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Language Policy in postcolonial Africa in the light of postcolonial theory. The ideas of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o¹

Abstract: The main aim of this paper is to discuss the ideas of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o on language policy in postcolonial Africa in connection with the key ideas of postcolonial theory. To that end some cultural, social, and political thoughts of Ngũgĩ will be presented, particularly those regarding language as a means to legitimize and execute the power, its role in the struggle against neocolonial dependency, social and political commitment of African writers and their language choices.

Keywords: language policy, postcolonial theory, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, legitimization of power, literary language

Introduction

PROSPERO. Abhorred slave,
Which any print of goodness wilt not take,
Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee,
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
One thing or other. When thou didst not, savage,
Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes
With words that made them known. (...)

CALIBAN. You taught me language, and my profit on’t
Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!

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This famous passage from William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (Shakespeare 1991: 7) illustrates that in the European tradition language has long been linked with self-consciousness, knowledge as well as being human (inasmuch gabbling is a characteristic of "a thing most brutish"). It also indicates that language can be used – and in this particular case overthrown Duke of Milan tries to use it this way – as a means to articulate certain interests, bring them into being and, as a result, broaden the power of specific stakeholders. Therefore, language can serve as a tool to legitimize and execute the power. At the same time that passage provides one of the most confronting demonstrations of the importance of language in the colonial encounter and presents some crucial questions of colonial identity and postcolonial transformation (Ashcroft 2001: 82). Therefore it is often used by the advocates of postcolonial theory² as a reference point for discussing links between power and language, including language policy, in Africa and other countries of the Global South – to mention only one issue they bring out of it (Gandhi 2008: 133, see also Singh 2003 or Didea 2007).

One of the leading representatives of postcolonial theory in the world is Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o³ (born 1938), a Kenyan dramatist, novelist, essayist, critic, scholar, cultural, social, and political activist, called "one of Africa's most eminent literary figures", "one of Africa's most articulate social critics" or in the similar way (however, in the world he is probably best known of his novels). As Ngũgĩ states: "Caliban has no language. He can only be taught/given language.

² Although in this paper we use the term „theory” in a conventional sense, we are aware of various accusation that tend to question and indeed deny the theoretical and even scientific value of research from this perspective. We wish, however, to differentiate between the postcolonial theory and a broader term of postcolonial studies, which is often used in isolation from the historical, ideological and methodological (post-structuralism, Marxism, feminism or psychoanalysis) fundamentals of the postcolonial theory.

³ In this paper the spelling of the name refers to the orthographic convention of the Kikuyu language. In References the author's name is listed as "Ngugi wa Thiongo". For citations and other references in the text the name "Ngugi" is used.

Prospero keeps reminding Caliban of his debt to Prospero's language and culture: *You did not know yourself until I gave you language. I created you, but, of course, in my image.* We encounter the same phenomenon in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, when Crusoe is teaching language to Friday. (...) Language here is being used to reproduce a master and slave consciousness in order to reinforce the material reality of the same. If Friday – or his earlier manifestation in Caliban – were to accept that language as used by the master, then he would enter a permanent state of auto-enslavement, surrendering his own sovereignty forever.” (Ngugi 2008: 168).

In *The Intimate Enemy* Ashis Nandy (1983) distinguished two types of colonialism. The first one is called “militaristic colonialism”, and implies territorial conquest. Such colonialism is violent and bandit in nature, but its intended objectives and means remain transparent. The second type is called „civilizing colonialism”, and involves mastering the mind, self and culture⁴ (Nandy 1983: xf.). It is indeed civilizing colonialism that constitutes the main field of interests of Ngũgĩ, the author of *Decolonizing the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature*, with the language policy in post-colonial Africa as a central part of it. In various books, articles, lectures and interviews, which will be examined later, the Kenyan argues that any situation in which there is a relationship of domination and subordination – regardless of time, place, religion or skin color of its participants – is reflected in the language, and that the language confirms and deepens inequalities inscribed in such relations. Therefore, as he states, “the language issue is the key, not the only one, but definitely a very, very important key to the decolonization process” (Ngugi and Jussawalla 1991: 146).

The day after independence – the issues to be discussed

Decolonization of Africa – or merely “formal decolonization”, as postcolonial theory underlines – has spawned various conflicts between the newly arisen states. Nevertheless there existed a few fun-

⁴ In the past, claims Nandy, it was led by the rationalists, liberals and modernists in the name of a civilizing mission.

damental issues in which the new countries had promptly reached an agreement. First of all they agreed that their borders, though resulted from the colonial division, will remain intact. This declaration was largely respected⁵, albeit it is necessary to note that numerous border wars waged since late fifties in various locations in Africa had claimed at least a dozen millions of victims. Secondly, the new countries have recognized that efforts should be made to integrate – or at least cooperate closely on a political level – within the framework of regional organizations and the Organization of African Unity. Unlike in the case of the borders, this demand turned out to have been vaulting ambition and it has been realized only partially. Such a consensus as in respect of the frontiers and integration, even if only declared, did not consider the language policy. The new states had to decide – and they wanted to do that on their own – whether they preferred a colonial or indigenous language to be their official or national language. Both solutions could have brought many risks and uncertainties. Let us list some of them.

On the one hand, the language of the ancient metropolis was considered by many Africans as a symbol of colonial enslavement, and over time as a symbol of postcolonial dependence (not always fully conscious, of course). As the postcolonial theoreticians claim, this language, being the tongue of the colonizer or the „invader”, confirmed, legitimized and ossified the outcome of seventy or eighty years of colonial rule (that is, the life of three generations)⁶. Since the

⁵ Obviously, in many cases the imposed borders violated strong and centuries-old social, ethnic, religious and linguistic divisions, but re-demarcation, as was assumed, could trigger a spiral of bloody wars. The first, and so far the only, correction of the colonial borders took place in July of 2011, when Republic of the Sudan divided into Republic of the Sudan and Republic of South Sudan. However, it is true that Eritrea broke away from Ethiopia in 1993 after a long and bloody war, but from 1936 to 1941 it was a part of the Italian East Africa, from 1941 to 1952 – a territory under control of the British, and in 1952, on the grounds of the UN resolution, it was incorporated into Ethiopia.

⁶ However, in some countries it was a shorter period of time. The best example is Morocco, which “became a French protectorate in 1912 and was

language is the carrier of cultural, social, political or economic ideas, they argue, then a colonial language, despite the departure or „escape” of Europeans⁷, continues to impute colonial view of things and thus limits the development of native ideas and institutions. The choice of the indigenous language as a national or official language of a new state was supposed to complete the process of decolonization, making this historical though only formal and symbolic breakthrough a real and palpable change as well. According to some post colonialists it was also supposed to partially heal, and perhaps even compensated for, the wounds of the past.

