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Postcoloniality, Interculturality and Cultural Identity: The African Foreign Culture Classroom as a Postcolony

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Abstract:

The experience of colonialism and the neo-colonial practices of the Western Metropole, including the categorization of Africa as area in the disciplinary structuring of knowledge in the academia, sustain in the African teacher of Western culture, in the least, an ambivalent attitude towards the African cultural self and sets off, as well, an undercurrent of cultural asymmetry and cultural identity conflict in the African foreign culture classroom. This ambivalent attitude potentially affects the representation of both the African and the Western cultural identities and shapes the attitude of the African learner of Western culture towards his/her African cultural identity. This paper emphasizes the critical positioning of the (African) teacher of Western cultures to African learners in the cultural identity dialogue between Africa and the West and posits that appropriate and authentic knowledge both of the West and Africa, cultural self-knowledge and cultural self-acceptance are critical base knowledge required of the teacher of Western culture to African learners. This base knowledge combined with a "postcolonial Intercultural" model to foreign culture teaching and learning will enable the teacher to deal with the postcoloniality, asymmetry and conflict of cultural identities inherent in the African foreign culture classroom.

Key words: Postcoloniality, African Foreign Culture Classroom, Cultural Identity, Cultural Self-knowledge, Cultural Self-acceptance.

> When I was a schoolboy, it was unheard to stage Nigerian dances at any of our celebrations. We were told and we believed that our dances were heathen. The Christian and proper thing to do was for boys to drill with wooden swords and the girls to perform, of all things, maypole dances. Beautiful clay bowls and pots were only seen in the homes of the heathen. We civilized Christians used cheap enamel wares from Europe and Japan. Instead of water pots, we carried kerosene cans. In fact to say that a product was Igbo-made was to brand it with utmost inferiority. *When a people have reached this point in their loss of faith in themselves, their detractors need do no more; they have made their point.* (Achebe 1973:9)

Postcoloniality

Postcoloniality refers to the condition of existence and interaction that is made possible by the continuing and dominant effects of a colonial past that has been mapped into a neo-colonial present. The neo-colonial present is one characterized by the continuing but disguised power and influence of the imperial metropole (the West or 'former' colonizer powers) over 'former' colonized peoples refracted through various forms of 'globalised' control of the institutions and structures, processes, frames of knowledge and references and discourse, values and ways of life of former colonized peoples. The nature of that disguised control is in inscribing and reinforcing on the consciousness of the former-colonized an alienation from, revulsion to, and rejection of his own cultural self and a preference for the Euro-Western self with all that constitutes that Western self in terms of institutions and structures, processes, frames of knowledge and references, and ways of life. Such control seeks to leave the former-colonized to remain perpetually marginalized and excluded, subjugated and exploited. The intellectual response of the 'former-colonized' to the awareness of this disguised control has been in the effort to interrogate the self on both sides in order to possibly recover and

reassert his own self. This response has found room in the academy as postcolonial studies articulated in 'Postcolonialism' as its theoretical frame. Postcoloniality is thus, for the 'former-colonized', the condition of being 'postcolonial' of living with and against the experience of 'still' being colonized, of being the "subordinated, non-white, non-Western [and subalterned]subject of [neo]colonial [imperial] rule" (Klages 2006:153) after the period of territorial colonial subjectivity.

The 'ungeographical' space of postcoloniality is the postcolony the space of unbounded imperialism inhabited by both the former colonizer and the former colonized selves locked in asymmetrical relationship and the conflict and contestation of knowledge, meaning and identities. In the postcolony, the political, economic, cultural and conceptual structures on which colonial occupation and imperial control were and are based assert dominance in the face of their being interrogated and resisted in order to be surpassed by the disciplinary project of postcolonialism (cf: Ghandi 1998: 4, Young 2001: 60). Postcoloniality as a condition of being is thus normative dealing with questions of truth, power, hegemony, knowledge, identity and privileges.

The masses and the majority of the elite of the 'excolonised', however, struggle in the postcolony from a disadvantaged, weak and vulnerable position to rediscover, reclaim and reassert their collective cultural identity and lay claim to a belonging to a world of cultural equals. This is due to their being burdened by a colonial mindset-the continuing feeling and naive acceptance of inferiority and self-abasement conditioned by the experience and psychology of domination in the periods of bounded subjectivity. Achebe speaks of this psychological experience of domination as "the pain of the wound in our soul" (1975:44) but regrets this acceptance of inferiority:

> Needless to say, we [Africans] do have our own sins and blasphemies recorded against our name. If I were God I would regard as the very worst our acceptance

> for whatever reason of racial inferiority. It is too late in the day to get worked up about it or to blame others, much as they may deserve such blame and condemnation. What we need to do is to look back and try and find out where we went wrong, where the rain began to beat us (44).

