mind-set, proverbs are “the palm oil with which words are eaten” (Achebe, 1978: 51) and “a language without the use of proverbs is like a chest without a treasure” (Epoge, 2015: 58). The proverbs identified in this work are transliterated metaphorical expressions, that is, expressions that make simple ideas vivid. Though these expressions are written in English, they maintain the cosmic vision and thought pattern of the indigenous culture and language. Some proverbial expressions identified in the novel *Across the Mongolo* and their literal meanings include:

1. Palm wine enters the calabash in drops and yet fills it (p. 180) - i.e., bit-by-bit a task is accomplished.
2. If a snake bites you, flee at the sight of the millipede (p. 196) - i.e., once bitten twice shy.
3. Do that before the eye of the day darkens (p. 3) - i.e., before nightfall.
4. It is not because an old man has lost his teeth that the young men will not eat bones (p.137) - i.e., the older generation should not deprive the younger generation of their rights.
5. Where else does the man lying on the ground fall, apart from his grave? (p. 145) – i.e., someone who is on the ground need fear no fall.
6. I came out from a man’s womb (p.5) - i.e., I am full of vigour.
7. Ngwe, *put your head in your book* and climb (p.24) - i.e., concentrate on your studies.

What is noted with these Cameroonian/*Nweh* metaphorical expressions is that they provide a window into local values and traditions that literal language will not.

### 3.2. Direct loanwords

According to Kachru and Smith (2008), people in most parts of the world often need to express themselves through the medium of English. However, Inner Circle Englishes are not always amply adequate for such purposes. So, words maybe modified to express some meanings. These meanings that need to be conveyed in local contexts call for the nativization of English. For example, in order to use English in the changed context of the North American continent, a large number of items were adopted from various sources in American English, including Native American, Chinese, French, German, and Spanish (Mencken, 1936). With regard to this, items such as *cayote*, *prairie*, *bayou*, *depot*, *canyon*, *corral*, *tornado*, *frankfurter*, *hamburger*, *kowtow*, and others are an integral part of American English and are evidence to the acculturation of the language in the new context. These examples make it clear that borrowing items from an indigenous source language is one stratagem that is used for the nativization of a language in a new situation.

With regard to the above-stated fact, direct borrowing is one of the lexical innovation processes in Cameroon English. It involves the transfer of lexical items from the languages surrounding the acquisition of English in this non-native setting. In the novel *Across the*

*Mongolo*, the novelist ultimate aim for the insertion of words drawn from the Cameroon complex sociolinguistic ecology is not just to preserve the socio-cultural realities of his people, but also to make the English language bear the encumbrance of socio-cultural realities. To preserve the cultural values of such expressions, the writer avoids transliteration or circumlocution. Hence, by virtue of their usage, the borrowed items come to be intertwined into the syntax of English but they retain their donor language meanings. Direct loanwords identified in the novel *Across the Mongolo* are particularly from indigenous languages, French, and Cameroon Pidgin English.

### 3.2.1. Loanwords from indigenous languages

The italicized words and expressions are some loanwords from Cameroon home languages.

8. Ngwe was the *gem* of the clan (p. 1) - i.e., something precious.
9. There were vendors of bread, *kwirikwiri* (i.e., snack made from groundnut paste), *bobolo* (i.e. food item made from cassava paste) and all sorts of things (p.62).
10. *Lebin Soh'ho M'menyika Mbo'oh* (p.1) - i.e., an expression used to show that a terrible thing has befallen someone (i.e., M'menyika in this case).
11. Some people said it was *ndoh*, the punishment heaped on his head by his ancestors (p.2) - i.e., a curse, the anger of ancestors.
12. He sounded his gong and summoned his *troh-ndii* (p.2) - i.e. The chief masquerade in the *Nweh* tradition often endowed with very powerful potency.

### 3.2.2. Loanwords from French

The italicized words or expressions in the structures are some direct loanwords from the French language. They are followed in square brackets by their English equivalents.

13. [...]It was only at the door of the *scolarité* [i.e., Admissions Office] for two weeks (p.60).
14. We arrived in her room in the *Cite Universitaire* (p.167) [i.e., students' hall of residence].
15. At one time, the other invigilator would uncover candidates using prepared material or *cartouches* (p.161) [ i.e., prepared written material students bring to the examination hall in order to cheat].
16. I had been told that it was customary for new appointees to '*arousé*' [i.e., to feast/celebrate, or to call for a drink] as they say in French (p.127).
17. What made him grieve most was a [...] to enroll and defend the *Doctorat d'Etat* [i.e., a PhD] before they were considered for promotion (p.126).

### 3.2.3. Loanwords from Cameroon Pidgin English

The italicized items are loans from Cameroon Pidgin English.

18. These were future Divisional Officers [...] or the *Babarajos* of the country (p.75).
19. The first colonization being the Germans, the second by the British and the third by the *Awaras* (p.143).
20. Why did a lizard like you touch a *Top Exco man*, Ngwe? (p. 87).
21. Buy your *bonga* [i.e., a special kind of dried fish] with this, he told my mother (p.17).