On the other hand, the advancement of the native language to the status of a national or official language is potentially connected with the promotion of one language group at the expense of others⁸ (and, as history of Africa clearly shows, it is hard to avoid such a risk or temptation). Since linguistic divisions are often interwoven with ethnic or religious divisions as well as with historical, political or economic conflicts and animosities, the arbitrary choice of the national or official language may cause or deepen social inequalities, weaken cohesion of a country, or lead to a spiral of violence.⁹ The next chal-

again independent in 1956 – the era of colonial domination now shorter than that of renewed sovereignty.” (Parker and Rathbone 2007: 91).

⁷ As some cases of the “escape” can be pointed out, e.g. Guinea after 1958 referendum.

⁸ One can count on the fingers of one hand the countries south of the Sahara, where at least half the population speak one common African language. Although there are few (however impressive) exceptions – that is, countries where about 80 percent of the population speak the same language (Tswana in Botswana and Sotho in Lesotho) – but usually several languages are used within one country and they are used by a few groups that are similar in number.

⁹ Let us note that even in the times of the European pre-colonial expansion the European missionaries tried to use local language differences for their own purposes, sometimes strictly political. By translating the Bible into a selected native language they opened up new prospects for a specific language group – namely: access to culture, education, and power at a local

lenges for the language change process are: huge organizational and financial effort, which is associated with it¹⁰, high level of illiteracy as well as an ideological and emotional attitude of the other-language groups¹¹ (see Piłaszewicz and Rzewuski: 2004: 103ff.).

Some supporters of exoglossia have enriched the above-mentioned arguments with references to the international situation of the new countries both in Africa and Asia. They argued that the choice of the colonial language as an official language would enable worldwide communication for the commercial and political elites of these countries, and, as a result, strengthen their position in global politics and economy. At the same time it might facilitate cooperation and integration of these new countries at the regional, continental, or even Afro-Asiatic level, all the more that the vast majority of them were colonized by the speakers of just two languages, i.e. French and English.

H. Ekkehard Wolff, referring to the African intellectuals who perceive the colonial languages as the instruments of dominance and cultural alienation and would like to see them replaced by one or more indigenous languages, states: “With a few exceptions, of which Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o is the strongest voice, their complaints are launched paradoxically in exactly the languages they complain about!” (Wolff 2000: 342). It is indeed dilemma situation, if the same think, that is the European language, is at the same time the

level – to some extent at the expense of other language groups, some of which consequently underwent marginalization.

¹⁰ It is necessary to develop teaching materials, curricula, hire teachers, translators etc. What is more, as many African languages are highly diversified in terms of dialects (many of them are in fact groups of dialects that Europeans call „languages” only out of laziness or simplification), a standard form of the language needs to be developed. This raises the need to define, or better still to unify the grammatical, spelling and phonetic rules. A scientific transcription, and even written form is needed (many African languages, for example Shona in Zimbabwe, is rarely used in writing). This “language change” process may take up to several dozens of years.

¹¹ The last obstacle can be compared to the aversion many Polish students felt when forced to study Russian in the time of Polish People’s Republic.

subject and the tool of the criticism. However, let us look at the following admission of Caliban once again: “You taught me language, and my profit on ‘t / Is I know how to curse”. Bill Ashcroft argues that despite the fact that Caliban fails to transform the language, he remains very inspiring symbol of postcolonial response: “while many would hold that colonial language has no other function than oppression, good for nothing but cursing, writers throughout the colonized world have continued to transform it, and turn it into a vehicle that works for them.” (Ashcroft 2001: 82). So do some of them transform this symbol in order to state that the knowledge of the language of the enemy gives one a weapon best possible – that is, a weapon of the enemy (kind of an ancient but extremely practical argument). As a result one can be fully understood by both executors and enemies of neocolonial dependency.

Decisions on language policy

The examples of the arguments that appeared in favor of endo- and exoglossic policies could humor us for a long time. Before we characterize the decisions made on language policies, the notions of “official language” and “national language” in reference to Africa should be defined. Since the linguistic and socio-political situation in Africa is tremendously diversified, there are indeed ambiguous terms.

To start with, one should state that “language policies will establish a functional hierarchy of *official* language(s), *national* language(s), and other languages spoken within the state, and indicate their role and institutional support” (Wolff 2000: 340f.). Generally speaking, official language is a language that is given a special legal status. Typically it is the language of the legal acts and official documents, is used by the government (courts, parliament, administration), in countrywide media or at the universities. In turn, the status of a national language can be, though does not have to be, prescribed by law. National language might be a dominant language in the country, have a countrywide range and serve as a tool of national communication (such function of it can be even stated by law), but does not necessarily have the status of an official language (the au-

thorities do not even have to support such language). There are some languages which, due to the fact that they are dominant, may be regarded as potential national languages (if elaborate this issue, the notion of “dominant language” should be specified). There are also languages which are dominant but there are neither *de iure* nor *de facto* national languages. To sum up, the official language is primarily perceived as a practical or even “technical” tool of communication, particularly if used only by the government, whereas the national language is considered mainly in the light of its role for national unity and identity.

As it was flagged before, two modes of language policies – endoglossic and exoglossic – have developed in Africa. These modes were also internally varied: different levels and options of each one could be described (Piłaszewicz and Rzewuski 2004: 117-129). The majority of the countries south of the Sahara choose the exoglossic policy, taking European languages (English, French or Portuguese) as the official or national languages. These languages were used by the government, dominated the media and were taught at all levels of education (in high schools they were sometimes taught simultaneously with the local languages). However, some other countries choose the endoglossic policy. In the active variant of this model the native language was foremostly a means of communication in public administration and education, at least at a basic level, and the government tried to extend its reach to the national media and universities.¹² In turn, in the passive variant it was used in the state administration, the education system and in the national media to a small extent, even though formally it had the status of the official language¹³.

The seventies brought a correction in the exoglossic model. Many African leaders and intellectuals have recognized that exoglossia can lead to loss of their native culture or stand in the way of creating a

¹² This model was implemented e.g. in Arab countries in Northern Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Sudan, Tunisia) as well as in Ethiopia, Somalia and Tanzania.

¹³ This model was implemented e.g. in Botswana, Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Rwanda, Swaziland.

new genuine national culture. Some expressed opinions that the low level of education and poor literacy make exoglossic policy beneficial for the upper class only, and that it therefore leads to a reproduction of elites, which in turn accelerates the development of a class society (Piłaszewicz and Rzewuski 2004: 108). As a result, several countries south of the Sahara strengthened the native languages' significance. For instance in 1974 Kenya announced Swahili the official language of the parliamentary sessions; Tanzania adopted an endoglossic model subsequently.

