

The Linguistic Strategies of Alteration in Contemporary Neo-Slave Narratives: The Case of Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* (2016)

استراتيجيات التبديل اللغوي في روايات العبودية المعاصرة: دراسة رواية العودة إلى الوطن (2016) لـ "يا غياسي"

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Abstract:

The incorporation of local lexica in diction is one of the cornerstone of the African style in prose fiction. It carries specific cultural loads related to African authenticity, yet it requires the alteration of English structure. The present study aims to examine the linguistic strategies used to Africanise English in contemporary neo-slave narrative in a Ghanaian context. It relies on a mixed methods approach that borrows theoretical insights from the dynamic modelling of context and indexicality. The results showed that with recourse to the linguistic strategies of code-switching and transcoding, Yaa Gyasi has squarely mediated the Akan experience to a global English-speaking audience in her debut novel *Homegoing* (2016). By switching to the Akan code, the narrative preserved the semantic value system of the Akan culture. On the other hand, transcoding Akan lexica into the English language evoked stances of blame, shame, revolt, glory and ethnic reconciliation between the Fante and the Asante.

Keywords: Code-switching; Transcoding; Akan Code; Contemporary Neo-Slave Narrative; Yaa Gyasi

ملخص:

يعد دمج المعجم المحلي من أحد الركائز الأساسية التي يتسم بها الأسلوب الأفريقي في الرواية النثرية. كما يحمل هذا الأخير في طياته قيما ثقافية محددة تتعلق بالأصالة الأفريقية التي تقتضي تغييرات في بنية اللغة الإنجليزية. يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة الاستراتيجيات اللغوية المستخدمة لإضفاء الطابع الأفريقي على اللغة الإنجليزية في أسلوب السرد الجديد والمعاصر للعبودية في السياق الغاني. كما يعتمد على نهج الأساليب المشتركة الذي يركز على النمذجة الديناميكية للسياق. قامت الكاتبة ياجياسي *Yaa Gyasi* في روايتها الأولى بعنوان العودة إلى الوطن (2016) بنقل التجربة الأكانية إلى جمهور عالمي يتحدث الإنجليزية باستخدام استراتيجيات لغوية كالتناوب اللغوي والترجمة الحرفية والمعنوية. كما حافظ أسلوبها السرد على نظام القيم الدلالية للثقافة الأكانية وذلك من خلال الاعتماد على التناوب اللغوي. من ناحية أخرى، أيقظت الترجمة الحرفية والمعنوية مواقف من اللوم والتمرد والمجد والمصالحة بين الفنتين العرقيتين فانتى وأسانتى.

كلمات مفتاحية: التناوب اللغوي، الترجمة الحرفية والمعنوية، اللغة الأكانية، السرد الجديد والمعاصر للعبودية، ياجياسي.

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1. Introduction

African literature has always been a reservoir of resistance to colonial rule and a pressing locus of revision for indigenous cultures and collective memory in the postcolonial era. Although the theoretical considerations of this body of literature have been keenly informed by postcolonialism, questions regarding the language use and style of writing still occupy the research focus of stylistics, literary criticism and translation studies in general. The significance of the English language as a colonial legacy has been proven to be debatable in the African scholarly community since the Markere Conference. The advocates of the local languages paradigm, such as Ngugi Wathingo and Obi Wali, have pointed out the importance of using the local language as a potential medium to meditate on the profound experiences and myths of African locality. Since English continues to perpetuate colonial premises within its discourse, writing in local languages is highly encouraged. They are endorsed with a traditionally-inspiring diction that contributes chiefly in “decolonising” the African mind (Ngugi, 1986). More importantly, the task of writing literary fiction in local languages is necessary for the promotion of indigenous languages (Wali, 1997). In contrast, Chinua Achebe has started the tradition of Africanizing English to suit the ex-colonization purpose and reach a global English-speaking audience. This Africanised version of English is coined “a new English” because it structurally follows standard English. Yet, at a lexico-semantic level, it carries a different tone for the native speaker of English (Achebe, 1965). The cultural loads that the writer incorporates in English by using different linguistic strategies render writing African fiction in English very promising. This has sparked much interest in stylistic studies over how African writers carefully choose their diction to achieve a particular artistic effect.

As far as style is concerned, *Things Fall Apart* is regarded as canonical for two reasons: it expresses the depth and the eloquence of Ibo society using different linguistic and stylistic strategies. English forms are subverted to describe the specificities of the Ibo people. Numerous stylistic studies have been conducted to shed light on the strategic use of proverbs, folklore, myth, transliteration, and figures of speech to create an authentic Ibo focalisation (Alimi, 2012; Kosasih, 2019; Chintya et al., 2019; Wafula and Wanjala, 2017). This stylistic trend has influenced many younger African writers in choosing English at the expense of their indigenous languages for their creative muse.

Writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Helon Habila, Olufemi Terry, Noviolet Bulawayo, Nana Ekua Brew - Hammond, and Yaa Gyasi continue to experiment with the “new English” style as they inform the stances of contemporary African literature differently. Typically, Helon Habila refutes Wali’s argument as she points out that language choice and style do not dictate the nature of African writing. Within the same vein, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie describes English as her favourite language for writing. She partly imitates Achebe’s style in terms of transliteration and code-mixing as she attempts to capture the characteristics of Ibo orality and traditions (Ekpang, 2013). The “new English” model that Achebe proposed was thoroughly

studied in his novels. Indeed, this has stressed how Nigerian literature is considered the “powerhouse” of African fiction (Akinwale, 2015). Many critics and scholars have explored how this style informs the cultural specificities of Ibo, Yoruba and Hausa people. However, few studies shed light on the interface between other ethnic varieties and the English language when writing fiction in Western African countries such as Ghana. This study aims at exploring how contemporary Ghanaian writers experiment with the “new English” style using different linguistic strategies and techniques as they incorporate Akan varieties such as Twi and Fante into a narrative to forge an authentic cultural texture. The Twenty-first century witnessed a significant shift in representing the traumatic experiences of slavery and, more precisely, the slave trade implications on the formation of the African continent by investing more in the neo-slave narratives. Remarkable Western African writers, including Ghanaian writers, adopted the historical realism mode as a transitional move to speak the silences left behind by the first wave of postcolonial African writings regarding slavery and the slave trade (Murphy, 2012). In consideration of the translator as an “intercultural mediator” (Benlakdar, 2021), the study explores how Yaa Gyasi, a young Ghanaian writer, invests in this new trend in her debut novel *Homegoing* (2016) by creating a different stylistic alteration that incorporates Akan lexical items structurally and semantically to index specific ideological moves and stances regarding the slave trade history in Ghana.