"Find[ing] out ... where the rain began to beat us" to heal and reverse this colonial conditioning of the mind is one of the dominant directions in 'African Postcolonial scholarship': to examine "the mechanisms through which the colonizing powers persuaded the colonized people to accept a foreign culture as 'better' than their own indigenous methods of government and social organization[and cultural values and norms] " (Klages 2006: 153); it is also seen in one of the communicative goals that informed Achebe's writing of the literary narratives *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*:

> ...to help my society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement. ... I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past...with all its imperfections was not one long night of savagery from which the Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them (44-5).

The other strand in the above direction of scholarship is to examine by what channels and mechanisms this colonial mindset is being sustained.

However, this 'masses' of Africans burdened with a colonial mindset cut across the broad spectrum of the African society including the illiterate, the not-so-literate and the highly literate members of all age brackets occupying various positions in the social, political, economic, cultural and intellectual hierarchy. As a result, only few 'intellectuals' and elites are critically aware of this psychological or mental conditioning and engage themselves in the informed response to the disguised control of the imperial metropole. This few undertake the project of 'representing' or

'speaking for' the other naïve and 'voiceless' members of their society.

Spivak's 'intervention' in postcolonial theorizing already problematizes the representation of the subaltern-the oppressed and marginalised and voiceless (post)colonial Other, defined by difference, whose presence, though, was crucial to the self-definition and hegemony of the colonizer. He also was, nonetheless, in a position to subvert the authority of those who had hegemonic power. Spivak (1988) states that the imperial or colonial project from its very origin created hidden transcripts and modes of knowing that asymmetrically erased the knowledge or trace of the colonial subject ("Epistemic violence/Catachresis" p.280-1, 289; 297) and reconstituted the colonial subject in the social text as 'Other'-"a construction of Europe as Self". By this mode of 'creation', the voice of the subaltern is completely muted, it is neither privileged within the dominant discourse nor can it speak in a vocabulary that will get a hearing in institutional locations of power. It rarely enters the official and intellectual discourse except as represented (p.276-278, 287). However, the constitution of the subaltern's alterity as 'Other' ensures that to represent the subaltern is to rely on a hegemonic, specific conception of reality that may not contain the voice of the subaltern at all, and that rather makes the representative complicit in the "persistent constitution of the Other as the Self's shadow"(p. 280) and in continuing the task of imperialism by rehearsing neo-colonial imperatives of political domination, economic exploitation and cultural erasure (p.280-2).

The import of Spivak's problematization is in revealing, in our context, that there can be African literate and non-literate elites that have assumed the project of representation but who rather misrepresent Africa and Africans and are, unknowingly (or perhaps, knowingly), complicit in continuing the hegemony of the imperial West due to their own naïve acceptance of inferiority. Appiah identifies this group in a cynical definition of postcoloniality that bespeaks an attitude of self distancing from

the group as "the condition of what we might ungenerously call a comprador intelligentsia: a relatively small, Western-trained group of writers and thinkers, who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery" (1996: 62).

Interculturality

The concept of Interculturality draws from the unarguable difference and diversity of cultures that correctly assumes the existence of 'the Other', as well as the possibilites both of contact and conflict and of communication, negotiation and understanding in relations between cultures.

The 'Other' here refers to the non-belonging, the excluded, the incomprehensible, strange, unfamiliar, foreign and inaccessible opposite by which an identity defines itself and its worth. It refers to that which an (cultural) identity sees to be completely unrelated to its perception of its own self but which it uses to affirm its own worth and, even, superiority. According to Cahoone (2003):

> The apparent identity of what appears to be cultural units human beings, words, meanings, ideas, philosophical systems, social organizations are maintained only through constitutive repression, an active process of exclusion, opposition and hierarchization. A phenomenon maintains its identity in semiotic systems only if other units are represented as foreign or 'Other' through a hierarchical dualism, in which the first is 'privileged' or favoured, while the other is deprivileged or devalued in some way (11).