In his best known book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), which is undoubtedly one of a few founding texts of postcolonial theory, Frantz Fanon states: "In decolonization, there is therefore the need of a complete calling in question of the colonial situation" (Fanon 1991: 36). Let us conclude this part of the article with the statement that the lack of a consensus regarding language policy in Africa together with the introduction or retention of exoglossic model in many countries, even if considering its later corrections, were blatantly contrary to the quoted words of Fanon, all the more in comparison to the consensus on the inviolability of the borders.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o – biography of the writer and activist

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o was born as James Thiong'o Ngũgĩ on January 5, 1938 in Limuru, a small town near Nairobi, in a large peasant family speaking Kikuyu language. He received his primary education at a mission school and Kikuyu independent school. During the Mau Mau rebellion Ngũgĩ and his family were imprisoned, along with more than a million Kikuyu people. Then he went on to attend Alliance High School (1955-59), the first school in Kenya to offer secondary education to Africans. He graduated from Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda with a B.A. in English in 1963, and, subsequently, from Leeds University in England with the second B.A. in literature in 1964. During the mid-1960s he was teaching at schools and worked as a journalist for Nairobi's *Daily Nation*.

Ngũgĩ's emergence as a writer has coincided with the struggle against the colonial rule in Kenya and other countries of East Afri-

ca.¹⁴ In 1962 he performed his first play, *The Black Hermit* (published in 1968), at the National Theatre in Kampala, as part of the celebration of Uganda's independence. The play focuses on a young man, Remi, who is torn between two loyalties – that of the modern city and that of his traditional community, the conflict embodied by the fact that he abandons his rural wife for the white urban girlfriend. As he is the first of his tribe to go to university, the community elders and the Christian pastor, acting separately, send the delegations to convince him to return home, and to make use of his education by taking the political leadership. Remi, who goes along with this proposal, strives to unite his people, but, as it turns out, he is unable to reconcile his modernizing vision with the tradition, and the idea of nationhood with the ethnicity.

During his studies at Leeds, Ngũgĩ wrote his first novel, *Weep Not, Child* (1964), which turned out to be very popular and prize-winning. The book tells about a Kikuyu family involved in the struggle for Kenyan independence during the state of emergency and the Mau Mau uprising. It was the first major novel in English written by an East African. In 1965 Ngũgĩ published his second novel, *The River Between* (written before *Weep Not, Child*), the story of lovers kept apart by the conflict between Christian and traditional beliefs, in which he suggests yet again that an attempts to reunite a culturally divided community by means of Western education are doomed to failure (Augustyn 2014: 234). Ngũgĩ's third novel, *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), set in the background of Mau Mau revolt, deals with the social, moral, and racial issues of the independence struggle and its aftermath¹⁵.

In 1967 Ngũgĩ became a lecturer in English literature at the University of Nairobi. He soon engaged himself in the university politics, and campaigned to change its English Department into the De-

¹⁴ Tanganika obtained independence in December 1961, Uganda in October 1962, Zanzibar and Pemba as well as Kenya in December 1963.

¹⁵ On the official website of Ngũgĩ we can read that it “was a turning point in the formal and ideological direction of his works. (...) The collective replaces the individual as the center of history” (ngũgĩwathiongo.com).

partment of African Languages and Literature. In 1968, together with Taban Lo Liyong and Awuor Anyumba, he wrote *On the Abolition of the English Department*, a text which had a continental-range impact (soon it became a part of his first volume of essays, *Homecoming*, 1969). Around that time he dropped his Christian first name, James, and adopted his Bantu name, Ngũgĩ.¹⁶ In 1969 he resigned his post at the University in protest against violations of academic freedoms by the government. In 1970 he published another plays: *This Time Tomorrow*, *The Rebels*, *The Wound in the Heart*. From 1970 to 1971 he worked in the United States as a visiting professor of English and African Studies at the Northwestern University in Illinois. In 1971 he returned to the University of Nairobi, and became a head of the re-named Department of Literature (1972-77).

In 1976 Ngũgĩ co-authored, with Micere Mugo, a play *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, telling about a famous leader of the Mau Mau uprising. The European management of the Kenya's National Theatre did not agree to perform the play during the UNESCO General Conference in Nairobi (instead it scheduled *A Funny Thing Happened* on the way to the Forum). In 1977 Ngũgĩ published *Petals of Blood*, a novel which deals with social and economic problems in East Africa after independence, especially in Kenya: exploitation of the masses by foreign business, greedy indigenous bourgeoisie and corrupted political leaders. In 1976 and 1977 Ngũgĩ was working in the Kamĩrĩthũ Community Education and Cultural Centre, a self-help project located near Nairobi, which aim was, among others, to recreate and celebrate the African languages in the theater and in literature. In 1977 he wrote, together with Ngũgĩ wa Mirii, *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (published in 1980 and translated as *I Will Marry When I Want* in 1982). The play, the first one written in Kikuyu ever, attacks capitalism, religious hypocrisy, corruption, inequalities and injustices in postcolonial Kenya. It was performed in Kamĩrĩthũ the same year in an open air theatre, with Ngũgĩ as a director and actors from the

¹⁶ This is why some editions of his early books are still published under the name James Ngũgĩ.

workers and peasants of the village. The play was so popular among the local people that the authorities banned it immediately.

Ngũgĩ soon became the victim of a government harassment campaign: his home was searched, his library confiscated, and he lost his post at the University. In the end he was detained without trial (or even formal charges) in December 1977 and spent nearly a year in a solitary confinement at Kamiti Maximum Security Prison in Nairobi. It was in the prison when Ngũgĩ made the decision to abandon English as the language of creative writing in favor of Kikuyu or Swahili, and wrote, on a roll of toilet paper, *Caitani mũtharaba-Inĩ*, his first novel in Kikuyu. Written in a manner meant to recall traditional ballad singers, the novel is an allegorical account of a meeting between the devil and various villains who exploit the poor (Augustyn 2014: 235). It was published abroad in 1980 and translated into English by Ngũgĩ himself as *Devil on the Cross* in 1982 (as he continued to use English to translate his works and for non-fictional purposes). Ngũgĩ's account of the time in the prison were published in the memoir *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* (1981). After an international campaign was performed, with Amnesty International naming him a prisoner of conscience, he was released in December 1978. However, the regime of Daniel arap Moi (president of Kenya from August 1978 to December 2002) barred him from jobs at colleges and the University.