2. “New English” Style as a Pragmatic Literary Weapon in African Fiction

The African novel has demonstrated a pressing concern with the questions of authentic representation, meditation style and diction choice. Chinua Achebe (1965) has appropriated “New English” as a stylistic project that transmutes the Ibo oral traditions and the African experience into a literary form using different linguistic and narrative techniques. He describes this stylistic choice as a submissive utility that should be employed for an African end. English as a style is, first and foremost, favoured at the expense of indigenous languages simply because of its status as a national language in some African countries such as Nigeria and Ghana because of the impact of British colonialism. The writer that adopts the English language as a medium of narration is deemed to address all the dwellers of the national space, whereas writers who write in Yoruba, Ibo or any other African languages, unless their works are translated into English, are associated with a direct ethnic orientation towards a specific local reader. In this respect, writing the African experience in English is a pragmatic choice to resolve the complexities of African languages, which are associated with oral features and ethnic barriers. On the national level, it informs and reforms the community it addresses. Secondly, English is regarded as a universal language. By using it as a writing medium, the African writer speaks back to the colonial powers and communicates the African experiences to a worldwide audience. Regardless, the “new English” style advocated by Tutuola, Achebe, and several younger writers is associated with a process of alteration that goes beyond the

conventional use of the English language. Yet, it does not negatively impact its reception at a semantic level. This alteration process creates a space of evocation that reflects various particularities of African everyday life and culture. Thus, alteration makes this style a literary weapon since it subverts any colonial legacies within the English discourse framework. Diction, storytelling and focalization play a focal role in the alteration process.

2.1 Diction and the Stylistic Devices of Alteration

Generally speaking, diction is a term that describes the word choice process that the writer resorts to when engaging in the act of storytelling. It constitutes the core of the literary style that dictates the thematic and rhematic features of discourse in the novel. Diction plays a critical role as it contributes to forming specific sub-genres. It influences several novelistic elements such as: the setting, characterisation, tone, mood and themes. It also provides the narrator with a voice that determines the story's structure and purpose. Genette (1993) has thoroughly examined diction and style and noted that diction shapes "the constitutive regime" of fiction and influences its thematic concerns. He has also emphasized the importance of diction on the account that it reflects the "expressive function" of language (p. 100). By going beyond the literal and the denotative aspects of language, the level of expression that the style provides is related to its connotative features. These features determine the social characteristics that are attributed to a given subject. In fiction, however, they constitute literary representations that manifest the author's attitudes towards a given theme or viewpoint. Genette has substituted the terms connotation/expression with a specific item: evocation to explain how the sign interacts with other signs and objects in the mode of signifying to forge an "exemplificatory function" (p. 105). The latter determines the "perceptibility" of the text.

As far as African fiction is concerned, diction is deemed necessary for constructing a "new English" style as writers are careful about choosing a register related to the socio-cultural formation of their African localities. To illustrate, one refers to Povey (1970), who examines the styles and themes of the first wave of postcolonial West African writers. He analyses the significant novels that demonstrate the different experimentation of the aforementioned style by relying on different techniques regarding word choice, word order and altered forms that embody several oral features. Amos Tutuola's *The Palm Wine Drinkard* exemplifies the formation of a Pidgin style that hybridises the discourse of English with Yoruba folktales. The deformed diction used by the first-person narrator retells how a drunk man takes a spiritual journey to the land of the dead to bring his tapster back to life to prepare his palm wine. This experimentation with a Pidgin English style and Yoruba folklore has altered both the structural and thematic conventions of the Western novel written in standard English. Another example is that of Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*. The writer chooses a type of diction equivalent to Zulu speech, a Southern Bantu variety spoken in South Africa, by implementing biblical sources. The same goes for

Gabriel Okara's *The Voice*, which literally translates Ijaw items into English to give the novel a local colour. His description of the end of the day and the upcoming of the night shows the impact of his local language on the formation of personification in this example: "Soon the day's eye became bad. It became bad and black and closed that it could not be looked at" (Povey, 1970, p. 211). So, locally-based forms of diction have influenced the African style in the sense that the experimentation with syntax and words has created a new connotative level that reflects the African experience. Thus, "the exemplificatory" function of this style lies in providing the postcolonial African experience with a new model of articulation that evokes African oral traditions and imageries as it subverts and reshapes the English language.

As mentioned above, the father of modern African literature, Chinua Achebe, has consciously manipulated the English language for an African end. His attempt at Africanizing English is the third example given by Povey. Accordingly, *Things Fall Apart* (1995) demonstrates how the English language is altered to suit the literary need of the novel setting. In terms of style, the chosen diction meets the most quoted passage about the widespread use of proverbs in daily Ibo speech: "Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten" (p. 2). Another instance on the same page communicates how achievements are cherished and encouraged in the Ibo community: "As the elders said, if a child washed his hands he could eat with kings. Okonkwo had clearly washed his hand and so he ate with kings and elders" (p. 2). Thus, the incorporation of numerous Ibo proverbs as a characterising device to give voice to eloquent elders such as Okye is common in the novels of Chinua Achebe. Other examples are given by Ekpang: "A toad does not run in the daytime for nothing" to express suspicion and questioning Obiako's behaviours as he quits his trade. "A child's fingers are not scalded by a piece of hot yam which its mother puts into its palm" is a profound Ibo proverb that Okonkwo used to justify his decision to take action in the killing of Ikemufuna" (Achebe, as cited in Ekpang, 2013, p. 123). The inclusion of folktales as an episodic frame within the main plot is another crucial strategy that Chinua Achebe has used passionately to familiarise the reader with the Ibo folklore. The tale of Tortoise and the parrot is a relevant example that illustrates the socio-cultural hue of the Ibo and participates chiefly in establishing a significant theme about language and translation as a key weapon of subversion. So, translating the Ibo proverbs and folktales into English creates an African reference that the reader may recognise easily. This process is identified by Olakunle (2009) as transcoding. It permits meditation and indirect commentary on African cultural specificities.