Rosen (2000: par. 2) illustrates Cahoone in his observation of the West's perception of and relation with the East. According to Rosen:

> Orientalism as cultural myth had been articulated through metaphors which characterize the East in ways which emphasize its strangeness and otherness. The orient is seen as separate, passive, eccentric, backwards, with a tendency to despotism. ...this kind

> of orientalism carries with it the implication that Asian people are much more...inferior.

In a similar vein, Raji-Oyelade, in a critique of English literature on Africa, notes what can be seen as Europe's depiction of Africa's Otherness. According to him, "A cursory but critical observation of the thematic import of major English fiction on Africa, extending from the late nineteenth century, has revealed a somewhat monolithic and predictable portrayal of an African milieu caught in the dark beginnings of time (1998:275).

The 'dark beginnings of time' conjures up the images of a primitive, barbaric, and savage people who, in the words of Frantz Fanon (1967:32), are declared to "represent not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values, the enemy of values and, in this sense, the absolute evil". Derrida (1972) points out the close-knit tie between culture and the colonialist agenda in observing that the usage of the notion of culture always includes the naïve and misleading binary opposition such as 'us' and 'them', 'civilised' and 'primitive', 'white' and 'black', 'men' and 'women', and so on, which always tend to stigmatise, suppress and exclude the Other. Earlier, in his reading of *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, Achebe affirms the deep desire in Western psychology "to set Africa up as a foil to Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest". He elaborates on this Euro-Western attitude:

> For reasons which can certainly use close psychological inquiry the West seems to suffer deep anxieties about the precariousness of its civilisation and to have a need for constant reassurance by comparison with Africa. If Europe, advancing in civilization, could cast a backward glance periodically at Africa trapped in primordial barbarity it could say with faith and feeling: There go I but for the grace of God. Africa is to Europe as the picture is to Dorian Gray a carrier onto whom the master unloads

> his physical and moral deformities so that he may go forward, erect and immaculate. Consequently, Africa is to be avoided just as the picture has to be hidden away to safeguard the man's jeopardous integrity. (1).

The self creates a distorted image of the Other to estrange and exclude it and by this exclusion to preserve its own wholeness and worth, and the privileged status, which it assigns itself. In this way, Otherness becomes an instrument for the preservation of the Self. Schoepfling (2001: par. 14) states this in part when he observes that:

> Collective identities protect their meanings. They do so by establishing boundary mechanisms and boundary filters, which ensure that ideas external to the community are never received in full, for if they were, they could devastate the sense of collective self by introducing a tidal wave of innovation which the receiving community had no cognitive means of ordering (...).

Otherness as strangeness or exclusion or both creates distance between diverse cultures and engenders misunderstanding, prejudice and strife. However, what is critical in this binary relationship between the cultural self and the Other is that the Other as what defines the Self also embodies the Self, such that it is only when there is an 'Other' that the Self knows itself. Hall states this fact in implying that there is no identity that is without the dialogic relationship to the Other. The Other is not outside but also inside the Self, the identity. Identity is also the relationship of the Other to oneself. According to Hall:

> ... Identities are constructed through not outside difference. This entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its 'constitutive outside' that the 'positive' meaning of any term and thus its 'identity' can be constructed (...)

This ironic mutual inclusion of the Other in the Self and the Self in the Other suggests the possibility, or even necessity, of both to engage each other in dialogue to possibly reach understanding and agreement for peaceful coexistence. Indeed the inclusion of one in the other suggests that each needs the other to exist. Miller (1994: par. 15) observes the same while holding that "if the Other is really another form of the same, much can be said, done and thought. ... There is the possibility of understanding and reconciliation. The two sides can talk, perhaps reach a consensus". Interculturality mirrows this difference and Otherness of cultures and the need for cultures diverse to each other to engage in dialogue.

Interculturality, therefore, refers here to the critical and dynamic contacts, interactions and exchanges between cultures that are the consequences of their difference and diversity, which aim is to bring about equality and mutual respect between the cultures. Interculturality goes beyond the mere fact of many cultures coexisting in a single geographical space and points especially to contacts, encounters and interactions that equally implicate the complexities and conflicts of power (political, economical, ideological, and so on) underlying all intercultural relations within asymmetrical contexts. The nature and process of this interaction would themselves include negotiations and mediations and other direct and intervening measures that can result in "the construction of cultural syntheses in new stages". (cf: Gumucio 2008:321).