In 1982, while Ngũgĩ was in London for the launch of *Devil on the Cross*, he was warned about the Moi's plot to arrest him on his return to Nairobi (the plot is supposed to be a part of the repressions following the attempted coup against Moi in July 1982, after which a number of artists and intellectuals fled the country). Consequently he decided to live in exile, first in Great Britain (1982-89), and then in the United States (1989-2002). Nevertheless, the Moi dictatorship hounded him trying, unsuccessfully, to get him expelled from London and from other countries he visited. In 1986, at a conference in Harare, he experienced an attempted assault (according to ngugĩwa-thiongo.com – official website of Ngũgĩ).

In 1986 Ngũgĩ published his second novel in Kikuyu, *Matigari ma Njiruungi* ("The patriots who survived the bullets"). *Matigari* is a

man who, having lived in the forest for some time, decides to return to his home to reunite his sundered family; on the way he is jailed, escapes, lands in a mental hospital, but escapes once again. Eventually he comes to a conclusion that an armed uprising is the only way to make his country more just. A lot of people started talking about Matigari as if he was a real living person and some of them were even calling him “Mzee” as a term of respect. In response to this the Moi regime, also believing that Matigari was a living man, issued an arrest warrant for him. On learning that he was a fictional character, the regime banned the novel: it was taken away from all the bookshops and publishers warehouses, and between 1986 and 1996 it could not be sold in Kenyan bookshops. Together with other Ngũgĩ’s books it was removed from all educational institutions (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1989: 249).

Living in Britain, Ngũgĩ continued to publish essays on literature, culture, and politics, which were collected in: *Barrel of a Pen: Resistance to Repression in Neo-Colonial Kenya* (1983), *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986), *Writing against Neocolonialism* (1986). In the preface to *Decolonising...*, in which he explains his language choices, Ngũgĩ declares: “This book (...) is my farewell to English as a vehicle for any of my writings. From now on it is Gĩkũyũ and Kiswahili all the way” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1994: xiv). Eventually he has not kept his promise: although he had once did a conference paper and wrote a significant critical essay for “Yale Journal of Criticism” in Kikuyu, he began using English again in the late 1980s in his academic career (see Pendergast and Pendergast 2007). During his stay in Britain Ngũgĩ, together with his wife, Jerry, founded a literary journal in Kikuyu. He also collaborated with the London based Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners in Kenya.

In 1989 Ngũgĩ moved to the United States. From 1992 to 2002 he was a professor of comparative literature and performance studies at the New York University. Living in the U.S. he released another collections of essays: *Moving the Centre* (1993), *Penpoints, Gunpoints and Dreams: Towards a Critical Theory of the Arts and the State of Africa* (1998) as well as two children’s books: *Njamba Nene and the*

Flying Bus and *Njamba Nene's Pistol* (both in 1995). In 2004 he published *Mũrogi wa Kagogo*, his first novel since *Matigari* (translated into English as *Wizard of the Crow* in 2006). It is a surreal, allegorical, and satirical story dealing with the legacy of colonialism, as it is both perpetuated by the native elite and ingrained in ostensibly decolonized culture (Augustyn 2014: 235). The plot is set in the fictional postcolonial country of Aburi resembling Kenya and other 20th-century African states.

Because of Moi ousted in 2002, Ngũgĩ visited Kenya in 2004 for the first time since 1982 as part of a month-long tour of East Africa. The third day of the stay Ngũgĩ and Jerry were assaulted in their home in what is believed to have been a political attack. In last years he wrote two memoirs: *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* (2010) and *In the House of the Interpreter* (2012). In June 2015 Kenya's president Uhuru Kenyatta, during his meeting with Ngũgĩ in Nairobi, invited him to move to Kenya. "It is really a great feeling when you feel your government is recognizing and acknowledging you", said Ngũgĩ ("Daily Nation").

Ngũgĩ has taught at numerous universities throughout Europe and the United States, including Bayreuth, Yale, and Oxford. Currently he holds a post of distinguished professor in comparative literature and English at the University of California at Irvine. Ngũgĩ's books have been translated into more than thirty languages.¹⁷ He is the recipient of ten honorary doctorates, both in Africa and in the West, and many other awards, from the East Africa Novel Prize (1962) and UNESCO First Prize (1963) to the 2001 Nonino International Prize for Literature. He is regularly mentioned as a candidate for the Nobel Prize in Literature (see e.g. "Guardian").

Key Ngũgĩ's thoughts on language policy

Since "nothing is more important than life's journey" (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 2009: 1), we will begin this part of the article with Ngũgĩ's reflections on the beginning of this journey, that is the childhood. In

¹⁷ In Poland two novels by Ngũgĩ were published so far: *Weep Not, Child* (*Chmury i lzy*) and *A Grain of Wheat* (*Ziarno pszeniczne*), both in 1972.

a joint publication under a telling title *English Language as Hydra* (2012) Ngũgĩ gives us advice: “if you wanted to hide knowledge from an African child, put it in English or French. Or if you wanted to hide the keys to the future, hide them in the dominant European languages” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 2012: 14). In his numerous texts Ngũgĩ describes his school days when he used to use both his mother tongue, Kikuyu, and English, which was the language of education of each level and the official language in Kenya from the beginning of colonization. He tells how he and his friends were punished and humiliated for speaking Kikuyu in the school compound (the culprit was given strokes of the cane on bare buttocks or was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with inscriptions such as “I am stupid” or “I am a donkey”) (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1994: 11-17). “This humiliation and negativity were attached to African languages in the learning process” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 2012: 12). “On the other hand, when anyone of us did very well in English language, we were praised very highly, were given very high marks, were given standing ovations. We became heroes” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1985: 20). According to Ngũgĩ two things were taking place in the cognitive process: positive affirmation of English and criminalisation of African languages as means of intellectual production. As he could sum up: “With English, went pride; with African languages, shame” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 2012: 12).

What are the results of the language policy as described above? Ngũgĩ argues that a child punished and humiliated for speaking his mother language starts to hate that language and “by extension hate the values carried by that language and also dislike or look down upon the people who created [that] language” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1985: 20). At the same time the child starts to look up to English language, values, culture, and, by extension, the English people. Consequently, a knowledge of English is seen by him as the standard or the measure of one’s intelligence and abilities (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1985: 20), “the rubber stamp that certifies the neocolonial mind as being truly made in Europe” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 2008: 168). In brief, the hierarchy of languages, cultures, values and nations in the mentality of the child is created.