Code-switching is among the pivotal linguistic devices that shape the "new English" style. According to the *Dictionary of Stylistics*, code-switching is common in the field of sociolinguistics. It is used to express how the speaker shifts between more than two languages or varieties in a given context according to the situation, the addressee or the topic variation. The latter is known as a "metaphorical code switching". It determines which language forms are suitable for the subject of the

conversation (Wales, 2014, p. 63). Code mixing is used to express a constant switching between different languages or varieties that repeatedly appear in informal conversation. More specifically, when a speaker uses code-switching to affirm or resist a specific social practice or authority, it is known as code-crossing. Code-switching gains much interest in stylistic analysis when it comes to literature. As a literary device, it signifies how the constant shift between “the code of the norm” that the narrator used and “the code of the deviant” that might be expressed through the character’s speech tell the reader about the subversive forms that shape social reality in a particular time and place (Wales, 2014, p.64). Based on the glossary of the Ibo words and phrases, Achebe (1995) has used thirty-seven Ibo nouns to hybridise the discourse of the novel and give the story an African or, say, Sub-African flavour. For instance, the lexicon “Agbala” is used to denote a woman in the Ibo language, whereas it connotes a man who failed to build a farm and receive a title. Achebe initially introduced the reader to the Ibo variety via code-switching using both English and Ibo items to signify the same thing: “The elders, or *ndichie*, met to hear a report of Okonkwo’s mission” (p. 4). Then, on the same page, when Okonkwo’s wife seeks to know how long Ikemefuna is staying with them, he angrily reacts: “Do what you are told, woman...when did you become one of the *ndichie* of Umuofia”. This technique naturalises the usage of the Ibo lexeme within English codes. Adding to this, it connotes the authority of the elders that should be followed submissively by members of the clan.

Transcoding and code-switching are frequently used in the African novel. Another example is Ayi Kwei Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones are not Yet Born* and Ifeoma Okoye’s *Men Without Ears* (Unubi and Ikani, 2017). Firstly, Armah has mixed his style between Pidgin English, Standard English and local items to build tension and express Ghanaian complexity. For instance, Pidgin English is used to imitate the everyday speech of peasantry and non-educated people and express anger and satisfaction with the state of corruption in Ghana: “Aaah, contrey broke ooo, country no broke oo, we dey inside.....mah contrey people no happy, sah”. This exemplifies how transcoding gives voice to everyday speech in English. The same strategy is used by Okoye but in a Nigerian context: “.you de travel, sir?....Nobody fit give you boarding pass unless you give am money”. Secondly, Armah has used Fante words such as “Kenkey”, “juju”, “fufu” among others to give the story a native flavour. He also uses “Oware” to refer to a specific African game that does not have its equivalence in English culture (Obou, 2015, p. 170). Likewise, Okoye uses Ibo lexica such as: “agbada”, “buba”, “obi”, etc. As Unubi and Ikani (2017) note, the use of local African varieties does not necessarily signify the lack of an appropriate lexicon in English, but it is used as a stylistic marker. This demonstrates how African writers employ the same strategies of transcoding and code-switching even in a diversified way as they create altered forms of signification in their novels.

2.2 Stylistic Research and the African Novel

Abrams and Harpham (2009) accentuate the importance of stylistic analysis in fiction in the sense that it correlates between the author's style and the psychological, social and historical factors that shape the author's attitudes and viewpoints about a given topic or reality in general. Numerous stylistic studies have adopted a pluralist attitude in decoding and categorising the different stylistic variations adopted by different African writers. Emike (2014) has examined how Armah has employed relevant stylistic devices such as substitution, temporal abridgement and figurative language to forge a cohesive form for the thematic unit of corruption in his novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Similarly, Unubi and Ikani (2017) have conducted a comparative study between the aforementioned novel and Okoye's *Men Without Ears*. Notwithstanding the diversity between the Ghanaian and the Nigerian landscapes, both writers resort to the same stylistic devices, ellipsis, analepsis, prolepsis, Pidgin English, code-mixing and the use of symbols, as they reflect the ill-fated formation of neo-colonial reality in post-independent Africa. Obou (2015) has widened the scope of the comparative study to include Armah, Wole Soyinka's *Interpreters* and Amos Tutuola's *The Palm Wine Drinkard*. Based on the theoretical considerations of systematic textlinguistics, Obou has explored the distinctive stylistic features that construct a common "literary dialect" that shapes the authors' form and content. Code-switching, word-class manipulation, loanshift and coinage act as stylistic narrative complements that unpack "embedded meanings" and their role in generating and enriching themes and social relations in the novels. The feminist Ghanaian writer Ama Ata Aidoo's novels, *Our Sister Killjoy* and *Changes: A Love Story*, have also been the subject of scrutiny by different scholars. According to Ekpong Monique (2011), the style that she ascribes to women subverts old items like "married woman" and "wife" with new meanings that connote revolt and liberation as marriage is despised and divorce is associated with traits of self-assertion and independence. The first generation of postcolonial writers was aware of the multilingual context they inherited from colonialism. In response, they have created a suitable multilingual style that reconstitutes the socio-cultural characteristics of their communities and the main problems they faced using the English language as a means.