Medina-Lopez-Portillo and Sinnigen (2009) emphasize the above conceptualization in their clarification of the conceptual difference between interculturality and intercultural competence by showing the unequal emphasis accorded to these concepts in the [Europe] US and in Latin America based on the peculiar needs of each cultural grouping or system (i.e. Europe-US or Latin America). Visible in their conception is the existence of asymmetry. While the US emphasizes intercultural competence with reference to individual set of skills, attitudes and behaviours

needed to successfully and effectively relate with people from different cultures, the emphasis in Latin America is on interculturality which refers to "a historic condition". According to them:

> Intercultural competence is primarily an academic matter and produces valuable scholarship and training programs and methodologies. Interculturality points to the radical restructuring of the historically pronounced uneven relations of wealth and power that have existed between Europeans and their descendants and indigenous and other subordinated groups during the last half millennium. This history has been characterised by an ongoing process of conquest, exploitation, and resistance. In Latin America, interculturality is used to describe the necessary condition for a new social configuration that allows historically marginalised indigenous groups and others, primarily blacks, to pursue cultural, political, and economic equality. (250)

The graduated dialectical syntheses that result in intercultural interactions are to lead to the progressive realisation of mutual and equal respect of cultures, cooperative endeavours based on equal participation and representation of all cultures. They progressively abolish the indulgences of dominant cultures which through political, ideological, economic and military processes effectively reduce often to practically zero - the possibilities of other cultures to define their own goals, priorities, destinies, and to realise those; and make the dominated cultures "subservient to the realisation of the goals, priorities, destinies, of the dominant group[s]". (cf: Binsbergen (2003: 17)

Interculturality does not only imply asymmetry and conflict but more critical and important is that it is also an intervening or mediatory factor in postcoloniality. It offers the possibilities of communication, negotiation, and of reaching understanding and consensus in the conflict taking place in the postcolony. In other words, interculturality problematizes postcoloniality offering it

dialogic channels of dealing with its inherent conflict and asymmetry. We refer to this mix of interculturality and postcoloniality as "Postcolonial Interculturality", a term already used by Irani and Dourish (2009) to characterize the effort at intercultural understanding within the framework of a postcolonial perspective that stresses the importance of colonial histories, uneven economic relations and local knowledge systems and practices in framing and designing information technologies.

Categorization of Cultural Knowledge and Identity in the Academia.

The emphasis on the possibilities for dialogue and understanding offered by interculturality has been forced by the development of new communication and information technologies as well as by improved transport systems and closer contact of economies that have reduced spatial and temporal distances. Consequently, more people than ever increasingly come in contact with foreigners and the foreign, e.g. students, academics, missionaries, military personnel, diplomats, tourists, humanitarian aid workers, businessmen and women and others, who have different cultural backgrounds. These increased contacts and the need for cultural understanding contributed in formalizing the discipline of intercultural communication within intercultural studies, whose forebear in the US from early 20th century was Area Studies - a 'discipline' with the broad focus on increased or improved instruction in modern languages and other fields needed to provide a full understanding of the areas, regions or countries in which such languages are commonly used. Area studies is further identified in the academia through the names of the countries, regions or cultures being studied such as German, French, Russian, Egyptian(or Egyptology); European, American, Middle-Eastern, Latin-American, African studies, and so on.

However, Said, in his seminal work "*Orientalism*"(1978), shows that area studies in its disciplinary origin from Europe, later

formalized by America, served the imperialist project of creating imaginary and false 'otherness' of other cultures in other to spread Western hegemony. Said demonstrates this in his thesis, resulting from his study on the Western creation of the orient, that the Western academic discipline of Oriental studies was set up for the sole aim of producing a distorted and false image of the Orient that will justify and support the Western project of imperialism (reproduced in Mongia 1996: 33-35). In another study, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Triffin (1989) argue that the English language (also English Studies) and its institutionalisation as an academic discipline were used as deliberate cultural enterprise to privilege the British culture as an occupying force and to complement political colonial hegemony:

> It can be argued that the study of Englsh and the growth of empire proceeded from a single ideological climate and that the development of the one is intrinsically bound up with the development of the other, both at the level of simple utility (as propaganda for instance) and at the unconscious level, where it leads to the naturalizing of constructed values(e.g. civilization, humanity, etc) which, conversely, established 'savagery', 'native', 'primitive', as their antithesis and as the object of a reforming zeal. A 'privileging norm' was enthroned at the heart of the formation of English studies as a template for the denial of the value of the 'peripheral', the 'marginal', the 'uncanonized'. (3)