These innovative processes enrich the English language and contribute significantly to the domestication of the alien language. The espousal and adaptation of different codes items enables the novelist to express his socio-cultural affiliations in the English language that is in close association with his historical experiences. This is accentuated on the awareness that language is at the centre of sociocultural identity construction in any milieu that involves its use.

### 3.3. Coinage

The term “coinage” is construed as an innovative lexical process resulting from the sociolinguistic factors prevailing in the linguistic ecology. The words so coined convey new cognitive and sociolinguistic reality to the socio-cultural context, cosmic vision, and the worldview of the users’ knowledge. The following examples are identified in the novel *Across the Mongolo*:

22. Ngwe [...] went to *Besaadi* many years ago to *learn book* [i.e., to be educated] in that *big school where book ends* [i.e., university] (p.1).
23. Soon as I started the first words in English the lecture hall broke into a tremor of booing and jeering ‘*Anglo! Anglofou! Anglbete!*’ (p.64).
24. Equally, there is the province of *Kama* [i.e., West Cameroon] and the province of *Ngola* [i.e., East Cameroon] as well as *Wysdom* college [i.e., Saint of Wisdom College Fontem] and the University of *Besaadi* [i.e., University of Yaounde].

The italicized words are cultural realities found in the Cameroonian socio-cultural context to which the novelist prefers to refer with coined lexemes. In fact, Cameroon has two main alien official languages speaking population: the French-speaking and English-speaking. The novelist comes up with two coined lexemes - *Ngola* and *Kama* – respectively, to refer to the former French Cameroon (Province of Ngola) and British Cameroon (Province of Kama) where these groups of people originate. This breeds a cognitive dividing line whereby the English-speaking Cameroonians are in a denigrating manner referred to as “anglo” (“pauvre Anglo! Anglo for Kromba! (p. 61)), and the French-speaking Cameroonians are referred to as “frogs”. In the same vein, the word “Kromba” is a coined lexeme for a town in the South West Region of Cameroon known as Kumba. Besides, before the 1993 Cameroon university reforms, there was only one full-fledged university in Cameroon, that is, the University of Yaounde, referred to in the novel as the “University of Besaadi”. This implies that those from the English-speaking region had to crossover to the French-speaking region to have university education.

### 3.4. Code-mixing

This is a linguistic process that encompasses linguistic features of at least two languages in a communicative process. Thus, it “occurs when conversants use both languages to the extent that they change from one language to another in the course of a single utterance” (Wardhaugh, 1986: 103). That is, when the lexical items and grammatical features of two or more languages exist in the same sentence (Muysken, 2000). In this regard, Bhatia and Ritchie (1999: 244) define code-mixing in the following words:

Code-mixing refers to the mixing of various linguistic units (words, phrases, clauses and sentences) primarily from two participating grammatical systems across sentence boundaries within a speech event. In other words, code-mixing is inter-sentential and may

be subject to some discourse principles. It is motivated by social and psychological factors. Against this backdrop, Liu (2008: 6, citing Muysken, 2000) establishes three main types of code-mixing:

- i. Insertion – the insertion of well-defined chunks of language B into a sentence that otherwise belongs to language A;
- ii. Alternation – the succession of fragments in language A and B in a sentence, which is overall not identifiable as belong to either A or B; and
- iii. Congruent lexicalization – the use of elements from either language in a structure that is wholly or partly shared by language A or B.

With regard to the present study, code-mixing refers to French lexical items that are added into the English language. It is a characteristic feature of Cameroonian creative writers. Some examples from the novel *Across the Mongolo* include:

25. Mr *le Prefet* has a *seance de travail* and is soon going for *midi*. *Repassez demain*.(p.58).
26. The Vice Dean told me that he was not in the position to solve my problem and that I should instead see the people of the *service des oeuvres* (p.124).
27. We were never used to those documents in our side of the country, documents like *attestation de presentation de piece d'originaux, attestation de domicile, attestation de lieu de naissance, and certificat de date de naissance* (p 58).
28. *Bonjour Mr le prefet. Monsieur le Prefet* does not quite answer but nods... (p.58).

The co-existence of the two imported official languages – French and English – within the Cameroon sociolinguistic ecology reveals the bicultural nature of the country. Hence, this bicultural nature is projected in the novel through code-mixing constructions. These expressions ornament the write-up of the novel, giving it a Cameroonian romantic aesthetic in linguistic texturing. In the same vein, the use of indigenous transliterated metaphorical expressions, direct loanwords, reveal that the language of *Across the Mongolo* portrays the interconnection between language and culture and language and socio-cultural identity construction.

### 3.5. French discourse

The term “French discourse” denotes a communication process which comprises only the linguistic features of the French code. It indicates the presence of French in the linguistic repertoire of the characters and the attempt to suppress the English language and project the dominance of French over English. This use of French discourse provides an elaborate account of the sociocultural realities and gives an interpretation of the world the novel represents. Some of these French discourses in the novel *Across the Mungolo* include:

29. “*Les anglo aiment toujours les annouilles. Sort, monsieur, suivant*”, he said and beckoned another student in (p.60).
30. “*Ancien, l'anglo a quand même son relever de notes*”, he said (p. 61).
31. “*Le type n'a pas bien arranger ses affaires*”, he went on (p.61).
32. “*Le type n'a pas bien arranger ses affaires*”, he went on (p.61).
33. “*Parle française, mon type je ne comprends pas ton paraitre patois la*” he said getting unnerved(p.61).