Recently, many scholars have shifted towards stylistic analysis to examine how the African writers of the second and third generations rework the linguistic strategies adroitly as they experiment with style to reflect and reconstitute their social realities subtly. Ekpong (2013) depicts how the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Adichie continues to invest in the Achebean traditions as she uses similar literary and linguistic devices to hybridise her style in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and develop thematic concerns regarding change and gender roles in Nigerian society. Pertaining to quantitative analysis, Ohanedozi (2013) examines the same novel to calculate the presence and the frequency of the stylistic devices used to shape the narrative. In this respect, the following devices are detected: code-mixing, figures of speech, transliteration, italics and parenthetical expression. These devices are used carefully to depict the tragic

impact of the civil war on Nigerian society. Okolo (2016) has also shed light on the importance of style in developing the themes of cultural conflict, identity, patriarchy and oppression in her first novel *Purple Hibiscus*. Among linguistic and structural devices, code-mixing is used thoroughly to add a local flavour to the story as Igbo words such as: “agbogho” is used with the adjective “ripe” to describe a girl who is attractive, beautiful, but mature. In the Ghanaian context, the rise of young female writers such as Yaa Gyasi, Ayesha Harruna Attah, Nana Oforiatta Ayim, Nana Hammond and Taiye Selasi have elevated African fiction to international acclaim. A closer examination of sources indicates that countless studies emphasize the thematic concerns of this wave regarding Afro-politanism, feminism, race and anxiety (Phiri, 2017; Okoth, 2021), whereas the stylistic variations through which salient themes have been communicated are overlooked.

3. The Problematic Representation of the Slave Trade in Ghanaian Fiction

3.1 The Ghanaian Novel and the Question of Slavery

Considerable scrutiny over the representation of slavery and the slave trade in the African continent disclosed how it is imparted in a “politics of oblivion”. De Jong (2010) has reviewed three key books that addressed the question of commemorating slavery and the slave trade in the historical discourse in Ghana and the West African countries in general. Although many slave edifices, such as Cape Coast Castle, act as a site of traumatic memory, they are often used as raw material for supporting the increasing tourism industry that has been encouraged by the Ghanaian governments since the 1990s to attract more African Americans. At the interior level, however, as Hosley argues in *Routes of Remembrance*, the question of the slave trade is utterly silenced in public discourse. In contrast, the Fante residents of the coastal towns Cape Coast and Elmina, which are known for the long history of the slave trade, are immersed in a state of forgetfulness and claim that the sites are only meant for tourists. In this sense, the slave trade history is excluded from the Fante residents’ collective memory in order to hide the complicity stories of their forebears. Hence, traumatic guilt is repressed as a distinctive landmark of their identity construction as much as Ghanaian governments preserved this attitude as they excluded the slave trade from the textbooks (Hosley, as cited in De Jong, 2010). As the memory of the slave trade is excluded from the public discourse to avoid controversy and stigma, Shaw’s *Memories of the Slave Trade* and Argenti’s *The Intestines of the State* reveal how the slave memory is represented via the art of the performative in the form of occult practice. Regardless of the intricate ways that the traumatic memories of the slave trade are preserved, the deliberate silence over the historical legacy of the slave trade and its physical and literary implications in local African societies is far entrancing for speculation.

Deliberate avoidance of treating explicitly the question of the slave trade in an appropriate context reflects psychic repression or a sort of amnesia regarding the slave

memory representation in Ghanaian fiction. Murphy (2012) has revealed how the majority of the Western African novels written in the second half have eschewed the direct treatment of the slave trade as a central theme in the novels. Instead, they relied on the metaphorical and the symbolic realm rather than “an overt narrativization” as they addressed contemporary political or social problems or were immersed in the retelling of African history. For instance, Aye Kwei Armah has relied on a symbolic evocation of the slave trade as the protagonist of *Fragments*, who came back home from exile, is haunted by the cargo mentality of his family relatives and society. The latter refused to delve into the dark history of slavery. He has also relied on the mythical and allegorical depiction of the slave trade in *Two Thousand Seasons* to represent a romanticised narrative of African history that evokes rage and hatred against the European and Arabic conquests and expresses shame and condemnation for the so-called betrayal of the African tribal leaders in their illegitimate involvement in the slave trade.

Nevertheless, the gist of Armah’s narrative generally reflects his commitment to condemn African corruption and colonial powers and praise victimized blackness in an idealized tone without giving much importance to contextualized historical facts. In contrast, Armah’s *The Healers* provides an authentic historical context that depicts the rivalry upon the crown in the nineteenth Ashanti Kingdom in Ghana, but the question of the slave trade and its implications on the state of warfare between the British, the Fante and the Asante are disregarded. In accordance with the Fante code which implies secrecy and concealment regarding telling slave stories in the public sphere, Smith (2016) outlines the social implications of this attitude on the community and its literary representations. As slave stories are associated with social stigma for the descendants of both slave owners and slaves, the Akan Customary Law is a social practice used in the Fante community to urge its members to take an oath not to disclose inherited private slave stories connected with the family sphere to the public. This taboo-based practice has primarily shaped the artistic construction of critically acclaimed writers such as: Ama Ata Aidoo or Kwadwo Opoku-Agyemang. According to Smith (2016), these writers represent the memory of the slave trade within the discourse of secrecy to inform the reader about the context that gave rise to such practice. From a Fante focalisation, the slave stories act as sites of traumatic memory that should be repressed. Thus, the incapacity to come to terms with the dark shades of Ghanaian history and its ongoing consequences on the Akan community has exacerbated the trauma of the slave memory. Be that as it may, the realm of the metaphorical and the symbolic is the only literary medium to evoke the uninvoked.

3.2 Young Female Voices Breaking the Silence of the Fante Code

The twenty-first century is characterised by a new trend toward the representation of slavery and the slave trade in West African literature. The rise of the flux of African American tourists in Ghana and the debate over the significance of the slave castles as an ambivalent legacy have alternated the critical focus towards the representation of