A reading of Spivak's "*Can the Subaltern Speak"?*, Said's *"Orientalism"* and Ashcroft et al's "*The Empire writes Back"* will reveal that the creation of an imaginary 'other' (Orient, in this instance) by the West was an act of cultural identity displacement by which the 'real' other (Orient) is subalterned and muted. This displacement created a space in which the West may and did establish its hegemonic cultural self as the central, superior and model cultural identity that the displaced other would have to study (the Western self as a discipline, e.g English, French, German, Russian etc) and, perhaps, pattern itself into. The study of the Western cultural self by the other thus complements the

creation of an imaginary and bizarre other in the single project of establishing and maintaining Western hegemony over other cultural identities.

Zeleza (2007) notes the crucial difference in the organization of the area studies model in Africa and Europe and America. The study of Africa in Euro-American academies and institutes palpably 'overdetermines' African knowledge system, while African influence on Euro-American scholarship is quite negligible (par. 4). He further observes that area studies as it was developed in the US at the end of World War II and reinforced in the cold war was based on three needs: first was to solve the national security concerns of the US brought about by its ignorance of the rest of the world especially the newly independent states of Africa and Asia where the US and its European allies were locked in a fierce combat with the soviet union "to win hearts and minds" (cf: Szanton 2003: par. 20). Second was the "epistemological imperative" to internationalize knowledge in the academy. Area studies was developed not as a discipline but as an interdiscipline

> infused with the twists and turns of American foreign policy, the projection of imperial power, in which knowledge of America and allied Europe more broadly was lodged within the disciplines, and that of the rest of the world was relegated to the area studies ghetto and inscribed with the pathologies of otherness. Consequently, the United States and Euro-America more generally was not considered an 'area,' which it obviously is, but at the very core of disciplinary knowledges, its experiences rendered into stylized facts and the epistemologies derived from them elevated to manifestations of the universal. So the pernicious fictions were born and bred that area studies were concerned with the parochial and the particular, while American studies, and their civilizational cousins European studies were disciplinary parables of the human condition. (9)

The third adjudged imperative was to justify the racial and discriminatory exclusion of native Americans and African Americans from political and cultural citizenship, from the American mainstream by separating their ancestral cultures and continents from disciplinary narratives; they are to be seen and studied as 'areas', as others. (10).

A further insight into this universalization of the Western self, also in Africa, may be illustrated with the course charted for German studies. In 1933, *Germanistik* in Germany was redesignated "*Deutschkunde*" and converted to „Deutschwissenschaft als Organ des deutschen Selbstverständnisses." (Seeba 1989:144). This redesignation, observes Seeba, made *Germanistik* to serve, rather than to record and analyze, the formation of national identity and it was thus assigned the new task "not only of exploring but also of promoting 'Germanity' ", and "*Deutschtum* emerged as the unconditionally accepted litmus test in dealing with all German language, literature and history"(1989: 44). Whereas this new redesignation may be seen in the light of National Socialism's effort to justify the ideology leading to the Third Reich, to promote in Germans an ascendant perception of their cultural identiy and race to be superior and above any other cultural identity, it did still promote educational policies and programmes of cultural imperialism.

While *Germanistik* may be seen to be mostly directed towards the Germans, the academic discipline of German as Foreign Language (GFL) set up in the 1970's was organized within a cultural education policy to "assimilate" the foreign workers in Germany which a self-confident West German economy has attracted from the late 1950's, and secondly to support the foreign policy of promoting German culture and language abroad (Welle 2009)). Jörg Roche, director of the GFL institute in Munich (cited by Welle 2009: par. 3) explains the situation that gave impetus to establishing the discipline of German as foreign language back then:

> That was when people noticed that the Italian, Spanish and Portuguese guest workers we'd recruited were not going to go away, as originally thought. Instead they stayed here, but didn't speak any German. [and Welle adds]New forms of German instruction were needed. In addition, the growing number of foreign students played an important part in the development of GFL, *as did the return to a more self-assured policy of promoting German culture and language abroad.* (emphasis mine).