34. "Pauvre Anglo! Anglo for Kromba! Tu ne pouvez pas rester chez vous a Kromba, Anglo!" (p. 61).
35. "*Element subversif tu bouge je tire*" said the policeman tightening the grip on my neck (p.108).
36. "*Un de leader de la greve qui fuite*", he said (p.108) [i.e., one of the leaders of the strike who is on the run].

This preponderance of French is enough testimony for the domineering nature of French in the Cameroon sociolinguistic ecology.

### 3.6. Cameroon Pidgin English discourse

Pidgin English is a lingua franca that developed in Africa during the colonial period. It came up as a result of cross-cultural movements. The use of this language in the novel *Across the Mongolo* is symbolic. It illustrates the layman's way of speaking, spells out the social class of the speaker in the society, and portrays the low level of educational attainment of the speaker. Consider the following examples from *Across the Mungolo*:

37. *Dat njaah dem go toot me ndiba fo ma hoss joss noh* (p. 67).
38. "*Tamwhe dem go toot you for valle de la morte demain for morning time whatti you go cry? Ma mbroda, faf pip idem don toot'am just noh for putt'am for grong for valle*", he said.(p.110).
39. *Dat gendarmes dem be tif pipi*", the driver said. "I show'am book, book correct, e say a don run motuar too much. I don beg'am e no want hear, sote two thousand francs do comot for ma kwa", he lamented. "Dis country no good-o-o-o-o! Filenchiman don kill am o-o-o-o!" (p.41).

The use of these Pidgin English expressions ornament the write-up of the novel giving it a Cameroonian romantic aesthetic in linguistic texturing

## 4. CONCLUSION

The novel *Across the Mongolo* portrays the quintessence of the Cameroon socio-cultural identity which reveals aspects of her social and communal life. In making prominent a true image of Cameroon, Nkengasong presents bare facts. His mission is to showcase life and living in the Cameroonian society and the consequences that the historical contact with European languages have wrought on it. The present study has explored and discussed the rhetoric and the cultural values in the novel through the use of the English language to ascertain the sociolinguistic and socio-cultural features that the novelist uses to express the Cameroon socio-cultural identity. The outcome shows the richness and complexity of the Cameroonian socio-cultural and linguistic ecology. This is seen manifest through various linguistic features such as transliteration of metaphorical expressions, borrowing from the languages in the linguistic ecology, code-mixing, French discourse, as well as Cameroon Pidgin English discourse. Thus, the language of *Across the Mongolo* portrays the interconnection between language and culture, and language and socio-cultural identity construction.

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## DISKURS I KULTURA U ROMANU DŽONA NKENGASONGA PREKO REKE MONGOLO

*Afrička književnost ne samo da prikazuje identitet afričkih pisaca, već im omogućava da daju doprinos različitim dijalektima engleskog jezika, ili engleskim "jezicima", da iznesu svoj kulturološki stav i ukažu na kulturnu hibridizaciju/kreolizaciju i/ili "izmeđujezičnost". Na taj način, oni nam približavaju vezu između jezika i kulture. Ne postoji niti jedna kultura bez jezičkih temelja. Upravo zbog toga, kada govorimo o kulturi, govorimo i o jeziku, jer je on "primarni kulturološki imperativ, i ne računajući misao, prvi kulturološki izum čoveka" (Fonlon, 1965: 29). U svetlu iznetih činjenica, afrički pisci koji pišu na engleskom svojim subverzivnim pristupom prisvajaju i dekolonizuju standardni engleski jezik, kako bi izrazili sopstena, afrička iskustva i stanovišta. Stoga se u ovom radu analizira i istražuje sinergijska veza između jezika, kulture i književnosti posmatrana kroz delo Džona Nkengasonga Preko reke Mongolo. Rezultati analize pokazali su da roman Preko reke Mongolo iz različitih uglova duboko prodire u sociokulturne vrednosti naroda Kameruna/Nve. U radu je izdvojeno pet aspekata kamerunske/nve kulture, koji su implicitno prisutni u romanu: porodična struktura, pozdravi i pozdravljanje, život u zajednici i gostoprimstvo, kulinarske čarolije, kao i dani u nedelji. Pored toga, izdvojene su i lingvističke karakteristike poput transliteracije i metaforičkih*

*izraza i slika iz autohtonih jezika koje su ušle u engleski, zatim pozajmljenice iz autohtonih jezika, francuskog, i kamerunskog pidžina; tvorba reči, mešanje koda, i francuski i kamerunski pidžin. U radu se konstatuje da jezik romana Preko reke Mongolo oslikava međusobnu povezanost jezika i kulture, kao i jezika i stvaranja socio-kulturnog identiteta.*

**Ključne reči:** *kultura, literatura, jezik, socio-kulturni i jezički identitet*