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## **A Critical Analysis of Ngugi wa Thiongo and Language**

**Stephen Bani-Kwakye**

Tutor / Lecturer, Institute of Educational Development and Extension,  
University of Education Wineba, Iede, Accra Academy Centre, Ghana

**Abstract:**

*The master's tools can never dismantle the master's house, same is language. But in other instances language when not well used can make or un-make a writer and taint the ideas he or she wants to uncover. Ngugi wa Thiongo, as a prolific African writer has to his credit a wide repertoire of literary works, ranging from novels, drama, poetry and many other educational materials used in and outside the walls of Kenya, his country. Language as a tool has been used creatively by Ngugi in most of his works to depict many ideas. This paper seeks to investigate and analyse Ngugi's choice and use of language in some of his literary works. The books selected for this research were randomly selected using the random sampling procedure. From the analysis of the works selected for the studies, the researcher found that Ngugi had a personal stance and stake on his choice of language used in his works, as well as employing several linguistic features to hail the traditions, beliefs, experiences and the socio-cultural life of the African.*

**Keywords:** *Language, linguistic theory, native lexicons, poetic language, allusion, rhetorical elements and biblical or religious language*

### **1. Introduction**

Language and literature are inextricably connected, in the sense that language is the basic raw material or medium through which literature is produced, whether they are novels or poems, plays or folktales, etc. Language can be said to be a system of communication by spoken or written words, which is used by the people of a particular country or area. Language is a system for the expression of thoughts, feelings, etc, by the use of spoken words or conventional symbols. Literature, whether oral or written, expresses people's thoughts, feelings, views, culture, etc through language. Thus, literature cannot exist outside language, since language is the medium of expression. In other words, literature involves the manipulation of language for creative purposes, Abugu (2010).

A different way of looking at the relationship between language and literature is this: while language is a method of communication, literature is the content being communicated. Language has been described as a set of gestures, words and phrases with meaning behind them; literature is the manipulation and use of those gestures, words and phrases for creative purposes, Abugu (2010). It is pertinent to say that language enables literature in achieving its aim. In literature, language is meticulously crafted. Broadly speaking, 'literature' is used to describe anything from creative writing to more technical or scientific works, but the term is most commonly used to refer to works of the creative imagination, including works of poetry, drama, fiction, and nonfiction. Literature, in all its forms, cannot exist outside language. It is language that gives the literature of any people its peculiarities. For instance, one of the distinguishing features of Nigerian literature is not only the abundant presence of Nigerian proverbs, idiomatic expressions and figures of speech, but also transferred lexical items used in Nigerian environment.

Literature is one of the ways in which language functions. In its expressive function, language reports feelings or attitudes of the writer, or of the subject, or evokes feelings in the reader. Poetry is one of the best examples. In poetry we can see very clear evidence that language and literature are interwoven. Poetry has to do with language used in a special way. One important way that the meaning of a word is communicated in a poem is through sounds. Words convey meaning denotatively or connotatively.

While it is undeniable that literature is the manipulation of language for creative purposes, it must be noted that the usefulness or otherwise of literature to the human society depends largely on how the writer uses language. Like a house whose structure and value depend on the quality of materials used by the builder as well as the builder's expertise in the use of these materials, the value of a work of literature also depends on the writer's choice of language as well as his or her ability to use language creatively and in a manner that is beneficial to the human society.

What can be deduced from the above is that every work of literature is the product of a given language and that the aesthetic and moral values of a work of literature certainly depend on the use of language. To produce a good work of literature, the writer must be able to manipulate language for the purpose of conveying a specific message that is both meaningful and useful to the audience, Abugu (2010).

In all the genres of literature, it is indisputable that language provides the building blocks for every work. Every writer of literature uses language; however, each uses language in his or her own peculiar way. For instance, Ngugi's use of language can be described as

simple and easily accessible. He uses language vividly to depict the sociocultural world of Africa. In analyzing and studying the concept of language and its nitty-gritty of Ngugi wa Thiongo's works, his sociocultural background and intellectual ability play an important role in the choice and use of language. This study of language by Ngugi will take into cognizance three of his works: *I Will Marry When I Want*, *Weep Not Child* and *River Between*. But much emphasis will be placed on *I Will Marry When I Want* and *River Between*. These books were randomly selected through a random sampling procedure.