the slave trade using the poetics of historical realism. The dialogue between the African American artists and their concomitant Western African writers gave much importance to a comparative approach that scrutinized the impact of slavery and the slave trade upon the two sides of the Atlantic and speculated the way historical memory and trauma have been captured in literature. In this regard, many writers subscribed to the neo-slave narrative to depict the historical moments of the slave trade and dramatize it in a dualistic manner. Of paramount significance is Kwakuvi Azasu's *The Salve Raiders* (2004). It locates its story in an authentic context of the sixteenth century as the English managed to immorally invest in slave "raid" in the South East of present Ghana. The narrative offers a realistic account of the Anlo, a sub-variety of the Ethnic Ewe, who controlled the region and called it Anloland. Still, the novel was immersed in a whirlwind of silence regarding the implication of the Asante and the Fante tribes in the trade and the tragedy it generated. In the second decade of the Twenty-first century, Yaa Gyasi has noticed the gap between the problematics mentioned above and the language question. According to Murphy (2012), the first generation of Ghanaian writers, including Ama Ata Aidoo, admitted the limiting impact of English in creating a tone and mood that resolved the issue of the slave trade in a reconcilable way. To defy the shackling mood that the English language creates with its racial and oppressive barriers, Yaa Gyasi has managed to utilise her sense of hybridity as a source of power to debunk the Euro-centric discourse and Africanise English in a way that says it all from an Afrocentric perspective. She lives in USA as a second-generation Ghanaian immigrant and is acclimated to African American literature. This allowed her to conflate the African American traditions of neo-slave narrative with the Achebean style of Africanising English to forge a new form that fits contemporary demands of African reality and its impediments. Thus, she sheds light on the complicity of the Fante tribe in enslaving the Asante families using transcoding and code-switching to Twi as a technique that gives her narrative a historical flavour. The ensuing pages demonstrate how she artfully fuses linguistic codes to liberate English from the burden of enslaving memories. Simultaneously, she deciphers its historical connotation as a language of "whipping" and oppression.

4. Method

The study relies on a mixed methods approach because it is suitable for stylistic analysis and its impact on the thematic formation and the generic build-up related to the neo-slave narrative. It relies on the dynamic modelling of context: Mode, Field and Tenor as revisited by O'Donnell (2020) and borrows the concept of indexicality and the ideological moves forged in a situation of interaction from sociolinguistics (Eckert, 2008). Firstly, the study offers a quantitative reading by exploring the frequency of linguistic devices used as a mode of organising the text to achieve cultural authenticity. It dictates the frequency of code-switching and transcoding in the text and determines which variety is subject to each linguistic device. A situational configuration of the Akan code is also performed to trace its thematic orientation in the text. Then, an

indexical analysis is qualitatively conducted to explore the tenor that the switching Akan items created in the text. As a result, the stances that are expressed vis -à- vis ethnic relations, power relations and slave memory are excavated to depict the tone and the authorial attitudes regarding the representation of Fante, Asante and the British involvement in the slave trade during the 18th and 19th centuries. The narrative of Yaa Gayasi's *Homegoing* is considered a relevant corpus to examine how young African authors rework the Achebean traditions of “new English” style while they shed light on the silence over the legacy of the slave trade in West Africa and, more precisely, in Ghana.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 The Frequency and the Situational Configuration of Akan Lexical Items

The first section provides a quantitative reading of the frequency of the Akan Lexical Items in the novel under study. It introduces the presumed number of each item as it is determined by a particular mode. Local varieties and their authentic cultural system of signification are expressed differently. The frequency of the Akan lexical items is determined by AntConc, which is a freeware corpus toolkit commonly used for concordance and text analysis. The results are presented in Table 01:

Table 1. Mode and Frequency of Akan Lexical Items in the Novel

Linguistic Alteration (Mode)	Devices of Local Variety	Akan Lexical Items
Code Switching		314
Transcoding		More than 500

Table 1 shows the prominence of code-switching and transcoding as key alteration devices in the novel. More precisely, the data shows that the number of transcoded forms from Twi and Fante to English is more frequent than the direct use of Twi or Fante lexical items in the narrative. Two types of transcoding are detected: transliteration and translation. The former is a literal translation of the local items by preserving their local syntax or semantic characteristics. For instance, the author demonstrates how Fante people express their admiration and attraction to Effia in the first chapter by calling her: “Effia the Beauty”, which is a transgression of the way the native uses the adjective *beautiful* often to describe the beauty of women (Gyasi, 2016, p. 21). In the same vein, in the second chapter, the narrator describes how the villagers’ admiration for the kindness and beauty of Effia’s sister, Esi, is depicted in a locally metaphorical way. The author states it as follows: “Esi grew up in bliss. The villagers called her *ripe mango* because she was just on the right side of spoiled, still sweet” (p. 37). This reflects the metaphorical labelling of the Asante using English as a medium.

Literal labelling is also used as Akan people often called powerful people as: “big man”, “fat man” or elders “old man”. They also called people who are not successful in farming “unlucky”. Another instance of transliteration is performed at the level of proverbs and folklore. For example, the author literally translated the song Esi’s family sang to urge their father to punish the little slave girl Abronoma when she made a mistake and spoiled water from the pot. The whole family’s children chanted: “The Dove has failed. Oh, what to do? Make her to suffer, or you’ll fail too” (p. 43).

Translation to English, however, is appropriately used to voice characters as they speak, such as Effia when she talks to the crowned prince Aboeku. The author tells the reader that they speak in Fante, whereas the discourse that is presented is constituted in proper English: “Will you work for the British when you become chief?” Effia asked. Cobbe and Baaba sent her sharp looks, and she lowered her head, but she lifted it to find Aboeku smiling. “We work with the British, Effia, not for them. That is the meaning of trade. When I am chief, we will continue as we have, facilitating trade with the Asantes and the British” (Gyasi, 2016, pp. 14-15). Translation is also used to provide meaning for the Akan words that the non-Ghanaian reader is unfamiliar with. For instance, the author introduces the Akan item directly as “Nyame” and then provides an appositive phrase in English explaining its meaning as “the Akan God” (p. 190). In these examples, transcoding transmits the Akan people’s local culture, customs and tradition to a global audience. In other words, it makes the local global.