In the 1980's, precisely in 1984, intercultural German was formally articulated and set up as a disciplinary and scholarly offshoot of both *Germanistik* and GFL devoted to 'thematizing' and researching the interaction of the German language and culture with other cultures with the aim of promoting the acceptance of the German language and culture by other cultures (cf: Gutjahr in Straub et al 2007: 144-146). The discipline was first initiated as an academic programme "Intercultural German Studies Programme" within GFL in 1987 at the University of Bayreuth by Alois Wielacher (Welle 2009: par. 7). Intercultural German is thus a foreign-policy-driven discipline that creatively incorporates and promotes the aims both of *Germanistik* and GFL.

A pertinent question that might be asked here is: what is wrong with a self-confident German culture promoting its presence in and acceptance by other cultures (we are concerned here precisely with the African other). The answer apparently is nothing; perhaps, absolutely nothing. The English, the French, the Spaniard, the Russian, the American (excluding the black-American) and all of the constitutive selves of the Western self do the same. They have the means and possibilities of not only promoting but also imposing the Western cultural self on other cultural identities.

This apparently innocuous foreign policy projects of modelling the African other into the Western self can be clearly seen in the

light of these policy projects being complementary to neocolonial practices of the West in the control of global economy, politics, culture, media and (the categorization and structuring of) knowledge. These neocolonial practices sustain underdevelopment and consolidate the crisis of cultural identity in Africa and in the African Diaspora. This crisis makes the average African vulnerable to passively accept (in the place of his own) the Western cultural self presented to him in the foreign cultural class as the only universally valid self.

Hall acknowledges, considerably, in the relations of the West and Africa, this construction and categorization of cultural knowledge and identity, by which the real identity of the other's self has been expropriated and replaced with the 'universalized' Western self such that the other as created by the West now experiences its real self as other and strange, and strives to be the universalized (or the globalised) self of the West. According to Hall:

> Not only, in Said's 'Orientalist' sense, were we [*black people*] constructed as different and other within the categories of knowledge of the West by those regimes. They had the power to make us see and experience *ourselves* as 'Other'. Every regime of representation is a regime of power formed, as Foucault reminds us, by the fatal couplet, 'power/knowledge'. But this kind of knowledge is internal, not external. It is one thing to position a subject or set of peoples as the Other of a dominant discourse. It is quite another thing to subject them to that 'knowledge', not only as a matter of imposed will and domination, by the power of inner compulsion and subjective con-formation to the norm ... This inner expropriation of cultural identity cripples and deforms. If its silences are not resisted, they produce, in Fanon's vivid phrase, 'individuals without an anchor, without horizon, colourless, stateless, rootless - a race of angels'. (1997:112) (Hall's emphasis).

The African Foreign Culture Classroom and Cultural Identity.

The African foreign culture classroom designates here the class of African students and learners of Western cultures, i.e. the learning of the West as self either as a whole, e.g. European Studies, or through any of its constitutive selves, e.g. French, German, English, Russian, Spanish studies, among others, and within the disciplinary categories of knowledge, e.g. language, literature, history, thought, etc into which the learning is subdivided.

The African learner seated in the class, theoretically plagued by a crisis of his own cultural identity, is vulnerable to a deepening of that crisis, even to the point of self-rejection. A justification for learning European languages, for instance, is necessary and one of the most salient given is that these European languages and their underpinning cultures are the 'universal' languages of science, of communication, diplomacy, technology, business, education, law, etc. The universal validity of the European languages and cultures impliedly contrasted with the marginal otherness of African languages and cultures becomes a dominant justification and imperativeness for the African learner's presence in the class.

This contrast between a universally valid Western self and an African marginal other runs subterraneously in the teaching and learning of the other disciplines or knowledge areas in the class/course and affects or conditions the psyche of the African learner. The African self is 'decentered' in the process of the African learner's learning of the West. This decentering is, perhaps, most evident in the learning of European languages in Anglophone, Francophone and other Europhone Africa where the acquisition of European languages is from one European language to another and the African mother-tongue is regarded as "interference", an unwanted and unwelcomed intruder in the learning process. The African learner of the West is continually alienated from his African self not only in the justification for his

study but also in the presentation of the material he studies and in the instructional style of presentation.