The discussion of the language used by Ngugi in his selected works is discussed in this paper in two different taxonomies. The first discussion centers on Ngugi's personal view of language (especially English language) used in his literary works and in Kenya. The second discusses the language pattern, and its features used in his works as mentioned above.

### 1.1. Research Questions

This paper is underpinned by the following research questions:

1. What factors influence Ngugi's choice of language in his works?
2. What rhetorical and linguistic features are used by Ngugi in his works to enrich his literary works?
3. What effects does language in Ngugi's works portray?

### 1.2. Conceptual Framework

This paper falls on the 'Linguistic Theory Approach to analyse the choice and use of language by Ngugi in the selected books. Linguistic theory as espoused by Greenberg (1961) is to answer such questions as 'What is language?' and 'What properties must something (a literary work) have in order for its language to be learned and use.' Different theories provide different answers to these questions, and there is at present no general consensus as to what theory gives the best answers to these questions.

In order to answer these questions, one strategy, originally employed by Greenberg (1961), is to undertake a comprehensive study of the languages of the world, (especially the world surrounding the literary work), to determine what properties they have in common and what distinguishes them from things that everyone agrees are not languages. Another view advocated by Chomsky (1980), is to examine a few particular languages in depth to determine which of the intricate details that are found in one language turn up in all the others. This work will draw more on the theory posited by Greenberg since it provides grounds for analysis that will investigate the language used in the literary works as well as its author.

The Linguistic theory approach as explained by Greenberg (1961) above, will allow this research work to have a quick look at the world surrounding the world of the books (*I Will Marry When I Want* and *The River Between*). In doing so the world of language around the author (Ngugi wa Thiongo) and his perception about it will be considered to understand vividly the 'what' and 'why', of the language used in the novels to be discussed.

The Linguistic theory approach again will demonstrate in the analysis the properties of the language used in the books selected for this research. Hence, linguistic theory permits the analysis of language from different perspective especially language from the world of literature. Walker (1983) believes that due to the "feel for literary style" in most literary works, the language and its style may vary dependent on the writer's point of view, sociocultural background and his view of his immediate world. It is upon these tenets of the linguistic theory of language that the language of *The River Between*(1965) and *I Will Marry When I Want* Will(1977) by Ngugi wa Thiongo is analysed.

### 1.3. Description of Data

*I Will Marry When I Want* is a play set after the independence of Kenya. The book is based on Marxist criticism at post-independence time. The play revolves around Kiguunda, a peasant farm laborer and his wife Wangeci who are leaving in abject poverty on a one and half acre "waste land". They live in a square, mud-walled, white ochred, one roomed house which goes further to describe the poverty in which they are in. Gathoni their daughter and only child, is impregnated by Kioi's son, John Muhuni. Kioi, better known as Ahab Kioiwa Kanoru together with his wife Jezebel later pay the Kiguunda's a visit and Kiguunda and Wangeci are convinced that the visit was meant to seek their daughter's hand in marriage to their son John Muhuni. Much to the disappointment of Kiguunda and Wangeci, John Muhuni jilts Gathoni when he learns that she is pregnant with his child. Kioi manages to convince Kiguunda to take a loan from a bank where he is director.

When Kiguunda confronts Kioi about his son's behavior of impregnating his daughter Gathoni, things turn out ugly and Kiguunda actually threatens to kill Kioi who is saved by his wife Jezebel. They later auction Kiguunda's wasteland and Kioi buys it and plans to put up an insecticide factory being funded by American, German and Japanese investors.

Kiguunda, Wangeci and the Gicaamba's' become disillusioned people. The hope they had of a better life after independence is all lost as they are forced to work under difficult conditions in coffee farms and factories earning little wages that cannot even sustain them. For example Kiguunda cannot afford to pay fees for his daughter Gathoni to go to school. They are forced to live on a one and half acre waste land, their only land and in a one roomed shanty.

Gicaamba's disillusionment comes out from his long monologues where he lays out on the table his frustrations and dashed dreams. The play comes to end after Kiguunda loses his land and is bought at an auction by "The oppressor, Son of grab and take" better known as Kioi. The peasants unite to reject the new religion and alcohol.