As far as code-switching is concerned, the frequency of the Akan lexical items is less compared to the previous technique. Still, it is significant and complementary for the former as it provides an authentic context that Africanises English as the linguistic codes evoke signifying objects from the Akan culture. To dictate the most prominent aspects of Akan culture that are depicted by the authentic evocation of Akan language, whether Fante or Twi, it is crucial to conduct a situational configuration of the local linguistic resources that are demonstrated by code-switching. In this regard, Table (02) classifies the occurring Akan lexical items alphabetically via the frequency, variety type and the field of each lexical item:

Table 2. The Situational Configuration of Akan Lexical Items in the Novel

Akan Lexical Items	Frequency	Translation into English	Variety Type	Field
Abronoma	29	Little Dove	Twi	Proper Name
Aburokyire	2	America and Jamaica	Fante	Place
Abusua	1	The Family	Twi	Privacy
Akata	3	The descendants of the African Slaves that live in America and Europe	Akan	Ethnicity
Akuapem	1	Sub-ethnic group of Akan people	Akan	Ethnicity
Akwaaba	5	Welcome	Akan	Greeting
Anansi	7	Spider and Trickster	Akan	Mythology

Asamando	5	The Land of Spirits	Akan	Mythology, Religion and Cosmology
Asante	96	A prominent Sub-ethnic group of Akan people	Akan	Ethnicity
Asantehene	5	King of the Asante people	Twi	Power and Authority
Asase Yaa	1	Female Spirit of Earth (Created on Tuesday)	Twi	Mythology, Religion and Cosmology
Awurade	1	God	Twi	Religion
Bia & Tano	1	Children of Asase Ya and Nyame	Twi	Mythology, Religion and Cosmology
Chukwu	1	Supreme being of the Igbo spirituality and source of all its deities	Ibo (Lexically borrowed)	Mythology, Religion and Cosmology
Ewe	1	An ethnic group lives in Ghana and Togo and speaks the Kwa language	Akan	Ethnicity
Oboroni	8	White man/ Wicked man	Twi	Race
Fante (people)	34	A sub-ethnic group of the Akan people	Akan	Ethnicity
Fante (language)	18	A variety of the Akan language	Akan	Language
Fufu	13	Mashed Cassava	Twi	Food
Ga	1	An ethnic group that lives in the coastal Southeast of Ghana	Akan	Ethnicity
Juju	2	Spell	Akan	Mythology
Nyame	13	The Akan God	Twi	Mythology, Religion and Cosmology
Nyame Nsa	1	The hand of God	Twi	Mythology, Religion and Cosmology
Omanhin	2	Chief of the village	Fante	Authority
Sunsum	1	Spirit of the Kingdom	Twi	Mythology and Authority
Twi	55	A variety of the Akan language	Akan	Language
Yaa Asantewaa	7	Mother Queen	Twi	Authority

Table 2 demonstrates the prominent subject matters that motivate the text and outlines their purpose and thematic build-up. Participants such as “Nyame”, “Asase Yaa” and “Anansi” are employed as cosmic and mythical markers in the novel. There are 33 lexical items in the novel. They constitute the core of the socio-cultural formation of the Akan people during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries. Ethnic markers are also detected with a frequency of 144 items. They depict the ethnic

panorama in pre-colonial Ghana and the social relation that gave rise to the conditions of the slave trade at that time. The Akan system of power relation is coded by the frequency of 15 items that inform the reader about the Akan community organisation and the involvement of the British and the Dutch before manipulating the Akan system for the sake of profit and wealth. Verbal processes are also detected to inform the reader about the complexity and variety of language use in the 18th and 19th Cape Coast. Twi lexical items are present in the text more than Fante lexical utterances, with 80 Twi items versus only four Fante words. The latter is almost entirely transcoded into English. To shed light on the plurality of Akan language and its rich varieties, 229 Akan items are located in the text. Since Fante and Twi varieties are mutually intelligible, Akan items are used to stress diversity and homogeneity between the Fante and the Asante ethnic groups. Thus, the situational configuration of Akan lexical items in the novel indicates that the field of mythology, cosmology, religion, language, authority and ethnicity play an ideational metafunction in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* (2016). It evokes the authentic experiences and the cultural layers that determined the way of life and its connection with the history of the slave trade in West Africa.

5.2 Stances and Ideological Moves in the Novel

The second section aims to approach the novel qualitatively via the examination of the tenor of the text by conducting an indexical analysis. Code-switching to a local language is employed as a stylistic mode to organise the text strategically in order to establish the motif and the themes related to the historical memory of the slave trade and the social relations between Europeans and the locals of the Gold Coast. It explores the different stances the text expresses regarding attitudes towards the Fante, the Asante and the White men regarding power relations and the slave trade.

5.2.1 Fante Shame and Blame

This part is intended to analyse the stances expressed in the quotes that evoke emotions, views, opinions, attitudes and representations about one of the main ethnic groups of Akan, the Fante and their involvement in the slave trade. Four quotes are selected and codified as Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4 to discuss the representation of the Fante Subject:

Q1: "What's below?" she asked James, and the mangled *Fante* word that came back to her was "cargo." Then, carried up with the breeze, came a faint crying sound. So faint, Effia thought she was imagining it until she lowered herself down, rested her ear against the grate. "James, are there people down there?" she asked. Quickly, James ...looking straight into her eyes. "Yes," he said evenly. It was one *Fante* word he had mastered" (pp. 23-24).

Q2: "At the end of the first dry night Abeeku was crowned *Omanhin*, chief of the Fante village...Abeeku wanted to do something big, something that would bring attention to their village and make them a force to be reckoned with" (p. 17).

Q3: “So these are the slaves you have brought us?” one of the men said in *Fante*. It had been a long while since Esi had heard anyone speak that dialect, but she could understand him clearly.... *Fante* and *Asante*, fellow *Akans*. Two peoples, two branches split from the same tree. “Let us out!” they shouted until their voices grew hoarse from the words. Nothing but silence greeted them” (p. 50).

Q4: “Eh, he calls me aunty? He whose family sells our people to the whites abroad. He dares to call me aunty.” ... “Eh, now you speak of money? Mampanyin has already said she knows how your family makes money. By sending your brothers and sisters over to *Aburokyire* to be treated like animals” (pp. 108-109).