The behavior of the child as well as the policy of neocolonial native government which establishes that hierarchy in child's mind, may be considered in relation to the notion of mimicry formulated by Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994). Dominated Africans who undergo mimicry – that is, both the child and the government – feel that a foreign language has a special power that their indigenous languages miss, since they are lower in the world hierarchy of the languages, while the European ones are certainly at the top of it. Therefore postcolonial power's obligation is to civilize and bring the ruled people closer to a pattern – which is obviously the European pattern, based on the colonial language – seen as a final stage in the evolutionary path of human societies' development. However, the aim is precisely that: to bring closer, but never complete the process. As Bhabha states, the ruler does not want the ruled to become the same as him, but almost the same – the same, but not quite (Bhabha 2010: 122). Therefore, for example, this native government, controlled by the ancient metropolis, holds firmly to the opinion that the African literature can deal with the native topics, but only in a European language.

The first result of the exoglossic policy in education, as described above, is the hierarchy of languages, cultures etc. established in the minds of Africans. The second one is alienation. It is an alienation from one's own language, culture and society, from other people but also from one's self. Ngũgĩ describes it this way: “[English] Language and literature brought us further and further away from us to other us, from our world to other worlds” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1994: 12). So, as we see, alienation has both psychological and sociological character. In the essay *Freeing the Imagination* (2008) Ngũgĩ claims that it is therefore total and ties it in with the notions of enemy and threat: “colonialism (...) is indeed a system of alienation. It turns a people's land, labor, power, values, even psyche, into an enemy, a threat, as in the case of the overseer.” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 2008: 168) (may it be a reference to Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* 1975).

The result of alienation is deepening of social divisions which may contribute to the reproduction of elites within the meaning of

both economic and cultural capital (compare with the above-mentioned arguments against exoglossia regarding class society).¹⁸ Ngũgĩ underlines that even after the cold war “the gulf between the poor and rich is becoming really enormous” all over the world, but in Africa in particular (Ngũgĩ and Rao 1999: 166). In *Detained* (1981), having told how much he had learned working in the Kamĩrĩthũ Centre, he states: “colonial education, it tended to alienate the educated from his immediate environment” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1989: 20). In other text he asks: “The colonists may have even wanted to create a gulf of knowledge between the elite and the people. But why should we in Africa want to continue to deepen and widen the gulf?” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 2012: 14).

The hierarchy of languages, established in the minds of Africans, is analyzed by Ngũgĩ in terms of different disciplines (the main are: history, psychology, sociology, political science) and on various geographical levels: that of the particular countries, that of Africa and also that of the whole world, when the African situation is seen in conjunction with the other developing, Third World, or Global South countries. So let us discuss his arguments presented in terms of international political, economic and cultural relations. Colonists’ languages, claims Ngũgĩ, dominate the world process of production and spread of knowledge, as well as the fields of consumption, media and industry. The European linguistic dictate, as he calls this phenomenon, manifests itself not only on strictly international but on transnational level as well. The best proof of that is the fact that four of the six official languages of the United Nations (since 1982 these are: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish, and Russian) are, after all, European languages.¹⁹ These hegemonic languages constitute, as

¹⁸ H. Ekkehard Wolff points out that since the upward social mobility is encouraged through use of the foreign language, the elite can control replenishment of their own ranks (Wolff 2000: 342).

¹⁹ Let us note that Ngũgĩ does not mention that only two of the official UN languages listed above, i.e. English and French, are undoubtedly languages of the North, while Spanish is the language of both Spain and the great part of the South (the Philippines and Latin America countries except of Brazil)

he calls it, an aristocracy of the languages, while “small” languages of the periphery are being dominated and marginalized by them. Ngũgĩ calls this phenomenon “linguistic feudalism”. What is more, linguistic feudalism is only an initial step on the road to the extinction of language – the process or effect that is called „linguistic Darwinism”. Some of the African languages, as he states, “face the destiny of dinosaurs” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 2012: 15).²⁰

Although in Ngũgĩ’s texts the objections to linguistic feudalism and Darwinism are aimed mainly at the colonial languages, particularly English, some of them are addressed, albeit not so vehemently, to African vehicular languages. According to him such languages as Swahili (from 50 to 100 million users), Hausa (50 million) or Fulani (20-30 million) contribute to the destruction of smaller vernacular languages which are not associated with such a big influence, prestige or money (the phenomenon acknowledged by the linguists long time ago). In that way, as the postcolonial theoreticians would state, and Ngũgĩ probably agrees with them, the colonizer-colonized dichotomy manifests itself not only in the foul language of the former metropolis and the former colony, but also in a clash between African languages. Thus Africans themselves incorporate the roles of the colonizers and the colonized. Let us note that such an attitude is somewhat at odds with the vulgar, “opposing” version of postcolonial theory, which operates within the black-and-white hostility between the native and the colonizer. In fact, Leela Gandhi explains, in this situation one has to deal with reciprocal fears and desires, and mutual snooping. The lines of the struggle between the native and

and finally the status of Russian in this classification is disputable as some people include Soviet Union or Russia to the North and some others to the South. It is true however that all these European languages, which are the official languages of the UN, are the languages of the colonizer, though only two or three of them are the languages of the European colonizers of Africa, namely English, French and to a much less extent Spanish (Spanish West Africa).

²⁰ It should be added in this context that a language is considered a gift from God by many African commons.

colonizer duplicate in both the colonized and the colonizer. This hidden psychological conflict is no less important, as she claims, than the classic one which dominates the militaristic colonialism (Gandhi 2008: 19f.).

Despite the ferocious phraseology he uses at times, Ngũgĩ is not a fanatic or dogmatic person. He is aware of the difficulties and possible negative consequences of the policy of endoglossia. He notes that the endoglossic policy should not generate new conflicts and social disparities; rather it should be tailored to the individual circumstances of each country. As an example of a successful implementation of these assumptions Ngũgĩ brings up the language policy which promoted Swahili to the range of a national language of Tanzania. He is also aware that the struggle with the old hierarchy (of cultures, languages, identities) should not lead to creation of a new one (see Foucault 1980: 86, invoked by Ngũgĩ). With this recommendation in mind, the Kenyan postulates that the relationships between the languages were not gradable, thus not feudal, but based on the principle of a network. In the terms of postcolonial theory Ngũgĩ's position can be specified this way: recovery of the dominated languages and marginalization of the dominant languages is necessary, but risky. He could easily agree with the old Latin phrase: *nec temere, nec timide* (neither rashly nor timidly).