*The River Between* (1965). Ngugi's "The River Between" is an exhilarating novel set in a rural location of the Gikuyu ethnic community, Ngugi's own ethnic community. *The River Between* provides a full narration of the effects of colonialism on the ethnic communities in Kenya. This he achieves by highlighting the Agikuyu or Gikuyu community of Kenya. Waiyaki, the main character in the novel, is brought up by his father Chege to believe that he is the only hope for the ridges Kameno and Makuyu ever uniting and

preserving their traditional ways. Chege is a worried man. This is so because of the coming of the “white man” to the ridges. The great prophet of the land, Mugowa Kibiro had in his prophecy foreseen this happening. He prophesized the Whiteman’s invading the ridges. Mugo prophesized that “...there shall come a people with clothes like butterflies...” The people did not believe what he prophesized and instead poured scorn on him, laughed at him and even went to the extreme of suggesting he was not “well”. He was rejected by his own people in his own land; “The seer was rejected by the people of the ridges”. Mugo’s last words on earth before he died were whispered to his son’s ear, he said “salvation shall come from the hills. From the blood that flows in me, I say from the same tree, a son shall rise. And his duty shall be to lead and save the people!” Chege tells this prophecy to Waiyaki and tells him not to forget that he is the last in the “line” that came from Mugo and so he should take up the responsibility of saving the ridges from the white man’s rule River Honia which separates the two ridges is a very symbolic image in the text. River Honia, is the link between the two ridges, it acts as a bridge between the two warring parties. The narrator comments about Honia in the first page when he says the two ridges were connected by one source of life, River Honia. The River never dried up; it’s given the human traits of being graceful and having a strong will to live by the narrator. Waiyaki grows up to become a fine young man, a school teacher, who is respected by everyone in the community. He tries to fulfill the prophecy made by Mugo and carried on by his father Chege. Waiyaki is unfortunate as he is unable to unify the two ridges. He is torn between being faithful to Nyambura, which means not being faithful to tradition and the ways of the people and being true to the oath he took with the kiama. Kabonyi fixed Waiyaki in the close of this book which is an anti-climax as the reader is left in suspense, wondering what happens to Waiyaki and Nyambura. Kabonyi tells the people at the assembly that Waiyaki is marrying Joshua’s daughter an uncircumcised girl, which is an inconceivable and unacceptable idea to the people of the ridges. Ngugi captures the Agikuyu ethnic community’s way of life very well in his book *The River Between*.

## 2. Analysis of Data

### 2.1. Research question 1: What factor(s) influence Ngugi’s choice of language in his works?

This section investigates the factors that influenced NgugiwaThiongo’s choice of language in the novels used in this research. This finding will receive a brief attention while placing much attention to the second research question which deals with the features and characteristics that governs the language used by Ngugi.

Ngugi’s Concept of Gikuyu (his Native Language) and Other Tongues

Ngugi’s position on the language of African literature written in the native languages which would lead to ‘tribal’ literatures has been trashed unfairly. The reality of African literature is in the inherent contradiction of marketing the so-called Africa culture and sensibility with an alien language. Ngugi claims that “English language is the academic language, our governing, official and economic language of most African states”. Then the problem: “does it mean that for us to attain true nationhood in all aspects of our national existence we have to consciously eliminate our native languages and then bind up in the English language?” This according to Ngugi does not bring out the true identity of the African, Anyaduba (2006).

As a result of his disgust to the prominence of English language overshadowing the use of native language in most African literature, Ngugi wrote some of his novels in Gikuyu, his mother tongue. This he did in order to reach the length and breadth of the ‘masses’ with his ideas. It is however interesting to know that most of the novels and books Ngugi wrote in Gikuyu were later translated to English.

Other scholars such as Prof. Malinowski have criticized that as double standards from Ngugi. These scholars argue that the uneducated mass of Africans are still exempted from any form of written literature, be it in indigenous or Western languages, since it is the educated African who can read both native and non-native literature and not the uneducated.

Another important factor that influenced Ngugi choice of language is his immediate sociocultural setup. A look at the situations that surrounded the continent of Africa as a whole and Kenya to be precise was a major factor which influenced Ngugi’s choice of language. From most of the novels and literary works of Ngugi, his language explicitly reveals the situations within which the African finds himself. Ngugi’s choice of language can be described as a language of liberation, oppression, agitation and freedom. From his first novel *The Black Hermit*, (1963) to his last *Wizard of the Crow*, (2006), Ngugi employs language and language structures that genuinely depicts the African as being subjugated. With this idea, Ngugi uses language that either instigates the continent either to protest the tyranny and the oppression planted on them or to find an alternative way out of oppression. He specifically uses language to portray slavery in *Weep not Child* (1964), Christian oppression and fight between Christianity and African tradition in *The River Between* (1965) and *I will Marry When I Want* (1977).