The four quotes above signify the negative connotation of the ethnic group *Fante* and their dialect is associated with shame and disdain. Q1 refers to a conversation between Effia and her husband, James, the governor of the Cape Coast Castle, in the castle in the second half of the 18th century. As a background, Effia is a daughter of a *Fante* father and an *Asante* slave mother who was manipulated by her stepmother, Babaa, who urged her into a marriage of shame. This means she is married to a white man instead of royal *Fante*, as her father hoped. James started to learn the *Fante* dialect as Effia started to learn English. Slaves, from different ethnic groups and tribes except for the *Fantes*, are held captives in dungeons and commodified as cargo to be transported to the New World. The stances of shame and disdain towards the representation of the *Fante* alliance with the White men and their commodified dialect are expressed. Q2 refers to how the slave trade flourished as Abeeku took his father’s legacy as a new chief of the village and wielded his power to suffice his greed for wealth, even at the expense of other ethnic groups. Many members of *Asantes* were raided and sold as slaves to the British. Again, the story of Esi, Effia’s step-sister, demonstrates the politics of raid and wealth that the *Fantes* relied upon secretly. Q3 and Q4 provide a voice for the unvoiced: the shackled enslaved woman and the “fetish” female priest. The stances that are communicated in the third and the fourth excerpts evoke blame and shame against the *Fantes*. Q3 casts light on the context of the encounter between the *Asante* enslaved women and the *Fante* slavers, who expressed their joy and eagerness to sell them to the British. The unbearable shouting of the female slaves, including Esi, is a reminder of *Akan* kingship and unity and evokes a blaming tone against the involvement of the *Fantes* in trading their sisters as slaves to the British. Within the same vein, the *Fante* fetish woman, Mampanyin, evoked the stance of blame when James, the grandson of the governor of Cape Coast Castle James and Effia came to seek medication for his impotence. The lexical item “*Aburokyire*” represents America as a land of fear and oppression for the Black subject. Thus, stances of shame, disdain, and blame for the suffering of one’s Black skin are evoked by switching to the codes of the *Akan* language.

5.2.2 Asante Revolt and Glory

This part is devoted to analyse the stances expressed in the quotes that evoke emotions, views, opinions, attitudes and representations about the second prominent sub-ethnic group of Akan, the Asante. Four quotes are selected and codified as Q5, Q6, Q7 and Q8 to evince their revolt against the British:

Q5: “She asked, and he shrugged his shoulders, tried to keep his nose from running, for it seemed to make her more angry. “I tell you, if they had not chosen the white man’s god instead of the gods of the *Asante*, they could not say these things to me.”... “The white man’s god is just like the white man. He thinks he is the only god, just like the white man thinks he is the only man. But the only reason he is god instead of *Nyame* or *Chukwu* or whoever is because we let him be. We do not fight him. We do not even question him” (p.127).

Q6: “Aku talked softly, told Ness about how she had taken Akan people north to freedom many times, so many times that she had earned the Twi nickname *Nyame nsa*, hand of God, of help.” (p. 90).

Q7: “Akua’s voice was the strongest, and so she led them in song: *Awurade Nyame kum dom Oboo adee Nyame kum dom Ennee yerekokum dom afa adee Oboo adee Nyame kum dom Soso be hunu, megyede be hunu*” (p. 186).

Q8: “They wanted to walk by *Yaa Asantewaa*’s palace. The place had been preserved in her honor, and the girls liked to stand outside the gate, singing the postwar songs. Their favorite one was: *Koo koo hin koo Yaa Asantewaa ee! Obaa basia Ogyina apremo ano ee! Waye be egyae Na Wabo Mmoden*” (pp. 195-196).

The four quotes above depict how divinity, mythology and political authority are integral in the socio-cultural formation of the Asante empire. *Nyame* plays a key role in the cosmic representation of the Akan people. It signifies the omnipotent God that created the universe and the dweller of the sky, whereas *Asasi Ya* is the female deity of earth. *Nyame* denotes the God creator, but the stances that are expressed in the novels show that he is considered the protector of the soul of the Akan people. His incarnation is symbolised in the Golden Stole, which according to Akan mythology, it is sent from heaven to the first Asante King Osei Tutu. Q5 and Q6 demonstrate the importance of the Akan God or even the Ibo God as a center of the local culture and the source of its sovereignty and aliveness. Ma Aku, an Asante slave displaced to America, views Christianity as a dogma of oppression through which the white men have contaminated Black people. The stance of rage expressed at the self-alienation and oppression that took place in the first half of the 18th century. In response, Ma Aku commitment to liberating the slaves by helping them to escape from South America to the North metaphorically earned the name of the Hand of the Akan God. Q7 and Q8 reveal how Asante women have supported their men who fomented an Asante revolt against the British occupation of the Cape Coast during what is known today as the Asante-British wars. Songs of war are considered a female device to praise God *Nyame* and pray for

his protection and support against the British and their allies. Q7 explains how Asante songs act as a vivid form of prayers to support Asante warriors and discourse of protest against the white men's presence and their intention to seize the Golden Stool, which has a metaphysical connotation of the Ashanti soul and Empire. The quote is translated as: "God of Creator defeat the troops". Q8 praises Edweso's Queen Mother, who organised a third revolt in 1900 in search of protecting the Golden Stool. The quote is translated as follows: "Yaa Asantewaa. The woman who fights before cannons. You have accomplished great things. You have done well". Thus, stances of praise, revolt and protest are expressed by chanting war songs. Again, Nyame signifies the cultural essence of the Asante's source of power and resistance. Glorifying the Asante sacrifice and bravery are keenly expressed by switching to the Twi code.

5.2.3 The Dualistic Connotation of the White Man

This part aims to analyse the stances expressed in the quotes below. The subject of the stances revolves around the dualistic representation and the attitudes related to the presence of the white man in Africa. They are codified as Q9 and Q10:

Q9: "But the slave trade had finally ended, and two Anglo-Asante wars had passed. The white man, whom they called *Abro Ni*, wicked one, for all the trouble he had caused, was no longer welcome there" (p. 145).

Q10: "In the missionary school they called white people Teacher or Reverend or Miss. When Abena died, Akua had been left to be raised by the Missionary. He was the only one who would take her. "It did not begin as *obroni*. It began as two words. *Abro ni*. ... wicked man?" Akua said. (the fetish priest nodded) "Among the Akan he is wicked man, the one who harms. Among the Ewe of the Southeast his name is Cunning Dog, the one who feigns niceness and then bites you" (p. 182).