Writing in African languages

All the plays and novels of Ngũgĩ, up till the play *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (written in 1977) and the novel *Caitani mũtharaba-Inĩ* (written in 1978), were written in standard English. As Feroza Jussawalla notices, in *Petals of Blood* (1977), his last novel in English, while the narrative is in standard English, Ngũgĩ uses some code mixing and switching as well as transliteration of African languages in the dialogue and the poems. Ngũgĩ comments on that it in the following words: “that’s subconscious. But some phrases used in *Petals of Blood* could only be said a certain way, in Kikuyu or in Kiswahili (...) But definitely *Petals of Blood* was a transitional novel. However, language experimentation was only a small part of this novel. I was writing about peasants and workers and their struggle (...) This

was true not just of *Petals of Blood* but of all my novels. And yet none of the people who formed the subject matter of my novels could possibly read them because the novels were encased in a language that was not their own. So one could say that, in a sense, I could not continue in that direction” (Ngugi and Jussawalla 1991: 147). The work in the Kamĩĩthũ Centre (1976-77), where he was naturally confronted with the issue of language, definitely deepened that kind of feeling. It was, as he recalls, “a shocking confrontation” with the reality (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1985: 21). Nonetheless his change of the language of creative writing, made in 1978 in the solitary confinement, was not an impulsive decision, but resulted from the long and profound reflections and personal experiences.

Since that switch of language Ngũgĩ has been intensely calling other African writers to create in the African languages. We can mention three assumptions which are crucial for his appeal. The first one is a very simple and logic one and address the problem of hierarchy already discussed: since African languages, likewise cultures, philosophies and nationalities, are not worse than the others, and “All over the world writers write in their own languages” (Ngugi and Jussawalla 1991: 149), African writers should write in African languages. The second one provides that the African matters should be seen from the African perspective, thus by means of African languages. In the manifesto *On the Abolition of the English Department* (1968) Ngũgĩ and others state: “This is not a change of names only. We want to establish the centrality of Africa in the department. (...) With Africa at the centre of things, not existing as an appendix or a satellite of other countries and literatures, things must be seen from the African perspective” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 2003: 442). Finally, the third assumption is set out in the following words: “in the case of Africa, there is a definite need, a necessity, for breaking out of this historical mold into which we have been forced” (Ngugi and Jussawalla 1991: 149) – a phrase which could easily begin a political manifesto of postcolonialists’ party. One can say that all the further Ngũgĩ’s arguments on writing in African languages are derivative of those three fundamental assumptions.

One of the most important Ngũgĩ's arguments can be called a "majority argument". It is based on the assumption (some would say: the fact) that European languages are the languages of the minority of Africans. "The situation in Africa – states Ngũgĩ – is a little bit absurd when you take into account that the majority of the African people speak African languages and that only a very tiny minority (...) speak French or English or Portuguese, which means that when African writers write in these languages (...) they are basically addressing themselves to that very tiny minority – that is, the apex of each of these nationalities" (Ngugi and Jussawalla 1991: 144). It is indeed democratic and egalitarian argument, and it is additionally linked with the argument invoking the sense of reality. Ngũgĩ claims that language policy should reflect the real, not imaginary, linguistic situation, and that this reality might be specified only if one see the things as a whole. Therefore, he argues that colonial languages should "occupy their proportionate position in society. English and French may remain minority languages, but they will at least not be the dominant languages for expressing African culture (...) There will be a more natural balance." (Ngugi and Jaggi 1989: 250, compare with Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1997: 20).

Ngũgĩ states that Kikuyu-speaking nationalities count *circa* five million people, but only five percent of them can effectively read, understand and use English, while ninety-five percent uses Kikuyu as their only means of communication. "So the choice for me is between that five-percent minority and the ninety-five-percent majority. I know that when I'm writing in Kikuyu, I'm reaching many more people within that nationality than if I wrote in English" (Ngugi and Jussawalla 1991: 145). Let us note that in the above excerpt, and it is not a unique example of that, Ngũgĩ does not mention about the possible supralocal impact of the works in English. Even though in some other places he points out that writing in English can attract attention of a small percent of overall country's population, in that excerpt he does not formulate the dilemma: either You write in Kikuyu and reach almost five million Kikuyu speakers or You write in English and reach a handful of Kikuyu speakers along with a few percent of the whole Kenyan society or, to make the numbers larger, a few per-

cent of the whole English-speaking Africans (instead of that five percent of Kikuyu speakers, as he does propose). It might seem to be an inconsequential or at least unconvincing approach, but actually it is very logic one. To prove it, let us analyse Ngũgĩ's thoughts on imperialism and tradition.

In *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) Ngũgĩ argues that language policy in Africa is an area of world struggle between tradition and imperialism and that the reasons for the choice and retention of exoglossic policies, just as the sources of war and poverty, are to be found in this struggle. To describe its character, the Kenyan uses some basic principles of Marxist theory (some would say that he expresses an African Marxist viewpoint", as McArthur does). His narrative is as follows: the ruling elite in the pro-Western African countries is thoroughly opportunist and dependent on foreign patrons. It continues to implement "civilizing colonialism", but their role is only that of an intermediary for the transmission of Western ideas. It mimics the views and behavior of the Westerners, bringing into existence the most harmful principles of imperialism and capitalism which serve their interests.²¹ That establishment – called servants of the international bourgeoisie – usually consists of officials, judges, journalists and scientists who without embarrassment claim to be the African patriots or defenders of the African tradition. In fact, contemporary native ruling elite presents no less a threat to the African tradition than a long time of colonial administration once was. Resistance to that elite is reflected in the struggle for democracy and the defense of native tradition or "patriotic defense of the peasant or working-class roots of the national cultures" (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1994: 2). It is a domain of the working class, namely the proletariat and the peasantry; the patriotic students, intellectuals (academics and others), sol-

²¹ Ngũgĩ refers to Foucault when he adds that the modern economic dominance of the West stems directly from the alliance of knowledge and power. The problem is not confined to Africa itself – rather, it has a global reach. Ngũgĩ says, however, that Africa is where the worst features of that phenomenon are revealed (Ngugi 2009).

diers and other „progressive elements” of small middle class assist them.

Coming back to the “ninety-five or five percent dilemma”, we should ask: what is the sense therefore to mobilize people (writers, translators, publishers etc.) in order to release anti-imperialistic books in small indigenous languages? Is that really efficient way to fight with imperialism, assuming that the impact of such books is limited as the number of potential readers is relatively small, the efforts are disproportionate in relation to the goals, and the power of imperialism is enormous. Maybe one should not choose half-measures, as writing in native languages should be called, but decide to use the most influential tool, which is possible, namely the very tool of the enemy – the colonial language?