It is therefore conclusive hereafter that Ngugi, no less a person was influenced by the sociopolitical and sociocultural practices in Kenya, and these effects passionately affect the kind of language he employed in writing almost all his works.

These factors as discussed above which affected Ngugi and his use of language cannot be attributed to Ngugi alone. It is obvious that other African writer including Chinua Achebe, Aryi Kwei Armah, Kobina Sekyi, Ama Arthur Aidoo and Wole Soyinka have their own peculiarity in their choice of language and its use of in their literary works.

According to Achebe (1988), a powerful instrument of control used by the colonizing powers is the instrument of language. Language forms a huge part of the culture of a people - it is through language that a community expresses their folk tales, myths, proverbs, and history. For this reason, the imperial powers invariably attempted to stamp out native languages and replace them with their own. As Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1995) point out; there are two possible responses to this control - rejection or subversion. (*The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, 1995) While Ngugi wa Thiong’o is famous for advocating outright rejection of the colonialist language, believing that this rejection is central to the anti-imperialist struggle, Chinua Achebe chose the idea of subversion rather than rejection. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, Achebe’s writing “displays a process by which the language is made to bear the weight

and texture of a different experience. In doing so it becomes another language.” In The African Trilogy, Achebe uses the language of the colonizer to convey the Igbo experience of that colonization. The idioms, proverbs and imagery of these books all invoke his Eastern Nigerian culture, forcing the reader to accept on Achebe’s (linguistic) terms, the story he has to tell.

Any reader of The African Trilogy comes into contact with at least some knowledge of Igbo words and phrases. Some words such as *obi*, *chi*, *osu*, and *egwugwu* are assimilated very well into the knowledge language especially English through the way Achebe scatters them casually through the text using them to distinctively display cultural elements in Nigeria. These native lexicons are consciously chosen by these writers to help them accentuate their culture, their views, sociopolitical and sociocultural experiences.

2.2. *Research question 2: What rhetorical or linguistic features are used by Ngugi in his works to enrich his literary works and its effect?*

This paper critically analyses *I Will Marry When I Want* and *The River Between*, focusing on the type or the linguistic features and language used by Ngugi in them. Using the linguistic theory approach, this analysis will focus on the following features: nativized lexicon or structures, vocabularies, rhetorical elements such as: (poetic lines and language, parallelism, repetition, allusion and proverbs), biblical language and other linguistic elements that featured in both books.

Native lexicons and Structures

Native lexicon and structures in this context are the lexical items used in the two books that are originally native. These words that have been identified in the language used by Ngugi are generally derived from Gikuyu the mother tongue or language of Ngugi. These words and sentence structures have been carefully selected from the two books for this study. It is interesting to state that *The River Between* was predominantly characterized by individual lexical items whereas *I Will Marry When I Want*, has more sentential structure of the Gikuyu language:

Book	Word / Lexicon	Sentence Structure / Phrase
<i>I will marry when I want</i>	Wapi (pg50)	Utaona cha mtemakuni (pg 17). Na uchungemdomowako (pg17). Tajiriwoteduniani (pg40)
<i>The River Between</i>	Thingira (pg 13) Riika (pg 96/121), Irigu (pg121) and Thahu (129 and 147)	KagutuikaMuciigatihakagwoAgeni. Demi naMathathi (pg 10)

Table 1: *Lexicon and Sentence Structures*

Illustrates some of the words (lexicons) and the sentence structures that were identified in the books

These original native words and constructions that are used in the works stylistically add to the aesthetic devices used by the writer. As a result he keeps the originality of the text and its intended effect on the text. Starting with *I will marry when I want*, Ngugi maintains the two structures: *Utaona cha mtemakuni. Na uchungemdomowako* in a single conversation. These lines as found in:

- Extract 1.

“if ever I see or hear that again....!

Utaona cha mtemakuni

Do you think that we mine gold.

To enable us to educate boys and girls?

Go away!