The attitudes expressed in the novel about the presence of the British are ambivalent. For the Fante people, the white man is associated with wealth and power regarding trade. Strikingly, however, it is associated with shame when it comes to marriage and family bonds. The Fante pure lineage was favoured compared to the "half-caste" and Effia's son, Quey, is a significant illustration. For the Asante, the slave trade and the war with the British have forged a dualistic representation of the British. The words *Abro Ni* in Twi denote the white man as a man who is capable of bringing evil and destruction to the African continent. The two words conflated to *Obroni*, which connotes the concealing evil that any white foreigner might embody. The novel provides vivid examples of the strategic devices the white men employed to conceal greed and the quest for wealth, even by oppression and manipulation. The Cape Coast Castle signifies a metaphorical architecture of concealing evil and oppression. Under the church, which is supposed to teach the word of God to soldiers and their Fante wives, lies the Dungeons as a dark and tormenting site reserved to store the enslaved people before sending them via "the door of no return" to the hellish locality of the plantations in America. Through transcoding, the narrator provides the reader with a

Fante proverb about separated sisters being “like a woman and her reflection, doomed to stay on opposite sides of the pond” (p. 44). The dualistic imagery of Effia and Esi as two separated sisters occupying different spaces in the Cape Coast Castle, one in the Chapel and the second in the Dungeon, evokes the sinister and baleful makers that signify the white man’s malice. Another example is the white man’s smile, which was first misinterpreted as a code of politeness and goodness by Esi before it turned out to be a genuine warning of upcoming brutality. The soldier in the dungeon faced Esi with a polite smile before committing a brutal rape on her. Likewise, after the governor’s smile, Esi was sent to the slave ship as cargo to the New World.

The Cape Coast Castle represents the white man’s concealing evil in Africa. As malign markers of presumptuous goodness, governor James attempted to learn the Fante code as Effia attempted to speak English. Language is depicted as a commodity in the system that was essentially based on capitalism and trade. The narrator describes the bilingual dialogue between Cape Coast Castle’s governor and Effia as a couple “trading languages”. His Fante dialect is associated with a negative connotation by pertaining to the following English adjectives: “strange”, “ugly sound”, “poor”, and “rusty” to express detachment. Once, in the new world, the white man is depicted as a brutal enslaver who banishes local language use on his plantation. The narrator refers to the slave owner through Esi’s focalisation as the Devil with a plantation coined Hell. The Devil severely punished Esi for using the Twi language and ensured all slaves spoke English. The latter is represented as a linguistic hegemony that is reinforced by the use of whipping. Thus, the new world as a malign site of oppression and English as a whipping language conflate the authentic image of the white man as “a man capable of hurting” regardless of his physical glamour. Stances of fear, ambivalence and apprehension are evoked by Abena, an Asante’s orphan raised by the missionaries in Kumasi or Effia, Esi and Ness (Esi’s daughter). In contrast, Ma Akua and the Fetish Priest forge a guiding voice that subverts the white men’s discourse of manipulation and reveals his malignant essence.

6. Conclusion

With recourse to the linguistic strategies of code-switching and transcoding, Yaa Gyasi has squarely mediated the Akan experience to a global English-speaking audience. By switching to the Akan code, the narrative preserved the semantic value system of the Akan culture. Lexical items such as *Asmando*, *Nyame*, *Anansi*, *Sunsum*, *Fante*, *Asante*, *Nyame Nsa*, *Omanhene* and *Asantehene*, among others, mark an indexical authenticity for the readers by introducing them to local lexica that constitute the essence of the Akan perceptibility in terms of cosmology, mythology, religion, and authority, which viewed as the landmarks of socio-cultural formation. In other words, the Akan codes represent the themes or the content lexica that primarily direct the novel’s discourse. Secondly, transcoding is used as a rhematic device to transmit the Akan people’s tone and semantic reservoir in English. In view of this, the English language has metaphorically been transformed into codes that carry Akan objects and

values. Due to this hybridised style, the reader may develop an aesthetic stance that permits viewing the history of the Akan community from within. These devices, then, altered English words as they dissent a semantic shift that exemplifies the Akan perspective regarding the issues of history and, more importantly, the representation of the slave trade using an explicit discourse.

At a thematic level and by means of transcoding, the narrator dramatizes the social relations between the Asante, the Fante and the British colonial officials. The narrative evokes the stances of blame and shame vis-a-vis the involvement of the Fante in selling other ethnic captives to the British from an Asante focalisation. Nonetheless, it carries a reconciling tone by explaining how Fante's involvement was nothing more than a cunning manipulation of the white man. Again, the metaphor of the Cape Coast Castle as an Akan pot of groundnut soup under fire, which was launched by the white men, communicates the malign tactics adopted by the British to incite tribal conflicts and wars among the different ethnic groups to ensure the continuous flourishing of the slave trade. James, the grandson of Effia and the mixed-race product of the English, Asante and the Fante, has raised this point as the British official attempted to convince James's father not to go to the funeral of the King of the Asante people. This metaphor ascribes to James' mother, Nana Yaa, the daughter of the Asante King Osei Bonsu. Her viewpoint indexes her lucid vision about understanding the manipulating tactics of the British and their decisive plan to take control of West Africa.

By tracing the stories of the captives in the novel, almost all the slaves who have been captured are from the North and the Asante region. Moreover, the voice of resistance and liberation in the American plantations is mediated by the Twi code as Ma Aku, Esi and her daughter Ness used Twi songs to express sorrow, prayer, protest and strategic escape. On the other hand, the Fante code is altered by the use of the white men in the Cape Coast Castle as a means of interaction between white soldiers and their Fante *wenches*. The latter is equal for a wife in Africa for British Christian believers whose wives are left at home. It is also considered a strategy to create a family bond between the British and the Fante to invest more effectively in the slave trade as the story of Quey unfolds. All in all, the narrative pertains to an episodic style that provides the stories of seven generations of two separated sisters of an Asante mother and different fathers (Asante and Fante) to decipher the complexities of history. Still, the stories herald an ideological move that dramatized the suffering of the Asante slaves and their descendants in America. At the same time, it deciphers the complexity of the interface between the Asante and the Fante in shaping generations in present-day Ghana. Although the stance of authorial reconciliation with the traumatic gaps left by the slave trade is deciphered, there lies an implicit tinge of historical blaming for the Fante's involvement in the horrors of the slave trade. In essence, the style of the novel establishes a reappraisal of the neo-slave narrative in the African context. It discloses how transnational history continues to shape contemporary African Americans and Ghanaian people equally yet intricately in a different way.

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