According to Ngũgĩ “any blow against imperialism, no matter the ethnic and regional origins of the blow, is a victory for all anti-imperialistic elements in all the nationalities. The sum total of all these blows no matter what their weight, size, scale, location in time and space makes the national heritage” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1994: 2). The cited words imply that Ngũgĩ perceives that great all-African struggle as a long-term process consisted of numerous local fights. These battles can be isolated and quite different, but with the passing of time they start to form one great struggle with the same ultimate goal, though still locally diversified in terms of tools and intermediate goals. The crucial condition for the success of that struggle is to have fighters deeply convinced of the justness of their fight. The best way to make them convinced is to use their own language. It is not the best solution, claims Ngũgĩ, if you try to convince the biggest possible group of people by the use of the language, which is understandable but unconvincing, since it is foreign, likewise to convince the elite which is alienated and unchangeable. These are actually the actions that should be called half-measures. Instead he urges to address a small number of people, by using their native language, so as to convince them truly and deeply. We can call such an attempt a grass-roots approach, increasing the chance, coast accounting or otherwise, depending on one’s outlook and methodology. To sum up this paragraph the following words of Ngũgĩ, put in his essay *The*

Commitment of the Intellectual, may be cited: “My advice here will be very simple. And that is, to go back to the people. (...) I mean it is using our immediate environment as a base for our take-off, or as a base for our assimilation of whatever is necessary to our struggles” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1985: 24).

The last, but definitely not least, argument of Ngũgĩ’s appeal – among those which can be listed in this paper – provides that writing in African languages can constitute an interesting and instructive experience for a writer who used to write in foreign language, since it is an opportunity to experiment with some new formal and artistic solutions as well as to get a feedback from the readers. Ngũgĩ recalls his work in the Kamũrĩthũ Centre, where he performed the plays on the real “heroic struggles against colonial and neo-colonial oppressions. The moment we did this, and in a language which they understood, of course the rules were once again reversed (...) Often some of the people who took part in our theatre were the very people who had actively participated in the Mau Mau guerilla”, so they knew their story much better than the scriptwriters. At the same time the peasants and factory workers knew much more about Kikuyu language than Ngũgĩ did, so some of them laughed at the awkward way he wanted to use it. “And they would comment and say, ‘You are doing very well, you are trying very hard. But this is not how you use language. An old man does not speak like this. An old man uses this and that kind of proverb. (...) So now, I who had been previously a Professor of English and Literature at the University of Nairobi, was now being taught the ABC of my language” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1985: 21). As we can imagine, Ngũgĩ is highly satisfied with the new formal and artistic challenges which derive from his change from, or against, English, in favor of Kikuyu. “Now I can use a story, a myth, and not always explain because I can assume that the [Kikuyu] readers are familiar with this (...) I can play with word sounds and images, I can rely more and more on songs, proverbs, riddles, anecdotes”

(Ngũgĩ and Rao 1999: 163f.). Obviously, writing this way makes his books much more convincing and popular among the local people.²²

Translating the African languages

Since Ngũgĩ claims that the struggle against imperialism is an all-African struggle, involving various groups of people speaking different languages, and believes that this struggle should be fought in African languages, he pays much attention to the translations between the African languages, both vernacular and vehicular. As a result, he argues, “the African languages will be communicating with one another. And if a literature develops from that communication, that literature overall will be reaching many, many, many more readers than if we’re using only English, French, or Portuguese” (Ngugi and Jussawalla 1991: 145).

However, one can see at least two obstacles for the translations between the African languages, particularly between these smaller. The first one is a fear that it will cause or deepen language fragmentation of Africa (actually it is the same fear that drives the objections to writing in these languages). When asked about that fear, Ngũgĩ answers: “There is no reason why it should. It is not more or less different from what is the actual practice in the world today.”, but his arguments, whether right or not, sound a bit unconvincing, since he invokes a situation when “Gorbachev and Reagan met in summit meetings to decide the fate of the world” (Ngugi and Jusawalla 1991: 151) and none of them did not have to abandon either English or Russian thanks to the help of interpreters and translators. Then, the second obstacle are the limited skills or rather the limited number of some languages’ translators. As Ngũgĩ claims, “whereas many African people can handle at least two or three languages (...), what has not been developed is their capacity in those three languages to a level where they would feel free to translate from one to another.” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1989: 251).

²² Tom McArthur (1998) states that works of Ngũgĩ (though he probably means all his works, including these in English) “are widely read in Kenya by people far from the modern metropolitan centres”.

In that context, it is worth noting Ngũgĩ's decision regarding translations of *Matigari ma Njiruungi* (1986), his second novel in Kikuyu. In 1989 Ngũgĩ told that he had closed, in the contract of the originating publisher, the option to translate the novel from English, by insisting that it must be translated directly from Kikuyu. "Obviously, translators may check additionally with the English, but we have been very firm on this because there were loopholes in the case of *Devil on the Cross* (...) The tendency has been to take the easy way out – through the English translation – which means that the work will become further and further removed from the original in terms of its spirit and meaning" (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1989: 249). Ngũgĩ decided on that direct translation clause, although his position, as he stated in 1989, seemed "to be a minority position among practicing African writers" (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1989: 251).

"Writers who could not use the African languages"

In the preface to *Decolonising the Mind* Ngũgĩ emphasizes that his criticism is not total: "If in these essays I criticise the Afro-European (or Eurafrikan) choice of our linguistic praxis, it is not to take away from the talent and the genius of those who have written in English, French, or Portuguese. On the contrary I am lamenting a neocolonial situation which has meant the European bourgeoisie once again stealing our talents and geniuses as they have stolen our economies" (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1994: xii). Nevertheless some of Ngũgĩ's statements on the role of African writers creating in colonial languages are radical, vituperative or just extremely sour. For example he claims: "Admittedly, in some cases, missionaries have done more for African languages, by having people read the Bible in, say, Gĩkũyũ or Ibo or Kiswahili, than African writers themselves – though the missionaries were not, of course, doing this for the sake of African languages or cultures" (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1989: 250). However, when writing or asked about the details, he does see some arguments that justify writing in the colonial language, regarding Africans living in exile (as was his case at the time) or raised up abroad.