Na uchungemdomowako”

This construction is strongly used by the author to show the level of anger of the speaker. From the extract, the native sentences or constructions are maintained because the English language may not provide the adequate structure to mean and carry the same feeling and emotions as may be carried in the Gikuyu form.

On the other hand, *The River Between* uses strictly no sentence form of the native language but rather uses few lexicons from Gikuyu to enhance the meaning and effect of the language. In page 121, Irigu was used as an adjective to describe the uncircumcised males in the novel. “*A day would come when all these Irigu would be circumcised by force*”. Irigu, in the Gikuyu language is used as a derogatory remark or term for people who are regarded as ‘unclean’ or ‘unworthy’ and this could not have been expressed in English to carry the kind of contempt the writer wishes to advocate in his book.

#### ➤ Poetic Language

The totality of the characteristics of language is the instrument of artistic expression and an object of artistic perception of writers. The term “poetic language” is sometimes applied to verse speech that is, to literary language that follows the rules of verse. Ngugi uses poetic language in most of his novels in revealing the aesthetics of the African culture. Poetic language gives writers the license to use language to create imagery and ideas which cannot be expressed in the regular use of language. Ngugi, as a rich African writer fuses few of these poetic languages in his novels which enriches his concepts and thought about the world of the literature. From the following lines in *I will marry when I want*, these ideas can be found:

- Extract 2.

“You, who used to waylay me everywhere all the time?”

In the morning,  
 In evening,  
 as I come home from the river.  
 As I come home from the market.  
 Or as I came back home from work in the farms?  
 Can't you had never in your life seen a beauty like me?"

Ngugi employs other poetic or literary devices such as parallelism and repetitions to illustrate the beauty of African women as Wangeci, described the state of her youthful days. Also from *The River Between*, Ngugi uses some poetic languages which correlate with the ideas that are expressed in *I Will Marry When I Want*. In *The River Between*, the following line depicts the poetic nature and style of Ngugi's novels:

- Extract 3.

"Yes,  
 'it is beautiful to the eye'  
 'It is beautiful.'  
 'And young and fertile'  
 'Yes, young and fertile'  
 'All this is our land'  
 'Yes father'  
 'You know Gikuyu and Mumbi'  
 'Father and mother of the tribe'  
 it was as if both were in a big dream.  
 'Do you see that mountain showing through the grey mist on the horizon?'"

In a critical look at these poetic lines in extract 3, comparing it with extract 4, it depicts similar poetic features such as repetition, parallelism and the idea of expressing aesthetics. These few poetic lines according to the Hutchinson encyclopedia employ figures of speech such as those that have been identified and others in a literary work to enable the reader to unpack the meaning behind the work.

Poetic language in literary works are purposely used to add style, beauty and deeper meaning to the work, and this Ngugi covertly and overtly does to enrich his books.

- Biblical or Religious Language

This category of language often used in literature is one of the most distinct varieties of language. In the works of Ngugi, the use of biblical language is appropriate to the theme, social and political life of the people's struggle to enslave themselves from the bondage injected into their sociocultural life. Both books been reviewed in this paper have a high prevalence of this biblical or religious language.

Literature as a product of a given language implies that we also have a peculiar brand of literature which is clearly a product of Biblical language; it expresses what can be called the divine tradition (the godly or Christian way of life). The reality of God and people's quest for the knowledge of Him as revealed in His word. The Bible has given birth to what can be described as Bible-based literature: literature that expresses the peculiar culture and world view of the believers. Although human language is used as the medium of communication in this brand of literature, its message transcends the boundaries of human languages and cultures. In fact, the language of Bible-based literature has assumed a universal status: it is a language characterized by Biblical concepts and their equivalents in whatever language is used as a medium of communication. Works of literature in this category have one thing in common: they are intended to teach moral lessons.

This paper considers language of religion and biblical language as linguistic structures which are not necessarily alluding to instances from the bible, but rather structures that employ biblical or religious phraseologies. Again in analyzing the biblical language, this paper in addition considers the biblical quotes that characterized the language of the books. In *The River Between*, the writer employs these structures of language to suit the themes of his stories as well as creating the kind of characters that will enhance his idea. In this book, Ngugi mentions that:

- Extract 4.