Centricity, following Asante (1991:171), refers to a perspective that involves "locating students within the context of their own cultural references so that they can relate socially and psychologically to other cultural perspectives." It is a concept that can be applied to any culture. The decentering of the African learner of the European culture is in his alienation and dislocation from his cultural self and identity, the inscription of cultural inferiority and marginality on him and enforcing on him the proposition that the only way to become acceptable "universally" or "internationally" is to become someone else; for his learning process does not incorporate any validation of his own culture or cultural identity, and his culture, by its deliberate or indeliberate exclusion from the learning process, is impressed on him as having made no contribution to world history, society and development. He is made to see himself and his culture as the "acted upon" never as active participants in history (Asante 1991: 171). Asante makes this point, drawing from the African-American experience: "The little African American child [the adolescent/adult is not necessarily excluded] who sits in a classroom and is taught to accept as heroes and heroines individuals who defamed African people is being actively de-centered, dislocated, and made into a nonperson, one whose aim in life might be to one day shed that "badge of inferiority": his or her Blackness." (1991:171).

A pertinent question here could be: where is the (African) teacher of European and Western culture to African learners located in this postcoloniality in the foreign culture classroom? How aware is he/her of this conflict of selves and identities in the classroom? And of the possible conflict of selves in himself/herself? To the (African) teacher of the Western culture to African learners, the possibility exists that he/she may not be aware of his/her involvement in an active process of cultural identity

representation and formation in his/her 'patriotic' (and career)) zeal to raise "universally" or "internationally" competent and acceptable students. He/she may also not be aware of his/her own naïve acceptance of an imposed inferior cultural identity complex, how that affects his/her instructional style and presentation of material in class and the overall effects on his/her students; and importantly how naively he/she has become complicit in continuing the hegemony of the imperial metropole as well as continuing the neo-colonial project of erasing the African culture.

A 'postcolonial interculturality' model to foreign culture teaching and learning in the African foreign culture classroom will take into cognizance the asymmetry and conflict of cultural knowledge, meaning and identities and emphasize an approach that does not focus simply on providing culture specific information of the foreign but one that makes available a broader and complex world view - the framework of ideas and beliefs through which the learners interpret the world and interact with it. The presentation of such world view necessarily identifies and establishes the equal validity and relevance of the cultural selfhood or identity both of the African learner's culture and that of the foreign culture being learned. Furthermore, the African learner's culture is 'validly centered' in and constitute the basis of the learning process of the foreign culture: the learning process thus becomes a vista that opens the learner towards a critical, deeper and better discovery, understanding and acceptance of his/her own cultural roots through his learning of the foreign.

Conclusion

The African foreign culture classroom for learning Western culture(s) is one of the "non-geographically" marked spaces in which the asymmetrical cultural identity conflict between Africa and the West takes place. It is also a space that offers the opportunity for intercultural dialogue and possible understanding necessary to realise equal regard and respect between cultures

and to build new syntheses for progressive collaborative endeavours.

The (African) teacher or instructor of the African learner in this classroom is involved in an active process of mediating cultural knowledge, representing and moulding cultural identity as well as creating attitudes of self-acceptance or self-rejection. Each of these two attitudes has great implication on the quality of person the learner graduates to become and what his/her disposition to Africa and to African phenomena will be . The instructional style or teaching methods, and the cultural content and material adopted for this class must be such that permit the teacher to consciously, deliberately, and conscientiously admit the equal validity both of the Western culture and the African learner's culture and cultural identity in the learning process.

The above implies that among the critical base knowledge the (African) teacher in this classroom must have are appropriate and authentic knowledge both of Europe and Africa in the disciplinary areas of knowledge the cultural curriculum is subdivided and, importantly, cultural self-knowledge and cultural self-acceptance. *Self-knowledge* here refers to "a thorough understanding of one's own cultural roots and group affiliations" and *self-acceptance* refers to "a high level of self-esteem derived from knowing one's own roots"(Haberman and Post 1998:98). Whereas dominant groups, whether by race or class, are often unaware of their identity because it is synchronous with the internal and external images they hold of themselves and reality while subordinated groups are much more aware of their identity because internal and external images often do not reflect their ideas of themselves or their world (Tatum 1997), the surbordinated African, possibly including the intellectual teaching foreign culture to the African learner, contrastively, may not be aware of, or may have resigned himself/herself to the complex of cultural inferiority and silence to which he /she has been subalterned. The need for him/her, therefore, of self-knowledge and self-acceptance.

The teacher must, pursuantly, be aware of the influences of his/her own cultural identity attitudes and affiliations, inquire into his/her own cultural consciousness to be aware of and to critique his/her own value orientations, complexes, assumptions, ethnocentrism and prejudices, and stereotypes that could intrude into an interculturally responsive and responsible teaching.

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