The key sentence for his argumentation in that matter is following: "The choice of language is a question of both the content of the

books and the audience” (Ngugi and Jussawalla 1991: 145). Confronting with the fact that there are some African or Third World writers living in Britain or younger black British writers trying to reach people in Britain and not elsewhere, Ngũgĩ elaborates: “For me it is necessary to see what is typical and necessary for Africa. I am continuing to attempt to reach the people in Africa. (...) I don’t expect to see a writer who was brought up in Britain and so has learned the English language all his life write in an African language. Each individual has to respond to his or her own practice, and this practice will be determined by the concerns of his or her individual position” (Ngugi and Jussawalla 1991: 149). Nonetheless, as he underlines, “nearly all writers have a choice. I can only think of maybe a handful of African writers who could not use the African languages” (Ngugi and Jussawalla 1991: 149f.). He adds that Caribbean writers are going more and more towards their own languages, and Afro-Americans or the black writers in Britain go to the roots of the language as spoken by their own communities instead of standard English. However, at the same time he recognizes that a writer needs an inspiration and a contact with his own home, society and language, which is a living tool after all, to be able to function effectively.²³

Finally, it should be stated that the above-mentioned opinions of Ngũgĩ, urging some authors to write in the African languages, are primarily referred to creative writing, and not necessarily to the language of science or other activity. Let us remind that Ngũgĩ has not fulfilled his pledge to use Kikuyu or Swahili as the only means of his writing of all types. In his academic work he returned, without explanation, into English. Simon Gikandi notes that by the time Ngũgĩ accepted a tenure at New York University (1992-2002), “it was clear that Ngũgĩ’s effort to use Kikuyu as the language of both his fiction and critical discourse had been defeated by the reality of exile and American professional life” (Gikandi 2000: 274).

²³ However, Ngũgĩ claims that working abroad has its strengths, as “one can see some other problems much more clearly” (Ngugi and Jussawalla 1991: 148). Nevertheless, in the same interview he is enigmatic when discussing the possibility of inspiring the struggle from overseas.

Conclusions

“Obtain a political kingdom, and the rest will be given to you” – these famous words, attributed to Kwame Nkrumah, might have contributed to the discussion on the terminology of postcolonial theory.²⁴ Some representatives of this perspective prefer the term “post-colonialism” written with a hyphen in the middle to emphasize the difference between colonialism and the state resulting from decolonization. Jean-François Lyotard criticizes the use of the hyphen, claiming that it results from the utopian hope that colonialism obviously ends as soon as the former colonies gain independence (it is suffice to obtain a political kingdom).²⁵ Actually, as Said states, “To have been colonized was a fate with lasting, indeed grotesquely unfair results” (Said 1989: 207). So by using the hyphen, continues Lyotard, we avoid an open confrontation with the past, making it difficult to escape from colonialism – we repeat it, instead of surpassing it (Lyotard 1993: 75-80). Even today, as Albert Memmi reveals, the decolonized are reluctant to acknowledge the fact that the colonial past has a psychologically lasting impact on their postcolonial present (Memmi 1968: 88). In this context Leela Gandhi speaks of “the will of oblivion”, which is supposed to constitute a part of the historical self-creation or a simple need to begin anew (Gandhi 2008: 13). All these arguments cause many, or perhaps even most of the post-colonial theoreticians to use the term "postcolonialism" written sans hyphen, assuming that the colonialism cannot be separated from its effects.²⁶

²⁴ Let us put aside the objections to the use of the adjectives like “colonial”, “postcolonial”, and “precolonial”, based on the assumption that colonialism was just a part of the history of these countries and societies which we call pre-, post- or colonial (Loomba 2011: 33f.), although these objections are of extreme importance.

²⁵ According to Ashis Nandy the postcolonial state should be understood as a state of suspension between the dependence and the actual independence.

²⁶ Some of them are convinced, however, that the term “postcolonialism” is too academic, and therefore they use the term “postcoloniality”, which, as they claim, contains an existential element and maybe even awakens some sort of empathy (Gandhi 2008: 13).

Pursuit to name the things with their proper names is also characteristic of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o. Actually it is an issue that has been a leitmotif of his works and activity from the very beginning, with the declaration *On the Abolition of the English Department* (1968) as a particularly clear proof of it. An example of that pursuit is put in *Decolonising the Mind*, where he argues that due to the continuing growth of poetry in African languages it is “manifestly absurd to talk of African poetry in English, French or Portuguese. Afro-European poetry, yes; but not to be confused with African poetry which is the poetry composed by Africans in African languages” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1994: 87). Accordingly, if there is an African, claims Ngũgĩ, who creates in non-African languages – whether he constitutes that “handful who could not use the African languages” or not, and regardless of his motives, whether justifiable or not – he should be consequent and should not call his works “African”. Otherwise, it means that he is unable to surpass the colonialism, as Lyotard and others state.

Obviously, Africans writing in colonial languages, as well as writers and non-writers from outside Africa, can contribute, and they actually do that, to the struggle against the legacy of colonialism, however, as Ngũgĩ suggests, the impact of their contribution is limited. Therefore the most important thing to do in order to make the struggle successful, claims the Kenyan, is to urge Africans to write in the African languages.²⁷ With the passing of time they will find that “they can communicate and be published, and derive status as writers, even if they write in African languages”. Such a change could let, as he argues, to the more endoglossic approach in some other spheres of social and cultural life: “I see a situation where an increased focus on African languages in schools, universities and other institutes of learning will also mean increased attention to the art of translation.” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1989: 250f.). All these elements –

²⁷ In 1989 Ngũgĩ was predicting: “What I think will happen is that the younger generation will probably experiment with African languages.” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1989: 250).

pro-endoglossic governments, writers willing to “experiment”, as he states, and translators willing to work in African languages (whether their own or not), as well as publishers willing to invest in these writers and translators – are necessary to promote for a breakthrough in literature written in African languages. But the primary responsibility, as Ngũgĩ states, is for the writers themselves.

What are then the specific conditions which have to be fulfilled, so as to the African writers contribute to the struggle most effectively? According to Ngũgĩ there are three of them: the proper language, the proper content, and the proper audience of the book. As for the language, it should be an African language, as we already know. With regard to the content, the book should be written in the language of struggle. “But the real language – he states – that one is looking for is the language of struggle, the language of the transformation of our various societies. (...) [when you] find an identity with the struggles of the working people. Then you discover that real language of struggle – that is, whichever language is being used for “the struggle,” whether it is English or Kikuyu or Swahili or Ibo or Hausa or American English or Chinese or Russian” (Ngugi and Jussawalla 1991: 150). Finally, the third condition – the proper audience – can be seen as a derivative of the first one, because “When you use a language, you are also choosing an audience” (Ngũgĩ and Rao 1999: 163). Consequently, the proper audience means people using local languages, and these are, first of all, the lower classes.

In the following words of Ngũgĩ these three conditions are combined: “if a book is written in the vernacular of the people and is critical of the existing social order and is addressed to and being received by the peasantry or the working people in Kenya, then the government fears that this might give the people 'wrong' ideas” (Ngugi and Jussawalla 1991: 145). Finally, it should be specified that these three conditions are inseparable and indispensable for the success of the struggle. Therefore even though the content is extremely revolutionary, if articulated in colonial language, the book is alienated from the majority. On the other hand, if the books praise the regime in power, “the regime wouldn’t mind if they were written in Kikuyu or Ibo or Swahili” (Ngugi and Jussawalla 1991: 145).

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