"Isaiah, the white man's seer, had prophesied of Jesus.  
 He had told of the coming of a messiah.  
 Had Mugo was Kibiro, the Gikuyu seer, ever foretold of such a savior?  
 No. Isaiah was great.  
 He told of Jesus, the savior of the world.  
 Those who refuse him are the children of darkness:  
 Those, sons and daughter of the evil one, will go to hell:  
 They will burn and burn forever more, world unending"

Ngugi uses this allusive biblical language to explore the idea of a saviour of the people (Gikuyu), who will come in the form Jesus as is the Christian faith, to save and liberate them. Other related quotes and languages indicating the idea of a saviour in the same book are found in the following lines:

- Extract 5.

“Salvation shall come from the hills”  
 “A man shall rise and save the people in their hour of need”  
 “I will look up into the hills from whence cometh my help”  
 “He shall show them the way: he shall lead them”

These lines buttress the idea that Ngugi wanted to establish Waiyaki (the protagonist) in the novel as the expected messiah who was going to liberate the people of Makuyu from the enslavement and oppression of the whites.

I Will Marry When I Want, equally has features of these language. The book revolves around the concept of Christian marriage and exploitation of most peasant and poor farmers in Kenya.

- Extract 6.

“Ndugire...the only good freedom is that of the soul.  
 Leave your fishing net behind.  
 Follow me now.  
 And I will make you a fisher of men”.

These languages and more are used in the story as a means of appealing to the mind of the African and the people in other to exploit and rob them of their properties, just as Peter left his net and canoe to follow Jesus. It is of no doubt that Christianity is used in both book (I Will Marry When I Want and The River Between) unveil its cruelty and exploitative nature.

- Rhetorical Elements

Linguistic theory has as one of its tenets been the use of rhetorical elements or features in studying the language of literary works. The rhetorical features identified in the works cuts across wide ranges which include: parallelism, repetition, allusion, proverbs and personification just to mention but few. But for the purposes of this study focus will be place on the Allusion and proverbs since these are the most frequently used.

- Allusion

An allusion is a figure of speech that makes a reference to, or a representation of: a place, event, literary work, myth, or work of art, either directly or by implication. M. H. Abrams defined allusion as "a brief reference, explicit or indirect, to a person, place or event, or to another literary work or passage". It is left to the reader or hearer to make the connection (Fowler); where the connection is detailed in depth by the author, it is preferable to call it "a reference". Ngugi in his works employs a lot of allusions, a closer look at The River Between and I Will Marry When I Want, reveals a rich use of biblical allusion in drumming down the ideas of the writer. In Ngugi's quest to create an identity of a saviour or a redeemer in The River Between, he falls mainly on the use of biblical allusion to make this idea possible in his novel. In chapter seven, the writer presents Joshua, the staunch Christian to reminisce on the coming of the messiah who will liberate the people (of Makuyu) from physical and spiritual bondages. In this same chapter (page 29), Ngugi alludes to the mother of Jesus and the birth of Jesus through the lens and thoughts of Joshua, this is illustrated in the lines below:

- Extract 7.

“Behold, a virgin shall conceive,  
 And bear a son,  
 And shall call his name Immanuel”

The plot of the story develops to create a picture where the people of Makuyu, awaits a mighty breakthrough in their suffering and the inequitable treatment they have been subject to by the whites through religion and other socio-cultural and political related issues. As the story unfolds, Waiyaki the son of Chege, receives the attention of the people and that obviously places him in the light of the hero or the expected Messiah of the people. They anticipate the leader who will emerge (Waiyaki) to save them from their prevailing suppression and oppression. This allusion in The River Between goes a mile to stress home the idea and the gravity of 'cross' or pressure Christianity and the presence of the whites in the land of Kenya laid on the indigenous people. This (extract 7) also foregrounds the idea that there will be someone from the hill of Makuyu who will instigate the people against oppression. But in the midst of the difficulties, the people of Makuyu, just as the Israelites anticipated the coming of the Messiah to liberate them perpetually from oppression, they were 'blessed' with Waiyaki who attempts to save the people from the grips of the whites. But he ends up with opposition which in turn thwarted his dreams and visions for his people.

Similarly, I Will Marry When I Want, is characterized with some few important allusions which elevate the ideas of the writer. The plot of the story is directly linked to the allusions that were used in the story. Kiguunda, a farm labourer and his family suffers high degree of exploitation from the whites and the Christian community. In Act two scene one of the story, Njooki a neighbour to the

Kiguunda, in disgust of the oppressions and exploitation meted on the people for year un-ending allude to Jesus teaching his disciples in Matthew 5: 6 (the Beatitudes) that:

- Extract 8.

“Blessed are they that go thirsty and hungry  
And endure tribulations in their hearts  
For they shall inherit the kingdom of God!”

This Njooki says not in anticipation of a better kingdom yet to be enjoyed by the people, but instead quoted this or uses this form of alluded language to show the state of the people of Kenya (being thirsty and hungry) and the exploitation brought to them through Christianity.

- Proverb

Siran (1993) posits that proverbs are important symbolic system which helps construct and maintain the culture’s view of reality of a particular group people (mainly cultural group). They originate within culture and employ the mother tongue language and idioms which makes it crucial for their use in developing contextual theology. Since the language a person internalizes affects the way he perceives the world around him. Same is the world of Ngugi which he transfers through the use of proverbs in his literary works.

- Extract 9.

The River Between, uses proverbs such as:

“the oilskin of the house is not for rubbing into the skin of strangers”.

“The tree listened, moaned with the wind and kept silent. Birds and beast heard and listened”.

In I will marry when I want these proverbs are aesthetically used in the drama for several purposes, these proverbs include:

- Extract 10.

“A fool’s walking stick supports the clever”

“Clouds may be in the sky But it does not mean it’ll rain”

“Did the leopard ever change its spots?”

A kid steals like its mother.

The chameleon family has never changed its backridge”.

“The given does not know when the granary is empty”

These and many other proverbs in the novels bring out the African cultural setting of the novels. It is believed that in the African society, a wise child is spoken not in plain words but in proverbs. Hence, these proverbs illustrate the deeper meaning and the inner ideas that the writer seeks to depict. To Ngugi, these proverbs are meant to illustrate the deeper sense of traditional wisdom that is practicable in the African traditional society.

### 3. Conclusion

In all the genres of literature, it is indisputable that language provides the building blocks for every work. Every writer of literature uses language; however, each uses language in his or her own peculiar way.

It is undeniable that literature is the manipulation of language for creative purposes, it must be noted that the usefulness or otherwise of literature to the human society depends largely on how the writer uses language. Like a house whose structure and value depend on the quality of materials used by the builder as well as his or her expertise in the use of these materials, the value of a work of literature also depends on the writer's choice of language as well as his or her ability to use language creatively and in a manner that is beneficial to the human society.

At a careful look at language used by Ngugi wa Thiongo in his works: I Will Marry When I Want and The River Between, it throws light on the view of language from Ngugi’s perspective as well as a stand point for generalization to involve some other African writers. It is clear from the study that, most African writers especially Ngugi wa Thiongo employs language in his literary works solely on the grounds of his contact with the sociopolitical and sociocultural environment of the African continent as a victim of colonization. In view of this, Ngugi’s language is dominated with views and ideas that exhibit the agitation of the African from oppression. From the novels used in this research, it is clear that the language of Ngugi in these works is a call against the oppression and the exploitation meted on the African as a result of religious influence more specifically Christianity.

Again, the research indicated that there were several characteristics that formulated the language used by Ngugi in the selected literary works. From a more overt angle, biblical language was a domineering feature used in both works. One very important area, in which the inextricable link between language and literature is quite evident, is in the expression of what can be called divine tradition and culture, and this is what Ngugi achieves in the use of this form of language. There is no doubt that Biblical language has become a universal language which transcends both racial and linguistic boundaries.

In brief the research identified other important linguistic elements that characterized the language used in the novels used in this research. Among them were: the use of repetition and parallelism which the writer uses to create emphasis and stress on issues that he

believes need the attention of the reader. The language used in the novels was also not devoid of African proverbs, it is believed that in the African cultural setup, a wise child is not spoken to, in plain words; similarly, the language of the elders of African communities is always intertwined with few proverbs. It is thus for these reasons the Ngugi employed proverbs in both works to bring out this beliefs of the African as well as portraying the rich culture of Africa.

It is therefore conclusive that the language of a particular literary work can be studied from different perspectives; some scholars may consider the syntactic and grammatical parts of the language employed by a writer in his literary work. While others can look at language of a literary work from the way this paper has considered language.

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